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# Georgian – South Ossetian Dialogue: A case study of “Youth Peace Express” project

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## **List of abbreviations**

CIS - Commonwealth of Independent States

COBERM -Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism

EU- European Union

ICG – International Crisis Group

IDP- Internally Displaced People

JCC – Joint Controlling Commission

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OSCE- the organization for Security Co-operation in Europe

RJ – Restorative Justice

UN – United Nations

UNDP–UN Development Program

## Abstract

Georgian-Ossetian conflict has a long history; the last armed conflict happened between Georgian and Ossetian ethnic groups occurred in August, 2008. After that 5-days' war in Tskhinvali region Tbilisi has no diplomatic relations with Moscow. Russian troops entered Tskhinvali on August, 8 and expelled Georgian military. Later, Russia recognized the independence of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In response, Georgia abolished diplomatic relations with Russia and two unrecognized republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are officially referred as the occupied territories.

The following research is about particular project of "Youth Peace express". The project providing the joint program of EU/UNDP and COBERM was supported by Georgian-Ossetian Civil Forum was carried out in 2014. The idea was to promote immediate and concrete initiatives through several meetings and discussions between the representatives of certain conflict sides. Likewise the project was a unique possibility to Georgian and Ossetian young scholars to travel to the Balkan Region and exchange ideas and beliefs about the conflict and start work through reconciliation and peace-building process between conflict divided societies.

I was given the chance to participate in the whole implementation process of the project as a Georgian representative. Hence, the following research addresses the analyses of the current situation of Georgian-Ossetian conflict as well as it provides an observational case study of the specific project. The given thesis analyzes those identified expectations and identifies various discussed ideas and expectations from the Youth joint project that were meant to contribute to possible peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The main hypothesis of the research derives from the *Restorative Justice Theory* saying that conflict can be transferred to peace through the implementation of Restorative Justice Practices through dialogue, interaction and negotiations between the parts of the conflict.

Thesis based on the observational analyses of the particular *Youth Peace Express* project identifies several significant academic findings and enriches the Discipline of Peace Studies with the specific case-study of Georgian ethnic conflict.

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# Chapter 1

## 1.0. Introduction

First and foremost, I as a researcher want to inform the reader that the following thesis contains terminology which is internationally inculcated. The names such as: South Ossetia, Tskhinvali are used in the international reports by UN, EU, European Council Fact Finding Commission; International Crisis Group reports. However it can cause protest among Georgians or South-Ossetians, since there are different other variations of the names of geographical territories and terms used describing the situation.

As a student at the center of Peace Studies of the University of Tromsø, I chose the topic from the very beginning of the studies. It is fair enough reason to have special interests in the region where I come from. Due to my ethnic belonging the given case-study provides one of the current ethnic conflicts in my homeland, more specifically it is a research of Georgian-Ossetian ethnic conflict.

During the curriculum process of Peace Studies soon enough my special attention have been referred towards the specific theoretical courses on restorative justice and mediation, as it contained new information, specific phenomenon I have not studied before. Soon enough I decided to link this theoretical approach to Georgian case - a small South Caucasian state with two ethno-conflicts. After several researches I came across to the interesting idea about the possible Georgian-Ossetian Youth dialogue. I fortunately got involved in a joint project Youth Peace Express, which was implemented in 2014, 6 years after the last armed conflict between Georgian and Ossetian ethnic groups. Although the project goals were reconciliation and peace-building in post war era between conflict divided societies, it was not an easy task to start dialogue between parties after such a short period of time passed since the war took place.

As I obviously represented Georgian side in this joint project one might question my personal attitude towards the research objectivity. Although I can assure the reader that my emotional connection towards this conflict contrary to other participants remains rather distinct, as neither me or any close person and relative has not been personally involved in this armed 5 days war of August, 2008. Thus, the research is only counted on gained experience and data analyses through my participation in this project.

After taking part in many discussions and debates between the participants and a thorough observations on the project, I identified several findings: a) conflict still remains to be frozen; b) dialogue between the parties should continue in order to improve social condition of residents in the conflict zone; c) it is not necessary to agree to each other but promotion of trust-building between the parties should remain irrevocable through the dialogue; d) Restorative Justice Theory explains how the parties involved in the dialogue contribute to peace building processes.

### **1.1. Geopolitical context**

The end of the 20th century led to the end of the Cold War and brought freedom and democratization to many Eastern European Countries. So called socialist camp countries turned to the open market system and liberalism is now leading ideology in those countries; many of them became EU and NATO member states (Antonenko 2009).

Soviet Union- leading State of the Warsaw Pact, superpower and one of the main actors is the Cold War collapsed and divided in 15 independent states. Three former Soviet states - Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia successfully passed the road towards structural peace and democracy and became members of the European Union and NATO, but other 12 countries created their own organization called Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Sakwa 1999). By the report of Freedom House 2015, none of the 12 countries is considered as a free country. 7 countries are not free or worse than free countries and just five post-soviet republics Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan are considered as partly free countries. Immediately after the collapse of the USSR several ethnic conflicts emerged in those states. First war broke out in 1988 between Armenia and Azerbaijan lasting until 1994 (Zurcher 2007). A bit later this was followed by the war in South Ossetia, Georgia and a civil conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia. Simmering conflict between the Moldovan government and the authorities of the region of Transdniestria escalated into civil war also in 1992 (Zurcher 2007). Nowadays Ukraine has its civil conflict in its Russian populated Eastern part of the country.

All those conflicts became frozen where violence continues at a lower level (Except Ukrainian case). All those conflicts are individual where different actors play their significant role in the



conflict resolution or escalation processes. In most of the conflicts, some conditions can resume structural violence.

In my work I will look at the frozen conflict of South Ossetia, where last military fights ended up with ceasefire in 2008. Since that time some peacemaking projects and initiatives were implemented what are necessary for de-escalation of the conflict. Some of them were successful and contributed to peace in the region.

## **1.2. Research Questions**

My Research Questions are those milestones the whole thesis goes along with trying to come up with certain academic findings. Through attentive analyses, particular observation case-study process and data collection from the gained personal participation in “Youth Peace Express” project, thesis addresses the following Research Questions:

- 1. What positive results can be expected on the conflict resolution process when youth of two conflict sides are involved in the dialogue?**
- 2. Relevance of theory of Restorative Justice in resolution of ethnic conflict (Georgian case-study)**
- 3. How the project “Youth Peace Express” Contributes to peace-building in post – war Georgia?**

Thus, the objectives of my research are:

1. To examine and describe the post-conflict situation among divided societies of the Republic of Georgia.
2. To identify and analyze challenges of “Youth Peace Express” project on the way to contribution to peace-building between the opposite parties.
3. To discuss and evaluate expectations from the promising joint project “Youth Peace Express” and analyze the possible post-dialogue peace-building process through Restorative Theory framework.

### **1.3. Thesis Structure**

The thesis contains six major chapters: Introduction, History Chapter, Theory chapter, Methodology, Data presentation and analysis and Conclusion.

The Introduction provides the basic overview of the geopolitical context the given Georgian-Ossetian conflict emerges; the chapter also informs the reader regarding the Research Questions and thesis objectives.

The History Chapter explains the importance of the historical background and analyzes the given ethnic conflict from the very beginning to the 2008 August war.

In the Theoretical approach I introduce the Concept of Restorative Justice and the Galtung's definition of Positive and Negative Peace.

The Methodological approach covers the applied research methods and employed methodology in the given thesis.

The Data Presentation and Analyses assume the gained findings and expectations through the research and based on the analyses identifies certain views for the future peace-building process in the Conflict zone.

The Conclusion chapter summaries the findings of the carried project; and it also highlights the final remarks of the study.

Additionally, the reader is encouraged to read through the external chapter dedicated to Project Description (Attached, p. ). The latter introduces the “Youth Peace Express” project and its implementing organization the Civil Forum for Peace Georgia. The goals, sponsors, beneficiaries and other technical materials of the organization will also be described.

## **History Chapter**

### **2. 0. Introduction**

Georgia, a former soviet republic, situated in the region of Caucasus declared independence in 1991. After 24 years Georgia has not succeeded in expanding the sovereignty of the central government over its entire territory. Under Soviet rule, more autonomous units had been built up in Georgia than in any other Soviet republic. Immediately, after regaining independence in 1991 Georgia was confronted with severe internal conflicts concerning two secession conflicts, in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (JAWAD 2008:613).

In this chapter I will explain the dominant characteristics of the South Ossetian conflict. First of all, I will provide some general information about the conflict zone and describe a brief history of the conflict. Although, I will place the positions, interests and needs of the major participants in the conflict.

### **2.1. Geo-Political context**

The former Soviet Autonomous Oblast of South Ossetia was a part of Soviet Republic of Georgia with its administrative capital of Tskhinvali. The territory is a small, highly mountainous region located in the north central part of Georgia. South Ossetia is bordered by the greater Caucasus Mountains to its north, politically it's the Autonomous Republic of North Ossetia within Russian Federation. South Ossetian autonomous oblast covered about 3.900 square kilometers. Where most of the population of around 40 000 were Ossetians and some 20 000 were considered ethnic Georgians (Jentssch 2009:2).

Ossetians are an ethnic Iranian group that became Christian in the early middle ages under Georgian and Byzantine influence. A consolidated Ossetian Kingdom was created in the eight century A.D. In the 18th century Mongolian invasion drove them out from the north and they were establishing large Ossetian communities in Georgia (Pipia 2014:340).

Violence between Georgian government and ethnic Ossetians first broke out in 1920 following a number of Ossetian rebellions for Independence. Georgian national army could put down Ossetian revolts during its independence time until Georgia was occupied by Soviet troops in

1921 and included it in Soviet Union as a constituent republic, the South Ossetian Autonomous district - oblast was established in 1922 within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. (Pipia 2014:340), at the same time North Ossetian Autonomous District – Republic was created within the Russian Federation. South Ossetians were not satisfied with their status being “Oblast” when Northern Ossetians had their “Republic”. They felt that they were at a political disadvantage and wished to attain their status of “Autonomous Republic”. (Jentssch 2009:1) Despite the Ossetians, Georgians argued that even the status of “Autonomous Oblast” was granted by the Bolsheviks as a gift to Ossetians for fighting against a Democratic Georgia while its three years of independence. (Georgia declared its independence in 1918, May 26th, established Democratic republic of Georgia, and got its own constitution in 1920. In 1921 February of 21th capital of Georgia, Tbilisi was taken by Soviet troops (Jones 2014:3).



Photo from: Independent international Fact-Finding Mission on the conflict in Georgia, Report September, 2009, Vol (1).

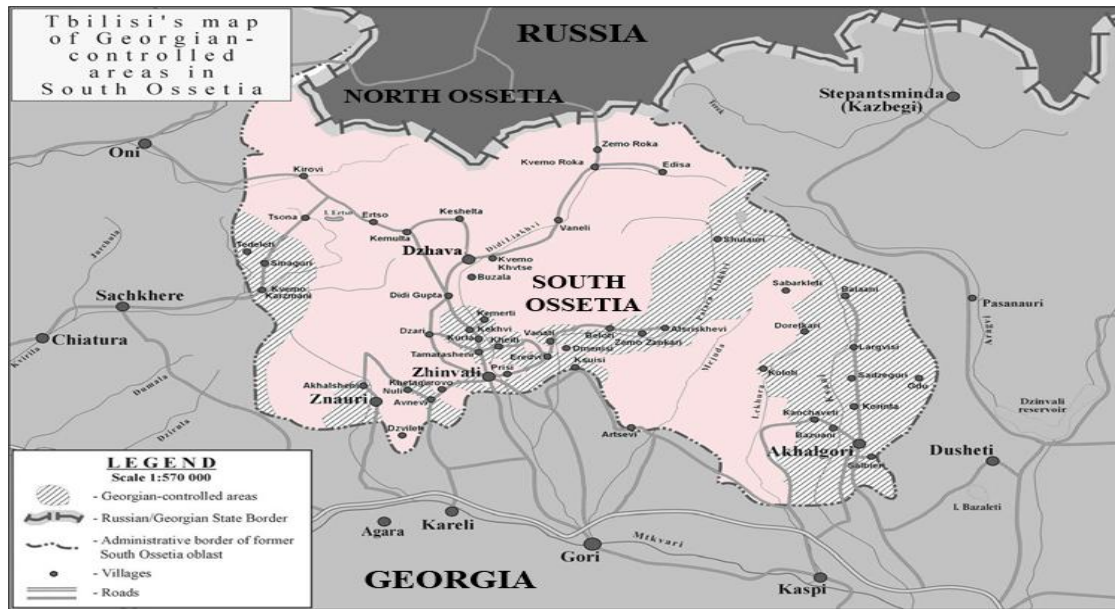
## **2.2. First Conflict escalation in 1990-ies**

The first step was made by Ossetians, they sent an official request to the Georgian Supreme Soviet in 1989 to become an Autonomous Republic. The request was not accepted and confrontation between the Georgian government and Ossetians got confronted (Jentssch 2009:2).

