

“Dialogue helps you understand others and yourself”

An ethnographic study on the significance of dialogue

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Abstract

I have conducted seven months of fieldwork among participants and employees at Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue, in Lillehammer, Norway, and have taken part in seminars where dialogue is significant as concept and practice. The interlocutors in this study have background from Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Kosovo, United States, some living in these respective countries and some in Norway. Most of the interlocutors have experiences with conflict, and come to the seminars to learn about dialogue techniques, meet people from different sides in a conflict, and to build cooperation between participants, both in diaspora groups in Norway and in their country of origin. This thesis brings forward how knowledge acquired at seminars is understood and applied among interlocutors, and how participating in seminars is experienced.

Taking part in seminars is by participants expressed as “connecting” and becoming like a “family”. Furthermore, similarity and difference emerged in identification processes among participants during seminars, for instance in different ways of practicing Islam. I argue that the way interlocutors approach practicing dialogue can be looked upon as a meta-perspective on communication. I argue that these ways of talking create internal jargons of understanding between participants, that I call ‘dialoging’. Since several participants have backgrounds from conflict areas, I moreover explore possibilities for empathy and resonance within processes where dialogue is central. Among interlocutors in this study, change on a personal level has been described like becoming a “new” person, or having a “personal transformation”. Moreover, several of the participants want to use what they learn, for instance starting dialogue initiatives in their countries, which underlines a social relevance of the seminars I have studied.

Through this empirical study on the significance of dialogue, this thesis aims to fill a knowledge gap in dialogical anthropology, contributing with a processual and relational perspective on how to understand dialogue.

Key words: dialogue, training seminar, similarity and difference, conflict, communication processes, personal and social change, empathy, resonance, peacebuilding, peace education.

Prelude

This is an ethnographic study on dialogue as a concept, and as it is presented, understood and applied in seminars at Nansen Center for peace and Dialogue. In line with the cooperation agreement with Nansen center for Peace and Dialogue, the center is not anonymised in this thesis, neither are employees. I want to stress that the pages to come are not an evaluation of seminars at Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue, and facilitators of seminars or lecturers are not necessarily speaking on the Nansen center's behalf. I take full responsibility for the whole ethnographical product, analysis and possible shortcomings.

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CHAPTER 1. Introduction

During one seminar one of the participants, Adnan, and I go for a walk. I ask him about his opinion on dialogue. Dialogue is very interesting, Adnan says. “In what way”? I respond. He says that dialogue is “healing” the wounds, and that dialogue requires understanding. Adnan continues to reflect and says that through dialogue you can judge and make a decision. “Dialogue helps you to understand others and yourself”, he continues. Adnan says dialogues helps to get a “startingpoint to ask questions”. “I believe dialogue is a good method for peacebuilding”, especially when it comes to violence, Adnan adds.

Topic and research question

In this thesis I explore: How is knowledge presented, acquired and negotiated among participants at seminars? Furthermore, how do interlocutors experience participating in seminars, and how can participants’ shared experiences be understood? In analysing dialogue as central in the work and seminars of Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (hereafter called Nansen center, and the center), I intend to show how dialogue can be understood and used in practice. Furthermore I investigate the aim of the work of the center and what is at stake for the interlocutors involved.

In this thesis I intend to show how understanding and using dialogue contributes to a meta-perspective on ways of communicating among interlocutors. Elements of dialogue stressed by interlocutors as important, creates ways of talking about communication. I hold that these ways of talking contribute to creating internal jargons and understandings, and to the development of what can be called a ‘culture of dialogue’. I argue that interlocutors get a starting point of common understanding of dialogue during training, as talking together is termed as a dialogue and many interlocutors want to use what they have learned afterwards on a personal and social level. In line with these findings, I argue that dialogue is an active concept used in practice, that I call ‘dialoguing’.

Central concepts

The most central concepts in this study are dialogue and process. Additional concepts will be defined and operationalised throughout the pages to come.

I follow an 'experience-near' and empiric grounded approach in seeking "out knowledge they [the interlocutors] deem relevant to their lived experience as the basis on which to frame cultural understanding" (Wikan 2012:89). As I asked Tariq, one of the interlocutors in this study, about what he saw as the main concepts in the seminar in which he participated, he replied: "It was not about peace, it was more about how we have a good dialogue". Dialogue then is a central concept in this thesis, and in the work of the center.

Etymologically dialogue consists of the Greek "dialogos", coming from "dialegesthai", which means to converse with, where "dia" means through, and "legein" means speak. Logos refers to word and sense. In other words a dialogue is an activity practiced through words that make sense (Oxford dictionaries 2013, Svare 2006:10). Oxford Dictionary defines dialogue as a "conversation between two or more people as a feature of a book, play, or movie", or as "a discussion between two or more people or groups, especially one directed toward exploration of a particular subject or resolution of a problem" (Oxford dictionaries 2013). The Norwegian philosopher Svare has written a book called *Den gode samtalen: kunsten å skape dialog* (*The good conversation: the art of creating dialogue* (my translation)). Svare defines the concept as: "A dialogue is a conversation between two or more persons characterised by mutual good will, openness and cooperation. It is a conversation where you together reach for a common goal" (Svare 2006:7, my translation). This definition resembles, as we will see later on, the understanding of dialogue at the Nansen center.

"Process" is a concept that the Nansen center uses to describe what happens during training. I have found it helpful in understanding interaction, group dynamics and setup of what takes place in the setting at the training seminars, which is how I use the concept in this thesis. As a starting point I hold that in the processes analysed in this thesis, every person has multiple concerns and unique identities, with individual experiences and learning, affecting which part of identity will be made situational relevant (Wikan 2012:130,139). In line with this understanding I argue that ethnic and religious background does not fully suffice as an explanation for understanding the participant's background and behaviour. I do not wish to devote much space to define and discuss 'culture' and what it is or is not, partly in wanting to avoid reification of the term, but also because I am rather more curious to explore what happens between interlocutors at training seminars. Furthermore I make a distinction between employees at the center that have facilitated the training seminars and the participants taking part, even though both groups have been interlocutors in this study. Therefore both

participants and employees will be called interlocutors, whereas the course participants will interchangeably be called participants and interlocutors. I have chosen to use the concept of interlocutor, instead of informant. Gullestad (2003) points to how informant is the most used concept in anthropology, rather than fieldwork person or interlocutor. She suggests it has to do with that even though 'informant' is replaced by 'interlocutor', the researcher has the control over the final result (Gullestad 2003:258). Battaglia (1999:121) points to how dialogue in the textual presentation risks ending, as the written can appear to be a given truth, and not to be like the process and openness that lies in dialogue. With these appropriate warnings in mind I have still chosen to use interlocutor in this thesis because I see the participants at the trainings more as interlocutors than informants, where a mutual learning process has been apparent through fieldwork to which I return to in the next chapter. A background of the center's work follows.

Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue

In 2010 the Norwegian Peace Center (Norsk Fredssenter) and Nansen Dialogue (Nansen dialog nettverk), both located at Lillehammer, were merged together into what is now called the Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (Nansen Fredssenter 2010). The Norwegian Peace center has long experience working with diaspora groups through courses with diaspora groups from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and Somalia. Since its beginning in 1995, Nansen Dialogue has developed its peace, dialogue and reconciliation work in the Balkan region to a network that has established ten local branches of Nansen dialogue centers in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia (Sørli Røhr 2005:3). The center describes their work on their website in the following way:

We do not know best how to create peace around the globe. The solutions are with those involved in the conflict. What we can contribute are tools and experiences that can make a difference for a lasting peace in a variety of places and situations. (Nansen Fredssenter 2013a).

Developing tools to create peace is furthermore underlined by the center, where dialogue seminars are put forward as the most important tool. In this way the center provides experience-based knowledge on different conflicts both nationally and internationally, and provides practical dialogue and reconciliation skills through seminars. The Nansen center works with peacebuilding and reconciliation in aftermath of war, rather than related to

international peace negotiations. A term used by the center to describe their work is “dialogue work” (*dialogarbeid*). I define dialogue work as the practical implementation of training seminars where participants learn dialogue as a method, with the aim of a better understanding of each other, the nature of conflict, and acquiring of knowledge that can be used after the training on a personal and social level. Other concepts that describe the center’s work are: “courses, seminars, dialogue seminars, peace education, educational programme, dialogue projects, training or dialogue meetings” (Nansen Fredssenter 2013a). I will use some of these terms interchangeably, but mostly I use training and seminar, reflecting the learning of dialogue as a communication form and the processual elements part of training seminars that I have found.

The Nansen center is located within the same building as the folk high school, Nansen Academy at Lillehammer. Nansen Academy is a one-year boarding school based on learning for life not only for the sake of a degree (Folkehøgskolene 2013a). Aarbakke’s (2002) report on the work of Nansen Dialogue and facilitating dialogue in former Yugoslavia over the years, puts forward how the pedagogical approach is partly built on the tradition of the Scandinavian ‘folkehøyskole’, and on the workshop concept as applied by organisations working with peacebuilding. As presented by the organisers of the course, dialogue increasingly became the central concept in the work, while the four additional elements of teaching, social activities, physical activities and cultural activities were mutually interconnecting elements during courses (Aarbakke 2002:9-11). One of the courses I participated in was different from dialogue seminars with participants from the Balkans, or peace education courses with Afghan diaspora in Norway, as I followed a mixed training seminar with participants having background from Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina. I still find the central elements in the work mentioned above to be applicable in understanding important factors in the learning environment at courses. Several studies from various academic stands have researched the center’s work, among them Aarbakke and Eide and Mathisen (2011, 2012) that have done several evaluations of the center’s projects, among them a peace education project at a Norwegian asylum center (2011).

Participants at the training seminars I have researched have background from conflict areas and experiences with war in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraqi Kurdistan. Even though Islam is the religion for the majority in these countries I will not focus on the regional aspects of participants’ background. Further choices of demarcation I have made, relate to the dimension

of conflict part of the center's work, which I will not dive into in this thesis, as I rather focus on what happens at the trainings themselves between interlocutors and how it is experienced. Furthermore I could have focused more on diaspora groups as part of peacebuilding work, and in the cosmopolitan tendency among some of the interlocutors, travelling around having lived various places, but this is not a trail I investigate in this thesis.

The center's main financial support is from VOX, the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong learning, an agency of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (VOX 2013). Through the years the Nansen dialogue network has been funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the center's work is also based on project grants. Finding financial support is a concern employees had to deal with, which at times was expressed as stressful. The center has eleven employees some of whom you will be acquainted with in this thesis. An Academic Council (*Fagråd*) further contributes with knowledge for the center to draw on (Nansen Fredssenter 2013b).

Positioning in an analytical landscape

Once culture is seen as arising from a dialogical ground, then ethnography itself is revealed as an emergent cultural (or intercultural) phenomenon, produced, reproduced, and revised in dialogues between field-workers and natives (Tedlock, Mannheim 1995:2).

As I approached understanding dialogue and peacebuilding work, I quickly came to see how dialogue has been studied in various disciplines. In anthropological approaches to the peace movement, Sponsel and Gregor (1994) point to how the peace movement is the fastest growing movement in newer history (Sponsel and Gregor 1994:5). In this regard Wolfe and Yang (1996:147) propose it to be advantageous for anthropologists to contribute with knowledge about these new trends, and the relations created between NGOs and the global work with peace, peace studies and research. I see the Nansen center's work and contribution of "tools and experiences" stressed by the center to "make a difference for a lasting peace in a variety of places" as part of a peace movement and global work with peace. Furthermore Howell and Willis (1989) show anthropological examples of societies described as "peaceful", and Nordstrom and Robben (1995) bring forward anthropological approaches to sociopolitical conflict and violence.

Dialogical anthropology

Kohl (1998) presents the longstanding discussion with anthropology about the methodological approach and accusations by postmodern and postcolonial critics on its shortcomings (Kohl 1998:51). What seemed to be a solution to this criticism, was put forth in the experimental ethnographic writing formulated as dialogues, in the works of Crapanzano (1980) and Dwyer (1982) called dialogical anthropology (Kohl 1998:51). As proponents of dialogical anthropology, Tedlock (1979, 1987), Tedlock and Bruce Mannheim (1995) and Dwyer (1977) are central. Criticism has on the other side concerned how dialogues, as it appears during fieldwork, can be represented in the format of written dialogue (Fabian 1990:764). I find that the central project of dialogical anthropology brings forward how ethnography in itself is a dialogical process revised in the encounter between fieldworker and interlocutors, as put forward by Tedlock and Mannheim (1995) above. Some of dialogical anthropology's proponents have taken the form of dialogue to the outermost, writing in a dialogical format as Dwyer does (1982) in his book *Maroccan dialogues: Anthropology in Question*. The book is based on transcription of eleven conversations Dwyer had with his informant and he uses dialogues in a textual format. Tedlock uses the same approach, for instance in his article *Questions concerning dialogical anthropology* (1987) and in the book *The dialogic emergence of culture* (1995). A critical perspective on the methodological approach during fieldwork and the relation between informant and anthropologist is further central in dialogical anthropology discussions. Dwyer for instance calls for making the dialectical interaction and relation between anthropologist and informant explicit (Dwyer 1982:272). Still, a lot has happened during the past decades, with an increased degree of reflexivity within anthropology and writing strategies to emphasise personal relations during fieldwork (Gullestad 2003:258), which is also evident in the writing style of confessional tales (Van Maanen 2011).

I have found that through an ethnographic study of how dialogue is understood by interlocutors and exploring what takes place in processes where dialogue is central, I suggest that my findings can contribute to dialogical anthropology, in broadening an understanding of what dialogue also can entail, based on own empirical evidence. I therefore argue that this thesis can contribute with knowledge about dialogue as concept and practice. I also see a possibility for mutual knowledge exchange between the centers understanding of dialogue, and analytical anthropological approaches I have found useful in researching dialogue work.

In researching for relevant and comparative anthropological studies to the dialogue training seminars, I had a difficult time finding anthropological research on the field I have studied. I did not want to go into discourse analysis, or linguistic anthropological approaches to communication, or *Forms of talk* (Goffman 1981). Therefore, I rather found three main analytical perspectives and approaches to be fruitful and helpful in understanding what takes place in processes at courses where dialogue is central.

Analytical perspectives towards dialoguing for peace

Among interlocutors during training seminars a meta-perspective on communication has been evident throughout fieldwork. Bateson (2000:178) explains the meta-communicative level of abstraction, as when the subject in a conversation focuses on the relationship between the people speaking, or defines the situation or conversation that one is in. Keesing (1998:41) follows Bateson in arguing that in meta-communication people put frames around messages in order to understand how they should interpret these messages. Further I have found this meta-communication relating to Ingold's (2007) notion of learning by doing. Ingold describes learning by doing as a process in which knowledge is continuously created and discovered with active participants, which is what interlocutors have done through sharing experiences and having a meta-perspective throughout the training seminar process. Learning by doing is furthermore a process that all humans have in common, not just interlocutors in a study (Ingold 2007:288). The latter fact additionally illustrates a panhuman approach to learning, communicating, or perhaps dialoguing, that I hold has a level of perspicacity contributing with knowledge for other fields of study.

I have secondly, within the training seminars that I see as learning and communicative processes, found differentiation and negotiations of similarity and difference taking place in interlocutors positioning themselves in relation to others, identification processes where similarity and difference stressed, situational dependent. I find Jenkins' (2004) theory on social identity to be useful to understand dynamics. Within identification processes, similarity is most often linked to the collective aspects of identification, whilst difference is most often linked to the individual (Jenkins 2004:16). Jenkins defines identification as "the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities" (Jenkins 2004:5). In this way, as Jenkins suggests, similarity and difference should be seen together making what he calls "the dynamic principles of identification" (Jenkins 2004:5). This principle I have found in processes where dialogue is

significant, as connection and division or differentiation occurs, and as expressed in the interlocutors' use of similarity and difference.

The third analytical perspective I have found helpful is looking at the experience and sensitivity between interlocutors and how it is expressed, which I find relates to the domains of empathy and resonance. Hollan and Throop (2011:2) present the reason for their anthology *The Anthropology of empathy* to contribute to knowledge about empirical incidents of empathy in their context and everyday interactions. Following Halpern, Hollan (2008) points to an ongoing dialogue for the accuracy of the process of empathy. This, in my opinion, testifies to the fruitfulness of analysing my own empirical material and just what this ongoing dialogue can entail, also in terms of better understanding empathy in everyday interactions. Especially considering that Halpern, according to Hollan, does not develop the idea of what an ongoing dialogue entails in much detail (Hollan 2008: 476). The concept of resonance, Wikan (1992:463) presents, demands a willingness to engage with another's world. Furthermore resonance demands an ability to use one's own experience and trying to understand beyond the words what is evoked in the meeting between experiencing subjects. In this way I find resonance relates to understanding each other better and to the center's understanding of dialogue. With these analytical perspectives in mind I suggest possibilities for mutual enriching in understanding resonance and what happens in processes at training seminars where dialogue is central. Moreover, I suggest that exploring dialogue and resonance possibly can contribute to understand better "the ways in which people in different times and places promote and discourage understanding of themselves" (Hollan 2008: 475), and to better grasp empathy in everyday interactions (Hollan and Throop 2011).

Target group

To define who you are writing for is important in adapting text to potential readers (Nygaard 2008, Lie 1995). With this thesis I wish to reach an anthropological audience, as well as a broader audience. I also take the starting point that anthropologists can have a role to play in contributing with knowledge that can affect social change (Rugkåsa, Thorsen 2003:11). I see training seminars for improving communication between people in personal relations and in post-conflict societies, are knowledge of social relevance. Moreover, I have written in English, as I wanted more people to have the possibility to read it.

Thesis outline

The chapters in this thesis firstly introduce the content of the chapter to come. A presentation of empirical evidence follows, with a further analytical perspective and discussion at the end, before closing reflections. The next chapter elaborates the methodological approaches I have taken in the research process, wherein mutual learning has been important both theoretically, but also methodologically in being a fieldworker.

What I call a landscape of dialogue initiatives is the focus in chapter three. I will illustrate with examples of how dialogue is portrayed in the Norwegian humour TV-series *Lilyhammer*, various organisations' dialogue meetings, and discussing the branding of Norway portrayed as a nation of peace. I suggest that these various understandings of the concept of dialogue and the history of religious dialogue all make out bits of a mosaic within which the Nansen center's work can be situated.

The center's understanding of dialogue is the main focus in chapter four. I intend to show how this understanding is learned and used by participants, and how this can be seen as a meta-perspective on communication. I suggest this way of learning and using knowledge at training seminars can be related to Batesons's concept of 'metalogue' and knowledge as presented by Barth.

How training seminars are experienced as "connecting" and becoming like a "family", is explored in chapter five. I suggest that dancing together is a factor during training that creates a sense of group feeling, and can lead to what is expressed as unity across earlier country divides. Further notions of personal change among participants and employees will be dealt with, as a parameter of using dialogue more in personal relations, towards internalising this way of communicating as a lifestyle.

Factors that differentiate participants, like different opinions and different ways of practicing religion, also emerge in training seminars. In chapter six, incidents of how interlocutors deal with disagreement are put forward. Building on the dividing and connecting aspects of similarity and difference that emerged during training, I will discuss dialogue in relation to resonance and empathy in chapter seven. In chapter eight, I bring aspects of the center's work together, suggesting a relation between personal change and wanting to achieve changes in society and in relations between people.

CHAPTER 2. Methodological approach

Anthropology, perhaps more than any other discipline, is about learning how to learn. It is not so much the study of people as a way of studying with people - a protracted master-class in which the novice gradually learns to see things and of course to hear and feel them too, in the ways his or hers mentors do (Ingold 2007:287).

Access to the field

In May 2011 I came in contact with the Nansen center as I took part in a dialogue meeting held by Christiane. These meetings were held all over Norway, and the theme was: *How to live in a multicultural society?* At this point I was in the process of finding out where I should do my fieldwork. After the meeting Christiane told about different projects at the center, one of them being a competence-building course for women in Norway with Somali background that caught my interest. As this project did not get the funding in time for me to research, I stayed in touch with Christiane about other projects I could follow instead through the fall of 2011. Christiane guided me to contact the right people related to the Dialogue forum in Drammen municipality and one of the training seminars, and became a key interlocutor, also in terms of access to the field.

Later on through Steinar also working at the center, I got in contact with different local branches of the Nansen Dialogue Network in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as I initially planned to do a multisited fieldwork there and in Norway. One participant working at a local Nansen Dialogue center in Bosnia-Herzegovina was meant to join what I in the following call the long course. As she could not join this course I ended up focusing on the long course and kept contact with employees at the center through telephone and emails, and adapted to the courses I could access to and followed the opportunities that came. For instance I joined Inge and Steinar to visit local centers in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia in the end of January 2012. In the following six months I attended different trainings and activities described below.

I got permission from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) to do fieldwork at training seminars connected to the center. I was accepted to take part in the long course as a researcher through the contact I had with Norunn and Christiane, and in cooperation with the

two and Maria D. Sommardahl, the Nansen center's director, we formed a cooperation agreement referred to in the prelude and ethical considerations below.

The places of study

During the fieldwork period between January 3rd and July 30th 2012, I participated at different training seminars, meetings and activities in Lillehammer, Drammen, Oslo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. Lillehammer is a middle-sized town of 26.850 *lillehamringer*, as the local government call the inhabitants at the end of 2012 (Lillehammer kommune 2013).

Training seminars

Common for most of the trainings I have attended is that different employees at the center facilitate exercises in training seminars with participants on topics such as dialogue, communication, conflict analysis, identity, and the role of diaspora in peacebuilding.

Long course

This thesis is mostly based on a one month long training seminar for practitioners and interested in dialogue and peacebuilding. Eleven participants of both sexes in the age from 19-37 participated at the training, with background from Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina, both living in these respective countries and in Norway. The long course and meeting most of the participants in different contexts afterwards, build the main foundation for analysis, having the other training seminars and meetings to draw on to nuance, and as complementary, comparative supplements.

