THE PATHWAY FROM CONFLICT TO RECONCILIATION:
COEXISTENCE AS AN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

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Summary notes

A normative sequence is proposed in the evolution of conflicts toward coexistence, namely:

CONFRONTATION←→TRUCE←→CO-LABORATION←→CO-OPERATION←→INTERDEPENDENCE←→INTEGRATION

I. Confrontation: assumption of ill intent on any act of the other + active hostility and intent to damage the other's life, livelihood or well being. ("Hostilites is the only option"). Zero sum. Dominant emotion: elation, contempt, and hostility

II. Truce or Freeze: assumption of ill intent on any act of the other + acts of hostility curtailed by a real or virtual "neutral zone" patrolled or controlled by powerful third parties ("Ready for hostilities whenever needed.") Zero sum. Dominant emotion: resentment, anger, mistrust.

III. Collaboration (literally: "Sharing labor"): assumption of ill intent as a background + certain activities in common (e.g., shared cropping of neighboring boundary lands) ("Hostilities is a fall-back option.") The third party begins to self-efface. Predominance of zero sum. Dominant emotion: mistrust, ambivalence

IV. Cooperation (literally: "Sharing operations"): assumption of neutral intent + active planning activities in common (e.g., designing a dam for both territories.) The third party leaves. ("Hostilities would be inconvenient") Moving toward non-zero sum. Dominant emotion: ambivalence, cautious compassion

V. Interdependence (literally: "Reciprocal dependence"): assumption of common goals overshadows assumptions of ill intent + progressive involvement in planning / actions toward the common good ("Hostilities would be foolish") Non-zero sum. Dominant emotion: forgiveness, cautious trust

VI. Differentiated integration: assumption of good intent in any act of the other + active involvement in planning / actions toward the common good. Each supports the other's growth. ("Hostilities doesn't even enter into consideration") Non-zero sum. Dominant emotion: solidarity, friendly trust

This model is not assumed to be linear: at any given moment in any given field situation one may expect to find traits of different stages expressed in different venues. Also, as with any evolutionary process, ebbs and flows should be expected.

The climb from one evolutionary stage to the next is hard, slipping is frequent and sometimes cascades to the bottom, the top appears—as in any mountain-climbing-- far away, and there is no long range view until almost the end.

The winding pathway "between vengeance and forgiveness' (Minow, 1999), between confrontational zero-sum and collaborative non-zero-sum relational "games" (Axelrod, 1984), may be paved with good intentions and the hopes of the surrounding communities, and sometimes even of the parties in conflict, but is filled with countless obstacles. Much as harmony and coexistence is consensually defined in most cultures as more desirable than war and confrontation, the road from the latter to the former is windy, uphill, and difficult to transit. In fact, the overwhelming experience about conflicts between nations, regions, communities, ethnic groups, organizations with competing interests, neighborhoods, neighbors, families and couples, that is, from macro- to micro-social systems, confirms that conflicts linger, that violence re-emerges easily, that mistrust is pervasive and difficult to eradicate, and that the dissolution of conflicts, or even their transformation into workable disputes, is far from easy.

To start with, those transformative processes are <u>frustratingly slow</u>, a pace that may collide against pressing hopes and needs of the parties involved, thus increasing the changes of accusations of ill will toward the other party and a collapse of the process. Studies of the real time estimate of post-war socioeconomic recovery indicate that it "typically requires at least two decades of sustained effort" (Kreimer et al., 2000, p.67). This slowness may be tied to the fact that each stage of the process from open conflict to open interdependency is qualitatively (not only quantitatively) different from the next, and shifts take place following complex processes that require time to stabilize.

