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Contact education, old and new media: Reflections on a peace-building initiative in Norway

Kurzfassung: 2001 wurde in Südnorwegen eine Friedensorganisation gegründet, die ein regionales Gestapo-Hauptquartier aus dem 2. Weltkrieg in einen gemeinnützigen Veranstaltungsort umwandelte, dessen Vision es war, sich zu einem national anerkannten Friedenserziehungsforum zu entwickeln. In den ersten beiden Jahren war das Zentrum von Bankrott und geringer Anerkennung bedroht. Dann setzte sich aber doch die angestrebte Vision durch - Erzbischof Desmond Tutu aus Südafrika kam zweimal zu Besuch, und es wurde eine Joint Venture Vereinbarung mit dem von der UNESCO anerkannten Robben-Island-Heritage Museum in Cape Town unterzeichnet. Weitere Kooperationsvereinbarungen folgten. Aber was hatte diese Vision an sich, das plötzlich die Aufmerksamkeit von in der Friedensarbeit engagierten Individuen und Organisationen auf sich zog? Können wir aus der Geschichte des Zentrums etwas über Friedenserziehung als eine Art narrativer Strategie lernen?

Abstract: In 2001, a peace foundation was set up in Southern Norway, where a regional WW II Gestapo headquarters became a non-profit venue with a vision of becoming a nationally recognized peace education center. The first two years saw regular threats of bankruptcy and little recognition. Then, the vision took hold - Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa came to visit twice, and a joint venture agreement was signed with the UNESCO-listed Robben Island Heritage Museum in Cape Town. Several other alliances were forged. But what was it about this vision that suddenly caught the attention of individuals and organizations engaged in peace work? Can we learn something from the history of the center about peace education as a kind of narrative strategy?

Introduction

Each year, I take my BA and MA students in political communication to a place called *Stiftelsen Arkivet*, in the city of Kristiansand in Southern Norway. The venue is probably not familiar to readers of this article, but the questions we discuss there are: how does one approach conflict history, war memories and historical knowledge of human rights atrocities with the aim of learning things of value and salience for understanding contemporary wars and conflicts in the world? What place does collective war memorization have in society – and what do war memories contribute to our basic understanding of conflict escalation and reduction? How might we apply insights from the broad range of the social sciences and the humanities in a constructive panorama of contemporary peace education to transform conflicts from violent to non-violent alternatives?

Stiftelsen Arkivet (*The Archives Foundation*) is a newly established peace documentation center with an already consolidated name recognition in Norway, to some extent in the Nordic countries, and increasingly also internationally.¹ It began with modest ambitions in 2001, struggling continually against bankruptcy. In the mid-1990s it appeared that the Norwegian government intended to move the regional division of the governmental archives system to a new venue, while also intending to sell the building that had housed them until then.² The similar names should not be confused: the state's archival foundation is a government institution responsible for all governmental documents, whereas Stiftelsen Arkivet is an NGO. A group of individuals got together to try to secure a different fate for the building, as it has a strong historical identity. During the German occupation of Norway 1940-45, the house served as the regional headquarters for *the Geheime Staatspolizei* – the Gestapo. It was locally known during the occupation as the "House of Terror." And now, in 1999, the initiative finally succeeded: the government abandoned plans for a sale and donated the house to the museum advocates, on the condition that they use it for peace-building purposes. Within 12 months, the doors of the new *Arkivet* were opened to the public. Authentic artifacts from the war years had been returned after decades in private and public possession. Returned to their original positions, these artifacts were now presented in the museum by retired and unpaid voluntary guides. The whole building had been restored and renovated. What opened in 2001 was a volunteer-supported war museum and peace documentation center with a vision that sometime in the future it could become a professional, nationally recognized peace education center.³

For the first two years, the foundation was often in danger of bankruptcy and received little recognition. Then, the vision took hold – Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa came to visit twice, and exchange programs were developed with the Desmond Tutu Peace Center, as well as with the UNESCO-listed *Robben Island Heritage Museum* in Cape Town. Several other cooperative relationships were forged, and a multimedia project gained national tenure for a simple reason: New media technologies were brought to bear on the challenge of telling History through a multi-media lens. By 2007, exchange agreements had also been signed with like-minded institutions in Cambodia and Spain. The center became an individual item on the national budget in 2005, with allocations increasing by the year. Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre now regularly refers to it as a model of NGO-based peace education. By the year 2007, 6500 students were visiting the center annually, while another 3-4000 adult visitors find their way there as tourists, conference participants or in some other capacity. For most of its brief history, the center was run by non-paid volunteers.

Considering the rapid growth of the center, it seems interesting to address the question of what kind of a communicative phenomenon it actually is – what potential it may have as a venue for peace education, how it bridges academia and the NGO-sector? Does it reflect other role models or has it created its own? Can it become a role model for others – if so, what are the key assets? What does it reflect in terms of possibilities for peace education in schools, in universities, in NGOs and society at large? What was it about the vision that somehow seemed to inspire individuals and organizations engaged in peace work? Can we learn something about peace education and narrative strategy?

Outline of the article

An invitation to speak at the *20th Annual Conference of the German Peace Psychology Association* on "Conflict, Communication and Intergroup Relations" in June 2007 provided an occasion to structure some experiences from three years as head and coordinator of research and development at the center. There are quite obvious similarities between the visions of Stiftelsen Arkivet in Kristiansand and, say, for instance, *Villa ten Hompel* in Münster, Germany, the *Truth and Reconciliation Committee* in post-apartheid Cape Town, South Africa, the *Robben Island Heritage Museum* in Cape Town, South

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1. As the foundation itself intentionally uses its Norwegian name in order to make it familiar to the public, I will follow suit in this article and refer to either the building as *Arkivet*, or the foundation as *Stiftelsen Arkivet*.
 2. <http://www.riksarkivet.no/english/about.html>
 3. <http://www.stiftelsen-arkivet.no/english>

