WW meets Organizational and Cultural Development - Befriending Conflict in Organizations and Business

Joe Goodbread, Reini Hauser and Constantin Peer

In this workshop, Reini Hauser, Constantin Peer, and Joe Goodbread described and demonstrated their approaches that help facilitators to develop a more neutral perspective as an important step to open a new space for conflict-resolution.

Joe and Reini first introduced the *Befriending conflict* approach based on the principles of worldwork and deep democracy, talked about various ways of looking at conflicts and introduced the key principles:

1. Each participant in a conflict usually underestimates his or her own power or resources. That leads to escalation. You feel weak and you are looking for power through victory.
2. Each conflict situation has some unconsciousness of rank and privileges- participants consider themselves as having less rank (social, psychological or spiritual). When someone has a house or auto and always looks only on what he has not, that´s irritating for those who don´t have a house or auto.
3. The world is ruled by ghost roles, atmospheres and marginalized split-off parts. Ghost roles are positions in field whose influence we feel but nobody stands for them consciously and speaks for them.
4. For facilitators- We usually see conflict as something happening out there. Useful is the ability to see outer people in conflict as parts of me. If it´s also our inner conflict, we are in a better position to be useful. If we don´t find both positions also inside of us, we tend to get polarized, one-sided and tend to worsen the conflict.

Constantin then talked about the cultural and ethical neutrality approach based on the work of Stuart D. G. Robinson. Key principles are:

1. Most of conflicts (of interests) are conflict of values. There are two categories- values can be cultural (group) or ethical (personal)

2. A culture-neutral perspective gives the most space to help the process. Because when the facilitator is unconsciously cultural biased in a conflict, this partiality will hinder an open process.

Befriending, escalating, ignoring or avoiding a conflict is often a result of cultural and ethical assumptions involved. Both approaches are built on the possibility that facilitators can remain aware of the given personal and cultural premises in even the hottest conflict atmospheres.

The lecturers then showed with a participant on an actual conflict case an example how both methods approach a conflict situation and the audience then could try out an experiential exercise connecting both approaches and showing, how cultural and ethical assumptions strongly influence the interaction. The worldwork approach can enrich the neutrality approach for example by focusing on positions,

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ghost roles and signals. The neutrality approach can provide useful questions to identify hidden assumptions of the facilitator.

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