

A Conceptual Approach to NGO-Based

**Advanced**

Early Response Strategies in Conflict Prevention.

**Networking.**

Anton Ivanov.

Berghof Occasional Paper No. 11  
October 1997  
© Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management

Contact Address:  
Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management  
Altensteinstraße 48a

D-14195 Berlin

Via Internet:  
<http://www.b.shuttle.de/berghof/>

ISSN 1432-4016

## Table of Contents

	Introduction ( <i>Definition of Networking</i> ).....	1
1	Networking in the European Agenda .....	4
2	Methodological Frameworks .....	10
2.1	Core Values and Discourses .....	11
2.2	Advanced Networking Solutions.....	12
3	Dominant Networking Paradigms.....	14
3.1	›Pyramid‹ Paradigm ( <i>Networks with Formal Structure</i> ) .....	17
3.2	›Web‹ Paradigm ( <i>Networks with Informal Structure</i> ).....	21
4	Ethnic of Evaluation in the Frameworks of Advanced Networking .....	24
5	Networking for Justice.....	29
6	Prospects for the Optimal Networking.....	31
6.1	Political Concerns ( <i>European Security Perspective</i> ) .....	32
6.2	Early Warning and Early Response Priorities .....	34
7	Peculiarities of the NGO Deceision-Making Process .....	37
8	Toward Formulation of an Integral Strategy Concept.....	38
	Bibliography .....	41

## **Introduction**

### *(Definition of Networking)*

Like every powerful word that has acquired meanings beyond the scope of most dictionaries, the word *networking* requires certain limitations in its scope of meanings. To offer an overall idea of what is meant by *networking* within the frameworks of this paper, it would be helpful to consider it from the point of view of different approaches, i.g.: philosophical, political and economic, informational, and psychological.

To follow John Lofland's (Lofland, 1996) sloganized proposition, ›new organization arises out of old organization‹. This formula captures, to some degree, the perception of the structured interdependency links that always exist in society. Existing organization patterns (shared needs, similar values, settled hierarchies, pre-existing friendships, etc.) can acquire new meaning in the changed environment and serve qualitatively different purposes. Communication enhanced by technical means and new information technologies creates a specific circumstance for ideological, religious, ethnic, and political mobilization within ›solidarity communities‹ (Oberschall, 1973).

Networking reflects the perception of interdependence of different actors within such communities. It is a *means* and carrier of mobilization as well as a flexibility-oriented organizational strategy. In this setting, *networking may be broadly defined as a structured communication for the achievement of similar goals in the conditions of interdependence*. It is especially applicable to the peacemaking NGO's which, being deliberately designed by their founders to deal with problems requiring collaborative action, may not seriously hope to be successful in their activities without co-operation and ›*management of interdependence*‹ with other NGO's and social agents.

It is more or less clear that no co-operation is conceivable except on the basis of at least a certain similarity of interests. The goals may differ, the interests may not be common, but they must be compatible in principle, otherwise the communication is better described in the terms of conflict, rather than co-operation. The background for a political approach to the definition of networking is, therefore, an opposition between the similar motifs and interests vs. conflicting ones. *In the political context networking presents an effort for the search of common interests and the form of alliance-building through enhanced communication.* Economic background of networking is the resource-sharing, information marketing, and redistribution of funds. In this respect, networking is also a form of alliance with a distinctive emphasis on effective communication.

Cybernetic meaning of networking can be based on the universal principle, characteristic to any viable system, oriented to the achievement of the minimal non-equilibrium state, by means of building up external protection screens in order to accumulate more energy and resources, better forecasting (prognostic) capability, redistribution of burdens and pressures, etc. In this sense networking can be defined as a *dynamic process of increasing the system's adaptive capability through the search for alternative information sources about the external environment with simultaneous limitation of the scope of tasks to be resolved (development of priorities).*

Perhaps the most important aspect of the definition of networking is its meaning for an individual. It is not merely a combination of the above approaches in a personal system of motifs but something broader. An individual within an organization that is not engaged in networking experiences more limitations to the pursuit of personal values than the one involved in the work of networks. One may attribute that to the *widened community of discourse*, which is a distinctive feature of networking, but the phenomenon on the whole appears to be more complicated. According to Ernst B. Haas (Haas, 1990), «an actor's sense of self-interest includes the desire to hedge against uncertainty, to minimize risk. One cannot have a notion of risk without some experience with choices that turn out to be less than optimal; one's interests are shaped by one's experiences. But one's satisfaction with experience is a function of what is ideally desired, a function of

one's values. The interests to be realized by collaborative action are an expression of the actor's values». However, the *networking not only broadens one's experiences and thus creates new interests, but also transforms the values of the individual actors, when they find it necessary to adapt to the new discourse, or – the ›rules of the game‹ in the global environment*. For the NGO actors (both on personal and organizational levels) such adaptation implies the need to ›catch up‹, to overcome a certain *ressentiment* toward a globalising cultural context; and that process can proceed most dramatically.

The thing is that the importance of the players in the global and even regional networks depends primarily on their ability to provide an essentially *local* knowledge input to policy formulation and implementation, but in such form as to make it compatible with the dominant networking discourse. The biggest flaw of the most unsuccessful NGO networkers is a sterile globalistic cosmopolitanism, which leaves no room for multifaceted vision of the community of discourse, making it utterly biased in relation to the resolution of practical problems. This is one of the key background ideas to be kept in mind when taking a closer look upon the organizational peculiarities of the NGO's networking.

## **1 Networking in the European Security Agenda**

There have been few attempts to assess in somewhat futurological light, what the networking has to offer to the conflict prevention activities of NGO's with diverse goals and strategies, and what impact it may have on the non-state actors (NSA's) in general. This can hardly be regarded as a subject of an abstract academic interest, as there already exist dozens of actively functioning early warning NGO-based schemes that, nevertheless, produce little, if any, impact on policy-makers' responses world-wide.

The regional security arrangements, developed by the United Nations, OSCE, NATO and other international organizations on the assumption that the notion of global security must be broadened from its traditional focus on the security of states to include the security of people and the environment, call for the international community to improve its capacity to identify, anticipate and facilitate resolution of the conflict situations before they reach a violent stage. One of the fundamental reasons for the universal failure to prevent war is the unwillingness and inability of governments to respond early to the emerging crisis, or threats of crisis. To conserve resources, or to avoid politically risky decisions, governments oftentimes ignore the existence of the conflict-generating factors, until the situation has escalated into a deadly enmity. (Our Global Neighborhood, 1995)

At the same time, as A. Smith argued (Smith, 1993), nations have been functional for a world of competing industrial states, but they are obsolete in the ›service society‹ of an interdependent world based upon technical knowledge. It is not capitalism and its transnational corporations which have eroded the power of nation-states, but the possibilities of constructing much larger institutional units on the basis of vast telecommunications systems and computerized networks of information. By the same token, however, these same communication networks make possible a denser, more intense interaction between members of

communities who share common cultural characteristics, notably sets of values and interests; and this fact, quite paradoxically, causes institutionalization and consolidation of submerged nationalist agendas and radical pressure groups. It is important to bear in mind that not all of the conflict-generating factors are essentially local: communal and national. Global connectivity, like any other powerful tool can be two-sided, so to speak, and just as well instrumental to the essentially destructive incentives.

For most of the commercial media networks, which are at the heart of the global information flows' system, the precondition for coverage is crisis in any form. On the other hand, it is precisely the international media coverage and the public's reaction sparked by the media reports that provide a legitimate warrant for international peacemaking action. While it is firmly established, that early warning can and must be effective to the point of pro-active third-party intervention or the timely assistance to the local self-regulation, the NSA's that might perform such roles lack the relevant mandates (and in the case of NGO's — adequate capabilities and influence).

With some favorable exceptions, the nongovernmental organizations in the field of conflict prevention are, as a rule, disconnected and under-resourced. They have diverse skills and experiences to offer. There is good logic to the argument that, in present circumstances, they should work together to increase the effectiveness they might have in conflict intervention. A range of possible models for inter-organizational co-operation can be envisioned. One is a very loose model, in which the group of organizations with similar concerns seek to be permanently aware of what others are doing and to adjust their own behavior appropriately. A second is a model in which the organizations work by design in parallel with one another, taking the piece of the action, but understanding how the pieces fit together. A third is where organizations explicitly agree to allow one organization to do a certain piece of work, and use their own energies to actively support that work. A fourth model conceptualizes organizations seeking to work jointly as one. Each of



these models has advantages and disadvantages, as well as peculiar implications for the choice of methods of networking.<sup>1</sup>

In the last two years and especially after the conflicts in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Chechnya, special emphasis is placed by the international peacemaking community upon elaboration of an inclusive early warning models, utilizing up-to-date organizational and information technologies and sensitive to the specific regional conditions. While approaches vary from pure statistical methods and the comprehensive systems of formal indicators, to the ›narrative mosaic‹, provided by the loosely connected groups of experts, there emerges a universal agreement that there are at least two objectives that should be followed for such an inclusive system to become effective. The first is *regional focus and conscious limitation of the scope of problems to deal with*. And the second is *development of closer contact with policy-makers and elaboration of response options for the early warning to be followed by practical preventive action*.