Africa, or the *Documentation Centre of Cambodia*.¹ All of these are by now collaborating partners with Stiftelsen Arkivet, as is the war memorial museum in Guernica, Spain. They are all approaches to building peace based on confrontation with the after-effects of war. As such, they share key elements. However, the contexts are also very different. Stiftelsen Arkivet is a small venue catering to predominantly middle-class citizens of a very prosperous and peaceful part of the world, by most comparisons. South African contexts both before and after apartheid may have parallels to processes centering around the Second World War (hereafter referred to as WW II), which is the key reference point in the Norwegian peace center. However, exactly how one conceptualizes these relationships and their relevance for peace education is an immensely complex issue. Words such as "peace" and "war" tend to have much more complicated meanings than what we think of in everyday speech. Peace for the average Norwegian can hardly be compared to peace for the average Cambodian – yet we continue to employ the word as though it had a fixed meaning. A first issue for a peace education venue is to come to grips with the term peace itself, and only thereafter might one begin to consider aspects of education in relation to it.

In trying to relate key insights from my experiences with Stiftelsen Arkivet, I will draw up the rudiments of a theoretical framework of peace education, but principally this article is a case study based on practical experiences, as well as notes and interviews with visitors and students during the stage when I was engaged in creating the venue.² My sense of the term *case study* in this context is simply to structure and organize facts and the data of experience in such a way that they form a coherent reflection, with the ambition of paving the way for a more cogent theoretical treatment later on. The article presents some ideas concerning the term "contact education," as an attempt to connect Stiftelsen Arkivet to the vast and heterogeneous body of literature that one might use to elaborate on peace education as a distinct field within peace studies. As education is quite obviously also an aspect of *communication*, there is reason to also reflect on the *multi-modality* involved in combining interpersonal communication with multi-media technology for educational purposes.

Stiftelsen Arkivet

In order to construct a case study, a conceptual framework is needed that provides some analytical dimensions. And following from the introduction above, it seems possible to define Stiftelsen Arkivet as a non-governmental organization with an approach to peace education that is loose: it is not *formalized*, nor necessarily *educational* in the strict sense of the word, but more akin to what in German is called *Bildung* and in Norwegian *dannelse*. Although there is no single corresponding word in the English language, the meaning is synonymous with *education for life* – learning how to contextualize yourself, learning canonical values from history and literature, understanding the origins of yourself and your culture – but also learning the practical value and salience of cultural codes. In this broad sense, the concept of *peace education* acquires a quite inclusive meaning. In trying to envisage a place for such an inclusive concept, one might refer to the *Transcend Peace University* – of which the UN is a partner, and Johan Galtung presiding rector:³ 21 different courses are listed in the website, immediately suggesting the conclusion that no single, regular university department anywhere at any time could cover degrees in peace studies alone. The subject is too broad. Neither could a single university. Area knowledge and conflict history insights must be pooled. And neither could formal academic education as such, simply because there is an element of participation, application and bottoms-up thinking involved in a working peace education. A vision like this would seem to run parallel to John Keane's (2003; 1998) convincing attempt to outline what he calls "a global civil society." It would also have a bearing on Adam B. Seligman's (1992) argument in *The Idea of a Civil Society*, where he states that studies of politics and political culture need to reclaim the complex interrelationship of social movements, political parties, interest organizations, educational institutions, arts and leisure in a more integrative totality in order to further elaborate the ancient idea of society as a Civil society.

In this article I will apply such ideas to understanding Stiftelsen Arkivet, its roles and its necessity. *Stiftelsen Arkivet* is located in a building commonly referred to as *Arkivet (The Archive)*. It is a four-story building with a view of the harbor and the city center.⁴ The stately concrete house had, as mentioned, for decades been the venue of the regional offices of the

1. <http://www.muenster.de/stadt/villa-ten-hompel>; for the home page of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission see <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc>; for Robben Island Heritage Museum see <http://www.robben-island.org.za>; for the Documentation Centre of Cambodia see <http://www.dccam.org>.

2. The conference was held June 15-17, 2007 in Constance, Germany (Konstanz). This article is a reworked version of a paper I presented there entitled *Peace Education through New Media: A Case Study of a Local Peace Initiative in Southern Norway*. A different version of the same research issue was presented in Paris, July 2007, at the *International Association of Mass Communication Research* biannual conference. Emphasis in the latter article was more oriented towards the field of participant communication, but some elements have been worked into this written version of the Constance presentation.

3. <http://www.transcend.org>.

4. Kristiansand is a city of 75,000 people, a city that in 2007 acquired its own university. Institutions like Stiftelsen Arkivet perform a much needed function as affiliated adjunct knowledge institutions for the university. Traditionally, Kristiansand has only had a university college, a teachers college and some other smaller academic venues. In the last 10 years there has arisen a new situation of academic competition, a fact that has some bearing on the understanding of Stiftelsen Arkivet's rapid establishment.

Norwegian National Archives. During the WW II occupation, *Arkivet* assumed another identity, as it was used as the regional headquarters of the Gestapo. This is in other words the house where members of the regional resistance movement in Southern Norway were incarcerated, interrogated and tortured. Throughout the post-WW II years, stories of this "House of Terror" have been told as part of the regional folk narrative, while much has also been actively not told – suppressed, partially forgotten, rendered taboo in the interest of moving forward. No doubt, the force with which the repercussions to this taboo-culture hit the city of Kristiansand when the house was re-opened surprised many people. The house is in a sense a narrative all by itself, although younger generations had never even heard the term "House of Terror" at all.

Stiftelsen Arkivet started its work in 2001, with two employees and a large number of non-paid volunteers. A number of conferences and seminars set the activity in motion. There was a general recognition that the response was unexpectedly tense, deep, and emotional. Few places in contemporary Norwegian society create occasions and possibilities for working through emotions with the same intensity – people have been known to burst into tears before its exhibits, and not infrequently. *Stiftelsen Arkivet* now occupies the top floor of the *Arkivet* building, and there are 13 employees helping school-teachers and their pupils, university students, tourists, and other visitors, while also running a website, conferences and seminars, as well as doing research – although at a fledgling level.

