



REFLECTING ON PEACE PRACTICE PROJECT:

Case Study

Prio/Nansen Case Study: The Balkan Dialogue Project

This case study is one of 26 cases developed as part of the Reflecting on Peace Practice Project (RPP). The RPP cases were not written as evaluations; rather, they were written to allow for the identification of cross-cutting issues and themes across the range of cases. Each case represents the views and perspectives of a variety of people—the case writer, agencies, project participants, and observers—at the point it was written. RPP would like to acknowledge the generosity of the agencies involved in donating their time and experience for these case studies, as well as their willingness to share their experience with the worldwide community of peace practitioners.

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Donna Isaac

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Reflecting on Peace Practice Project

*The Collaborative for Development Action, Inc.
2464 Massachusetts Ave, Suite 451
Cambridge, MA 02140 USA
1 617 661 6310 fax: 1 617 661 3805*

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When Marina Tuneva, a Macedonian journalist spoke about her experiences at Lillehammer and shared her thoughts on her unexpected positive friendship with an Albanian, she expressed it as “I felt that I had been denied the right to have these interactions.”

This case study will examine the Balkan Dialogue Project that is actually two integrated projects. The initial project of Democracy, Human Rights, and Peaceful Conflict Resolution began in 1995 with training at the Nansen Academy in Lillehammer, Norway. The Nansen Dialogue project is a pedagogical concept and served as the starting point for the later Balkan Dialogue Project. The Balkan Dialogue Project began in 1999. It is an activity that evolved from the educational premise of the earlier project. In this paper, the two projects are viewed as one integrated process and the earlier distinction thus has become irrelevant.

The Balkan Dialogue Project is discussed from its earliest history, then the case study examines the roles of the cooperating partners that are both governmental and non-governmental agencies and finally the participants’ views of the process. From this perspective, the case study looks at how the participants are taking the dialogue process back to their respective regions and the impact of this local dialogue building.

I. Background and History of Peace Research Institute of Oslo and Nansen Academy

A. History of the Peace Research Institute of Oslo

The Peace Research Institute of Oslo, Norway (PRIO) is one of the oldest peace institutes of its type, having been founded in 1959. From 1959 to 1993 PRIO, as a serious academic research institute, produced two journals, organized and hosted seminars and conferences, and focused exclusively on peace research, from the causes of war to peace building.

With the signing of the Oslo Accord in 1993, Norway’s foreign policy experienced a shift within the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) due to Jan Egeland, who was at the time Deputy Minister. The policy shift was to aid the Balkans, an area in which Norway had no direct interest. The form of aid was to promote dialogue and reconciliation and to contribute to the peace process. This change was viewed as a diplomatic political advantage for Norway whose MFA sees its own national security very much based on the security of others in the whole of Europe and other regions. The focus of the work was a bottom-up approach, recognizing the ownership of a grass-roots type of process by its citizens, which in turn builds local leadership, rather than what is imposed top-down by politicians (interview with Jan Braathu, Adviser on South-East European Affairs, MFA). By focusing on the grass roots, an opportunity presented itself for on-going education in an effort to address the move from centrally planned societies towards democratic societies and market-based economies. From the perspective of the

MFA, this was an investment that they believed would build long-term sustainable societies.

In the summer of 1994, MFA had approached PRIO to help facilitate discussions between two groups in southern Russia. Also during this time, PRIO was engaged in meetings of bi-communal groups in Cyprus. When the idea of a Balkan dialogue project was raised by MFA, the board of PRIO was unanimous in its support to be an active participant.

The Balkan Dialogue Project began with an initiative to bring people to Lillehammer, Norway, to the campus of the Nansen Academy, for a 10-week course on democracy, human rights, and peaceful conflict resolution. From the perspective of PRIO, this was a capacity transfer for young people to know about and discuss issues and to learn about democratic culture. However, the course quickly evolved into dialogue which in itself became central. Dialogue enabled the participants to truly build connections across divides that a more traditional lecture style did not. Gradually the idea of on-site workshops in the Balkan countries developed. From 1997, Dan Smith, Director of PRIO, and Steinar Bryn, a professor at Nansen Academy who later became project director, began to go on-site to give courses and do follow-up work.

PRIO's involvement includes Dan Smith (Director), Ivar Evensmo (International Coordinator of the Balkan Dialogue Project), Snezana Popovic (field coordinator for Montenegro and Serbia), and Julijana Mladenovska (field coordinator for Kosovo and Macedonia), who is based in Skopje. Dan Smith and Steinar Bryn give the workshops, but visits throughout the region are carried out by all the PRIO and Nansen personnel involved. PRIO's role in the workshop format and the techniques used by Smith and Bryn to discuss very difficult issues are important contributions. While I did not observe a workshop, Orion Kriegman's notes from the Herceg Novi, Montenegro, workshop in March 2000 illustrates how both Bryn and Smith use dialogue to move beyond position-based to more interest-based discussion.

B. Role of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Balkan Dialogue Project is a different type of undertaking for the MFA. They view this project as a potential model not only for Norway's policy in contributing to the reconstruction and stabilization of South Eastern Europe, but also for building long-term local capacity. The project also enables MFA to spend money in a directed way for sustainable project work. The MFA understands the Balkan Dialogue project will need support for some time and it recognizes that at the moment the Nansen Dialogue Centers developing within the region are far too vulnerable without their administrative and financial help. The philosophy of the MFA is to enable the project to build sustainability through the development of the local centers, which means that adequate and long-term funding will be necessary. The MFA has been concerned with the "over-optimism" of 3-5 year funding projects, "the American model," as it is referred to, that often leave programs on site very vulnerable (Braathu interview). Over time, an obvious and necessary evolution of these individual centers will develop that will influence both their work and their relationships with the Government of Norway. PRIO and NANSEN

DIALOGUE may become less intrusive over time. For the moment, with the considerable financial involvement of MFA, both PRIO and NANSEN DIALOGUE have responsibility to provide financial and administrative oversight.