Because of their close ties with local communities within and between which most of the current conflict situations arise, NGO's are particularly well-placed to fulfill an early-warning function. As evidenced by the several major field-studies (e.g. Bremmer and Taras, 1997; Tishkov, 1997), the local knowledge on conflicts, and especially ethnic conflicts in the ex-USSR, tends to be either misinterpreted or concealed by the national governments and governmental bodies in charge of the regional security. These elites are inclined to use the process of the conflict situations' resolution as a political resource and, thus, have no incentive to verbalize the actual reasons and driving forces behind the disputes they aspire to settle. In this type of political struggle it is of crucial importance to maintain secrecy in order to protect the knowledges of perceived political importance from the opponents and rivals. Even less interest is observed among the upper-layer elites so far as informing and alerting the international community to potential enmities,

---

1. See a number of interesting discussions on that topic in ›Peaceful Settlement of Conflict — a Task for Civil Society, *Loccumer Protocole 9/94*, Evangelische Akademie Loccum, Rehburg-Loccum, 1995.

population movements, environmental migration, etc. It is precisely the NGO's niche where two capacities are uniquely combined: access to local knowledge and the transnational cultural background promoting connectivity.

Apart from monitoring and early-warning functions, NGO's are involved in the practical peace-building and conflict-resolution activities. Due to the organizational and communicational patterns most of the NGO's acquire shortly after their formation, they are, as a rule incapable of performing these roles within large-scale conflicts. The majority of the NGO's in Yugoslavia, in the Russia's republics and USSR's successor states have committed themselves mainly to the organization of small-scale local capacity building, distribution of the humanitarian aid, bulletin publishing and human rights monitoring. Only in isolated cases there emerge initiatives on practical reconciliation work in the post-conflict zones, where the influential actors are brought together to the negotiation table and a certain amount of concerted ethical, political, and educational action is observed. This cannot be explained exclusively by the lack of financial resources and the structural weakness, which are normally advanced as the main reasons for the feeble impact.

There appear to be several major challenges the NGO's face in the realm of networking, that could be added to the ones mentioned above:

- Lack of connectivity between the NGO's and informational isolation, caused by:
  - a) concentration on the fieldwork in the conditions of scarcity of resources for development of inter-NGO links;
  - b) little experience with computers and telecommunications, lack of will to develop such experience.
  
- Limited use of opportunities and conditions for the effective resource-sharing; duplication of efforts and excessive competition for funds.
  
- Managing the cross-cultural peculiarities of networking (ethnic, social, political, and ideological discourses, underlying values and personal factors)

that emerge as an obstacle to the enhancement of connectivity and co-operation.

- Efficiency concerns such as:
  - a) decentralization of the existing networks and diversification of control over informational resources to allow exchange;
  - b) potential for ensuring impartiality, comprehensiveness, and regularity of conflict monitoring and data-gathering for early warning;
  - c) provisions for co-ordinated and well-informed decision-making in conflict prevention, mediation, peace building initiatives;
  - d) co-ordinated interaction with local and central policy-making bodies;
  - e) provision of free access to information resources, dealing with technical problems of connectivity (compatibility, retrieval of information, a shift to Internet from outdated computer networks etc.).
  
- Clear definition of benefits that a joint and co-ordinated networking has to offer to NGO's and local experts, adjustment of each actor's policy to meet the new-comers' needs and expectations, elaboration of the mutually acceptable networking flow-charts and its implementation.
  
- Lack of pre-requisites for the effective circulation of the analytical information on conflicts among NGO's engaged in networking, irregular and erratic delivery of the information product to the policy-makers, international organizations and the public.

On the other hand, the NGO's in a general setting, present a remarkably mobile (both geographically and socially) political force, that has very little vulnerability to the charges based upon the sovereignty principles, and experiences almost no constraints in the field of the imperatives of the foreign and domestic policy. The NGO's have a rare opportunity to be governed only by the principles of universal ethics and social justice, with little reverence to the unnecessary divisions, that set

restrains to communication along the national and community borders. NGO's public-advocacy in itself requires a more detailed philosophical examination in order to reveal the potential NGO's have in the field of peacemaking.

It is generally assumed that NGO's formation goes hand in hand with the self-organizing movement toward the new concept of civil society. Ideas of self-governance or the local self-administration, as the main pillars of that movement present a fundamental interest also as a certain type of the grassroots security system, that has proven its viability already, e.g. in the phenomenon of ›green sensitivity‹. As soon as the realistic environmental threats have been emotionally and intellectually represented in the European and American mass consciousness in late 1980's, there came a justifiable critique of the *method* applied to the resolution of these problems by the national governments. Much of this criticism blamed the anthropocentric foundations of liberalism and proposed replacing them with ecocentric ones. The basis for such an argument and the corresponding public sentiments, was the perception of the environment as a universal ›holistic‹ biosphere in which virtually all local problems have global implications.

Similarly, the globalising discourse of the existing mass media networks and electronic web seems supportive of what may be called ›red sensitivity‹ — intolerance to bloodshed and utter forms of injustice regardless of the geographic location in which these occur. Along with the traditionally overwhelming importance of the concrete peace building activities in the regions where the NGO belong to, there emerges a universal interest to the activities of others, backed by educational and pure instrumental reasoning. It is no longer moral, nor politically justifiable for the influential actors to stand aloof from the regional problems in different parts of the world which masses of public are becoming vaguely aware of, thanks to the international mass media and the Internet. For NGO's these new developments imply that they are facing the task to bring a systematized *local knowledge* about conflicts to public scrutiny.

## **2 Methodological Frameworks**

The survey of the dominant present-day networking strategies of NGO's in the conflict-prone regions will be indispensable for the formulation of the possible answers to the concerns NGO face so far as early warning is concerned. Furthermore, it is necessary to tread into the shifting sands of core values and discourses that stand behind these strategies and single out the ones that obstruct the enhancement of connectivity and the ones that promote it. In fact, the assessment of the capacity of the networks for the joint policy formulation and implementation in accordance with priorities and goals that are external to their intra-organizational guidelines, appears to be a necessary pre-requisite for taking initiatives on specific issues of early warning, mediation, and conflict resolution. Another important aspect of this assessment would be the survey of organizational techniques of preserving the integrity of the network in the context of decentralization and diversification of control over the informational resources. It would be also very important to test arguments about whether or not the advanced networking technologies and re-design of the co-operation strategies between many NGO's present a cost-effective alternative to the strengthening each particular NGO's to increase overall effects of early warning.

The main methodological tools for categorizing the networking implications for peace making and early warning of conflict were developed initially through scrutinizing the NGO's networking efforts in the case regions (the former Soviet Union successor states, Russia's republics and the former Yugoslavia). Operational methods included focused interviewing and hermeneutic analysis of text/interpretative context of the network participants' narratives about their goals

and objectives.<sup>2</sup> Personal experiences of people on accounts of conflict mediation and anti-crisis networking were compared with the short-term and the longer-term policy concerns of their organizations, to test arguments about technical and funding problems as main obstacles for the re-design of networking process and for the application of co-ordinated action plans in the sphere of ›virtual diplomacy‹.

Data-gathering activity was centered around the following issues:

- a) degree of connectivity between NGO's;
- b) possible opportunities for the resource-sharing;
- c) types, quality, and amounts of analytical information produced;
- d) models of ›early warning‹ being used;
- e) information technologies and telecommunications background (hard- and software used, compatibility, proficiency with use of Internet, technical problems etc.);
- f) patterns of peacemaking and mediation activities and implications for networking.