On the top floor one finds the offices, seminar rooms and a small conference area from which *Stiftelsen Arkivet* carries on its peace initiative. The basement floor of the four-story building is an exhibit with the fully restored torture chamber, incarceration rooms, an exhibition of artifacts from everyday life in occupied Norway, and a restored Gestapo headquarters, displaying and narrating the story of the regional German occupation. The two floors in between are rented by regional branches of such humanitarian organizations as *The Red Cross*, *Save the Children*, *Amnesty International*, *Rotary*, *The UN Foundation* and others. It is in many respects the presence of these NGOs in the house that best explains the peculiar mix of war and peace focal points that characterizes house activities. By the end of 2007, approximately 40 employees were working in the building altogether, which is an increase of 38 since the doors first opened.

Visitors are typically taken on a tour of the basement, where non-paid staffers introduce them to both local war history and humanitarian thinking concerning contemporary conflict management. There is also a seminar room in the basement, amidst exhibits of the local resistance. The latest addition is a multi-media auditorium in the basement's sublevel. Both are used during the tours. On the way, visitors stop at the NGO-offices and gain an insight into their work on contemporary issues.

The contrast between the tour's beginning and its end is extreme for those who come to visit here: in the top floor conference room a huge tapestry adorns one whole wall. It is a story told visually, in a room with a view of the harbor through a number of large windows. Below, the basement is as dark and sinister as its story of fear, torture and violent confinement.



Commissioned by *Stiftelsen Arkivet*, and woven by a gifted and distinguished artist from the region, the 15 feet long and 12 feet tall tapestry (see figure 1) is an artwork that interprets the story of the war in Southern Norway through needle and

thread, as well as through symbols and emotions. It is a powerful story, told in very contrasting colors and with interwoven imagery of hope, depression, violence, resistance, national symbols of solidarity, and foreign symbols of fear and destruction. It functions as a powerful testimony to a mode of communication that both predates and outdates our modern multi-media of text and image communication. This is where the volunteer guides end their tours with visitors. The guides, who have little formal training in storytelling, find in the tapestry a focal point for a narrative that no high-definition TV screen or Powerpoint presentation could ever hope to approximate. Thus, the ways in which Stiftelsen Arkivet approaches its vision offer an opportunity to assess not just its concept of peace education, but also its approach to peace narratives as well.

Notes on peace education: communication, narrative, truth

Applying the idea of narrative in elaborating on Stiftelsen Arkivet seems plausible, but also somewhat out of place. With the word *narrative* we first and foremost think of the concept of story – something told to someone by someone else. However, *narrative theory* is today in part also an academic fashion trend, in part a meta-theory, in part a research paradigm, or a group of related theoretical orientations. Only a fraction of the orientations can be said to represent *applicable* narrative theory in studies of person-to-person communication. Be that as it may, it is quite possible to stick to the idea that *narrative is simply a story-telling approach to the study of culture and social communication*. I do not have in mind the more theoretically fine-tuned theories at this time. I am rather thinking of the *Arkivet Narrative* as an overarching context (meta-narrative) for understanding – in Clifford Geertz's (1973) terminology – "what they are up to." Quite clearly, understanding the narrative scheme that is woven into the tapestry, for instance, helps us to understand the Arkivet institution.

I also meet myself when I attempt to do so, as I am a former R&D employee. In that respect, this article is also an elaboration on my points of view concerning Stiftelsen Arkivet as an aspect of *narrative method*. When I began in 2002, I built on points of linkage between education, journalism (my field) and communication. Without communication, there can be no such thing as journalism or education. And one might think of journalism as an aspect of *both* narrative and education – as for instance Jake Lynch (2007) seems to do in his endeavor to teach peace journalism as course curricula in journalism education.¹

In response to some questions raised during my Constance presentation, I referred to James Carey (1987), who once remarked that "communication is a wonderful thing": much as fish are not aware that they swim in water until they are out of the water, most people are only vaguely aware of how much their existence depends upon narratives. In the book I referred to, Carey invoked John Dewey's educational philosophy – it was in fact Dewey who authored the quote. And one will not have to read very far in the literature on communication and civil society before one encounters the debates between John Dewey and the more familiar figure of Walter Lippmann (Splichal, 1999). In contrast to intellectual journalist Lippmann, philosopher Dewey did not place so much emphasis on the media in his thoughts on communication. Their debate concerned a more basic quarrel over the capacity of the masses to make sense of complex matters. Lippmann took an elitist view, whereas Dewey emphasized partnership and learning through participation. And I can think of few other debates in academic history that move more directly to the intersection point of peace, journalism and education. The common point is communication, yet communication has for a very long time been a neglected subject in studies of politics and international relations.

By focusing on the concept of "communication" in attempts to define a field called "peace education," one necessarily has to deal with the paradoxical and contradictory nature of the term "peace" itself, as it appears within different academic fields and levels of education. How can we talk of peace education when we educate students about war and conflict, for instance? In a basic sense, theology, moral philosophy, sociology, anthropology and psychology all approach the process of peace building from the vantage point of communication. One might also, with a stretch of the imagination, invoke the economist and peace research veteran Kenneth Boulding (1978), who throughout his career showed an inclination to implicitly employ a great deal of communication philosophy in his mostly structurally oriented research on war and peace. Communication is essential in social theory, according to Boulding – and he is not alone in holding this view.² Peace research over a period spanning close to fifty years reflects that same position. By communication studies, we are referring not to media studies, but to the range of interdisciplinary, sub-disciplinary and non-disciplinary areas in which the concept of communication is part of the vocabulary.