Secondly, the progress of the process of reconciliation is <u>extremely unstable</u> and sensitive to, if not contingent upon, many uncontrollable variables. Some of these variables are <u>relational</u> --stemming from the differences in the "punctuation of the sequence of events" of a given shared history. In fact, the corolaries of any given shared story can shift dramatically according to how it is "punctuated", that is, by the way each party chooses to define which is the first step of a given interactional sequence. The quarrel "I withdraw because you nag", "No, I nag because you withdraw" is a paradigmatic example of a difference in punctuation, central in order to determine who is victim and who is perpetrator, who is right and who is wrong (Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson, 1967.) Throughout these quarrels, each party struggles to place him/herself in the socially stronger position of victim and the other in the socially weaker position of the

perpetrator, as the position of victim will help to legitimize any subsequent act of aggression or ill will[2]. They may variables derived from <u>contextual</u> phenomena–supra- or extra-relational factors, be they "acts of God" such as a drought in the region, or the economic collapse of a potential ally (or, in a couple in conflict, a disease in one of their children)[3]. Reciprocal-causal as the process of reconciliation may be, a variety of <u>culture-informed</u> roles and routines that may contribute to it, including variations about expected responses to victimization and styles of reciprocation or retaliation.[4] And there are variables contingent upon the <u>internal vicissitudes </u>of one of the parties, if not both, such as the need of a given government to galvanize the public opinion in order to distract the population from internal foibles—an example being the out-of-the-blue engineering of the ill-fated 1982 Falkland Wars by the Military Junta in power in Argentina while their hold of power waned as that country's economy became chaotic. In fact, as a rule, internal political pressures deriving from collective socioeconomic suffering may make renewed conflict a preferable solution than a lingering truce for embattled government wanting to retain power.

Thirdly, these processes occur simultaneously at <u>multiple levels</u>. This has two meanings. On the one hand, each stage is characterized by dominant themes or rhetoric that in turn churns and is supported by collective emotions, which in turn energize and provide sense to some actions, which in turn, recursively, reconstitute and sustain those stories. On the other hand, social processes take place at multiple levels of activity, and possible acts of collaboration –or of hostility, for the matter—can occur at different pace in each of these different social/relational levels. The complex nature of human and political systems assures that there will be some specific areas or sectors in which change, evolution and progress is more viable than in others, with more or less opportunities for shifts from adversarial to collaborative activities. For instance,

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[2] For instance, the unfairness of the Treaty of Versailles was used to justify the acts of aggression of Nazi Germany, defined by Hitler's regime as vindications of those iniquities.

[3] As conflict scenarios range from the interpersonal to the intercontinental, from relations between individual people to relations between blocks of nations, examples are provided that sometimes refer to couples, such as a marriage in the rocks, and sometimes to socio-economic and ethno-political entities, such as disputes within countries, or countries in dispute.

[4] As an example, "forgiveness" (as it appears more frequently within the Christian tradition) is a process centered in the victim—and it is totally his/her prerogative to grant it, regardless of whether it is requested by the perpetrator or not-- while "atonement" (that may be more dominant in the Jewish and Muslim tradition) is a process centered in the perpetrator-- regardless of whether the victim requests it or not.

neighboring countries in a reciprocal relation of armed truce may be able to develop some minimal cooperation in the agricultural activities but not in an industrial sector (and a couple involved in a conflict may be able to share a civilized conversation during dinner but not to engage in a tender sexual encounter…or vice-versa).

From confrontation to integration: a sequence of stages

A fourth, perhaps less discussed if not recognized variable, is that the process from open conflict to constructive collaboration, rather than constituting a binary process or even a smooth continuum, is characterized by a probabilistic sequence of discrete intermediary stepping stones, stages or stations, that is, is <u>normative</u>, and it takes place one step at the time in a predictable order or sequence, that is, it is "<u>path dependent</u>" (ref?). Each of those stages corresponds to a specific period of a given relationship in progress, and has traits of its own, allowing fro the evaluation of the progress in the process of change. It should also be highlighted that several of what in an evolutionary sequence may be defined as intermediary steps may become, however, desirable goal within a process, and even the end of the line.

The process can be described as evolutional, in the sense that specific steps can be assumed to occur following a pre-determined order –useful information to guide these processes, to allow for recommendation of actions that would have maximal probability of success, and to reduce the frustration, when the best intentions are met with the slow reality of an evolving process.