## **2.1 Core Values and Discourses**

Singling out and analysis of the core values and discourses was carried out during the participial observation in the field in 1996 — 1997. The special attention was paid to the peculiarities of the local knowledge of dealing with conflict that was originally developed by the local NGO's sooner as an alternative rather than a follow-up to the knowledges gained during the international training seminars and workshops. On the other hand, the attempt to assess attitudes toward a globalising

---

2. I am very thankful to Dr. Norbert Ropers, Anja Weiss, and Alexei Nazarenko for sharing the materials on the NGO's in Eastern Europe, including the interview transcripts. Another important source for the analysis of the formal data and narratives was the Databank of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Conflict of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, materials of which were kindly made available by Dr. Valery Stepanov and Dr. Sergei Sokolovsky.

influence of networking upon the local values and discourses was made. Local definitions of ›network‹, ›networking‹, and ›networking for peace‹ were collected to examine the interpretative context of the transformation of meaning. It helped to look into the dominant discourse and a more general paradigmatic influence (of the conflict situation, ethnicity, material and ideal interests, state regime etc.). The interpretative assessment of these variables was sought from both the team-workers within NGO's and the decision-makers to see if there is a gap between personal and corporate opinions that could obstruct formulation and implementation of the new arrangements.

## **2.2 Advanced Networking Solutions**

The research findings were evaluated as to whether they include pieces of experience, accumulated by the most successful networks and NGO's, that can be implemented ›as is‹ (without further adjustment) in the activities of the marginal organizations. The main emphasis, however, was placed upon the elaboration of the new programmatic solutions for the networks and NGO's joint operation in the field of peace building and prevention of conflict, encompassing the following areas:

- analytical and ›early warning‹ information exchanges (flow-charts for the immediate delivery of information from the participants who produced it to the members of the network/web who expressed interest to receive it); establishment of the effective ›electronic notice-board‹ or a newsletter with summarized reports or headlines;
- prospects for creation of the commonly accessible database (merging the existing databases) on conflicts with unrestricted and easy access for all the NGO's involved and other users (containing historical and analytical data,

statistics, resource-packs, training materials, information about funding schemes available etc.);

- theoretical and practical hints for the co-ordination of decentralized and diversified networks, collective policy formulation and implementation, co-ordinated public outreach;
- joint collaboration with mass media and international organizations.



### 3 Dominant Networking Paradigms

It is more or less obvious that all the methods of networking, while being as diverse in contents as the variety of subjects allow, have at least one thing in common. They all rely primarily on the assumption that the more formalized and regular the communication patterns are, the more efficiently the network operates. However, as it is evidenced by practice of at least two data-gathering and early warning networks<sup>3</sup> in the C.I.S. and bridge-building network<sup>4</sup> in Yugoslavia, the adherence to the formally standardized quality of the incoming reports and outgoing feedback implies the resource-intensive organizational efforts and certain amount of pressure from the network's center. On the other hand, the requirements for the standardized reports may be disruptive to the narratives and blur the analytical picture. In Yugoslavia, where most efforts were put into the bridge-building networking rather than to early warning academic type of it, the standardization is merely unthinkable as a consistent organizational pattern. It may be argued that the two different types of activity (early warning and bridge building) call for different organizational patterns, but it would be unwise to deny that both types,

---

3. The analysis of the efficiency was carried out on the basis of the EAWARN — Network of Ethnological Monitoring and Early Warning of Conflict ( a joint project of the Conflict management Group, Cambridge, MA. and the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow. I am very grateful to Kirsten Foot sharing her Ph.D. thesis material and most fruitful discussions of these issues, conducted both on-line and in person. the second newly created network is in its large part connected with the EAWARN: It started operation in July 1996 as part of the UNHCR C.I.S. Local Monitoring Project, of which the author was co-ordinator for the Russian federation. See also A. Pallinder: ›Establishing an Early Warning Network in the Former Soviet Union‹, Report prepared for *International Alert*, March 1995.

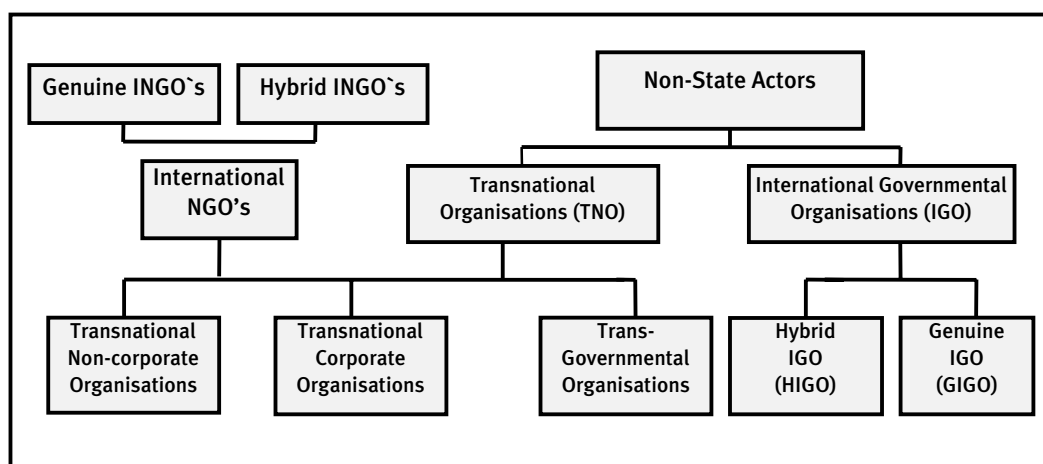
4. see 1.

nevertheless, require a certain normalization of the informational flows circulating within the networks.

In order to deal with a certain confusion that can be observed in the field of typology and theoretical frameworks of the electronic networking for peace, it may be necessary to survey the existing classifications of such activities and, possibly, offer a tentative typological summary, designed to suit the purpose of this paper.

In this setting, it appears helpful to consider not only the NGO's involved in the peace making, but also non-state actors in general, as it is they who are working in the closest contact with the NGO's, providing funding, structural support, and academic advice. A coherent conceptual approach to such a classification can be found in G. Geeraerts and A. Mellentin's work.<sup>5</sup> They single out the following major non-state actors:

**Figure 1: Typology of Non-State Actors in World Politics (A. Mellentin, G.Geeraerts)**



This typology takes into account mainly the organizational and decision-making principles of the NSA's, such as membership criteria, varieties of foundation, levels of participation of the representatives of the states, etc.

5. G. Geeraerts, A. Mellentin: ›Analyzing Non-State Actors in World Politics‹, Centrum voor Polemologie, Vrije Universiteit, Brussel, *Pole-Papers*, 4-1994.

In terms of networking involvement with smaller peacemaking NGO, the international governmental organizations (IGO's) and genuine international non-governmental organizations (INGO's) appear to be the most active players at present. The examples of IGO's engaged in full-fledge electronic networking with peacemaking local NGO's include the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), European Union (EU), Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (HCA), etc. The INGO's engaged in electronic networking with local NGO's vary in number, depending on their short-term projects' time-frames, but there are several of them that pay special attention to longer-term objectives and seem to be ›permanent residents‹ in the cyberspace. These are the Open Society Institute with its ›Forced Migrations Project‹, Conflict Management Group (›Management of Ethnic Conflicts in the Former Soviet Union‹), International Alert, International Refugee Documentation Network (IRDN) (coordinated by UNHCR/CDR) with their communications project IRENE, etc. It should be taken into account that such organizations are normally dependent on the major funding institutions, which belong to the realm of the transnational corporate organizations (TNCOs) whose intra-organizational values influence the policy of the INGO's through the formulation and implementation of the funded projects. Relevant TNCOs exercise no direct power over the networking schemes and arrangements, but they are able to control the activity of the INGO's and, thus, indirectly influence the smaller NGO's, which comprise the web of the projects' participants. Among such TNCOs the G. Soros Foundation and the Carnegie Foundation/Carnegie Corporation of New-York emerge as especially influential actors.

### **3.1 ›Pyramid‹ Paradigm**

#### *(Networks with Formal Structure)*

The types of knowledge, that is normally collected, produced and circulated, within the networks with a formal structure (NFS's) are generally referred to as ›analytical information‹. Whether it is a brief news story or a well-founded substantial report, this knowledge tends to be used for the purpose of analysis of the political situation in the region of its origin with the ultimate goal to elaborate practical policy responses. On its way to the multiple international audiences, this data undergoes a series of transformations on every stage of its processing. Starting from selection of relevant and marginal materials, where a certain amount of externally-originated value is already injected into the ›raw‹ information under the influence of the target audiences, on every stage of editing the perceived facts are also modified by the personal values of the analysts, regardless of their attempt to follow ›objective‹ avenues of thought. The result of all these transformations is that, generally speaking, the target audiences and the international community as the final recipient, are provided with no grassroots and specifically local knowledge in all its uniqueness, but rather with a modified version of it, answering various stereotypes that define the audiences' preconceptions. In other words, the international community sees what it wants to see, but not what is there, according to locals' point of view. Needless to say, what significance it has for the third parties engaged in monitoring, mediation and resolution of local conflicts.

