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## **Uncertainty, fluidity and occupying spaces in-between: Peace education practices in an ecology of peace in Mindanao, the Philippines [accepted version]**

### **Introduction**

Peace and security have arguably become a rallying call of the early Twenty First Century. Only a year old, the new century was shocked by one of the most ambitious terrorist attacks imagined: the coordinated attacks on the World Trade Centre, the Pentagon and Washington D.C., now instantly recollected under the phrase '9/11'. Since its precarious beginnings, this century has seen successive war and increased terrorist threats, which has elevated the concept of 'security' to a strong watchword. In this context the concept of security has permeated and saturated public discourses, which are no-less evident in the fields of Development and Education. Novelli (2010), in his paper *The New Geopolitics of Educational Aid: From Cold Wars to Holy Wars?*, explores some of the implications of this shift in these fields.

However, the apparently self-evident and important notion of security is not a neutral or value-free concept. As Duffield (2001) reveals in his book *Global Governance and the New Wars* the merging of development and security in today's complex systems of global governance has redefined security to reflect an agenda for social transformation. In this context the notion of liberal peace appears to be held up as the self-evident answer to insecurity and conflict extolling state building, democracy and free markets. However, liberal peace is not without its critiques (e.g. Cooper, Turner and Pugh 2011; Goodhand and Walton 2009; MacGinty 2007; and Pugh 2004), and its main constituents are contested and problematic notions in any context, not only in conflict-affected regions. For example simplistic impositions of representational democracy can fuel divisions and lead to majoritarianism; free markets can exacerbate socio-economic inequalities; and human rights, through elevating individual rights, extol a culture of individualism and consequently suppress notions of collective rights. It is not my case that these ideas do not contain important values;

however, applying them blindly without critical engagement and sufficient attention to the nuances and complexities inherent to them can cause unintended problems. The work of discourse to rework the ideology of liberal peace into a neutral, depoliticised notion and panacea renders invisible the violence of the western political and economic interests it contains, leading to the ironic situation of “a violence that sustains our very efforts to fight violence and promote tolerance” (Žižek, 2008: 1).

Appeals for ‘security’ are usually made with a sense of dire necessity, or what Žižek might call ‘the fake sense of urgency that pervades the left-liberal humanitarian discourse on violence’ (Žižek 2008: 5). In his book *Violence*, Žižek describes a situation where the imperative to ‘do something’ diminishes our time to reflect, identifying ‘a fundamental anti-theoretical edge to these urgent injunctions’ (ibid: 6). However, by failing to reflect and to engage theoretically and critically, our efforts to address the issues portrayed to us, in this case the issues of insecurity and conflict, risk turning into self-undermining acts. For example, the portrayed urgency in which we must tackle global insecurity denies time to reflect on the complexities and interactions between the less visible forms of cultural and structural violence (Galtung 1990), which may underpin direct violence. An anti-theoretical stance denies the opportunity to reflect on how a model of liberal peace may actually undermine peace, while simultaneously doing the work of marginalising critics by accusing them of not caring because they do not share this urgency and can easily (and unfairly) be accused of doing nothing. The depoliticising tendencies of our age present ideological conceptions such as liberal peace as natural and neutral by playing on a sense of urgency and anti-theoretical sentiments to reduce politics to mere administration. However, theory is important because it helps us to understand from different perspectives, to see the nuances of the situation, and because solutions are found in how we approach something (our theory) in the first place.

In this chapter I introduce a theoretically informed practice of peace education, which takes a very broad understanding of education to include non-formal and informal activities that orientate around community organising and capacity building. This broad understanding of education makes

this approach relevant to not only educationalists, but also development practitioners engaged in community development in conflict-affected areas. In what follows I introduce a brief sketch of the theoretical approach 'peace as an event, peace as utopia' (pepu) (Horner 2013a), describing the main influences and general implications. After broadly setting the theoretical framework, the chapter turns to the context of Mindanao, the Philippines, in order to illustrate what this might mean in the field. I offer a short introduction to the context before exploring the multiple understandings of peace present in Mindanao – the ecology of peace knowledges - and the practices that appeared to strengthen peace within this ecology. The chapter will then seek to demonstrate these ideas through a case study before concluding with the impact this has for both practitioners and researchers.