When analyzing the vicissitudes of this pathway, the transition between any two of these steps appears sometimes seamless and sometimes agonizingly complex. A poignant example of this assertion can be found in the detailed insider's account of the Irish "Good Friday Agreement" that George Mitchell contributed to forge (Mitchell, 1999)

Each stage consolidates –or characterizes—a specific period in the process toward coexistence, and therefore gauges the progress in the process. It should be also highlighted that what in the evolutionary sequence may appear as intermediary steps constitute a qualitative move forward or backward within a process, and even an acceptable end in itself.

The <u>specific</u> traits that may characterize each step or configuration are, of course, contingent upon the nature of the relationship being considered (are we referring to a marital couple in conflict, a management-labor dispute, and inter-ethnic escalation, two countries at war?). They are also contingent upon the nature of the conflict (is it

about reciprocal responsibilities, about control of a territory, about saving face, about finances?), as well as upon countless variables of context—be they cultural or circumstantial, as discussed above.

This presentation aims at specifying the <u>sequence of discrete steps or stances</u> that characterize the pathway from one extreme, open conflict, to the other extreme, full integration, and to explore some of the most salient traits of each of these stages. What is proposed here as a lens is an evolutionary model that, because of its sequential nature, may provide a viable framework for the design of Interventions and evaluation processes. It may also provide a frame to understand failures in processes toward a fruitful, constructive coexistence: bypassing some of these steps in the planning and implementation of peace and reconciliation processes may decrease the probability of their success[5].

Not surprisingly, each stage is sustained by –and in turn reconstitutes—a set of rather <u>specific dominant themes</u> for narratives or stories. They appear as dominant presentation of the news by the media, as discourses by the political leaders, and as everyday life conversation in the street and at home. Narratives may present with a variety of specific contents, but they tend to be variations of specific meta-narratives or themes. As stages are described below, dominant themes will be specified.

In turn, each stage resonates with –and in turn is supported by—a <u>specific set of emotions</u> experienced by the actors –be they politicians, leaders, or the common person--and expressed or permeated through their actions. In turn, those actions reconstitute –remind, represent-- those emotions and therefore anchor them. In fact, if the process remains unchanged, dominant emotions may show shifts within their own range. Such is the case of a transformation of "hot emotion" such as anger, fear, rage and humiliation, into a more uncomfortable "cold emotion" such as unforgiveness (Worthington, 1998) –that only pushes the process "backwards", toward confrontation.

What follow is the sequence of stages being discussed:

I. **Confrontation**: This stage entails an active involvement in hostilities intending to damage the other party's life, livelihood or well being. Each party assumes and attributes ill intent to any act of the other. The basic tenets to establish or maintain a

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[5] As with any other model, the one proposed here has the merit of organizing complexity while courting the risk of oversimplifying it.

dialogue are broken, and communication is sometimes tentatively achieved only through the good offices of third, "neutral" parties. The narrative that dominates and anchors this stage –that dominate conversations within each party as well as their spokespersons or their controlled media--could be summarized in the statement "Hostility is the only option." The emotional correlates that dominate the participants are elation –the empowerment of the confrontation--, contempt –a denigrating perception of the other contendent--, and hostility. The rules of engagement in this stage are unambiguously those of a zero-sum game: "Your loss is my gain."

II. **Truce:** While the parties co-exist without open acts of violence –sometimes side by side such as two neighboring countries, or neighboring families in a lull of a violent dispute, sometimes at the distance, or couple in which the women took refuge in a shelter after an act of physical abuse by the husband--, this stage remains dominated by behaviors that denote an assumption of ill intent on any act of the other. An example of these assumptions in action could be seen during the June 2002 escalation and de-escalation phases of the alarming confrontation between India and Pakistan about the disputed Kashmir territory, during which negative interpretations and open mistrust was expressed about what could otherwise be seen as conciliatory gestures displayed by each of the two parties. The enactment of hostility is only curtailed during that stage by the presence of a real or virtual "neutral zone," strongly pressured, patrolled or controlled by a powerful independent party (such as the United States carrot-and-sticks diplomacy to curtail the 2002 risky conflagration between India and Pakistan, or the current United Nations contingents in East Timor or Kosovo, or an active physical separation or the presence of a third family member in the case of marital conflicts with potential for violence, each of them examples of peacekeeping functions (Ury, 1999). The dominant narratives in this stage are variations of the motto "We are ready for hostile acts whenever needed." The dominant emotions that sustain and, recursively, are sustained by this stage are resentment –re-sentiment characterized by repetitive rumination of past victimizations and of old and new grudges--, anger—maintained active by those ruminations and, in the appropriate scenario, by the media--, and mistrust of the other party. The "hot" emotion of anger, of feeling wronged, of humiliation, is ruminated and "cooled" in this stage into an experience of unforgiveness –an unpleasant emotion that leads to attempts at relieving it through seeking punitive justice, or through revenge. The rules of engagement between the parties still follow the principles of zero-sum games.