But, here, it is not the process itself that is of interest (as it is has recently become the subject of examination for a substantial body of epistemological research), but the implications it has for policy and, namely, for the networks development.

The process of the local knowledge intense modification is especially characteristic of what may be called a ›pyramid network‹. This is the network that follows a hierarchical principle of organization in which the values, motifs and interests of the top dominate those of the foundation. Normally, such networks consist of the 'centre', that defines the policy, provides funding and technical assistance or fuels the provision, organizes feedback, and issues a final information

product; ›co-ordinators‹ — who organize a data-gathering activity in the regions, and finally — ›experts‹ that are represented by the local NGO's, smaller research centers and individuals, who actually do the fact-finding. In some cases, the pyramid' includes more levels, catering for specific tasks and types of activity, defined by the network's policy.

The organizational pattern of any NFS and the ›pyramid‹ in particular, determines to a considerable extent the guiding principles that it uses in its operation. The main objective of the monitoring, conducted within the framework of such NFS's, is to provide a policy input and early warning material for the nucleus of the NFS that does the leading and management of the lower layers within the network. Its primary concerns, therefore, are mostly of political nature, as the policy the NFS's nucleus elaborates is heavily dependent on the behavior of the major political players in the field. It is the political progress or regress, that the nucleus of the NFS attributes its successes or failures to. The criteria of progress, in this setting, are set by a more general political environment in which the ›pyramid‹ itself sets its goals and objectives. Typically, it is the top layer of the international bureaucracy, represented by such NSA's as the international governmental organizations within the UN system. Thus, the most successful (and characteristic) example of the NFS's is the network set up by the UNHCR to monitor the ethno-political situation in the C.I.S. and detect the early signs of tension and conflict that could potentially lead to population movements and refugee flows.

Technically advanced communication is of critical importance for the NFS's, as it appears impossible to maintain integrity of the formal organization without a regular and dependable contact. In the case of C.I.S. countries and the Eastern Europe, it is also a vast geographic space and poor condition of the telecommunications infrastructure on these territories, that call for firm arrangements regarding the contact schedules. These schedules tend to be not linked to the course of events in the different localities, where the network posts are situated, but rather stick to the real time regime. Technical insight and expertise, that may be considered an indisputable advantage of the NFS's, is at the same time very narrow in its scope. While much attention is paid to the introduction of new networking technologies with the pre-dominant use of electronic mail as a

technical means of communication, little interest is observed in the full-scale use of the world wide web opportunities, namely, placing the data onto the web sites for general public access. Diversification of control does not fall within the scope of NFS's operating schemes, mainly because the hierarchical organization of such networks entails significant costs. The upper layers need to be supported, but oftentimes the bulk of funding is consumed by those elements, which bear little or none of the grassroots elements' functions on data-gathering and analysis.

Furthermore, any radical re-design of the existing financial flow-charts is met with extreme reluctance from the upper-layer and middle-layer elements of the NFS's. The funding policy of the TNCOs toward the early warning networks in the C.I.S. especially, appears to be concentrated largely around the centre-based organizations with English-speaking, Western-style staff to whom they delegate the management functions over a rather unpredictable community of local small-size NGO's and experts. There is an abundance of examples where such organizational solutions applied by the NFS's and supervising TNCOs jeopardize the local NGO's efforts. It is, obviously, a cross-cultural difficulty that most of post-soviet NGO's and the Western NSA's are experiencing in the field of networking.<sup>6</sup> Their expectations and requirements are very much in contradiction with one another, and the full mutual understanding even within the NFS's themselves remains to be demonstrated. However, it would be premature to make a final assessment of the viability of the NFS's scheme as such, because most of the presently functioning networks of this kind are still under construction and have not yet revealed their potential in full.

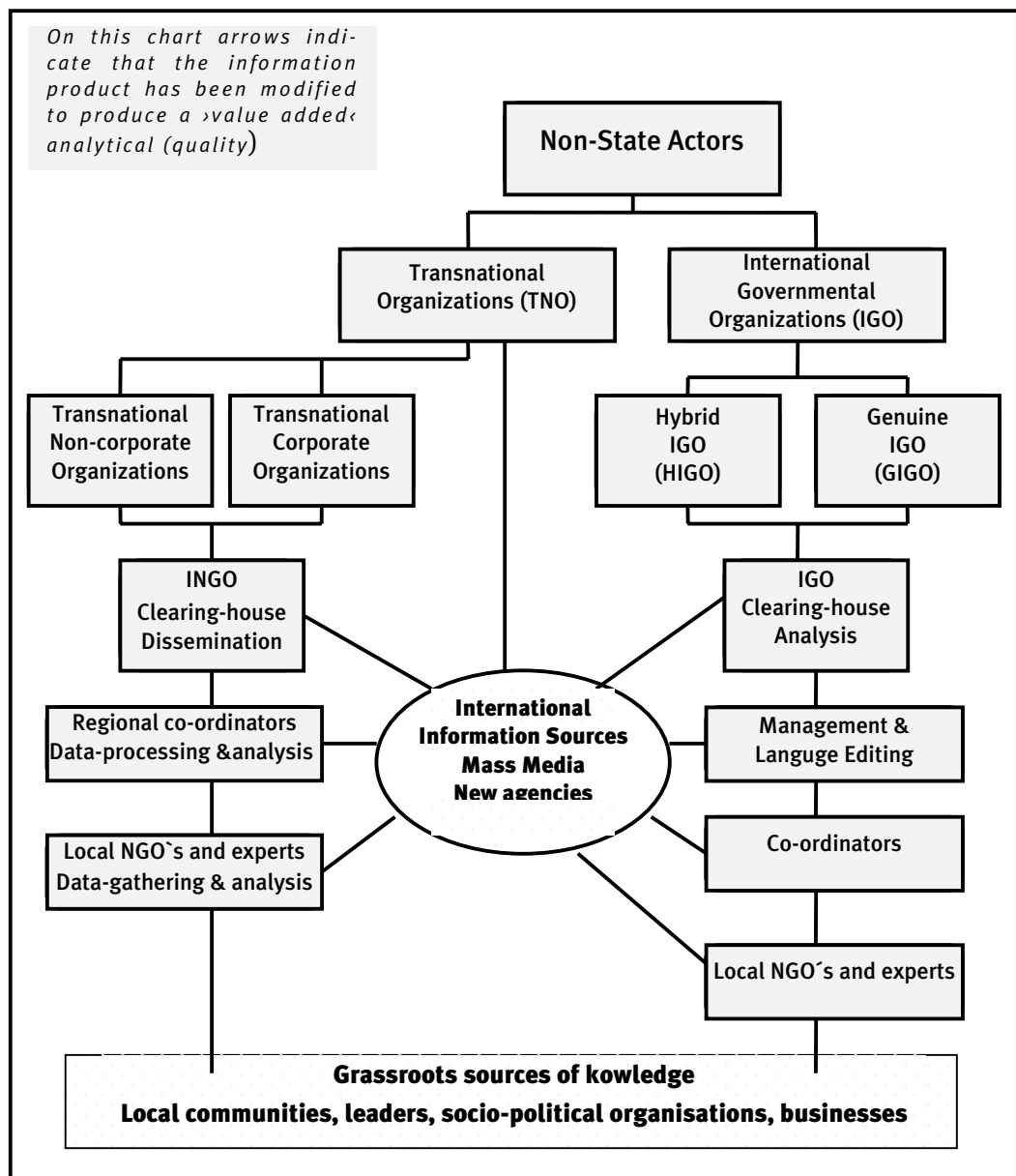
The summarized scheme of the stages of the 'construction of knowledge' process may be graphically represented for the purposes of future analysis, but one should bear in mind that the rapid emergence of new variables which is presently underway makes the picture to be essentially incomplete. On the other hand, the new variables tend to modify rather than replace the existing factors, e.g. the

---

6. e.g. A. Weiss, A. Nazarenko ›Strategies and Needs of NGO's dealing with ethno-political conflicts in the New Eastern Democracies‹, Berghof Center for Constructive Conflict Management, Berlin, 1996, pp. 8-13.

creation of qualitatively new NGO's with diversified control over priorities and the institutionalization of the presently loose networks is not followed by the abandonment or acquisition of qualitatively new values, motifs and interests.

