

CORE PAPER II: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: KEY IDEAS OF J.P. LEDERACH

1. Conflict Transformation Lenses

A transformational approach, according to Lederach (2003,8), requires a new way of seeing conflict. As conflict is dynamic, complex, and multidimensional, understanding requires different lenses for seeing a situation from different perspectives. Lederach suggests that we need one lens to see the immediate situation, another to see the underlying patterns and context, and a third to discern the conceptual framework that binds them together. These three viewpoints provide a framework for understanding the interplay between the content, context, and structure of relationships necessary for transforming conflict (2003,9).

In different terminology, these lenses help us to see the root and proximate causes of a conflict and the interaction between the two. Often times the proximate causes are more visible and tangible while the root causes are less visible and intangible. This is why at first glimpse many conflicts seem simple. For example, to an outsider there may be many options for resolving a land dispute between two communities - Land could be split equally; one party could buy the property from the other; one party could agree to an alternative plot. But, if there are so many alternatives then why do so many disputes over land go unresolved? Because disputes over land (immediate situation) are often manifestations of deeper issues (underlying patterns and context), which are often related to more subjective issues such as identity, trust, security, fear, and pride. Therefore, if the land dispute is resolved without taking into account underlying patterns, the short-term agreement could exacerbate the conflict and cause escalation.

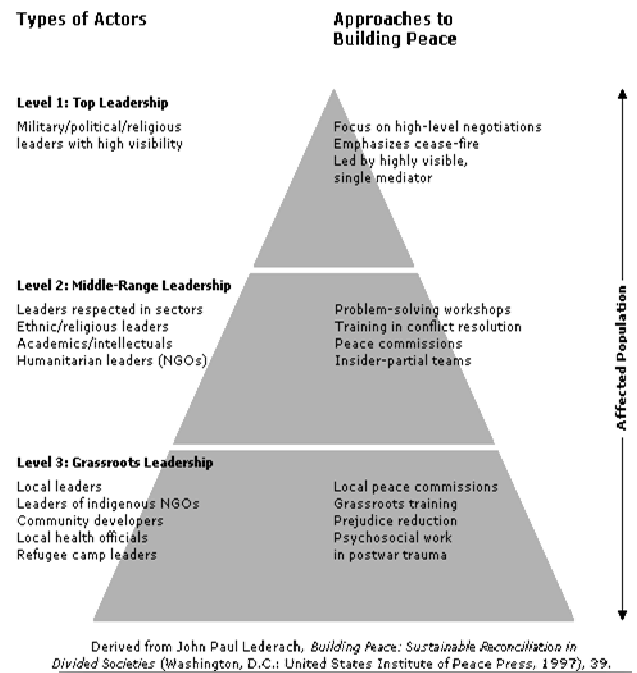
2. Dimensions of Change

Building on these three perspectives, Lederach (2003,23) suggests that because conflict is not static, we should seek to understand conflict by analyzing the dynamics of change at the personal, structural, relational and cultural dimensions. The **personal** dimension focuses on the positive and negative affect of conflict on individual cognitive, emotional, perceptual, and spiritual development. The **relational** dimension focuses on the effect of conflict on relationships, including patterns of communication and interaction. The **structural** dimension focuses on the underlying causes of conflict and the positive and negative affect of conflict on socio-economic and political structures. The **cultural** dimension looks at the positive and negative impact of conflict on group socio-cultural norms. It is not enough for the scholar-practitioner to assess and describe dimensions of change. They must also prescribe change goals for each of these dimensions. Based on this principle each of the above four dimensions can be seen to have a corresponding change goal, which are summarized in the following table (Lederach 2003, 27).

Dimension	Change Goal
Personal	♦ Minimize destructive effects of social conflict and maximize the potential for growth and well-being in the person as an individual human being at physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual levels.
Relational	♦ Minimize poorly functioning communication and maximize understanding. ♦ Bring out and work with fears and hopes related to emotions and interdependence in the relationship.
Structural	♦ Understand and address root causes and social conditions that give rise to violent and other harmful expressions of conflict. ♦ Promote nonviolent mechanisms that reduce adversarial confrontation and that minimize and ultimately eliminate violence. ♦ Foster the development of structures to meet basic human needs (substantive justice) and to maximize participation of people in decisions that affect their lives (procedural justice).
Cultural	♦ Identify and understand the cultural patterns that contribute to the rise of violent expressions of conflict; ♦ Identify and build upon resources and mechanisms within a cultural setting for constructively responding to and handling conflict.

