EXACTLY ONE CENTURY ago, Georg Simmel, in his work Sociologie (1908; translation 1999) noted that war and peace ‘are so interwoven that conditions of future wars are formed within conditions of a situation of peace, and conditions of future peace within a situation of war’ (1999: 336 our translation). The insight of this sociologist—whose founding contribution to conflict analysis in international relations was recently highlighted by Frédéric Ramel in particular (2006)—remains very modern. It is further demonstrated in the works of Vasquez, for example, for whom ‘certain types of peace have been fairly successful in avoiding a repeat of the war, while others have actually promoted a war’s recurrence’ (1993: 266).

Thus, in contrast to the summary definition that is given in the realist paradigm—in Bull’s work for example: ‘the absence of war among member-states in the international system’ (1977: 7)—peace does not arise when war stops. The end of hostilities only marks the opening of a critical transitional phase in which, although fighting may have stopped and/or a formal agreement negotiated, each of the parties feels the acute fragility of the moment, and the possible return to hostilities. This transitional period should preserve a progression towards ‘a great reduction in the probability that political actors will resort to violence to achieve their ends’, which for Vasquez, constitutes the definition of peace (1993: 264).

1 We would like to thank Cédric Pierard, formerly in charge of the ‘Negotiators of the World’ programmes at ESSEC IRENE (www.essec-irene.com).
Simmel is quite justified in emphasising that ‘peace is not so directly an emanation from the conflict; the end of conflict is a specific step that does not belong to either of these categories, much as a bridge is of a completely different nature from the two river banks it connects’ (1999: 337 our translation). What should draw the attention of the researcher as well as the practitioner is the way in which a conflict comes to an end, the nature of the bridge linking the conflict side to the side of peace.

Yet the architecture and construction of this bridge leading to peace is made more complicated by two factors. The first is related to the interstate or infra-state nature of a conflict. At the end of a war between two sovereign states, the belligerents can foresee their destinies in separate ways; and as can be shown for the French–German example, this does not prevent reconciliation. In contrast, civil war leaves the same wounded and divided social body: separated by hatred, communities continue to live together. This imposed proximity will only be sustainable if the communities in question come to accept it, which implies a modus vivendi, or even, if possible, a reconciliation. This is in part linked to the acceptance of common game rules, the restoration of confidence between actors, the capacity to overcome past suffering—which supposes acknowledgement and pardon—to better focus together on questions concerning the future. There is reconciliation once the conviction becomes widespread enough that a common future has more importance than the divided past. Researchers in conflict resolution studies therefore consider this notion as essential—as illustrated by Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2005: 231–45).

However, this reconciliation—and this is the second complicating factor—will be made all the more difficult if the conflict has been marked by serious human rights violations, war crimes, crimes against humanity or acts of genocide, thus transgressing the jus in bello. The recollection of atrocities, and the legitimate need for justice expressed by the victims, will not make the reconciliation process easier, however necessary it may be for the pursuit of a life as a community. Thus forms a difficult-to-resolve tension between a logic of peace and a logic of justice, as demonstrated by Colson’s analysis concerning the former Yugoslavia (2000).

It is therefore in these extreme contexts—a civil war characterised by the worst atrocities—that the question of reconciliation must be considered. This is what we will do in light of data collected in two cases which demonstrate these two complicating factors: Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

But a paradox already appears. The notion of reconciliation is not found in works related to negotiation, with a few rare exceptions including a book

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by Thuderoz, who notices this subject’s absence (2000: 102). This omission constitutes a troubling paradox as negotiation is a central tool for the end of an armed conflict, whether the belligerent parties deal directly with one another or are assisted in their negotiations by a mediator (Bercovitch and Jackson, 1997; Pekar Lempereur, Salzer and Colson, 2008). Furthermore, this absence invites a reflection on the subject, for, as early as 1737 following François de Callières’ work, Antoine Pecquet, in his book which establishes the founding principles of a general theory of negotiation, wrote that negotiation ‘is the instrument of reconciliation between princes’. (1737, edn 2003: 15 our translation).