**Figure 2: Construction of knowledge concept within NFS's in the ›pyramid‹ paradigm**



### **3.2 ›Web‹ Paradigm**

#### *(Networks with Informal Structure)*

The networks with informal structure (NIS's) operate largely on the regional level and deal with a wide range of problems such as data-gathering for early warning, human and minority rights fact finding and petitioning, conflict mediation, confidence-building and capacity-building measures, POW's exchange and search for MIA, humanitarian aid, etc. in the conditions of conflicts with low, medium and high escalation as well as in pre- and post-conflict situations.

The organizational system of the NGO's involved in NIS's is characterized by the absence of any hierarchy. There is also no external unifying force behind such networks. Apart from the spontaneous self-organizing impulses and intra-organizational motifs, virtually nothing else keeps NIS's going. On the contrary, there are powerful factors that alienate the NGO's from one another within the frameworks of NIS's. Duplication of efforts, unavoidable in the conditions of spontaneous and uncoordinated networking, brings about competition for scarce financial resources and complicates the sharing of information. In this context, the networking itself may be regarded as an answer to serious challenges of interdependence and consolidation before the well-concerted and active parties that stand behind conflicts. It is something essentially natural that reminds one of a biological organisms' reaction to a threat, larger than that faced by the one particular being.

The formation of NIS's is heavily dependent on the personal values of the NGO's participants. They, but not their organizations as independent entities, appear to be the most active participants of the NIS's defining the goals of such networking. The NGO's as such become simultaneously a ›username‹ and a ›password‹ to the NIS's space, in which the personal users gain access to funding sources, training seminars, and a wide array of joint projects. In this arrangement one may find some positive and negative sides, but what is especially important within the scope of this paper, is that the personal users from NGO's community are most immediately engaged in *practical action* in the field of conflict prevention. Unlike the local experts of the NFS's, who find themselves immersed almost



exclusively in the data-gathering and analysis of the research findings, the NGO's participants within the NIS's place a stronger emphasis on the direct intervention and, thus, develop personal contacts with the key actors inside the conflict. They are preoccupied to a less extent with putting the veil of ›objectivity‹ on their analytical work, because the only indicator of their success is the final result in practical terms. These individuals and their NGO's may contribute most effectively to the elaboration of the response options for the policy-makers on all levels, including the UN system, because their work supplies that kind of ›insider‹ knowledge, essentially local (and even indigenous in a number of incidences), which upper-level think tanks experience a shortage of in order to adequately understand the actions of the local populations at risk. The personal experience and connections of the NIS's members appears to be underestimated, which seems to be a more serious problem than the technical one — of delivering their information product to the major NSA's involved in the development of regional security.

For one thing is true about the NIS's — their operation is amazingly cost-effective. In the field of data-gathering, one of the human rights centers in Azerbaijan with an annual budget smaller than, for example, the remuneration package of a clerk at the Swiss Red Cross, is able to collect, process and disseminate a large amount of the high quality, locally-sourced news ›stories‹ on political developments, national problems, mass media, human rights, and religion in Azerbaijan and the adjacent states, providing a prompt follow-up and statistical backing upon request.

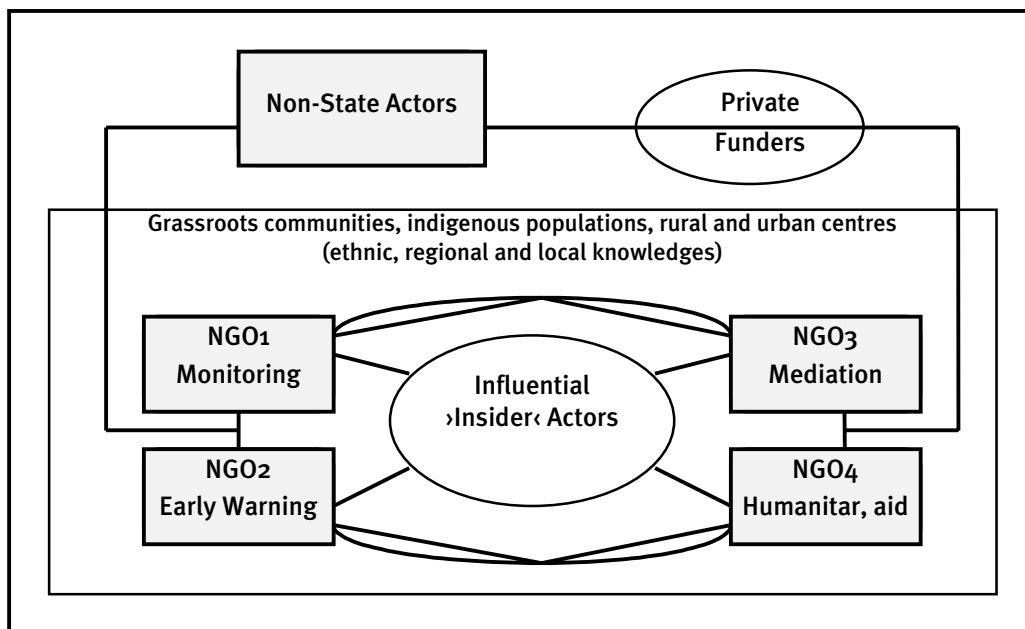
The capacity for electronic networking among the local NGO's within the NIS's is generally lower than within NFS's in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. A study, conducted by A. Weiss<sup>7</sup>, shows that of 56 local NGO's working in the field of conflict management within both high escalation and low escalation conflicts, only 13 have been engaged in such activities as human rights monitoring, fact finding and rumor control, monitoring and early warning; while 43 of the NGO's have committed themselves to shuttle diplomacy, persuasive communication, humanitarian work, (re-)establishing symbolic and factual communication, round

---

7. see 6, p.4

tables, common economic and social projects, including income-generating projects, school education, political protesting, etc. It means that only 23 % of all local NGO's are involved in a systematic collection, processing and analysis of information about the areas of conflict. However, the NIS's has great flexibility in adjusting its structure to the changing political environment, and many of the NGO's that find it inappropriate to sacrifice their time and resources to the organization of information exchange when a number of pressing problems call for immediate action in the other field, they may quickly switch their attention to the development of networking arrangements, should the need arise (and always assuming there are corresponding resources available). For example, a small NGO, ›Non-violence international«, that had been very successful in persuasive communication and bridge-building (regarding the exchange of POW's during the war in Chechnya), addressed a NFS (Network on Ethnological Monitoring and Early Warning of Conflict) with a proposal to launch a joint policy-oriented early warning project, justly pointing to the fact that it has much local experience to contribute to the EAWARN's formal monitoring system.

**Figure 3: Construction of knowledge concept within the frameworks of NIS's.**



## **4 Ethic of Evaluation in the Frameworks of Advanced Networking**

Caught up in the accelerating trend towards intervention in societies in crisis and witnessing the expanding military role in humanitarian and peacekeeping operations, NGO's are wrestling with questions of what job to do and how to do it well. As current responses become more costly, reactive and selective, an equitable and serviceable international networking system is seen to require a better balance between anticipation and reaction.

A number of value-laden ›buzzwords‹ like *mediation*, *networking*, *sustainable development* is forming a frame of reference, which alienates the local NGO's from their communities and brings about either hostile or ironical attitudes on the part of those local actors who appear to be closely associated with the ethnic tradition and, and oftentimes, ethnic nationalism. It may be unwise on the part of the NGO's and their donors to consider the ›export of values‹ and modernization processes as a practical and realistic answer to this challenge, capable of changing the deeply rooted ethnic stereotypes and mythologies. ›Modernization fatigue‹ seems a more likely alternative to rapid societal transformation if not in Eastern Europe then in the post-soviet countries and, primarily in Russia. In this regard, a critical question is not how skeptical are the local populations when they judge the performance of their government, of their administration and behavior in conflict simultaneously assimilating values of democracy and human rights, but how much skepticism is accumulated in relation to human rights defenders and peacemaking NGO's, who are widely thought to be ›influence agents‹ of the donor countries due to the continuous leftist accusations and anti-liberal propaganda in mass media.

Public perception of NGO's as the ›carrier‹ of globalization process within local communities, ethnic groups and even national cultures is an extremely

important phenomenon. It marks a shift of emphasis in people's attention from the abstract power of a spoken and printed word towards *practical* influence of the institutionalized cosmopolitan peace constituencies. At present, this influence is comparatively insignificant, but because of a certain cultural mixing it can produce adverse ethnic reactions on the part of local cultures and tradition-oriented populations (see Samuel, 1989, Vol. II; Smith, 1993).

