Inventing the Future: Reciprocal Maieutic Approach for Conflict Transformation

Edited by Ana Afonso and Vito La Fata

A practical manual for youth workers and project coordinators
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The realisation of this manual is possible thanks to the work of a lot of people during the last two years. All the partners, including the project coordinators, youth workers and youth participants, gave different and helpful contributions to make possible the publication of this manual that we hope will be useful to many people. We are grateful to the people who were involved directly in developing the contents and composing the manual pages and graphics. Finally, we thank the European Commission for the financial support and the technical and human support given by its kind collaborators.

The book can be useful to youth workers and youth leaders, coordinators of organisations that want to present a project and to youth looking for inspiration for their own future and life.

If you have doubts about any of the parts or contents of this manual please contact Ana Afonso (e-mail ana.afonso@danilodolci.it)

The project coordinator
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In modern societies there is a great of people and groups—people of different religions, beliefs, ideologies, ethnics, cultures, backgrounds, live together, however sometimes in a violent way. Factors such as wide migration fluxes from south to north have contributed to the development of urban spaces that resemble a multicoloured and multitextured mosaic.

Today’s young people grow up in a different context from their parents and grandparents. They have the possibility to co-exist with diversity at various levels and to learn from that “mosaic”. However this does not happen as easily as we would like because diversity is not an easy reality to live with, yet it is something that can be learnt. However there are too few possibilities for young people to develop their intercultural skills.

We have daily examples in the media of situations that explode into violent conflict as a result of cultural, religious or ethnic conflicts. These situations can hide people’s difficulty to deal with the cultural, ethnic and religious differences, the divergence of interests between two parts, the desire for political and economical power, as well as other motivations. Of course no conflict has only one clear cause. This idea will be a guide during the development of this project.

We do not want to simplify reality but to make young people aware of all factors that influence and create conflict and violent conflict resolution, as well as about the transforming nonviolent strategies. This is the only way to achieve our aims and to develop sustainable strategies to deal with conflict in the communities to which participants belong.
Inventing the Future is an international project that involved 60 youths and 20 youth workers from six different countries in Europe, Eastern Europe and the Middle East: Italy, France, Bulgaria, Moldova, Palestine and Israel. The project was co-funded by the YOUTH Programme, action 5 - Support measures, Call for proposals DG EAC 62/05 Innovative Co-operation, Training and Information Projects.

The main idea of the project is to perform activities concerning nonviolent conflict transformation strategies in conflictual multicultural, multiethnic and multi-faith contexts through the use of the reciprocal maieutic approach (RMA) and with a target of young people from conflicting areas.

All partners identified the main conflict in their local community and recruited a group of 10 youths coming from the conflicting parts.

The programme of activities was common to all partners and a coordinator and 2 youth workers in each country facilitated the implementation of the programme and guided the youth group. This programme was thought of and designed in the framework of reciprocal RMA, non-formal education and international mobility and it happened at two levels, local and international. The activities have been developed in a way that permitted the creation and building of the youth group in the first phase, then the development of local activities with the group and contact with the local community, an encounter between all the youth groups and the development of valorisation activities in the community with
The **main aims** of the project were

1. To promote RMA as an innovative strategy/practice that can be used in a youth context;
2. To promote positive change in the life of young people and communities where conflict emerges (through the use of RMA);
3. To foster the active youth citizenship and reinforce the role of young people in the process of change in society;
4. To raise awareness about the individual role of each person, and specially young people, in the creation and maintenance of a culture of respect and peace;
5. To contribute to the creation in youth (and their communities) of an attitude of respect and peace towards difference.

The **specific objectives** were:

1. To reflect on the root causes and effects of multicultural, multiethnic and multi-faith conflicts;
2. To learn how to analyse conflicts and to develop strategies (mainly RMA but also other practices) to deal with them;
3. To help young people to develop the skills and competences to deal in non-violent ways with conflict situations in their multicultural, multiethnic and multi-faith contexts and in general;
4. To explore and activate the knowledge and resources present in youth participants;
5. To stimulate mutual exchange of experience and good practice in nonviolent conflict transformation and the promotion of a culture of respect and diversity between partners;
6. To help young participants to develop a life project and to foster their personal growth;
7. To create and consolidate strong partnerships between partner organisations;
8. To develop new projects with the Youth in Action Programme.
Inventing the Future: Reciprocal Maieutic Approach for Conflict Transformation
CESIE – Centre of European Studies and Initiatives – is a non-profit, secular and independent European non-governmental organisation. It was founded in 2001, inspired by the social, cultural and political work of Danilo Dolci. The organisation works towards the promotion of cultural, educational, scientific and economic development at both local and international levels through the employment of innovative and participative tools and methodologies.

Aims:
• Promote intercultural development
• Apply reciprocal communication methods in order to consolidate peace and democracy
• Abolish all forms of discrimination thus favouring social inclusion and equal opportunities
• Promote a responsible global awareness through the application of human rights
• Develop social, cultural, economic and scientific relationships at local and international levels
• Facilitate the growth of people and organisations, with particular attention to youth, through bottom-up approaches

At the local level, CES.I.E works in the disadvantaged historical centre of Palermo. At an international level, CES.I.E cooperates with countries around the world, especially the European and Mediterranean countries. Activities include: mobility, maieutic workshops, events, seminars and training courses relating to interculturality, youth exchanges, European Voluntary Service (SVE), etc.
Centre for the Creative Development “Danilo Dolci”
Palermo, Italy

Centre for Creative Development “Danilo Dolci” is a non-profit organisation composed by youth and adults. Our main field of interest is education. Nowadays the main aims of the organisation are:

- Disseminate the life and work of Danilo Dolci;
- Promote education to children, youth and adults through the reciprocal maieutic approach;
- Promote the reciprocal maieutic approach in the school context and at international level;
- Educate for peace and nonviolence;
- Educate to group work as a tool for cultural, social and civic promotion;
- Promote active citizenship and participative democracy between youth people;
- Promote the grass root participation of all in the development.