After this a secession movement supported by the Russian government was initiated in South Ossetia and the intent was to unite the province with Russian North Ossetia. It led to Ossetians proclaiming South Ossetia as the South Ossetian Democratic Republic on 20 September 1990, fully sovereign within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Georgian parliamentary elections of 1990 was boycotted by Ossetian and they held their own, that's results were cancelled by Georgian parliament and even the Autonomous Oblast status of Ossetia was abolished (Jentssch 2009:3). Georgia's actions aimed at returning the region to Tbilisi's control and in January 1991, several thousand troops were sent into South Ossetian capital, Tskhinvali. That was a start of first fights between the parties. The war continued until June of 1992, when a ceasefire agreement was signed between Russian and Georgian authorities (Bardakci 2010:2019). By the agreement 1,100 of peacekeepers from Russia, Georgia and Ossetia established their camps near Tskhinvali (Pipia 214:340).

At the end of this conflict, many Georgians were forced from South Ossetia to Georgia, while the Ossetians took refugees in North Ossetia. People between 1000 and 2000 have been killed, the number of displace people was between 60 000 and 100 000. Capital Tskhinvali and most of the territory of South Ossetia was taken by Ossetian rebels. Before that, District of Akhalkgori and some villages surrounding Tskhinvali populated by ethnic Georgians were under Georgia's control (Bardakci 2010:220).





Map of Georgian-controlled areas in South Ossetia until August, 2008. Photo from: [www.allworldwars.com](http://www.allworldwars.com).

As part of the Georgia-Russia agreement, a Joint Control Commission (JCC) was created to “supervise observance to the agreement, draft and implement conflict settlement measures, promote dialogue, design and carry out measures to facilitate refugee and IDP return, solve problems related to economic reconstruction and monitor human rights” (ICG p 1).

The JCC was consisted by four involved parties: North and South Ossetian, Russian and Georgian representatives. The JCC was financially supported by the EU, and EU commission had an observer status in the meetings of JCC (Bardakci 2010:220)

In addition to this the organization, for Security Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) also helped to promote peace in the region by launching a conflict resolution mission to Georgia in 1992. Mission aimed to resolve the clashes in Georgia through negotiations. The JCC achieved some progress in terms of the demilitarization of the conflict zone and the restoration of the confidence. Also, expert group meetings on the conflict began in 1997 under the auspices of the OSCE and the agreement was reached in 1999 on the Baden Document, which lays down the fundamental elements to a political solution (Bardakci 2010:220)

These and other actions helped to prevent military confrontations from occurring the region for the “subsequent twelve years” (ICG p1). Those political agreements and actions were important for the political solution of the conflict, on the other hand ethnic Georgians and Ossetians started

to build up their relations once again and process towards peace was noticeable. But, in 2004 the conflict became violent once again which led to a wide scaled war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008.

### **2.3. Escalation after Rose Revolution**

In 2003 Parliamentary elections were held in Georgia. Ruling party of current president Eduard Shevardnadze took 1<sup>st</sup> place. Opposition was unsatisfied by official results and was claiming that government falsified the elections and started protests on the streets of Tbilisi. Protests led to mass demonstrations and on 23<sup>rd</sup> of November President Eduard Shevardnadze resigned. The non-violent change of government is known as “Rose Revolution” that brought into the power young leader of opposition party “National Movement” (Jawad 2008:616).

After taking the power, as a president of Georgia, Saakashvili declared the fight against corruption and the restoration of Georgian Integrity as main priorities of the new ruling party. Economic grow, development and democratic reforms made Saakashvili popular leader in the country. In his speeches he often underlined that Abkhazia and South Ossetia would soon be under Tbilisi’s control again and that Georgian people was not going to wait for it too long. New government also declared its course to joining NATO and European Union. Beginning in 2004, Georgia increased its military budget from US\$50 million (2003) to US\$600 million in 2007. The 2008 defense budget reached to US\$ 1 billion. The officials explained it to upgrade the Georgian military to NATO standards for to take Georgia one step closer to membership (Chetarian 2009:158).

The tension between Georgia and the separatist administrations of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and Russia dramatically peaked. The Georgian government was seeing conflict being more Georgia-Russia conflict than Georgia-South Ossetia conflict, defining problem in “Georgian-Russian relations with respect to certain territories” (Jentsch 2009:8).

Russia was concerned on Georgia’s official purpose to join NATO and its intense relations to USA, while Tskhinvali officials were concerned on Georgians new government’s statements about country’s reunification.

In 2006 Russia imposed embargo on Georgian wines and other products. Georgia considered it as anti Georgian move and in answer arrested four Russian citizens on charging of espionage. Relations between states radically tensed. On the other hand, Ossetian authorities hold a referendum in November of 2006 to reaffirm South Ossetia's independence from Georgia. In response of this all Russia started to grant Russian citizenship to the inhabitants of South Ossetia and issue them Russian passports (Pipia: 341).

Simultaneously of radicalization of political issues around the conflict there were increasing clashes between Georgian troops and South Ossetian paramilitaries around Tskhinvali at least a week ago before 7 August 2008, day which is defined a start of Russo-Georgian conflict by Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia led by Heidi Taglavini, who reported a final observation of the conflict, its roots and escalation.

“Open hostilities began with a large-scale Georgian military operation against the town of Tskhinvali and the surrounding areas, launched in the night of 7 to 8 August 2008. Operations started with a massive Georgian artillery attack” (Heidi Tagliavini raport, p 19, Volume 1).

According to Georgian government, the operation aimed to restore the constitutional order in the region. The statement about this was made by Georgian brigadier Mamuka Kurashvili on the night of 7 August: “We were invoking Ossetian side to stop shooting many times, but they kept bombing Georgian villages, thus we made a decision to restore constitutional order in the region” (Interpressnews, August 2008). Georgian troops got some advantages and could took control over big parts of South Ossetia on 8<sup>th</sup> of August. Ossetians were claiming about genocide against Ossetian nation and asking for help from Russia. Russia responded effectively, President Dmitry Medvedev announced an operation to save South Ossetian people from Georgian attacks and launched an attack with a large number of troops. The fighting lasted for five days. Russian side could repel Georgian forces from South Ossetia. Russian military troops occupied not only South Ossetia, but Abkhazia and many other cities in other parts of Georgia. A ceasefire agreement was reached on 12 august 2008, mediator between Georgia and Russia was Nicolas Sarkozy, then the head of EU and French president. The agreement was signed first by Mikheil Saakashvili on august 15, day after it was signed by Russian president Medvedev. After more than a month of agreement was made, Russia withdrew its forces from parts of Georgia outside the administrative borders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Antonenko 2009) On the other hand Russia left 3,700

troops each in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia made agreements with the separatist regions of Georgia on the joint protection of the borders. On August 26, 2008 Russia recognized independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Tuathail 2008).

#### **2.4. Reaction and assessments on International level**

On 1 September 2008, the European Council stated that the European Union is ready to support confidence –building measures and secure a peaceful lasting solution to the conflicts in Georgia. On 15 September 2008, the Council supported the idea of an independent international inquiry and appointed Ms. Heidi Tagliavini as head of the fact-finding commission.

According to the Tagliavini report (2009), human losses were substantial. Ossetians claimed losses of 365 persons, which included both civilians and servicemen. Georgian side spoke of 170 servicemen killed, 14 policemen, and 228 civilians, 1747 Georgians were wounded, while Russia claimed losses of 76 servicemen and 283 wounded. According to the report, more than 100 000 civilians fled their homes. Around 35 000 still have not been able to return to their homes (Most of them were Georgians) (Tagliavini, 2009).

*“The fighting did not end the political conflict nor were any of the issues that lay beneath it resolved. Tensions still continue. The political situation after the end of fighting turned out to be no easier and in some respects even more difficult than before”* (Tagliavini 2009: 5) – was said in Tagliavini report.

It was the first most serious crisis between West and Russia since the end of the cold War. But still, political issue is not solved; the statuses of South Ossetia and Abkhazia are not under consideration by Georgian government, while Russia recognizes them as independent states (Antonenko 2009). Most of refugees cannot return to their homes and isolation of South Ossetia continues. First time after 7 years International criminal court announced its interest to initiate an investigation into the alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity taking place in Georgia in 2008. The prosecutor of the international Criminal Court (ICC) Fatou Bensouda requested authorization on this case to the Court’s judges on 13 October 2015. In her request Fatou Bensouda explains reasons why ICC should start the investigation, she finds a reasonable basis to believe that war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed in the context of the armed

conflict. “This includes alleged crimes committed as part of a campaign to expel ethnic Georgians from South Ossetia as well as attacks on peacekeepers by Georgian forces, on the one hand, and South Ossetian forces, on the other” (International Criminal Court, October 13, 2015). The prosecutor divides crimes mostly in two parts, first is attacks on peacekeepers, and second part is about the campaign by what the number of Georgians living in conflict area was reduced at least 75 per cent. According to her between 13,400 and 18,000 ethnic Georgians were forcibly displaced and their property, around 5,000 dwellings belonging to them were reportedly destroyed.

“Should ICC Judges grant the Prosecutor authorization to proceed, she will open an investigation into alleged crimes committed in the Situation in Georgia. As with all the activities of the Office of the Prosecutor, that investigation will be conducted with full independence and impartiality” (International Criminal Court, October 13, 2015). Fatou Bensuda (2015) also may request ICC judges to arrest warrants who her office believes to be most responsible no matter whom they are.

## **Theory Chapter**

### **3.0. Introduction**

The first part of the theory chapter will be dedicated to the explanation of the nature of positive and negative peace. It is vital to understand the system where the project “Youth Peace Express” was implemented in order to address the needs of societies in the conflict. One of my research questions (how “Youth Peace Express” contributes to peace building) is connected to understanding of the political environment in post war societies. In this kind of societies war is absence, but other objectives and circumstances still involve parts in the conflict. Conformably, this involvement can lead to harm for the involved parts.

Additionally, this chapter will also focus on the aspects of the Restorative Justice (RJ) Theory. I argue that the elements of the project “Youth Peace Express” directly address the issues of RJ



Theory. The expected positive effects on conflict resolution when youth of two conflict sides are involved in dialogue can be connected to his theory; giving greater importance to the fact that RJ aims peace building by involving people, civil and public-societal sectors in democratic processes.

Thus, on the one hand the approach of negative and positive peace and on the other hand RJ theory will be applied in this study in order to support the findings of this empirical project.

### **3.1. Theory of Positive and Negative Peace**

To begin with, post conflict situation makes peace to be either positive or negative. Implementation of peace projects in any given region intends to transmit negative peace to positive peace. Hence project “Youth Peace Express” aims to contribute to structural peace. To understand the nature and significance of positive peace, I will consider the theory of positive/negative peace and its challenges in transitions from negative to positive peace/security.

Social unrest, wars and conflicts occupy an essential place in the history of mankind. Today's society is very rich in such cataclysms that mainly deal with social and political spheres. Issues regarding peace, conflicts and social equality have always been and still are subjects of research observations. For instance, the peace researcher Johan Galtung is an author of the concept of Positive and Negative Peace. According to him, peace is the absence of war, but peace can be either positive or negative. More precisely, Positive Peace is much more than just the absence of violence. In other words, it undertakes to include relationships between different social groups. Thus, Galtung's ideas assist us to go in depth in the nature of the process of conflicts (Grewal, 2003).