### **Peace as an event, peace as utopia**

Peace as an event, peace as utopia (pepu) (Horner 2013a) was born out of a reaction to liberal peace discourse. I found myself troubled by current thinking around peace. Multiple encounters in the related literature with terminologies such as 'peace dividends' served to tie peace up in a language of economics and instrumentality. Not only was this not how I understood peace, but also these terms served to hide the role economics can play in violence, especially when broadening the concept of violence to structural violence, for example through economic inequality, increased competitiveness and individualism (in neo-liberal economics). Simultaneously, I found myself responding to the idea of peacekeeping troops, an image that at the time flashed across our television screens in increasing frequency, with very contradictory and uneasy feelings that played on the irony of the militarisation of peace. Peace also seemed to have been conflated with security and used to legitimise intervention, either as political and social reforms or, ironically, as a justification for war. A certain discourse around peace with a technocratic framing of 'the problem' had arguably consolidated itself as a strong 'regime of truth' (Foucault e.g. 1980), enacting a violence of closure that ultimately denied alternatives. In this sense, peace was betraying itself.

It was from this position that I was motivated to disturb this discourse around peace in order to think about peace differently. My attempt to rethink peace was shaped by that which disturbed me, and it was the reaction against a technocratic, instrumental and strong (legitimising) discourse that led me to seek out the opposite: an irreducible, incalculable, and weak theory of peace, which I located in my reading of Bloch (1986) and Derrida (e.g. 1992, 2006) and scholars working around their works (for Bloch: Anderson 2006; Levitas 1990, 1997; Moylan 1997;. For Derrida: Caputo 1997, 2006; Lather 2007) who both stress an undecided and uncontained future which houses an ethical space 'to come'.

Bloch is known as the political philosopher of hope, and he develops a language of hope in *The Principle of Hope* (Bloch 1986), which builds a utopia orientated in real possibility – what he refers to as concrete utopia. In his theory of concrete utopia Bloch aims to redeem the idea of utopia from the critique of mere dreaming and is 'adamant that wishful thinking or abstract utopia (which is a start) needs to become will-full thinking in reaching concrete utopia' (Levitas 2013: 6). Bloch builds his thesis of concrete utopia on the central idea the world is unfinished and in processes, and consequently her future remains undecided. The undecided future of the world, that which we can influence and change Bloch calls the realm of the *Not Yet*. The Not Yet views an unfinished world where the future is not determined, and therefore it is possible to anticipate and affect. This utopian function 'includes both the power to define fulfilment as well as the power to resist *all* efforts to contain its potentially unbound hope in any hypostatized definition' (Moylan 1997: 115, emphasis in original). *Front* is what Bloch called the place where these possibilities exist. For Bloch even if they are not realised, these possibilities are still part of reality, but at its very edge. The utopian function, therefore, is the refusal to respect the constraints of external conditions. Through Bloch's work on the Not Yet and Front, 'the utopian is defined as an excessive movement towards something better that can be found throughout life' (Anderson 2006: 692). An aspiration for a peaceful future is the stuff of utopias and peace education itself can be seen as a utopian function: to participate and affect the future.

Derrida also informs on an unfinished and undecided understanding of peace. Through Derrida's work on the differed promises of democracy and justice, peace can be seen as an event. An event is a differed promise that a signifier (word, name, symbol or image) is pointing toward, for example the word 'democracy' is a place holder for the event democracy which is to come, which is a promise we have not realised yet. As Caputo explains 'names contain events and give them a kind of temporary shelter by housing them within a relatively stable nominal unity. Events, on the other hand, are uncontainable, and they make names restless with promise and the future, with memory and past, with the result that names contain what they cannot contain' (Caputo 2006: 2).