C. History of the NANSEN Academy and the NANSEN DIALOGUE

The Nansen Academy is named for one of Norway's best-known humanitarians. Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930) was an explorer, author, athlete, scientist, statesman, and laureate of the 1922 Nobel Peace Prize for his humanitarian work. He was the only private person to have a passport named for him. The Nansen passport was a stateless passport for refugees forced from their homes and was accepted by 52 governments (Interview with Inge Eidsvåg, professor and former director of Nansen Academy). The Academy was founded in his name in 1938 as a protest against the political developments in Europe and the rise of fascism and nazism. The aim was to defend human dignity and human rights and to be a meeting ground for people of different cultural, religious, and political backgrounds. One of the founders of the Academy was also influenced by the philosophy of Gandhi and had introduced it to Norway. Thus the Academy from its beginning had a focus on peace education.

During the 1980s, as a result of the anti-nuclear movement growing in Europe, peace education became a part of the school's curriculum. In response to the multi-cultural and multi-religious groups finding their way to Norway in the 1990s, the school devised a dialogue project, "Common Ethics in a Multi-Cultural Norway." This was a one and one-half year project that looked at how religions and beliefs related to human rights. Another project undertaken in 1996 by the Academy was "Religious Beliefs and Human Rights." Nansen Academy (Nansenskolen) received an honorable mention of the UNESCO Prize 1998 for Peace Education in recognition of its contribution to the promotion of peace and tolerance. In addition, in 1999, Steinar Bryn and the former director and project director, Inge Eidsvåg, received Amalie Laksow's Human Rights Prize for the Balkan Dialogue Project's contribution to the promotion of human rights.

With this background, a link became forged when Lillehammer was chosen to host the 1994 Olympics, a decade after the Sarejevo Olympics. As Lillehammer was preparing for the event in 1992, Sarejevo was under siege. The Olympic organizers, Nansen Academy, and the town people of Lillehammer felt a great affinity for Sarejevo and began a solidarity campaign, "Lillehammer Olympic Aid," that raised 70 million NOK. This campaign brought the groups into contact with sports organizations and humanitarian aid organizations such as the Norwegian Red Cross and the Norwegian Church Aid.

In 1994, Inge Eidsvåg visited Sarejevo and on his return to the Nansen Academy set about structuring a training program for the students from former Yugoslavia to learn about democracy, human rights, and peaceful conflict resolution. The aim was to strengthen individuals who live in a war zone/conflict area and others who are working actively for democratization, reconciliation, and peace. A common framework was built in which the possibilities of reconciliation, reconstruction, and peaceful conflict

resolution were explored. With funding from the Norwegian Red Cross, Norwegian Church Aid, and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs the idea of NANSEN DIALOGUE was established. The first workshop for 14 students from Bosnia was held in fall of 1995. This was a difficult period with the on-going war and prior to the signing of the Dayton Agreement. The sessions were very emotional and, as Inge Eidsvåg pointed out, “we had no experience training people coming right out of war” (interview). By December and as Christmas neared, the atmosphere began to shift dramatically among the participants as personal relationships took root and changed the entire tone of the workshop. As the students left to continue their work at home they were, as Eidsvåg said, “a beam of light in a dark night.”

By the Spring of 1996, with the Dayton Agreement now in place, the project director, Steinar Bryn, carefully selected the prospective participants. He recruited participants by using the partners’ international contacts to identify people making contributions to teaching and education and who could continue the work in their home countries. There were certain criteria for the participants of the workshops which included that they not be war criminals nor part of the security police within their own countries. Beyond that, the recruiters were looking for people who could effect change within their societies. There were risks involved for both organizing the workshops and attending them.

Originally, the intent of the workshops was to target social and political hard-liners within the region. The recruiters wanted participants firmly rooted within their own communities. However, very few of them spoke English. Ultimately the level of education and the need for English meant the participants had more liberal views. (An important task of the dialogue centers now being established within the region will be to reach people with less popular views.)

The town of Lillehammer and the Nansen Academy presented from the first, and still represents, an open and neutral location. In this respect just having a physical location outside of the region may be needed for some time. It is a place where people from different cultures could express themselves, share their feelings about the conflict for the first time using English, a neutral language. It is a place where burdens are lifted and where a neutral ground is created with no social or economic limitations. From this place, there is now a growing network with the regional Nansen Dialogue Centers.

D. Organizational Structure of the NANSEN DIALOGUE

The four cooperating partners constitute a wide professional and academic background with extensive contacts, both nationally and internationally. Each of the participating organizations has its own individual board that must agree to the work and to representation. The two humanitarian organizations are large actors in the field of humanitarian assistance in the former Yugoslavia. Structurally the NANSEN DIALOGUE is a cooperative effort. It is governed by a Steering Committee that is made up of a representative from each of the participating organizations, as well as Professor Bernt Hagtvedt, in his academic capacity as an independent member. The selection of representatives to the steering committee is important. Professor Eidsvåg described the

need for devotion and commitment to the work of the project, not only on the part of the participating organizations, but from their individual representatives.

The NANSEN DIALOGUE has as its mission that it will, through applying the ideas and skills of dialogue, empower people who live in conflict situations to contribute to peaceful conflict transformation and democratic development with promotion of human rights. Each member organization may initiate and implement projects under the auspices of NANSEN DIALOGUE, which must be approved by the Steering Committee. Any project must be in accordance with the main aim of NANSEN DIALOGUE and must involve substantial cooperation with organizations and individuals in conflict areas and must be of major importance for at least one of the cooperating organizations. Under this structure of NANSEN DIALOGUE, the Nansen Academy oversees the Lillehammer courses; the Norwegian Church Aid specifically oversees the Peace Boat project; PRIO/Nansen the Balkan Dialogue project; and Nansen Academy oversees the summer Peace Institute. All the partners, however, serve as an overall advisory council. The responsibilities of the partners thus include ideological and pedagogical advice as well as overall funding of projects. The NANSEN DIALOGUE represents an interesting and effective collaboration drawing on the vast experience of all the different partners and their various expertise.