III. **Collaboration:** While assumptions of ill intent still loom as a background, the scenario changes when some activities in common are initiated, some co-labor such as share-cropping of neighboring boundary lands, or re-building a bridge, or re-establishing a railroad across boundary lines, or even sharing a river where women from the two parties wash clothes, each group using the opposite margin. The external regulatory presence of the third party becomes less visible, and its role may become one of witness or verifier of the process, and occasionally acting as a cybernetic governor to minimize the deviations from the parameters of a given agreement. The cautionary banner that underlies the narratives that dominate this stage reads "Hostilities are a fall-back option", and a calmer ambivalence begins to reduce the clouds of mistrust. Issues of personal restitution, aimed in part at reducing the esteem of those defined as perpetrators by public admissions of wrongdoings, asking of forgiveness in witnessed ceremonies, or more subjective beliefs in Divine justice –in which God will balance the scale—or in Karma –unremitting justice in the long run—are kept alive but in a more muted way. Some rules characteristic of non-zero sum games can begin to be noticed in the processes between the parties –, as this is a stage in which the first inklings of a civil society (re) appear.

IV. **Cooperation:** The development of some planning of activities in common (co-operation), such as designing a dam to facilitate irrigation in both territories, is accompanied by a shift of the dominant assumption toward an attribution of neutral intent on the other ("They may not be our friends, but they don't behave as our foes. While they pursue their own interest, those interests fit our own.") The presence of the external buffer is no longer necessary, and those forces are experienced as an almost inconvenient reminder of past hostilities—at this stage emergency relief agencies such as UNHCR and WFP complete their withdrawal from the field, being replaced by self-reliance. In fact, the motto underlying narratives at this stage seems to evolve toward "Hostilities would be a major disadvantage…for both of us. Peace is desirable." The relational field moves toward the enactment of non-zero sum rules of partnership and the dominant emotions appear to shift away from ambivalence toward the possibility of a cautious empathy.

V. **Interdependence**: In this stage the materialization of the common goals

overshadow the remnants of assumptions of ill intent, as the parties engage in joint planning and actions toward the collective good. The dominant narratives display a consensus that "We need each other. Hostility would be definitively foolish," and the constructive nature of the relationship is carefully maintained and signaled once and over again, in an active display of non-zero sum ritual reminders. The dominant emotions include acceptance of the past and even forgiveness for prior misdeeds, with cautious trust and open attachment.

VI. **Full integration**: In this end of the spectrum all relational moves are based on an implicit assumption of good intent attributed to any act of the other, as well as an active involvement in planning and actions toward the common good, following the characteristics of full non-zero sum processes. Furthermore, there are conflict management strategies/systems built into the relational infrastructure, so as problems arise, and they do, they are re-formulated, attributing positive intent to the other. Additionally, while maintaining differentiation, each supports the other's growth. Narratives are inspired by the banner: "We are one. We take for granted that each move is for the collective benefit." There is a full relational reconciliation. The dominant emotions are solidarity, empathy, friendly trust, humility of self and, perhaps even love. As with any of the previous shifts, achieving this stage --which occurs occasionally in interpersonal relations and much more rarely in other larger systems-- entails a second-order (qualitative) change in the relationship.