Hence, the three objectives set out by this chapter: to clarify the links that exist between negotiation and reconciliation in post-conflict contexts (section 1); to present an original system of intervention in two countries having experienced serious civil war, Burundi and the DRC (section 2); and finally to analyse the nature, and the extent to which such a mechanism can contribute to different kinds of rapprochement and reconciliation (section 3).

I. NEGOTIATION: RECONCILING THE IRRECONCILABLE?

Several typologies have outlined the range of processes that allow a conflict to end, in particular those of Dupont (1982: 27). Simmel, once again a precursor, put forward his own, which we will use as our guide (1999: 339–46). He considers three ‘habitual ways’ of ending a dispute: victory of one of the protagonists, notably the defeat of the other; compromise, in other words, negotiation; and finally reconciliation, whereby the two parties choose to end their disagreement without demanding compensation. Yet, Simmel has a distinct approach concerning these three typologies, for at the crux is to consider their structure. It consists of exploring, the day after a victory, how a reconciliation seems possible, and even necessary, to the actors involved, and to determine the role that negotiation can play within this prospect.

For that purpose, a typology of the place given to the notion of reconciliation in the negotiation process is proposed. Schematically, three configurations can be discerned

(a) Reconciliation is Unrelated to the Negotiation Process

This case seems to be the most commonly assumed, for two reasons. First, in the aftermath of an armed conflict, the agenda is dominated by immediate, concrete and obvious issues that are at the antipodes of the features that define reconciliation: the long term, the symbolic and the underlying issues.
Secondly, the parties involved, even if they are united around the negotiating table, remain in an antagonistic logic that polarises their differences, making them stand firmly in their own positions so as not to be perceived by their respective audiences as compromising the interests they represent. Negotiation in this example takes on a logic that is mainly distributive: that what can and must be divided—territories, resources, power and responsibilities. Negotiation takes place; then everyone goes their separate ways.

This example is all the more common because these negotiations take place under the auspices—and partly under the pressure of—third parties. As Simmel noted: ‘compromise [in other words negotiation] is out of the question […] in conflicts motivated by hatred or vengeance’ (1999: 350 our translation). Hence, the frequent recourse to mediation in civil wars: the good offices of traditional diplomatic efforts aiming to mediate peace with local warlords. The international pressure is often so intense that chiefs feel obligated to sign peace agreements, although deep down they are not always convinced of their validity or legitimacy. They at times consider these agreements rather like truces, pauses, before taking up arms again.

These leaders are even less sure that their respective troops—for whom the ‘Other’ has been referred to as their sworn enemy—will see themselves in the signed clauses, weakening the fragile stability that has been obtained and increasing the risk of a split from either side: moderates tired of war on the one hand and radicals drawn to the mirage of a subsequent armed conflict, on the other. Any rapprochement with the former enemy can be perceived as treason, and as a sign of weakness from one’s own side; the victors in the field and the negotiators at the table are well aware of this problem. As a result, reconciliation is kept at the sidelines of negotiation.

(b) Reconciliation Appears as an End of Negotiation, Albeit a Distant One

In this second configuration, which can entail multiple terms, reconciliation is present in the minds of the parties involved, or at least in some of them. It becomes a desirable end. If the negotiation intends to lead to a lasting peace, it must foresee mechanisms for the future that will favour reconciliation between the communities in question.

As a result, an additional and particularly sensitive variable has to be brought to the negotiating table. The process becomes all the more complex. The negotiation must lead to a decision concerning the mechanism that will be adopted to promote this reconciliation. It may include favouring the oversight of past events, or, on the contrary, investigating past events, possibly institutionalising an exchange of confession and pardon—following the example of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa (2000). Another model entails the resort to
legal proceedings, whether they be national (as in Ethiopia when the crimes of the Mengistu regime were judged), or international (such as the criminal courts created for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda).

Although the process has been made more complex, the hope is that in the long term the negotiation will have gained in solidity. We can speak of integrative negotiation: one negotiates and hopes that a rapprochement will follow as a result. In this configuration, reconciliation comes after negotiation. But Simmel also thinks that reconciliation can constitute an element before the negotiation: ‘Reconciliation, a purely subjective mode, contrasts with the objective character that the end of combat entails through compromise. Here I have in mind reconciliation that is not the consequence of compromise, or another reason for renouncing combat, but the cause of the latter’ (1999: 342 our underlining and translation). Reconciliation can result from negotiation or the end of combat; but it can also facilitate negotiation. This is in the spirit of the last configuration of our typology.