In an interview, the Norwegian Church Aid representative to this collaborative effort, Stein Villumstad, pointed out the changes the structure of the NANSEN DIALOGUE had undergone. This also occurred at a period when NCA was looking at how it undertook projects (see M. Anderson case study “Extending the Humanitarian Mandate: Norwegian Church Aid’s Decision to Institutionalize its Commitment to Peace Work,” April 2000). NCA had begun to address changes in how it decided its aid program and how to mainstream local capacities into its organizational approach to giving aid. NCA wanted more than to put money into the Balkan Dialogue Project. It wanted to have a clear link between the context, the pedagogy and the philosophy of the project. As well, NCA was interested in having more diverse projects under the umbrella of NANSEN DIALOGUE, and so the idea of the Peace Boat was undertaken.

NCA’s role as an NGO well rooted in the region proved to be an important source for recruitment of participants. Villumstad believes that the local NDCs needed a network and some links between them and to look at partnering to develop local projects. Once there is a critical mass to carry on the work in the Balkans, he believes the role of NANSEN DIALOGUE will diminish. He also believes that this model can and needs to be taken beyond the Balkan region. Villumstad is interested by the idea of creating a model that could be used within various local areas (possibly Afghanistan and the Sudan), with contextual changes and adjustments. He would like to analyze Afghanistan as the next dialogue area.

The next logical step for the Balkan Dialogue project is to have some assessment of what has occurred. Another step is to target future opinion makers, such as potential politicians, so recruitment must look at mid-level professionals and address those individuals at the extremes of society within the Balkans. Many of the participants have

worked with or are already linked to NGOs, and this builds further networks within the NGOs as institutions. NCA is looking at the project and the influence it will likely have on future decisions regarding potential projects. Five years ago, when the NANSEN Dialogue project in the Balkans was first discussed, dialogue and civil society were only words with little meaning, and there was no idea how to incorporate these ideas into operational terms. Now they have become more concrete, and there is an opportunity for NCA and other NGOs to bring people into their organizations with new skills. NCA is empowering its own local representatives to be involved with local citizens, to encourage forums and to build dialogue. This is a direct impact of NCA's participation in the NANSEN DIALOGUE PROJECT (interview, 6 September 2000).

E. The Training at Lillehammer

As originally devised, the course was to be structured more traditionally, based on lectures. In fact, the first course consisted of approximately 40 different lecturers and focused on the transfer of knowledge. However, it was found that the participants gained more from meeting each other and facing, what Steinar Bryn termed, their "enemy images" than from attending lectures. Recognizing this, the next courses shifted to dialogue among the participants. There are still lectures on human rights, democratic theory, and cultural identity, but the methodology focuses on the dialogue among the participants, both socially and within their groups. For one participant this offered the opportunity for their group to decide how and on what to dialogue and gave them the responsibility to determine this rather than waiting for the facilitators (interview with Julijana Mladenovska, the project coordinator for Kosovo and Macedonia).

Since 1996, Dr. Bryn has been the major recruiter for participants, who are selected through several means. They are recommended by previous participants; or through one of the NANSEN DIALOGUE partners such as the NCA or the Red Cross. Students at the Balkan Peace Studies program at the University of Skopje comprise a large number of the participants from Macedonia. Bryn conducts telephone interviews with the perspective participant and makes a determination that is based on whether a potential participant believes or is open to the belief that dialogue can affect a change in people's lives. The groups of participants chosen to date reflect youth and education. They also reflect optimism about the potential for dialogue and the opportunities it presents for the future of their respective civil societies.

The Lillehammer courses originally extended over a 10-week period. The length of time has posed some difficulties over the years and the workshops have lasted anywhere from 3.5 to 8 weeks. While the longer length gives time for participants to build relationships and trust, it is difficult to recruit professionals to leave their jobs for that amount of time. The groups are always equally mixed—for instance 10 Albanians and 10 Serbs in the 1996 group. Overall, there have been 165 participants over the five years of the Balkan Dialogue Project. While it may seem slow progress, the impact is building within each region, especially as the individual centers come on line, to build a critical mass.

Follow-up seminars with the increasing number of participants were held in Budapest (1996), in Lillehammer (1997), in Igalo, Montenegro (1998), and in Ohrid, Macedonia (May 2000). As the numbers grow, these follow-up sessions bring close to 150 people from the Balkans together. The follow-up seminars support the work that is now being established in the individual centers, build the networking between the centers, and support beliefs about what is possible in this region that has known conflict for so long. This has also meant increasing staff at Nansen to include a project coordinator and pedagogical coordinator as well as a technical assistant.

On the other hand, the concept of the Balkan Dialogue Project is to have on-site workshops/seminars lasting for a few days. The intention is to create a space for dialogue that is neutral and open, where the different actors in a serious conflict can meet face to face in truthful and honest communication. The idea is to break down enemy images, as well as to increase the understanding of each other's positions, interests, and needs, while remaining in their own respective settings. Facilitators and lecturers try to stimulate the cognitive analysis of the conflict and the experience of the "other."

A typical workshop is discussed from an observer's perspective in Orion Kriegman's notes on the Herceg-Novi workshop held in March 2000. As Dr. Bryn points out, aggression always comes out the first day of these workshops. On the second day the group looks at skills and necessary tools for dialogue and does so in a detached manner to enable them to discuss the issues. Only on the third day does the group apply these tools to the situation (in Kosovo). Both Bryn and Smith believe in holding off the discussion that most participants want to get into immediately, until some neutral grounding discussions of conflicts in general, the history of conflict, and some tools for dialogue have been established. This dramatically changes the topical discussion on Day 3. The facilitators recognize that the participants have no space within their own societies to meet and talk among each other, especially from different ethnic backgrounds. That is the power of dialogue—the "euphoria" as Steinar Bryn calls it, of having a chance to talk openly about the conflict that is taboo back home.