In accordance with the two main paradigms suggested above (and always assuming one may adhere to ›non-of-the-above‹ paradigm), one may believe that the networks with formal structure attract more skepticism of the local ethnic communities in crisis than the informal networks, just because they are more closely connected with the donors and non-state actors who fund them on the more or less permanent basis. However, one of the observed phenomena of the post-soviet political space, namely the still continuing ›rough handling‹ of the skeptically-disposed human rights activists by the governmental agencies shows that it is not so. Several such cases, which occurred in the last six months only in Moscow, Baku, Oryol and Ekaterinburg cities with the human rights and early warning NGO leaders<sup>8</sup>, evidence that informal networks and isolated NGO's are more vulnerable to maltreatment and even persecution, than the politically connected and firmly institutionalized networks with formal structure, and especially, early warning NGO's collaborating with the governmental agencies on the permanent basis.

Evaluation of the early warning NGO's and networks is, thus, dependent on their organizational structure and activity patterns to a considerable extent. It is not only the ideas they express and the relationships they enter that affect the attitude toward them, but also the purely methodological and ethical aspects of their work so far as the resolution of complex problems is concerned. There exist different approaches to the assessment of the feedback influence the evaluation of conflict prevention and early response strategies has upon the prevention itself.

---

8. The micro-study has been conducted by the author in December 1996 and June 1997 as part of the project ›Advanced networking with NGO's‹. See also A. Podrabinek: ›Express Khronika‹, *News Digest*, 7 June 1997; *HRCA bulletin*, No. 23-2, 1997.

According to J.-H. Guilmette (J.-H. Guilmette, 1997), successful prevention erases the proof of its success, largely because the ›specific system of rationality‹ and we may add, of the selective and instrumentalist ethics applied by the evaluators (be it governmental agencies, media, NSA's or local communities) is heavily dependent on the advantage of having a post facto knowledge about the evaluated situations. Academic evaluation can certainly suffer from the same inadequacy, producing however, more disastrous results. For example, adverse assessments of NGO's and their role in the conflict prevention and early response were rarely inclusive of a rather simple idea, that the NGO's might have been a great deal more successful, if they had received a timely and consistent academic support at the initial stage of their engagement in the evaluated activities.

Another point of view on evaluation and its feedback stems from the traditional risk assessment approaches and what Andrea K. Riemer (Riemer, 1997), for example, calls ›extended signal approach‹. The bottom-line of any quantitative theory is that the more comprehensive and concrete the set of indicators or signals is, the more accurate is the evaluation. Knowing that the events usually do not happen overnight, we, according to A. K. Riemer, should analyze and put into ›our old but convenient boxes‹ the signals, signs, or ›mini-events‹, which take place in a kind of prephase. In this context time becomes the crucial variable, as the nearer the signal can be found at the point of transformation the more concrete and reliable it is, while the time budget for early response is decreasing in the same way. Contrary to the early response action strategy, the evaluation of it has the advantage of allowing a more extended time-frame, which is theoretically quite illimitable, provided that history records are kept in order. This brings us to a concept of the databases as yet another quantitative tool for evaluation of the early response action.

Despite a well known objection to the quantitative approaches based on the presumption of metaphysical freedom of human beings and the entropy of this world which decipher them from the chess supercomputer and the geometry of chessboards, empirical evidence and political practice suggest that these methods may prove very successful if applied to the conflicts within traditional societies (conflicts in Africa, issue of Kurds, etc., which are normally taken as examples by the

proponents of quantitative theories). In the conditions of the former Soviet Union, and namely the numerous cases of inter-ethnic strife within transforming and semi-modernized societies, however, such approaches come across serious difficulties. Furthermore, even the tentative and purely hypothetical suggestion that at least a certain portion of the conflict presents a result of Machiavellian conspiracy or anything of the kind (which simply means that key reasons for action of the main actors *are not accountable to the evaluators*), the very idea of signals and mini-events just loses its sense.

The opposition between a variety of the approaches based on the analysis of different variables, and not the least diverse ›intuitive‹ theories is not a binary one. It would have been rather naive indeed to think that the limited theoretical distinctions we impose on the complexities of life give us anything but a shaky starting point. Nevertheless, the ethical dimensions of drawing the oppositions appear to lie at the very heart of the present debate about the early response action strategies in conflict management and its evaluation. Considerations of efficiency and profound concerns regarding the ethics of intervention becoming more and more instrumentalized and selective to meet the interests and project dominant values of the strong against the weak, go beyond the scope of academic analysis and enter the realm of politics. It's been sometimes a paradox, but the peacemaking NGO's left behind the academic community, evidence a larger degree of realism in their assessment of unfolding crisis in their societies always regarding the conflict prevention and early warning activity as a tool, mechanism (and sometimes a ›cover story‹ to the practical intuitive action), rather than an end in itself (which is often the case for a consistent scholar). It is exactly this controversy, that seems to be the main flaw of the presently dominant principles of evaluation.

In the context of advanced networking of NGO's, when evaluation and result based management are indispensable parts of the very process of networking, the distinction between the importance of rational planning, implementation and getting practical outcome, one hand, and the correctness of the strategic policy on the other hand may be blurred. Responding to multiple signals, outbursts of conflicting ethnicity, humanitarian problems and humanitarian imperatives, poorly resourced NGO's and their networks may find themselves unable to perform their

program activities without establishing the reliable feedback, evaluation and audit systems. The elaboration of criteria of the policy correctness becomes under these circumstances of special importance. Indeed, if the strategic goals are set in accordance with the existing realities and the means of getting to the ends are clarified, even a neo-aristotelian philosopher must expect to achieve success. The sad truth about most of the NGO's in the post-Soviet space, and especially the NGO's working in the Russian Federation is that they *do not evaluate the strategy fully surrendering to the natural course of events and do not realize the vital necessity for such evaluation to be introduced even by the efforts of NSA's, donor agencies, or academic institutions.*

The immediate consequence of that is the noble but rather unfruitful struggle against, so to speak, the conflict itself or against the post-conflict situation as it is. In this sense, the NGO's act as humanitarian rapid reaction units and it is exactly in this sort of activities they achieve most tangible results. The potential for early warning and early action is left perfectly unused. The efforts made in this field seem rather unprofessional, because unlike the regular academic institutions and networks with a formal structure, the isolated NGO's and NIS's lack an ivory tower of permanent funding and, thus, a necessary peace of mind.

Problems experienced by NFS's are generically different. Having an abundance of resources, they not only can afford the effective evaluation procedures, but also to set up specific facilities to provide a regular input to the formulation of strategy on the basis of careful implementation of lessons learned. However, as it has already been mentioned above, NFS's carry a heavier burden of intra-organizational values of their own and are subject to the pressure of the policy concerns of the NSA's, which finance them. Such organizations are in no condition to abandon their strategy and formulate a new one solely due to the negative results of self-assessment. *They require an approval for that from the top of the hierarchy which disrupts NFS's capacity for early response and creates an extra-sensitivity to the personal factor within such organizations.* This seemingly an unimportant feature, nevertheless, gives birth to the firm corporate values and complicated inter-personal politics. This arrangement creates loyalties which may be perfectly justifiable for business, but

which have nothing to do with moral authority of peacemaking NGO that is possibly its only real capital. In the Russian Federation today, for example, there exist only two kinds of effective backgrounds for the engagement in early response action: economic leverage, which may help to ameliorate the numerous injustices causing conflict, and moral authority, based on ethnic traditions and universal ethical values professed by Russian Orthodox Christianity and Islam.

## **5 Networking for Justice**

It has become apparent in recent years that the main target of the peacemaking at the early stage, when it is much easier to prevent conflict, should be a variety of historical, economic, ethnopolitical and personal factors which serve as the reasons for the starting dispute. Mobilizing social agents, such as NGO's are particularly well-placed to fulfill that goal thanks to their close ties with the target communities and a possession of the local knowledge of conflict with its peculiar stereotypes and perceived injustices. However, the following strategic considerations regarding the networking should be taken into account at the stage of planning NGO's intervention:

- Local knowledge about conflict is of crucial importance for the successful early response. Mapping and comparative study materials based on the field research should be circulated freely and regularly within the networks to allow a continuous monitoring of the conflict-generating processes.



- Networks with formal structure should be oriented to the development of closer links with the NGO's operating in the field, by means of including them in the existing mailing lists and allowing access to the information product produced within NFS's. The networks backed by academic institutions should carry out evaluation of the local NGO's activities and provide recommendations (and policy input, wherever possible) on how to re-adjust the activities of the local NGO's for them to be more empowered and efficient in peacemaking.
  