Peace, like communication, is 'a wonderful thing', but possibly even harder to define. Peace education, like peace research, is not a strict discipline, but rather an orientation, albeit an increasingly discipline-like one. By and large, peace education has no theory of its own that is commonly shared, but one need not look very far before one encounters references to Johan Galtung and his distinction between *direct* obstacles to peace, *cultural* obstacles to peace, and *structural* obstacles to peace (Brock-Utne, 2004; Perez, 2006; Galtung & Langlois, 2006). Neither does one have to search very hard before

1. Among other things, he has one such course in Galtung's portfolio.
2. His position is largely the same in the older book, *The Meaning of the 20th Century*, from 1965.

certain themes from development and poverty studies come into focus – for instance the educational philosophies of Freire and Illich (Kent, 1977). Concepts such as *consciousness* invoke perhaps a reference to Marxist philosophies of alienation, on the one hand, and a pluralist ideal of global exchange in the sense of, for instance, former-US Senator William Fulbright, on the other. A practical view may be to take Galtung's emphasis on *obstacles* as a starting point. From there one may say that peace education combines a *processual* strategy with a *structuralist* one, a *micro-view* with a *macro-view*, an *historical orientation* with a *contemporary* and *comparative* one, an *academic view* with a *grass-roots view* on competence building. In short, it takes everything and positions it around the word "peace," firmly placed in the center, with all the implicit consequences. What Galtung has in mind is nothing short of a new educational paradigm, with peace as the pivotal point and the focal lens.

Contact education

But how do we think of peace education as a form of communication? What is communication, in addition to being another of those unclear words?

One such meaning that we might put to use comes from Mark Kramer (2005), who begins an elaboration of the term *narrative journalism* with an emphasis on *contact* – or *meaningful* contact. Kramer, Director of the *Nieman Program on Narrative Journalism* at Harvard University, once asked himself what he meant by the term narrative journalism? On our side, we might ask ourselves what we mean by the term narrative (peace) education? As documented above, the key ingredient in Stiftelsen Arkivet's approach is exactly that: narrative. That is also where peace education and peace journalism enter into the common equation. And it is, arguably, also where we find the center of the contours of a common theory of peace education:

Kramer first labeled narrative journalism "contactful journalism" – and we might add *contactfull education*: The writer (educator) contacts the reader (student):¹

It's journalism that doesn't assume that the reader is a robot, that acknowledges the reader knows a lot...and feels...and sniggers...and gets wild. Perhaps the question, "What's up with this narrative stuff?" is an uneasy one. It's a question that denotes factions and discomfort with the clear movement toward more narrative in newspapers.

Kramer adds:

Narrative denotes writing with character; action that unfolds over time; the interpretable voice of the storyteller in an area with a somewhat discernable personality; and some sense of relationship to the reader, viewer, listener; and leads the audience to a point of realization or destination (2005: 7).

I will take this to mean that through *narrative* and *contact*, (peace) journalism and (peace) education are kindred spirits to the extent that they both work from the starting point of audience participatory engagement. The compelling truth-value of the fact being told is juxtaposed to the ethos of the person who is telling. This is in turn inseparable from the context of the telling and the purposes that lie behind the telling. We are in other words scratching the surface of a Habermas-inspired communication philosophy, but I prefer to remain much more practical, down to earth, and keep an emphasis on narrative and drama rather than rationality and argumentation. Peace journalism, like peace education, is the challenge of letting more voices speak, and letting them speak in a way that makes sense to themselves with less regard for structure and constraints – more regard for emotion, place, and response. More direct. More contact. In fact, teaching peace issues at *Stiftelsen Arkivet* suggests another of Kramer's insights:

Once an audience is set to willingly follow the teller, throw in such topical digressions – shifting gladly between scenes – so that the reader will assemble in the mind a sequence of what are called sub-textual realizations. They're not there. You read the text about the dog and you go "aha..." and you make little solutions for yourself as you go along. And that's really what you are sculpting for yourself when you write narrative. (2005: 8)

Playfulness, inwardness, complexity, emotion and *opacity* are necessary means of reaching *rationality, openness, simplicity, and clarity*. Admittedly, this is still not a theory, but it represents movement toward one.

Through the concept of communication, peace education, as a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary endeavor, encounters the term truth from the realization that there is none. There is no single truth. There are only many truths. But the search for truth bears in its nature the values that might carry seeds for peace education. Truth is in the search, not in the finding. One cannot confine teaching to the simple and boring erudition of facts, and one can by no means begin to believe that a rendering of facts outside of their context has anything to do with searching for truth. As soon as we in education begin to contextualize, we invoke some element or other of drama, of rhetorical persuasion, attempts to convince, and ways of conveying worldviews to our students.

1. Kramer, Mark (2005) "Why narrative now? A tense but unhealthy marriage", *Narrative Journalism South Africa*, Johannesburg: Paula Fray & Associates.

As though that were not enough, the lines keep getting blurred between the kind of drama we encounter in reality and the kind we encounter in fiction. As Nobel Literature Laureate Harold Pinter stated in his 2005 Nobel Lecture, truth in drama is forever elusive:

You never quite find it but the search for it is compulsive. The search is clearly what drives the endeavor. The search is your task. More often than not you stumble upon the truth in the dark, colliding with it or just glimpsing an image or a shape which seems to correspond to the truth, often without realizing that you have done so. But the real truth is that there never is any such thing as one truth to be found in dramatic art. There are many. The truths challenge each other, recoil from each other, reflect each other, tease each other, are blind to each other. Sometimes you feel you have the truth of a moment in your hand, then it slips through your fingers and is lost. (2005, 1)¹

From this point on, Pinter moves into a quite direct commentary on US policies towards Saddam Hussein and Iraq that took many listeners and viewers by surprise when he gave his lecture in 2005.

Truth in political language is not elusive, but rather is sacrificed in the service of power:

Political language, as used by politicians, does not venture into any of this territory since the majority of politicians, on the evidence available to us, are interested not in truth but in power and in the maintenance of that power. To maintain that power it is essential that people remain in ignorance, that they live in ignorance of the truth, even the truth of their own lives. What surrounds us therefore is a vast tapestry of lies, upon which we feed. (2005: 3)

The point is clear: on the one hand, art searches for truth and, on the other hand, politics avoid it. There is drama involved in both instances, but they are different kinds of drama. From the point of view of the dramatist seeking truth, we as the audience work with the author/narrator *empathetically*. We trust in the endeavor, we let it guide us. The alternative is to do the opposite: for instance in political communication where you recognize that the truth is to be found not in the light that the author/narrator is providing you with – but in the darkness beyond, where you are not supposed to go. Education – as journalism – has a possibility to choose either mode of communication. But one only can approximate Kramer's concept of contact.