As the workshops have become more established there is a growing need to get participants together in follow-up seminars in the field and to find areas within the region where the groups can come together and meet. There is also the necessity to continue to build trust and confidence. As the individual Nansen Dialogue Centers come on line, there is a growing need to include more opportunities for staff within the region to meet, have workshops, plan programs, and to build a space for dialogue.

Two of the Nansen Dialogue centers were visited during the course of this case study. The staff and some members of the NDC network were interviewed at each site. The two, while quite different in some respects, present opportunities for dialogue to effect changes within their respective societies. The Prishtina KIDS office is made up entirely of Albanians. The NDC/Skopje office has both Albanians and Macedonians on staff. While the goal is dialogue across ethnic lines, due to the current situation in the region, not all the centers are multi-ethnic. Those interviewed acknowledge that any reconciliation is pre-emptive at this point, given the tradition of revenge and hate in the

region. Right now, reconciliation is viewed as “opening a door” for history to repeat itself. There is no trust at the moment in reconciliation as a process. However, they agree that for reconciliation to occur at all, some responsibility for actions must be acknowledged and that dialogue is a powerful tool of understanding. According to Arjeta Emra of the Prishtina KIDS office, reconciliation must also occur across all social and economic levels of society. What those interviewed believe is occurring is empowerment at the personal level for people to become the future foundation for the societies themselves.

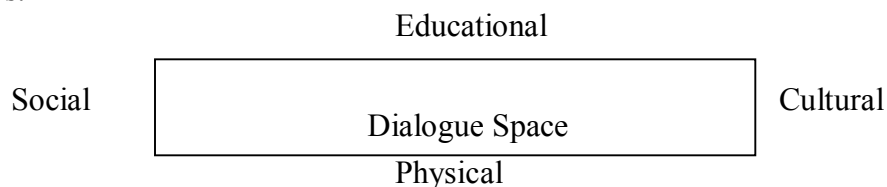
The conflict in the Balkans in general, as Bryn sees it, is changing from being an ethnic conflict to being a ‘clash of cultures’ as an elite class emerges. He sees three aspects of this change:

- (1) Postmodern global space with the internet and travel has begun and will continue to shift impressions and experience.
- (2) Modern nationals are those in the urban areas who are involved in nation building.
- (3) Traditional people from villages are coming to Sarejevo and Prishtina in large numbers for work, university, and better living conditions.

These aspects of today’s culture clashes add to the already complex nature of the centuries-old ethnic clashes. The idea of the clash of cultures provides a new angle by which to see age-old conflicts. The language one uses is also part of the conflict. In this case, the use of English by Nansen Academy is considered neutral. Several other programs include “Training for Trainers” which is training people to go out in their own language to work in the villages and other rural areas. This is a slow process that will continue to build momentum over a period of time. It is also a slightly different model in terms of how NGOs work. Each individual Nansen Dialogue Center is a registered local NGO within its own country. The strength of these dialogue centers is that the staff are all part of the Nansen network within their home countries and within the larger context of the region. This has established a common loyalty to a higher vision. There is shared communication over time and economically, at least for the time being, there is less risk. The Nansen Dialogue Centers are all funded through the MFA, who views this as an effective use of their funds towards building democratic societies over the long-term.

F. Methodology of Dialogue

The Nansen Dialogue concept has a very specific methodology attached to it that is used in the training — the creation of “a dialogue space” as devised by Steinar Bryn. This applies both to the Lillehammer training courses as well as the seminars/workshops in the Balkans.



The idea is to provide space for dialogue to occur. There is the educational aspect of dialogue where you discuss the process of conflict resolution; integrate media and propaganda; discuss cultural identity and what ethnicity means; and theories of democracy.

Cultural identity is the symbolism attached to power and the conflict. The Lillehammer course gives a historical perspective of conflict bringing it to post-modern traditionalism. The discussion also addresses how everyone is connected through the use of internet, computers, airports; the relationship of cities to villages; and even how people live. There really are few cultural differences. Dr. Bryn gives the example that no matter which ethnic group, the television is in the same place in the living room.

The social interaction is very important. This becomes relatively easy with the small campus of Nansen Academy and the size of Lillehammer. It is an important part of the integrated approach of the Balkan Dialogue Project.

The physical part of dialogue includes hiking, skiing, dancing, using the sauna. Quite inadvertently this has also come to include the smoking room. Since many from the Balkans are smokers, the smoking room quickly became a central point of social interaction and continuing the discussions that started in the more traditional classroom. Dr. Bryn allows only one criticism from the participants and that is about the food. Considering the differences in regional cuisine from the Balkans to Norway, there was much to criticize according to former participants.

Steinar Bryn defines dialogue as intended to create only understanding, not necessarily agreement. Dialogue can be a foundation for understanding and is a pre-requisite for solving problems. Thus while the underlying goal is to stimulate dialogue among the participants, it is also to explore the potential of dialogue as a tool in conflict resolution. He then uses six principles of dialogue: neutrality; it is not enough to be right; there are always more than two sides; humor; creativity; and moving people from position-based to interest-based discussion.

From this academic background, the idea of regional, individual Nansen Dialogue Centers evolved. Today, four centers are currently in place: Belgrade, Prishtina, Podgorica, and Skopje. Three more are scheduled to open at the end of September 2000 in Sarejevo, Banja Luka, and Mostar. With each Nansen Dialogue Center, MFA provides set-up costs, salaries, administration and equipment costs. The intention is for each center to have 8-10 seminars a year on democracy and peace building. The NANSEN DIALOGUE can give input on the content and provide a facilitator and the Center then has a free activity. However, it is expected that over time the Centers will each look for independent sources of funds to support their individual program plans. In fact, Ivar Evensmo, the International Coordinator who oversees all the Nansen Dialogue Centers, envisions that each of the regional offices will develop with its own board, councils, and donors, and that NANSEN DIALOGUE will give only core support. Not all the partners involved in the Balkan Dialogue Project have yet accepted this perspective or the time

schedule, which Evensmo himself recognizes. The next sections look at two of the Nansen Dialogue Centers from a field perspective.

