

“Unconditional Spaces – From Soft Skills to Hard Competences”

ABSTRACT:

Within this paper I conceptualize “Unconditional Spaces” (UcSp) as an “Open Gestalt” that strives for completion in our societies and is meant to facilitate sustainable change and peace processes. This meta-approach offers a new perspective on contemporary peace research and conflict transformation practices. It twists prevailing rational strategies on the edge of a Gestalt called “unconditionality” and thereby opens the door for a holistic and transrational understanding of human relationships.

Multidimensional aspects of unconditional experiences, attitudes and techniques build the foundation of individual UcSp expressed through personal presence, “emptiness”, empathy and interconnectedness that translate into concrete facilitation and mediation skills. Inner practices reach out to public space by transgressing private room, embracing facilitators, mediators and parties and thereby creating concrete structures and processes in conflict transformation.

The paper explores options for transcending circles of violence by means of inclusive change processes and UcSp-mediation. Following the guiding question on how to transform soft skills into hard competences, I relate “Unconditional Spaces” to mediation practices and draw a scenario of unconditional process design. The embodiment of UcSp by the mediation team and the step-by-step creation of a context specific unconditional “group space” build the heart of the process that is open to cultural-sensitive co-mediation, as well as elicitive and art-based conflict transformation methods.

In order to illustrate the concept of “Unconditional Spaces” and its “soft-hard”-dialectics, I explore unconditional aspects within the peace process of Mozambique (1991/92), where the FBO Sant'Egidio was acting as host and facilitator, and open the floor for further discussion and research. Once settled in the field of peace building, the Gestalt of “Unconditional Spaces” itself can be questioned and transcended through closure and full integration into our individual and social lives.