Our main activities are: organise maieutic workshops in schools, universities, organisations and institutions; organise cultural and educational activities that promote the life and work of Danilo Dolci; re-publish the books of Dolci; organise European projects about the themes of nonviolence, peace, active participation and reciprocal maieutic; organise European projects in the sphere of adult education using as privileged method the reciprocal maieutic approach.

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Regional Development Center “STABILITY” began its activity in UTA Gagauzya in 2006. The mission of the Regional Development Center “STABILITY” is promotion of democratic principles and development of civil society by means of active involvement of the population of the region in social life.

Our main goals are:

- Involvement of citizens into political life, in particular in decision-making process;
- Protection of the democratic principles and human rights;
- Creation of partnership network within civil society at the community level for assessment of local resources, common goals and possibilities of their efficient achievement;
- Development of innovative ways to solve/minimize social problems;
- Supporting the transparency in lawmaking and executing processes;
- Raising public awareness about important problems of the society;
- Development and support of tolerant attitude among interethnic and intercultural groups;
- Prevention and combating corruption;
- Promotion and maintenance of gender balance.

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Pistes-solidaires is a non-profit organization founded in 2002. Its main aims are to promote the sustainable development and its application as well as to foster citizenship participation in the European area. Pistes-solidaires campaigns for recognized human rights. For Pistes-solidaires, every person should benefit from all the human rights enshrined in the “Universal Declaration of human rights” and other human rights standards as the “Agenda 21” (the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the Statement of principles for the Sustainable Management of Forests were adopted by more than 178 Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992).

We work in the non-formal education’s field that advocates knowledge spreading to the majority of people. The purpose is to encourage the permanent development of people and to improve their skills at every step of their life. In reality, that non-formal education enables people to live together comfortably in fairness. Pistes-solidaires strives to make people aware of values such as fair development, social, cultural and economical respect.
The Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center began operation in March of 1995. Known as "Wi'am", which in Arabic means ("cordial relationships") the Center helps to resolve disputes within the Palestinian community by complementing the traditional Arab form of mediation, called Sulha, with Western models of conflict resolution. It aims to improve the quality of relationships and promote peace and reconciliation in the community. It strives alongside other forces present in the community to build a society based on democratic norms and values.

Wi'am provides individual families, groups and neighborhoods with peaceful alternatives to conflict by: addressing and confronting injustices rather than avenging them; dignifying persons on both sides of the conflict; promoting meaningful and healthy relationships; promoting greater joint mobilization around the values of peace, democracy, and human rights; contributing to the reduction of violence and promulgating a culture of non-violence.
The Youth forum Ashdod-Israel is an association (NGO) established in 2004, by youth and youth workers. While working with the local sector in the national level, an additional front has been developed in the international level.

YOFI is working and aspiring to be the biggest volunteering organization in Ashdod. We think that by helping others, each and everyone of us not only help building a better society, but also helps the volunteers themselves to develop in indefinite ways. YOFI encourages especially the weaker parts of society to straighten their connection to community by volunteering in the community. This brings them to be more active and to be part of the stakeholders and those who influence their surroundings.

Our main aims are to develop educational projects about and with youth, intercultural understanding, peace and tolerance. We believe in the power of youth to change our country and world for a better place to live in. Through working in and out of the country. We believe in the power of the individuals to derive themselves and others for active citizenship and leadership in the community. We believe that by increasing the awareness for voluntary work in the community, we could create more opportunities for all sectors of society.

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Recreation and Development Union is a non-government organization, which unites representatives of NGO’s, citizens, young people and businessmen. The activities of the organization are focused mainly on uniting the efforts of the third sector, the local authorities, the citizens and business circles for improving the quality of life, democratization of public institutions and creating a more favorable environment in the region of Haskovo through:

- Training, seminars, and conferences on youth issues;
- Computer literacy courses for disadvantaged young people;
- Training and information materials, manuals and handbooks;
- Information and awareness-raising campaigns;
- Cultural events, art exhibitions, and concerts;
- Training and information materials, manuals and handbooks;
- Information and awareness-raising campaigns;
- Cultural events, art exhibitions, and concerts.

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The activities of the project were designed in such a way that permitted participants to follow a route that maximizes the impact and the positive aspect of the final results. This route includes the local and international activities whose level of complexity required involvement from participants which increased with time.

In fact, the first activities are at local level and aim mainly to create the group, to promote the understanding and knowledge about the conflict situation in the own community and to open the group to the novelty and to diversity. These workshops are followed by the international youth exchange that gives the chance to all participants to meet each other, to share the own discoveries and doubts and to develop the intercultural sensitivity and competencies. Than there are some activities aimed mainly to the intercultural exchange (such as EVS) and to the dissemination of the results (such as the draft of manifestation).

We started with the training course for peer educators. This activity focused on the acquisition of competences necessary, not only to the following phases of the project but also to the lives of these youths. This course was complemented with an international seminar about methods of conflict transformation as a way to enrich the local experience. Finally the youth had the chance to share their own knowledge and experiences with other youth through peer education activities. This was the final and most important part of the project as it permitted the achievement of important objectives, such as the valorization of the results and put into practice the new skills acquired by youth, giving them a feeling of confidence and value.

We believe this is a very strong strategy that can become an example and a good practice for other organizations and partnerships for the following reasons:

1. Uses one main method that becomes familiar to all; the reciprocal maieutic approach and that is disseminated strongly during the project.
2. Involves a group of young people activities who remain the same
throughout the lifetime of the activities.