“In the 1960's Galtung expanded the concepts of peace and violence to include indirect or structural violence, and this was a direct challenge to the prevalent notions about the nature of peace” (Grewal 2003). Social structures are not only integrative; they can also have the violent nature against individuals or social groups. Therefore it becomes a matter of social conflicts. These kinds of conflicts are known as structural conflicts and structural violence since they are the causes of its foundation. Structural violence is usually the result of irrational political decisions. On the other side, Positive peace is considered to be the case of absence of structural

violence. Hence the absence of violence is considered as a negative peace, which is not stable and not always by peaceful means. On the other side, in case of positive peace people are integrated in society and follow rules and laws. These circumstances accordingly provide a positive peace and prevent violence. (Galtung 1996)

It is worth noting that unequal distribution of resources raises many social problems that lead to structural conflicts. Specifics of such conflicts lie in the fact that in most cases the participants are not linked to any entities that are responsible for the structural violence. Dissimilar direct violence (which involves the deliberate acts), structural violence affects society indirectly via social structures. This type of violence is usually invisible for individuals and/or social groups that are the objects of the violence. “Positive Peace has to address the violence at all levels” (Galtung, 1996) and the peace driven from cultural peace that flows through structural peace can bring positive peace.

Moreover, Galtung (1996) suggests a typology to explain the cause of peace. His typology has six spaces as it follows: Nature, Person, Social, world, Culture and Time. This typology affects peace and can also cause violence: nature violence, direct violence, structural violence, cultural violence and time violence. There is only positive peace where prevention of violence is feasible (Galtung 1996).

### **3.2. Kacowicz’s three zones of peace**

On the other side, Kacowicz (1995) accents on the political models of the countries and agrees with Kant’s theory that democracies do not fight with each other. They are usually satisfied with the territorial status quo within and across their borders. The liberal democratic countries have been developed into fully-fledged nation-states, and they do not have a need for irredentist claims beyond their own borders as they are satisfied powers (Kacowicz 1995:266).

When countries are satisfied with their borders, there are not reasons to expect wars among the state members of the region. Kacowicz (1995) offers three different gradations of zones of peace:

1. There is an absence of war, but civil wars within states, conflicts and crises are still possible.
2. There is stable peace. International conflicts may occur but within non-violent limits.

3. “A pluralistic security community of nation states with the stable expectations of peaceful change, in which the member-states are all democratic, they share common political institutions and are deeply interdependent” (Kacowicz 1995:267)

First zone is a zone of negative peace; there is absence of direct violence, but cultural violence through structural violence makes this zone unstable and development is just slightly noticeable. Conflict or war can still occur and can become a zone with direct violence.

As an example of stable peace Kacowicz (1995) names peace zone in Europe after Napoleon wars until 1848 where the big powers of Europe managed to establish stable zone of peace among themselves – Russia, Austria, France, Great Britain and Prussia. Kacowicz calls them the status quo satisfied powers. (Kacowicz, 1995:269)

The third zone is the private zone of democratic countries. These countries are characterized by structural peace and common security values. Pluralistic security communities seem to involve only democracies in a given zone of peace and the quality of that peace.

Similar to Galtung, Kacowicz explains the causes of positive security. According to him, there are different reasons for the positive security, yet all of them can be united under the structural peace. First of all, if any given country aims to reach structural peace it is necessary to establish a democratic system within any particular state. Moreover, all the democratic countries share a normative consensus of international law: “they are affected by domestic institutional constraints. Their high level of economic growth, development and interdependence creates vested interests for keeping the existing regional and international order” (Kacowicz 1995:274). These points illustrate the establishment and satisfaction of status quo. Countries that are satisfied with their status quo do not engage in war and live in peace. (Kacowicz, 1995)

However, some countries of the Third World, can still be not well democracies and can also be satisfied with status quo. These countries have a different reason for this satisfaction. The latter prefer the territorial status quo out of their institutional weaknesses at home. In case of social inequality within the country that is a part of negative peace state is weak vis-a-vis in its own society. The prestige abroad is low and the state has a weak position in the international hierarchy

of power. Due to this the state is satisfied with its territorial status quo and absence of war is faced, but absence of structural peace is still missing. Additionally, these weak states in zones of peace sustain a common interest in keeping the territorial status quo to focus their efforts in economic and social development and change (Kacowicz, 1995).

Kacowicz describes three zones of Peace, and Galtung's understanding of peace exists in these three zones. The first zone undoubtedly means negative peace. There is indirect violence which is equal to structural violence. Indirect violence comes from the social structure and it can be defined as violence between people, societies, alliances or regions in the world. The absence of these factors leads to structural peace, meaning that the peace in these countries is a positive peace.

Negative peace is an important factor in today's world. Examples of negative peace are dominant in many countries. Zones of negative peace where conflicts and confrontations are possible to appear are common zones for many parts in the international society. Where is the positive peace then? Galtung and Kacowicz describe how positive peace works in theory, but does it work in reality? Is it possible to reach cultural and structural peace? Galtung's theory of structural peace is a theory of the future. It shows and gives examples on how the structural peace can be reached. Kacowicz's zones of peace exist in the world. These zones are description of the different levels of peace. Galtung's positive peace is structural, which includes individuals, social classes, gender, intra-state and inter-state relationships. Four different dimensions are spheres where one can find negative peace or positive peace. Kacowicz's three zones of peace are zones where countries' national security systems related to other states' securities are shown as either positive security or negative security. It can be difficult to define any region or country in the world as an example of positive peace (structural peace). Though according to Kacowicz, there are few examples of positive security systems in the international society. Positive security is a reality among well-established democracies.

### **3.3. Restorative Justice**

The term "Restorative Justice" was first introduced in the contemporary criminal justice literature and practice in 1970s (McCold 2006:26) It is a novel concept in understanding of the meaning of the conflict resolution in a nonviolent way. Restorative Justice (RJ) is about a methodology for

the development of peaceful, democratic civil society organizations and movements. The scope of the people to whom the RJ theory is addressed is large: marginalized young gangs, minority groups of indigenous people in general, groups suffering from lack of human rights, ethnical minorities or other parts of society (Hydle 2008).

RJ describes a direct and dialogical way of handling conflicts on the premises of the involved parties where it strengthens those parties and communities and provides decreasing of reoffending. UN peace building commission is one example of the high interest on RJ in the world; the commission with the Working party on Restorative Justice works on investigating the usefulness of RJ in the peace building in different cases (Hydle 2008).

Nowadays, the term “Restorative Justice” is employed in a criminal justice context and it consists of four groups (Gavrielides 2003):

- a)Victim-Offender Mediation;
- b)Family Group conferences;
- c)Healing and Sentencing Circles;
- d) Community Restorative Boards

### **3.3.1. Victim-Offender Mediation**

Victim-Offender Mediation is one of the most well-known and commonly used contemporary restorative programs. Under this form it is usual to bring together a primary victim and an offender with the assistance of the trained mediator to coordinate the meeting. Both the victim and the offender are given the possibility to speak with each other. With the help of the mediator both sides consider different ways to make peace with each other. “Since mediators claim no authority, they can empower people through the mediation process to regain control over their own relationship rather than assume that all social order must be imposed by some kind of authority” (Gavrielides 2007:31).

Victim Offender mediation can appear in various shapes and forms depending on the structure of the criminal justice system in which it takes place; thus the historical background of the country plays a crucial role. This kind of mediation can appear instead of the structure of the formal criminal justice system; or it can be a part of the criminal justice. Moreover, Victim Offender mediation can take place at any time during the criminal process, or outside the system. Many programs of victim-offender mediation have the same basic steps. The first step is a referral of



the case to the mediation program. Referrals are usually agents of police, prosecutor, judges and take place from the report of crime. The second part is the preparation of the case. At this level the victim and the offender are contacted separately and asked if they are willing to join the mediation program. In the third step offender and the victim meet each other. The fourth and final step involves preparing the file and returns it to the referral source (Gavrialides 2007)

### **3.3.2. Family Group Conferences**

A family-group conference differs from victim-offender mediation in the way that it involves more parties in the process. The participants are not only the primary victims and offenders, but also secondary victims such as families and close friends, community representatives and often the police. All the participants are brought together by a third impartial party who is usually trained for this task. The latter are often called facilitator.

Through narrations and questions, all parties are given the chance to participate in a discussion and express feelings of anger, hate, fear, pity regret and vengeance. The group decides what the offenders must do in order to repair the harm they have caused, and what assistance the offender will need in doing this so. Victims are asked in advance about what kind of outcome they expect from the conference. The conference usually ends with the parties signing an agreement, outlining their expectations and commitments to both sides (Gavrialides, 2007:34).

“Overall, this program provides the victim, the offender and all those who are affected by crime a chance to be directly involved in a discussion leading to a decision regarding sanctions and amends” (Gavrialides 2007:34). The increase of the human impact on the offender’s awareness is a trend and it provides an opportunity for offenders to regret, apologize, taking the responsibility that the offender gets a chance to be forgiven by their victim and community (Umbreit 2006).

### **3.3.3. Healing and Peacekeeping-peacemaking Circles**

The Peacemaking circles are organized by a community justice committee and usually work side-by-side with the criminal justice system. All participants who are selected by the committee sit in a circle and the process typically begins with an explanation of what has happened. The

discussion moves from one person to another around the circle and everyone is given chance to express whatever they want to express. The discussion continues until everything that needs to be said has been said. “The overall goal is to promote healing for all injured parties, and an opportunity for the offender to make amends to the victim and to the society. This program promotes a sense of community, empowering its participants by giving them a voice and shared responsibility in a process whereby all parties try to find constructive solutions” (Gavrialides 2007: 35).

#### **3.3.4. Community Restorative Boards**

This Restorative program involves the community members in the justice process. Community Restorative Boards are assembled from a small group of active citizens who are trained in the public affairs. Each board aims to provide an opportunity for victims and community to confront the offenders in a constructive manner, while giving the offenders a chance to take a responsibility for their crime.

The Board members discuss the nature of the crime and the negative effects it had on the victim and community. They also have to discuss the process that has to be taken. After a thorough examination, the board develops some sanctions that they have been discussing with the sides of the case “until they all reach an understandable and acceptable agreement. Moreover, the board members also consider the method, specific actions and timetable for the reparation of the crime. The process ends when the stipulated period of time has collapsed and the board has submitted a report to the court on the offender’s compliance with the agreed upon sanctions.

Thus, illustration of the four general types of restorative justice dialogue has shown how diverse and difficult it can be to understand the concept of RJ. For instance, Howard Zehr (2002) has illustrated how demanding it is to define the Restorative Justice. Therefore he offers a suggestion as working definition: “Restorative Justice is a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have stake in a specific offense to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations in order to heal and put things as right as possible” (Zehr 2002:40).

Considering the goals of RJ, Ida Hyde (2008) examines its importance in the process of conflict resolution; she calls Restorative Justice as a nonviolent methodology of peace building as a

practical method, an ideology for peace and justice, and as an issue for peace research. (Hydle 2008: 7)

RJ is a theory and practice of conflict resolution within civil and public societal sectors, involving people in democratic processes for peace building. RJ is encouraged by the council of Europe, EU, UN and lately by the World Bank, to be implemented at in all parts of the criminal justice procedure in all European countries (Hydle 2008:7).

Restorative Justice is providing a concrete way of thinking about justice within the theory and practice of conflict transformation in the world where there are many conflicts that involve a sense of injustice. Although the field of conflict resolution or conflict transformation has acknowledged this somewhat, the concept and practice of justice in this field has been fairly vague. The principles of RJ can provide a concrete framework for addressing justice issues within a conflict (Zehr 2002:46).

Zehr (2002) mentions some examples where the peacemaking process came unstuck and began to move forward. That was a result of addressing the justice issues in the conflict using the traditional community justice process. Particularly the students at Eastern Mennonite University from several African countries when they return to their countries after taking a restorative justice course in the conflict transformation program.

### **3.4. What are Restorative practices?**

Restorative Practices as a practical continuation of Restorative Justice are developed as a particular discipline. The social science of restorative practices is an emerging field of study that enables people to restore and build community in an increasingly disconnected world. The concept of the restorative practices has its roots in Restorative Justice. More precisely, it is a new way of looking at criminal justice that focuses on repairing the harm conducted to people and relationships rather than on punishing offenders (McCold 2006).

During the last decade the International Institution for the Restorative practices has been developing a comprehensive framework for practice and theory that extends the restorative paradigm beyond its origins in criminal justice (as it has been explained above). The unifying

hypothesis of restorative practices is as follows: “That human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them” (Wachtel 2013).