Though Derrida does not refer to peace as an event, it conceptually resembles other events he writes about such as justice, democracy and friendship (e.g. Derrida 1992, 2006, 2005). The most paradigmatic example of the event is justice. For Derrida the law cannot contain justice as any attempt to institutionalise justice immediately betrays it. For example the destruction of private property is injustice (illegal) until it is done in the name of justice (for example as an act of revolution). Here, justice 'must conserve the law and also destroy it or suspend it enough to have to reinvent it in each case, rejustify it, at least reinvent it in the reaffirmation and the new and free confirmation of its principle' (Derrida 1992: 23). The event is therefore irreducible, it cannot be pinned down, described or captured in language. As a differed promise the space, or *différance*, between the event and its signifier cannot be closed, the word can never fully contain the event. The differential spacing allows for endless linkages for translating the meaning of the word peace while simultaneously resisting closure. By locating oneself in the *différance* a deconstructive space emerges where that which was previously considered stable and closed becomes tentative and open, offering opportunities for reconstruction.

Through the theory of *pepu* these two ideas of utopia and event are combined, although not without difficulty, as this is a messy union. Bloch understands utopia as a necessary component of Marxism, giving his theory a materialist foundation. However, as Levitas reminds us 'with no other writer is the rejection of form as a defining characteristic of utopia as consistent and explicit as it is

Lindsey K. Horner. *Uncertainty, fluidity and occupying spaces in-between: Peace education practices in an ecology of peace in Mindanao, the Philippines*

with Bloch' (1990: 100). It is this undecideness that I choose to dwell on, taking a poststructural reading of Bloch, aware that he (and others) may not agree with it.

By combining these two approaches and applying them to thinking about peace, peace is approached as an on-going process which presents an ethical imperative to engage in the here and now. This requires understanding peace as it is experienced in the world. In this sense peace has meaning in a contextualised space of production, striving for new translations while resisting the totalised thinking that closes off its future (see Horner 2013a for a more nuanced explanation).

### **Being orientated by pepu**

By starting from the theoretical perspective of pepu, we are immediately confronted with two important considerations when approaching peace. The first is the acknowledgement and appreciation that peace is multiple, fluid and irreducible, which leads to the related consideration of how peace is understood in context. Without a universal or fixed concept of peace to import into an 'insecure' or conflict affected area, an approach to peace building informed by the theoretical orientation of pepu requires first understanding how peace is understood in context. Furthermore, because of its fluidity and irreducibility these understandings will be inevitably incomplete and partial. De Sousa Santos's term 'an ecology of knowledges' (De Sousa Santos 2004) is helpful here, as it depicts multiplicity and non-destructive relationships. Contrasted to a monoculture of a concrete definitive idea of peace that creates absences, it points to a complex eco-system. The ecology metaphor can be expanded further by Deleuze and Guattari's plateaus (Deleuze and Guattari 2004), which are patterns of multiplicities connected to other multiplicities in a way as to create or extend a rhizome - ecosystems where roots and shoots connect nodes horizontally, connecting a networked system with no hierarchy, beginning or end. By thinking of multiple understandings of peace as patterns of multiplicities, collectively referred to as plateaus, the multiple and simultaneous connections between them that create and extend the rhizome are emphasised instead of the arbitrary divisions imposed on them.

The second important consideration when engaging with peace from the perspective of *pepu* is to consider how ecologies of peace are evident in different contexts in a way that ushers in the differed promise of the event peace and simultaneously resist totalised thinking. This reverses a model from 'expert practitioner with a tool box approach of pre-developed formulas' to one that requires an organic engagement with the peace already evident in that context. This reversal works to facilitate the endless linkages between the signifier and its event, and between signifier and signifier, for translating the meanings of peace (for a fuller explanation of how this informs peace education as a work of translation see Horner 2013a). This approach forefronts an on-going process that never ends, and refuses to objectivise peace and re-enact the violence of closure the event peace tries to resist.