II. NANSEN DIALOGUE CENTER, SKOPJE, MACEDONIA

The Nansen Dialogue Center (NDC) in Skopje, Macedonia was opened in January 2000. It is a small office located on a quiet side street close to the City Square area of Skopje and near so much of the city that was destroyed in the 1963 earthquake. The center has four staff members that include two Albanians and two Macedonians.

The mission and vision for this NDC is to strive towards building sustainable democratic community for all citizens, based on the rule of law and social welfare. Its focus is to speed up the process of integration and globalization. It intends to support the development of civic society by stimulating the process of dialogue between individuals and groups with different stances and opinions and to promote the values of peace and peaceful conflict resolution. There is a network of “activists” who have attended the Lillehammer workshops and who are willing to help support the efforts of the NDC/Skopje office in realizing its planned program of activities.

The program of activities focuses on cooperation with local, regional, and world organizations that share the platform for promotion of dialogue, peaceful conflict resolution, and cooperation respecting the principle of equality regarding nationality, religion, sex, and race.

NDC/Skopje, while not the first local NGO in Skopje, is one of the few organizations related to dialogue and peace-building that is neither state-owned nor has ties to the previous system. This concept of an independent, local NGO is a new one that governmental officials in Macedonia still need to understand. Since it opened as a locally-registered NGO, the staff has designed its programs for the first year within the parameters set by NANSEN DIALOGUE. This includes 8-10 workshops which have to date been given by the Norwegian facilitators in English. This has built an activist network of a young (20-30 year olds) and educated people in Macedonia. The program has thus far included two seminars on dialogue and conflict analysis by Dan Smith and Steinar Bryn with two more scheduled for October 2000. All the seminars were held in Macedonia. In addition a seminar in March 2000 on “Building the bridges of cooperation” and a follow-up seminar in May 2000 were also held. A forum on gender sensitivity is held each month and other projects have included “Mothers and Children;” a training course on “Child rights protection;” a seminar for lawyers and judges scheduled for October 2000 to promote juvenile justice; a summer program held in August 2000 entitled “Macedonia 2000” to enhance inter-political and interethnic dialogue; team-building training facilitated by the Center for Conflict Management in Oslo; and monthly, informal meetings and get-togethers that are social in nature but include dialogue among the members, staff, and growing network of NDC/Skopje. This is an ambitious program that has succeeded in drawing considerable attention and growing numbers of young people to the small Skopje office. Up to this point, 160

people have been trained. The NDC/Skopje has also been actively involved in preparing voters for the local elections that occurred on September 10, 2000. Journalists with USAID and the Institute for Sustainable Communities tried to prepare people on the importance of voting and teaching people, especially women and those from rural areas, how to vote.

Aleksandar Petkovski, the Coordinator of the NDC/Skopje, noted that while Macedonia is outside of the on-going conflict within the Balkans, they clearly see the situation of a divided society. Within Macedonia, the balance of the different ethnic groups was severely jeopardized during the armed conflict in Kosovo. Both sides however have felt this disorder and are now looking at exercises such as dialogue to change the situation within their own country so it will become more stable over time and less vulnerable to the impact of changes of the other countries within the region. From the perspective of Macedonia, it has avoided conflict, but the danger is always there. While both Albanians and Macedonians have been integrated, superficially at least, within the schools they have different classes in their own languages. At the university level, Macedonian is used and the unrecognized university uses the Albanian language. There is, he believes, separation at every level of society. There are deep stereotypes. The influence of European policy and what happens now within Kosovo will symbolically send signals which will influence Macedonia. The current situation in Macedonia is that Albanians represent 30 percent of the government, with Albanians in power in western Macedonia and the Macedonians in the eastern part of the country.

This first year for the NDC/Skopje is a year of experimentation. There are no criteria for the center or how it is to work, and staff are developing these as they work together. There is an obligatory program from NANSEN DIALOGUE they must follow in this first year. During the second year, NDC/Skopje plans to start meetings with the government institutions to build awareness of local NGOs, and to discuss the idea of tax credits if taxpayers make donations to an NGO. They will also look at outside donors and groups that have funded projects in villages to build more links with other agencies. The current Norwegian ambassador has been a keen supporter of NDC/Skopje and has opened other channels to outside funds. Alek Petkovski also sees the role of the networking among all the NDCs within the Balkan Dialogue Project as crucial. An upcoming meeting, scheduled for 11-17 in October in Cyprus, for all the centers to network will be important to building links to develop projects among the different centers. NDC/Skopje is currently heavily involved in training more trainers and from this base will move outward towards rural areas and to build links with Albanians, Macedonians, Turks, and Romas within their society.

This is still a new organization and very much under the influence of NANSEN DIALOGUE. According to Xhevehire Pruthi, a Project Coordinator at NDC/Skopje, the workshops produce a very positive energy, but the reality of what they as staff are dealing with is what comes next and how to strategically target groups to make a greater impact. Most of the staff of this office knew each other before Lillehammer. They have all been or are currently students of the Balkan Peace Studies program at the University of

Skopje. Julijana Mladenovska, an administrator there prior to becoming an analyst with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, recruited many students, especially from the law faculty.

NANSEN DIALOGUE provides an umbrella organization and clearly some protection as the work of the Nansen Dialogue Center in Skopje develops. But there is also room for the Center to create its own image and to work on its own. Currently, the optimism of the staff and the good working relationship with other NANSEN DIALOGUE participants there in Skopje are both strong indicators for future success. Many of those within the NANSEN DIALOGUE network are also proposing projects, such as having Macedonian and Albanian journalists travel to meet each other and present live radio/television broadcasts together. Time will tell whether this strategy to build strong and effective local roots for sustained dialogue will work.