Four general types of restorative justice can be defined as particular practices of restorative practices. Conferences or circles illustrated in the paper are discussed as restorative practices by Watchel and McCold (2001). The terms and concepts of Restorative Justice and Restorative practices are overlapping and have the same meaning in many ways (Wachtel 2001). Restorative practices are not limited to formal practices, such as restorative and family group conferences or family group decision making and it ranges from informal to formal. Restorative practices become more formal if they involve more people and are more structured. Formal Restorative practices require more planning and time to be more complete. In the case when the practices are intervened by the big international organizations, the practices become more formal and have a chance to restore and build relationships in different kind of communities (Umbreit 2006).

### **3.5. Restorative practices at the international level**

The formal practices are expanded at the international level. This phenomenon includes practices that address crisis taking place in different parts of the international society. According to Gavrialides (2007) RJ has been introduced into a large number in the European countries. It has been used for policy making at a regional level in two Europe’s largest organizations: The council of Europe and the European Union.

There are 47 members in The Council of Europe, most countries of European continent. In 1985 the council adopted Recommendation NO R (85) 11: “The position of the victim in the framework of criminal law and procedure” (Gavrielides 2007). Some Restorative Justice related recommendation followed: In 1999 was passed Recommendation about “Mediation in penal matters”. Although in 2005 it was passed as the resolution on The Social mission of the Criminal Justice System – Restorative Justice. In the conference of European ministers of Justice the ministers were “Convinced by a restorative justice approach the interests of crime victims may often be better served, the possibilities for offenders to achieve a successful integration into

society be increased and public confidence in the criminal justice system be thereby enhanced” (Gavrielides 2007: 73-74).

The work of European Union on implementation of main principles of restorative Justice has been active since 2001. In March, 2001 the Council of the European Union passed the framework decision: “The standing of victims in criminal proceedings”. By the 2006 penal mediation and Restorative Justice was introduced upon member States. In particular, Article 10 was declared that all member states shall seek to promote mediation in criminal cases. “Each member State shall ensure that any agreement between victim and the offender reached in the course of such mediation in criminal cases can be taken into account” (Gavrielides 2007:75).

### **3.6. Summary**

The situation in Post war Georgia is defined as presence of negative peace. The importance of its transition to positive peace was explained and based on illustration of the Galtung’s (1997) definition of negative and positive peace. Thus, this chapter has taken up the theory of Galtung concerning of positive and negative peace. The important aspects of the theory and the causes of positive and negative peace have been considered. The theory of positive peace is the theory of the future. Negative peace is a theory of present and challenges to transition from negative peace to positive peace were illustrated as important aspects in peace building.

I have also given great importance to the Restorative Justice Theory in order to argue that successfully implementation of the project “Youth Peace Express” is feasible as RJ describes the facilities of how such project can be realized. Restorative Justice practices require involvement of the people from opposite sides for dialogue that can contribute to peace building. Conformably this issue will be thoroughly discussed in the part of the data analysis of this empirical work.



## **Methodology Chapter**

### **4.0. Introduction**

The following chapter will introduce the methodology of my empirical work and the role I attained within my research, encompassing my personal reflections and experiences.

More precisely, the study area and phases of my methodological research will be taken up. To start with, the main part of my data collection consisted of 15 days of “Youth Peace Express” trip, where I was travelling with the informants in five countries.

I used qualitative methods and I was particularly an insider researcher. Advantages and disadvantages of being insider-researcher will also be discussed in this chapter based on the context of insider/outsider roles. I claim being insider in the research has many advantages as well as it has many challenges; this issue will also be illustrated with supporting examples from the fieldwork experience. Furthermore, I will discuss the role of my nationality (Georgian) in the procession of my qualitative study.

The major part of my fieldwork was connected to interviewing youth from conflict-divided communities in Georgia. As it has been explained in the History chapter, Russian military bases are concentrated in the territory of South Ossetia, and the boarder to Georgia is also controlled by the Russian soldiers. From the Georgian side EU mission is able to observe and work in the conflict zone only on Georgian controlled area (Mavroyiannis, 2012).

Under the circumstances, when the policy from the both sides makes barriers to the people from the both sides to interact, I had desire to uncover whether there were ways where Georgians and Ossetians could meet and have a dialogue or not.

In this empirical work I attempt to research the possibilities of peace building between those two communities. The conflict still remains as an ethnic conflict between Georgian and Ossetian communities, where Russia plays very significant role. Thought, in my methodology research, I attempted to avoid a Russian factor and concentrate solely on Georgian-Ossetian relationships. As this is a research on Georgian-Ossetian ethnic conflict and other involved sides such as Russia may have impact on it which is already discussed in the history chapter. Thus, my point is first of all about dialogue and reconciliation between ethnic Georgians and ethnic Ossetians.

#### **4.1. Preparation for the fieldwork**

After I had selected the topic for conducting my research, formulated the possible research questions, I simultaneously started to plan the fieldwork activities as well. For this purpose, I thoroughly checked and searched for any type of formats of negotiations or dialogues with both Georgian and Ossetian involvement. I found out that the only official format of such kind was Geneva Negotiations conducted between Georgian and Ossetian Officials accompanied the representatives from Russia and European Union (Philips 2011).

The Geneva Negotiations started in 2008 (Phillips 2011:11). However, it has not produced any significant results. This factor led me to other options apart from Geneva format and so I found that Georgian NGO “Civil Forum for Peace - Georgia” is an organization working with the conflict issues. My strong will and motivation to research this particular case study of post-conflict reconciliation of South Ossetia made easily accessible to contact the chairman of this program personally (Mr. Temur Arbolishvili). After certain explanations and clarifications of my research objectives, I was given this wonderful chance to apply in the EU/UN-supported “Youth Peace Express” project, which was first real opportunity after 2008 war for both Georgian and Ossetian young scholars to meet and have face-to-face dialogues.

#### **4.2. Study area**

Geographical area of my research is wide. The project “Youth Peace Express” gave me the possibility to make observation on the issue on the territory that is considered as a third (neutral) side. My research started in Tbilisi where I arrived first to meet both- members of the organization who were organizing the project “Youth Peace Express” and the participants from Georgian side. All the Georgian participants gathered in Tbilisi to discuss about the trip and get know to each other.

Georgian team after the bus trip to Turkey first time met Ossetian counterparts who arrived by plane. The initial meeting was held accompanied with Turkish national dinner in Istanbul, at the office of the local “Green Party”.

The next destination place was a city of Thessaloniki, Greece, followed by Skopje, Makedonia; Belgrade, Serbia; and Pristina, Kosovo. The countries where the most of my interviews were

conducted were Serbia and Kosovo. It could have its explanation as those countries have had relatively similar problems as in Georgian case, thus it created better environment for open discussions that identified different perspectives. The participants of the project did not have any emotional connections to the conflicts in Serbia and Kosovo and they were opened in the expressions about it and got chance to compare some issues about the conflict of Georgian-South Ossetian.

The special place where particularly successful interviews were recorded was in the village of Gracanica, which is known as a Serbian enclave in Kosovo and is located only 7 kilometers away from the capital city of Prishtina. Project participants witnessed many Serbian identity symbols such as car license numbers and flags outside buildings and we even personally interacted with many of village local inhabitants with Serbian background. The project host family was himself from the Serbian community. As part of the visit all the members of Youth Peace Express project participated in Conflict-related discussions, in general and towards particular Georgian case, too.

The given atmosphere stimulated rather sincere attitude by the participants towards the conflict. Many of them told the stories with an extremely honest manner, some of them even told the stories they admitted they had fear to share to anyone before.

### **4.3. Youth and data collection**

Why especially the youth? My research questions are concerning of the peace building and the post war reconstruction, where youth, as a social group has its special role. Stephanie Schwarz believes that youth can be “Agents of change”. Moreover, she argues that the role of the youth in the post-conflict reconstruction process is a determining factor for success. Reconstruction programs must not only be addressed to the protection and reintegration needs of youth, but also youth should be empowered by the programs and have a big space for actions (Schwartz 2010).

Participants have been raised in permanently strained environment with violence and stress during the last two decades. The Results of psycho-emotional stress caused by the war has proven hard to overcome, because of this the communities are still divided by the conflict. The level of estrangement is especially high among age 20-30, since this is the generation which has been

affected the most; they still do not have experienced peace. The emotional damage inflicted on them can also be difficult to overcome.

When Youth was chosen as a main part of my informant group, I decided to interview all of the participants in the project. It was much easier to interview Georgian participants, due to the same ethnicity.

9 Georgians (4 male and 5 female) were interviewed during many talks and conversations under the whole trip - on the way on the bus, during the visits of different cities. During dinners\breakfast\lunch time as during free time we had, visiting some attractions or experiencing some social life at local cultural places in these countries. Mostly I asked questions randomly and depending on situation in what we were or what a topic of conversations was.

Conducting interviews with Ossetian participants was the most challenging part of my field work.

As a participant of the project from Georgian side, I was automatically perceived as an opponent by Ossetians. As challenging it was, as successful it became at the end since I personally experienced the major aim of the project itself and observed the dimension of the future possible relation developments between these two youth ethnic groups.

I totally interviewed ten Ossetian participants (two female and eight male) both during the private talks and while public discussions. I confirm that the private talks contained rather informal dimension at times due to the logical expectations. I used one interesting method for the better interviews for my study. I tried to socialize with the Ossetian participants discussing different other topics that are mainly the matter of common interests for young people in general. For instance finding mutual understanding regarding the field of our studies, music, national cuisines, traditions etc. greatly shaped more open discussions regarding the most sensitive topic of the Conflict. As for the issue-specific evaluation, the interviews covered their personal experience and attitudes towards this conflict, as well as their expectations from this Youth project and their general view in the peace-building process and a better future co-existence for both parties. Conducted interviews by me were more open and free compared to the official records by project's operator. Jemal Sukhishvili - a Georgian cameraman of the Youth Peace Project who also gathered different interviews for the planned film production about this project. The participants showed relative openness when they were not officially recorded.

The introductory talks explained the aim of my research and I also requested them to behave naturally and free in their expressions. It is an important fact that they were interested whether this research was aiming challenge of the organizers or the project itself or not. After clarifying the pure objectives of my research was the part of my MA studies they actually got more willing for my interviews.

Very important part of my methodology was observation on how the relation transformation among the participants during the project.

Although due to my research objections my major focus was made on participants' behavior in concrete situations and discussions. As the main point for my study is to explore the future trust-building process credibility between Ossetian-Georgian youth, specific thorough observational research method will be applied later in the following chapter.

The biggest part of my collected data includes primer materials from the Office of civil Forum for Peace Georgia. Besides, by the help of the project head Temur arbolishvili I had additional access to official documents of the organization. Those gathered materials maintain valuable importance for my research as they included recordings regarded the official meetings and discussions between the conflict parties. Also various movies and documentaries made by the organization have been analyzed by me and used as secondary data in my thesis.

#### **4.4-Applied Research Methods**

During the procession of my fieldwork I employed qualitative methods. To begin with, the qualitative method seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves. "Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social context of particular populations" (Mack 2005: 1). In my empirical research I intended to explore the role of the youth in a particular issue, which requires an observation from inside, and this is exactly what I did during the procession of my fieldwork.

The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provides information about the "human" side of an

issue - that is human behaviors, emotions, and the relationships between individuals. During my interviews with the participants I identified the factors that made my project successful and provided the possibility of in-depth connections to the participants from the both sides. The factors (social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, and ethnicity) are identified by the researcher using qualitative methods. That helps us to interpret and understand better the complex reality of a given situation. (Mack 2005:2) In addition with the qualitative methods the relationship between the researcher and the participant is not very formal. My interviews with the participants were fulfilled in different social environment - during the transportation, breakfast or lunch time, coffee breaks and while visiting touristic attractions.

The methods of qualitative research described by Family Health International (Mack 2005) matches my experience in my research. They are most common qualitative methods: participant observation, in depth interviews, focus groups, and in my case it was the youth from Ossetia and Georgia ranged age 18-27.

#### **4.4.1. Research from Inside – Advantages**

Even though I come not particularly from the conflict zone, but from the western part of Georgia, I was still associated with the conflict side by the participants due to the ethnical belongings.

To be a participant and a researcher at the same time turned out to be a challenging task. At the beginning I identified myself as an insider researcher when it came to interviewing Georgians; and an outsider researcher when I was interviewing the Ossetians. Many scholars have discussed dilemmas regarding insider and outsider methods. Lauren J. Breen (2007) identifies the insider researchers as those who choose to study a group to which they belong, on the other hand, the outsider researchers are they whom do not belong to the group under the study.