3. Each partner chooses the conflict present in their own community as a way to create context/need related intervention.

4. Has a international dimension that permits the development of intercultural sensitivity, the acquisition of intercultural competencies and the openness to diversity (not only cultural). International activities are a motivating factor for youth participants.

5. Create the ground for the acquisition of competences that can be shared and applied.

6. Promote the discussion and reflection about important themes and issues, such as conflict/conflict transformation, violence/nonviolence, peace, interculturality, human values.

7. Has an output that was developed by the participants themselves (Draft Manifesto) and that is the base for future developments and actions, such as mainstreaming at political level about the vision of youth on violence and the ways to end it.

All these factors contribute to achieve a strong impact in the lives of youth participants and also at community level.

Some of the weak aspects of the project were:

1. Difficulty to measure the impact in the community.

2. Drop out of some elements of the group, given the long duration of the project.

3. Concern of participants in doing the peer education activities as they evaluate their own competences at a lower level.

Let's take a look now at the specific activities carried out.
Kick-off meeting – 1st international meeting and training course
This meeting took place in Palermo, Italy, the 12th - 19th of February 2007. The participants were the youth workers and the project coordinators.

The main aims of this meeting were to discuss the project, identify the weak points and possible problems that could emerge (as well as possible solutions) and redefine aspects that needed to be changed or improved, according to new developments in local communities or in the partnership (for example the availability to host trans-national activities). During this meeting all youth workers also participated in workshops about RMA and its application in conflict related issues (causes and effects, transforming conflict, consequences in youth, etc.).

Recruitment of the group of participants
This phase took place from January to March 2007 (3 months) in each partner country. Each partner used different strategies to recruit the group. We list some as we consider they can be useful for other youth centres and youth workers:
Maieutic workshops and Non-formal activities

These were the activities carried out continuously at a local level (each partner organised its own activities) from March/April 2007 till the end of the project. The maieutic workshops aimed to promote creative and positive conflict transformation within the group through the acquisition of knowledge and non violent conflict transformation skills, using the RMA. Our ambition was to choose topics that met the individual needs and suggestions of the participants without overlooking the project context. Other methodologies were also employed including learning by doing and active participation, as well as other activities such as sports, excursions, etc., with the objective of teambuilding and bonding within the group (as we saw these activities as fundamental in wiping out the prejudices and barriers that can create and maintain conflict).

SUGGESTIONS ON GOOD PRACTICE RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES

- Contact local organisations that already work with the target group and ask them to act as a link.
- Put posters and flyers in strategic places.
- Announce the possibility to participate in the newspaper or on the radio.
- Select the candidates through interviews.
- Meet youth in strategic places and talk to them about the project.
Inventing the Future: Reciprocal Maieutic Approach for Conflict Transformation
Bozza di manifesto – Draft of manifesto

A “bozza di manifesto” is a document that talks about a specific theme and that is created through the participation of different people that contribute to the topic in question. By putting together all the contributions, it is possible to create a final document that reflects the reality of all those who have participated. In the 1960’s, Danilo Dolci created in this way a fantastic document striving for participation, nonviolence and communication.

The main objective of this draft in the context of the project was to raise awareness of the need to be open and respectful of difference and to live in peace with others. This happens through two channels: the process and the product; and process refers to the specific steps that youth groups did in order to create the final product.

The main steps taken to create the final draft were:

1. Ask the all youth participants about a common subject that interested them.
2. Create 5 questions about the theme.
3. Do interviews with youth from the communities using the 5 questions.
4. Translate the opinions in English.
5. Work on the content of all interviews in order to create a final product that reflects the main ideas and concepts present on them.

Youth exchange: “Inventing the future: Youth power through nonviolent action”

The youth exchange was held in Palermo, Italy, the 13th-21st of February 2008. The participants were 1 youth worker and 10 youth per country. The main objectives were: To exchange ideas about the RMA; To share the conclusions of the maieutic workshops held in the different countries; To organise multicultural and intercultural maieutic workshops; To evaluate the impact of the maieutic workshops on conflict transformation; To discuss nonviolent methods (RMA and others) capable of promoting social change; To discuss the role of youth in the process of change of societies; To prepare the bozza di manifesto with the whole group.
Aware that…
Violence can be physical, verbal and psychological.
Violence is an action that restricts the liberty of others.
Violence is the imposition of one’s own choices and values without giving others the possibility or right to choose.
Violence is the way to get what one wants by force.
Violence is exercised by weak people thinking that it is a form of heroism to show that they are strong.

We ask…
To all people, especially young people around the world of all ages, of all genders, cultures, ethnicities, religions, social and economical backgrounds, political views, etc.

Inviting them to…
Begin with him/herself using education, the development of good relationships with people and trying to be tolerant, to demand their rights and duties from others.
Discuss the reason of conflicts in order to discover differences and commonalities, being aware and sure that one will never be able to see the whole truth.
Educate children and youth about how to deal with their conflicts through lectures and seminars in youth centres and schools. It is important that schools take part in educating their students to listen and to use dialogue as the best way to solve conflicts.
To listen more, to speak less and to act more calmly; these are three things that one should always take in consideration.

Youth from around the world
Training course for peers educators

This course was held at local level (each partner organised their own course) once a week, for 3 months in the beginning of spring 2008 with the youth group. The purpose was to prepare them and to facilitate the acquisition of skills needed to carry out the peer-to-peer activities they did afterwards with other youth.

During the meetings the meaning of peer-to-peer education was clarified and the necessary skills for this activity were identified and developed in a practical way. The education included a theoretical part regarding conflict transformation in a positive way and the implementation of RMA – sources and consequences.
Peer education project
The peer-to-peer activities were also held at a local level (each partner organised their own activities with youth) during the spring period in 2008. Approximately twelve meetings were held. The topics chosen for peer activities related to nonviolent conflict transformation and RMA. The presented information was easily accessible and relevant to the needs of the young people.