International Summer School

Supplementing the long course is the training seminar for 35 international students that I attended, connected to the International Summer School (hereafter called ISS), at the University of Oslo. Approximately half of the students came from countries in the Balkans like Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Norway, the second half had background from the United States. The ISS-training started some years ago with students from the Balkans, then Peace Scholars from different universities in the United States of America were added to the training. The age ranged from 19 and early twenties to early thirties. These ISS-students had a five-day training in Lillehammer before joining around 500 international students in Oslo for the next six weeks with two additional follow up meetings in Oslo with Steinar.

Additional arenas

I have been to meetings organised by different organisations and actors that I return to in the next chapter. I have attended seminars for instance about Afghanistan or the screening of the documentary movie Reunion about dialogue work between Serbs and Kosovo-Albanians. Additionally I have been to meetings related to a Dialogue forum in Drammen municipality, working with themes and questions connected to diversity and inclusion. Christiane was consultant for this forum in terms of using dialogue as a tool in this work. I will not focus on this forum in this thesis, but having attended meetings connected to the forum has been part of forming my understanding of the center's work.

Interlocutors

The “field universe” of this ethnographic study is thematically defined, as the interlocutors in this study share a certain quality connected to a theme as participants or facilitators at training seminars (Fangen 2004:51). Moreover the field can be defined as a network-based “universe”, as interlocutors in my study are related to each other through the Nansen center's work (Fangen 2004:51). Interlocutors in my study mostly have academic background, enrolled in Bachelors studies, Master Degree Programmes or PHDs. Some had background as journalists, lawyers, teachers, employees in organisations or politicians. Even so, despite interlocutors' different positions in society, I suggest that the interlocutors can be seen as a particular group, in terms of having a common interest, motivation and will to engage with dialogue and peacebuilding work when I met them. Still participants might have different goals and motivations. I suggest that participants coming from countries that either have been or are in conflict and war might have two agendas training seminars. This has to do with learning about dialogue and peacebuilding, get friends, and additionally to meet other participants from the Balkan region for instance, in order to rebuild relationships with “the other side” of a conflict.

I have also found employees to be interlocutors as well in the way that I have learned from them about how to understand dialogue, and the interaction between employees and participants taught me a lot about how to understand the process during training. Participating in the long course, the Dialogue forum, the ISS-course and going on a visit to the Balkans, also gave me access to different aspects of the center's and employees' way of working.

“Open-minded” participants

As the interlocutors seem to have a common interest that brings them together, where do participants come from and who decides who gets to join? As Peter, one participant at the

ISS-training, stated at dinner one day, the people that come to this sort of training are already “open-minded”. This was confirmed by Christiane that told me how participants at the courses were “handpicked”. Christiane said in an interview that they wanted to have engaged people at the long course and that can use what they learn. Christiane described these people to be the ones that would come to talk with her after a dialogue meeting for instance. She explained how at each course two out of 20 would understand this way of working, five participants if you were lucky. I will return to the aspect of motivation and interlocutors’ thoughts on how to use what they learn, especially in chapter eight.

To sum up I have had around 21 main interlocutors based on the 11 participants at the long course (mostly 6 participants), out of the 11 employees at the center (mostly 3 employees), from the ISS-training with around 35 participants (mainly 10), and in relation to the Dialogue forum in Drammen where around 30 people participated (mainly two interlocutors). As a result I have been in contact with many people, having had around 21 main interlocutors. Furthermore I have been in contact with up to 80 people like employees at local dialogue centers in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, at seminars, or in an initiative in Oslo called a “dialogue café”, that I attended four times with around 15 participants. This resulted in 30 of the 80 participants to be more peripheral interlocutors.

During fieldwork one of the interlocutors chose to withdraw from the research project, something I solved by not referring to this person in the thesis.

Ethical considerations

I have found that during training seminars people get to know each other well, through living together at campus and talking about personal and existential issues in exercises and leisure time. Furthermore, most interlocutors in this study have experiences with conflict and war and have shared sensitive information connected to experiences with war, or different ways of practicing Islam. Some of the participants have also background from multiple sides of a conflict. Therefore I have been concerned to make sure interlocutors are not recognised in environments from which the participants have background. For this reason interlocutors are not described in detail and some details are written in a more general form. I have used anonymised names that can be representative for several of the regions, like Muslim names that can be found in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Afghanistan. Description of participants’ country, age range and working areas have already been pointed out previously in this

chapter. In the thesis I therefore rarely refer to specific countries of origin related to persons, out of anonymising concerns. Furthermore, some places in this thesis I use the term participant or interlocutor, as I have assessed some situations to be more sensitive.

At the long course I was introduced by employees as a master student. I got some time to introduce myself as a masterstudent in social anthropology and that I used qualitative method and participant observation in order to understand what was important for participants in these training seminars. I also explicitly said that if participants had any questions they could ask me. At the ISS-training I was introduced as a master student by staff I also wrote a report for the Nansen center evaluating the specific ISS-training, which the participants were made aware. I did not have the same presentation as at the long course, so I also talked with participants in more informal settings about my research. In this way I got verbal consent from participants at courses and nobody objected that I took part in the trainings. In other activities connected to the center's work, like in Drammen, I would make my objective of being there doing research in social anthropology clear, and I only experienced positive feedback on researching the center's work.

In line with the cooperation agreement with the center, I agreed to not anonymise the center or its employees, and that lecturers that do not work at the center would get the opportunity to confirm quotes I use in this thesis. Employees that have facilitated trainings described in this thesis have also had the possibility to read through the thesis, to come with inputs on details that factually have been wrong, or that could possibly harm participants at trainings. Knowing that the center's employees would read through the thesis has given implications in considering inputs and opinions of the employees, and an extra focus of leaving out aspects and details to protect the anonymity of interlocutors. I have considered all inputs from the center's part, but have not modified any substantial aspects of my analysis, only in terms of anonymising to a larger degree, than before I sent it to the center. In this way I consider the fact that some employees got to read through the thesis has not affected the objectivity and reliability of the research project's findings (Stewart 1998:17). For me it has also been important to continue the open contact with the center throughout the research process.

Multi-sited fieldwork

As indicated above, the center's projects that I got access to changed along the way. I therefore adapted by taking part in arrangements and activities connected to the center, and

trying to meet interlocutors afterwards in as many arenas as possible, following interlocutors in dialogue work. The employees and participants travel a lot, to the trainings, or the employees travel to facilitate training seminars in different places in Norway, like in Drammen, or to Afghanistan or the different centers in the Balkans. My field of study is then transcending the local, single site, and can in this way be described as 'multi-sited' (Marcus 1995:79). Multi-sited ethnography investigates the circulation of objects, cultural meanings, and identities that cannot be researched while staying at a single site. Marcus terms it as a 'mobile ethnography' as ethnographers move between arenas, in order to understand the connections, relations and associations surrounding the phenomenon of study (Marcus 1995:79-81). I have found that the mode of travelling among interlocutors tells me something about the field I have studied. Moving is evident as participants come to seminars in Lillehammer, but live for instance in Oslo, and in how some participants travel to courses from the Middle East, USA and the Balkans. I have also seen how researchers researching peace and conflict issues intermingle with participants and employees at different arenas like seminars in Lillehammer or arrangements at the Peace Research Institute of Oslo.

Fieldwork in Norway

Frøystad (2003) discusses doing fieldwork in Norway as a Norwegian. Criticism of fieldwork in one's own society, has particularly been voiced by the Norwegian anthropologist Howell. The criticism is based on the difficulty of getting access to peoples' home spheres, following informants on different arenas to get data on interaction, and seldom getting to experience cultural difference, like in the analysis of exotic fieldwork. Frøystad agrees with Howell to some extent, but wants to nuance Howell's caution, considering several rich studies in a Norwegian context carried out by Norwegian researchers (Frøystad 2003:32-33). I got access to participate at courses and live together with interlocutors on campus in Lillehammer. Firstly, this meant that I was not reliant on interviews, but based my analysis on participatory observation, even though the field I have studied is multisited. Secondly, even though I did most of my fieldwork in Norway, I still argue that you can exoticise what you study. In context of this thesis the interlocutors additionally have diverse backgrounds, both living in Norway and abroad. The language in most of the training seminars has been English or translation to English from Bosnian, and participants would additionally talk Norwegian, Balkan languages, Dari, Persian, Pashtu, Kurdish and Arabic. Even though I only speak Norwegian and English out of these languages, I still consider my empirical material to be sufficient, despite not getting access to all verbal communication between interlocutors.

During fieldwork I meet several researchers in different contexts parallel to my own research. I think this fact also exemplifies the complex body of knowledge at the center, the cooperation with researchers and the wish of getting research on their work. What I found was that as several employees have background as researchers, and participants were or had been enrolled in academic studies, the worldview of interlocutors at times converged with the theoretical understanding of me as an anthropologist (Fagerlid 2005:153). Further implications came forward in how interlocutors' world view also converged with a methodological understanding, where I was asked what method I used in my research, or that I got daily questions about how it was going with my thesis.

Empirical material

During fieldwork I wrote extensive and descriptive fieldnotes on interaction, interlocutors' statements and context each day. These fieldnotes were based on 'headnotes', remembering occurrences and expressions, that I quickly would write down during breaks, often in the restrooms, in the form of 'scratch notes', or on my mobile phone (Sanjek 1990:93,95). As I understood that in one situation one of the participants felt uncomfortable with my 'scratch notes' during an exercise, I started writing them during breaks instead. On the other hand I also used 'open note taking' as an approach to actively involve participants, following up on concrete expressions, words and asking the interlocutors whether I had understood them correctly. This was a method Hutchinson used during her fieldwork among Nuers in the South-Sudan (Hutchinson 1996:44). Fangen, on the other hand, points to the fact that involving interlocutors too much will make the participants even more conscious about being observed (Fangen 2004:155). I experienced that open-note taking worked well if I asked in advance, as for instance during the walk with Adnan, opening this thesis, I brought with me pen and paper and I double checked quotes with him. Otherwise I took notes during exercises and lectures, which some of the interlocutors also did, so it seemed like a natural thing to do. Going into the role of a master student seemed to work, and gave me a good base to get direct quotes, the order of themes discussed, and what was expressed by whom and when. This means that expressions by interlocutors that are paraphrased in this thesis are close to what the participants expressed, and use direct quotes marked with quotation marks, or as italics in the original language. Concepts used by other theorists are marked with single quotation marks.

In writing fieldnotes, I have additionally followed Stewart (1998) and the style of writing down “the ethnographer’s path” (Stewart 1998:34). By this, I refer to the people I have been in contact with, mail correspondence and text-messaging with interlocutors, in addition to relevant articles in the media. This way I had awareness throughout the process about the information I acquired, and thus the factors that affected my knowledge of the field of study. Furthermore my empirical material consists of information I received from the center such as articles, programmes, annual reports, pictures I took of big flip-over sheets used during exercises, PowerPoint presentations, pictures and videos and texts shared among the participants. I derived information from the center’s website, and received access to minutes from previous meetings related to the Dialogue forum in Drammen. Textual sources have been helpful for me to see how dialogue work is presented and what is stressed as important, and are therefore part of building my understanding of the field. In line with Maranhão (1990:9), I find this additional source of information to have contributed to see interconnections between subjects, levels of meaning and language in the study and interpretation of dialogue.

Due to an extensive base of empirical material from fieldwork, I have additional examples that support findings presented in this thesis. This way, examples used in this thesis are representative of tendencies and patterns in my material, pointing to the validity and verisimilitude of the depictions used (Stewart 1998:17). In terms of access to the field of study, and therein access to empirical material, the center put certain conditions. For instance I did respect Christiane’s and Norunn’s wish to not contact participants before the long course. Additionally, I agreed to write an evaluation report of the ISS-course in return for getting access to the course and free food and accommodation.

Participant observation

Participant observation has been the main methodological approach during fieldwork, being present and participating in the formal and informal arenas in which the participants engaged. Conversations and chats with interlocutors make out the most of my empirical material. In this way I also got access to interaction and expressions used in different settings and insight into interlocutors’ experiences and ways of seeing the world, which is important in order to be able to go beyond one’s own frame of understanding as researcher (Frøystad 2003:42).

In practice my participatory observation usually had the form of “small talk” with participants following the topics raised by interlocutors, and I did not express my opinions that often. During the training seminar in Lillehammer, I usually had a more laid-back role, like that of a novice, rather listening to conversations than proposing what to talk about, though I would also occasionally have suggestions, inputs and ask questions about participants point of view on different topics. Methodologically, I pursued themes I found interesting and relevant during conversations, using this approach interchangeably with being more drawn back, so as not to lead but respond to what interlocutors wanted to talk about. That way, I was open to what was important for each participant.

In the last months of fieldwork, as I met up with interlocutors after the long course, I shared more of my opinion. As these meetings with interlocutors were more on a one-to-one basis, and interlocutors would ask about my opinion on different topics, this was both natural and necessary to keep a conversation going. It also turned out to be useful to increasingly share my own opinions through the fieldwork period as people in this way opened up to me, and I to them. As will be particularly evident in chapter seven, increasingly I saw how opening up also meant expressing one’s own feelings. Building relations with interlocutors as a methodological approach, also contributed to my understanding of what was central for interlocutors participating in seminars. This approach can be seen in line with how Wikan (1996) describes her relation with her Egyptian informants that she calls friends and in the fruitfulness Wikan describes in achieving resonance with interlocutors (Wikan 1992, 2012).

Interviews

I conducted 15 interviews during fieldwork. Six of these interviews were with participants, in addition to four interviews with Norunn, Christiane, Steinar and Maria. I had an interview with Irina Greni and Johan Baumann together, and a phone interview with the mayor of Drammen, Tore Opdahl Hansen, related to the work of the Drammen Dialogue forum. Furthermore I interviewed Ivar Flaten, vicar in a church in Drammen, who’s been central in the work on religious dialogues in Drammen. I interviewed senior researcher Helge Svare at the Work Research Institute and Anne Hege Grung, post. doc at Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo, that has experience with religious dialogues in Norway since the beginning of the 90’s. These interviews were based on questions I had prepared beforehand, and I would ask if they wanted to look at the questions before we started. I had some questions to guide the direction in the interview, but always adapted the questions, for

instance between questions for seminar participants and employees. I would also emphasise that I was open to talk about topics that could arise through the interview (Fangen 2004:148). See appendix for some of these guiding questions.

From these interviews, I particularly learned more about the historical context of dialogue work, which contributed for me to get a more nuanced understanding of dialogue work in Norway, and thus also the work of the center. As I decided to do most of the interviews at the end of the fieldwork period, I got confirmations on observations and ways of describing dialogue and experiences of the trainings I had done so far. Therefore I used several ways of data collection, contributing to verisimilitude of depiction, and as I got respondent validation it contributed to reliability and to a certain extent feedback from outsiders (Stewart 1998:17). Still, I have found that most of the empirical material put forth in this thesis is based on participatory observation, as I got a more nuanced understanding of what happened at trainings, salient concerns for interlocutors, and how what was learned was expressed and used in practice. This also points to the well-known fact within anthropology that there is not always consistency between what participants say and what they do. Additionally, I had several Skype conversations over the internet with three participants after training seminars. During these conversations I jotted down the most important things we talked about, and asked about permission to do so, in order to better remember what they told me. I found these conversations to be helpful to find out more about what participants were doing and what their thoughts were after the training.

Own positioning

Previous to fieldwork I had heard about the Nansen center's work as a student at the Nansen Academy during the year of 2006/2007. At that point I briefly talked with Steinar, and joined one dialogue workshop with a Balkan group, which already then sparked my interest. Additionally I have been engaged in peace education in the Norwegian Peace Association, especially working with youth. Furthermore, as I was in the process of finding out what I wanted to research I participated in a dialogue meeting facilitated by Christiane, and I can in this way be seen as one of the interested people. Thus I brought into the field with me an interest and engagement for this sort of work. This is also why I wanted to research something within this field in the first place, as I wanted to research working with social issues where I saw a possibility to contribute knowledge about this sort of work.

My positioning that can be termed as close to the field I have studied, and the fact that employees knew I was positively inclined towards their work through the interest I showed, made me reflect a lot on my own positioning. Because I in this way was close to sharing insider's goals, or had an approach of being an active member researcher (Stewart 1998:22-23), I distanced myself by writing field notes as descriptive as possible, and striving to have as open and exoticising gaze as possible. I also distanced myself through positioning myself in writing down my own biases and knowledge before I went into the field, during fieldwork and afterwards. At the same time, to master daily activities in the field at the same level as interlocutors is in line with how Stewart describes ethnography as a process of learning. Having knowledge of this field of work from peace education made it easier for me to get into these sort of training processes and coping in the field's daily tasks (Stewart 1998:20-21). In terms of positioning, I came across a dilemma in being a researcher and trying to have as little reactivity as possible, while balancing this to being a participant and taking part in the exercises as expected from the other participants. In this way I experienced how taking part of the process of learning and acquiring knowledge, learning how to communicate as the interlocutors learned it, as a way into understanding the language they learned and used. So, being part of this process also entails being conscious about the way I communicated, not only as a researcher, but also as a participant, in other words, I myself participated in the dialoguing.

Additionally, I found that I negotiated my own position and identity situational, in terms of choosing when to stress that my mother was German and that I was born and raised in Norway, as a way to express being similar and being different in a Norwegian context. I also went into the role of listening and learning as a young woman, the youngest in some settings. Moreover, I did not always understand employees' humour, the latter elements contributed to going into a role like that of a novice.

Being positioned

All the way through fieldwork, I experienced mutual positioning in the way that I was not only positioning myself; the interlocutors positioned me just as much. This was for instance illustrated at the long course, when I presented my reason for being there. Afterwards, one of the participants, Tariq, told me how he liked my presentation, and that it was good that I really got the people in the research to understand what I was doing. This statement is representative of how people generally were positive towards my research. Interlocutors

would most often position me as a student and researcher, by asking me how it was going with my anthropological fieldwork, whether I had relaxed or written field notes, and that several employees stressed that they hoped being at the trainings were “not a waste” (*bortkastet*) for me. I was also positioned as an “insider” as a former student at the Nansen academy, illustrated in how employees took for granted that I knew how the alarm system functioned or getting access to the internet. Participants would also from time to time ask help on, for instance, translating words between Norwegian and English or writing a note to get refund on travel receipts. Furthermore some employees and participants would give me an eye wink, that I interpreted as a sort of knowledge about researching that was shared between us. Christiane would also stress how research is very important for the center and how they have not been so good on “documenting” their work before. I, on my part, saw all of these ways of positioning me as a way to understand the field. What was evident was that there were similarities in having an academic background, showing a mutual positioning and converging understandings between interlocutor and anthropologist (Fagerlid 2005).

Closing reflections

Mutual learning as methodological approach

During a religious dialogue seminar with participants from Norway and the Middle East held at the Nansen Academy, I joined one session that Christiane facilitated. It was during the last days I was in Lillehammer in the end of June 2012.

Christiane, myself and some other participants wait for the rest of the participants to come into the room. Christiane says to the ones present that Odilia has “followed” her and their work for 6 months. One participant comments that just yesterday Odilia said she had learned a lot. Christiane smiles and says that I “learned a lot from Odilia and the intensive talks we have had”. I smile and think that I have also learned a lot.

This example illustrates a mutual learning through the research process, which I also argue has been one of the methodological approaches during fieldwork. Learning how to learn, then as stressed by Ingold in the introduction has proven to be something that both the interlocutors and I have done, so then anthropology is not a study of, but with the interlocutors. What became apparent to me was the way dialogue was an activity, as well as a way of theorising about a particular way of communicating in the field I studied. This made me aware of my own methodological approach and how I was present as a participant

observer in the field being a fieldworker. This again opened up a new perspective in terms of acquiring empirical material, and a renewed possibility to reflect upon my own methodological approach, as well as reflecting on what a dialogical approach in anthropology can entail. I will not go further about this track in this thesis, but only want to mention that I have done these reflections.

CHAPTER 3. Norwegian dialogue initiatives

[In modern diplomacy] you don't have to be neutral to talk. You don't have to agree when you sit down with the other side, and you can always walk; but if you don't talk, you can't engage the other side (Støre 2011).

So far theoretical and methodological approaches in my ethnographic study have been accounted for. In this chapter different approaches to dialogue work will be explored. I found that in order to sufficiently describe the field I have studied, it was necessary to take into account a bigger frame of reference in which the center's work is situated. Using the term of a Norwegian dialogue landscape in this chapter is due to the many variations of using dialogue I have encountered during fieldwork. As dialogue is used from organisations, politicians acting as peace mediators internationally, to local initiatives, religious initiatives, TV-shows and TV-series, I got curious about this mosaic and came to consider media sources as a supplement of understanding dialogue work. On this note I want to stress that my intention is not to give a full account of mapping the landscape of different initiatives similar to the center; it is merely an attempt to show that it is part of a broader picture of how to use and understand dialogue. Let us first take a look at the Norwegian TV-series *Lilyhammer* that was broadcasted during the first months of 2012 in Norway. In average it was viewed by 1/5 of the Norwegian population, meaning it was not only popular in Lillehammer and among interlocutors living there (NRK 2012a).

"I am big on this dialogue stuff"

Lilyhammer was mentioned several times during fieldwork and I found the TV-series to be a good example of how dialogue is spoken of in the Norwegian society. As a participant at a training and I are walking through the streets of Lillehammer the participant in an enthusiastic voice exclaims being an extra in two of the series. At other occasions other employees would for instance joke about going to the Flamingo bar shown in the series. Even employees at local Nansen Dialogue centers in the Balkans would tell me that there was a series about Lillehammer.