III. KIDS, PRISHTINA, KOSOVO

The Prishtina office of Nansen Dialogue Group uses neither “Nansen” nor “dialogue” in its title. Right now these are considered “dirty words” by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) according to Dan Smith and in fact are dangerous to use. While dialogue means inter-ethnic, each center adapts the philosophy of Nansen and dialogue to its own group. The Prishtina office is actually the first NDC, started prior to the conflict by Snezana Popovic, a Serb, and Arjeta Emra, an Albanian. It was dismantled at the outbreak of conflict. It has now returned as the Kosovo Initiative for Democratic Society (KIDS).

Some historical background on this particular center is useful at this point. The Prishtina Nansen Group actually developed the idea that was to become the concept for the regional centers. Both Snezana Popovic and Arjeta Emra, who first met at Lillehammer, forged a friendship across ethnic lines for the first time for each of them. Due to the parallel system that had been in place in Kosovo since 1990, Serbs and Albanians did not interact either in school or through sports or other cultural activities. Both Snezana and Arjeta wanted to continue what had been started in Lillehammer. They both returned to Prishtina determined to carry on the dialogue. In 1997, they recruited individually — Snezana, the Serbs, and Arjeta, the Albanians. Ultimately what they began could not continue with the onset of the war, but the spirit of that original intent survives.

When Arjeta Emra and Snezana Popovic met at Lillehammer, they did not know the impact they would have from their idea to try to continue what was begun in Lillehammer: to encourage dialogue in their own city of Prishtina. They were inspired to bring the ideas they had been exposed to back to Kosovo (interview with S. Popovic). By 1998 they had conducted 5 workshops and follow-up seminars and a training for trainers session. Having shared space with other NGOs in Prishtina, by March 1999, the Nansen Dialogue Center in Prishtina had more funders and activities and moved to its own space just before the fighting began. Snezana left Kosovo, not to return, and currently works with PRIO in its Oslo office as a project coordinator with the Balkan Dialogue Project. Now in her capacity at PRIO, Snezana travels to the Montenegro office where her family

lives, and is working on establishing the Nansen Dialogue Centers in Sarejevo, Mostar, and Banja Luka, all in Bosnia/Herzegovina.

The original Prishtina office emulated many of the ideas from the workshops of Dan Smith and Steinar Bryn. There were always an equal number of participants and the organization strove to achieve this balance. While many criticize this somewhat over-manipulation, there could not be a dialogue between a greater number of Serbs and only one Albanian, or vice versa.

The office sponsored seminars and looked for participants through both horizontal and vertical connections. The Ministry of Information was invited to visit the center, for instance. The main activity was the planning and programming of seminars. Often Dan Smith and/or Steinar Bryn would travel to give the workshops in Bosnia-Herzegovina or in the “neutral territory of Montenegro.” The center worked on a day-to-day basis writing proposals for projects and beginning to look for outside funding sources. As Snezana Popovic described during an interview, the office did not have the luxury of time to evaluate its work. In addition, there are cultural issues which made evaluation very difficult — coming out of a system where to be criticized and made to feel that one made a mistake could be very dangerous for one’s job.

NCA provided three months of operations funding for the Prishtina office. Then the office received funding through the Norwegian MFA. The Prishtina office provided a meeting and open space for people. The staff wanted this Center to be inclusive and there was space for everyone, Albanians and Serbs alike. The seminars did succeed in getting Serbs and Albanians together, but no major projects had developed prior to the Center’s closure. There were proposals for an internet café and a library. The center had just begun a program on media and propaganda that was funded by the Westminster Foundation in London. They had just begun to target specific parts of society for dialogue (such as seminars for legal students, journalists, and politicians).

It is interesting to note that from the perspective of MFA, PRIO and NANSEN DIALOGUE, the original Nansen Dialogue Center in Prishtina is thought to be a failure. This is an interesting term to use and I believe begs the question of what success would look like. The fact that this office was even established at such a critical time and that it set the model for the offices that are now opening throughout the Balkans, I believe, is a measure of its success. Whether a dialogue center can stave off armed conflict would be difficult indeed when one considers all the individual and political agendas and all who profit from conflict within the region.

There was little discussion of what occurred during the time of the conflict itself. Most of the staff dispersed — Snezana found refuge in Norway and the majority of the Albanians who were associated with the dialogue center went for safety to Macedonia. They returned to Prishtina soon after NATO and the Kosovo Forces (KFOR) had secured the safety of the region.

After the conflict, those involved in the Prishtina/NDC office contacted others returning to Kosovo. Currently Arjeta Emra with Petrit Tahiri and Dina Černobregu, all from the original Prishtina Nansen Group, work after their regular jobs and on weekends at KIDS. They are joined by an office manager, the only full-time staff and Bersant Disha and Artor Sejfiza, both of whom were involved in the original NDC as well.

Today the KIDS office is located next door to the Yugoslavian Embassy and the good thing they see is that they are always guarded by KFOR. While there is indeed a sense of humor connected to their work, the fragile veil of normalcy over Prishtina makes their work still dangerous. But the optimism of the KIDS office is contagious.

Considering there is only one full-time staff member and the other four staff members work after their regular work hours and on weekends, their accomplishments are significant. In September 1999, as the members of the original Nansen Group began to re-establish contact, Dan Smith, Director of PRIO paid a visit. The Norwegian MFA was, at this time, assessing the proposal from PRIO/Nansen for the regional center concept. This also proved to be a time to assess, after all that had happened, what people were thinking and whether dialogue was indeed possible. A long period of casual communication with PRIO followed, when the idea to re-establish a center matured among local network members.