Narrative education must engage, and it can employ artful ways of seeking the truth, but it can't lie or deceive. As always, there will be struggles with the form, with the construction of conventional ways of saying and doing things. As Pinter says, sometimes the mirror has to be smashed in order to arrive at the truth behind the image staring back at you (2005: 12). But that is what engaging with narrative is all about, and we see immediately that this understanding of narrative has nothing in common with postmodernist thinking – it is strictly modern, and for an institution like *Stiftelsen Arkivet*, it has to be. Accepting the existence of multiple truths is far from saying that no truth exists.

***Stiftelsen Arkivet* as a venue for peace education**

Here I will leave the juxtaposition of peace education and peace journalism and return to the questions set forth in the beginning of this article. How does the above discussion serve to characterize *Stiftelsen Arkivet* as a peace education venue? How should we appraise its narrative method? How should we regard its form of contact education? Below I will try to answer by defining six general dimensions of peace education, hoping to underline the relevance of what is being achieved in Kristiansand.

Peace education requires engaging social narrative

The first element of the framework concerns the notion of *societal narrative*²: and by that I simply mean a story that encompasses an idea. Peace education courses and programs may not need a distinct social narrative of their own, but a peace education venue – like the one elaborated in this article – does. A key to understanding the social narrative at *Stiftelsen Arkivet* is the manner in which the house evokes collective memories of WW II. It is far from the whole story, but this is the regional context and a unique source. Understood as meta-narrative, there is little difference between the *Arkivet* story and the Robben Island story. The contexts are not the same, nor can political geography be compared. So what, then, explains the similarity, other than the social narrative that gives the physical place its cultural space?

The house occupies about 7200 square feet, with ca. two-foot thick concrete walls. As a regional records archive, the building was built to last and to keep paper dry. Although not planned that way, the thickness of the walls was a convenient asset for the local Gestapo leaders, who soon after moving into the house began to use the basement as a prison and a

1. http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates (downloaded September, 2007).

2. In this article, I confine the theoretical discussion of the term narrative to Kramer's idea of narrative journalism. Cf. also Tveiten & Nohrstedt (2002). For a discussion of social narrative, see Lakoff (2006): *Simple framing: An introduction to framing and its uses in politics*, here quoted from Marianne H. Perez (2006). Lakoff's article last updated in October 2006, my download October 2007. http://www.rockridgeinstitute.org/projects/strategic/simple_framing

site for interrogation. Passersby would comment that there was a radio playing there during late hours. Only later would they realize that the music was meant to drown out the cries of prisoners being tortured. The name "House of Terror" began to stick to the house. Stories such as these are inseparable from the building. They are the meaning of the place itself.

However, it has not always been that way, other than for those who experienced WW II in this region. As the vision to reclaim the building took hold in the late 1990's, WW II veterans began to mobilize a volunteer work force. A friendship association was organized. They began to renovate the house, using national and municipal financing. Volunteers recreated the basement by calling for wartime artifacts to be returned from years of private storage. Thus, radios, guns, uniforms, pictures and a wide range of items became the property of *Stiftelsen Arkivet*. Posters, photographs, newspaper pages, torture implements and wedding dresses sewn from parachute silk were among the items. Local warehouses donated materials for window installations. Window exhibition models from downtown storefronts now acquired familiar, more somber faces, clad in Gestapo uniforms, plastic arms raised to salute *Der Führer*, whose photo was re-hung on the wall of the former Gestapo office. The raw and echoing darkness of the basement was reenacted: recordings played German wartime music, recorded sounds of falling water drops from old pipes added to the oppressive atmosphere created by dimmed lamplight.

One irony is that the former office of regional Gestapo chief *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Rudolf Kerner from 1941 until 1945 is now the office of the *Stiftelsen Arkivet Friendship Association*, the group of volunteers that to a large extent is the reason why the foundation exists at all. Some of the oldest members of the association were themselves imprisoned in the basement where the Gestapo office now has been restored, as close to the original as possible. In the friendship association's office upstairs, there is a lot of smoking, coffee drinking and laughter, but painful memories are never far from the surface either. A brief illustration is in order: next to the friendship association's office is the conference room where the already mentioned tapestry tells the regional occupation story from left to right. It begins in the beginning of the occupation and it tells it to the end. The guides who take visitors on tours of the building end their tours there. They now turn their attention to the "moral" of the narrative. Five decades of taboos and regional silence have ended – as in Pinter's Nobel Prize address, the mirror has been smashed. And standing there, facing a tapestry that functions like what the ancient rhetors would call the *dispositio* stage of speechmaking, or narrative, the old veterans who tell the story have a template with which to do it. The tapestry structures the story, visualizes the elements and draws the audience into *conclusio*.

Rationality, as we gradually come to realize, is an emotional affair. Thinking, speaking, and feeling are not opposites, but extensions of each other. Peace education has to begin with that fact and speak to the stories of the heart in order to be convincing. Unlike the classroom or the editorial office, to return to Kramer's point of view, the narrative *location* at Arkivet inserts an experience into the equation: contact education.