This activity is very important in the course of the overall activities, as it created a multiplier effect and, moreover, permitted the youth participants to develop practical skills for their future lives and contributed to their increase of self esteem.
International seminar: “International seminar: Inventing the future - RMA”
The seminar was held in Comrat, Moldova, 9th - 13th July 2008. The participants were youth workers and young people from all partner organisations. The seminar aimed to give the peer education training course an international dimension, giving also an opportunity for the participants to learn with international experts and to broaden their acquired knowledge. Although not all of the youth group had the possibility to participate, the youngsters that were present at the seminar had the task of organising a session for the rest of the group on their return. The main objectives were to complement the knowledge already acquired by the youngsters during the training and at the same time create visibility of the project, as the seminar was open to other youth who were interested in participating.

Voluntary Service
Voluntary service is a scheme designed to inspire the development of solidarity and to promote tolerance amongst youth, with the primary objective of strengthening the social cohesion and create friendship between peoples. It also promotes active citizenship and enables reciprocal understanding between young people.
In the project there were six voluntary service activities and six youth, one volunteer from each country doing one or two months in another partner country (Italy – Moldova, Palestine – Italy, France – Palestine, Moldova – France, Bulgaria – Israel, Israel – Bulgaria). The projects were held in the summer months in 2008.

The voluntary service projects permitted participants to live an intercultural experience, living and working on the conflict issues of the other community. This experience gave participants the possibility to develop intercultural skills, to become understand better the host country and other conflicts. Moreover, the possibility to live in a different country for a period fostered the acquisition of other skills and competencies (problem solving, capacity to adapt, autonomy, determination, etc.).

Local closing event: final conference
All partners organised a one-day conference open to the community in the last month of the project (November 2008). During the conference the project was presented the impact of the RMA in conflict transformation was discussed. Youth had the possibility to talk about the project results, about their own experience and the impact of the project on their own lives. Moreover, the outputs and products were distributed to the representatives of entities and organisations present.
Transnational evaluation and follow-up meeting
The seminar was held in Haskovo, Bulgaria, 15\textsuperscript{th} - 19\textsuperscript{th} October 2008. The participants included the coordinators, the youth workers and youth people (one or two per country).

The final meeting main aims were: to do final evaluation, discuss the follow-up activities and valorise the project. Besides the internal encounters to discuss about the project, two meetings were held with local organisations in order to valorise the project results and to give visibility. Media was also present during the meeting.
RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT (I)

- **Recruitment of youth participants:** use diverse methods to recruit and make good use of the other organisations already working with youth. Create interesting materials with clear information about the project in order to distribute them to the potential participants. A very first meeting before the official programme can be a good way of discovering who is really interested as just those will return the next time. Some partners also did interviews with potential participants: this can be a good way of creating the feeling in youth of a very important project and make them more interested to become a part.

- **Motivation of youth participants:** this very difficult part should be done very well in order to avoid high drop-out. The international activities functioned as a strong motivating factor as well the fact that the group had a good environment. Work on a good group building and monitoring the interest of youth is necessary in order to keep them interested. In addition it is important to meet the group outside of the project meetings.

- **Timing:** give longer time for the diverse phases/activities foreseen as it happens always that some difficulties arise with some partners that impede them to follow the timings initially foreseen.

- **Voluntary service:** this should be longer in order to allow for good adaptation, integration and intercultural discovery. It should be very well planned in terms of activities and time as it revealed an excellent opportunity for intercultural learning and promotion of understanding and friendship between cultures. When planning this activity it is a good idea to consider that youth are generally freer in the summer, as during the year the school engagements do not allow long travels.

- **Activities open to the community:** motivate and support the youth participants to carry out activities outside the own group in order to involve the community and enlarge the impact of the project. This is also a way to build competencies and to create confidence on their own capacities.

- **Building competencies:** spend a long time with the training course and similar activities in order give youth participants a major confidence in them selves and to reinforce the acquisition of skills and competencies.
RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT (2)

- **Online meetings**: do more online meetings between partners and involving the youth participants. It can be an interesting idea to do international seminar using web conference.

- **Website**: develop a more strong strategy to disseminate the website and promote the use of the forum.

- **Age of participants**: create local groups that have age homogeneity between them as this is an important factor during the international meetings.

- **Visa**: create good standardized documents and measures for visa request. Use a good description of the project and refer in all occasions that it is a European Commission project. Write in the letter detailed information about the participants requiring visa and about the venues place doing all procedures at least 3 months before the meeting.

- **Visibility**: develop a visibility plan that is very strong and contact the media from the beginning. Involve them and negotiate to pay their service with similar one, that is, to promote them in the website and in the publications of the project. Visibility is also an important way to show your project and to attract the attention of potential co-funders or partners.

- **Valorisation**: dissemination and exploitation are very important in order to share practice and to make the project known. It is necessary to work in cooperation with other organisations and work commonly on the building up of capacities. Organise meetings with local organisations and disseminate the project in other international projects as it is fundamental to reach these objectives.

- **Co-funding**: is one of the most difficult parts of a project. You can try local authorities, hostels and restaurants (those can reduce their prices in occasion of international meetings in exchange for publicity), other national funds, private donors (like foundations and banks) and sponsors.

- **Local partners**: working with local partners can strengthen the project impact and make implementation easier and more interesting. In some cases maybe those partners can co-fund the project.
The Inventing the Future website contains a wealth of information on all aspects of the project. Here you will find information not only on the project itself; aims, objectives, methods, outcomes, and the countries involved but also a brief overview of the activities on both a local and international level, which took place. You will find information on the youth exchange, maieutic workshops, training course, and seminars including photographs of the events and testimonies from participants.