When they were ready to act, PRIO was called in and together they agreed on a mission statement and to look at projects that the office could undertake. In May 2000, the Prishtina office participated in the Nansen Network seminar at Ohrid, Macedonia. They presented the mission of KIDS: “to provide space for discussion for all people willing to participate through discussions and seminars in order to gain a better understanding of what democracy, transparency, and civic society stand for. We also aim to provide a space for discussions regarding the relationship between Kosovars and the international community and possible constitutional solutions for Kosova.”

While the Prishtina office is getting underway again, its work is already visible in a city that has over 600 NGOs working since the end of the conflict. KIDS participates with other NGOs in discussions and planning; has been invited to monitor the up-coming elections (the country’s first democratic elections), and to monitor the post elections. It is poised for outreach to youth through education programs and through various media, including music. As Julijana Mladenovska, the project coordinator for the Kosovo office, indicated, the staff of KIDS is carefully targeting 3 to 4 areas focusing on children, breaking down stereotypes, and building the democratic foundation for the future civil society in Kosovo. They are also aware of the trauma that is present and, as they prepare to move from the urban area to villages, this will present an important issue for them to deal with. But she adds that each month that KIDS exists is a testament to its success and the dedication of its staff working in the midst of growing internal conflict among Albanians themselves (interview).

IV. RESULTS ATTRIBUTABLE TO PRIO/NANSEN

Those interviewed had very positive views of the workshops that were held at Lillehammer and subsequent ones within the region. They see their work at both centers as the beginning of a process, but the support of MFA for operational expenses and salaries frees the staff of these centers to focus on programs, planning, and building the Nansen Dialogue network.

The relationship between paid staff and volunteers in the local Nansen network is a potential conflict area. The NDC/Skopje office presented a positive example of how the Nansen network works with the paid staff. From mid-afternoon on the office is filled with people coming and going, working with staff on programming, socializing, etc.

In looking to roles and the link to the outside from the centers themselves, both the Prishtina and Skopje centers are poised to present programs for journalists and to discuss the impact of the media, to build education projects for children to break-down stereotypes, to address patients' rights, and to build the idea of association that even de Tocqueville writing in 1839 saw as the strength of democratized civil societies. The staff of both centers are optimistic about their ability and potential to impact the larger society. But the Balkan Dialogue Project is still young, and the centers are less than one year old. Even as they have achieved a great amount in a short time frame, they are very much testing the waters of civil society and whether dialogue can bridge understanding between multiple ethnic groups.

There is also the fear of conflict that has developed, especially in Kosovo. Viewed from a historical perspective, there is fear of outside conflict and inter-family and gender related conflict. To begin a discussion of what conflict means and the tools to resolve conflict is likely not possible at this point in its history. Culturally women are especially fearful of conflict that could possibly leave them without the support of a husband and family (Interview with Dina Černobregu and Petrit Tahiri, 10 September 2000). While KIDS is not attempting to undertake this issue now, (there are no plans to talk about conflict among children) it may be something to undertake at some later point.

It is still too soon to begin any discussion of reconciliation. Albanians in Kosovo believe that any discussion of reconciliation will open the door to Serb dominance again. At this point, the Albanians are savoring freedom—the freedom to associate, to go out at night and to re-build a society that has been segregated for so long under the parallel system. The parallel system destroyed the connectors that were at least superficially in place between Albanians and Serbs that included schools, sports, cafes, etc. (Interview with Arjeta Emra, 9 September 2000).

V. ANALYSIS

1. PRIO/Nansen Group has trained nearly two hundred participants in Norway through its Project for Democracy, Human Rights and Peaceful Conflict Resolution at

Lillehammer. This has included Serbs, Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Croatians, and Romas. The groups are equally numbered to allow for greater exchanges and so that no one group is overpowered by a larger group from a different culture. In addition, each NDC has held local training sessions that have now increased these figures exponentially.

2. The development of regional centers is clearly building local capacity. Each center is very different. The Skopje center is integrating the Nansen network with the staff well, while other centers are having more difficulty doing this. But the strength of the program is these localized, regional centers and the future capacity that will be in place. This is a unique aspect of the NANSEN DIALOGUE and through this local capacity a growing network of people interested and involved in dialogue is growing. The personal empowerment is building towards a strong critical mass within the region that works through dialogue for understanding.

3. Through these regional centers, non-English speaking participants within the countries can attend workshops and become part of the Nansen network. During one interview it was pointed out that potential participants within the countries often react differently to a foreign approach. These participants are more likely to trust a local person who has knowledge and experience of the culture.

4. All the centers as well as the coordinators and staff at PRIO and Nansen Academy see targeting strategic professionals within the region as extremely important in the near future. The encouragement of local capacity building will in the future be able to address generational issues, gender issues, rural/urban issues, and education curriculum issues; and organize workshops for strategic groups such as politicians, journalists, teachers, lawyers, etc. in the language of the region.

5. The regional centers are encouraged to become independent by planning their own programs, developing new workshops and seminars, and finding outside sources of funding. The first year for each Center, PRIO/Nansen prescribes the type and numbers of seminars. Eight to ten must be given. PRIO/Nansen provide administrative and financial oversight, since current funding is through the Norwegian MFA.

6. It remains unclear, at this time, when and how PRIO/Nansen will begin to give more autonomy, step away from providing oversight of the centers and allow full independence. Funding sources within the Balkan region are not readily available. The individual country governments also must become better acquainted with working with local NGOs—this is new for many at the government level. The Podgorica Nansen office, for instance, wants its own independent website and does not want to be linked to the larger Nansen Dialogue website. At the moment this will not happen. Each regional center is intended to be a separate link from this main site. While independence is encouraged, there clearly will be strong ties to PRIO/Nansen in Norway for some time to come. While all those interviewed in Oslo and Lillehammer were clear in the philosophy of undertaking the Balkan Dialogue Project and committed to long-term funding and outcomes; there was far less common opinion on what happens as the centers take on more independent programming. There is clearly no direction for how PRIO/Nansen will

step back or entirely out of the project once the local capacity building has reached the point of fully administrating and financing the centers. Nor are there any measure points established by which to judge when and whether a regional center has attained a certain level of autonomy to be able to step back. The centers themselves are currently encouraged to develop their own projects and to move ahead in their planning.