Insider and outsider researches are often discussed in contrast of each other. Main difference is a priori knowledge of the community under study. If Researchers do not have a priori knowledge of the study, or are not members of the community of the study, they are outsiders. Main characteristic description of the insider research is to understand the group of the study before undertaking the research. It is not necessary being a member of the group, where researcher

shares characteristics (cultural, biological etc.) but a priori knowledge of the group or study field until a researcher enters the study area (Greene 2014: 2).

Breen's predictions about the insider and outsider researchers were correct as I uncovered during my research. Introducing myself as an observant instead of just participant turned out to be more advantageous as an insider researcher. Adler and Adler (1987) identified three roles of membership of qualitative researchers engaged in observational methods. The third role is a role of complete member researcher, who is already member of the group or who becomes fully affiliated during the course of the research. (Dwyer 2009: 55) During my research I was a fully affiliated in it and in addition even my role was developed from outsider to insider regarding the interactions with Ossetian interviewees.

Being insider in researching a group of Georgian participants and being an outsider researching the Ossetian participants identified some difficulties and advantages at the same time. Thus, the methods used for my research were not controversial. I agree with the argument, that the insider-outsider dichotomy is a false one, because both types of researchers have to deal with the similar methodological issues (Breen 2007). I experienced the same reaction to my research questions by both of the group representatives. Methodology I used was quite similar, but the difference was more obvious at the start of the research, since it took longer time for the Ossetian participants to accept on the interviews, than for the Georgian participants. In the research I identify my role as an insider, sharing with some outsider characteristics in particular cases.

To go back to the advantages of being an insider researcher, I have to mention three key advantages identified in the article by Sema Unluer (2012). The first key is to have a greater understanding of the culture being studied; the second key is not to alter the flow of social interaction unnaturally, and lastly, having an established intimacy which promotes both telling and judging truth. Furthermore, insider researcher has a great deal of knowledge. In my case, I was collecting data every day, as my knowledge about the study provided me to be ready for the fieldwork, unlikely in the case of the outsider, the same knowledge might take longer time to acquire. The complete membership role gave me legitimacy that allowed me "more rapid and more complete acceptance by the participants". (Dwyer 2009: 58).

There have been argued different Pros for the insider research, which I have shared during my research. As I mentioned above, knowledge was one of the main advantages of the insider research, when researchers do not have to worry about orienting themselves with the research environment and participants, as they are also free of culture shock. Insider researchers do not disturb the social settings and are able to blend into situations. In interaction with Ossetians I was not sure how to start with, since I was not very familiar to their culture, while in contrast to Georgians I was able to “understand the cognitive, emotional, and/or psychological precepts of participants as well as possess a more profound knowledge of the historical and practical happenings of the field” (Greene 2014: 3).

Interaction is one of the pros of inside research. For the insider researcher, as it was for me, interaction is more natural and not a big risk “to stereotype and pass judgment on the participants under the study because they are familiar with the group and social setting” (Greene 2014: 3). I recognize, that it was challenging for me to interact with Ossetians, because I had a feeling that they were unsure that I could understand their discussed issues.

Contacts and access are very important key advantages for being an insider. Easy access assisted me not only at the beginning of the field work, but also after the fieldwork. I was able to re-complete some interviews, where I felt I missed some follow-up questions. Contacts were an advantage to make my research deeper. After analyzing the empirical data I could always go back to the participants and concretize their responses, if I was missing something.

#### **4.4.2. Disadvantages of being an insider-researcher**

There are also some disadvantages and challenges associated with the insider status. The biggest challenge for me was the role of duality. Before starting my research project I was known as a participant of the project from Georgian quote. During the project I became an observer too. In such situations insider researchers often struggle to balance their insider role (Unluer 2012:2). During the workshops, where I was supposed to act as a participant, the other participants might have perceived me as an observer too; there my role in the particular workshop could be seen differently. “In any insider research if the researcher does not take serious precautions to prevent this issue, the researcher’s need, critical to the study, may not be met” (Unluer 2012: 7). What I



did in that situation was to make the participants sure, that I supported any workshop as it was supposed to be; I wanted to observe the activities and do not alter them.

The second faced challenge in my project was question of subjectivity. Before going to the fieldwork, I was asked by my colleagues how I could balance the fact that I am Georgian and the observation I make could have a trend of subjectivity. Moreover, during the research project more questions about the methodology were asked by the Ossetians, for example, how and/or what exactly I wanted to use their answers for. After I realized that, they wanted to make themselves sure about my objectivity.

In case of Georgians, there I could share their position and opinion about the case, that greater familiarity could let to a “loss of “objectivity” and there is thus increased risk of the researcher making assumptions based on their prior knowledge and/or experience” (Greene 2014: 4).

Likely, responses from the Georgian participants were often conducted with too familiar manner of expressions like: “you know, that, right?”, “I feel, you know what I mean” etc. In order to avoid any possibility of misinterpretation or uncertainty, I was always acting precise to make them express their attitudes exactly the way they thought and not the way I wanted. This was meant to me as a researcher to maintain objectivity line and report the all identified issues of the project, since this was crucial for my whole research.

#### **4.5. Ethical issues**

Sema Unluer (2012) describes some ethical issues what should be considered during the fieldwork: honesty, privacy, responsibility and fair share (Unluer 2012: 8). The difficulties related to ethical codes are often encountered by insider-researchers. “Ethical issues might arise, and need to be dealt with, on an individual and daily basis” (Breen 2007: 164). Especially, ethical principles of privacy and confidentiality can help researchers to guide, but there is sometimes the lack of guidelines as to how these principles play out in community-based applied research. (Breen 2007: 164). These issues might be ethically prevented and resolved by the individual work by researchers. In private talks to Ossetian participants erased some issues when I saw necessity to underline the confidentiality of our talks. Often, I was asking participants if I was able to make use of some of their particular comments in my study. It established an environment

where all the informants were sure about their privacy. Sometimes, after the discussions, some participants even requested not to use their comments due to the privacy reasons.

Participants were explained that the study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, Norwegian Social Science Data Service. No one apart the researcher had access to the collected data. All the privately collected data for the project is intended to be deleted immediately after submitting this thesis and will be publicly accessible.

The most challenging issue for me was responsibility in taking position during the workshops. On one hand, I wanted to make others feel that I could be trusted (especially for Ossetians), and on the other hand, I did not want particularly Georgian participants to lose the trust established from the start (because of my Georgian ethnicity). The project was about the ethnic conflict, which meant that participants were from conflict-divided communities and confrontation raised in some issues. All the challenges discussed above were related to this last challenge, about the responsibility where important was to consider the gap between the participants and also be and act myself naturally. Hereby I can give an example – The main city in South Ossetia is called Tskhinvali in Georgian, but they say Tskhinval in Russian, (Communicative language between Georgians and Ossetians was mostly Russian, English and Georgian languages were used rarely). The issue of the name of the city was important for both of the sides. Ossetians were using name Tskhinval despite on which language they were speaking; the same about the Georgians pronouncing only version of Tskhinvali. I considered this issue as very sensitive and decided to employ - Tskhinvali, because my ethnic belonging allowed so; thus I was looking more natural while not breaking the rules.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

As I have discussed, being an insider in the research has many advantages: big knowledge in the study area; good connections to the participants, quick acceptance by them; wide interaction possibilities.

To sum up, various disadvantages and challenges of being insider-researcher were identified and discovered by supporting examples: dilemma of subjectivity/objectivity; challenges regarding trust and honesty; problems of privacy and responsibility.

Youth role in the post-war reconstruction is important. My methods were addressed to the behaviors of the young people. In addition, their reflections were described in the chapter. Lastly, some ethical issues such as sensitivity in the language and expressions were considered.

## **Data Analysis Chapter**

### **5.0. Introduction**

In the following chapter I will first briefly overview the current situation of the conflict territory and then I will discuss the importance and meaning of the “Youth Peace Express” project to the region.

The Caucasus region due to its strategic geopolitical belongings has always been the centre of interests’ conflict, violence and wars throughout centuries (De Waal 2003). Major power – Russian Federation provides an important political actor especially in the post- Soviet parts. However Russia is not the only one keeping eye on its neighbors but Turkey and Iran have also played a significant role in the regional processes. The last war in the South Caucasus occurred in August, 2008 between Georgia and Russia. After the five days war Russian troops invaded Tskhinvali region and misappropriated another piece of Georgian land. Despite the various facts of violation of international law regarding cease-fire, and by harshly involving in Georgia’s sovereignty, Russia still maintains its control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia and recognizes them as so called independent states (Boonstra 2011).

The aspect of Peace according to Galtung’s theory is only satisfied in the region of the absence of war (Galtung 1996). Contrary to this, indirect, but structural violence, social inequality, militarization and cultural imperialism are faced in the region. Likewise, territorial disagreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan is volatile (Boonstra 2011).

Current security framework cannot be promising to prevent new conflicts in the region. “The OSCE is the most obvious and long-standing security mechanism in the region” (Boonstra 2011:1) but non-existence of consensus among the some regional or international actors makes region more unsecured (Boonstra 2011)

Intra state systems are mostly relevant to negative peace. Gender violence, absence of independent media, and low development index and all together in the low standards of democracy among the states challenges transition from negative to positive peace as it is discussed in Theory chapter.

An important challenge to the Region is that two of three states have conflict with each other. Disagreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan over “Nagorno Karabakh” is considered as a “frozen” conflict. The OSCE Minsk group is trying to solve the conflict but unsuccessfully (De Waal 2003) All decisions and actions made by the Minsk group were toward to reach negative peace: cessation of hostilities in the conflict zone, avoid the hostilities and not allowing them to appear again (Matveeva 2002). Negative peace is not enough for long term perspectives. OSCE requires an absence of war, when actually conflict resolution and the final regulation and transformation process to positive peace are those immediate necessary actions for the regional stability. Otherwise pluralistic security community in the South Caucasus cannot be reached.

The complexity of problems and challenges in the South Caucasus, by all means, require future partnership and cooperation between the conflict states in the region. The effects and causes of the positive peace discussed in the theory chapter explain those required definitions on the regional perspective.

In such a challenging region, Georgian-Ossetian conflict resolution seems to contribute to stability for the whole region. At the same time the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict is linked to the Conflict Resolution between Georgians and Ossetians, which has been claimed by an unjust recognition of independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Moscow.

Since Moscow’s officials explain this recognition based on the possibility of Georgian aggression against South Ossetians, how could this be similar to Abkhazian status where did not exist any kind of Georgian military activity in 2008?! However these two conflicts still seem similar to the official Russia.

In order to illustrate the importance of Implementation of Restorative Justice, I will rather give its short conceptual overview on an international level.

According to Gavrialides (2007), Restorative Justice has been introduced into a large number in the European countries. It has been used for policy making at a regional level in two Europe's largest organizations: The council of Europe and the European Union. The formal International practices various crises in different parts of the international society.

There are 47 members in The Council of Europe, most countries of European continent. In 1985 the council adopted Recommendation NO R (85) 11: "The position of the victim in the framework of criminal law and procedure." Some Restorative Justice-related recommendation followed in 1999 through the adopted Recommendation about "Mediation in penal matters". In 2005 this proposal has been passed as the resolution on The Social mission of the Criminal Justice System – Restorative Justice. In the conference of European Ministers of Justice, they were "Convinced by a restorative justice approach the interests of crime victims may often be better served, the possibilities for offenders to achieve a successful integration into society be increased and public confidence in the criminal justice system be thereby enhanced" (Gavrielides 2007:73-74).

European Union's work on implementation main principles of restorative Justice has been active since 2001 (Gavrielides 2007). In March of 2001 the EU Council passed the framework decision: "The standing of victims in criminal proceedings". By the 2006 penal mediation and Restorative Justice was introduced upon member States. In particular, Article 10 was declared that all member states shall seek to promote mediation in criminal cases. "Each member State shall ensure that any agreement between victim and the offender reached in the course of such mediation in criminal cases can be taken into account" (Gavrielides 2007:75).