(c) The Negotiating Process itself as an Outcome of Reconciliation

If, as Simmel seems to indicate, negotiation is seldom achievable in situations marked by hatred or revenge—which are precisely the characteristics of civil wars marked by serious crimes—it is definitely reconciliation which offers an antidote to the need for revenge, and which can dissolve hatred. Reconciliation would then be a precondition to an effective approach to negotiation; a precondition, or in any case, an essential complement. In the New Caledonian conflict, for example, the Nouméa agreement of 5 May 1998 was preceded by a preamble that illustrates this approach. This text, as brief as it is elegant, acknowledges the conditions of the ‘Grande Terre’ colonisation, and weaves within the same framework the two communities’ distinct perspectives: ‘the time has come to recognise the shadows of the colonial period, even if it was not devoid of light’. The existence and content of this text were essential to achieving an agreement on fundamental questions.3

The conviction that efforts of rapprochement and reconciliation must be led simultaneously along with the negotiation sequence, and that the negotiation process itself must give way to these same efforts, is the basis of the post-conflict mediation mechanism that will be presented. Admittedly, this mechanism is not a negotiating process in the strictest sense—and, moreover, therein lies the very condition of its success. For it is truly on account of

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3 From an interview on 13 March 2003; this is what Aurélien Colson was told by Alain Christnacht, Conseiller d’Etat, former Haut-Commissionnaire in New Caledonia (1991–94), French Overseas Department Minister’s cabinet director during the Matignon Agreement (1988) and advisor to the prime minister during the Nouméa Agreement (1998).
this unconventional process, both indirect and deeply integrative, that the rapprochement between ex-belligerents begins, and the outlines of reconciliation appear, thus favouring a conclusion on the fundamental issues.

II. A MECHANISM PUT TO THE TEST IN TWO CASES OF POST-CONFLICT: BURUNDI AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

It is not the purpose of this chapter to describe in detail the conflicts which have torn apart Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)—where, as we write, deadly clashes still continue in the eastern regions. In Burundi, a country of approximately six million inhabitants, between 1993 and 2003, 300,000 people were victims of civil war and acts of genocide; by 1972, approximately 350,000 people had already been massacred; therefore, within one generation the population has been literally decimated. In the DRC, civil war and the resulting sanitary conditions have killed more than four million people—the greatest toll on human life provoked by a conflict since the Second World War.

It was within these two contexts of human disaster that ESSEC IRÉNÉ4 teams, in partnership with the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (Washington) and CMPartners (Cambridge, MA) were called on to devise and then run post-conflict intervention mechanisms. These actions, taking place since 2003 in Burundi and since January 2006 in the DRC, with a permanent local presence in both places, are respectively the Burundi Leadership Training Programme (BLTP), and the Initiative pour un leadership collaboratif et pour la cohésion de l’Etat en RDC (ILCCE—Initiative for Collaborative Leadership and State Cohesion in DRC).

Both of these post-conflict mediation processes are, in many respects, a product of the theoretical framework proposed by Burton in the field of conflict studies. First, and generally, the pluralist paradigm of international relations and political systems presented by Burton (1972) is reflected in the transversal choice of the diversity of actors involved in these processes: political representatives from every level, officials and ‘rebels’ of course, but also representatives from the civilian, economic and media worlds. Exiting a conflict, and a fortiori reconciliation, involves this multiplicity of non-state actors. Subsequently, the very foundations of facilitation—its non-imposing nature, the facilitators’ constant concern to not take sides concerning substance, the emphasis on the process itself and on putting the actors in contact

4 Alain Pekar Lempereur would like to thank Aziza Akhmouch, Liliane de Andrade, Eric Blanchot, Aurélien Colson, Florrie Darwin, Antoine Foucher, Thierry Gadaud, Cédric Jouniaux, Eric Le Deley, Ricardo Perez Nuckel, François Perrot, Cédric Pierard, Fahimeh Robiolle, Tina Robiolle and Astrid de Valon who gave their assistance, as well as members of ESSEC IRÉNÉ during the development of these programmes.
with one another—fit into the *conflict resolution* approach developed by Burton and his school (1990). Finally, the attention given to perception problems and the role of communication in the dynamic of conflicts refers once again to a constant characteristic of the Burtonian approach.