The website also contains valuable information on the co-ordinator – CE.S.I.E, the background of the partner organisation as well as a biography of Danilo Dolci. There are also links to other sites containing further in-depth information about Danilo Dolci and his method (Reciprocal Maieutic Approach – which also has a section of its own on the site).

You will also find a ‘meet the group’ page, which gives you an idea of the young people involved in the project and enables you to see for yourself the people involved in what could easily have become faceless organisation.

If you are interested in learning more about the causes, methods, and various partners involved in the Inventing the Future project you can go to the ‘Resources’ page, which contains links to many other sites containing further reading material and whole sites dedicated to the work of Danilo Dolci.

The site contains a ‘partners’ section, which contains all of the information in the applicable languages for each country involved in the project and there is of course a ‘contact us’ page so should you wish to speak directly with anyone here at CE.S.I.E we are only a click of a mouse or a phone call away!

🌐 www.inventingthefuture.eu
Danilo Dolci was born near Trieste, northern Italy 1927, son of a devout Slav mother and a sceptical Italian father who worked for the railways and become a station master. Danilo originally studied architecture in Rome, Milan, Switzerland, and also trained as an engineer. As a student he published works on the science of construction and the theory of reinforced concrete. He was hailed as a man with a brilliant future. He was also a deeply devout Catholic. Instead of immediately embarking on a professional career, he gave up everything to work with a remarkable priest, Don Zen o Saltini, who had opened an orphanage for 3,000 abandoned children after the war.

Danilo first came to Sicily for the sake of its ancient beauty. He was specially interested in Greek buildings, spending time studying the ruins. In 1954 Danilo settled in rural western Sicily. What kept him in Sicily for the rest of his life and made him throw away a professional future was the Island’s present wretchedness. During his visit a baby died of starvation. The giant misery of Sicily was a command to him. What he called “instinct”. Thousands lived in holes in the ground, in slums worse than Calcutta, without electricity, water, sanitation. They existed on the edge of starvation, weighed down by ignorance, illiteracy, superstition, fear, injustice, oppression by the mafia, indifference from
the church plus above all with the all-pervasive hopelessness of unemployment.

He chose Trappeto (province di Palermo) in an area notorious for banditry and proverbial poverty. A place where “the flies wouldn’t let you open your mouth”. He worked with the farmers and fishermen, all the time exploring the problems.

He lived in Trappeto, a country slum near Partinico. He married one of his neighbours, a widow with five children. From their small house with out any of the usual conveniences he launched his campaign against the misery that surrounded him.

Alone he stood, faced by the hostility of the church, the government, the landowners, the mafia. Surely, only with a flame of faith in his heart could he face hatred, corruption, brutality, indifference, poverty, dereliction and despair. But face them he did, and won his victories. He lived on a level of those he was trying to help, working at grass roots level attempting to leaven the lump with love plus knowledge so that it would rise up of its own accord.
First there was the huge problem of unemployment. Dolci insisted that work is not only a duty but a right. Inspired by this idea, he organised the famous “strike in reverse”. On which 150 jobless men protested by going to work. Dolci and the unemployed began to work on a local road that was badly in need of repair. They were arrested on invented charges and spent 8 months in jail. There was no violence, for Dolci was a disciple of Mahatma Ghandi and believed in a non-violent approach as a matter of principle.

Another big problem was the lack of water. Due to the lack of water the communities were disempowered. Dolci committed himself to working with the communities helping them to express themselves, to have their voices heard. And in a non-violent manner. As a result of his tireless campaigning dams were built, bringing irrigation, energy and new jobs. Never tiring he continued his works, looking at education, protesting about the current state and the barriers to attendance.

After consulting with both parents and children an accessible school was built. Designed with the help of the youngsters, with low windows the young people were free to enjoy and benefit from education.
The curriculum was also decided by the children, with them being asked what they would like to learn about today. Even now, this type of education can be found in northern Italy.

Danilo also founded the study centre at Partinico, which remains a source of aid for social and above all agricultural projects. He persuaded the government to bring new industry from the north, and a new life for the slum dwellers. Fearlessly he exposed and stood up against the mafia, despite being threatened with prison and death. In 1967, when he accused prominent members of government, by name of collusion with organized crime, he spent another two years in jail for libel. He responded by broadcasting his opinions over a private radio station, which was promptly closed. It is a source of wonder to local people why the mafia never seriously retaliated against Dolci; the speculation was that he was so popular that mobsters feared mass retaliation.

He was a profound and widely-read writer: his works include poetry and moving interviews with other wise but invisible members of humble trades whose lives he brought into evocative focus. His books are remarkable accounts of the society he surveys, and their accuracy and insight have helped to give a realistic basis to schemes for improvement. Most importantly he has given a voice to the abandoned, the forgotten, despairing, nameless, suffering people of Sicily. The
TV. He communicated through his books in which the Sicilian poor speak for themselves, and acts of non-violent demonstration. Dolci is a committed believer in passive resistance, every act of demonstration was in a non-violent way. All the time Danilo worked with these methods with the people, helping them work for themselves. Socrates also used these methods. A way of extracting knowledge from people helping them learn from themselves by themselves. Merely guiding discussions and helping people to realise things and by encouraging each other. Always working in a democratic way where everything is optional. On December 30th, 1997 Danilo Dolci “the Sicilian Ghandi”, twice a nominee for the Nobel peace prize, and once (despite being explicit non-communist), the recipient of the Lenin peace prize, died at the age of seventy-three of heart failure. A political maverick to the end.
The Reciprocal Maieutic Approach (RMA) is a “…process of collective exploration that takes as a departure point the experience and the intuition of individuals.” (Dolci, 1996). This way RMA promotes the group processes and the plurality of experiences and points of view. RMA is intended to create a safe context for people to express themselves, to discover, to be creative, to learn relational and communicational competencies, to feel valued as a human being. RMA was developed from the Socratic concept of Maieutic. It is common to the concept of maieutic and reciprocal maieutic that all human beings contain a great deal of knowledge. What differentiates both concepts is the fact that in Danilo Dolci’s concept knowledge comes from experience and a reciprocal relationship is necessary for this knowledge to grow. It is the maieutic communication that brings out the people knowledge, with all participants learning from each other.