Peace education and experienced authenticity

Authenticity is the second element of the case analysis. What does that term mean, specifically in the Arkivet context? The narratives that students and other visitors encounter at *Stiftelsen Arkivet* have been written and rehearsed, but they are still oral and spontaneous. They are communal, dialogical, unpredictable, and subject to change by those who tell them. As one of my interviewees, a German student, said; *it was exactly this homemade quality that made the exhibition so different from anything else he had encountered*. The rawness was what made it trustworthy. And the lack of professional frameworks for the narrators made it all the more convincing. His reason for being in Kristiansand was simple enough: his grandfather had been a soldier in Norway for several years during WW II, before he was sent to the Eastern Front. Throughout his childhood, the student had heard stories of Norway. His grandfather had dreamed of emigrating there.¹ Another student responded to the basement exhibition by fainting. Yet another, a 25-year old female from one of the Baltic countries, burst out in a fit of rage at the violence of the stories being told. In several long conversations afterwards, she told the same story as the German student: *It was raw, hard, unpolished. It was impossible to just move beyond it. When she walked around in the basement listening to the sounds and taking in the imagery, she had a creeping sense of something bad – a sense, she added, that Norwegian students coming from a less violent past may not experience*. She said she could not comprehend why anyone would embellish stories told in a basement like this with details of suffering that became even more stark when you stopped to think that they happened here, to *them, or their relatives* – she added.²

Many students approached me after classes to discuss their experience at *Arkivet*, but seldom ventured to do so in the public domain of the university classroom. For the purpose of this paper it is sufficient to say that their responses more often than not touched upon the issue of authenticity: the tangibility of a war fought long ago, when retold and re-enacted with the means put in place at Arkivet:³ The common reference in all the conversations is the role played by the storytellers.

1. Personal interview 2007.
2. Personal interview 2005.

These are old men and women with varying capabilities for making a story come to life, but with a story capable of being told. Their English would not pass muster in a professional museum, but somehow that is not a matter of concern here. There is a will, a dedication, an oral quality and an idealistic precision that in and of itself is a condition of identification, it seems.

My students are all more than 20 years old. I cannot tell whether younger school students, aged 14-16, would react in the same way.¹ That remains for research to establish. Yet, some narrative experiences are decidedly not for teen-agers at all: a South African visitor, one of the more prominent members of the ANC and an inmate of Nelson Mandela's at Robben Island, met my students and talked about his experiences at Robben Island. A tall, broad-shouldered man, he recounted how he had been tortured numerous times by being placed underneath a tin pan from which water dripped onto his head, for hours at a time. Drops fell every 10 seconds, striking his shaved head. Initially, it had been more like a joke, he said. But after 20 minutes, the drops started to reverberate in his skull, and after hours the sheer anticipation of the next drop became unbearable. He told the students that he had come to Kristiansand the day before. After a meeting with local government officials, he had been taken down into the museum of venue. And at the sound of the reverberating water pipes in the basement he broke down and wept.

War memory joined to humanitarian ideology

The third aspect of this case framework is the *tension involved in combining war memory with the practical work of humanitarian organizations*. The humanitarian interest behind such places as Robben Island Heritage Museum and Stiftelsen Arkivet is quite easy to spot, but there is, on the other hand, a great variety of humanitarian organizations and organizational cultures that fall within the category. Amongst them we find peace movements – often of a kind that caters very little to people and sentiments from a military background. Yet another category of peace organizations does exactly the opposite – indeed, some would treat national armed forces as peace organizations as well. NGOs of all kinds may be natural co-partners with war documentation centers and peace education centers alike. However, a key issue is how compatible a peace education epistemology is with the folk narrative of war memories? It may be entirely compatible, and then again it might not. In either case the issue remains central to an NGO-based peace educational facility.

During the first years of the foundation, conflict tension ran high between those who favored an emphasis on WW II and those who thought there was too much of it, at the cost of an emphasis on transforming contemporary conflict situations. At the time when the first website was created in 2003, there were many discussions about the logo (a line drawing of the house), the chosen colors (faded olive green – symbolizing both military colors and the color of earth and growth in Greek mythology), the use of photos, and so on.² The humanitarian organizations located on the second and third floors of the building had strong opinions about the lack of emphasis on peace issues. These were opinions that reverberated throughout the city, giving the foundation an immediate and important challenge to improve its reputation. Contrary to its vision, Stiftelsen Arkivet became known as a site of conflict rather than a messenger of peace.

There is a profound issue at play here. Throughout the world, wherever such documentation centers as Stiftelsen Arkivet have been established, there is the challenge of acquiring something more than a museum-like venue. Museums tend to freeze history and render narratives as standardized messages. Museums and other exhibition venues are constantly faced with the challenge of keeping up with their publics. The past only provides interesting exhibition material if someone comes to see it. Provided that the audience in fact does come, one can take one of two courses. Either one can pay homage to the past, focus on it and distill its essence once and for all with the aim of canonizing certain ways of looking at things, or one can attempt to rearrange, reconstruct and reconnect the dots on the map, creating new lines. As anyone with experience in communicating art to the public will know, such attempts at reconfiguring the past will usually be met with accusations from some and enthusiasm from others. Any effort that "creates new meaning" for some people "messes up tradition" for others.

And needless to say, the analogy holds true for peace education, as well. In our collective dealing with WW II, there is obviously an intergenerational gap: old and young people tend to have rather different conceptions of that war. A striking feature of the peace education work at Stiftelsen Arkivet is the kind of contact that has been established between generations and NGO-types. One could not at the outset have foreseen that school students and employees in humanitarian organizations – far removed from WW II – would at all partake in the vision once enabled by war veterans. But it happened. It turned out to be a version of their own visions.

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3. A note should be made here that I am basing these renderings on long conversations carried out over the course of three years. In this paper I make no endeavor to discuss methods, however. My principal concern is the reflection on peace education, in light of peace journalism and narrative strategies employed in both cases.
 1. A point stressed in a number of informal conversations.
 2. Personal notes.

Folk stories joined to academic epistemologies of war and peace

The fourth aspect is *the difference in the epistemology* of war and peace as folk material, on the one hand, and as academic material, on the other. For instance, the vividness of memories and personal commitments is a particularly salient feature in the case of Stiftelsen Arkivet and its establishment. The tapestry adorning the conference room wall could only have been woven by someone with a personal attachment to the story. The bloody prisoners lying handcuffed on the concrete floor in the basement are only real through a stretch of the imagination – and that imagination has little to do with academic insights, much more with folk stories and dramatizations. The stories that are being told do not require academic insights at all, nor were they primarily researched by historians. They stem from the depths of local trauma, from several generations of subdued pain. Although they are old stories by now, in a country bearing every sign of a peaceful political and cultural system, they are stories that are not only alive, but in a sense have been lying dormant only waiting for the right occasion to reemerge and reclaim a more public identity – they are stories of humiliation and dignity and refer to common human experience as an ingredient in peace education.