The TV-series has additionally gained international success and is sold to more than 17 countries worldwide (NRK 2012a). *Lilyhammer* portrays the former mafia member Frank Tagliano from New York, USA. In return for testifying against his boss he gets to choose

from where ever in the world he can start over, through FBI's witness protection program. He chooses Lillehammer in Norway, as he remembers the TV-images from the host town for the 1994 Winter Olympics. The humoristic serie portrays how Frank, that calls himself Johnny, handles the encounter with the Norwegian welfare state and its bureaucracy, rules and snow (TVDB 2013). Lilyhammer also stereotypically portrays people working at the Nansen Academy as "tree huggers" and idealists, and makes fun of non-violent activism and dialogue.

In the setting of the scene described below, Johnny meets a representative in the organisation called *Natteravnene*. This is a volunteer organisation with adults that walks around in local environments at night time, based on the idea that being available and visible has a preventive effect on vandalism and violence (Natteravnene 2013). The following scene is based on my translation, as Johnny speaks English while most often the Norwegian actors speak Norwegian.

Natteravn representative says to Johnny: "We Natteravner have zero tolerance for violence".

Johnny: "What? How do you achieve anything then?"

Natteravn representative: "We talk with them, of course".

Johnny: "You can't talk with bullies. Do you think we had caught Saddam if we had shown up in yellow vests to take a chat"?

Natteravn representative: "With these attitudes I have to ask you to return the vest". The representative sits down at the sofa next to Johnny, with a serious facial expression.

"All right, all right", Johnny says. As he takes his vest off, another man that Johnny has been in touch with earlier comes walking in and Johnny instead continues to tell the

representative: "I fooled you there. I was just kidding. I am big on this dialogue-stuff".

Johnny nods in a serious fashion and friendly taps the representative's shoulder (Lilyhammer 2012a, my translation).

The American Dream meets Law of Jante

This sequence can be understood in various ways, where especially the last quote can be seen to have different connotations in English and Norwegian. In Norwegian I suggest the quote implies that the main character is really good at this particular way of talking, this "dialogue-stuff" (*Jeg er kjempegod til sånne dialoggreier*). Whereas in English Johnny seems to belittle the dialogue-stuff, and in this way makes fun of this way of talking in Norway. Still it seems he might have learned that this is the right way to talk, behave, and a norm for approaching

violence and deal with disagreements in a Norwegian context. As Johnny says: “he is big” on dialogue, I propose that Johnny’s statement can be seen as a meeting between the American dream and the Norwegian *Jantelov*¹ (Law of Jante). This meeting between different ideas about individual behaviour related to group, can be seen in how being good or “big” on dialogue from an American context comes in opposition to not standing out as an individual, part of the Law of Jante. Later on I discuss the concept of dialogue and peace in light of Norwegian ideals of equality.

In another scene the son of Johnny’s girlfriend is bullied and thrown into the snow by some of his classmates. Johnny then asks the teacher whether they will be punished. The teacher replies no, laughs nervously and says “*We are of the opinion that dialogue is a much more effective weapon against this sort of antisocial behaviour*” (Lilyhammer 2012b, my translation). The teacher’s and the Norwegian school system’s approach is then not welcomed by Johnny who instead encourages his stepson to punch down the classmates that bullied him.

The series then portrays a mafia member stereotype and the challenges for this type of behaviour in a Norwegian context. We see how Johnny manoeuvres in the Norwegian society in a way of understanding the “right” jargon of talking, possibly learning something about the Norwegian society in the process. At the same time he contests and challenges these norms by encouraging the stepson to fight and not to engage in dialogue. I propose the manoeuvres of Johnny attesting to a way of understanding and using dialogue in a Norwegian context, and that even though dialogue is made fun off in the series, this might well confirm the tendency of talking about dialogue in Norway. This is one popular cultural example of what I call a landscape of dialogue work from which I will continue to present some additional examples.

A historical backdrop and “climate” for dialogue

Going into the different initiatives I found that the work of religious groups from the mid-eighties onwards has been important in building a foundation for dialogue work in Norway. In an article written by Inge Eidsvåg, Tore Lindholm and Barbro Sveen (2004), they give an account of the interfaith dialogue and cooperation work in Norway. They argue that interfaith

¹ *Janteloven* stems from the Danish-Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose’s book *En flyktning krysser sitt spor* from 1933, where the main character experience social pressure of how to behave and be careful not to promote himself. Sandemose formulates ten commandments in the *Jantelov*, the central being “You shall not think you are someone”, showing the collective pressure on the individual of not sticking out, which from an anthropological perspective can be seen related to Nordic discretion in accentuating own or others happiness (Gyldendal 2013, my translation).

dialogue emerged from 1985 onward, starting with annual interfaith dialogues after the first was arranged at Nansen Academy in 1984 (Eidsvåg et al. 2004:781). The Nansen Academy has then through the years been an important arena for interreligious dialogues, which I was briefly acquainted with at a “Faith and life stance dialogue” seminar for young adults from Europe and the Middle East parallel to the International Summer School training. Eidsvåg et al. stress that in the last decades Norway has become multicultural and multi-religious to a much larger degree, which has contributed to conflicts but also has inspired new ideas like that of interreligious dialogue (Eidsvåg et al. 2004:778)².

After the terrorist attacks in the Government quarter and Utøya on the 22nd of July 2011, the Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities (STL) in Norway put forward how persistent dialogue work through nearly three decades, showed a positive outcome. STL pointed to how people from different faiths and life stances came together during the aftermath of the tragedy. Up until then it seemed to be an assumption that tragedies with 77 people killed by one man in a few hours could only happen in other parts of the world (Hylland Eriksen 2012:7).

As my fieldwork took place during the trial after the terrorist attack, I found that investigating the surrounding environment could be helpful in understanding the “climate” for dialogue in Norway. Regarding the “climate for dialogue” in Norway, the Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg urged the Norwegian society to become more open and based on democracy after the attack. The same message was emphasised by the Prime Minister in July 2012, almost a year after the attack with debates in the media about sleeping facilities for Romani people in the city of Oslo. Politicians were suggesting everything from deportation by force to improving toilet and shower facilities, coming to a point where the Prime minister told the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation that the wording used toward the Romani people stood in stark contrast to “the values” that Norwegians gathered around after the terror attacks. As Stoltenberg said: “tolerance, diversity, democracy and openness are values that have a central position in the Norwegian society” (NRK 2012b, my translation). So then it seems that dialogue can be seen as a value in addition to an activity?

² See more about religious dialogues: Grung and Leirvik 2012, Eidsvåg et al. 2004, Leirvik 2001 [1996], Grung and Larsen 2000.

Grung and Leirvik (2012) describe how dialogue already in the 1960's was used in the Norwegian working context, where the parts involved used dialogue as a model in salary negotiations in order to include workers and avoid prolonged conflict-filled strikes (Grung and Leirvik 2012:80). I suggest that this dialogue model can be seen related to the development of conflict councils all over Norway since the 70's, mediation in schools, and an emphasis on restorative justice (Konfliktrådet 2013, Hareide 2006, Hydle 2011). Grung and Leirvik (2012) argue that religious dialogue became increasingly institutionalised in the 90's, exemplified in the founding of Emmaus, center for dialogue and spirituality in 1991, parallel to reports on dialogue projects at the Nansen Academy and the establishment of the Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities in 1996 (see also Eidsvåg et al. 2004:778). As pointed out by Grung and Leirvik (2012) it was first in the 2000's that politicians' interest for religious dialogue increased. After the Mohammed-caricatures³ in 2005 politicians wanted to engage in the existing religious Dialogue forums in order to prevent situations like the one in Denmark happening in Norway (Grung og Leirvik 2012:78). I suggest that the model referred to above where various actors are included also reoccurs in other types of dialogues, which I intend to show below. Grung and Leirvik also suggest that as the dialogue model has been important for conflict resolution in the working life, the model has probably also influenced how to think about conflict resolution in other arenas in society (Grung and Leirvik 2012:80). We will now look closer into some more present examples of dialogue initiatives.

A Norwegian landscape of dialogue initiatives

During fieldwork, in addition to taking part in trainings and activities arranged by the center, I also attended other meetings in Oslo where dialogue was stressed. For instance Minotenk, a think tank focusing on minority issues had a "dialogue meeting" (*dialogmøte*). The dialogue meeting was a promotion of a book called *Sisters (Søstre)* with female Muslim writers, and Minotenk wanted, through the dialogue meeting, "to move the debate further" (Minotenk 2012, my translation).

Grønn hverdag is another organisation that works with making it easier to adapt to environmental and ethical concerns at home and at work, that hosted a dialogue meeting, called a community dialogue (*samfunnsdialog*). The dialogue meeting was about a new

³ In 2005 the Danish Newspaper Jyllands-Posten, published twelve controversial caricatures of Mohammed, the prophet of Islam. After this, violent uprisings and demonstrations took place in many countries in the Middle East and spurred a debate on whether the caricatures could and should be printed as freedom of expression (Andersson et al. 2012:121).

sustainable, socially-just and democratic economy, with different actors invited, such as other organisations and architects building environmentally friendly houses. Grønn hverdag particularly stressed how they wanted to start a process regarding these questions with a wide spectre of actors in a “dialogue” not a “debate” (Grønn hverdag 2012). I also participated in a “dialogue café”, started on a local and voluntary basis in Oslo. The participants have Kurdish background and starting with an introduction for the rest of the group, followed by a discussion. I also once held an introduction on dialogue as I was asked about it. Additionally on a state level, for instance a committee called the Inclusion committee, arranged four *dialogue meetings* in different parts of Norway with the aim of shedding light on challenges and possibilities in a multicultural Norway (Regjeringen 2013).

In 2011, the lawyer, politician, diplomat and society critic Abid Raja with Norwegian-Pakistani background published a book called *Dialog. Om vold, undertrykkelse og ekstremisme* (Dialogue. About violence, suppression and extremism (my translation). In the book Raja highlights dialogue meetings as an arena for discussing challenges related to integration in terms of language, education, work, law, and in addition norms and values in society. Raja sees dialogue as a fifth factor of integration in terms of how to deal with value loaded conflicts that can emerge as various religions and traditions meet. He suggests that with a good dialogue one can create an arena to solve these challenges. In his opinion dialogue is crucial in order to face the debates ahead of us and to create a place where all citizens in the country can succeed. Raja encourages dialogue on themes that might spur conflict (*konfliktfylte*), and that contribute to change (Raja 2011:10, 14, 233). In terms of understanding dialogue, Raja describes the principal idea of dialogue to be listening and sharing one’s own position, in order to come closer to each other. Raja argues that we cannot have laws against values that are not to our liking, but that one can try to convince the other through arguments and interaction (Raja 2011:11). So far the examples above point to some parts of a landscape that show different approaches to understanding the concept of dialogue. As these understandings exist side by side, I am wondering whether these approaches can be seen as different brandings of dialogue?

Branding dialogue?

On Minotenk’s webpage it says: “Dialogue meetings have become our brand” (*varemerke*) (Minotenk 2013). It was also out of dialogue meetings facilitated by Raja in Oslo at

Litteraturhuset⁴ that Minotenk mentioned above started (Raja 2011:235). Even so, Raja's approach to dialogue has been controversial, for instance as he once was asked to leave NRK studio because he would not stop presenting his arguments in a debate (NRK 2010). The dialogue meetings have been criticised and debated upon in the media, as well as by young participants who have been sceptical on whether the term dialogue is accurate because of the meetings' occasional confronting style. One participant states that the meetings should therefore rather be called debate meetings (Andersson et. al 2012:109,39). On the other hand Raja's efforts are acknowledged, and in 2010 he received a Norwegian prize for *Free Speech* (Raja 2011:10).

In a conversation with Eidsvåg I asked him about different ways of understanding and using dialogue, to which he answered he was not so orthodox (*rettroende*) about how to define dialogue. Eidsvåg has on his side written extensively on dialogue, for instance 13 tips to dialogue (Bryn, Eidsvåg and Skurdal 2011:41-43). Eidsvåg stressed that no one has the "monopoly" on the concept of dialogue and that as long as people come together to talk, the definition used is not so important. In an interview with Grung she explained how she earlier had been strict (*vært streng*) as to what dialogue was and was not. So previously she would use dialogue in a normative way, but with time she had become more open to the idea that there are more ways to use dialogue. In an interview, Christiane would also express how no one should have the monopoly of what dialogue means, but at the same time stressing the uniqueness of the work of Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue. In the conversation mentioned above with Eidsvåg, I asked him his opinion on whether the climate for dialogue had changed over the years. He replied that the climate has become more "natural" and matter of factly (*selvfølgelighet*), and how dialogue now is more accepted and no longer seen as so strange. On the other hand, Grung and Leirvik (2012) describe how the understanding of dialogue changed in the public after the caricature of Mohammed, in how dialogue went from being a concept to describe a conversation where something was at stake to being a concept used to avoid and gloss over whilst dealing with controversial topics (Grung and Leirvik 2012:78). We will now look at dialogue related to how Norway might be seen as a peace nation.

⁴ The House of Literature hosts public events and promotes interest in literature, reading, as well as freedom of speech issues (Litteraturhuset 2013).

Norway as a peace nation?

Norwegian representatives have been part of several peace negotiations internationally. In a newspaper article, Halvard Leira, senior researcher at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) is interviewed. Leira points to the fact that Norway is perceived as a peace nation, but that this image is mostly valid for Norwegians themselves. Civil society voices in Norway, that is also echoed in the article, suggests a paradox in the image of Norway as a peace nation, referring to Norway's extensive production and export of weapons (Aftenposten 2012, Changemaker 2009). Still, Norwegian representatives take a mediating role in peace negotiations. The latter point can be seen as part as Norwegian representatives performing "niche diplomacy" by facilitating peace negotiations. The Norwegian comedians called Ylvis, on their side, make a humouristic portrait in a music video of Jan Egeland, a Norwegian mediator and how he is "constantly working for peace" (Ylvis 2013). In the refrain the Ylvis brothers continue: "When there's war and all is hell. Send in Jan Egeland! The United Nations superhero man". The video is on YouTube with around 430 000 views.

The Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue, whose dialogue work will be dealt with in the following chapters, is engaged in peacebuilding and reconciliation work internationally and with diaspora groups in Norway from countries that have or are experiencing war. In this regard, I see some parallels between the center's work and Norwegian official representatives engaged in diplomacy and peace negotiations. I propose this engagement to illustrate additional approaches within the dialogue landscape. Furthermore, the Nobel Peace Prize Committee and annual ceremony is based in Norway, as well as the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) founded in 1959 by the well-known Norwegian Johan Galtung, whose work has been vital for the development of peace and conflict studies.

I opened this chapter with a quote of Støre on modern diplomacy, part of a presentation held at TED talks, an online forum with talks and performances (Støre 2011, TED 2013). In Norway, Støre, in addition to Raja, has been called "spokesperson for dialogue". On one of the popular TV-shows, Skavlan, seen by three million viewers in Sweden and Norway each week (Skavlan 2013), Støre was a guest. The TV-host Skavlan asks Støre: "You talk a lot about dialogue, is this really your favourite branch in your job?" Støre nods. "Can you put into words what your method entails?" Støre replies: "What I try to do is to get the other part to listen to me, to hear what I have to say and the values I want to bring forward. And then I

believe that there is a greater chance to achieve this, if I let the other feel that I am also willing to listen to what comes from the other side” (Skavlan 2012, my translation). As Støre at this time was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I suggest dialogue being a significant approach for him individually, but also in the way he was representing Norway internationally. In this way, I find that Norway can be seen to be branding itself as a peace and dialogue nation. Concerning branding, Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) argue in their book *Ethnicity, Inc.* about processes of identity and ethno-politics, some aspects being that identities and ethnicized populations are somehow rendered into corporations of some kind, and cultural products and practices are commodified (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009:21). In line with Comaroff and Comaroff, I argue that Norwegian efforts in mediation, peacebuilding and dialogue can be seen as a “branding” of Norway outwardly as a country. Terje Tvedt makes the same point in how Norway “state branding” relates to development and peace politics internationally (Tvedt 2010:479). How Norway can be seen as specialist on peace and dialogue I came across later on during fieldwork. Nina Witoszek, a Research Professor at the Centre for Development and the Environment at the University of Oslo and a specialist on cultural and environmental history, were among the panelists in a seminar at Litteraturhuset with the topic of “Norway after the 22nd of July” (Witoszek 2012). In Witoszek’s presentation she posited Norway how “homo scandinavicus” are specialists on “dialogue”, “reconciliation” and “peace negotiations” that connect to equality, peace and wellbeing. Witoszek continued to describe the life of “homo scandinavicus” to be a long seminar where dialogue and peace is “über alles” (German expression of something being over everything else), and even when crisis occurs we just relax and “have dialogue”.

During fieldwork I have experienced many seminars with the topic of peace and dialogue, on the other hand the image of Norway as a peace nation was nuanced and contested in conversations I had with interlocutors. One of the interlocutors at the long course expressed to me how it seemed that the Norwegian government wants to work with peace⁵, and how they want to build up a department of peace, as it was needed in his country. In an interview with Norunn, she expressed how, at times, there had been a lack of knowledge from Norwegian mediators whilst engaging in peace negotiations. In this chapter, a discussion on equality and

⁵ The interlocutor expresses working *with*, instead of working *for* peace, the latter approach stressed by employees at the center. I am wondering whether working *with*, can be seen related to a way of phrasing used within organisation or education environments, working on different topics. Even so, I do not consider working *with* and *for* to be mutually excluding, and that you can work *with* and *for* peace building at the same time.

peace lastly follows, as previously stressed by Witoszek being part of the “project” of “homo scandinavicus”.

Equality and dialogue

Equality is known as a gatekeeping concept as it has marked previous studies conducted in the Norwegian society and therefore needs to be considered (Lien et al. 2001:12). Lien et al. points to how the Norwegian word of equality has different connotations, as in the state of being compatible and equal, or being similar which can be called sameness. The authors furthermore stress the concept’s ambiguity, and how anthropological studies in a Norwegian context have shown a contradictory relation between equality as value and ideology and actual social differences (Lien et al. 2001:16). In the same anthology Gullestad (2001:36) suggests how “equality” often is linked to other concepts with positive connotations such as “independence”, “peace” and “harmony”, and how a problem often occurs if people are experienced as different. Gullestad (2001:36) further argues that as values of “peace”, “quiet” and “harmony” are central, parts can end up avoiding each other if the differences are experienced as too great (Gullestad 2001:36).

Hylland Eriksen (2012) describes Norway as a community of disagreement (*uenighetsfellesskap*). He posits that Norway “is a place where we agree about disagreeing” (Hylland Eriksen 2012:9, my translation). Hylland Eriksen continues: “It sounds paradoxical, but it is only the disagreement community that can create enough agreement so that we together can move in the right direction” (Hylland Eriksen 2012:13, my translation). He also stresses that in order to achieve this agreement about disagreeing, there still needs to be certain rules for it to work, like both agreeing to listen to each other (Hylland Eriksen 2012:61). So then Gullestad and Hylland Eriksen point to how avoidance of conflict, and agreeing about disagreeing can be seen as part of the Norwegian way to handle conflict. Even though working for peace through dialogue was a goal among interlocutors, peace and quiet in relation to dialogue was still not necessarily a goal in terms of controlling feelings and avoiding open conflict, as will be evident especially in chapter 6. This can be due to participants having different backgrounds and different ways of communicating, something which for instance a participant from Afghanistan would comment on during lunch one day at a training saying that it was good to have a Norwegian present to calm down the conflicts at the training. I suggest this statement to be one example that can show how the Norwegian way of dealing with conflicts and communication was picked up as different from the way

participants that came to the training in Norway to learn about dialogue and peacebuilding. Even so, I found Norwegian ideals about avoiding conflict in order to keep peace and quiet contradictory to the center's presentation of dialogue, where conflict was not necessarily negative, also illustrated in how there was room for disagreeing during trainings. A focus on equality as a goal in dialogues as presented by the center, where the point was not to achieve sameness, in being the same, but to have dialogues that were founded on equality.

Closing reflections

In *Lilyhammer* we saw a humoristic approach to using dialogue, where being good on the dialogue-stuff seemed to be the “right” jargon to talk within. We have also seen how dialogue has become more institutionalised within official bodies, is present in think tanks' meetings, organisations, a local café, and in the way Norway seems to be a peace nation, but also contested in the field I have studied. All of the examples so far show various parts of a mosaic of understanding and using dialogue that and therein point to how dialogue might be seen as a “travelling concept”⁶. I also suggest that the dialogue model put forth by Grung and Leirvik, reoccur in types of dialogues described so far, for instance in getting forward minority perspectives in Minotenk's work, or Grønn hverdag involving different actors engaged in community dialogue on a new economy. Involving different actors is not the least evident in the center's work that this thesis investigates, where trainings are based on sharing experiences between participants. In the next chapter we will be closer acquainted with this particular way of working and how dialogue is understood and practiced.

⁶ I would like to thank Anne Hege Grung for making me aware of this point.

CHAPTER 4. Learning how to dialogue

A metalogue is a conversation about some problematic subject. This conversation should be such that not only do the participants discuss the problem but the structure of the conversation as a whole is also relevant to the same subject (Bateson 2000:1).

We have explored what I call a dialogue landscape in Norway, within which I have argued that the center's work can be situated. In this chapter we will look closer at the pedagogical aspects of the work and the understanding of dialogue used at the center. Exploring why and what the employees want to achieve with this way of working will be illuminated through examples of what, where and how the participants learn about dialogue through sharing experiences. Sharing of experiences can be seen as one of the main ways knowledge is learned. This leads to an investigation of techniques and knowledge learned and how this is utilised by participants. What is apparent is that when skills and knowledge are practiced among interlocutors it contributes to a meta-perspective or 'metalogue' on communication that I call dialoguing.