### **The Mindanao context**

Mindanao is the second largest island of the Philippine archipelago, and as well as being known for its rich resources and beautiful nature it is also notorious for the on-going conflict between Muslim autonomous armed groups (AAGs) and the predominantly Christian Government of the Philippines. A complex history informs current religious tensions on Mindanao, arguably dating back to Spanish Colonial ambitions. Muslim traders and missionaries settled in what today we consider the southern Philippines in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and by the early 16<sup>th</sup> century Islamic influence had spread peacefully through the islands (through trade and marriage) as far north as south Luzon (Yager 2002). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Spanish colonised Luzon and the Visayas, however Mindanao arguably repelled their conquest, and they never succeeded in controlling Mindanao completely (Shiavo-Campo and Judd 2005). This did not stop Spain from pressing on with their ambition to expand their territory, enlisting Filipinos who had converted to Christianity to fight the Muslims of Mindanao, which arguably engendered the root of suspicion and separatism between them prevalent in today's hostilities (Yegar 2002). Spain went on to cede the Philippines to the US in 1898 and also ceded Mindanao, despite challenges over if it was Spanish territory. In 1946 when the republic of the



Philippines attained independence, once again Mindanao was implicated despite resistance from the Muslim population. The 'Philip' pines - the Spanish colony unified under King Philip II of Spain – arguably never included Mindanao, however, the twentieth century concept of the Philippine Nation consisted of the whole archipelago. Today, the Muslim population are perceived as waging a war of secession against the Philippines. This perspective is informed by the notion of a whole archipelago that is ethnically, historically and geographically unified under the Philippine nation. This belief has been strengthened by the subsequent migration of Christians to Mindanao in the 1960s, under a land-titling system that allowed land not titled to be awarded to an applicant. The influx of Christians to Mindanao not only saw Muslims become a minority in the Island, bringing it more culturally in-line with the administration based in Manila and creating the impression that it is therefore naturally part of the Philippines. Also the Christian occupation of (previously untitled) land permanently or seasonally occupied by the indigenous or Muslim peoples of Mindanao exacerbated suspicion between Muslims (and indigenous peoples) and Christians.

My field work to Mindanao took place in 2009 when hostilities between Muslim factions and the Armed Forces of the Philippines maintained a protracted low-level armed conflict, which was prone to flare up intermittently<sup>1</sup>. During this time, I conducted ethnographic research in three areas of Mindanao (two conflict affected areas and one relatively 'peaceful' area). I worked with ethnic Muslim communities to better understand the ecology of peace in their contexts and practices that nourished this ecology through facilitating translation and evoking peace 'to come'.

My research took the form of a multi-sited ethnography in three ethnic Muslim communities in Mindanao and a Christian NGO who also facilitated access to the communities. Concerning the ethnic Muslim communities I regularly visited two of the communities and lived in one community for some time. I also lived with members of the Christian NGO at various times and locations and joined in with their meetings and activities as appropriate. I was in the field for a total of three

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing this chapter a peace pact is in place, which has seen the cessation of armed conflict between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Philippine Armed Forces.

months. The communities were small and my main points of contact were small teams that partnered with the Christian NGO, who introduced me to the wider community members including men and women, local government leaders, local community leaders, youth and (former and current) 'activists'. In total I collected data from a sample of 81 community-based participants across three sites, although the data was not evenly spread between each individual, with the small teams that hosted me making up a core group and providing a significant proportion of the data. The Christian NGO was also a small operation; at the time of conducting my fieldwork it had 11 members.