(a) The General Configuration of a Post-conflict Mediation Mechanism

The broad outline of this mechanism—described in detail by Lempereur (2007)—consists of regularly organising formative retreats bringing together groups of key leaders meant to work together, but having to overcome disagreements linked to past—or still current—events. The basic workshop, planned to take place over five days, consists of two distinct parts:

— A *methodological and relational part* (three days): the key leaders reinforce their skills—decision making, negotiation, dialogue and problem solving; they also learn to better know, respect and understand one another. This first part, where topics that are a cause for dispute are not yet addressed, brings together the conditions that are essential for the next phase.

— A *practical and substantial part* (two days): participants identify the most important and urgent topics for their country, choosing those on which they can exert an influence, and search together for solutions and reach commitments, for which follow-up mechanisms are put into place.

In the first part, our teams of facilitators have the goal of weaving links between former combatants (*first, the people*) and structuring methods to be applied in the next part (*then, the process*). During the second part where key questions are examined (*finally, and only then, the problems*) and solutions are sought out, the facilitators are mediators who have made the choice of limiting their input as to how the process is conducted. The distinction between *mediator-facilitator* (focusing on the process) and *mediator-advisor* (proposing solutions) in this instance appears as fundamental to us. It is the former that describes the methodological approach which prevails in these workshops. The participants remain in control of the content. In no way do the facilitators intervene to say to the participants: ‘here are your problems, their causes and solutions, thus here are the recommendations and commitments that you should make’. The citizens from Burundi or the DRC, who are in their own environment, are the ones to develop the content. The prevalent idea is that the participants learn from one another.

In this spirit, the BLTP brought together almost 8000 national and local highest level leaders in workshops destined for political decision makers (from the executive and legislative branches), for executives from security
sectors (army and the police), for civilians, for the press as well as for training of trainers (in Paris, Washington and in Burundi). A midway assessment of this process is the subject of a report by Wolpe, Lempereur, et al (2004). In the same vein, in the DRC, through ILCCE, more than 500 national and provincial leaders from the political and security sectors, and civilians have participated in 23 workshops that have already been held at national and local levels. The local dynamic has been focused on the Kivu region, which was very hard hit by the war.

(b) The Mechanism’s Three Inherent Principles appear as Driving Forces for Reconciliation

The first principle necessitates the appropriation or ownership of the mechanism by local actors; the second principle requires its fitting into the local and long-term scheme; the third demands the integration of the most radical actors.

(i) Reconciliation cannot be Imposed by External Forces. It is Constructed from the Inside by the Actors Involved

In Burundi as in the DRC, the starting point for the mechanism is the agreement—or at least the non-opposition—of all the state’s highest level figures, the signatories to the peace agreement (and if possible including the agreement of those who could not participate for various reasons). It is not simply a matter of convincing top leaders of the need to hold workshops or conferences taking place here or there, bringing together the country’s key actors. The workshops must take place with their ‘will’; the project must be nationalised, the initiative must be ‘Burundised’ or ‘Congolised’ even before it has even begun.

Although foreign personalities may facilitate the process, the country’s citizens are the ones who guide the project, and give it content. Leaders, who at times have the feeling of having been pressured by exterior forces during the agreement’s negotiation and signature, welcome the idea that the dialogue that will subsequently take place with key leaders is indeed a national one. They must be guaranteed that the facilitation is limited to a smooth method that allows for the process to progress towards fundamental issues.