Emic understandings of dialogue

A relational and processual approach

Steinar gave me a ride to the train station after a visit in Lillehammer at the end of June 2012. He told me that what I needed to understand, if I was going to understand how he works, is the concept pairs of relational versus instrumental, and process versus program. Steinar was referring to the field of international peacebuilding, where he argued that the main approach was instrumental. His point of view was rather that there should be a stronger focus on building relations between people on a local level in peacebuilding. Adapting to the group's pace instead of sticking to a set programme of planned exercises I repeatedly observed in the way Steinar works as programmes were adapted and changed during for instance the ISS-training. Having a processual and relational approach was then in Steinar's point of view salient elements in the work. Furthermore, Norunn told me during an interview how she and her colleague Christiane wanted to have different impulses in the long course and not a specific reading list. The value of having different impulses was exemplified in how additional people with diaspora backgrounds were invited to join the other participants at the long course for one weekend. Norunn commented that having different elements was often

the way they develop courses, having some ideas that are followed up, and evaluations to see how and what they can learn and use from the experiences from each course. The employees had also worked with different target groups. Having reconciliation and dialogue workshops with groups from the Balkans and working with diaspora groups in Norway like the Afghan diaspora, reflected a broad working field.

Sharing experiences

I found that “sharing experiences” was a central approach of the center. This came forward in the way employees presented their work, in how participants were encouraged to share experiences during exercises, and in the way interlocutors would talk and share experiences among each other during seminars, the latter aspect will be returned to in the next chapter. Let us continue to look at some aspects of the pedagogical framework of the center.

During the long course, lectures on for instance pedagogical ideas in a folk high school were part of the programme. It was the priest, philosopher and poet Grundtvig that founded the pedagogical ideas for the folk high school. These ideas were based on being a school without exams, in sharp contrast to the Latin schools at the time (Folkehøgskolene 2013b). The principles of a folk high school can also be seen as part of the foundation of the center’s way of teaching. Sjøberg (2008) has done a study on how dialogues are done and developed in folk high schools. Sjøberg points to how Grundtvig emphasised conversations as a founding principle in folk high schools, where teacher and pupil were to be equal participants (Sjøberg 2008:22).

Conversation and dialogue are central elements in the center’s work, in peace education and dialogue seminars. Additionally, the dialogue projects that developed into Nansen Dialogue Network, were initiated by Eidsvåg in 1994, director at the folk high school Nansen Academy at the time in support from Lillyhammer to Sarajevo, one OL-town to another (Sørli Røhr 2005:1). The Nansen Peace Center (before merging into Nansen center) also moved into the same environment as Nansen Academy and Nansen Dialogue Network, due to having the same pedagogical understanding, which Norunn told me about in an interview. Furthermore, powerpoints on different topics such as gender or the pedagogy in the folk high school were further medium employees used in between practical exercises on the same topics. It is however important to note that none of the programmes at the trainings I followed had the same structure Furthermore theoretical perspectives at the trainings came among others from

theories like that of Johan Galtung mentioned in the previous chapter, and the peace scholar John Paul Lederach. With some of the analytical approaches to peacebuilding and conflict in mind, let us continue to take a closer look at the elements of dialogue stressed by employees at the center.

Dialogue and debate

Dialogue was conceptually put in opposition to debate by the center. In the center's brochure called "To understand the other – dialogue as tool and attitude to life" (Bryn, Eidsvåg, Skurdal 2011, my translation), the distinction between debate and dialogue is further elaborated. While in dialogue one should be looking for the strength in the other, in the debate you will hunt for the other's weak arguments. In the dialogue you will work for making the other feel safe through tolerance, self discipline and self criticism, whereas you in the debate are to make the other feel insecure, being like a judge of morality. The body language will also be different in the two approaches as described by the center, having an inclusive body language in dialogue, and a more confronting one in a debate. Finally changing your opinion in a debate is a sign of weakness, whereas it is a sign of strength in dialogue (Bryn, Eidsvåg, Skurdal 2011:15). This way of viewing dialogue was something Steinar repeatedly told about on several occasions; at different courses, at a movie screening of the film called "Reunion", about a course with a dialogue group consisting of Serbs and Croats in Kosovo, that he was leading in 1999 just before the NATO bombed Serbia.

So far process and relations are two elements stressed as important in understanding how they work at the center that also relates to the emic understanding of dialogue. Three further important elements in understanding dialogue follow.

Movement, relations and making yourself visible

"Movement" was an ideal, achieved through conversation where the person was open to change opinion and move by listening to the other. Secondly the understanding was that dialogue would contribute to "making oneself visible" by sharing opinions and experiences. The third element was building "relations" in this process. According to Steinar, in segregated societies having been at war, these qualities of dialogue were important in order to start seeing the others' human face, going beyond the stereotypes, created by not having any contact and propaganda from the home, school, media and politics. As some participants have experiences with conflict and meet other participants from the other side of conflict, the place of Lillehammer itself, I find has significance in being a neutral and safe place, a fact stressed by

employees, participants and previous research (Aarbakke 2002:11). Describing the place and in what ways it had significance will be dealt with further on.

”The place where people are moved, bridges are built and dialogue is promoted in the work for peace”⁷

In this quote itself, one of the elements of dialogue underlined so far, implies that the center is the place where people are moved. This place was important for doing the center’s work, which became apparent already on the first day of fieldwork when Steinar brought it up. Steinar asked me if I had heard about the discussion on whether the course participants should sleep somewhere else than in the dormitory or the apartments that belonged to the Nansen Academy. Steinar expressed his scepticism about participants not sleeping on campus. Rhetorically, he asked if one had enough empirical evidence to prove that the arrangement would be successful if participants were to sleep somewhere else.

Informal arenas of socialising and learning

The various courses were held in the main building of Nansen Academy and the center. During trainings participants sleep in the same dormitories as the folk high school students, in a building close to the main building. The participants have separate rooms. Male and female participants stay on different floors, sharing toilets and showers on each floor. A laundry room is also available. In the main building the course participants have common meals together in the canteen. Leisure time and evenings are spent in various places like the foyer in the main building with various sofas, or in a library and two connected rooms with a fire-place, filled with books and original paintings made by Fridtjof Nansen⁸. A room downstairs in the main building has worn-down sofas, a TV, board games and paintings made by folk high school students. Even though the rest of the main building closes at eleven this room can be accessed 24/7.

⁷ This quote is the slogan of the center written on their information brochure (Nansen Fredssenter 2012:2, my translation).

⁸ Due to the Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen’s (1861-1930) humanitarian efforts, the Nansen Academy, Nansen Dialogue Network and then also Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue is named after him. Nansen was not only well-known in Norway, but also worldwide, due to helping refugees to settle in different European countries after the first world war through the Nansen passport. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1922, and worked for international attention to the immense hunger in Russia that affected millions of lives (Aarbakke 2002, Nansen Dialogue Network 2013). For more about Nansen’s role related to the center’s work see article in the magazine *Betwixt and Between*, Odilia Häussler Melbøe (forthcoming).

As described above the seminars are usually filled with presentations, exercises and activities such as cultural exchange evenings between the participants and students at Nansen Academy. Furthermore participants spend time at barbecue parties in Steinar's home, snacks in Norunn's home, going to the shopping mall, cinema or museums. As pointed out by Steinar there were different arenas besides the campus itself that contributed to the trainings' success, like visiting Maihaugen, an open-air museum with buildings from different historical periods, or visiting the ski-jump, driving up in minibuses and walking down all the 1000 steps. Moving in the landscape surrounding Lillehammer was further underlined as an important part of the participants' experience at the training seminars. This was illustrated as the first thing participants at the ISS-course did after arrival was jointly go for an exploratory walk around campus.

All the factors above then can be seen as part of "building the bridges" between the participants, creating an environment that will be described thoroughly in the next chapter. From the employees' side it was about creating a safe space that Christiane would describe as a welcoming atmosphere for participants.

I found that the interrelation between learning about and using dialogue was one of the goals of the center's work that could happen in the different arenas, also the informal arenas. Now will be explored how dialogue was understood and used in practice.

"Learn how to dialogue"

In the end of January 2012 I was invited to join Steinar and Inge to visit several local branches the center has in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. During this visit we met with politicians together with employees and volunteers at one local Nansen Dialogue Network branch. The following happened:

A formal elaborative presentation by the Mayor of the situation in town opened the event. After 15 minutes Steinar said that they should start the real talking. As the conversation proceeded, several lobbying presentations for the politicians from the local dialogue branch's side was put forth, or inputs the other way around to the local dialogue center from the politicians. One local volunteer had her say. Through the interpreter translating what she said from Bosnian to English, she told about how children that had attended dialogue courses

told their parents that they had to “learn how to dialogue”. Steinar smilingly and enthusiastically clapped his hands.

The applauding and what I see as a confirming gesture by Steinar of the statement led me to see that learning how to dialogue is one of the main goals of the center. The following incident at the long course illustrates learning dialogue as a technique in an exercise where dialogue is taught and learned. The exercise was led by Elvir Djuliman, working at a local Nansen Dialogue Network branch, in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Elvir came to Lillehammer to lead workshops during the second week of the course on the topic of dialogue.

The dialogue diamond

We are given the exercise of making a diamond of dialogue. Elvir starts by having an introduction on what elements of dialogue entail. We are given a hand out listing twelve basic elements of dialogue, being: Relationship, agreement, understanding in first place, listening, judging, non – verbal communication, integrity, challenge, sensitivity, care about others, common language and change. Out of the list the participants’ task is to fill in a prioritised list of the elements in different squares of a diamond that we are to draw, where the final is to be found on the front page of this thesis.

As we are split into three groups, I join Mina, Amir and Tariq to form a group of four. We are sitting in a room called the blue room, where groups on trainings and dialogue seminars have been working for the past 15 years, as the employees at the center tell us. There are several windows, with blue curtains that have given the room its name, revealing the view of the glittering lake Mjøsa behind train tracks and trees. The opposite wall is filled with pictures of previous seminar groups.

Talking about how to proceed with the task, we agree to start with the words that we want to exclude, as there is just room for nine elements in the diamond. Mina and Tariq are talking the most and bring forth different suggestions. We continue by finding the most important elements in dialogue. Mina says that we should see the square at the top of the diamond and the two elements below in connection. After talking about it we agree on having understanding in the top square, followed by listening and relationships. As we have come to talk about the middle of the diamond, Tariq suggests we could try to find the least important element. The element of care about others we exclude. The reason for this follows Mina’s

argument that in a dialogue between people that do not necessarily like each other, the main goal is not to care about each other. I ask Amir what he thinks. Until now he has been mostly silent, but has followed the conversation attentively. Amir says he agrees with the prioritisation so far. The middle and next to least important elements are up for discussion. Tariq says challenge is like spices in society. Mina on the other hand wants to have challenge first. She says that in order to move forward this is an important element in dialogue. I say I do not agree with this because as I see it having a common ground is more important than the element of challenge. I say that having integrity, sensitivity and judging is more important than challenge, and that having these three elements can lead to get a common language and to challenge. Mina thinks for a little while before she says that she agrees with me. Amir asks where the element of agreement should go. We say that this element was taken out at the beginning. To myself I think that it looks like Mina, Tariq and I have the same understanding that seemingly is not shared by Amir as he asks about the element of agreement that we excluded in the beginning.

After some discussion we agree that the diamond is built up in a good way. Now we have an understanding Mina says, and adds that it was a good dialogue. Elvir peeks his head through the door. He asks us how we are doing. We are finished, Mina replies, whereupon she asks the rest of the group whether everybody agrees. We decide to take a little round. If we don't agree, we don't have to tell the others, Tariq says, whereas Mina answers that she thinks we should tell them [the other groups], as the point is not to agree, it is okay to disagree.

I will continue with analysing three main elements from the case above. During the exercise Mina commented that the point is not to agree, it is in fact okay to disagree, which was also central in the center's understanding of dialogue that you did not have to agree and you could agree about disagreeing. So in this way Mina and the center had a similar understanding, bringing forward the first element of analysis. Whereas Tariq on his side stated that if our group were disagreeing about something, we did not have to tell the other groups. This illustrates a difference between Mina's and Tariq's perspective, where Mina's point of view, closest to the center's, got to be last statement on the matter. The different perceptions, opinions and understanding of the process was secondly evident in the way Amir did not follow on one element that was eliminated from a spot in the diamond, or as Mina told Elvir that we were done with our task, before checking with the rest of the group. A third element was the value of being open to change one's mind after having listened to the other. Mina did

it in relation to what I expressed during the exercise, something Mina underlined as positive. In this way the incident describes what, when and how participants learn how to dialogue, where Mina also practiced what she had learned.

As shown above, changing one's own opinion is an important part of the center's understanding of dialogue. I will quickly go back to the incident, as it can shed even more light on how participants learned and how the learning in the exercise can be understood.

After the break it was time for the groups to present and share what they had learned through the exercise. Elvir opens by saying that: "this exercise is a dialogue about dialogue". He underlines listening as the most important, and asks if the participants have listened to each other. Zakariya admits that the communication was not so good. Whereas in the next group one interlocutor expresses they were pretty good in "communication".

This brings to the foreground that learning how to dialogue has to do with a consciousness, not only about what the elements of dialogue can be, it also has to do with how you communicate, leading to a meta-perspective on communication. A meta-perspective was also present in the way opinions on whether dialogue in practice did actually happen and succeeded in the participant's group work. Mina, for instance, commented on the group and the process in the exercise as a "good dialogue". Additionally a participant from another group commented that they were having a "real dialogue". To this Khaled responded by pointing one of his thumbs up in a movement towards Sofija so as to confirm that having a "real dialogue" was appropriate for this setting. This links back to Steinar's confirming applause described earlier. I find it worth stressing that both Mina and Khaled knew about the center's work before the course, being familiar with doing these sorts of exercises and some of the center's concepts of dialogue.

This again brings us back to a differentiation between ways of relating to what they learn, having to do with some participants knowing more than others (Mina and Khaled knew more than Amir). Maybe that was why Mina and Khaled both had the extra level of evaluating and reflecting on whether dialogue as a method was fulfilled or not, and coming quicker to the same meta-level of understanding dialogue as the employees? By expressing and practically using the same understanding as the center, it can further be seen as Mina and Khaled reproduced a dialogical understanding, as they used the same internal jargon about how they

should talk and showed some of the dialogical skills in practice, as changing your own opinion. So practicing what they learn can be seen as becoming an internal jargon of communicating. We will continue to inquire into the meta-perspectives on communication and knowledge taking place.

A meta-perspective on communication

We have to have dialogue - Mina

When Elvir asked the participants if they had listened to each other, I found that he contributed to raise awareness not just on how the elements in the diamond dialogue could be prioritised, but also on how the participants communicated while doing this exercise. This way the exercise brings forward a meta-perspective on communication. As we have seen, participants put internal frames of understanding around how dialogue can be understood, terming a group work exercise as a “good dialogue”. As highlighted in the introduction, Bateson (2000) explains a meta-communicative level of abstraction when the subject in a conversation focuses on the relationship between the persons speaking. Furthermore, Bateson argues that an important stage in the evolutionary development of communication is the way people can understand that signals are not only signals, but individual signals that can be both trusted and distrusted (Bateson 2000:178). This relates to body language, as is also stressed by the center as one aspect to be aware in communication, being an additional aspect of meta-communication.

Related to meta-communication is Bateson’s concept of ‘metalogue’. As Bateson explains, it is a conversation in which not only the problematic subject is taken into account, but also the whole structure of this conversation (Bateson 2000:1). In the chapters to come, I argue that what is presented by staff in seminars, and how this is dealt with by participants can be seen as metalogues. A meta-perspective was often present between participants, and participants and employees in talking about topics such as religion and experiences with conflict. In this respect, in the processes where a meta-perspective and consciousness of learning and practicing of skills is present, I argue that dialoguing can be seen related to metalogues. Dialoguing, I suggest takes place when dialogue techniques are used in parallel to participants having a meta-perspective on the conversation itself. This comes forward through the structure of the conversation, and in the way interlocutors reflect on the way they

communicate. I will on the other hand go further than Bateson's concept of metalogue, in the way I operationalise dialoguing. I have found that dialoguing in the field of study is not only about problematic subjects, but also, for instance, on how having a dialogue was experienced in a positive way, that we will look closer into in the next chapter. Dialoguing has so far been evident in the learning how to dialogue example and dialogue diamond exercise. I also found that dialoguing took place in participants' leisure time, not during exercises or part of the center's programme that comes forward in the following example.

It is the third week of a training seminar. Sofija, Sara and I are at the shopping mall to buy cosmetic products. It turns out there is a sale where you can get three products for the price of two, and we decided to go for the bargain. Afterwards, while looking at the bill, we find ourselves confused, who paid for what? None of us manage to come up with a solution, and Mina finds the three of us leaning over the bill trying to figure it out. We discuss a bit back and forth, whereupon Mina tells us to stop fighting. "We have to have dialogue", she says. Everyone turn silent and looks at Mina, who smilingly exclaims that she has fixed the problem.

I find that Mina had an active approach to using dialogue, and thus an example of dialoguing. As this way of using dialogue entails that the concept does something, it is an activity and requires in this way an active approach by the person performing the statement, using certain techniques or using the jargon of talking to achieve something, to fix a problem or stop the fighting as Mina expressed.

Brottveit has conducted fieldwork studying network meetings offered to psychiatric patients in various Norwegian mental health services called "open dialogue" (Brottveit 2013a). Brottveit follows Hank in describing how certain parts of meetings can be described as 'communicative happenings' (my translation). Brottveit describes these happenings as situations where something that is communicated does something in the world, where he draws on Austin and speech act theory (Brottveit 2013b:155). Wikan, on her part, follows Davidson in approaching words as means to produce effects rather than having intrinsic meaning (Wikan 1992:464). I suggest that this relates a lot to the concept of dialoguing I have studied. Even though Mina said they had to have a dialogue with a joking twinkle in her eye, I hold that this example still underlines talking jargons of the right ways to talk about things. In this way dialoguing can be seen as a development of an internal building of cultural codes or

a culture of dialogue, that is particularly clear in the dialogue diamond exercise. Lastly, let us look at how learning and knowledge relate.

Anthropological approaches to knowledge

Ways of knowing

In the book *Ways of knowing*, Harris (2007) suggests new approaches to learning and experience within anthropology. He argues that ways of knowing is a continuous activity in which the person moves in different contexts leading to knowledge always being bound with the world. Knowing is then according to Harris “an achievement of work, experience and time” (Harris 2007:1). This way of approaching knowledge corresponds with how the center’s work is dependent on practicing techniques and on the experiences people bring with them to the seminars to share. Furthermore learning and experiences are shared and made sense of in the context of the training, where the place itself plays a central part in the process. The main approach in *Ways of knowing* can be described as phenomenological, being concerned with “the world as it is lived and experienced” (Harris 2007:2). Harris argues that if one takes the starting point of knowing being continuing and practical, anthropologists have to study the process accordingly, integrating the methodological approach with the theoretical, like a phenomenological one, going beyond writing about experience through statements made by interlocutors (Harris 2007:2). In this thesis I intend to write both about the experiences shared by interlocutors and understanding this within the context of the process itself.

Interconnected facets of knowledge

In the article called “An Anthropology of knowledge”, Barth (2002) advocates an ethnographic analysis and comparison of human knowledge. Furthermore he argues for inquiring into how bodies of knowledge are produced, and how this relates to the social relationships sustained by this production. In this way he argues anthropologists can better understand the ways in which people construct cultural worlds as well as advancing the anthropological contribution (Barth 2002:1). As people use knowledge to construct their worlds, anthropology studying knowledge must consider how varieties of knowledge are produced, used, transmitted and represented (Barth 2002:10). Barth divides three facets of knowledge that he also sees as interconnected. These facets are firstly that a body of knowledge includes ideas and assertions about the world. Secondly these ideas must be communicated through different medias such as actions, words, gestures or symbols. Thirdly knowledge is communicated, transmitted and distributed within social relations of instituted character (Barth 2002:3). Barth (1990) compares two ways of managing knowledge. On one

hand among the New Guinean initiators in charge of leading novices through rites of initiation, as well as transmitting knowledge in this process, the value of knowledge increases when it is only shared with as few as possible and kept secret. On the other hand, with the Balinese Muslim teacher, the Guru, it is quite the opposite. The knowledge of the Guru is strengthened by how much knowledge he communicates and shares with his audience (Barth 1990:643, 641).

I find that the interconnected ways of seeing knowledge as explained by Barth can relate to the field I have studied. I argue that the center has a body of knowledge with ideas about the world, with a whole set of assumptions and understanding as with the concept of dialogue and peacebuilding. These ideas are certainly communicated at the trainings through words and action, in the exercises where the participants are to practice skills based on the center's body of knowledge. This aspect relates to Barth's third facet of knowledge, in the way knowledge is communicated and distributed, relating to social relations of instituted character. This is exemplified in the center and the relations between the employees, but also in the social relations emerging among the interlocutors at the trainings, which will be dealt with more thoroughly in the next chapter. I propose that in regards to a comparative analysis of human knowledge, I can contribute, with a body of knowledge from a specific Norwegian context in Lillehammer, with perspectives of possible relevance for other dialogue initiatives in Norway. I will also explore how the knowledge at the center might further enrich an understanding of what happens and can happen in meetings between people with different cultural backgrounds engaging in a dialogical approach.