It is the challenge of academia to construct its own narrative in that context, according to peace researcher and psychologist Evelyn G. Lindener (2007). She may be right at that, but we are in a sense also approaching a reorientation back towards a kind of philosophical anthropology that is not new at all but in fact mainstream. Academic activity and the more structured education flowing from it come into the picture in at least four different ways. First, there are the factual accounts presented with historical precision: what happened, where did it happen, and whom did it involve? Second, there is the comparative dimension, involving the contrasts and similarities between WW II in southern Norway, WW II in other parts of Norway and the world, and also other conflicts in the past and present. This comparative aspect is followed by a hermeneutic aspect: what does it mean? What can we learn? A hermeneutic aspect is followed by an even more philosophical and normative aspect: what are we supposed to learn? How does the WW II experience in southern Norway speak to us as human beings, in a more generalized narrative than that which concerns the local place and time?

Questions such as these are not the sole domain of academia, of course. However, from academia one might gain the precision and the modesty that is necessary when shifting between the general and the particular in sharing WW II memories. In the particular case of Stiftelsen Arkivet, one is struck by the strength and vigor of the folk story, the latent knowledge that keeps manifesting itself, the interplay between everyday historians and professional academic historians, as well as the difficulty that arises when more profound and less concrete research issues come on the agenda. How does one mobilize popular interest for a type of war and peace research that requires years of specialist training in order to even begin to understand? On the one hand, a good communicator can quite clearly lecture on the models of society that war and peace researchers employ. But how can such insights be joined to folk insight as something else and something more than lecturing – as *contact education*?

Fusion of direct and indirect communication

The fifth aspect concerns the interplay of old and new media technologies. As demonstrated already, there is a strong element of folk wisdom and folklore at Stiftelsen Arkivet. This description is not meant in any derogatory sense, but rather as a positive description of the lubricant that helps the wheels turn smoothly. The strong oral culture is of particular interest when attempting to generalize on the experiences at Stiftelsen Arkivet as a venue for communication. And we remember Carey citing Dewey: communication is a wonderful thing. But however wonderful, it still represents the difficulty of putting reality into technological machines and still having it come out resembling something real at the other end. There is no substitute for human, direct narration, not even in our times, when we have storytelling machines so sophisticated that we could not even imagine them ten years ago. There is always a rupture when the human modality of storytelling is exchanged for a technological one.

There is the particular image of a retired air force officer (a paratrooper from the special forces) standing in front of a group of 14 year-old school kids and telling them about a local *quisling* during WW II who became a tormentor of friends and neighbors brought to Arkivet. The veteran soldier has a personal contact point to this story: right outside is a statue with the torso of his father, the local leader of the resistance movement – who was brought to Oslo and shot.¹ Like the narrative in the tapestry upstairs, the narrative in the basement exhibition more or less tells itself. But it cannot on its own add the nuances of a story once lived. And the 14-year-olds know it, as do my own students.

The question then is how to preserve the oral dimension of the documentation center when there are no longer any people left to tell it who also lived it?

There will come a day when a more standardized kind of narrative will pave its inevitable way at Arkivet, just as it has in

1. For an English version of the Arkivet story on Major Arne Laudal, follow this link:
http://www.stiftelsen-arkivet.no/arne_laudals_story.

other places and contexts. To an extent, that day has already materialized. Several interactive media games have been created in order to provide a further geographical reach and temporal longevity for the Arkivet experience. A new website also structures the center and adds new functions, like downloadable photographs, search modes, news updates, as well as links to like-minded centers nationwide and internationally. On a more encompassing platform, a multimedia service called *Never Again* offers downloadable films, charts, audio interviews, statistics, and literature with information provided in three languages (Norwegian, English, German).¹

Although this is for another article to elaborate on, it seems clear that the very issue itself is of growing importance, not just to the website service *Never Again* or Stiftelsen Arkivet as such, but in a generalized sense: 1) how does one account for the vividness of life and lived experience being told by war witnesses, when the mode of communication is *indirect* and not direct – when the eyewitness tells his or her story to a tape, and not just to another person – *without* a tape or a video-camera? 2) Exactly how ought one to go about making the context of the tape being played to an audience come alive in the right kind of context? 3) And, finally: do eyewitnesses truly remember their stories, or do they also *reconstruct* them in the process of articulating their memories? Does the *setting of the interview* and the *technologies applied* also influence on the end product – the story they tell?

In short, the vista of research questions opened up here is truly broad. I make no claims to the contrary. I rather emphasize that it makes sense to raise such questions here, in this context, and with this orientation. *Stiftelsen Arkivet* is in a sense part of a large, encompassing, and international phenomenon whose core is the question of *how* social memory is captured and communicated.

This is possibly also the area where concerns with peace education cross into concerns with peace journalism. If one starts with the wide definition of journalism as a *social narrative of crucial facts and events*, then there are more than coincidental overlaps between education and journalism. In the slow contextualization and narrative rendering of what events actually mean, journalism crosses back into education. Multi-modal communication is how peace journalists express their ideals, although they remain within the context of news journalism. 'Contactful journalism' in the manner in which Kramer defined it, is perhaps not an option for the news media. If not, then quite obviously there are a number of other options within the print and broadcast media as we know them. But even more interestingly, peace journalism may hold the most promise as a multi-modal form of journalism in completely different kinds of venues – as for instance NGOs like *Open Democracy*² or for that matter Stiftelsen Arkivet. In the future, it may be a kind of peace reporting that one will find more in think tanks, NGO websites and other venues than in the regular media, where the journalistic way of approaching the world is fast becoming a standardized and alienating mode of operation, making permeable the very center of what normatively is referred to as *news* (Tveiten, 2006). New technologies hold many promises, especially for NGO venues with a sufficient reputation to actually begin to expand into what was once the realm of the news media. Likewise, one finds, for instance, BBC World coming out with a continuously updated website approaching much of the same value system as that propagated in peace education and multi-modal peace journalism. Technology blurs the genres.