FIG. 1 ABOUT HERE

As already stated, this sequence of stages is proposed as NORMATIVE, i.e., most conflictive relations can be predicted to move through those configurations. The process can stagnate at any stage, as well as deteriorate toward more conflictive stages if not enticed in the opposite direction by circumstances, best interests, or leadership. Equally important, it is SEQUENTIAL, i.e., these stages tend not to be skipped, but one follows the other, and each contains experiences that, when consolidated, constitute the seed of the next one. However, the evolution (the "climbing") from one evolutionary stage to the next is hard; slippage is frequent and may lead to a tumbling back to a previous stage. In addition, the evolutionary reward for the active efforts toward reaching the "top" appears to be—as in any mountain climbing during the ascend-- far away. And,

what is more disheartening to many participants, a long-range view is not possible until reaching the vicinities of the final summit (cf. Figure 2).

FIG. 2 ABOUT HERE

Equilibrium and change

Each end of the proposed sequence operates as a "powerful attractor" – processes near their sphere of influence tend to be pulled in its direction. And, as stated above, while intermediary stages can acquire stability through consistent practices, they are comparatively unstable. In addition, the climb towards interdependence is time consuming and the process is frequently experienced by the parties not only as extremely slow but with a low level of immediate gratification, as happens with all long-term goals --unlike the moves toward conflict, that are potentially quicker and therefore tempting for their immediate gratification. Hence the reasonable risk of the dreaded "slippery slope" (cf. Figure 2).

At one end of the spectrum, the fumes of confrontation have an intoxicating effect ("I love the smell of napalm in the morning. It smells…of victory!"[6]). " As William Ury (1999) states, "War is contagious." In fact, in the beginning, conflict

- reaffirms the collective self ("they see us, therefore we exist")
- expands the self of the participants (generates a sense of power and righteousness)
- creates affiliation (fosters a sense of togetherness)[7]
- gives meaning to life (creates a story of optimism and protagonism)
- creates hope (open alternative future)
- fosters business (generate micro-economies, black markets, bartering, pillage, reconstruction)

However, in the long run, if persistent, it has a toxic effect ("The horror! The horror!"[8]), as chronic confrontation exhausts resources and fosters hopelessness, an

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[6] As joyfully exclaimed by a military commander in the middle of a violent carnage, in Francis Ford Coppola's 1979 film "Apocalypse Now", with screenplay by John Milius and Francis Coppola.

[7] The Fascist movement that rather violently elevated Mussolini into power in Italy in 1922 had as symbol of the party the fasces, "a bundle of rods bound around a projecting axe-head" (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. Fourth Edition, 2000).

experience that unravels the prior process. As Mitchell (1999, p.xii) observed, in reference to the Irish public opinion after years of protracted conflict, "The people long for peace. They are sick of war, weary of anxiety and fear. They still have differences, but they want to settle them through democratic dialogue."

In turn, the pole of integration has its own attraction, as it enhances:

• predictability and prospection (planning can be done with some degree of certainty as the context is stable)

• civility (the rules of interpersonal and institutional relations are guaranteed by collectively enacted behaviors and collectively agreed-upon enforcement agencies –the rule of law and of good will)

• personal and relational well-being (in contrast with the exhausting stress stemming from violence.)

It should be added, as a sad but realistic note, that one of the long term effects of a stable integration seems to be that the collective commitment to the common good, foregrounded during the crisis, moves slowly into the background, and, as it is taken for granted, individual interests override the focus on common good and risks reversing the process.

But this tendency toward consolidation within a given stage, these "powerful attractors," are not only a specific trait of the two extreme ends of the spectrum. In fact, each stage has its own inertia: once in that stage, complex processes that tend to keep the system operating within the specific thresholds can be detected (von Foerster, 1976, refers to each of the stages in the evolution of a system an *eigen* value of the system[9]). In fact, complex systems –systems in conflict included-- do not evolve linearly, but alternating sometimes long-lasting unsteady-but–stable periods with sometime abrupt qualitative changes. Stating it differently, no unstable-but-steady system remains indefinitely in any given stage: the unstable nature of any complex system –from couples to corporations to nations-- may lead in the long run to increasing (quantitative) oscillations, which at a given moment may override their established threshold. When that happens—fitting both Prigoyine and Stengers' (1984) model of "order through