Knowledge can further be seen in different respects in the field I have studied, where the dialogue diamond case can be illustrative in this regard. On one level Elvir is teaching the participants how to understand dialogue by presenting what can be different elements of dialogue. At the same time there is the level of participants getting the opportunity to prioritise the elements themselves. In the process the participants are supposed to learn from each other as well as learning from the exercise itself, bringing the meta-perspective on communication in the group as well as a meta-perspective on an individual level. Part of the picture is also researchers' presence at trainings held by the center, like myself. At the center and in the exercise, it seems then that the mode of knowledge is more in accordance with the Guru's approach. Furthermore, since even though the employees present the content of knowledge, the pedagogical approach is still not based on having monologues, or keeping

some knowledge veiled. Rather the mode of knowledge can be seen more as a transaction and exchange of knowledge, where knowledge is seen as developed through conversations, in sharing experiences about what dialogue is. So here sharing experiences from dialogue work and using dialogue as method links experience and learning together.

Closing reflections

We have in this chapter seen how participants talk about what they learn, which I argue can be seen just as much as a way to practice what is learned. We have looked at how dialogue is learned, creating transactions of knowledge and ways of knowing in line with Harris and how knowledge fruitfully can be understood as a continuous process. Further knowledge in the field I have studied is not based on transaction alone. Knowledge is not kept secret, rather it is in the center's interest to "spread the dialogue", as Christiane would encourage the participants to do on the last day of the long course. The knowledge is mostly based on sharing experiences, even though this means that some have been more acquainted with the center's knowledge than others, like Mina and Khaled in contrast to Amir. What happens in the training processes and the interlinking between participants applying dialogical skills and sharing experiences, is the focus of the next chapter. This brings forward themes that are of concern for the participants, and how this process is experienced as "connecting".

CHAPTER 5. Connecting and sharing experiences

All of the social activities enables the connection to happen – Dana

The participant's experience from training seminars will be the prime focus in this chapter. I have found learning and 'ways of knowing' (Harris 2007) to correspond with the notion that "we learn by doing" (Ingold 2007:288). As drawn forward earlier Ingold argues knowledge to be continuously created and discovered. This chapter explores how interlocutors experience training and how they position themselves to each other and use what they learn.

Connecting through dialogue

I found that interlocutors at the ISS-training used "connection" to describe something that took place between them selves during training. As one participant said, having "dialogues sparked a connection". Another participant, Denis, would for instance describe the process as "amazing", and that he found it fascinating to see relationships formed and the "connections" that happened between people. Denis added how "just an everyday conversation has been "ground-breaking".

Here we see that Denis uses the term conversation instead of dialogue. Even though participants sometimes said conversation and other times dialogue, I propose that when conversation was used as in the example above, it can still refer to the emic qualities of dialogue as described in the previous chapter. Others would describe conversations during trainings as more than "surface conversations", diving into conversations or having "deep" conversations.

One evening I had a conversation with Alexandra at the ISS-course. We were sitting in the living room in the apartment the two of us and two other ISS-participants lived in during training, just up the road from campus. Alexandra explained how she would often get "energy" from dialogue. I on my part said that an exercise in which I took part had felt kind of liberating (this example will be returned to in chapter seven). Alexandra responded by saying that you have to talk from your "heart" when it comes to dialogues. I find that this way of talking about dialogue can be seen as a metalogue and dialoging, also because of the fact that Alexandra several times during the conversation would stress that we were having a "dialogue". Furthermore, the aspects drawn forward by Alexandra can possibly help us

understand what connection can be, speaking from the heart and going beyond the “surface” when talking together?

On the last day of the ISS-course in Lillehammer Steinar asked about what promises the participants would make for the coming summer in Oslo. Natalie says that at the course they can “make connections” so deep and become friends so fast. Natalie says that this shows that this way of working “really works”, and that it was something she wanted to “transfer” when home. Kaia explains it further “as a group we have been able to pass the level of awkwardness”. Kaia confirms how they had become real friends and that in this way: “dialogue was a success”.

So many participants would explain “connections” to be something that happened between people, that it had to do with getting friends very fast, having “deep” conversations. After the training in Lillehammer several follow up meetings took place between the ISS-students and Steinar. At these meetings a group feeling, friendships and bonds forged through the course in Lillehammer, and connection was still brought up. Some participants stressed that what they learned in Lillehammer contributed to feeling like a group, which made it easier to connect with others. Catharina for instance described that as a group they stayed very close. She reflected that the Lillehammer training also enabled people to form bonds with other participants at the international summer school as well. Catharina said it was easier to talk and connect with others.

Having deep conversations and connecting with people I will return to discuss in chapter seven related to Wikan’s (1992, 2012) concept of ‘resonance’ and the concept of ‘empathy’ explored by Hollan (2011) and Halpern (2010). How connection and connecting was explained by participants, I find shows a negotiation of group boundaries. The participants stressed the group themselves, but also how their group had the character of being open to include others. Negotiation of group and identification I find relates to Jenkins (2008) and how people make sense of each other relationally, aspects of what takes place during training that is the focus of next chapter. I also find definitions of connection to be helpful in understanding more about what participants mean by expressing connection during trainings. Among several aspects the concept of connection is by Merriam-Webster Dictionary defined as: “causal or logical relation or sequence”, like that between two ideas, or like “a relation of personal intimacy [like that of family ties]”. I find it interesting to note that synonyms of the

concept are those of “affinity, association, bearing, kinship, liaison, linkage, relation, relationship”, all of which relate to relations, forming bonds, and emotional ties (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2013). As we shall see some of these aspects of connection were also stressed by participants.

Becoming a family

I first heard the notion of a “Nansen family” from Steinar and different colleagues working at a local Nansen dialogue center in the Balkans. When I asked Steinar about who was part of this family, he answered participants that had attended courses during the years which were central in establishing local Nansen dialogue centers in the Balkans.

A Balkan-American family

Several participants also used “family” to describe what happened between them in the trainings. Some weeks after the training in Lillehammer, a participant at the ISS-course commented, “it’s really been a family”. He added that they had retained it [during the summer school] and that it’s really special. Among many others with a similar description another confirmed that the “family” transcended where they were coming from, and said that he was hanging out with the: ”Balkan-American family”. This illustrates how even though boundaries based on ethnicity were maintained in certain contexts new sets of boundaries emerged, in the form of a new group, a family that included and transcended earlier national and regional divides.

A sense of feeling like a family was also confirmed at the long course. On the last evening of the long course I asked Zakariya, what he felt about leaving and going home. He answered that he felt “attached”, but that he also felt attached to his family. So it’s like having two “families”, he says and laughs. In other conversations interlocutors from the same course would refer to other participants at the course as “Nansen friends” or the “Nansen group”. Another participant at the long course, Sofija on her part admitted that she did not expect to come this “close” to other people at the course. She explained that in her “personal experience” the participants were like a “big family”. During a weekend at the long course some twenty more people came to join the ten participants at the course. The newcomers also had background from among countries similar to the participants at the long course. Sofija would tell the newcomers about the long course group that had spent the last three weeks together: “We have become like a big family. And that as one of the participants was leaving earlier, this person was so sad and had said to Sofija that, “the family will be like one member

less”. The participants here then point to the fact that the long course group had become like a family. I find it interesting that a notion of group and family here was expressed to a new group, the new comers to the long course, as was also the case with the ISS-group in relation to the rest of the summer school students. So in this way the notion of group was used both to stress the long course group and ISS-group as similar. At the same time the participants would differentiate themselves as a group in relation to the other people, reconfiguring positioning in terms of creating new “family” bonds, even though they were metaphorical. In this way it can be seen related to what happens in processes of identification, as posited by Jenkins. As we will see below dancing was another medium, which was experienced by some as connecting, but was also an arena through which differentiating occurred.

Connecting through dance

Dancing together among participants reoccurred through fieldwork. Dancing happened both as part of planned activities at cultural evenings together with Nansen Academy students at the long course, or spontaneous dancing like at a barbecue party at Steinar’s home during the ISS-course. Natalie shared a reflection from one of these evenings. Steinar and ISS-students were sitting in a circle at a follow up meeting in Oslo, as Natalie says she thinks it happened at Steinar’s house and explains: “that’s when we all settled” and people were connecting. Her face lights up in a big smile.

The summer evening was filled with consuming lots of grilled food and drinks of both alcoholic and non-alcoholic sorts on Steinar’s terrace outside. Later on participants started dancing. Almost everybody joined the pulsating circle movement of the dancing, at times trying to get a synchronicity in kicking the left and right leg into the middle in real “can-can” style. There were smiles on people’s faces as they held their arms around each other’s shoulders moving to Balkan beats. The river Mjøsa was glittering down to the left, and the sun was rising high towards the blue sky with catchy Balkan beats booming through the neighbourhood.

So can the dancing on the evening referred to by Natalie, be seen as something that brought people together as a group, even though everybody did not join the dancing? As Denis told me at dinner the same day that Natalie highlighted dancing as “connecting people”, he was not of the opinion that people were actually united by the dancing. Denis told me he had thought there could be something in what Steinar had said about playing music from one

country and not other countries could be experienced as excluding by some participants. Even so, Denis went on saying, when participants from countries whose music was not played were asked about the music the participants had replied that the music was very good. I find this to be illustrated in the energetic dancing of one woman with this background. Another participant with the same background had furthermore written “one of the best evenings of my adult life”, about the evening in Steinar’s guest book, even though he observed the scene of dancing and socialising, standing smoking in a corner most of the evening. Denis on his part left the party before the people really threw themselves into the dancing and he did not drink alcohol. As I talked with Denis large parts of the evening, I understood that he experienced the drinking of alcohol as slightly uncomfortable. Another dancing event was emphasised as important by participants, to which we now turn.

During the last follow up meeting between Steinar and the ISS-students, several participants from the Balkans told about a cultural evening for all the 500 international students that had taken place some days before. At this cultural evening some in the group that was in Lillehammer had danced kolo, a folk dance from the Balkans. At one point on stage they had held all the flags from the Balkans at the same time. One male participant said that when they [the participant here referred to the group on stage as we] were holding the Balkan flags, they did not know which flag they were holding. He described it as such an emotional moment that he almost cried. Another woman from the same region comments that some of them had in fact cried. While Teodora, that had the audience perspective expressed that the group on stage was so united. And that she wanted to cry. Teodora went on saying that then she would have ruined her make-up. Several people, including myself laughed. Hannah later on in the sharing round comments: “I didn’t even realise it [holding different flags at the cultural evening] was so significant, because I was thinking about you as one group”, another participant adds “I was so happy it was meaningful to you too”.

Dancing together can in other words seem to unite people that have histories of conflict behind them, where moving together and communicating through dancing seemed to contribute to blurring identification borders. In this way I suggest that dancing as part of the training both in Lillehammer, as well as at the International Summer School in Oslo, contributed to a sense of collective identification (Jenkins 2004:16). Dancing kolo together then, the music seemed to bring participants closer. Or as another interlocutor told me in an interview: “Kolo, it’s originally a Serbian thing, [but] all the Bosniak’s dance to that. We

don't feel like it is ours anymore, because everybody dance to that". The participant continued to say that dancing is something that makes you happy, and that when you dance to what you like, you feel at home. So maybe this was a reason for dancing kolo that a Balkan identity emerged, and that in this way, notions of boundaries and differentiation were negotiated.

The sense of unity though, turned out to be understood differently by the participants, as American participants already saw the Balkan group as one, whereas for the Balkan group it had a significant meaning being a *we*, not caring about which national flag they were holding. Nevertheless, it was a meaningful experience for the Balkan and American participants alike, but with different connotations. The first dancing was on the other hand according to Denis not uniting, pointing to the fact that diverging views on this existed side by side. I suggest that the whole process of learning and living together had the potential to achieve a "connection" between people, dancing being one part of the process. What is also evident is that even though dancing can contribute to differentiation by seeing oneself in relation to the other, it can also lead to unity and the emergence of a Balkan identity. Dancing then, I suggest, contributed to reconfigure identification as a group feeling emerged transcending national, cultural and religious divides.

We will now continue to explore experiences related to what interlocutors expressed about change on a personal level. As Elvir expressed during the dialogue diamond exercise: "Dialogue can be tool for change". He added that in the work they did, very often changes on a personal level as well as on a social or group level took place. So far we have dealt with the group level, let us now turn to the personal aspect of change.

Transformative moments

Making yourself visible was as we saw in the previous chapter one of the central elements in dialogue. On the second day of the course with the international students we did an exercise where a group of seven students and I were to answer who we were and why we were here.

It was Leo's turn to tell his story. Ana, another participant, commented that he was "too young" to tell a story. "You would think so", Leo replies whereupon he tells about growing up with a family member with a serious disease, and someone close to him that committed suicide. Leo talks for a long time, and says that he usually does not share this much about himself, and how it was in fact one of the first times in his life he had done it. It is quiet for a

little while after he is finished talking. Ana says something to another in the group in their common language. Then she turns towards Leo, and tells him him that he is nice. “Thank you”, Leo says, whereupon Ana with a big smile on her face tells the rest of us: “He’s amazing”.

In a follow up meeting weeks after this incident Leo says he wants to thank everybody, and Steinar for getting the possibility of “making myself visible to everyone here”. Leo ends by saying that he cannot express how thankful he is. At the last follow up meeting in Oslo, Steinar brings up how Leo expressed a goal about being more visible through the course [both in Lillehammer and in Oslo], and asked whether this had happened and if he was punished or rewarded for doing this. Leo answers that he has been “rewarded” and that the morning after he had shared the story it was like waking up as a “new” person.

Here we see how Leo expresses becoming like a new person. Brottveit (2013b) and Fagerlid (2012) have both found that talking and sharing experiences can be experienced as therapeutic. Brottveit (2013b:154) draws forward ‘transforming moments’ as incidents where a person within the therapeutic process opens up, or gives attention to a relation to another interlocutor that up until then has remained unsaid. Fagerlid (2012:103) has through fieldwork among slammers in Paris doing performance poetry found that sharing experiences in front of an audience can have a therapeutic effect. Despite that the dialogue trainings were not within a therapeutic framework and the interlocutors in my study have not had the same issues as Brottveit’s informants, I suggest the incident can be seen as a transformative moment in how Leo expressed waking up as a new person, opening up, sharing something so personal. In this way it can be seen that telling his story was a way of processing challenging issues Leo had experienced and in the process making himself visible. In arguing this I follow Brottveit’s main hypothesis that therapeutic processes can be comparable with communicative processes that take place in settings that are not therapeutic (Brottveit 2013b:9), also as communicative processes to a large degree is what I have seen taken place in the field I have studied.

Ana on her part during a follow up meeting sitting in a circle, expressed how she had become friends with participants from other countries in the Balkans, which for her was emotional. She told about when she talked with friends on Skype, and how she was trying to explain that she was hugging her new friends that she wanted to try to explain to her friends. With tears in her eyes she said she did not want to think about leaving, as it was so sad. Whereas in the

beginning of the training in Lillehammer she talked about how much she would miss her boyfriend and friends during the summer, in this way something seemed to have changed for her.

Brottveit describes that in some network meeting incidents participants “experiencing something” that contributes to a sense of community and relations with each other (Brottveit 2013b:155-156). Experiencing something that contributes to building relations I propose happens in the processes I have studied as well, and correlates with the fact that it is through “dialogues” that “connections” are sparked. Transforming moments are incidents when something happens that leaves an extra impression, in the way that the participants become emotionally moved, where they experience something that contributes to relations and building a community and fellowship (Brottveit 2013b:155-156). Ana expressed how she had experienced what she called a “personal transformation”. So for Ana transformation also seemed related to the relationship she had developed with friends from the Balkans across earlier divides. Furthermore, I find there to be a change from the first days when Ana told Leo that he was too young to tell a story, which can be seen opposite of the dialogic approach as presented by the center in being open to listen to what the other person had to say, and becoming friends participants at the training. In terms of a transforming moment it seems for Ana, transformation had to do with being part of the process that contributed to what she termed as a “personal transformation”. After Leo had told his story, I several times saw Ana and Leo taking the hand of each other in a friendly way when walking by each other. I suggest this gesture having something to do with change taking place before and after in the way Ana saw Leo and the other way around. It also shows how relations were built across background, age and gender at the course.

So far we have seen Leo’s and Ana’s experience of personal change. We will continue to look at a few more examples of experiencing change with Alexandra, Zakariya and Christiane. In Zakariya’s case a personal change was particularly related to using skills he had learned at the long course.

Becoming a different person

In the conversation with Alexandra referred to earlier, Alexandra described the “mediation” training she was part of some years ago, as “supernatural”, or as she said it was even “beyond supernatural”. “I changed my perspective completely”, she says. Changing perspective and

learning about oneself was also something that was stressed by Zakariya and Christiane in a conversation I heard them having during the first days of the long course. I was sitting in the blue room writing notes, whilst hearing Christiane and Zakariya talking in the room next door. “Be the change you want to see”, Zakariya says to Christiane. Christiane tells Zakariya that in Norway they have a saying that you cannot change anyone but yourself.

What are evident here are two views on personal change. Later on I will return to Christiane and how change relates to dialogue skills as an attitude to life, but first let us look closer into Zakariya’s experience of change. His statement above was a reference to variations of a quote that through the last decades have been attributed to the nonviolent activist Mahatma Gandhi: “you must be the change you wish to see in the world” (Brainyquote 2013a). Some months after the training I asked Zakariya if he had learned something from the training, to which he replied how he tried to practice a dialogical way to communicate, having a good feeling whilst doing it. He explained in an email what his colleagues said about him:

I am a different person now. And I also feel it. I attribute this to the course in Norway. So, that is the retrospect in short. I talk a lot now, trying to express my opinion rather than to persuade things to go my way. It just gives me a sense of relief. Also, it increases my self-confidence to learn and realize diversity and differences of other people.

Later in a Skype conversation Zakariya tells me he has learned “something that requires hard practice”, and that he uses it as he “communicate[s]” with people. He continues to talk about how people at his office says he seems to be changed, and that this change has to do with “respect[ing] diversity of ideas”, and that everybody appreciates that he listens. Zakariya adds that even though he is the “big boss” at the office now colleagues have the “courage to talk to me”.

Zakariya’s way of communicating and reflections on how he communicates resemble the dialogical attitude of the center. I find Zakariya’s experience to be similar to what Elvir told us during the dialogue diamond exercise, that dialogue had to be practiced and when “you practice” it gives you not only a good feeling in your stomach. Because through practicing you also become a good listener, and if you are a good listener even in a debate [that was put in opposition to dialogue], you will get a better understanding. We have also so far seen how

talking can release your concern, as seemed to happen in Leo's case, where talking can be seen connected to getting the concerns out of your body, resembling the findings of Fagerlid and Brottveit.

In Wikan's (1996) study on people in Cairo and their different strategies to the challenges in their everyday lives, talking is seen as a life necessity by Umm Ali, the main voice in the book. As Umm Ali says: "talking together makes wise", and she asks what humans had understood, "if we did not tell each what each of us thinks and feels" (Wikan 1996:22). According to Umm Ali "you get the problems out of your body" through talking, it "purges you of sorrow [and] anger" and "invigorates your soul" (Wikan 1996:22). So in contexts from Paris, Cairo and different Norwegian settings, there are similarities in terms of the role of talking and how it is experienced. So even though an Egyptian context differs from a Norwegian one, living with simple means one side and having the possibility to participate at a training to learn about communication and peacebuilding on another, there are still correlations. As emphasised by Umm Ali talking invigorates your soul, meaning that talking strengthens and gives energy, which I find similar to Alexandra and how she experienced that she often got energy from having dialogue. Talking together makes wise Umm Ali shows, which is what participants at seminars have also stressed, that they learn from each other. As Nadia said she liked the method of learning, it's like you don't notice you are learning, but you learn all the time she tells me. She explains how being part of this group, meeting these people even if it is just one or two times in life, it is "really valuable". She tells me how she has not been in a mixed group like this before, and that being at the training will help to "understand" their situation better. I suggest that Nadia's statement links back to learning by doing as a process where knowledge is continuously created and discovered with active participants as Ingold puts forward. Further on I propose how the method of learning and dialogue relates to the learning process seems to continue for some of the participants, like for Zakariya, changing perspective like for Alexandra. Yet for other interlocutors, dialogue is as we shall see, like an attitude to life.

A dialogical attitude as lifestyle

Many times during fieldwork Christiane and I would talk about being a "dialogue worker" (*dialogarbeider*), or using the skills at the center as approach. In the end of June during the ISS-course and religious dialogues seminar we sit down and talk during dinner. Christiane tells me how the center's work is mainly about "change". I ask her about what this entails,

and she tells me that this work is a lifestyle. Christiane tells me that therefore this lifestyle cannot be false. She tells me how the lifestyle “affects” individuals, and those around you through the way you communicate. This corresponds with Zakariya’s description of how his colleagues understood him too, and how he explained it had to do with how he communicated. Christiane tells me that this way of communicating entails “listening”, “being humble” and having “integrity”, not only saying, but doing what you teach. She tells me that this way of communicating is about internalising it. This we saw earlier in the way this way of communicating was expressed by both Elvir and Zakariya, and how this seems to entail feeling different also physically, so can one say it is a sort of internalised embodiment of skills?

Christiane draws forward Gandhi as an example of this work as a lifestyle. She continues to talk about Inge Eidsvåg, and how he is such a person, a role model. She explains it by saying that he is present in himself (*tilstede i seg selv*). For Christiane this way of communication had to do with changing oneself, which was a topic we would often talk about, or which she would also talk about with participants at the trainings as well.

Working for peace

During the spare time after the programme was over, in the breaks and evenings, or through cultural, physical activities like dancing or social activities like barbecue parties and going to museums, employees and participants intermingled and talked. In this way I saw an intertwining of lives and building of relations also happening between the participants and employees. This illustrates working at the center as a lifestyle, being a dialogue worker as for instance Steinar would spend time with course participants, showing Nadia Lillehammer, or in how Christiane would be on campus after the programme of the day was over. Christiane’s lifestyle was for instance noticed by participants at the long course during the first evening when Christiane arranged “get to know each other games”. At one point Nadia tells Christiane that she should go home soon, as Christiane has worked for a long time. Christiane replies: “We work for peace”. Whereupon Nadia answers: ”But we are peaceful here”, to the amusement of the rest of the group, many laughing. So here we both see how working for peace, having it as a lifestyle was commented upon. At the ISS-course, would say: “I call myself a dialogue worker, that’s what I do”. There were also different ways and point-of-views on the way of working at the center as a lifestyle that Christiane elaborated on during an interview in the end of June. Christiane told me how she was the most extreme at the

center in terms of taking the work as a lifestyle, and how she was thankful that her colleagues let her take it so seriously.