This method permits individuals to learn to share different points of view with other people; to learn to communicate in a nonviolent way; develop listening and verbal communication skills; to learn to value and respect others; learn to value the group and to cooperate; develop active participation awareness and skills; to strengthen democratic competences; to facilitate and reinforce the integration between people from different backgrounds.
The reciprocal maieutic approach should be seen as learner centered. It emphasizes the following main aspects:

- Nonviolent communication (listening, honest expression of oneself, respect of others when speaking)
- Sharing of power (in contraposition to domination and concentration of power)
- Individual and social responsibility
- Active participation of all
- Cooperation
- Nonviolence
- Building complex images of reality (with the point of view and contribution of all)
- Confrontation
- Values the individual and group experience
- Creativity
- Awareness/self awareness
- Ask questions and analyse problems instead of impose solutions –
The participants sit in a circle with one person chosen to co-ordinate the session. The maximum duration is 3 hours. During the session participants ask when they want to speak creating an order that should be respected. It is good practice for all participants to express their opinion on the subject matter as it then calls for the individual responsibility that each of us should have in our own lives.

Regarding materials few things are needed; materials brought by participants and coordinator (relevant texts, photos, etc.) and flipcharts can be useful to record the outcome of the session.

Other than this activity RMA can be used in conflict resolution, need analysis within a group and planning how to accommodate these needs through action, planning and discussion about specific matters, etc.

One of the difficulties that we have using this method is the language barrier, because in multicultural groups where English is the working language the difficulty can arise that some of the participants do not speak enough English in order to participate actively. A possible solution can be to provide translation permitting each individual to express their own ideas.
The subject matter that participants discuss is decided before the session as it is necessary that all agree about the theme. However it can also be a decision of the coordinator who then suggests and shares it with the group rather than imposing it.

Continuity is important in this method, that is, to participate in a series of sessions that will permit participants to develop strong skills and competencies. This continuity also permits the group to keep discussing and developing ideas, which enables them to build something that comes from this single group experience.

It is necessary that the location is very peaceful, because participants need to have the optimal atmosphere available to express themselves. It’s also necessary that all participants are punctual and that they start all together and proceed without interruptions.

During the discussion it is important that the coordinator records what the participants say; at the end these notes will allow her/him to make a short summary of what has been said during the meeting and if needed to elaborate conclusions. This is an important tool, which gives the group feedback on what they have said and learnt.

At the end of the meeting is also important that the evaluation is the final part of the session. It has been introduced as it is important that participants express something about the experience of the session and about what they have learnt. It is also an important opportunity to consider the future of the group and about what to do in the following session.
Who initiates the maieutic session?

The coordinator, that has the role of introducing the theme or do a question (the good question) that promotes the communication and the exchange of ideas. If the workshop aims to solve a conflict the coordinator should be very cautious in the way he/she chooses to start. We are still practising this part and so we don't have clear answers. In the beginning, you can use an introduction by talking about an experience or about what will be discussed.

Is preparation needed? On the part of whom?

The preparation may be needed. It is not always necessary and depends on the aim and theme. For example, Danilo, he used to organise encounters to discuss about the work of the organisation and in this case he asked people participating (volunteers and employees) to prepare themselves by reading documents and letters, etc. If you want a deeper reflection I guess that you can request preparation (read documents, research, bring an article or picture, etc) it is a good idea.

What are the characteristics (attitude and qualities) of the facilitator?

The facilitator should be someone with the following characteristics:
- emphatic
- good in conflict resolution/transformation
- capable of listening, summarising and giving feedback (in the form of clarifications that helps the others and the speaker him/herself to understand better the intervention)
- capable of doing a closing summary that gives a general idea about the discussion done
- does not impose their own ideas and is open to all interventions
- having knowledge about the theme proposed
- gender awareness
- creativity

What are the tasks of the facilitator? How to finish the session?

The main tasks of the facilitator are to facilitate the communication, give all the participants the chance to talk, keep the time, reflect feelings and clarify interventions. The coordinator should intervene and give their own contributions as this permits a true reciprocity.

Closing time comes when people are tired, when time is finishing. Close by summarising and, if it is the case, talking about the next encounter, when, at which time, about what. It is also a nice idea to close by asking a short evaluation (few words, even 1) about the encounter.

How long should it last? How many persons should be in present (minimum and maximum)?

Maximum 2 hour (3 in the worse case and with a break) and maximum 20 persons to allow the time for all to intervene.

In terms of the language, working in international groups, should people use a common language or, speak their language and be interpreted by a translator?
The best is the last option, but it is hard to have translators. So what we suggest, and it is a limitation, is that the participants are all have good language skills. RMA is a method based on language, so it is necessary that all can contribute by using it.

**What are the results of the maieutic?**

The maieutic process activates and develops in participants fundamental competences and values (fundamental capacity to live in society and build together), including learn to cooperate, learn to appreciate and respect the “other”, learn to be active and involved in the community. As well it promotes the increase of self-esteem, self-awareness and creativity.

The results also depend on the aim. If you aim to promote the resolution of a conflict the results will be specific to this aim. However, the aspects described above are fundamental and happen always as they are on the base of the method.