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[8] Utterance murmured in despair by the burned out, doomed, suicidal colonel Kurtz, also in Francis Ford Coppola's "Apocalypse Now" , inspired by Joseph Conrad's 1899 novella "Heart of Darkness," in which a homonymous character mumbles those same words (Conrad, 1988, p.72)
[9] A very elementary example of "*eigen* value" (in French, "valeur propre"; which translates imperfectly as "own value") is offered by von Foerster in the sentence "This sentence as XX letters" , that has two eigen values, namely two possible fitting answers where content and form coalesce (v.Foerster,1976.)

fluctuation"[10] and Gladwell's (2000) notion of "tipping points"--, the whole system shifts to a new, qualitatively different level of equilibrium, around which again the system coalesces…until new oscillations will begin the potential process of destabilization. In sum, this evolutionary process of fluctuations through which, at a given moment, the whole system passes a threshold after which a new (unstable) equilibrium is reached, with new baselines, new values, new rules of the game, are established, is characteristic of all complex systems.

The value of understanding these processes from open conflict to reconciliation from a systemic perspective –and following the optic of unstable steady states—lies in the possibility of assuming that qualitative changes occur at any stage following destabilizing processes. Further, seeds of the next stage can be sown at any given stage but cannot be imposed, as complex systems inevitably will follow quantitative-qualitative dynamics of their own. At the same time, random (in the sense of unpredictable) contextual variables introduce multiple perturbations that impact the future processes / actions of the system, reducing the precision in time-tables for these evolutionary changes.

The function of the Third Party

The presence of a third party plays a central role during the first stages of the process from open conflict to integration. The presence of the Blue Casks of the UNMIK acts as deterrent from inter-ethnic violence in Kosova as much as the presence of a witnessing adult or even a child may function to deter from violence in many couples[11].

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[10] Prigoyine and Stengers (1984) described the universality of these processes, defining them as the core of all (co)evolutionary dynamics. Complex systems, they assert, pass through periods of stability within fixed parameters but they evolve toward parametric fluctuations that progressively push the system away from equilibrium until reaching a threshold or "point of bifurcation," where new baselines are set, and the cycle repeats itself, but at a different evolutionary stage.

[11] When it does not, that is, when spousal violence occurs in the presence of their children, the experience leaves strong marks in those offspring –they will experience the world as terrifying and extremely unreliable, and themselves as lacking any weight or agency. The opposite scenario in which a child becomes the main deterrent against parental violence places him or her in an equally damaging situation, that of becoming a prisoner of their own household, fearing what may happen without their buffering presence; it may also force the child to take sides between parents or to become a referee for issues beyond their maturational grasp, or even to acquiesce to extreme alternatives –accepting, for instance, an incestuous seduction that reduces open violence between the parents. Not surprisingly, the more socially isolated a family, the more the likelihood of violent behavior (Cobb, 1976; Gelles and Straus, 1998; House, 1981; Mitchell and Hodson, 1983; Thompson et al., 2000)

In many cultures –especially those where strong family interdependence if not enmeshment is the norm), the extended family tens to operate as a buffer against interpersonal violence,[12] as well as an established venue for the management of conflicts –under the watchful eye of a patriarch of an extended Latino family or of the boss of a Cosa Nostra Sicilian "family" or of a sheik of a Bedouin clan, to mention just a few.

At a different level of processes, the prime example of the failure of the international community to step up to the role of enforcing Third Party to prevent the Rwandan genocide, while the signs of its imminence were escalating[13].

Some closing comments on narratives

As pointed up above, each stage is characterized by a set of narratives or dominant themes, that is, by the stories that people tell about the situation (who are the "good guys and bad guys", the protagonists and deuteragonists, those with noble and ignoble intentions, the ultimate motivations and hidden intents of the others, et cetera). And each set of stories will reconstitute (that is, to solidify and anchor) their respective stage. Hence, the whole process toward reconciliation entails –and may even be centrally focused in-- a progressive shift of dominant narratives, from stories of victimization to stories of evolution and empowerment. This process of shifting dominant narratives (and therefore facilitating changes toward more deve   loped stages) is difficult because dominant stories get entrenched over time, anchored in (and anchoring) the individual and collective identity. That is why the passage between stages toward constructive collaboration becomes more viable when changes are simultaneously enacted and anchored by activities in multiple levels –such as the economics, education,