This first principle is in itself a factor of rapprochement, a premise of reconciliation: leaders who are in fundamental disagreement, at times violent, agree on a common process. For example, the first workshops in Burundi—the Ngozi process—and in DRC—the Nganda process—brought together participants who were as representative as possible of the national leadership. These heterogeneous groups were comprised of figures from the political
A Bridge to Lasting Peace

world and highly-placed civilians. This intermingling was the best way to ‘take the temperature’ of a society divided and weakened by war. These unlikely encounters were also opportunities to prove to the seminars’ participants that they could even be together, work together, and then recognise each other. Once the election results were known in Burundi, the president-elect Pierre Nkurunziza, the two vice presidents and the ministers attended a government retreat that took place in September 2006. This team-building experience at the highest level allowed the members of the cabinet to better know one another and reflect on methods of action for the executive branch.

(ii) Consequent upon the Previous Principle, the Undertaking of Reconciliation must be Developed within the Local Frame of Reference and this for the Long-term

This continuation takes place in Burundi and the DRC in training retreats, on a monthly basis when possible. Either a basic workshop for a new group is organised, or a follow-up workshop is given every three months, briefly convening participants from a previous basic workshop. A network of personalities is thus built and cultivated among those who are weaving links of trust, as the commitments made together are put to work. Of course, there are ebbs and flows. But over time, this follow-up and the consequent embedding in time are, in themselves, factors narrowing the gaps between formerly divided groups.

This duration is made possible by the constantly renewed support of numerous international partners. In Burundi, the project was launched thanks to the World Bank’s Post-Conflict Fund, and then continued by the European Commission, as well as the British Department for International Development (DFID) and USAID (Office for Transition Initiatives). As for the DRC, a trust fund from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) received contributions from the European Commission, as well as American, British, Canadian, Norwegian and Swedish support.

The duration of this process is also the fruit of permanent local units’ efforts. The direction of the local branches was entrusted to local personalities who, despite the country’s great liabilities, were able to maintain the confidence of all the local and international actors.

In Burundi, national representatives who were consulted often mentioned two names: Fabien Nsengimana, a former presidential advisor, and Eugène Nindorera, former Minister of Human Rights. These two eminent men set themselves apart by their unanimously recognised impartiality and dignity. The Burundian ethnic duality also dictated that through them the Hutu and Tutsi ethnicities would be represented. Merely mentioning these two men’s names was enough to reassure potential participants. During the entire project, Fabien Nsengimana, BLTP director, and Eugène Nindorera, consultant,
ensured that situations were deciphered properly, helped to prevent blunders, directed debates and made sure that the BLTP was managed by a Burundian.

In the DRC, the ILCCE turned to Michel Noureddine Kassa, former head of the local DRC office of OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). A French-Algerian hero in the Congo, he embodied, from 1994 to 2002, the spirit of impartial action in service of the population. The Congolese recognised him as one of their own, and he is regarded with great respect. To many a Congolese citizen, an ILCCE letter signed by him is an immeasurably valuable pass. The invaluable contribution of Father Martin Ekwa should also be noted. In charge of Catholic education in the DRC after its independence, he, too, opened numerous doors and guided the ILCCE’s strategy through his standing as a wise man, his subtlety and his charisma.

This permanent local presence also allowed the effort to be brought to zones that are difficult to access. In the DRC, because of risks linked to events in the provinces of North and South Kivu, it was decided to set up local workshops in Goma and Bukavu, and even in towns such as Butembo, Minembwe and Uvira, areas where, over the past 15 years, confidence has been most seriously undermined. These workshops have allowed people to overcome their fear of elections before they took place, and then, once the change in power wanted by the electors occurred, to overcome their fear of the results. In these zones, ‘volcanic’ in every sense of the word, there remain barely extinguished fires that may at any moment rekindle into potential violence. Yet nuclei of good will have been constituted, and they fight as best as they can against these risks.

(iii) The Reconciliation Effort must Integrate Radicals.

There is no point in reconciliation among those who are already in agreement. Bring together moderates and they’ll come together on an agreement and then the war will be taken up again through the extremists, who were excluded from the process from the beginning. This mechanism is about generating ‘unlikely encounters’: bringing together moderates and radicals from all sides, including hawks and all those who for better or worse will determine the future of their country for the next 20 years to come. Naturally, those in love with peace should be included if they exert an influence on the society in question; and if their presence is justified by the likely positive influence they may have on the others. As for those actors known for being ‘hard-liners’, their presence will give credibility to the initiative. Of course, the atmosphere at the beginning of the meetings is bound to be icy, but at least all of the conditions are united to bring together precisely those whom the conflict has pushed the furthest apart.