**How can the maieutic method be used for promoting active participation?**

Well, this is one of the results we foresee to achieve as a result of the process through RMA. Participation in the workshops brings the feeling of being active on something, in the group process of building knowledge. The next step should be transfer this awareness to the own life and act at diverse levels. This can happen in a direct way, when the group working together decides to act the ideas reflected. In other way it can happen that the person through the participation feels so confident that starts to take new steps in the own life.
After this project we can conclude that RMA is a method that can be used effectively by youth workers in their work with youth in a context of conflict and where the aim is to achieve conflict transformation.

Conflict transformation “includes bringing about a structural and relational change within the society to bring a halt to the existing conflict.” (p. 51, Goswami, 2007). As affirmed by Lederach it should have a focus on the active involvement of the people that live the conflict situation and not in the third part.

Conflict transformation is a long term process that also includes the more urgent issue of conflict resolution. That is, to make the people involved in the conflict to find a solution to the main issues they disagree about. However, conflict transformation goes deeper by touching issues such as: broken relationships, forgiveness, justice, violent structures, development, etc.

Conflict transformation permits the achievement of positive peace, that is more than the absence of direct violence. Positive peace is about a society characterized by nonviolent structures (political, social, economic, health). In such a nonviolent society there is sustainable development, active participation from all people (also in the conflicts each one believe are important), equal access to resources, communication, no exploitation, human values, respect for human rights, etc.

In conflict transformation, as we aim to transform relations and structures that create/maintain the conflict, and RMA can be very useful. Maieutic encounters would contribute to the conflict transformation because this is a group process:

- Considers the involvement of the direct actors in the conflict and not only, neither in major proportion, the third part.
- Allows participants to communicate and to clarify perspectives, to listen the other, to understand one another, to make the other feel valued and that his/her opinion counts, to build/transform relations.
- Permits participants to become aware of a dominant society and about their own individual power and responsibility in the process of change and this way become more willing to participate in the action of CT that follows the encounters.
CONCLUSIONS ON RMA AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION (2)

- Gives participants from different perceived groups the chance to develop a common view of reality, that considers all interpretations, and a common intervention strategy that can bring about change in perceptions, relations and structures.
- Gives space to confrontation, to emotions, to understanding and maybe forgiveness.
- Be creative in the way Danilo Dolci so well described: “…to perceive and produce necessary alternatives.” (Barone, 2007)

Before we finish we would like to underline that we do not consider that RMA alone can transform conflict. It should be used as one fundamental tool together with others that can complement its more fragile aspects and the conflict points it does not touch. However RMA promotes factors that are basic conditions to transform conflict and to build peace through a creative and nonviolent process of common growth, mainly with youth groups that are still flexible, willing for change and hopeful for the future.
The project was monitored periodically by different evaluation moments. Every 3 months the youth leaders and coordinators evaluated the project and each month the participants evaluated the activities developed. These constant evaluations were part of a strategy to keep the quality of the project and to monitor the achievement of the objectives established.

Regarding the final evaluation, the methods used were different depending on if the evaluation was aimed at the coordinators and youth workers or the youth participants. Coordinators and youth workers compiled together the final evaluation report. For the youth participants we developed a questionnaire, a group evaluation in each partner country and an international group evaluation that took place during the final international meeting in Haskovo, Bulgaria. This meeting gathered youth from all partner countries that elaborated a final evaluation considering diverse aspects. Take a look to the evaluation they did:

**What did you learn?**

*There are a lots of possibilities to solve and prevent the conflicts in nonviolent way (with the respect and non violence)*

*Learning about each others’ culture*

*The development of our personality: presentation skills, leadership, acting and interacting, ability to communicate with each other, skills in communication with young people, skills to empower other people.*

**About RMA…**

*The Dolci method of transforming the conflict and to communicate with respect within our group*

*We use it in our daily life*

*It’s useful in preventing the conflict*
Strong Aspects
Opportunity to communicate, to travel
Learning about cultures
Society exchange
Knowing new methods (RMA)
The idea of the project itself
The communication between organisations (networking)
Successful in organising the project
The learn foreign languages during our communication

Weak aspects
Lots of theory but not enough practice
Two years is long term for a commitment (drop out because getting married, travelling, etc)
Setting a timetable that is suitable for all the participants

What you would change
We could organise a video conference some times in a year to discuss the program and to share the points of view

Follow up
We could organise some new projects, some training to discuss about the same problems deeper
We could organise the activities in our countries which would give the opportunity for the young people to learn the culture of different countries
We have an idea to organise a project which would be aimed to provide the money for children at schools
SOME TESTIMONIALS FROM VOLUNTEERS AFTER RETURNING HOME FROM THEIR PLACEMENTS ABROAD

A Bulgarian volunteer in Israel
“It was a great pleasure to meet so many friends, to see a different world. You may ask me what is different. Let’s see… the people, their culture, their way of life, their way to have fun. Thank you very much for everything.”

A Moldavian volunteer in France
“The idea of the project was great, it was a good experience for everybody. We could see really picturesque places of France, we could enjoy working together, creating a show, working with the children, dancing and singing on the stage, making one the evenings in someone’s life more interesting. This experience is very useful for me, because I want to create my own project for Moldova. Thank you!”

An Italian volunteer in Moldova
“The best of EVS period: Seeing that day by day the children love you more and more and also putting a smile on the faces of children with different problems.
Difficulties: getting used to a country with different language, culture, food and attitudes. My dream is to wake up one day in my EVS being able to speak and understand their language.
What I learned: I can now speak a little Russian. I know myself better, I’m now little more patient but the most important thing is that I’ve learnt to respect everybody different from us in culture, religion and sex. All young people should try this opportunity because through it the lives of everyone surely will change for the better.”