This research does not claim to be representative or systematic. Instead, the methodology aims to be true to the theoretical frame, and consequently is more concerned with evoking and translating peace. In recognition of the fluid and promissory nature of *pepu* it therefore prioritised the poetic: 'a style and a tone, as well as a grammar and a vocabulary, all of which, collectively, like a great army on the move, is aimed at gaining some ground and making a point' (Caputo 2006: 104). Furthermore its notion of ethnography is informed by Clifford's 'True Fictions' (1986), which while not opposed to truth simultaneously recognises how truth is fashioned, or made. The theoretical frame was also reflected in understandings of validity, which considered Lather's work on a Transgressive Validity (1993). Validity was considered as a Lyotardian Paralogy which 'fosters differences and heterogeneity' (ibid: 685-686) so that fractures and fissures in a text are expected when dealing with the irreducible, and therefore paradox and dissenses testify to the deliteralized event peace and validate the research. Derridean rigour/rhizomatic validity which "unsettles from within" in order to generate 'new locally determined norms of understanding' (ibid) was also applied.

## **An ecology of peace in Mindanao**

My research revealed an ecology of peace in Mindanao, with interconnected plateaus that extend to create a rhizome of peace and an understanding of peace that resonated with the theory of peace

developed as pepu. I would like to be clear that I am not claiming that pepu is my participants' understanding, only that there is resonance.

### **A Rhizome of peace**

Understandings of peace emerged that formed patterns of multiplicities with multiple and simultaneous connections to each other that revealed leaky and porous boundaries to create an ecology of peace. These patterns of multiplicities, or plateaus, that I encountered around peace were: religion, governance, livelihood, and security.

A significant number of participants reported that the authentic practice of religion was an important component of peace. It was common for participants to offer peace as the literal meaning of Islam. Livelihoods were also considered an important element of peace, and linked to this was education, development projects and land-reform. Education was considered important and formal schooling valued as both a gateway to employment in the formal economy and of the production of values. However this was held in tension with criticism of the omission of Muslim culture in formal schooling and its limitations for ethnic Muslim children if they were barred from work in the formal economy because of discrimination. Regarding development projects that sought to address livelihood issues participants reported that they were often linked to religion (Christianity), and related to peace the access to livelihoods that not only refrained from what was perceived as cultural imposition, but worked to reinforce and develop their own culture, values and identity. Farming was considered another form of livelihood, and many participants from rural communities described peaceful utopias where currently unplanted land was farmed and productive through land-reform. Physical security was considered in terms not just of the armed conflict, but also in terms of law and order, with variations depending on how close different communities/participants were to the armed conflict. Regarding governance, many participants attributed good governance to fairness; the equal distribution of resources, including education; and being free from corruption –

this was associated with perceived Islamic values which reacted against their experiences of a secular/Christian government, where they felt they experienced discrimination and corruption.

### Resonance with pepu

It is important to stress at this point, again, that while in what follows I discuss some of the characteristics of pepu in Mindanao this is my own reading of the situation, and pepu was not the language or conceptual frame of my participants. However, it is my argument that there is a resonance and synergy between their understanding and pepu, and it is this resonance that I wish to bring to the fore.

For many of my participants peace had a positive character. For example if violence came in the form of poverty, peace was not simply an absence of poverty, but took on a positive character as livelihood. In the case of war, the absence of war was rarely considered peace, but instead participants described a richness of life which would no longer be obstructed by war. In this sense peace is something, not merely an absence of violence – it has positive attributes. Not only is this understanding of peace one that goes beyond physical security, but also that peace cannot be reduced to one single and simple outcome, the cessation of war. One participant described this as ‘big peace’ and ‘small peace.’ On the one hand big peace is ambitious and not limited by current restrictions, resonating with a utopian ‘Not Yet’ that also rejects the constraints of the present. On the other hand, small peace occurs when hope is diminished and peace becomes equated with not being evacuated, not starving. This understanding resonates with Galtung’s concept of positive and negative peace, where positive peace is marked by a positive content such as relationships and cultural and economic development, contrasting a negative peace which describes simply the absence of direct violence (Galtung 1996).