- Networks with informal structure should develop electronic networking as the main vehicle of interaction within the NIS's. The emphasis should be placed onto the education in the field of information technologies, while technical support should be focused on telecommunications as these two aspects serve as a necessary precondition for the early response action. Enhancement of connectivity within the NIS's may be regarded as the main tool for their empowerment at this stage. Training oriented toward organizational and conceptual issues should be re-designed to incorporate these goals and rely primarily upon the permanent information input rather than isolated seminars. This may be carried out through the electronic newsletters and development of the on-line resource centres.
  
- The ethical background for the NGO's networks activity should be precisely formulated, preferably on the basis of incorporation of the local ethnic values (in terms of strategic aspect), and good office practice as well as result based management (in terms of logistical aspects).

So far as the present-day understanding of the early response imperative is concerned, NGO's intervention should be centered *not upon ›networking for peace‹ but upon ›networking for justice‹, which is a necessary precondition to peace*. This formula marks a certain shift of focus to a more in-

depth and distant-led concept of networking, and primarily that kind of it, which meets global connectivity opportunities most fully.

## **6 Prospects for the Optimal Networking**

An unavoidable outcome of any critique that attempts to be constructive, especially as far as organizational matters are concerned, is that one stumbles on some seemingly obvious solutions which, if properly implemented, might change the flaws into advantages. It is less obvious, however, that any fresh strategies and action plans tend to create new difficulties and the treatment may well bring about more harm than cure. There is basically a distinction between free scholarly search for a better state of things, and a responsible planning for the concrete organizations. Nevertheless, one is due to be rather weak without the other.

In the realm of conflict resolution, or conflict prevention, a highly politicized realm indeed, one may be struck by the power of value-laden words and slogans. One's thought is increasingly guided by a number of pigeon-languages and very flexible terms, which tend to transmit emotional meaning as much as rational. Some have acquired almost magical power, and networking appears to be one of the most fashionable.

It should be explicitly stated that even in its widest sense, networking is nothing but a purely utilitarian strategy. It is always networking for some purpose and the more adequately the principles of networking suit the purpose, the more successful is the final result. Networking for the sake of networking is a nuisance.

It has been demonstrated above, if tentatively, that probably *the most important purpose in the present-day conflict prevention*

*methodology is to include the multiple local knowledges about potential conflicts into the global community of discourse without distorting its original qualities by the processing and editing on different levels.* The key question is how this goal may be achieved, (if it is possible at all). It would be overly optimistic to think that there exist some ready-to-use informational and organizational know-how's, which will help to fulfill this task.

On the other hand, NGO's as fully autonomous units do not require procedures used by governmental bodies and TNC's, neither have they sufficient potential for accommodation of such organizational technologies. All they really need to have is right priorities, timely advice, sufficient funding and proper evaluation.

There is a number of preconditions for the effective NGO' activities, which are external to the NGO community. Perhaps the most important one is the mobilization of political will of the international governmental organizations and major funding institutions for support of the NGO-based conflict prevention activities. Clear definition of concerns to be addressed, in this respect, is of crucial significance, but there are other related issues which need to be addressed separately.

## **6.1 Political Concerns**

### *(European Security Perspective)*

*a) Enhancing capacity to prevent the outbursts of ethnic nationalism in the Eastern Europe and the FSU.* This objective should occupy the central place in the present agendas for NGO preventive action. The reasonable level of involvement should be centered round the monitoring and early warning activities with the improved flow-charts for information delivery. The NFS's collaborating with the UNHCR and CMG, for instance, (IRENE, CISLMP, EAWARN, etc.) provide a necessary background information for the policy planning, but a special emphasis should be placed on the development of the NIS's engagement with a particular attention paid to early signs of escalation of the low-intensity disputes and submerging nationalist activities. The combination of the indicators-

based academic monitoring (NFS's) and the ›rapid reaction‹ style of the NIS's may significantly improve the overall effectiveness of the early warning systems and provide a ›stereoscopic‹ vision of the situations, incorporating the narratives based on local knowledge and the theorizing discourse of academic culture.

*b) Institution-building for regional security.* This component plays a very important role in the FSU due to the tendency on the part of the governments to use the institution-building process in their short-term political interests. The use of development activity as a political tool is commonplace, but there is a major difference whether the political efforts are oriented to the pressure for greater security to all, or toward elitist and even private interests. Deliberate discrimination and imposing of inequalities by the organized effort of dominant groups, through an institution building process is one of the most dangerous tendencies that has to be addressed by the NGO movement. This factor is capable of seriously deteriorating the effectiveness of the European community's aid to the nongovernmental sector in the ex-USSR successor states, for example. It is of political significance to ensure that financial resources are used to ameliorate poverty and dependence, as well as other injustices that serve as main roots for most of the present-day ethnic enmities. The NGO's, supported by the global NSA's may present a most effective counter-force to the intentional manipulations with institution-building.

*c) Recognizing educational priorities in the promotion of democracy and peace.* One of the longer-term objectives of the nongovernmental sector is to ensure that the building of peace constituencies is advanced as an answer to the propaganda of intolerance and nationalism. The general flaw of such educational programs at present is their escapist air so far as ethnicity is concerned, which leaves no room for the expression of the vital ethno-cultural manifestations. NGO's should seek to promote those kinds of local ethnic knowledges and cultural contexts, which provide for the peaceful settlement of disputes and, generally, the positive vision of the opposition of ›we‹ and ›they‹.

*d) Development of relations with local political leaders and links with mass media.* The dialogue between the NGO's and the local political leaders, especially in the conflict-prone regions, should not be confined to general consultations. It must encompass initiatives on the resolution of practical problems and relevant mandates for action should be sought by NGO's independently. The major concern, which this strategy addresses is the lack of co-ordination between the agencies (NSA's) providing humanitarian relief, early warning NGO's, and the mass media. The casual and fairly ironical attitude toward the NGO's in this setting is furnished by the lack of corresponding mass media coverage of *positive* examples (delivery of humanitarian aid, exchange of POW's, psychological assistance etc.).

## **6.2 Early Warning and Early Response Priorities**

The presently existing early warning techniques is largely a result of decomposing a ›nondecomposable‹ problem field, where not a single variable can be a sole object of the early warning analysis without the other. It is virtually impossible to offer a set of indicators, which would be comprehensive and flawless and e.g. PLOOM, UNHCR/CDR, IRENE,(CPN, FEWER in program) and EAWARN field operation is more or less inclusive of the old but good ›narrative‹ reporting and in some cases (UNHCR/CISLMP, EAWARN) is, in fact, centered round this component. Among small peacemaking NGO's another pattern of early warning activity emerges. It is based on the fieldwork missions reports that incorporate the narratives of the locally engaged analysts but are not reduced to them. This type of highly subjective, analytical-substantive monitoring reminds the anthropological technique of ›participial observation‹, when an anthropologist lives within a community he or she studies, taking part in all the activities and rituals, as well as sharing the burdens of the people. The advantage of such method is of course the ability to produce a ›pseudo-insider‹ kind of knowledge, which is then brought to classrooms and workshop lounges for expert assessment. The obvious disadvantage of this scheme is the necessity to invest significant time, financial and physical resources.

On the other hand, electronic networking seems adjustable to virtually all conceivable roles local NGO's can play in early warning (ranging from the expert consultant, to monitor or lobbyist), but not to the ›participial observation‹ technique. If local NGO's are employed as permanent participial analysts, they tend to shift to the monitoring pattern characteristic to networks with formal structure, where local knowledge undergoes a series of transformations along the way to the audiences and shows up unrecognizable at the policy-makers' tables. It is mainly a peculiarity of the policy-makers' expectations, however, that results in the lower layers of the pyramid supplying the local NGO's with feedback, which tempts them to be selective in their coverage and seek for a rather journalistic ›crisis-story‹, even when the events unfold relatively ›smoothly‹.

It should also be explicitly conveyed, that it is not the ›un-smooth‹ character of local developments that can be regarded as a signal for the appropriateness of an early intervention, but on the contrary, this very ›smoothness‹ if it is accompanied by underlying tensions.

Some of the study outcomes suggest that it is necessary to target the above controversy, and furthermore, to ameliorate the existing discrepancy between the need to mobilize political will for conflict prevention at the early stages, and the need to allocate resources, primarily, for the humanitarian relief, that is necessary to avoid escalation and the spatial and dimensional growth of the currently pressing ethnopolitical and environmental ›trouble spots‹.