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[12] "The service is yours, the blood is ours.", is the ritual statement of a traditional Kosovar Muslim father when delivering a newlywed daughter into the household of her husband where she will live from then on. It signals to the receiving family that any mistreatment of the daughter will be taken as an attack on her parents' family (Sluzki and Agani, 2003)

[13] In 2004, during the tenth anniversary of that atrocity, Rwandan president Paul Kagame explicitly accused France of having relinquished that role by supporting the Hutu-dominated government and armed forces precisely during the period in which the rhetoric of the government-controlled radio was inciting the population toward carrying on that massacre (NYT, 4/8/04). In turn, the pitiful role of the international community, and, specifically, of the United Nations armed forces located in Rwanda during that period has been the subject of a dramatic description by Ltnt.Gen Romeo Dallaire, the Canadian commander of the United Nations Mission in Rwanda, who warned the UN about the pending genocide to no avail, and requested support to main world powers, to be rebuked (Dellaire, 2003)

sports, artistic domains that contribute (with unequal weight, indeed) to build a civil society

Subsequent steps in the development of this model may include to further specify the traits ("symptoms") that characterize each stage, in order to be able to identify ("diagnose") more accurately the locus of the evolutionary stalemate in different situations of malaise or conflict. For the time being, we will have to rely on intuition in order to pinpoint, with some degree of approximation, the specific stage in which a given process may be stuck.

One valuable, perhaps key, task of a mediator/facilitator/consultant consists in destabilizing and transforming the story brought forth by the parties in favor of a "better" one, and facilitating the consensual adoption of it by all the parties. An example of a desirable shift in the transformations of stories is the passage from a passive to an active stance (from people as powerless recipients of acts by others toward people as agents of change.) However –and that is the reason why it is highlighted here—this shift has the potential of becoming a double-edged sword, as the early incorporation of agency (i.e., of people as active protagonists of their own story) into a narrative previously characterized by passive victimization may push the participants toward violent revenge rather than fostering constructive collaboration [in clinical psychiatry, if the physical passivity that accompanies many depressions is neutralized with medications before the mood changes, the risk of suicide increases!]

Embedded in this discussion lies another important issue: stories live in the interpersonal space (in addition to the iconic space of symbols and rituals). Hence, the minimal unit of analysis should not be the individual but the "social network" as a key daily life interpersonal space—included but not limited to the family, affinity groups, community organizations, interest-related aggregates-- where old and new stories circulate and are reconstituted, reconfirmed and anchored, or changed. Needless to say, many highly structured networks (such as armies, political parties, religious groups) may be invested in self-sustaining narratives that may push toward conflict, and that may be difficult to challenge because of the dense and homogeneous nature of the collective.

"Narratives," it may be clear by now, are both the dominant stories and the daily practices that intertwine and support each other—both within each party in a conflict and between parties-- in the vicious cycle of conflict as well as in the virtuous cycle toward reconciliation. Hence, the difficult task of destabilizing the rather entrenched dominant stories of the parties in conflict may start by challenging and changing those practices

that both are rooted in the dominant conflict-sustaining narratives and contribute to further anchor them: the development of some <u>doing</u> in common may make possible the development of some stories of commonality as much as vice-versa. In fact, to attempt to determine a sequential order in a shift in stories and in action may be more a need of the observer than a pragmatic reality: they are two sides of the same process of mediation, where conflict-based narratives as well as daily practices are destabilized and transformed, in an effort to nudge the system in conflict toward constructive coexistence.

Hopefully, the map introduced here will provide a useful orientation for planning this complex journey.

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STAGE	NARRATIVE	EMOTION
Confrontation	"Hostility is the only option"	Contempt, hostility, elation
Truce	"We are ready for hostile acts when needed"	Resentment, anger
Collaboration	"Hostilities are a fall-back option"	Ambivalence
Cooperation	"Hostilities would be a major disadvantage."	Cautious empathy
Interdependence	"We need each other."	Acceptance of the past; cautious trust
Integration	"We are one."	Solidarity, friendly trust

Fig. 1: Stages, themes and emotions

Fig. 2: The pathway toward integration is hard to climb