### **5.1. Restorative Justice practices in the South Caucasus**

There have been exercised certain implementation practices in different ethnic conflict areas. As it stands with everything in the world, these practices face also faced difficulties due to the complexity of particular conflicts. In most cases restorative boards do not have the right access to the participants, in other cases there are also more unidentified parties presented, stopping the implementation processes of the Restorative practice. Complications regarding this practice will be illustrated in the cases of the South Caucasian conflicts.

Firstly, I will emphasize the case of Georgian – Abkhaz ethnic conflict; I will also review how the mediation process supported by certain organizations has been carried out. Secondly, I will take up the importance of Ergneti Market as a place of informal restorative Practices between Georgia-Ossetian face-to-face meetings.

International Alert is an organization that works on conflict transformation in the South Caucasus region. The aim is the resolution of the conflict by peaceful means. Major efforts are made at the civil society level with the aim to get involved actors across the region together as part of the conflict transformation process.

Georgian-Abkhaz conflict derives from Georgia's attempt to secede from Soviet Union in the early 1990s. It includes similar elements as Georgian-Ossetian conflict which has also been provoked and influenced by the former Soviet leader.

From the mid-1990s, negotiations facilitated by the United Nations struggled to create a common agenda and it rather became a crisis management mean instead of promotion the substantive negotiations. The UN facilitated the negotiations that continued for over a decade, however, it did not bring Georgians and Abkhazians any closer to find the common solution for peace-building process. An invitation was launched, in bringing civil society representatives from both sides together in an informal environment. The initiative was more about the facilitated dialogue and not mediated negotiation (Cohen 2012: 68). *Restorative Justice* Practices however is useful in the dialogues led by the facilitators, not in the process of negotiation.

## **5.2. The Schlaining Process**

The initiative was called as The Schlaining Process. The process was named after the city of Stadtschlaining (Austria) where the first meetings have been held (Cohen 2012) The process grew out of capacity building work with Abkhaz and Georgian NGOs in the 1990s and it provided one of the few processes of unofficial diplomacy which included both Georgian and Abkhaz officials and civil society activists during over a decade. The first meeting was held in January 1997. The first workshop was held in February, 2000 in Stadtschlaining. Twenty meetings have been between 2000 and 2007 (Cohen 2012)

The Abkhazian coordinator, Manana Gurgulia (2012), believes that The Schlaining process was a unique platform for informal dialogue between representatives of two sides of the conflict. “It allowed the participants to discuss their concerns and work together on analyzing factors that enable and get in the way of conflict resolution. It also provided an opportunity to exchange information on what was happening in the ground” (Gurgulia 2012:100). Restorative Justice Practices are about bringing different positions together where they have the opportunity to express themselves and exchange feelings and concerns regarding what happened. Restorative practices are about the Victim-offender problem solution in the inter-ethnic or interstate relations, and often it is complicated to differentiate between the victim and offender, thus making it more challenging to implement it in the level of inter-ethnic conflicts. However, the main conceptual understanding of restorative justice is restoring peace and conflict resolution avoiding criminal justice, which was exercised during the Schlaining process. Abkhazian representative Manana Gurgulia (2012), has claimed that during the process it became possible to start a dialogue about launching an agreement in order to achieve a mutually acceptable outcomes. This process helped the participants to achieve a higher level of maturity in that they can have the same view on different topics: “The democratization of society and state as a basis for a more constructive approach to conflict transformation; confidence-building measures; human rights and collective rights as part of peaceful resolution process; the effectiveness of the various forms of economic and political pressure applied to one of the sides in the conflict; the return of refugees and displaced persons; and the impact of internal political processes on prospects for a peaceful resolution of the conflict” (Gurgulia 2012:101).

All these approaches were possible to be discussed in the productive environment despite the very difficult situation among the political elites. The Shlaining process led a very positive process in restoring peace in the regions and made a ground for further cooperation and relationship between the parties. It provided to all its participants with an opportunity to obtain a fuller understanding of the positions, interests and fears of the sides involved in the conflict. “At the meeting, information was exchanged about the latest political events in Abkhazia and Georgia, and the potential consequences of these events for the peace process were analyzed. The various draft interim agreements, framework principles for reviving the negotiation process, guarantees for non-resumption of military action, and much more, were discussed” (Gurgulia 2012:106).

From the concept of Restorative Justice it is a challenge to address its practices to the inter-ethnic conflict resolution projects. It may not suggest the immediate way of resolution of the conflict, but it definitely helps the situation to become more desirable in the sense of peace building process among the parties. It gives possibilities to the participants in the process of Restoring Peace to understand their position. In the case of Schlening Process, the meetings consisted of training components, such as a number of methodological approaches to conflict analysis and ways of transforming it.

All these positive components of the process mentioned above did not reach a full success in Georgian-Abkhazian conflict resolution case. Uppermost it was because of the limited meetings held during the process, and secondly, due to the complexity of the case itself. In order to better illustrate the issue, I will use comments stated by the Abkhazian representative: “The Georgians wanted to persuade the Abkhaz that the war had not changed the fact that they were two closely-related peoples who had to live together within a unitary state. They constantly raised the issue of Georgia’s territorial integrity and the return of refugees, linking these to the resolution of all the other issues” (Gurgulia 2012:107).

On the other hand, the position of Abkhazian side was the opposite from Georgian: “The Abkhaz tried to persuade The Georgians that Abkhazia would never voluntarily be re-incorporated into Georgia, insisting that its desire to be an independent state, with good international relations with its neighbor Georgia, was fully justified” (Gurgulia 2012:107). Despite these radical positions from both sides the Schlaining Process was described as positive practice in the dialogue process among Georgians and Abkhazians. Some elements of Restorative Justice used in the Process made it possible in opening the doors for the both sides to bring their positions in order to have a constructive dialogue. The process was halted in 2007. Twenty meetings have been organized totally and attended by 57 Abkhaz and 56 Georgian participants.

According to the current minister of Reconciliation of Georgia, Paata Zakareishvili (2012), who was a NGO activist from the Georgian side and participated in the Shchlaining process, the process did not result any clear outcomes or affect the conflict dynamics (Zakareishvili 2012). But at the same time he also states several factors that were beneficial out of the Schlaining format. For example, as a result of the Schlaining process, some of the Georgian participants “realized the need to prepare systematic proposals which could be submitted to the Abkhaz side”.



One such example was the document Concept on the special status of Abkhazia in the Georgian State, which was in fact written by them and presented to the Georgian public and authorities for discussion” (Zakareishvili 2012:110).

Implementation of the Restorative Practices in Georgia is not wide and mostly is supported or organized by western organizations and different authorities, as in the case of Schlaining Process. Despite the difficulties and complexity of the conflict specifics, the nature of the Restorative Justice makes the Georgian Authorities and civil activists still to think ( or consider) the need of Restorative Practices in the future as well.

### **5.3. The Ergneti Market**

A very good example of how practices of Restorative Justice contribute to peace building is the case of Ergneti Market- an important bridge for the conflict societies.

In the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, formal negotiations at the end of 1990s had some progress on certain issues such as demilitarization and recognition. At the same time, there were not implemented any dialogue processes by the different facilitators from the international organizations to support the substantive peace. Civil activists or community members were not involved in the processes, thus the reconciliation process went slowly and people living in the overlapping territories across the conflict zone started to find their own ways to make a better life. Spontaneously, informal channels started to develop, vigorous trade and commerce in the large Ergneti market, which was located on the administrative border of South Ossetia “helped build confidence between the societies and improve inter-ethnic relations” (Frichova 2009:15).

The Ergneti market on a track of land between South Ossetia and Georgia properly started to develop in mid 1990s. The village Ergneti was in the middle between the capital of South Ossetia, Tskhinvali, and Georgian city of Gori, the informal trading post was mainly for the Georgians and Ossetians. Ossetians due to their intensive contacts with the Russian Federation were transporting goods from Russia to the market and many Georgian individuals or companies were buying goods then to re-sold in the country’s internal market without any proper customs clearance and legalization. Some benefits that were provided by the market can be identified:

Average citizens gained from the trade in the context of overall high number of unemployment in South Ossetia and poor economic development (International Crisis Group 2004).

In that sense, when economic situation in Georgia was described as in crisis prices on basic goods such as bread were low. Although “Most importantly, perhaps, the market was a means for average Georgians and Ossetians the only place to meet, build contacts, and identify common interests after the war years” (International Crisis Group 2004).

Very important element was also the fact that Ergneti Market was on the Georgian controlled territory, monitored by Georgian authorities and police. Despite this, the market was beneficial for thousands of Ossetians in different ways and they were allowed to cross so called boarder without any fear being on Georgian territory. At the same time, markets were illegal according to Georgian law and had negative effects on country’s legal political and economic environment. “The Market was commonly viewed as the biggest trading hub between Russia and south Caucasus, Turkey and Iran at the time. It caused Georgia’s income to bleed as well, because effective Georgian customs controls were lacking due to conflict” (Frichova 2009:15).

However, the Georgian state kept the Ergneti Market until 2004, until the time when the government was changed in Georgia after the “Rose Revolution”. New government led by the President, Mikheil Saakashvili, changed politics regarding conflicts and turned to a more aggressive and sharp strategy. According to the press releases issued by the Georgian Customs Department on September 1, 2004, closing down Ergneti Market in The South Ossetian conflict zone helped to increase revenues. “The Customs Department also reported that smuggling through Ergneti is estimated to have caused an annual USD 120 million damages in unpaid taxes to Georgian budget per year” (Civil Georgia 2004).

Egneti Market as a place for reconciliation is related conceptually to the Restorative Justice approach. People-to-people dialogue and a peace building process were somewhat leading elements of Ergneti Market as well. The closure of the Ergneti Market could have been analyzed as one of the issues in following conflict escalations finalized by an actual war of August, 2008. The period before the war and abolishing of Ergneti Market was a sort of trying period both sides, as the officials from both sides knew how important the role of that market played in everyday life for the people living in the conflict zone. Georgian authorities realized that the

“Ergneti market's closure would affect not only the corrupt officials but also the livelihoods of common people who depended on petty trafficking for survival” (International Crisis Group 2004: 12).

The official Tbilisi started to blame the Ossetian authorities, which has been after all interpreted by them as a direct attempt to violation of independence and security of the region.

By July 2004 a local poll found out that 95 per cent of Tskhinvali population opposed reestablishment of Georgian sovereignty, 96 per cent supported Kokoity regime (so called President of South Ossetia), and 78 per cent would personally fight if needed” International Crisis Group 2004: 13). Ergneti Market as the bridge between the communities was shut down and accelerated the possibility for further conflict escalation which actually ended up by August War, 2008.

## **5.4. Youth Peace Project**

In the post war period Georgia-Ossetian relations remains to be very tragic, with thousands of refugees, closed borders and ethnic hatred. In such situation the project “Youth Peace Express” seems relatively promising in trust-building process between two societies. I will analyze collected data through my personal observation and participation in the implementation process of the project.

The “Youth Peace Express” project was a meeting place for exchanging ideas between Georgian and Ossetian young scholars through the civil forum for peace. This project was implemented during 8 month, with support of European Union and United Nations Development Agency`s joint programme COBERM. The main part of the project was 15 days trip where Ossetian and Georgian youth were travelling across several countries together. The Project was the part of NGO Georgian-Ossetian Civil Forum Peace strategy which focused on tolerance development among Georgians and Ossetians, especially between students and young scholars for their full integration into society.

The basis for implementation of this Project is rooted in the fact that conflict-divided societies have not yet overcome the results of the psycho-emotional stress caused by war and violent

conflict. The level of estrangement is especially high between young people, as they do not have experience of peaceful cohabitation with the counter Georgian community. They have been raised in anti-Georgian and “anti-occupation/territorial integrity” environment. Problems in education field, low employment level, poor health and lifestyle, negative vision of the future, passive activities are those issues that remain sensitiveness on both sides of the conflict. These problems regularly result in the estrangement of young people, loss of perspectives, criminalization, spreading of drug addiction and a thwarted narrative of the conflict, meaning that in case of return of IDP`s (Internally displaced people) to their living places acquires possibility of a repeated escalation.

The project Youth Peace Express regarding all these matters has identified several implications that require certain attention and thorough analyses. To emphasize the general expression over the conflict-affected participant, they mainly showed certain lack of interest in communication with counterparts even in terms of peace-building capacity. The conflict has obviously inevitably affected the possibilities and resources particularly for Ossetian students to socialize with European partners. It is also noteworthy that young people have limited capabilities of self-expression which is largely conditioned by post-war trauma and difficulties with adaptation to a new environment.