7. Will the Balkan Dialogue Project serve as a model for other areas of conflict? There are differing views on whether this model could and/or should be used in other areas, such as the Middle East. For one thing, there is clearly a special link between Norway and the Balkans, that is historical and that provides an emotional bond. Many from the Balkans were prisoners of war during WWII in the north of Norway. The Norwegian/Yugoslavian Federation has been active since that period. From another perspective, there is the learning curve involved in working with a totally different cultural group or groups in another part of the world. Both the Peace Boat undertaken by the NCA and the Summer Peace Institute held in Lillehammer are attempts to look beyond the Balkan Dialogue Project and to integrate other projects that are philosophically related under the programming of the NANSEN DIALOGUE.

8. All of the above having been said, it is equally clear that at present all the Nansen Dialogue Centers are vulnerable and depend on the MFA funding and the umbrella protection of the NANSEN DIALOGUE. Funding and support will be necessary for some time in the foreseeable future. While the work of the individual regional centers requires enormous courage, there is still apparent danger of becoming too well-known or overstepping a boundary.

9. Both PRIO/Nansen and the centers that were visited are trying to address evaluation measures for the programs and for the project as a whole. Graham Dyson, Conflict Management Group of Oslo, and a service provider for Training for Trainers, especially voiced this need. He was also concerned about the need for some internal evaluation among the representatives of the NANSEN DIALOGUE itself. While it may be difficult to devise appropriate performance measures, for the moment the numbers attending workshops in Lillehammer and the individual centers is impressive enough to continue the funding and commitment of the MFA. Evaluations of workshops are completed by the participants, but it is not clear what happens to these data nor how they are analyzed and evaluated. This will be a considerable task over the next year to two years to devise some evaluative means to measure the success of the Balkan Dialogue Project. The steering committee of the NANSEN DIALOGUE seems intent on looking at this, although it is not known what these evaluation measures will look like.

10. This also raises an interesting cultural dilemma of how to evaluate the individual centers under the project. The staff and network of people making up the regional centers come out of centrally planned societies in which criticism of any kind provokes fear. The measures established for these evaluations will certainly not be standard and will be culturally appropriate and sensitive.

11. The average age of the workshop attendees is mid-twenties. Over time, the true impact that the PRIO/Nansen Balkan Dialogue Project has had will become clear as these participants take their places in society as doctors, lawyers, teachers, journalists, politicians, etc. For now, there are four active and quite different centers, with three more opening during September 2000 in Bosnia/Herzegovina. These centers have become the spaces that PRIO/Nansen envisioned, where young people of the ethnic groups that have warred against each other for so long can attempt to find some common ground through dialogue.

12. Smith envisions the centers becoming increasingly important. For one thing, the workshops in Lillehammer and those facilitated by Smith and Bryn are in English. For greater outreach, the workshops and dialogue discussions will need to be increasingly in the local language(s). But the individual Nansen Dialogue Centers that are developing in the Balkan countries are the flagships of Norwegian reconciliation work. They are a symbol of supporting local capacity in the rebuilding of these societies into democratic entities.

13. There is evidence that trauma is not being discussed. In Prishtina, it was noted that trauma especially among women and children is not targeted as a necessary issue and thus not being dealt with (interview with Dina Černobregu).

14. At the moment any discussion of reconciliation is pre-emptive. The staff of the regional centers and at PRIO and Nansen recognize this as well. What is interesting is that fear of conflict is now prevalent, especially in Kosovo. This fear is not only of external threats, but within the social and family structures where the fear of conflict and what historically it has meant may hinder openness and dialogue once KIDS moves away from the urban areas to the villages. This may be something that the NDC in other areas will find as well. As intra-ethnic issues surface, as they have begun to in Kosovo, a new and different face of conflict will emerge. Whether the individual NDC centers are ready to take this on will be a question that needs to be answered.

15. An impact that has occurred in Prishtina with the presence of the international community organizations that are now present is that those who speak English are being recruited away from local jobs. There is the market effect on wages and housing costs. While this does not have a direct impact on the KIDS for its dialogue programs, it is having some indirect impacts as they begin to build their own programs to train the trainers using those who are educated in English, who can then go out into the villages to teach and train and build dialogue in their own language (interview with Arjet Emra, 9 September 2000).

VI. ADDENDA

List of Interviews

Oslo: Peace Research Institute of Oslo:
Ivar Evensmo, International Coordinator
Snezana Popvic Project Coordinator, Balkan Dialogue Project
Dan Smith, Director, PRIO
Graham Dyson, Conflict Management Group and training service provider
Stein Villumstad, Norwegian Church Aid
Jan Braathu, Balkan Advisor and Dagfrid Hjorthol, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Lillhammer: Nansen Academy:
Steinar Bryn, Project Director and Professor
Vanya Pestoric
Heidrun Sørli Røhr
Boris Maksimovic
Inge Eidesvåg, Professor and Former Director, Nansen Group

Nansen Dialogue Center, Skopje, Macedonia:
Iir Hasani
Marina Tuneva, Journalist
Julijana Mladenovska, Ministry of Internal Affairs
Albert Hani, Coordinator
Aleksandar Petkovski, Coordinator
Xhevahire Pruthl, Project Coordinator

KIDS, Prishtina, Macedonia:
Arjeta Emra
Dina Černobregu
Bersant Disha
Artor Sejfiija
Petrit Tahiri

Related Web Sites:

Nansen Dialogue Website: www.nansen-dialog.net
Project Web Site: www.dempro.org

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