On the other hand this way of living was expressed by Christiane and Steinar as tiring work, travelling around Norway and the Balkans to hold seminars. Christiane would describe the work as both “fantastic” as well as “demanding” (*krevende*). Several times she would tell me how she sometimes wished she could just work at a grocery store, just doing something ordinary, not having so many courses and new groups all the time in addition to writing applications.

Closing reflections

This chapter explores how interlocutors share experiences through what they term as dialogues, stressing connection and a sense of group feeling described as becoming like a family through getting common memories, like dancing together. Interlocutors experience change and transformation through exercises and being together as a group, something that is also noticed by others after the training, like colleagues. Being open for change or movement, as explained by Christiane and Steinar part of dialogue and being a dialogue worker furthermore relates to having a dialogical approach as a lifestyle. So it seems that dialogue is “more than mere words” (Brottveit 2013a) for interlocutors evident in the experiences presented so far. In this way I find the concept of connection used by participants to be one way of understanding what takes place between participants and what the more than mere words at trainings entail through how interlocutors relate to and describe their experiences. As I have argued in this chapter a reconfiguration of group took place exemplified through dancing. Still in the trainings, differentiation between participants from the Balkans and USA came forward as through dancing, something I also suggest relates to interlocutors’ knowledge being continuously discovered in the process of getting to know each other’s point of view. We will now turn to further examples of similarities but also differences that appeared at the trainings.

CHAPTER 6. Negotiating similarity and difference

A person is never (...) only a Muslim (though some may present themselves as if that were the case). Every one is a real human being with multiple compelling concerns that determine how different part identities (or selves) will be made relevant in different situations (Wikan 2012:130).

In the previous chapter the focus has been on how participants learn, use and experience taking part in seminars. Coming together at the training, establishing what can be seen as a group, was also challenged in some situations. Several factors affected the group dynamics and therein also the dialogue between participants. Different ways of practicing religion I found to be one of the factors that differentiated participants, also emphasised as differentiating by the interlocutors themselves in the way they positioned themselves to each other. Examples of what I find to be processes of identification negotiated among participants will be explored in this chapter.

Theoretical perspectives

Negotiations of identification relates to Jenkins' (2008) presentation of how people make sense of each other relationally, through processes where identification takes place, making use of similarity and difference. Jenkins calls it a "multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world, and our places in it" (Jenkins 2008:5). In this way identification is something humans *do*, it is an activity through which categorising one's identity takes place relating to others and one's own image of how the others categorise you (Jenkins 2008:5). The processes of identification are part of people's lives, and are perhaps especially visible where and when people meet and negotiate their mutual categorisations in everyday life.

According to Barth (1969) attention must be given to how ethnic boundaries are maintained and negotiated, and not the "cultural stuff" of the group. When boundaries are maintained, it signals who belongs and who is excluded from the same set of values and understandings, by validating and keeping boundaries that in this way determine a group identity (Barth 1969:15). Even though boundaries based on ethnicity were maintained during trainings, I argue that, as a group feeling emerged among participants new sets of boundaries appeared, where participants differentiated themselves from others that were not at the course. This

differentiation was for instance illustrated through several participants that expressed how boyfriends and family did not “understand” or “care” about the sort of course they were participating at. Jenkins shows how identification is both interactional and socially dependent, whereby persons in certain situations will be identified by others either as an A or a C. Identification can also take place in how people position themselves (Jenkins 2008:5-6). During fieldwork the latter aspect of identification for instance came forward in the situational stressing for instance a Bosnian identity in one context and a Balkan identity in another, or in stressing similarity in having background from countries with conflicts. The latter aspect will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Using group as an analytical concept can yet again be problematic in itself, as “the group” has too often been taken as a fact within social science (Jenkins 2008:8). Jenkins points to Brubaker in stating that people in ethnic conflict should be seen as individuals and organisations rather than ethnic groups. In this view it is people that “make and do identity”, not the other way around, even though Brubaker sees a shared sense of group membership or ‘groupness’ to be real (Jenkins 2008:9). Terming groupness as more real than groups can on the other hand also be an argumentative pit fall according to Jenkins, as people’s everyday lives are filled with the ambiguities and paradoxes, and not the least that individuals act and behave, which cannot be understood fully within a theoretical framework (Jenkins 2008:9). Even more so, arguing that groups are only imagined by the people themselves, does not make up for the fact that the groups are experienced by people in their everyday lives, and can in this way be seen as “a three-dimensional experiential materiality to supra-local ethnic groups” (Jenkins 2008:11).

In my own material, the appearance of a group contributed to what I see as a reconfiguration across earlier divisions, where being a group could be stronger as an identification marker than ethnic identity in some instances. As Jenkins in my opinion rightly suggests, the relevant questions to ask in this regard is why people feel that they and others belong to a certain group, while others do not? (Jenkins 2008:5). In this thesis I argue to have found that sharing the same experiences through participating at the same training can be one answer in feeling belonging to the group at the training. Considering then that creation of a group feeling is not only dependent on ethnic background, I find it interesting and a bit baffling that a group feeling emerged parallel to verbal communication stopping between some of the participants. On this note I find it important to stress with Jenkins that identification does not determine

what people actually do (Jenkins 2008:5). Especially considering how every person has multiple concerns and unique identities bringing their own experiences and learning to seminars, affecting which parts of the identity will be situational relevant (Wikan 2012:130,139). These aspects I think are crucial in understanding what will be evident in the cases presented below, also considering that there is no one-to-one relation between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences, as the elements that are important are only those stressed as significant by the participant (Barth 1969:14). The following examples shows how religion can be seen as part of identification processes, possibly challenging the sense of a group feeling, and that sharing the same religion still revealed different views on how to practice Islam.

Different ways of being Muslim

Despite most interlocutors at the long course sharing religion, nuances and negotiations of being a Muslim appeared. One incident in which the participants chose to sit in a particular way illustrates a positioning to each other that I argue can show the differing practices. I will analyse three elements of a situation as the training was coming close to the end. One of the participants invited the rest to join her for a farewell dinner in Lillehammer, as she was leaving the course earlier than the rest. We ended up in a restaurant where the following took place.

The restaurant is empty, so we can choose whatever table we want. As we sit down four participants from the same region take their seats at one end of the table. Jasmina sits down beside them. Together with Sara I sit in the middle of the table. At the other side of the table all but one from the same region order beer, as does Jasmina, and one participant from another region. While the rest order various sorts of soda drinks. After a little while Sara agrees to switch seats with Jasmine, so that Jasmina is seated at the end of the table sitting with participants from the same region she's from. As the switching of seats takes place, one comments, "movement is good", where upon another with a smile adds that "dialogue is movement".

“Movement” was as we saw in chapter four an important element of dialogue. In the incident above we see that the center’s understanding of dialogue was used as Sara and Jasmina switched places. In this way this case firstly illustrates how participants use what they learn, that can be seen as a development of a common understanding, therein also developing

jargons of talking and dialoguing as explained in chapter four. The comments can in this way be seen as a negotiation of when and how to use what they learn, this time in a humouristic manner.

What this incident secondly illustrates is the physical positioning of how the participants were sitting. The participants ended up sitting together with the group of their same background, splitting the table in three. Sitting together with group of similar background was underlined as Sara switched seat with Jasmina. Thirdly, Jasmina's move can partly be seen as a wish to sit closer to others with the same background, but as I see it had just as much to do with the fact that she had bought a beer, as did most in the group which she shared background with, being more comfortable sitting and drinking beside others that were drinking alcohol, or possibly out of respect for those who have different religious practices regarding alcohol drinking. The comments on changing seats can also be seen as a way of covering a possible uncomfortable situation where Jasmina and Sara changed seats. I consider that both ethnic and religious identity was triggered in this situation as differentiating factors.

The physical positioning at the table can further be seen to illustrate a continuum of different ways of practicing Islam and being Muslim, where at one end no one was drinking alcohol, whereas in the middle one from a region was drinking, and three out of four were drinking at the other side of the table. In this way I find alcohol to be one differentiating factor between participants, and as an aspect of cultural values and religious practices that was negotiated during the course. As was underlined by interlocutors that were drinking it had more to do with cultural values and practices learned and adopted from other ethnic groups in the region, rather than being a good Muslim or not. During the last days of the long course one of the participants from the latter end of the table told me that the participant did not want to invite the other side of the table to go out for a drink, as the participant would not feel comfortable with it. Still the participant told me that one of the more liberal in the group could go with them. What this participant said can then possibly explain more on why Sara and Jasmina switched seats, but also how being liberal could make them more similar, even being from different regions. In this way identification was stressed across the participants different backgrounds, and similarity was positioned, at the same differentiating against others at the course that were not seen as liberal. This then underlines how similarity and difference, as Jenkins argues are always a pair as the dynamic principles of identification (Jenkins 2004:5). We will continue to look at other incidents that nuanced the negotiations of being Muslim.

Drinking alcohol

The first Saturday evening at the long course I went out with four of the participants. Just before we enter a pub, one of them asks if she can ask me a personal question. I respond that off course she can ask me. Are you Christian, she asks me. I say that I respect different religions, but that I am trying to find my way. She says she is doing the same with Islam, and being a Muslim. The participant tells me she wants red wine. I get in the line at the counter with her and another participant, help him with the Norwegian change for a beer, buy a beer for myself, and make sure that the other participant gets a large glass of water to go with the wine. The participant with the red wine tells me that this is one of the first times she is drinking, and that she wants to try it, because here she has the freedom to try it. Another participant drinks a Bacardi breezer, while the last two are drinking a Norwegian soda water called solo, that tastes like a fluid of sparkles and orange.

Is it strange for you that I am drinking I ask the two drinking solo. It is not strange one of them says, the other one agrees. The first one with the solo tells us that he was known as the one who didn't drink among his fellow students, and that he could drive his friends around during his study time. He went on saying that after a while people got used to him not drinking.

In the situation I waited to see if some of the participants would drink, before deciding to buy a beer. In this incident I experienced how one participant asked me if I was Christian. I interpreted this to be a way of testing how I related to drinking or not drinking and whether she should drink or not. My answer was neither positive nor negative. The participant ended up buying wine. She also positioned herself as similar to me, saying she was also trying to figure out her approach to Islam and being a Muslim, so despite having different backgrounds, we had something in common, which she stressed. I see her explaining that she now had a possibility to drink as a way of negotiating her own position, and how to be a Muslim. As I asked the two drinking solo if they thought it strange that I was drinking, it seemed they were both fine with it, possibly related to having lived different places. I also found that one of the participants positioned himself in taking the role of driving his friends around, possibly making it easier that he was not drinking. Still, I found differentiation and positioning taking place, as some of us were drinking, and the two of them were not, but it did not seem to affect our conversation in a negative sense. There were also other aspects of

approaching and practicing religion that differed among participants, aspects that were also evident in other situations than at the training seminars.

Different approaches to practicing religion

I met with one of the participants several times after one of the trainings, usually at different cafés in Oslo. On one of these occasions the participant told me that he had prayed as a child. His mother was still praying, the participant went on, his father now and then, and his siblings did not pray that much either. The participant says that he believes in “doing good, positive things, not negative things”, as he expressed it. The participant further tells me that he is not religious and does not practice religion. He also comments on how a man he had met through studies had assumed that just because of the interlocutor’s background he was supposed to be Muslim and practice Islam. In response to the man the participant told me he had told the man he did not practice that much. It was first after the training he told he did not practice, and to my knowledge he did not explicitly tell others that he was not religious at the training. It had possibly to do with the fact that the participant did not wish to differentiate himself that clearly from the others in his group, or the other course participants for that matter.

Later in the conversation at the café, the participant and I continued talking about Taliban and practicing religion. I ask him whether there were different views on these topics within the group he was in at the training. He cut me off, by responding that he did not want to say anything about that. This was one of the last times we met during fieldwork. Up until now I felt we had built a relation with mutual trust, having talked about many topics, also sensitive ones. It was therefore to my surprise he did not want to talk about it. So could it be it was too sensitive and he did not want to talk badly about others in his group? I suggest that the participant’s positioning and approach to religion relates to Wikan’s emphasis on how every persons’ multiple concerns, experiences and unique identities, will contribute to which part of the identity will be made situational relevant.

The role of Islam

During the long course, a weekend was devoted for more members from the diaspora in Norway to come to Lillehammer to meet the course participants at the long course, to learn from each other and share experiences. At one point around 40 people were sitting in a big circle in the campus’ main hall. One of the participants at the long course presented what the situation was like in the country she lived in. Whereupon, one of the other participants followed up on this presentation, insistently asking about the role of religion in the country,

and why Islam was not the state religion, Muslims being the largest religious group in the country. The participant did not have a clear answer to the other participant's question and opinions, and seemed hesitant during this discussion.

Later on I meet another participant in the staircase on my way to the blue room. I ask about the participant's opinion on the previous discussion, and we stop to talk. The participant says that the participant that had asked questions previously had said how the Islamic state should not be the basis. The participant asks me if I understand, and looks around talking in a low voice. I get the impression that the participant is careful not to talk too loud, so that the other participant cannot hear our conversation. We continue up the stairs to the blue room where the participant who asked questions is standing. A little after the two of them are talking about another topic.

In the incident in the main hall I argue that the participant asking questions can be seen to position himself in terms of religion, assuming similarity as Islam was present in the participants three respective countries. Later after this incident the participant who presented the situation in the country she lived in expressed discomfort with the whole situation. As a backdrop several of the Bosnian participants expressed concerns during the training about the Bosnian Mujahedins and their influence in Bosnia-Herzegovina today. The Mujahedins were Muslim volunteers joining the war from 1992-1995, coming from mainly Arab nations to fight on behalf of Islam and Muslims, some of which had stayed in the country. Another participant expressed to me how the participant that had asked questions had "pushed" too much in this situation, on what the participant called "Islamic politics".

The participants shared as we have seen what was seemingly the same religion, but this picture was partly contested, challenged and nuanced by individualistic approaches to practicing religion, both within an ethnic group and in the way the boundaries of that group were negotiated in relation to other groups. This resembles Barth's theory of the fruitfulness of studying the negotiations taking place at the boundaries of ethnic groups (Barth 1969). In this way I find that inquiring on how people "make and do identity" (Jenkins 2008:9) makes sense as an analytical approach, in relation to how interlocutors explain, ask questions, and have differing assumptions and opinions, all factors pointing to a positioning I see as negotiations of similarities and differences, part of identification processes. Some interlocutors experienced pressure or lack of understanding, differing perspectives based on

religion can in this particular incident be seen as challenging the room for dialogue and understanding between the participants. On the other hand the way participants dealt with disagreements during the training illustrated individual approaches. In this way I find that both the group that emerged during the course, as shown in the previous chapter, and continuing a dialogue between participants was challenged. I will present further on additional examples of incidents that affected group dynamics during the long course.

Different understandings among interlocutors

From chaos to cooperation

During the training the participants were arranging a cultural evening where students at the Nansen Academy were invited to celebrate *Navroz* with food and a big fire in the garden outside campus. *Navroz* is the New Year that is celebrated in different countries in the Middle East, as in Iraqi Kurdistan and Afghanistan on the 21st of March. In order to do so the participants had three meetings to plan what food to be served and divide tasks.

The first meeting is in the campus' foyer, where participants talk and joke simultaneously, discussing if a leader is needed or not. One participant leaves for the restroom and at her return another has taking her seat. She takes the seat of another participant that has left the room, returning later on. Additionally, two other participants comment to another, that he is not paying attention or participating. The discussion is noisy and goes back and forth. I see one of the Nansen Academy students looking in direction of where we are sitting. One suggestion is to serve fruits starting with the same letter, but in the different languages that the group speaks. One person suggests twice that we should rather go for finding fruits, not depending on whether the fruit starts with a specific letter or not. Another writes messages on facebook. Another checks his mobile, and two google fruits on their Iphone and Ipads. The meeting lasts an hour.

In the next meeting we are seated around a long oval table in the library on campus. During the meeting some participants raise their voices, others remain silent, and one wanders off from the meeting. Like last time, several talk at the same time and disagree on the planning. One participant comments that we are working for peace, which makes her smile a little. Some seem to be irritated by other participants, like when one participant suggests something, another sighs loudly saying "oh, my God". I feel uncomfortable during the meeting and I am surprised by how they raised their voices and how they are discussing.

Conflict making meeting

After this incident I meet one of the participants by the coffee machine and ask him what he thought about the meeting. In a low tone of voice he says he did not like it and how we just kept repeating ourselves. That evening in the hall, where the female participants, including myself, were sleeping, I met another participant. I asked her thoughts about the meeting. “I didn’t like it”, she says, the “atmosphere” she explains. As she asks me what I thought about what happened, I admit I did not know what to say. Whereupon she comments that I did not like it either and tells me not to worry.

The next day at lunch I sit together with another participant. We just had a lecture on mediation in a Norwegian context. The participant tells me that yesterday was good, this morning was good, but that yesterday evening, there was no “conflict resolution”, but a conflict making meeting.

Before the third and final planning meeting almost a week after the first one, a participant says that we need some “air” or that we would “fight”. This meeting goes free of disagreements and raised voices, and some joke with each other. Two other Nansen Academy students are sitting at the table close to ours, and they are silent and just looking at us. At the end of the meeting people talk and engage loudly.

The meetings went from being described as “chaos” by one participant, to more organised and easy going, and the tone between the participants was filled with humour. At the third meeting there had also been a week of exercises, lectures and role-play on dialogue as a tool in conflict situations. This might have given the participants time to reflect on how to use dialogue in practice. Even so differing opinions continued, illustrated in how the tone between two participants at the training changed from being joking and friendly, to not talking to each other at all at the end of the long course.

Talking that stopped

Some days after the Navroz celebration the long course participants visited Nobel Peace Center and the Peace Research Institute in Oslo. As we are entering the bus one of the participants who had the incident with the other participant, mentions leaving the course. Another participant responds in a half-joking tone that she had learned dialogue and could now apply it in peacebuilding. During this day I did not see the two participants that seemingly had a confrontational talk some days earlier talk anymore, and they did not say

goodbye when leaving Lillehammer. As we have seen, some participants had confrontations and consequentially stopped talking to one another. Still the same participants would stress the importance of the group, as one of them for instance said he personally did not want to go to the cinema, but he would do it for the group. Yet another example is how one of the participants stressed the good cooperation in the group, while another pointed out how the group had become like a “family”.

In the contact I had with Norunn after the course, she acknowledges that there are incidents that happened that could have been dealt with. In an interview I had with Norunn later on, she told me how she did not have the insight in all the communication that took place amongst the participants, which was fine. She told me that her job as a facilitator of the process does not require her to know everything that happens, as that will leave no room for the participants to develop their own dynamics. On the other hand it was important for her to be attentive to processes within the group, without too much involvement. Responsibility as a participant was something she stressed as important, and that if something got out of hand, she expected them to let her know, as they were experienced participants.

Feeling free to disagree

So far in this part we have seen three incidents of differentiation at the course. We have also earlier seen how practicing religion has been a differentiating factor among the participants. In terms of understanding the disagreements and dynamics above I believe the involved parties' actions must be considered in relation to the participants' history, and their “learning and experiences” as Wikan (2012:139) argues. I find that even though the center was facilitating seminars on dialogue and peacebuilding, giving participants sufficient tools, it was still up to them to choose whether or not to use the techniques and how. I also consider that in order to actually solve a disagreement and to have a dialogue there needs to be a will to do so. Perhaps an additional factor could be that the participants did not invest as much in tending to the relations since the disagreement took place close to the end of the course?

This thesis points to what can happen in processes where dialogue is central. I consider there to be a paradox in how the center sets the training framework, with exercises, working in groups, lectures, social and cultural activities. Furthermore, the center builds the starting point of how to define dialogue itself as concept and how to practice it. What I on the other hand found is that despite the center's definition power, the participants had the freedom to decide

whether they wanted to engage in dialogues with other participants or not. So far we have seen that most participants did engage in what they call dialogue, whereas some did not. During an interview, one participant told me about the trainings: “You feel free”, and how there was no environment that would judge you, for instance by commenting on actions in regards to being Muslim. In an interview I had with Grung mentioned in chapter three, she also underlined the fact that in religious dialogues “people feel free”, and that you can get this feeling of freedom because the differences are wanted. On the other hand the other participant involved in the disagreement described above, explained to me in an interview that the person risked losing the goal of being at the course, which was to “learn”, “focus”, “communicate” and “discuss” when situations like these arose. As Steinar would say during an ISS-session; dialogue seminars usually consisted of 20% dialogue and 80% debate, or as Elvir said during the dialogue diamond exercise, it is not human to be in a “dialogue-mode” all the time. Could maybe the disagreements have something to do with these facts? Still, as one of the involved parties expressed risking the goal of being there, it seems the differentiation and degree of different opinions and ways of communicating contributed to a lack of dialogue. But still, might it be that in the aftermath of disagreement, there can still be room for an understanding of how the other’s perspective differed from one’s own? At least in the conversations I had with interlocutors after the course it did not seem that the involved parties had lost faith in dialogue.

Closing reflections

We have so far seen that even though participants can experience a feeling of community, differentiating and disagreement also occurs. In this chapter differentiation related to practicing religion, but also differing opinions that I argue has as much to do with individual points of view as a group identity. In this way, whether similarity or difference is stressed needs to be considered in light of both the individual and how the ethnic boundaries are negotiated, in line with Jenkins, Wikan and Barth. In the next chapter we will look closer into in what ways dialogue at the trainings might help to create understanding among interlocutors. I will discuss the use of “connection” among interlocutors, and possibilities related to the concept of resonance and empathy seen in light of examples in this study.