There is another significant issue that could actually take the major responsibility in the post-war environment. That is the serious lack of media coverage in the conflict reconciliation process. The local media, especially in the occupied South Ossetian territory does not pay much attention to peace projects and activities. Societies both in Georgia and especially in Tskhinvali Region have not been well-aware of even this particular Youth joint project. It is embarrassing to consider media independence in 21<sup>st</sup> century; however the authorities especially in weak democratic societies often try to take control over the local media that actually affects the development of any kind of peaceful integration or state building progress.

The main aim and objectives of Youth Peace Express project was to increase an engagement level between Georgian and Ossetian students and promotion of confidence-building between the conflict-divided societies. Rapprochement of Georgian and Ossetian youth and creation the conditions for future cooperation trough the organized educational tour was the major idea of the

project. Besides, discussions, debate, sharing ideas and getting valuable advices by the European participants were another purpose of the joint Youth project.

Ten Georgian and ten Ossetian students were participating in this project. Before the useful trip to the Balkan region, students had been given trainings in Negotiation, Conflict Transformation, dialogue between young people and Intercultural learning. The idea of this project was the importance of future peaceful reconciliation and uppermost promoting communication process between conflict-divided students. It is undoubtedly obvious that youth is that exact milestone of the society that has major power of changes and development. Thus, the project attained important role to the communication building between two sides. It was extremely necessary in order to lower existed alienation rate among youth so that they might not have one-sided information which could have crucial results in the future perspectives.

In order to carry out the observational estimation of the project, I would first describe participant students' general impressions and attitudes towards this project, and then I will evaluate rather issue-specific dynamics of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict based on my observational case-study research.

The trip with Georgian and Ossetian student groups that started in late April, 2014 lasted for 15 days. Each of the visiting spot was at different conflict places and all of the meetings and discussions aimed to broaden general understanding and attitude towards the future peace-building perspectives among the conflict participants. I will try to briefly cover up those important moments from each trip and analyze them in relation to the given Georgian-Ossetian conflict framework.

The first meeting location in Istanbul, Turkey served rather introductory purposes. The participants met "Young Greens" organization and students from different Istanbul Universities. The opening of the session was in a formal atmosphere where students expressed their expectations towards the project. The most valuable information we gained from this meeting was offered possibilities for students of Conflict zone to participate in Turkish Universities. I clearly remember the very first moments of the project when participants from both sides felt quite uncomfortable and stressed regarding the dialogues and project implementation processes. It was quite promising at the first meeting of our counterparts that possibility of the future

partnership could have been achieved at certain level, although one remarkable comment was quickly emerged through the informal meeting from the Ossetian student: “Yes, because we did not touch the issues of conflict yet“. And he was right; the tension immediately appeared as the actual conflict discussions have begun.

The second stop of the “Peace Express” was in the city of Thessaloniki, Greece, where discussions held at Aristotle University and where participants from “Erasmus Students Network” have participated in accordance with Educational Perspective-sharing and issue-specific conflict dialogues. Greek students have certain opinion and attitude towards the conflict topics, and their opinion towards the FYR Macedonia was interesting. It is important to mention that one of the important issues regarding Georgian-Ossetian student disagreement emerged primarily in Thessaloniki; during the discussion of the possibility of EU-Georgian integration a Georgian student stated in speech that Georgian-EU membership would definitely have immense benefits for the development of the country including Tskhinvali Region. This particular statement has been met by huge protest and opposition from the Ossetian counterpart saying: *“being or not to being a member of the EU should be done by will of Georgians and that won’t have any impact on Ossetian citizens”*. This particular fact obviously shows that Ossetian Youth lack full understanding of the real impacts over the conflict which definitely obtains more than a simple definition of ethnic conflict between Georgian and Ossetian ethnic groups. The harsh disagreement maintained their positioning over the “independence” factor.

The one-day trip to the capital city of Skopje in FYR Macedonia was basically similar to the previous ones. Participants discussed several issues where many disagreements have been emerged although first talks on possibilities of common prosperity, economic benefits and possible future partnership ways have started to be spotted this time.

The next destination points were in Prishtina and Belgrade. Important and interesting meetings have been carried out with the partnership of different Organizations regarding the Human rights, on refugees and IDPs, minority issues etc. Those meetings with reputed International Organizations attained huge importance for us as participants. We also discussed the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo. Actually the major discussions regarding the current Conflict situation have been analyzed at Belgrade meetings where actually certain possibilities over cooperation in different fields have been more openly introduced.

Prishtina meeting was most fruitful as we identified several possibilities for the future developments and relations between the conflict sides. A remarkable fact was the discussion regarding Georgian- EU relations again, when certain dimensions have been derived from Ossetian counterparts regarding Ossetian-Russian Federation relations. Participants identified different perspectives and future challenges. It is worth mention that Ossetian students have not uttered any straightforward future dimensions for South Ossetias integration towards the West or Russian Federation, unlike Georgian counterparts who have shown their solid position over Georgia's European foreign political vector.

The project finalized in Istanbul by the press-conference over the final evaluation of the project accompanied with expression sharing and summarizing the future perspectives of the project.

As for the issue-specific observation to this project, I would mostly emphasize the meaning of this project as it was a significant joint and a first actual attempt to develop certain kind of communication with the Youth of the same territorial but different ethnic belonging. The project attained huge importance and should be definitely continued as it aims a valuable purpose of confidence building among the most difficult target group of both conflict societies. Although certain issues covering cultural, social, intellectual, education prosperity could provide topics of possible future mutual understanding, territorial uncertainty and real peace-building possibilities seem to be the cases of the strong disagreement yet.

Despite that South Ossetian students do not show their clear position towards neither western or pro-Russian Federation, they remain toughest position over so called "Independence status". Nonetheless it is simply ironic to discuss the sovereignty and independence without fully understanding the process itself. Issues such as historical background, unclear foreign policy interests, recognition and acceptance by the International society and several other important topics don't contribute to the promising future existence of so called South Ossetian "independence statehood". Taking all this together and through the Youth Peace Express project it appeared that status of South Ossetia could not be considered as a fulfilled independence actor who needs dialogue with Georgian side for sharing its positions.

The overall objective of the Youth Peace Project was to increase engagement of Georgian and Ossetian youth in the process of confidence building between these conflict-divided societies.

Project Specific Objectives I define as follow: 1. Rapprochement of Georgian and Ossetian youth and creation of conditions for cooperation by means of an organized educational tour; 2. Formation of ideas for cooperation by youth based on knowledge and experience received from European peers.

There is no specific recipe for solving problems in post war societies unless each conflict parties realize the necessity and importance of starting dialogue in the nearest future, especially with particular focus on youth target group. There is no communication between Georgian and Ossetian students in general; nor do they have experience of peaceful cohabitation. The most significant issue that has been identified by the project was Ossetian participants lack of interests and unwillingness in future peace-building process discussions. This might have several explanations started from the Education they receive and continued by those information they get through media being evidently one-sided; 'dominance of the official narratives on conflict formed an enemy image of Georgians. On the other hand, the project showed rather readiness for dialogue and negotiations for the peace building process in the conflict zone.

*“From my home I heard people shooting constantly, sometimes from very far, and sometimes very close to my house, one day I woke up and it was totally quiet, and I got scared”* – said an Ossetian girl during the project discussion. She was in Tskhinvali, when the city was under bombing in August, 2008. *“I need time to heal in order to forgive, in the beginning, I did not want to hear anything about Georgians, and I did not want anything to do with them. Now, because I had the opportunity to spend some days with Georgians, I know that **they are not to blame**. We had a great time together”*. – It is an extract from one participant who without fully realizing the conflict bias meant to be mad on Georgians but after several discussions, changing ideas and getting know international practice in the Conflict Analyses they actually started to reconsider their perceptions towards many issues related to South Ossetian case. That can be named as the most successful achievement of the project actually - Conflict-divided youth are in extreme need for wider information and dialogue with their counterparts. This will lead in understanding how to make post-conflict reconstruction efforts as successful as possible while also addressing the needs of young people affected by the conflict. (Schwartz 2010: 4).

*“There was a time when there was need to fight, and we fought. Now is time to talk. Especially, I want to be a businessman, the economy is important, why should we not cooperate in that?”* -



asked me a young man from South Ossetia in the interview. He is a representative of the generation who might be leading their community in the short future. “Their experiences during the reconstruction period will affect their understandings of peace and conflict and therefore have potential to alter the national trajectory towards reconciliation”. (Schwartz 2010: 3).

Another related issue which was covered by my observation to the project was the importance of free media coverage. Despite the fact that Georgian and Ossetian communities in fact live in a (post-) war environment, local media does not attain much attention to cover peace projects and youth activities this direction. Most news is scandalous, drawing Enemy-images and literally affecting the confidence- building process between two societies.

Additional interesting contribution that was identified during the project implementation process was creating social networking possibilities for the participants, more specifically launching the facebook page. Besides those pure technical capabilities of sharing the curriculum-based materials, this page was way more important platform for exchanging posts, expressions and emotions among participants, their friends, peers, interested society and show recommendation and different acquired experience towards the conflict. Besides, importance of such networks is immense for future partnership and relationship. After the project the participants were requested to present their memorable photos and express their emotions and attitude towards the project through written sketches. After consultations and analyzes of each received materials by the project coordinators and international facilitators several distinguished stories have been translated in three languages: Georgian, Russian and English and published. I find this particular networking mean through social web-sites have huge positive effects on the possibilities for better relation and confidence building process among conflict-divided youth.

Another essential factor dealing with openness of participants connects to the neutral –Ukrainian journalist involvement in the project; Anastasia Slovinskaya’s participation in the Project is reasoned by the necessity to create space for the participants to open up. She was preparing video-blogs and reports airing to Georgian media at times (TV Imedi, 2nd Channel and Radio Liberty). She played important role especially for students from South Ossetia who were more unwilling to talk at certain times.

The circulation of positive, constructive and different information is necessary, but is not happening sufficiently currently at the conflict zone. Societies are not aware of joint activities by conflict divided youth and their attitudes. To improve awareness of constructive joint activities, it is important to have more printed materials and fiction or documentary films. REfer

Through my observational case-study I came up with several conclusions I'd rather sum up based on my data collection, gathered information and important experience from this wonderful Youth Peace Express joint project.

Georgian-Ossetian conflict exists in the zone of negative peace. There is absolute need to stimulate the divided society's bridge-building process. Both sides have very difficult post-war political situation. There is significant difference in perceptions, understanding and attitudes towards the conflict between South Ossetian and Georgian students.

Although there can be chances to negotiate and cooperate especially in economic development, education, cultural issues, there is a crucial point over the sovereignty topic for both sides that doesn't seem very promising. Tskhinvali region is officially Russian-occupied Georgian land for Georgians, while counterpart students claim that South Ossetia is an independent state and Georgia is the one who has to be blamed for wrong intensions of interfere. This is the red line, crossing which currently seems beyond the bounds of possibility.

Thus, this chapter has analyzed importance of negotiations, dialogue format and mediation in post-conflict reconciliation process. Although the major focus has been applied towards the observational case-study of the Youth Peace Express project, the study has also covered Shleining Process and Ergneti Market cases as rather positive aspects for mutual prosperity of conflict-divided communities. Furthermore, applied Restorative Justice Theory has considerably promoted the theoretical understanding of the study; as well as the presented research methodology has likewise guided to better analytical estimations of the Youth Peace Express project perspectives.

## **Conclusion Chapter**

### **6.0. Summarizing of the Results**

This final chapter of the thesis will bring together the main findings of this empirical study based on the supportive theory and various contributive research methods. In short, this study made an effort to discover and analyze the ways how dialogue between youth can promote to peace-building process in post war Georgia. The research was based on the fieldwork interviews and the content analysis conducted on the “Youth Peace Express” project. In addition, the background of the conflict provided the opportunity to comprehend the context.

Main goal of the above mentioned project can be summarized by the newsletter of its general sponsor COBERM: “the project aims at rapprochement of Georgian and Ossetian youth and creation of conditions for cooperation by means of a joint educational tour in selected European countries; formation of ideas for cooperation by youth, based on knowledge and experiences received from European peers” (COBERM 2014:3).

The process of Georgian-Ossetian dialogue between youth has supported various immediate and concrete initiatives that seek to have an impact on confidence-building within and across conflict divided communities. The objective of the project was to foster a peaceful transformation of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict.