How are the participants chosen? Here is another area where national leaders and representatives from international communities intervene.
They know those who uphold the cause of peace, but also the hawks who could sabotage the peace process. The idea is to ask each representative to prepare a list of 30 people who could play key roles in shaping the country’s future. When cross-referencing these leaders’ lists (heads of state or prime ministers from present or past governments, presidents of national or provincial parliaments, religious authorities, academic personalities or civilians), the names of certain personalities come up several times and are thus considered as influential leaders by the country’s highest authorities. Six criteria—presented without a hierarchal order—are suggested to enhance the representativeness of those who will attend the seminars:

1. **Men’s and women’s representation.** Noting the essential role that women play or could play in an appeasement process, our organisation team tries to ensure a high presence of women during the encounters. A goal of 30 per cent has been set to that end. It is sometimes difficult, indeed impossible, to achieve for some specific workshops, like for example those dedicated to the subject of security sectors.

2. **Professional representation.** Political and administrative officials, superior officers from the army and armed movements (‘rebels’, acknowledged or not), judges, lawyers, journalists, university professors, union leaders, heads of NGOs, etc.

3. **Geographical representation** with people from the capital as well as people from the provinces and as the case may be the diaspora.

4. **Ethnic representation** ensuring a balance between the country’s different communities, in particular those who are at the conflict’s epicentre.

5. **Historical representation** allowing for a balance between different eras in the history of the country. As an example, in the DRC, the presence of Lumumbist, Mobutist, and Kabilist leaders was essential.

6. **Representation of the whole range of opinions** including moderates and radicals from each side.

Here again, this approach favours bringing together personalities from different backgrounds. For example, during one DRC workshop, it was possible to bring together two vice presidents, the President of the National Assembly, a former prime minister, former provincial governors, the children of a former president of the country, advisors to the president, a bishop, etc.

We can observe that the choice of participants is in great part determined by the country’s authorities, hence reinforcing the local nature of the initiative and its appropriation on a national level. Equally, ensuring the presence of key personalities guarantees that these mediations will be carried out between persons who ‘recognise’ one another. Even if at first they do not know precisely who will be participating, the first moments they spend together in the hall will assure them that they are with relevant persons, for better or for worse.
III. FROM RAPPROCHEMENT TO RECONCILIATION

In what way does this post-conflict mediation programme contribute to reconciling the participating parties? In order to answer this question, let us note that we share the cautious approach that calls for humility in evaluating the impact of any undertaking of post-conflict facilitation, as pointed out by Hoffman et al (2004) among others. The distinction between the two case situations should also be made. The case of Burundi offers a better retrospect, as interventions have been going on there since 2003. Programmes instructing training officers (through training of trainers) have allowed interventions to be widespread. Above all, the size of the country and its population lead us to believe that the post-conflict intervention programme has reached a critical dimension. The situation is different in the DRC: interventions are much more recent, and due to the larger scale of this country, it has not yet been possible to undertake a widespread trainer’s instruction programme that would enable us to widen our approach, as in the Burundi case.

The account of this mechanism has already allowed us to illustrate in different ways emerging rapprochements and the reestablishment of contacts. In order to evaluate these results in a structured manner, we propose an analytical grid, distinguishing eight levels of impact in increasing order. Each level comprises elements favourable to a reconciliation.

(a) Immediate Personal Impact

Using first names among all the participants, coupled with the informal French ‘tu’ form (second person singular) as well as forbidding the use of official titles during workshops helps to remove a great number of inhibitions and prejudices. Furthermore, individuals are put at ease through simulations, exercises and discussions. The facilitators’ continuous acknowledgement and recognition that the participants are key to the success of the process triggers awareness, risk taking, indeed even confidences and commitments, leading to more constructive behaviour as the workshop takes place. The participants, who often come to these meetings with the secret wish of changing the others, have in fact changed themselves.