CHAPTER 7. Towards empathy through dialogue?

From my work on empathy in healthcare settings and post-war reconciliation, I believe we need empathy based on genuine curiosity about how other people feel, as well as emotional connection with them (Halpern 2010).

The previous chapter inquired into differentiating factors among participants during trainings and how participants dealt with having different opinions. Participants expressed getting friends very fast, having deep conversations, connecting with each other and becoming like a family. In this chapter I want to explore how tendencies of differentiation and connection at the trainings can be discussed in relation to the concepts of resonance and empathy. I will present experiences and expressions stressed by participants. Some ways participants deal with differing experiences with conflict will further be presented in order to discuss “empathy-like” understandings between participants following Hollan and Throop (2011). Firstly I turn to Wikan’s (1992, 2012) understanding of resonance.

Resonance

In Wikan’s book *Resonance: Beyond the words* she posits ‘resonance’ as a down-to-earth concept that should be grounded in practical action and peoples life circumstances (Wikan 2012:36). Wikan describes resonance as crucial in going beyond the words to understand people’s compelling concerns (Wikan 1992:460). She describes it in the following way:

Resonance thus demands something of both parties to communication, of both reader and author: an effort at feeling-thought; a willingness to engage with another world, life, or idea; an ability to use one’s experience – (...) – to try to grasp, or convey, meanings that reside neither in words, “facts”, nor text but are evoked in the meeting of one experiencing subject with another or with a text (Wikan 1992:463).

During Wikan’s fieldwork in Bali, she met with scholars to discuss Balinese epistemology. Wikan was given the advice to create resonance between the reader and the text, but more importantly it was to achieve resonance with people and their problems in order to understand them. As the scholars explained, resonance is “what fosters empathy or compassion” (Wikan 1992:462-463). Further they stressed that without resonance there could be no understanding. Rather, resonance was dependent on applying both feeling and thought, which for Balinese

was part of the same process. The Balinese on the other hand suspected that for Westerners it was quite the opposite in terms of distinguishing between thought and feeling. Resonance then demands something of both parties in communication and a willingness to engage with another person through using one's own experience. I find this understanding of resonance to be similar to that of dialogue in the field I have studied, in how dialogue is based on listening and engaging with the other and being open exchange, and possibly change opinion. Moreover, since sharing experiences is a central approach used during dialogue exercises and in the training process as a whole.

I suggest that resonance can be seen to correspond with Svare's definition of dialogue, being a conversation based on mutual good will, openness, cooperation and together reaching for a common goal, referred to in the introduction. I also find this definition to be similar to how dialogue was understood at the center and by interlocutors. As Adnan's statement opened this thesis "dialogue helps you understand others and yourself", wherein dialogue can be seen as a tool for understanding, and a tool for building peace as both Adnan and the employees at the center stressed.

Talking about peace

In a conversation with Adnan during the first days of the long course, we got talking about how we both understand the concept of peace. Adnan says that for him peace has to do with hope. He then continues to talk about peace related to research. He says that research cannot do it, as he describes it, as you have to connect feeling to thought.

Peace, is then by Adnan described as something that has to involve both thinking and feeling, something he stressed to be difficult for research to deal with. I find this way of looking at peace to resemble the way Wikan's Balinese friends would describe resonance, in connecting feeling and thought to get understanding, appreciation and foster fertile ground for empathy or compassion. Wikan on her side recommends that the notion of feeling-thinking should be an analytical tool within anthropology (Wikan 2012:37). On the other hand Adnan emphasised how research could not connect feeling and thought, still we will explore in the following possible nuances of these two opinions, first by continuing with resonance.

Wikan ends her article on resonance by reflecting on how one as an anthropologist can use oneself to understand more about what resonance entails. Wikan states: "To think I had

invoked a particular emotion theory to make sense of Balinese, when I could have dipped into my own self and applied resonance!” (Wikan 1992:477). Inspired by this encouragement I will seek in the following to illustrate an incident that was kind of an “enlightened moment” (Wikan 1992:477) for me to understand how dialogue could be experienced. It happened during an exercise at the ISS-training.

Dialogue Exercise I “Making oneself visible through dialogue”⁹

I am in a group with Denis, Muriel and Teodora. We have been given some questions from Steinar that we are to discuss, one of them being: Who are you? We are sitting out around a round table in the sunshine in front of the campus library in Lillehammer with Mjøsa behind us. Teodora is sitting to my right, Denis to my left and Muriel is sitting across from me on the other side of the table.

Muriel starts to talk about nature and how she grew up on a farm. She tells us how she learns nothing at the place she presently lives. Muriel says that now she already understands that it will not be easy to explain to others about this training, and to “explain how to dialogue” to others. Denis continues to reflect on the questions in a philosophical manner. I am feeling quite nervous and have no idea about what to say when the turn will come to me. When Denis has shared his thoughts with us, I look at Teodora. She continues to talk. She tells us that when they travel abroad from the Balkans, they stick together but not when they are at home. Then my turn is up. As I start to talk it feels like I am talking without hiding anything, being completely honest, sharing my thoughts on this question that I reflect on in an existential and philosophical manner, telling about what is important for me and sharing thoughts on who I am.

After the exercise Teodora and I walk down the stairs in the main building. She says that it was a special feeling, like talking freely. I tell her that I still feel shaky.

Feeling connection through dialogue?

The next day I am standing outside campus together with Christine and Edmond, as Teodora walks by with a big smile. Looking very pleased Teodora asks me: “how are you?”. I say I am fine and smile back asking how she is doing. “Excellent”, she answers. Edmond comments

⁹ The heading is taken directly from the programme of the training.

that it is not to be taken for granted that dialogue will work, and that people talk across backgrounds. He says that it is amazing (*utrolig*) what has happened in just 72 hours and how dialogue as a method can work in this way. “That is dialogue”, Christine says.

As Teodora walked by, I felt like I knew her better after the exercise we had together the previous day. After seeing how Teodora and I exchanged greetings, Edmond reflected on just what can happen between people just during 72 hours. So were the feelings I experienced in this exercise an example of resonance and what participants described as connection? During the exercise presented above I felt what can be described as a connection with the other people in the group, as I thought we shared something personal and I felt like I knew each of them better as all of us shared personal thoughts and reflections. This feeling continued after the exercise, as illustrated when Teodora walked past, or when I had several longer philosophical conversations with Denis during the stay in Lillehammer and in Oslo. In the way that I engaged through communication and used my own experience and sharing feelings and thoughts, I suggest this can be described as resonance, as I was willing to engage in others’ worlds based on both feeling and thinking. Before the exercise I did not expect opening up and talking in this fashion. So in one sense this ”dialogical experience”, was kind of ground-breaking for me, where it felt like I let go of the researcher even just for a little bit, whilst I could still reflect on what happened afterwards. I also hold that through participating I did also understand more about what can happen during and between participants at trainings like I have studied.

Presenting this experience here can be seen in light of Van Maanen’s (2011) description of the confessional style. The style refers to shock and surprises and hardships encountered and overcome, in a personal style, by making the participant observation technique explicit (Van Maanen 2011:73, 77). Furthermore, through the writing style:

Typically, the concern for the fieldworker’s perspective is told as something of a character-building conversion tale in which the fieldworker, who saw things one way at the outset of study, comes to see them in an entirely different way by the conclusion of the study (Van Mannen 2011:77).

I am writing myself into this tradition. It is for a purpose in line with following a position by Tambiah, as cited in Wikan: ”An anthropologist’s successful translation and account of

another people's beliefs, norms and actions implies that there is some shared space (...) and reasoning (rationality) between the two parties" (Tambiah 1990 in Wikan 1992:466). So through participating in the dialogue exercise, I find it to be one way to translate other people's belief and reasoning which also resonated with me. Michrina and Richard (1996) suggest how dialogue between members in a group and the ethnographer can give the best type of empirical evidence to understand the world view of a group, and "matching horizons". In line with this approach, I both learnt something from the other participants, and they might have learnt something from me too. Furthermore through engaging in this process I understood something about what doing this sort of exercise could feel like.

Additionally I want to bring forth Paul in Wikan, who warns that researchers should not build theories that contradict our "own actual experience of what being alive is like" (Paul 1990, Wikan 1992:461). I consider that having dialogues and conversations in everyday life has panhuman relevance, and in analysing and building theories related to communication, should not contradict our own experiences. Tariq reflected on this aspect in an interview. He told me how dialogue is something that is part of the nature of human beings and part of our everyday life as we practice dialogue almost every day. We will in the following continue to look more into how the triangle of connection, resonance and dialogue can be seen related to empathy.

Empathy

Hollan (2008) argues that in engaging with empathic work of understanding anthropologists must both consider the emotional and imaginative capacities of the empathizer, but also the empathized. This means exploring the imaginative and emotional capacities towards the researcher from the studied and "how others imagine or allow themselves to be known and understood" (Hollan 2008:487). Empathy can then be understood as resonating emotionally with the other's experience, also in an imaginative way, trying to see the other person's perspective. Hollan goes on describing empathy as a process that requires an "ongoing dialogue for its accuracy", engaging and changing own impressions, whilst engaging with the other person's perspective and state of emotions (Hollan 2008:475-476). I find this view of empathy to resemble interlocutors' way of viewing dialogue, in how interlocutors stressed friendships, family and connection among themselves formed during seminars. Furthermore, employees at the center said that through engaging in a dialogue you are supposed to be open to a change of perspective through listening to the other. This relates to "movement", one of the important elements in dialogue presented in chapter four, involving that through dialogue

there is a possibility to move from previous assumptions through engaging with the other. I find that this can be seen like the imaginative and emotional capacity that Hollan describe happens in processes with empathy.

Hollan discusses both Geertz's and Rosaldo's approach to empathy. Geertz on one side holds that anthropologists cannot understand and perceive the way the interlocutors do. Therefore the anthropologist's own experience needs to be set aside, rather seeing the interlocutors' experience within their own framework of selfhood, so as not to transfer ethnocentrism and their own projection of feelings and experience. For Rosaldo empathic-like understanding can only really be achieved through having gone through a similar experience (Hollan 2008:477-479). Hollan describes how Wikan on the other side has a much "more optimistic view of people's ability to empathize because it rests on their willingness to gain practical knowledge of others rather than on whether or not they share life experiences or positionality with them" (Hollan 2008:479). With this in mind I will present in the following section part some situations in which the participants' differing experiences with conflict and war came to the foreground, for in this way to discuss possibilities for empathy within processes where dialogue is central. I start with an incident that happened while I was visiting a local dialogue center in Bosnia-Herzegovina where I met Amina.

Experiences with conflict as differentiating

Amina and I are walking towards her car. She tells me about how her parents were killed and that 6000 people were murdered in this region. I say: "I understand" (ich verstehe). We get into the car. We talk in German, as this is the only language that both of us have in common. As the car makes its way onto the road she tells me how she loves Germany and how it received a lot of Bosnian refugees that were all well received. She continues to tell me about the place she lives, how it is only for Serbs, and that this is typical for the place. I remain silent and let her talk. Amina goes on to tell me how her neighbours and best friends suddenly killed each other. She tells me it has been difficult, but that you have to rebuild (aufbauen), and that she wanted to come back for this. Amina tells me that nobody talks about the dead to me, but that I should know about it.

Wikan suggests that resonance can be seen related to attitudes like that of sympathy, empathy or the German "verstehen" (Wikan 1992: 465), which is actually what I said to Amina. But did I, and could I really understand her?

Different experiences with conflict were evident among interlocutors. As Adnan said, they have lived with conflict all their lives in his home country. There were differences between the countries interlocutors came from. As Christiane commented to Tariq, Sara and me, the group at the long course was an interesting group for the center as people from different conflicts came together. Christiane said it would be interesting to talk about the different types of conflicts at the training, where Afghanistan now is in conflict, Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan have been in conflict, the same with Bosnia-Herzegovina. Even though there are still some conflicts in these countries, the conflicts are at different stages Christiane adds. Sara and Tariq respond by nodding.

There was also a distinction between participants living in countries with conflict and war, or having experience with conflict through hearing stories from family and friends as part of a diaspora. There were also some participants that did not have this sort of experience. At the end of the first week of the long course something happened that made living with conflict apparent as a differentiating factor among participants.

Sixteen civilians were killed in the country of some of the participants. At supper that evening Zakariya comes in later and sits down. He says something to the others sitting at the table. What he says is not loud enough for me to hear. As Zakariya leaves, Sofija says that it is really bad for him. Nadia tells me that Zakariya had said that this [incident] would contribute to the Taliban ten thousand times. Tariq comments that when internationals were in his home country they did not understand anything about culture for two years. Tariq says that they searched women. His tone of voice is high and he is talking fast. "We are just talking about conflict, conflict, conflict, sorry Odilia", Sofija comments.

Later on I see Zakariya sitting in the foyer with a computer on his lap. I sit down beside him in the sofa and say: "I am really sorry about it". His eyes are blank. "It could happen to me" he says.

Some days later as I talk with Zakariya he tells me that he was not feeling homesick before, but that it has been like that for three days now. He tells me that his family says that everything is fine, but if something happens he cannot do anything, and they know that.

Related to this incident I find that people from different countries shared inputs as part of the conversation. Sofija apologized to me for just talking about conflict, maybe so because I did not share the same experience with them. Even so, could the other participants that were not from a country with conflict, myself included, understand what it was like to know that it could have been me that was killed? Or were experiences with conflict something that only participants from other countries that had actually experienced conflict and war could understand?

Alexandra, part of the ISS-training referred to in chapter five, was of the opinion that you cannot really understand others if you have not been in a war situation yourself. She told me she had answered no, when someone had asked if they could understand what they [having lived with war] have gone through. Alexandra and I are sitting in the apartment we share with two other participants. I hear the other two talking, and comment that they are chatting like us. Alexandra tells me that they are living in another world and how she saw the facial expression of one of them during the screening of the movie “Reunion”. Alexandra comments that the only knowledge one of them had was the article she had read about the conflict and that was that.

The conflicts and countries being in different stages was a focus among employees at the center, but also something stressed by participants. The conflicts were, on the other hand emphasized by participants as something among them.

Finding similarities

One participant reflected to me in an interview about taking part in seminars with participants from different countries, “of course every country has conflict of different kinds, and then [at the course] I just realised that we are in a way similar”. She continues to say that the situation was not as bad in Bosnia-Herzegovina as in Afghanistan, but that you could compare it, as Muslims were living in both countries. Similarity of being Muslim, but also the commonality of having experience living with conflict was then stressed.

As shown earlier, despite memories of conflict and participants different ethnic identities, finding similarities and stressing a Balkan identity was for instance emphasised by participants in the case of the emotional moment and being united as a group during the

dancing incident described in chapter five. We will continue to look at some examples of possibilities for empathy at trainings.

To a large degree conflicts were the reason for participants coming to the courses in the first place. Several participants stressed that they came to the courses with the wish and motivation to learn from each other, something I both observed and that interlocutors expressed. Learning about each other's different points of view could also contribute to silence and not wanting to engage with other participants, as we saw in the last chapter, but overwhelmingly the opposite turned out to be the case.

Caring more when knowing each other

During the long course, participants visited an exhibition on the situation in Afghanistan at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo. Afterwards some participants would tell me how it was so sad, and that she and another participant had cried during the exhibition. One of them explained on the bus back to Lillehammer from Oslo that she would not have reacted in that way if she had not met the participants from Afghanistan. I care more about it now, she says. The other reflected that having met the participants from Afghanistan made the participant think about being in a privileged position, owning things and what to do with it.

Later on a participant at the long course said she wanted to visit the participants that lived in Iraqi Kurdistan. She explained that "because of the people", she also had to go to Afghanistan. As the course came to an end, I had a conversation with another participant while eating lunch. She tells me how one of the other participants had showed her pictures of his wife. Previous to this she had given his children and wife presents. The interlocutor shares her thoughts on seeing the other participant's wife with me. She tells me that the wife is only in her mid-twenties, but looks like being in her mid-thirties. The participant says she could not look at her eyes, "as you see all her life".

The participant looked touched while telling me about this experience, her eyes watering. In the instance where she got to see the picture, I am wondering if it reminded her of how different the situations were in the countries represented at the training. I suggest that it seems she was reminded of how she was not in the shoes of the other participant's wife. So can then this situation be one of emotional imagination and resonance? Could it be a lack of resonance, as it was far away from her reality? Or can this situation rather illustrate how there are

possibilities at courses like these for resonance, or an emotional connection between people, in that people can try to understand and learn from each other's different circumstances in life? As Halpern posits: "When empathy is guided by a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives, it offers enormous promise for helping us build global cooperation" (Halpern 2010). I hold that the examples presented above can give promising grounds for a better understanding based on sharing experiences.

Discussion on possibilities for empathy

As Hollan and Throop (2011) present, empathy is still an elusive concept. Therefore it is important to study empathy in everyday life and to not be too quick in coming to a concluding definition. According to Hollan, empathy as a concept at the minimum implies that one can achieve an understanding that is more or less accurate. In this spirit Hollan tells how he himself has studied a context in which "empathic-like" understandings are utilized among the Toraja in a village in Indonesia. The Toraja do not have a single word that can be termed as "empathy" (Hollan 2011:209). In the same manner I find that situations where processes of empathy can emerge between people, the degree of understanding can vary and it can be conceptualised as "empathic-like". What I find important to stress is that if this "empathic-like" understanding occurred between interlocutors, I hold this has to do with the training process as a whole.

I suggest that at the trainings I have studied emotional attunement to understanding others can happen in dialogues, in verbal but also nonverbal interactions, like dancing, seeing an exhibition, exchanging gifts, seeing a family picture. In other words understanding relates to personifying the other. I also suggest that seeing the movie Reunion can be a way to find similarities, also across boundaries between different countries in the Balkans. As one participant from the Balkans commented during lunch one day at the ISS-training after having seen this movie, how it was powerful to watch the movie, because they recognised themselves, having experienced war.

Halpern describes that in post-war reconciliation and in the work she has done in health care settings, empathy needs to be "based on genuine curiosity about how other people feel, as well as emotional connection with them" (Halpern 2010). Based on what participants have expressed, presented in this chapter, I argue that what can be called empathic-like qualities can be seen in the way connection is used by interlocutors. I propose that an emotional

connection based on curiosity between participants happened for instance at the Afghanistan exhibition as two participants shared their experience related to it. I further suggest that as one participant showed a picture, it was possibly due to a form of reciprocity, getting to see picture in turn for the presents, but can also be seen as building relations across different backgrounds. Then can connection in this way also be seen as one term to describe the process of empathy through the experiences and feelings shared by interlocutors?

Hollan encourages studying “the ways in which people in different times and places promote and discourage understanding of themselves” (Hollan 2008:475). In the cases above some participants did not discourage an understanding, Zakariya in sharing thoughts in relation to his family and the atrocity that happened in his home country and Amina shared part of her story with me, and what she thought I should know. Alexandra on the other hand can be seen to discourage the possibility of understanding the other, maybe also then the possibility for empathy? A distinction was also made between American participants versus participants from the Balkans. Still, Alexandra would say that in dialogues she would talk from the “heart”. Alexandra told me about how she changed her perspective completely, and that she learned a lot about herself through earlier trainings. Does this then mean that she, due to this experience, would open up more than she had previously, even though she claimed others could not understand having lived with war?

Another dimension to discuss is whether it is easier to understand and engage in a process of empathy if both parties have experienced something challenging? As we saw in chapter five Leo expressed how he was “rewarded” by telling this story, making himself visible, and that the next day he felt like waking up as a new person. After this incident an emotional bond seemed to have been established between Leo and Ana as they would take each other’s hands several times when passing each other. So then I am wondering whether this relation was more that of connection, in terms of Ana listening to Leo, paving the ground for a friendship? Or can this situation be an example of how it might be easier to achieve empathy and resonance between participants with similar experiences of hardships, Leo growing up with people close to him with serious illness and committing suicide, and Ana with having experiences with conflict?

In this chapter I present a “dialogical experience”, experience I suggest can be described as resonance and connection through dialogue. Still I cannot fully understand just how

significant the dancing was in terms of *uniting*, the notion and experience of a Balkan identity, and how it must be to stay together abroad but not at home, living in a country having experienced conflict and war. I also find it important to stress how this has to do with not having experienced war myself, but also the dimension of the individual experience not ever being or having the same experience as the other.

We have seen how Wikan has a more optimistic point of view on empathy, where empathizing has to do with the willingness to gain knowledge, not dependent on sharing the same life experience and position in society (Hollan 2008:479). Having an interest and willingness to gain insight into others' experience resembles that of Halpern, and what interlocutors have expressed during trainings, dealt with in this chapter and chapters four and five. Or to say it with Eidsvåg (2011) "Because dialogue is about mutual understanding, we seldom can tell each other we have understood enough. Even after the best dialogue there will always remain a factor of incomprehensibility. And we say to each other: We have to talk more about this" (Bryn, Eidsvåg, Skurdal 2011:43, my translation). Again we see how it might be that we never really can understand each other fully, but that there still is a possibility to understand each other better through continuing with an ongoing dialogue.

Closing reflections

I have found that even though some people want to be understood and participants show "genuine curiosity" (Halpern 2010) for each other, researching processes of empathy does depend on the one who is to understand, and the one who is to be understood (Hollan 2008). I consider that the imaginative capacity of empathy is more difficult to engage in, when it comes to experiences related to conflict and war. Even so, Alexandra stressed to me in the conversation in the appartement we lived, how the two of us were having a "dialogue". So there might be some possibilities for engaging in processes of empathy, especially when dialogue in practice and skill is so significant in the field I have studied.