Also, it is a mistake to assume that because there is armed conflict there is therefore no peace in Mindanao. Participants shared many stories about their experiences of peace, revealing the presence of an ecology of peace. I was given examples of peace from within the communities I

visited, for example a community run livelihood project or an inner religious peace. While participants talked about experiences of peace amongst violence they did not seem to consider there to be any contradiction that needed to be resolved or that one should not cancel out the other. There is violence, an absence of peace, yet peace is found in the hope of something that has no substance, experienced fleetingly as it resists their grasp. Peace is possible, but as an experience of the impossible (irreducible).

Finally, I encountered an idea of peace as being in process. The Maguindanaon (the language spoken by one of the communities) word for peace is Kalilintad and means peace (lintad) and ka (to make). Participants explained it to me as a continual process, and this chimes with Bloch's world in continual process and Derrida's continual process of deconstruction and reconstruction.

### **Engaging with pepu in Mindanao**

Within this ecology of peace, the Christian non-governmental organisation (NGO) Malikha Bridge (pseudonym) works with Muslim communities on community development projects that contribute to peace building. Through networking, this NGO appears to be engaging with peace in a unique way which facilitates the exceptional partnership between Muslims and Christians (Horner 2013b). As the word bridge in their name suggests, Malikha Bridge acts as a connection between Christian resources and Muslim communities, placing the productivity of the resources, including their values, directly into the hands of Muslim communities (see Horner 2013b for a more nuanced description).

Before providing an example of a peace-oriented (educational) community project, I briefly describe the practices I encountered during my ethnographic fieldwork. Again, these are written up as plateaus, and the distinctions imposed on them for the pedagogical expediency of sharing them here do not reflect their interrelated nature. Furthermore, not only do these plateaus on practice inform and speak to each other, they also combine with the peace rhizome, as they are informed by it. For example, in their approach to networking it is possible to see how their practice has been

shaped to attempt to protect against a tradition of cultural imposition and preserve difference, a theme recurrent in the exploration of ecologies of peace.

Networking is the name I have attributed to this practice, however at the time of my field work my participants called it 'Insider Movement'. The reason I have avoided the term Insider Movement is because it already has an established meaning in Christian Missionary discourses. I contend that through the particular approaches to networking employed by Malikha Bridge that it would be erroneous to assume that this practice is the same thing.

Networking works by Malikha Bridge partnering with a group of volunteers or 'insiders' from within a Muslim community to create a movement. This group of volunteers use Malikha Bridge to connect them to resources from Malikha Bridge's network of Christian donors, who provide the resources to the volunteers, who in turn are responsible for their productivity. The production of outcomes from the resources consists of more than just the material resources, but includes the production of values, identity and capacity (see Horner 2013b for further reading).

It is not the networking alone which gives this practice the qualities that provide the potential for evoking a differed promise of peace, that affords an on-going process that never ends, one which refuses to objectivise peace and re-enact the violence of closure peace tries to resist. Of importance for this discussion is the approach that Malikha Bridge take to networking which transforms it from a type of 'Insider Movement' or bridging social capital into something new with the potential to usher in the 'to come' and to create a peaceful Not Yet. These approaches are the plateaus of uncertainty, in-between, and fluidity.

### **The plateau of uncertainty:**

This may seem an odd way to describe the practice of a Christian NGO. To identify as missionaries is not without its issues, especially in the context of a long running conflict couched in a language of religion and where the spread of Christianity is linked with colonialism and neo-colonialism.

However, it is also worth recognising that as well as challenges this does bring opportunities given