(b) Lasting Personal Impact

Once the participants have finished a workshop, they find themselves back in their initial professional and social surroundings. The risk of returning to old habits is great. This is why the follow-up meetings, in which the first moments are often spent exchanging experiences on changes being
carried out back at home, are so important. A certain political leader from Ituri explains how he resolved, through negotiation techniques, a problem between two communities that could have got out of hand. Or, the woman senator from Burundi who, having finally been recognised by her peers for her leadership qualities has become a government minister.

(c) Impact on Relations within the Group (Networking)

These meetings, that are frosty to begin with, bring people from all political sides, ethnicities and opposing parties, face to face. Yet quite quickly, a convivial atmosphere is created among the participants. As days go by, through discussions, but also coffee breaks and lunches, or even evening gatherings, a number of interpersonal obstacles fall. Suddenly, participants catch themselves no longer seeing the others as enemies, but as opponents, or even partners. The thought of setting up and reinforcing a network naturally comes at the end of a basic workshop. The permanence of this network is essential. An example of its impact is seen in the fact that three ILCCE participants were successively president of the National Assembly. Each transfer of power saw the risk of institutional deadlock, or even violence. But these personalities, having learned to better know one another in part because of the workshops and their methods, had measured the benefits of a cooperative approach compared with strong-arm tactics. They were thus able to find the mechanisms for a smooth transition when the second replaced the first; it was the same for the third. The changes in power occurred smoothly.

(d) Impact on Relations with Subordinates

If the participants are well chosen, there is a strong chance that they will be able to pass on to their colleagues the methods and answers developed during the workshops. For example, in Burundi, following the workshops organised for the military command integrated into the police, the Burundian Military Academy now incorporates these workshops into the curriculum for all their officers, with the help of Burundian facilitators trained to use these methods.

(e) Impact on Relations with Hierarchical Authorities

The participants are bound to have to report the workshop results to their principals and constituents. Their positive feedback and influence is crucial. Several new workshops were created only because former participants used
all their weight to demonstrate the importance of these workshops to their principals. They become more efficient national spokespersons than the facilitation team, and achieve a much higher level of impact, such a reach being in fact quite difficult to attain.

(f) Impact on Institutions

Once a critical number of representatives of an institution have worked together in a workshop, even if they do not belong to the same political movement for example, they can, within their institution, work in a non-partisan manner or approach some problems with less tension. In the DRC, the President of the National Assembly supported the organisation of a workshop for political group leaders. Having created a stronger sense of common belonging during the workshops, these leaders were able to treat unresolved legislative questions with greater facility. In Burundi, immediately following their participation in a workshop, military leaders from all sides were able to successfully end the deadlock on several key questions including the definition of a combatant, the harmonisation of ranks, and the allocation of posts, points that had been at a standstill for over three months.

(g) Impact between Institutions

This mechanism has already allowed for the prevention of a crisis in favour of a settlement. In Burundi, during the entire course of the year 2005, one of the workshop’s practical working goals was the drafting of a code of electoral conduct, as well as raising party leaders’ awareness to a responsible approach during the electoral process. Since February 2007, still in Burundi, a conflict between the executive and legislative branches had put the institutions in deadlock. At the request of the President of the Republic, a workshop was organised by the BLTP in September 2007 to bring together key personalities. Burundi’s four former living presidents participated in the workshop, along with the Interior Minister, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, the national police commissioner and the principal leaders of all the political parties. In the wake of this unprecedented seminar, three former heads of state—a first in Burundi’s history—together mentioned the settlement of the crisis during the Isanganiro radio broadcast. A few weeks later the crisis was resolved.