NGO's at the local level (communal, regional and national) should be regarded as a single political force (however weak) and the enhancement of connectivity between them may only increase its significance. The issue of competition, therefore, should be addressed in such a fashion, as to transform the current duplication of efforts into a widened coverage. The ability to introduce effective resource-sharing as a mechanism of such transformation is a clear evidence of the NGO's leadership function in whatever dominant coalition of organizations is there forming. *Nothing can be more ruinous to networking than the drive for domination and the steps directed towards greater control over financial and informational resources by the organization that does the leading.* The electronic and, generally, virtual web

is as fragile as the natural one and the ties are easily torn apart by controversy over the issue of domination and finances. Situation of networking is perhaps the best illustration of the direct technical democracy, with an additional quality of the prevailing consensual knowledge and consensual decision-making.

## 7 Peculiarities of the NGO Decision-Making Process

Decision-making in the context of conflict prevention (including tactical NGO-based policy formulation) is not regarded to be in the tradition of pure rational choice theories, that have been most clearly demonstrated by James G. March<sup>9</sup>. Such theories portray decision-making as intentional, consequential, and optimizing. They assume that decisions are based on preferences (e.g. wants, needs, values, goals, interests, subjective utilities) and expectations about outcomes associated with different alternative actions. It is assumed that the best possible alternative (answering decision-maker's preferences most fully) is chosen. However, decision-making ›under ambiguity‹, the opposite of the conditions associated with rational choice theories, cannot be assessed under the similar set of criteria. In fact, the ›correctness‹ of such decisions is always a matter of debate and can never be ascertained in the absence of considerable historical distance from the events (Haas, 1990).

Consensual nature of the decisions within networks is oftentimes explained not only by the compromising and flexible character of the dominant discourse within such entities, but by the desire to share the responsibility for the ›incorrect‹ policy and minimize the risks of a ›scape-goat‹ scenario. In the context of organizational theory developed by Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schon<sup>10</sup>, the NGO network as a political agent is primarily understandable as an interest group for the control of informational resources and territory (in terms of coverage). A NGO network, as a specific political force in a certain region, is always secondary in influence in comparison with the dominance-focused traditional political forces, due

---

9. see: James G. March: ›Decisions and Organizations‹, London, Basil Blackwell, 1988.

10. C. Argyris and D. Schon, Organizational Learning: ›A Theory of Action Perspective‹, Reading, Mass., Addison-Wesley, 1978, p. 328



to the very activity pattern, but it is precisely this quality that makes it acutely responsive to the tiny existing elements of what is referred to as a ›global governance«. And as the representative of powerful inter-governmental or international organizations, it may aspire to occupy a very convenient position in the local perspective: a third party mediator, co-ordinating humanitarian relief and informational coverage.

The precondition for this is an ability to pursue a coherent strategy approved by all members of the network.

## **8 Toward Formulation of an Integral Strategy Concept**

The following outcomes and recommendations are based on the assessment of the presently existing NGO-related networking schemes and the contextual influence of the major external factors, defining the social, political and ethnic environment in which NGO operate:

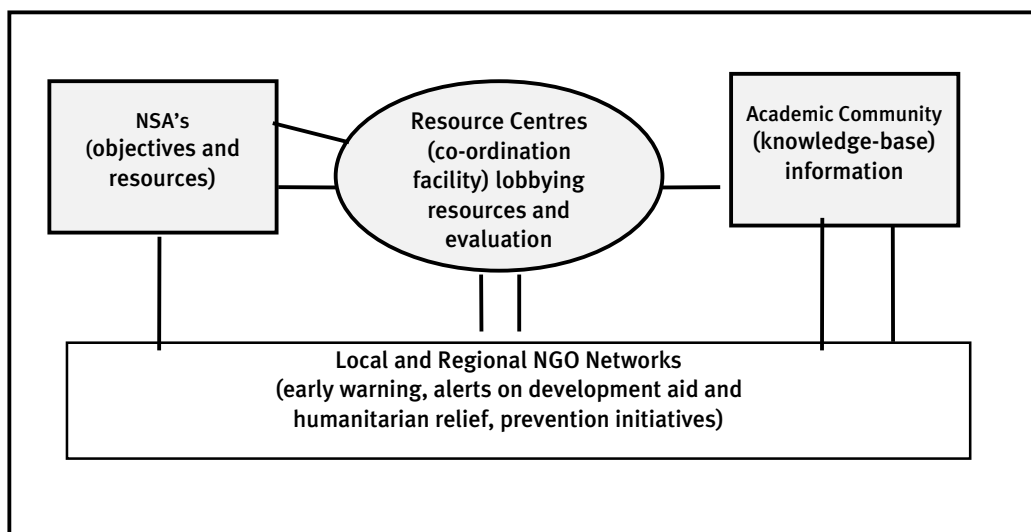
- *Globalising discourse of the communication space*, oriented to the values of democracy, individual freedom and human rights as the field of inter-related preconditions to a non-conflict environment, *should be inclusive to the local ethnic component* to provide channels for the expressions of vital ethnic manifestations. NGO's should recognize connection and enhance sensitivity to the local communal demands to create cultural and communicational conditions for the transformation of the destructive nationalist sentiments in accordance with non-violence scenarios. Such conditions may include: non-partisan, constructive partnership between NGO's from different

conflicting sides to publicize and build awareness on the part of the major NSA's about the local indigenous demands and perceived injustices before the conflict reaches violent stage; provision (or co-ordination) of timely assistance to the non-militant element within conflicting parties; co-ordination of diplomatic efforts so as to ensure that the interests of the discriminated local groups and ethnic minorities are observed, etc.

- *Lobbying activity should be centered around allocation of resources for conflict prevention in connection to the development aid and humanitarian relief.* Representational principle and consensual decision-making should be advanced in order to consolidate NGO's movement and cut an unnecessary competition for funds. The possible answer to this priority is a national and regional networks of NGO's, expressing the interests of the majority of nongovernmental actors in a certain territory. This ›platform-based‹ lobbying should be accompanied by the comprehensive evaluation of expenditure and effectiveness of resource allocation in co-operation with inter-governmental organizations and, generally, NSA's that provide the financial resources.
- Local early warning information and the comparative regional mapping data as a background for early prevention should be regarded as a main resource of all NGO's engaged in peacemaking activities. It presupposes that the networking strategy should be oriented to the systematic collection, processing and analysis of this information for the purpose of subsequent elaboration of a well-founded policy input for the inter-governmental organizations and major influential actors in the field. Early warning systems, developed in close collaboration with the academic community, may be multiple and diverse, but it is of utmost importance to ensure the free circulation of the final information products and reduce the number of value-adding processing stages. The information feeded in by NGO's must be available on-line not only to the policy-makers, but to the mass-media and the public as well.

- Institution-building process should be channelled to the creation of *NGO platform-based resource centres*, which would incorporate background information databanks, early warning data processing, newsletter, bulletin and ›notice-board‹ production, training activity, technical assistance as well as contribution to evaluation and lobbying for common interests.

**Figure 4: NGO-based conflict prevention (Integral Paradigm)**



## **Bibliography**

- LOFLAND, J.: Social movement Organizations: Guide to Research on Insurgent Realities, Aldine de Gruyter, New York 1996.
- OBERSCHALL, A.: Social Conflict and Social Movement, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ. 1973.
- HAAS, E.B.: When Knowledge is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organizations, 9. University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford 1990.
- OUR GLOBAL NEIGHBOURHOOD: The Report of the Commission on Global Governance, Oxford University Press, New-York 1995.
- SMITH, A.: Towards a Global Culture?, Global culture, SAGE Publications, London 1993.
- PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF CONFLICT: A Task for Civil Society, Loccum Protocole 9/94, Evangelische Akademie Loccum, Rehburg-Loccum 1995.
- BREMMER, I. TARAS, R., (eds): New States, New Politics, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997.
- TISHKOV, V.: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union. The mind Aflame, SAGE Publications, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi 1997.
- GEERAERTS, G., MELLENTIN A.: Analyzing Non-State Actors in World Politics, Centrum voor Polemologie, Vrije Universiteit, Brussel, Pole-Papers 4-1994.
- WEISS, A., NAZARENKO A: Strategies and Needs of NGO's Dealing with Ethnopolitical Conflicts in the New Eastern Democracies, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, Berlin 1996.
- R.SAMUEL (ed), Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of the British National Identity, Vol. II: Minorities and Outsiders, Routledge, London and New York 1989.
- GUILMETTE, J.-H.: FEWER Discussion Paper, Toronto, March 1997.
- RIEMER, A.: FEWER Discussion Paper, Toronto , March 1997.

MARCH, J.G.: Decisions and Organizations, Basil Blackwell, London 1988.

ARGYRIS, C., SCHON, D.: Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective,  
Reading, Addison-Wesley, Mass. 1978, p. 328