the importance of religion in the ecology of peace. The problems associated with a missionary organisation can be overcome by an uncertain approach to faith. Malikha Bridge appears to possess a very uncertain faith and see faith as intrinsically uncertain. For some of the group this is evident in their bookshelves which contain books on post-modern theology (e.g. Rollins 2006 who writes 'far from abolishing the possibility of faith, the critique of ideology in philosophy and the condemnation of idolatry in scripture only undermine a fundamentalist Christianity that would require religious certainty and lay claim to a correct interpretation of God' (Rollins 200: 16)), for others rather than an academic or conceptual knowledge there is a more emotional or experiential foundation to their uncertainty. The uncertainty inevitably varies across the group with some more certain than others. If you are certain of something then no faith is required, but faith comes from acting out of a belief you are unsure of. Religion, or more specifically its related concept of faith, therefore more appropriately occupies the space of doubt, and science has now replaced it as the temple of certainty and empiricism, as Gray reminds us 'science alone has the power to silence heretic... For us science is a refuge from uncertainties, promising – and sometimes delivering – the miracle of freedom from thought, while churches have become sanctuaries for doubt' (Gray 2002: 19). A faith as uncertainty enables an opening and this enables the movement of peace, where certainty would impose a violence of closure.

### **The plateau in-between**

The above acknowledgement that faith can be a space of uncertainty does not, unfortunately, lead automatically to all religions celebrating doubt, as a certain type of strong religion can commit a violence of closure. Mindanao hosts many missionary organisations and even supposedly secular government offices and projects can be saturated in Christian language and assumptions. Malikha Bridge, as missionaries, occupy this space while simultaneously being trusted and welcomed into Muslim communities whole-heartedly. This is not an easy thing to do. With a faith as uncertainty Malikha Bridge are dependent on a network of churches not only to fund the projects, but also to

support their very sustenance as missionaries. In my (by no means expert or comprehensive) personal experience churches that support missionaries tend to be conservative while theologically liberal churches are 'missionary averse' and tend to raise money for Christian Aid or Amnesty International instead (see Horner 2014 for furthering reading on my experiences). And yet Malikha Bridge are able to occupy a space at the margins of the missionary world, which they are both inside and outside of, and may be quietly and slowly subverting and deconstructing its strong truth and violent closure from within, challenging stereo-types and creating opportunities for cross-over between Muslims and Christians.

### **The plateau fluidity**

Malikha Bridge employs a chaotic and conversational approach and their work retains the flux and aspiration in the event peace. Their state of flux and propensity to constantly be deconstructing and reconstructing can be glimpsed in their reworking of the Insider Movement model in a new way – one aimed to place the productivity of values into the Muslim community's hand rather than to convert. This fluidity can also be seen in an approach that responds to events and conversation with the communities, which means they do not set long-term five year goals, but short term projects which then enable them to change course and respond to the situation in the moment.

All of these plateaus explore practices that relate to and make allowances for pepu. They make allowances for diversity through networking and mediating between contrasting groups; value the contextual through partnership; open-up the future to the Not Yet and a peace 'to come' through challenging the violence of closure enacted through certainty with uncertainty, and retain space for aspiration through fluid and organic dialogue and occupying the margins.



## Community organising as peace education

These plateaus of practice/approach unite in a community organising case study that I have identified as a type of peace education. Malikha Bridge facilitated many community projects and partnerships including: medical 'missions', cultural activities, the construction of a public toilet block, and a clean water project. All of these activities (networked, uncertain, in-between, and fluid) are forms peace education because 1) they address issues that are implicated in the ecology of peace and therefore relate to peace, and 2) they include an educational component when education is broadly understood as something more than schooling: because Malikha Bridge are organised through the co-operation between Muslims and Christians, they both create and facilitate the learning of new knowledges and values about what these identities mean, and include a strong capacity building focus.

One such example is the pre-school project. I cite this example because it is the most popular project within the different communities where Malikha Bridge works, and while each community has interpreted their need and execution of the project differently, it has been the most widely applied community organising project. In this discussion, I will specifically focus on one pre-school in a Muslim community in west Mindanao, in which I have most experience, rather than try to generalise across the communities.