(h) Impact on Society

Knowing whether these post-conflict mediation initiatives change a society, even marginally, depends on the capacity of key leaders to expand the
methods and content to a large scale. Workshop participants are invited to contribute to the expansion of this process. In the DRC, the agenda of a follow-up workshop was upset due to events which followed first round presidential election results. All attention was turned towards the two second round candidates: President Kabila and Vice-President Bemba. Just at the moment when their respective troops were confronting one another in Kinshasa, the workshop participants—from all backgrounds and various geographical origins ranging from the Congo’s east to west—contributed to the organisation of quiet encounters between key personalities. These participants—close to one side or the other, or some to neither—were all concerned about the fragile national cohesion that could shatter at any moment. Together they wrote and delivered an address calling for peace in the country’s four national languages. The address was named ‘Plea from Nguma’. During several days, the plea was broadcast on numerous Congolese television and radio stations. On other occasions, the participants have held press conferences or prompted interviews with journalists. Public exchanges between students and professors, such as those at the Bukavu Catholic University, also took place.

From the youngest school children to university students and adults in continuing education, such a high level of impact requires the largest possible integration of messages of peace, reconciliation and national cohesion, along with negotiation methods which in practice give these messages their substance. It remains that barely one Burundian inhabitant out of 1000 has participated in workshops and not more than one inhabitant out of 100,000 in the DRC, which has a population of 60 million. Even if the voices of key leaders participating in the workshops often have greater reach than those of ‘common mortals’, we are still far from being able to claim any long-term societal impact resulting from these types of initiatives.

IV. CONCLUSION

The post-conflict mediation mechanism described here seems to contribute to reconciliation of the parties in question through the following: organising ‘unlikely encounters’ between enemies or radically opposed parties; allowing opposing sides to speak, promoting mutual exchange—but especially listening; stirring a keen awareness of the other, and the interdependence that connects everyone in each social system; bringing about a new, shared experienced among former enemies—a shared reference point for the future; bringing cognitive bias that impedes reconciliation into the light in order to better cast prejudices aside; facilitate agreements on new, tangible and productive processes; creating symbols and helping spread them to a national audience; favouring the resolution of fundamental issues and concrete
problems; in short, inviting participants to plan together for the future, and plan for a future together.

Now the question is whether this process can be transposed to other post-conflict situations. As long as the presiding principles proposed in our evaluation grid exist, it seems that the mechanism can be applied elsewhere. The interest in transposing this mechanism is both practical—a concrete contribution of end of conflict mechanisms—and scientific—an opportunity to observe the constants as well as the adaptations needed in function with the actual ‘in the field’ variables. From this standpoint, the experience in the DRC constitutes a first attempt at transposition of the mechanism launched in Burundi.

The situation remains unstable in both these countries and it is illusory to deny the risks of a return to violence. At times, an accident or a crime followed by a rumour is enough to set in motion the escalation of tragic events. With this risk in mind, it would nevertheless be cynical to not guarantee the possibility of mediation where it is needed the most, always involving persons of influence in the process.

Reconciliation needs time. There still hasn’t been enough time to evaluate the impact of this mechanism and its capacity to encourage an effective reconciliation between stakeholders. It has to be constructed on the right scale, that is, in this instance, the Great Lakes sub-region. Taking into account the constant interactions between the neighbouring countries, a provincial approach in the DRC’s Kivus regions has shown its limits. When the time is right, a reflection on the necessity of having an inter-institutional workshop that regroups the heads of state and politicians from the four countries that constitute the quadripartite commission (Burundi, DRC, Uganda and Rwanda) cannot be avoided.

Reconciliation is not an explicit aim—there is no doubt it would be counterproductive to label it that way. As Uri Savir, one of the main Israeli negotiators with the Palestinians during the Oslo peace accords, noted in another context but with the same relevance: ‘in reconciliation, some will see an opportunity for salvation, others for capitulation’ (1998: 37 our translation). The declared goal is to reinforce the role of the leaders in ‘unity’, ‘cohesion’ or the ‘consolidation of the State’. But reconciliation is a part of the hoped-for result.

‘If only this retreat had taken place before the Arusha Accords, everything would have been much easier’, remarked one of the first participants in a seminar organised in Burundi, thus confirming the approach explained above: the reconciliation effort must be constructed inside the negotiation sequence itself, at the end of the conflict. It cannot be a subsequent prospect for it is intrinsically related to the process, and as we have seen, it has an impact on the process itself in numerous ways. This effort is indeed a constructive element of a bridge towards peace, each of its pillars having to be steadfastly built.
REFERENCES