An Israeli volunteer in Bulgaria
“EVS is a great experience for young people. When you live and mix in the community it is an opportunity to learn about a different culture and the people.”
RECOMMENDATIONS TO A GOOD PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION

• Define clear and measurable indicators of impact in order to facilitate the evaluation.
• We strongly advise to do an evaluation that occurs periodically and that involves all people involved in the project.
• Use diverse evaluation materials that are the same for all partners and done in the same project periods.
• Collect quantitative as well as qualitative data from evaluation. Quantitative data can give an idea about numbers but not about the quality of the activities or about participants’ satisfaction.
Youth participants

- The young people were involved in the implementation of concrete initiatives;
- Improved communication, problem-solving and leadership skills of the young people - during the workshops, the youngsters developed skills on how to overcome conflicts and contradictions in a positive way using RMA and how to support other community members to manage it. The young people demonstrated active participation, cooperation and respect to others;
- Improved self-image and confidence and acquired knowledge of the youngsters, improved relations and communication between them and increased awareness of the complexity of the problems discussed;
- The peer-to-peer activities, which encouraged activeness, the self-organization and the involvement, helped the young people to get used to the things new to them, and to reveal their potential as individuals part of a team.
- The youth developed good relationships during the meetings, that will continue after the project. They also showed an improved understanding of others and better communication skills;
During the youth exchange, the young people from different ethnic and social backgrounds had the opportunity to work together, to get to know each other’s cultures and values and also acquire better knowledge of the good practices in nonviolent conflict transformation;

- Created opportunities for participation in the social and cultural life of the community;
- Improved access to information about Youth in Action Programme and the different forms of youth participation;
- Increased responsibility and solidarity of the young people, they improved their capacity to become active citizens.

**Youth workers and coordinators**

Youth workers acquired experience and developed new skills in youth work. They developed the competences to use the RMA and other methods of conflict resolution/ transformation (*Sulha mediation*) and get new knowledge about the specific themes discussed during the project. They have now increased experience in facilitating and guiding groups constituted by youth coming from conflicting parties inside a community. They also developed their own intercultural competencies and the capacity to design and implement evaluations.
Coordinators gained more experience in coordinating projects at international level, learned more about how good communication between partners should be, how to develop a good and fruitful cooperation, developed more sensitivity to intercultural aspects, gained more experience in problem solving, increased their intercultural competencies and acquired new skills in recruiting groups and carrying out visibility actions and a valorisation plan.

**Youth organisations**

Through the implementation of the project partners established an effective partnership and all partner organisations acquired experience and knowledge that will contribute to the increased quality of future projects and activities: more information on Youth in Action Programme, EuroMed Youth III Programme and European Youth Foundation, improved competences in the management of large international projects with a long duration, new partnerships, increased visibility, increased motivation and self-confidence. In addition partners increased their capacity as now they have several new projects running or to be presented in the near future.

Also interesting is the fact that all partners developed new local partnerships that have become stronger during the project and are very important for the future as they have prepared the ground for articulate and strong interventions in the community.

**Impact in the community**

The impact at this level it’s difficult to evaluate accurately as it is very broad and it is easy to lose the contact with such a target. However we can base our conclusions in some important observations: the conversations with youth participants in which they relate with their contacts outside of the group, the visibility and valorisation of the project and the meetings that involved other people from outside.
the group. At an informal level all youth participating in the project had an influence on their families and close friends through conversation and discussions. All people connected to the youth were informed about the project.

All partners carried out diverse visibility and valorisation actions (through media, website of the project, internet) that had an impact in the community in general, contributing mainly to promote awareness about the issues touched on during the project and to disseminate the RMA at an international level. This is an important part of the work as it permits to reach a part of the population that in general is not directly involved in the project activities.

Finally, through the meetings with other organisations, through actions open to the community (for example intercultural evenings) or through the partnerships at local level there was a broader impact that can be the exchange of practice and also a change in behaviour from the part of some participants.

The project itself foresaw four actions that were directed mainly, but not only, to the visibility and the valorisation of the project. Those are the international seminar in Comrat, Moldova, the peer education project and the final closure seminars, one in Bulgaria with an international dimension, and the seminars each partner carried out in their local community. All permitted to reach in a very efficient way youth and youth workers that were not directly involved in the project.
This incredible project, made up of an intense 2 years of hard work, is creating its own sustainability. All partners have maintained a very strong contact with the youth participants. Some partners plan to keep meeting the youth groups and others plan how to give the group a self-sustainable dynamic.

Other projects for the future are:

- Website updating and improvement

- Training course *Youth in Action* about RMA
  Main aim: to help youth workers to develop competencies on the RMA methodology and to develop a RMA manual

- Training course *Youth in Action* about peer education
  Main aim: to help youth workers and youth leaders to develop competencies on peer education training

- Youth exchange *Youth in Action* about human rights and immigration
  Main aim: to promote awareness about the human rights of immigrant people in Europe and to develop artistic works that can serve to raise awareness at community level about this situation

- European Voluntary Service *Youth in Action* about community development (sending volunteers in Italy from Moldova, UK, Spain and Romania)
  Main aim: to contribute to the development of the community through local actions with people
Inventing the Future:
Reciprocal Maieutic Approach for Conflict Transformation

- Training course *Youth in Action* about good practice and problem solving in EVS and youth exchanges
  Main aim: to improve the capacity of youth organisations in Europe and East Europe in carrying out EVS and youth exchanges and to develop new projects
RESOURCES AND REFERENCES


Audiovisual archive about Danilo Dolci.


Domino - A manual to use peer group education as a means to fight racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance [http://eycb.coe.int/domino/](http://eycb.coe.int/domino/)