CHAPTER 8. "Dialogue out in society"¹⁰

We need dialogue in all of society. Everybody should be trained.

Dialogue at the kitchen table, and for politicians. We need to convince politicians, Adnan says with a smile.

"(...) The imagination, especially when collective, can become the fuel for action", Appadurai posits (1996:7). This chapter deals with the thoughts and ideas about social change that interlocutors expressed and how this notion of social change relates to personal change, for dialogue as central in building peace and what is at stake in the center's work. In this ending chapter, I will pull together the strings laid out in this thesis and look at what relevance the work I have studied can have for society.

Spreading the dialogue

On the last day of the long course there is a ceremony in the main hall where participants receive a diploma, an USB-stick with pictures, powerpoints presentations from the lectures, and a bunny made of chocolate, while Christiane encourages the participants to "spread the dialogue". Several of the participants wanted to continue the dialogue work at the courses I attended. There were also several participants that had attended previous courses and returned for more, as for instance Khaled and Sofija, or Mina that had previous knowledge about the work. Other participants told me how they wanted to start initiatives similar to the Nansen center.

Dialogue initiatives

In a Skype conversation with Zakariya four months after the long course, I asked him about a dialogue initiative he had mentioned to start in his home country. The ambition with the dialogue platform, he says, is to be "unique", "different" and "meaningful". Zakariya tells me that he is working to "gather support for it", and that he wants to build a center at his own expense, within the next year or two. Because he is really determined on "dialogue", Zakariya explains (and laughs). He tells me how dialogue was something "new" to him, and something that he really "admired". In his workplace he says they are thinking about having a section of dialogue, and that gathering support for this takes time. But as he says he hopes he will do it. Zakariya continues to say that some people are thinking about the dialogue initiative in terms

¹⁰ Dialogue out in society (*dialog ut i samfunnet*) was a phrase I came across several times in contact with the Dialogue forum in Drammen, see Odilia Häussler Melbøe (forthcoming).

of starting bigger projects, whereas he thinks about something smaller. He wants to start with his “own funding”, he continues so as not to be dependent on “external funding”, not having an “influence” from others. Zakariya also told me how he had hopes that this initiative could be a model for other villages in the long run.

Using dialogue in society

Adnan’s quote that opened this chapter stresses that we need dialogue in all of society and that everybody should be trained, so dialogue could be used from the kitchen table to politicians. During a walk with Adnan he told me that the problem is that those in power do not want dialogue. He still emphasised that there still is a potential if someone from the outside would start an initiative. I interpret this to be like that of the Nansen center, coming from the outside, that was also emphasised as a positive thing by partners at local dialogue centers in the Balkans about the center in Norway. Adnan says that in his home country they are forcefully segregated by nature, and that “ethnicity has been used by dictators, politicians against one another”, and therefore he saw that dialogue could be used between ethnic groups. To use dialogue between different ethnic groups was also stressed as important by Tariq during the first days we met at the long course. Sara also told me in the first part of the long course that this kind of education was needed in her country too and that she wanted to spread it for “social change”. Sara expressed this motivation before Christiane encouraged the participants to spread dialogue, which illustrates how there seemed to be converging motivations and wishes among participants and staff.

The center as experts

Tariq also told me how he had been thinking that they should have something like the center where he lived. It would be a fantastic idea he said and could be in cooperation with the Nansen center. Tariq mentioned this idea later on during the long course as well. At dinner on the day before the diploma ceremony, I sat at the table with him, Christiane, Sara and Adnan. Christiane said that they should not necessarily open a center where he lived. Christiane explains how there is so much administration, whereas the importance is to spread the knowledge, and how to spread it in society. She says that every context is different, so if you open a center it is not like it will solve every problem. It is better to train people, she says. Tariq says he agrees and knowledge is what is important. Christiane says she believes that if people would listen more, there would be less conflict, and consequently a better society. Adnan comments “a better world”? Yes, Christiane confirms and it would be better in local communities. Christiane later on added that what she had said earlier was due to the situation

with the local dialogue centers in the Balkans and their difficulties with funding, and that it was important to find “flexible” solutions. I suggest Christiane’s caution is due to the fact that external factors of financing were pivotal in continuing dialogue work. During fieldwork I understood how employees had to apply for project funding in Norway, which was tiring and stressful.

Steinar has worked extensively with dialogue and reconciliation work in the Balkans, and several participants expressed how they wanted Steinar to come to their country, like a participant told me while we were having coffee in Oslo after the course, we need many Steinars. This fact was confirmed in another instance.

I was seated eating dinner with Steinar, Tariq and Khaled, some days before the diploma ceremony. Tariq and Khaled start to discuss politics in the Middle East. “Let’s go down and fix this mess”, Steinar says and interrupts the discussion. He tells us how he has thought about this massive dialogue strategy, and doing it on a really large scale, like an area of commitment (*satsningsområde*). Khaled says that they need “experts” like him to Steinar. So what does this approach of using dialogue in society look like?

Dialogue is not abracadabra

Steinar worked with an approach of dialogue being more than words. At a screening of the movie Reunion in February 2012 at Parkteateret in Oslo, Steinar explained that their work method had developed over the years. He described the approach of dialogue being more than words to be a next step from dialogue seminars with participants that came from the different sides of the conflicts in the Balkans. The next steps were integrated schools, he said and that the work always was on a “local level” and “community-based”.

Later on Steinar held a presentation at the International summer school in July, called the International Forum. Steinar expresses how Macedonia had found a model that works, and that also other countries wanted to try it out, like Turkey, and how presidents were interested in integrated schools, like in Croatia, and continued to explain that this meant “dialogue might change a country”. Steinar continues, “You can say: Dialogue can not change my country. My response is: have you tried?”

Steinar would repeatedly stress how peace is something that is built over time and at the presentation he continued to say “dialogue is not abracadabra” (to an amused and laughing audience). Steinar encourages that “we have to create a culture of dialogue”. Because, as he explained without this “culture of dialogue”, we will not have corrections of stereotypes, that he argues is a pattern of us and them, a structure in our mind. He continued by saying that dialogue is not a by-product of democracy and integration, it is a “prerequisite” to create a democratic and integrated society.

Relating personal, political and social change

In talking about change, some participants would see the personal and political related.

On the last meeting with Steinar and the ISS-students Ana reflected on political dialogue. Even though there is so much “political dialogue” going on Ana says, they had not talked about this during the course in Lillehammer or at the summer school in Oslo. It was because they wanted to have harmony, she adds. She continues to say that this just shows how much these personal relations have mattered. “We get along these human lines”, Ana says. Ana continues to say that she thinks the personal can change the political. She explains how she sees “intercultural dialogue” as one step. Peter, another participant comments on Ana’s point of view. Peter says he thinks that when they leave to their respective home countries, they will know each other and that they could continue with dialogue in more political forms.

As Peter pointed out, it is only those who already are interested in the first place that come to courses like that of the center. I suggest that the participants at the trainings were interested and open-minded in the way that most seemed to use what they had learned and wanted to take action to contribute to some sort of change. As we have seen in previous chapters, it could be a change for your own sake, in your own way of communicating, like Zakariya. Another participant also wanted to start with his own family, or another that stressed that she wanted to use dialogue, communication, listening to each other and the whole “experience” in her work as a youth educator. To learn how to use dialogue to solve problems was furthermore something this participant highlighted that relates to how Mina told Sofija, Sara and myself that dialogue solved the conflict over a bill at a shopping center.

Wanting to use what the participants had learned I interpret as an engagement and commitment in the sort of work that the center was engaged in. So this both shows a way of talking about wanting to use what they have learned, a meta-perspective on the learning from

the courses, but also what seems to be a commitment to continue with this work. Furthermore I suggest that using dialogue in society seems to be dependent on individuals based on the examples shown so far. As one participant commented, many Steinars were needed in terms of continuing with the dialogue and reconciliation work in the Balkans based on the personal relations and trust built in this work. So then it seems that this kind of work is not for everybody, you have to be committed, and that not everybody can become “dialogue workers” and furthermore how participants coming to the trainings probably did not have the same goal, in terms of participating also because of getting to know people from the other side of a conflict participants had experienced.

As Norunn told me in an interview, there was a shadow side to dialogue, if you just understand then nothing will happen, you just understand. She asks me if it is as little action, and “peace and quiet” that we want? Norunn stresses that if the understanding does not lead to action it affects nothing in a social context. She also stresses that the important aim of dialogue is to get the insight to act in the best possible way to achieve. In other words the Norwegian ideals of peace and quiet, as put forth by Gullestad (2001) do not necessarily apply in working for peace through dialogue, when wanting to achieve changes in society.

I suggest this statement to relate to a worldview among center employees where social change is possible that can be seen related to Nansen’s heritage. This was illustrated in variations used around one of Nansen’s quotes during fieldwork: “The difficult is what takes a little time; the impossible is what takes a little longer” (Brainyquote 2013b). I argue that this quote can be seen to embody an important value and concern part of the work, having an optimistic approach to dialogue as contributing to build peace in the long run. As Steinar and Ingunn would repeatedly say: “dialogue is no magic fix”. This can then imply that nothing is impossible if you just use time. I find that the international field of work that the center does with peacebuilding in the Balkans and working with diaspora groups that are motivated to contribute to their community either in Norway or in their country of origin, relates to this worldview where change is not only possible, it is also desired.

So far we have seen how employees like Christiane, Steinar and Norunn were of the opinion that dialogue work and dialogue techniques could change a country. Still I also encountered ambivalence about continuing this sort of work. As Christiane told me, sometimes she wished she had just an ordinary job, like sitting behind the counter at a grocery store. Or as I met

Amir on the subway in Oslo once, he told me how another participant had lost hope in continuing with the skills in his home country. Maybe these instances can also be seen related to Elvir's statement of how it is not possible to be "in dialogue mode" all the time, because we are only human beings? And that sometimes you have bright and hopeful days, and others that are not so bright?

What I have found is that there is a lot at stake in this work, both for employees and participants, and dialoguing for peace is significant in the endeavour to use what is learned at the trainings, in the work for a more peaceful world. The meta-communication going on through the trainings and afterwards, I also have found related to place, building relations and working with dialogue.

Becoming a dialogue worker

The anthropologist and architect Marchand (2007) shows in a study on masons in Djennè, Mali how an "environment of situated learning" is helpful in understanding the interconnections between social context and relations in the process of learning (Harris 2007:14). Marchand describes how an apprentice and master were building a house together, where the master proudly would exclaim for the other masons present, commenting on the apprentice's work, that today his assistant was a mason (Marchand 2007:181). Marchand describes it as the apprentice and the master alike; "were participants in a context qualified by dialogue, social relations, available construction materials, tools-to-hand and the physical parameters of the building site. The workplace could be described as an environment of situated learning, (...) for both trainees and mentors" (Marchand 2007:181-182). This view can in my opinion be seen in relation to the center's location as environment of situated learning. During trainings both trainees and mentors, or course participants and employees that facilitate the process, are together in a learning process and context that is qualified by dialogue. The physical location and materials are also part, like that of the elements of dialogue prioritised by participants or theories to deal with conflict analysis. I hold that the process of learning can be seen as an environment of situated learning that can be seen related sociality among interlocutors that seems to a high degree to be connected to place. Furthermore, becoming a mason in Marchand's case, I consider similar to the ideal of learning how to dialogue, in becoming skilled communicators. What I wonder is whether to learn and then use the center's techniques is one step on the way to finally becoming dialogue workers as the outmost ideal, like masters in Marchand's case? As Christiane would stress

though, being a dialogue worker is a process, as having this work as a lifestyle requires practicing and continuing to “walk the talk”. In other words it was not a static knowledge, relating to how “knowledge is not possessed by individuals in finite and static form, but rather it is situational and the product of social, cultural and physical interaction” (Marchand 2007:199). So in this way, knowing is a continuing process, and is learnt through doing, emphasised by Ingold, further pointing to what I argue are panhuman aspects of dialogue.

Agency through sociality

The interconnection between engaging in common activities, learning, sharing experiences, and forming of social relationships related to place during training, I see as a way of understanding what happens in the field dealt with in this thesis. Pink (2008) has found how sociality among activists in the UK can bring forward capacity for action. Pink has looked at an urban social movement, a network of the international Cittáslow movement, where leaders initiate projects and activities to develop their towns, like setting up food cooperatives, or arranging events like carnivals and food and jazz festivals (Pink 2008:164). Pink advocates to study this movement by looking at the social relationships that are implicated through these processes, how these relationships are experienced and how these social connections can be seen as types of sociality. Pink shows how two metaphors stand out in how the interlocutors would describe the Cittáslow projects, that it created a “community” and that the interlocutors were “brought together” (Pink 2008:166,169). This resembles the experiences shared by interlocutors in my study, as the “connections” sparked by conversations and dialogues, through dancing, but also as the bonds created at the trainings were described as “connecting” and becoming a “family”. Pink further describes how interlocutors in the projects sit together at committee meetings not only sharing an experience, but how sentiment is also co-produced in processes of mutual identity constitution. Pink argues: “On the basis of this form of ‘sharing’ they also come to verbalise imagined and potential futures. This sensory sociality is integral to the processes through which place, self and activist agency emerge” (Pink 2008:178). Agency then, Pink presents, arises from the sociality of the committee, and it is through *connecting* and *sharing* at the committee meetings as a sensuous place that the capacity for action is developed (Pink 2008:179). I consider that connecting and sharing in Pink’s case can also be compared to the setting I have studied, as taking part in trainings brings “connections” between people, as well as a motivation to continue using what they have learned, and therein lies a capacity for action.

Closing reflections

As we have seen in this chapter, participants at trainings have ideas on how to use dialogue and what they have learned after the course. Two of the participants at the long course for instance, held workshops at learning institutions after the training. Some participants wanted to continue with political dialogue after the course once the relationships were built. Furthermore, some participants wanted to continue dialogue initiatives and “spread” the knowledge from the training in their home countries.

CHAPTER 9. Concluding reflections: Possibilities for the road ahead

Differentiation and connection

In this thesis I have explored dialogue ethnographically through researching seminars where dialogue is significant, in how interlocutors express their experiences participating at seminars, how employees present and facilitate for knowledge exchange, and how knowledge is acquired and negotiated by interlocutors. Through investigating experiences shared among interlocutors I have intended to describe and analyse aspects of what takes place among interlocutors in seminars, and how this can be understood anthropologically. I have found that the goal in the centers work is applying dialogue as a tool in peacebuilding and to help “you to understand others and yourself”, as expressed by Adnan opening this thesis. In the endeavour of improving understanding between participants at seminars, I have found that to “learn how to dialogue” is a goal for the center that to a large extent seems to be achieved in the way participants want to acquire what they have learned and dialogue becomes significant. As people have met to “learn how to dialogue” and engage in what is described as “deep” conversations, by some interlocutors, a group feeling, notion of “family” and friendships, has been emphasised among interlocutors. Following Hollan and Throop’s (2011) encouragement, I have in this thesis furthermore intended to contribute with knowledge about interlocutors engaging in processes of empathy, and argue that I have put forth incidents that can be described as “empathic-like”.

Having and cultivating a “genuine interest in each other’s distinct experiences” (Halpern 2010), I found most participants expressing at the seminars I have studied. In the way Ana expressed what she called a “personal transformation”, befriending participants that were from the other side of the conflict, and highlighting how the personal and “intercultural dialogue” could be a step to achieve change the political. In this way I find that seminars like I have studied brings forth openings for engaging in processes of empathy and building “empathic-like” relationship, and thus also possibilities for improving understanding between interlocutors.

On the other hand I have found it to be more difficult to engage in processes of empathy and for an imaginative capacity of empathizers, in situations that deal with differing experiences

related to conflict and war. Furthermore, some participants had different understandings on practicing religion, where some participants did not want to understand each other, and where a few participants stopped talking with each other towards the end of one seminar. In processes where dialogue is central, I argue that participants stress what they have in common, as in the group feeling that was described to happen through dancing across earlier divides, pointing to a reconfiguration of identification of having participated at the same training. Even so, participants also differentiated themselves, as shown in relation to different ways of practicing religion. I hold that this tendency of division and connection leads to negotiations of identification among interlocutors that is situationally dependent.

I have found that even though you will never really be able to understand the other, as we all have unique histories and experiences, there is still a possibility in trying to understand each other, an approach I hold to be important in building well functioning societies.

Building societies by talking together?

In the Cittaslow movement touched upon in the last chapter, Pink (2008) suggests that members of the movement verbalise imagined and potential futures at meetings and through their work, from which a capacity for action is developed. I hold that verbalising an imagined and potential future is also part of what happens during training seminars. As I asked Aida, an employee at the center, whether dialogue work could have value in local communities, she replied “absolutely”. She tells me about how she has been mostly working with Bosnia-Herzegovina, in places like Stolac and Srbrenica and segregation in society. “If dialogue helps there, Norway can absolutely learn something from that”, Aida says, and adds that after the July 22nd terrorist attack, it is “important to talk together”. I find that this statement shows the significance of dialogue for society and sheds light on what is at stake for interlocutors in the dialogue work.

Rattansi (2011) draws forward how people with different cultural backgrounds increasingly navigate and switch between different cultures, lifestyles and languages. He calls for approaches that can replace the nation-centered perspectives as answers to what he sees as a transnational and cosmopolitan phase. Rattansi sees a dialogic interculturalism not only as vital, but more possible. Rattansi draws forward several projects where dialogue is used that he posits can be effective in breaking down barriers between people. Rattansi also cautions about how interethnic mixing and dialogue in the short term can lead to conflict, but that it

can be more productive in planned and monitored contexts (Rattansi 2011:160-163). The seminars I have researched have been within a planned framework where barriers have been broken down, such as the case with Ana. Adnan's quote opened the last chapter where dialogue should be in all of society, which leads to a culture of dialogue.

Towards a culture of dialogue?

Steinar encouraged building a culture of dialogue at the International Forum presentation. He explained that dialogue is not a by-product of democracy and integration, but rather a "prerequisite" to create a democratic and integrated society, and that without a culture of dialogue stereotypes of the other will not be corrected. Employees at the center work for change and "movement" in meetings among people, presenting tools and knowledge about how to become more open to understand, exchange experiences and possibly change one's point of view through dialogue. I argue that developing a culture of dialogue can be a way to describe the training processes, in how groups create their own jargon of what they learn, and how to practice what they learn with family, friends or initiatives in society. In this way I consider a meta-perspective and 'dialoguing' to emerge among participants during training, wanting to engage and use the knowledge from the seminars further. Parallel to interlocutors dialoguing, I also find a level of perspicacity in terms of the fruitfulness and significance in dialogue work, for improving understanding and communication among people.

A suggestive contribution to dialogical anthropology

I hold that the aspects presented in this thesis where dialogue is significant in training processes, is fruitful to consider in relation to dialogical anthropology. I see a possibility for mutual knowledge exchange between anthropology, and actors involved in dialogue and peacebuilding work. I argue that this thesis can contribute with knowledge about anthropological approaches to dialogue as it is understood, acquired and used among interlocutors in dialogue seminars. I moreover suggest that this study can contribute with broadening an anthropological understanding of what dialogue can entail, as a concept and practice, possibly also in a methodological sense. A dialogical approach is part of what anthropologists engage through in the field, in order to understand interlocutors' concern and world view. During fieldwork I have found similarities in the field I have studied and in the methodological approach of anthropology, and I have come to see a level of perspicacity to be further explored. Crapanzano (1990) on his side is sceptical to replace dialogue with participant observation. He finds the replacement to suggest friendship, mutuality and

authenticity, giving a picture of an egalitarian relation, with the risk of concealing the power relations and alienating effect of the observation of the anthropologist (Crapanzano 1990:270). I agree with taking this precautionary approach. Still, I consider that the field of dialogical anthropology has the potential to be broadened in a more constructive way, also in terms of getting more knowledge about communication processes. The same year as Crapanzano, Fabian pleaded for “continued exploration of the dialogic nature of ethnographic research” (Fabian 1990:764). More recently Butler (2009) discusses what a dialogical anthropology can be. She suggests this can an anthropology where knowledge is based on collaboration between researcher subjects and researcher. The dialogical engagement is further premised on mindfully considering the power dimension part of this relationship and whereto knowledge out of this collaboration can be publicly circulated. I consider these aspects to open up for new possibilities to explore.

With this thesis my intention is to contribute to shed light on understanding dialogue as concept and how it can be used in practice. Communicative processes have to a large degree taken place and been reflected on among interlocutors in this study. I therefore hold that there can be a level of perspicacity that other dialogue initiatives in a Norwegian context can learn from. I have found that dialogue is significant in the way participants “connect”, in how participants’ express experiencing change on a personal level, and in how participants want to spread dialogue further to different arenas in society. I therefore find it fruitful to continue exploring what dialogue and understanding among people can entail.

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Appendix

Guiding interview questions

- How would you describe your work?
- What brought you to this course?

- What does dialogue mean for you, and in your context. Examples of this, when it is dialogue, and not?
- What do you see as the starting point for dialogue work?
- What is your experience so far in taking part in this course?
- What do you think of the methods used?
- What are in your opinion important concepts in the course? How about important concepts in your work?

- What does dialogue mean for you, dialogue meetings?
- What is peace for you? Peacebuilding. What does this mean for you?
- Fridtjof Nansen? What have you learnt about him, what do you think about him, did you know him before you came to Norway?
- From your perspective what role does, and can diaspora play in dialogue work and peacebuilding?
- In what way do you think that dialogue work can have a value for participants in this course in their local communities?
- For you what does it mean to work in a process?

- From your perspective, what do you think about, or to what degree does or does not Norway appear as a peace nation internationally?
- Who has inspired you?
- How do you want to use different things in the course further, what do you want to use?

- Anything you would like to add? About what is important for you, about the course, or about this course? Some other question I could have asked you?