The local Muslim community identified pre-school education as a 'felt need' as they perceived that their children were at a disadvantage when starting school. From this the team of local volunteers developed a proposal for the construction of a pre-school and approached Malikha Bridge for support. Malikha Bridge helped the volunteers access the building materials they needed to build the pre-school through their network of churches, and were also able to provide worker expertise and offer some basic teacher education to the volunteers who would be responsible for running the pre-school once it was built. Using a Freirean approach to teacher training, informed by the notion of *conscientization* (Freire 1972) which aims to raise the critical consciousness of learners to actively learn about their own conditions, the training did not simply deliver teaching

approaches and educational tool kits, but explored the organising values of the pre-school and the volunteers. Through this dialogue other 'felt needs' were revealed, and it became clear that not only was a pre-school needed to facilitate equal access to schooling, but that it could address other issues such as the acknowledgement and respect of Muslim values. I witnessed the end of year pre-school 'recognition' - a celebration to mark the completion of pre-school - which provided a highlight in the community calendar, with local dignitaries and councillors attending and offering speeches, refreshments, and cultural entertainment. A local Muslim leader was moved to tears in his speech, reflecting on the traditional Maguindanaon dress worn by the students, the traditional Muslim dance the school children had learnt, and the Muslim songs and prayers that accompanied the recognition ceremony. This community leader thanked the volunteers for restoring their Muslim culture in the community.

In this example the pre-school addresses many parts of the ecology of peace in Mindanao. It acknowledges and respects the ethnic and religious culture of Muslims, it attempts to tackle inequality by providing access to pre-school education when there was none before, and it speaks to the plateau of livelihood because it assists in access to formal education, the gateway to employment in the formal economy. However, through the way the pre-school has been set-up and run it does much more than this. Since livelihood is more than just shelter and transaction, and includes relationships, personal significance and group identity (e.g. Wallam 1984), the pre-school has played an important role sustaining and nourishing the values and identities of the volunteers and wider community. In this case, Christians have surrendered their resources with 'no strings', trusting the Muslim volunteers to produce what they will with it (including values) some power imbalances have been redressed. Through on-going and continual teacher education, the capacity of the volunteers is developed. And, most remarkably in a context grounded in deep suspicion between Christians and Muslims, the Christian NGO Malikha Bridge and her network of donors have partnered with Muslim volunteers and the community they serve and, through doing so in an

uncertain way, have opened themselves up to learning about the other, and maybe learning about themselves from the other.

### **Implication for practitioners and researchers (conclusion)**

To conclude, pepu changes the way we approach peace in the first place, in many more ways than this chapter has outlined, and in many more ways than I have imagined or conceived. I would like to conclude with some initial thoughts about what my exploration has revealed this might mean for both practitioners and researchers.

Approaching peace from the theoretical frame of pepu creates an ethical and political obligation to act. The irreducibility of peace does not provide an alibi for inaction but instead it provides a place to play. While I have stressed the uncertain nature of peace throughout (and advocated for uncertainty as a practice of peace education) I have also stressed the utopian function to anticipate and affect the future.

The imperative to engage with peace in the here and now requires understanding peace as we experience it in the world. In this sense peace has meaning in a contextualised space of production. This opens up new understandings and avenues of researching and facilitating peace's being and becoming. Research can explore the different ecologies of peace in different contexts and the practices which can enable the becoming of peace, in order to help develop theoretically informed practice to support practitioners in the field. For peace educators this means learning the practices of peace already in existence, rather than coming in as expert with a tool box approach of pre-developed formulas. It requires learning about the knowledge and practices of peace that already exist through a conversational approach and strengthening them and moving them forward by facilitating translation.

There are also implications for how we as researchers contribute to knowledge and understandings around peace so that, in academia's current tendency to feel the need to put forward a strong case complete with argument, counter argument and irrefutable evidence, we do

Lindsey K. Horner. Uncertainty, fluidity and occupying spaces in-between: Peace education practices in an ecology of peace in Mindanao, the Philippines

not objectivise peace and re-enact the violence of closure pepu resists. Considering methodologies which do not objectivise peace, such as through using a poetic discourse (Caputo 2006) and arts based data (Springgay et al 2005), may help move the field in possible directions.

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