Contact education requires spaces for active silence

The sixth case aspect addresses the context of communication, noting that it is of interest when 100 undergraduate students in political communication remain completely still for a full day. That is what happens when I bring my students there. I was not aware of that possibility years ago when I began to construct the website. Silence is a key element in contact education, however. Silence is not necessarily the same as the absence of speech and sound, nor is it necessarily the same as passing by a monument in a city square and then hastening on without a word even to yourself. Silence as an active, collective version – as in mourning, or in shared awe – paradoxically also in forms of joy and tribute. It is a way of "working through," to paraphrase John Ellis (1992).

The quietness of students at Arkivet is profound, in their listening to old voices and hearing history being told in a different way. Measured against the distanced passivity with which most of us today receive our daily news, such interest is just that: it is *interesting*. Informal class surveys tell me that these are students who seldom read newspapers unless asked to. Their habits concerning television news are completely different from mine. Their technologies of communication are more mobile, less standardized, less oriented to the classical institutions of news and more to the ironic treatment of daily happenings in talk shows and satirical programs. But here they sit still, not because their intellects are touched – rather because their emotions are touched. And that is why I am thinking that educators and journalists need to take a serious look in the rear view mirror in order to see whether the road still stretches all the way back to the founding pioneers of both journalism and education as a *holistic* and *political* narrative with an appeal to head *and* heart.

1. This is the website for the multi-modal database: www.neveragain.no
2. www.opendemocracy.org

What conclusions we draw from such inconclusive case material as the above depends a great deal on where we plan to go with our ideas of peace education – which in turn is a question of where we are coming from. Have we read the classics that we refer to, in journalism teaching, for instance? Do we really know, or do we continue to quote Walter Lippmann when we perhaps should be quoting John Dewey? Was there not something about a political and cultural canon – a value system – in the Lippmann equation (Tveiten, 2006)?¹ Yes there was, and in his writing, from *Public Opinion* in 1922 to *The Public Philosophy* in 1955, it became even more clearly articulated. Lippmann kept reiterating his early Platonic insights into how we as human beings require modes of simplification in order to make sense of the world. On the other hand, where Lippmann seems to have doubted the popular capacity to sift through complexity and arrive at simplicity, Dewey seems to have taken the opposite turn – beginning with simplicity, confident that the public can handle complexity.

The key element in understanding the paradoxes of the Stiftelsen Arkivet phenomenon is not a criticism of news journalism or traditional educational institutions. It is rather the idea that all societies at all times require locations for dealing with collective narratives, social memories and traumas caused by conflict. The Arkivet house is an example of such a space in the physical sense. There is also a *metaphysical* concept of space: space in our heads, in our stories and in our academic curricula to let the stories begin to tell themselves – letting them form structures, and not always forcing them into pre-defined ones. There is a very wide range and a great number of degrees when it comes to putting that idea to work. We see it immediately when we juxtapose the trials in Cambodia or South Africa with the more mundane narratives in peaceful Kristiansand. On the other hand, if the case is that so much energy was unleashed in a reclaiming of wartime memory in peaceful Kristiansand, all the more reason to pay attention to it as a workable narrative strategy elsewhere where conflicts are vastly more entrenched. If it requires 50 years of prosperity in Norway to begin to scratch beneath the surface of a war memory, what does that say of the role and potential of communication in peace building elsewhere?²

Summary

In the above I have outlined a way of understanding the emergence of Stiftelsen Arkivet, with a view to also contributing to a more generalized debate on peace education as a field. No emphasis has been placed on like-minded institutions in Norway – of which there are a number. Little emphasis has been devoted to kindred institutions in other countries, of which there are very many. And the literature review has remained at a basic level, simply because these elements are not the key elements of this study.³ Rather, the most ambitious theoretical ideas are Carey's remark that "communication is a wonderful thing" and Boulding's contention that the word "peace" is one of the most difficult words to communicate in the English language.

Placing Stiftelsen Arkivet into this context, I have tried to show how the main element in the vision behind Stiftelsen Arkivet was – and is – to create a location at which the local occupation history from 1940 to 1945 could be attached to contemporary conflict transformation issues. The strategy was to approach this goal by inviting humanitarian organizations to rent the remaining office space in the building once it was acquired. Hence, what began as a small-scale enterprise in 2001, based for the most part on volunteer work, was transformed in a few years into a professionally run documentation center with a conscious and ambitious plan to strengthen its vision by arousing the interest of key decision-makers in Norwegian cultural politics, foreign policy, and educational policy.

Emerging from these formulations is an understanding that peace education, despite the heterogeneity of peace research and peace building, may learn something from Stiftelsen Arkivet's and like-minded institutions' ways of pursuing actual spaces and places for contemplation and collective storytelling. Stiftelsen Arkivet is not a school and does not teach in the traditional sense. On the contrary, it is used by scholars and educators like myself as a venue for what I have called "contact education." It is a powerful idea: Stiftelsen Arkivet represents a 'contactful' space where collectively told stories are worked through in collectively engaged silence, often with a high level of engagement. What marks it as an innovative mode of peace education is perhaps the attempt to fill old places with new meaning, old meaning with new relevance, stories and smashed mirrors – attempts to get rid of the mirror images of wartime that stare back at you, move to the same side as you do when you move, and never let you pass by when you try to.

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1. Cf. for instance Chomsky and Herman's (1988) reference to Lippmann in their book and title: *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Media*.
2. Indeed, literature is being published that is beginning to take this approach, but that is for another review to elaborate on.
3. Rather, I refer to a forthcoming book that also includes student essays from Arkivet, to be published in 2008.

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