To begin with, the research highlighted significance of existence of the project “Youth Peace Express”. I as a researcher claimed that this project has proved to be an effective mechanism for creating a space for testing innovative approaches to confidence-building. Furthermore, the project opened up new channels for communication and productive exchange across conflict divided society.

The cardinal findings of this empirical study underscore that during the project implementation the participants earned effective communication values, both verbal and nonverbal. Additionally,

the project allowed the participants to clear the nuances and conduct effective communication. This process also encompassed active listening and non-violent communication.

Conflict settlement and prevention had diversified stages as follow – realizing conflict escalation process, subjective and objective reality, “me” and “you” message, assertive behavior, conflict management strategies helping participants in conflict prevention, setting conflict situation identification and settlement. All these aspects of the project have been seen as essential parts of Restorative Justice Theory. Considering the goals of Restorative Justice, I totally believe in its relevance in the process of conflict resolution. Thus, RJ was chosen due to its potential positive effects on peace-building. Remembering the latter concentrates on non-violent peace-building and is able to supply possible way to contribution to conflict resolution within civil and public societal sectors by involving people in democratic processes. Exactly in this particular way it is feasible to encourage the process of peace-building.

The results of this study are leaning towards the strategy of this project which focused on further development of tolerance among Georgians and South-Ossetians, especially among students and young people. Moreover, the full integration of the latter into society has given the major importance. The necessity for implementation of this project is rooted in the fact that the conflict-divided societies have not yet overcome the results of the psycho-emotional stress caused by war and violent conflict. The level of estrangement is especially dramatically high between the young people as they do not have experienced peaceful cohabitation with the other community. They have been born and raised in anti-Georgian and “anti-occupation/territorial integrity” environment. Due to the obstacles connected to problems in the fields of education, employment, health and other important issues of stability and rather negative vision of future and passive social activities remains acute on both sides of the conflict. These problems regularly result in the estrangement of young people from the wider society. Loss of perspectives, criminalization, spreading of drug addiction and a thwarted narrative of the conflict provide those further negative implications in the conflict zone contains the basis for further escalation possibilities specifically in case of return of IDPs to their permanent residence places.

Thus implementation of such social activities as “Youth Peace Project” is vital in possible future relation-building process among the most promising and vital part of both society- youth. I described and all the important issues covered in the discussions and debates under this project,

likewise Restorative Justice Theory has been applied for further academic explanation of the provided study.

After the observational case-study of the Youth project I came up with several conclusions. The research identified that certain spheres such as Education, economic prosperity and cultural issues seem mutually accepted by both parties, while the sovereignty and recognition issue remains the toughest point and doesn't give fundament for understanding. This is determined by the controversial attitudes towards Georgian-Ossetian conflict itself; Tskhinvali region is technically Georgian land for Georgians, while for counterpart students claim over South Ossetian independence status remains nonnegotiable.

To broader evaluation of the project, I would emphasize the importance of the project once again. It was the first and only format so far where Georgian and Ossetian youth have given the chance to meet and talk. By various discussions and dialogues during the project the major identified obstacle between the participants remains over the status of Tskhinvali region which seems beyond the bounds of possible understanding between two parties yet in the short future. On the other hand, I would still assign that this kind of joint activities regarding the post conflict reconciliation and peace-building objectives should be performed permanently in this region. This will obviously contribute to lower the existed estrangement level among both sides and would eventually promote to future mutual cooperation.

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## **Appendix #1- Project implementing organization - Civil Forum For Peace Georgia**

Full legal name of the implementing organization is Georgian-Ossetian Civil Forum for Peace (Civil Forum). Legal Status: non-industrial (noncommercial). Website of applicant: [www.civilforum.org](http://www.civilforum.org)

Other partners of the organization are:

1. Ossetian partner: NGO Civil Forum - Ossetia
2. International partner: IKV Pax Christi (Netherlands). PO box 19813, 3501 DH Utrecht, NL, Tel. +31 30 233 33 46 [depondt@ikvpaxchristi.nl](mailto:depondt@ikvpaxchristi.nl)

General Agency Profile and Experience:

In 2007 Dutch peace organization IKV Pax Christi founded a Georgian-Ossetian dialogue in Armenia, during which the Georgian-Ossetian Civil Forum was founded, at the initiative of members of Georgian and South Ossetian civil society. Founders of the Forum were: Union Momavlis Tskhinvali, Tskhinvali Region Trade Unions, Newspaper XXI Century, IKV Pax Christi.

In 2009 strategic planning trainings were conducted in Yerevan with participation of representatives of the Forum member organization. In the same year the Project Georgian-Ossetian Civil Forum Capacity Building was implemented in Bakuriani.

Over the years 2008-2013 the following Georgian-Ossetian meetings have been held in the framework of Civil Forum:

- 2008 – Amsterdam, The Hague (Netherlands); Ankara (Turkey);
- 2009 – Amsterdam (Netherlands), Brussels (Belgium); Istanbul (Turkey); Yerevan (Armenia);
- 2010 – Leiden (Netherlands); Istanbul (Turkey);
- 2011 – Istanbul (Turkey); Yerevan (Armenia);
- 2012 – Istanbul (Turkey); Yerevan (Armenia).

Over this period, other Organizations became members of the Forum with the status of founders.

The so called Leiden Declaration adopted in 2010 played an important role in bringing Georgian and Ossetian civil societies closer. The given declaration was discussed during the Geneva Talks and participants of the dialogues unanimously acclaimed the position and pathos of the Civil Forum.

In 2012 a Youth Group was founded in the framework of the Georgian-Ossetian Civil Forum, with presence in Gori and Tskhinvali. The Civil Forum has its website [www.civil-forum.org](http://www.civil-forum.org) and a page in social network Facebook. It has published several booklets in Georgian, Russian and English.

For the moment Forum unites over 100 civil activists and 10 (ten) non-governmental organizations both from Georgian and Ossetian sides. Forum member organizations are implementing multiple joint and parallel projects aimed at confidence building between Georgian and Ossetian sides. The Civil Forum as a structure plays a serious role in the peace projects implemented by the different Forum member organizations as the Forum is an established and trusted communication format between Georgian and Ossetian civil sectors.

Georgian, Ossetian and foreign (international) organizations and their representatives act as partners of the Projects.

## **1.1 Aims and context**

General goals

- Peaceful settlement of the conflict;
- Confidence building between Georgian and Ossetian societies;
- Creating favorable conditions for sustainable coexistence of those societies;
- Achievement of sustainable peace;
- Protection of rights and interests of population who have suffered from Georgian-Ossetian conflict and August 2008 war;
- Protection of IDP rights.

Objectives:

- Organization of alternative negotiation processes by participation of analysts and leaders of opinions.
- Organization of new processes of peacekeeping initiatives.
- Lobbying and promotion of peacekeeping initiatives at national and international levels.
- Development economic, social, cultural relations.
- Exchange of information.
- Development of civil society.
- Legal support to people who have suffered from Georgian-Ossetian conflict and to IDPs.
- Monitoring of situation related to IDPs.
- Raising funds for implementing targeted projects and programs.
- Cooperation with business companies, funds and other donors.

### **Selected Candidates for the project**

At the beginning of the Project, according to the developed and approved work plan, a competition was announced for the selection of participants of the Peace Express on the Georgian and Ossetian sides. The conditions have been posted officially at the Facebook page of the Pace

Express, at the website of the organization [www.civil-forum.org](http://www.civil-forum.org) and in the Tskhinvali independent newspaper XXI century. In their application interested students had to send their biography or CV and a motivation letter, explaining why they wanted to take part in the Peace Express and how they see their contribution to the process. The selection was made by the Project administration based on mutual decision by Georgian and Ossetian sides.

Key selection criteria were: students' availability at the time of the Peace Express; language skills (students should have a working command of Russian in order to be able to communicate with each other); Strong priority was given to people who are new to dialogue and were not part of established NGO networks or dialogue groups before. The project was consciously looking for people outside the "usual suspects" for dialogue initiatives and tries to involve active students who demonstrate initiative and show the potential of taking on leading roles in their respective societies in the future.

Next to these criteria, the following factors had been taken into consideration: if people are (relatives of) victims of war or representative of the IDP community; their specialization in university (the project will strive to include participants from different spheres), their readiness to participate in dialogue as expressed in their motivation letters, and so on. During the selection gender balance and the principle of ethnic diversity will be considered.

Applicants have been asked to fill in a questionnaire specially developed for the Project. At the end of the questionnaire there were a section designed for assessing results and expectations. Age of participants were from 18 to 27. Shortlisted candidates passed a short interviews. In the selection process on Georgian side help was provided by partner organizations with experience in similar activities "Union Momavlis Tskhinvali" (Tskhinvali of the future) and "Bridge of Friendship - Kartlosi"). For the selection process on Ossetian side, full responsibility was lied with the Civil Forum Ossetia, which has extensive previous experience in the selection of candidates for different types of dialogue initiatives.

In the end 10 participants from Georgia and 10 from Ossetian side were selected for the project. Brief description of Project Beneficiaries: Project beneficiaries are Georgian and Ossetian student-youth, leaders of youth organizations and active youth of the age 18 to 27. Direct Beneficiaries were

20 direct beneficiaries:

- Tskhinvali State University students;
- Tbilisi Ivane Javakhishvili State University students;
- Active members of the youth organizations in Tbilisi and Tskhinvali.

Indirect beneficiaries:

- Tbilisi and Tskhinvali students and youth;
- Representatives of Georgian-Ossetian civil society;
- Istanbul University students;
- Aristotele Thesallonica University Students;
- Belgrade University Students;
- Pristina University Students;
- Users of the social networks (Facebook) and Civil Forum website ([www.civil-forum.org](http://www.civil-forum.org)) who receive information from Internet;
- TV viewers and radio audience;
- Participants of presentations.

Average age of the participants is 23 Years. Gender balance was also considered. Number of total Indirect Beneficiaries is approximately 5 000.

**Trip Description:**

Day 1 – the Georgian group gathers in Tbilisi; departure in the morning by bus (Tbilisi -Istanbul 1600km). The Ossetian group departs from Tskhinvali to Minvodi and from there flies to Istanbul.

Day 2 – arrival of Georgian and Ossetian groups in Istanbul; accommodation in hotel; meeting and conversation about the Project.



Day 3 – Meeting with Istanbul Universities students. Excursion in Istanbul

Day 4 – departure from Istanbul hotel in the morning, crossing the Greek border, arrival at Thessaloniki in the evening; accommodation in the hotel (Istanbul-Thessaloniki 677 km.);

Day 5 – meeting with Thessalonica Aristotle University ([www.auth.gr](http://www.auth.gr)) students, excursion in Thessaloniki: excursion with local students showing the group their town and favorite places.

Day 6 – departure in the morning from Thessaloniki hotel, crossing Macedonia border, arrival in Belgrade, accommodation in hotel (Thessalonica –Skopje- Belgrade 655 km). Free time in Belgrade.

Day 7 – meeting with Belgrade University ([www.bg.ac.rs](http://www.bg.ac.rs)) students; meeting with civil sector of Serbia. Time for creative expression and project design.

Day 8 – meeting with government (state) sector of Serbia, excursion in Belgrade: excursion with local students showing the group their town and favorite places.

Day 9 – departure in the morning, crossing border to Kosovo, arrival in Pristina, accommodation in hotel (Belgrade – Pristina 360 km.). Free time in Pristina.

Day 10 – meeting with Pristina University ([www.uni-pr.edu](http://www.uni-pr.edu)) students, excursion in Pristina: excursion with local students showing the group their town and favorite

Day 11 – meeting with Kosovo civil and governmental (state) sector. Rest Time for creative expression and project design.

Day 12 – departure from the hotel in the morning, arrival in Thessaloniki, accommodation in hotel, rest (Pristina – Thessaloniki 320 km.). Time for creative expression.

Day 13 – departure from the hotel in the morning, crossing border to Turkey, arrival in Istanbul, accommodation in hotel (Thessalonica – Istanbul 677 km.).

Day 14 – preparing and conducting a conclusive conference of Georgian and Ossetian groups, assessments, press-conference (briefing) for media. Farewell dinner.

Day 15 – departure from the hotel. Departure for Tbilisi (Istanbul – Tbilisi 1600 km) and Tskhinvali (by air).