3. Levels and Types of Actors

In addition to these dimensions, Lederach categorizes types of actors based on three levels. The top level is composed of political, military, and religious leaders; the middle is comprised of respected personalities, prominent members of civil society, intellectuals, religious groups, and ethnic/identity groups; and the grass roots represents the masses including NGOs, community based organizations, civil society, and other entities working directly with the people. Lederach portrays how both bottom-up and top-down approaches should be applied along with various types of interventions that could be utilized at each level, for instance, high-level-negotiations at the top, problem-solving workshops at the middle, and local peace commissions or grass roots trainings at the lower levels. Lederach identifies the middle range actors as critical because they can link the track one and track three actors and they have 'the greatest potential for establishing an infrastructure that can sustain peacebuilding over the long term' (Lederach, John Paul 1997: 37-61).



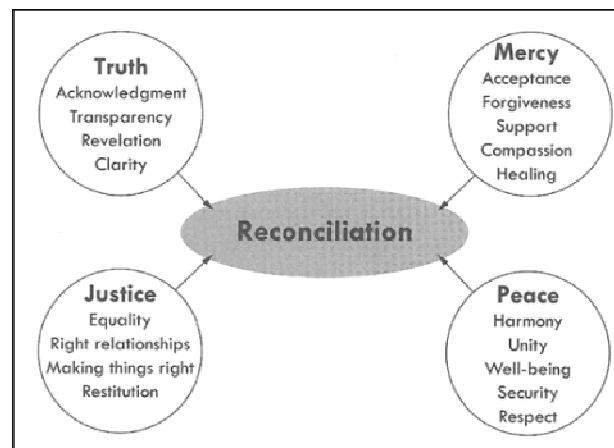
4. Ingredients of peacebuilding

Building on the work of Galtung, Curle and Dugan John Paul Lederach conceptualized peacebuilding as a long-term transformation of a war system into a peace system through a process of reconciliation. According to Lederach (1997), this process includes the often contradictory, yet interdependent ideas and forces of peace and justice, truth and mercy. Truth, he suggests “is the longing for acknowledgement of wrong and the validation of painful loss and experiences, but it is coupled with *Mercy*, which articulates the need for acceptance, letting go, and a new beginning. *Justice* represents the search for individual and group rights, for social restructuring, and for restitution, but it is linked with *Peace*, which underscores the need for interdependence, well-being, and security.”

This paradox raises difficult and important questions:¹

1. How do we address conflict in ways that reduce violence and increase justice in human relationships?
2. How do we develop a capacity for constructive, direct, face-to-face interaction and, at the same time, address systemic and structural changes?
3. What kind of changes and solutions are needed? At what levels? Around which issues? Embedded in which relationships?
- 4.

5. Conflict Transformation and Humanitarian Assistance



¹ Lederach (2003,20)

Perhaps some of the most poignant examples of humanitarian assistance inhibiting conflict transformation are the Rwandan refugee camps. In *The Paradox of Humanitarian Action: Condemned to Repeat?* Fiona Terry explores this dilemma in great depth highlighting the challenge of addressing immediate, life-threatening issues within a larger context of conflict. Terry (2) states,

“The history of the Rwandan refugee camps graphically illustrates the paradox of humanitarian action: it can contradict its fundamental purpose by prolonging the suffering it intends to alleviate. Relief agencies rushed to avert immediate disaster among the refugees pouring into Tanzania and Zaire, but inadvertently set the scene for the eventual disaster. Former leaders manipulated the aid system to entrench their control over the refugees and diverted resources to finance their own activities. In short, humanitarian aid, intended for the victims, strengthened the power of the very people who had caused the tragedy...”

Lederach (2002) addresses this dilemma stating:

“[I]n settings of complex emergencies produced by protracted conflict we know that crisis management responses to the humanitarian plight and political reconciliation are linked. What we do not as readily recognize is that they operate within distinctly different timeframes. The long view of conflict as progression underscores the importance of recognizing the distinction between the timeframe necessary for responding to humanitarian disasters and one that is adequate for the multiple tasks of building peace. It also underscores the relationship between the many forms of crisis-response and peacebuilding activities:

“Not one is conducted in a vacuum and each has the potential to move the conflict progression forward constructively or to contribute to a stagnating cycle of confrontation.”

Utilizing Dugan’s Nested Paradigm of Conflict Foci Lederach (2002, 80) provides a useful framework for determining Levels of Responses based on a Time Frame of Activity.

