

***Re-imagining Peace After Massacres:
A Trans-Disciplinary and Comparative Effort
Towards the Rebuilding of Functioning Societies***

Summary proposal by
Beatrice Pouligny
CERI-Sciences Po/CNRS, Paris, France

I. Executive summary

Re-imagining Peace After Massacres raises the question of *how to prevent failed states and rebuild functioning societies after mass violence*. It aims:

- to offer *a trans-disciplinary analysis of the impact of mass crimes on social and political relationships and the belief systems that support and organize them*;
- to develop *conceptual tools that identify local cultural practices—including histories, narratives, and systems of belief—that encourage peaceful social and political action and prevent the re-emergence of conflict*;
- to formulate *recommendations about how best to help re-establish functioning societies by supporting such cultural practices*.

The first phase of research will be undertaken by four international and local interdisciplinary teams based in *Guatemala, East Congo, Bosnia-Herzegovina* and *Cambodia*. The project will address the process of post-conflict reconstruction in the wake of mass crimes with a progressive, trans-disciplinary approach, addressing the individual and collective consequences of war and outlining culture-based means of reconstruction.

II. The issue

Whereas rebuilding the economic and socio-political infrastructures and institutions of post-conflict societies has attracted the concern and investment of the international community, conventional practices have given little consideration to the radical transformations in belief systems and codes of conduct that individuals and communities in these societies experience in the course of mass violence. Such a focus is crucial because the belief systems of individuals, families, and communities, tattered or re-arranged, misused or forgotten, form the conceptual roots of post-massacre social and political life, and so shape reconstruction issues as much or more than resources and infrastructure. How the tasks of reconstruction are accomplished is intrinsically linked with the beliefs held by the populace. Most often, reconstruction efforts focus on one or more of the following: changing identities and group boundaries, the difficulties of communicating across boundaries; justice and “reconciliation”; the distribution of property, land and wealth; the writing of history, the rebuilding of trust, and the capacities for new political systems. Yet behind these lie, often unremarked and unanalyzed, a host of cultural meanings. These offer conflicting and often contradictory answers to the above: who is to blame, what vengeance is due and whether there is any point in rebuilding at all, and so set the stage for all action or inaction.

Overall, this project begins from the premise that what people believe—about themselves, the other, the nature of justice, the requirements of community, and the proper structure of rights and responsibilities—determine, at least in part, post-massacre politics, social action, and communal life.

III. The purpose and goals of the project

The research team will work cross-culturally and across multiple disciplines to identify those elements of violence that lead to personal and social change, and will describe how these changes destroy or bend cultural categories and shared meanings in the cultures and communities under study. *We will try to understand the multiple ways in which collective frames of reference (shaped by perceptions as well as institutional and social processes, at both local and international levels, at the crossroads of individual and collective histories) in these communities have been transformed by violence.*

We will also look to those cultural categories that re-emerge or newly form after violence to support social cohesion, mutual trust, community-building, and reconstruction itself, looking in particular to how these emerge and what sorts of social and personal actions and conditions encourage and support them.

Three particular dimensions of these transformations will be studied:

1. *What happens in the family and community sphere as a result of mass violence:*

Partly due to the magnitude of ‘intimate crimes’ that occur during war, crimes committed at the heart of the community, or even within individual families, are often appalling. They can hardly be imagined or believed, even by their victims and perpetrators, before and after. Frequently, for example, perpetrators come from the same areas as those they assassinate or mutilate, and so family relationships can be the cause of suffering as well as the basis of support. In Cambodia, family relations were sometimes the reason for killing and at other times, for protecting: numerous testimonies describe cases of children charged with spying on their parents or even with killing them. In Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo, child-soldiers have played an active part in the extortions that took place in their own villages, including among their own families.

In such circumstances, masks (such as in massacres perpetrated in Ayacucho communities during the war in Peru; “If they had taken off those masks, we would have recognized them”...), rituals and fancy dresses (such as those worn by some militias in East Congo) may serve to construct an artificial identity of ‘other’ when the ones killing are in fact relatives or community members. Often, such masks fail to hide the facts, and instead suffuse the community with a sense of unreality and fantasy, a sense of the world being upside down.

Such ‘intimate’ crimes, and the efforts to hide them with lies and masks, individually and collectively, leave particularly deep marks. Socially, they may pit families and family members against one another, and make common, mutually supportive patterns of relationship problematic and painful. When social categories of protection such as family and friends are used instead to organize violence and destruction, basic, even unspoken and assumed regulatory foundations of a society are weakened and undermined. Culturally, assumptions, symbols, and

rituals that support family and community, once subverted to promote violent acts, may be weakened as well, confused, and even transformed. After violence they may remain suspect or even ridiculed, making it difficult to make up a new life in peace because simple patterns of work and trust seem impossible to re-establish.

To figure out how violent periods may have transformed the basic structures of the society, the project will address a series of questions in each of the project communities:

- Within the family sphere, gender and inter-generational roles have often been transformed by conflict. What of this can be observed in familial structures? What are the main values and codes of conduct now promoted, and do they differ from family members' recollections of past values and codes, and from pre-war sources? What are the new hierarchies? How are conflicts now resolved? What is the place occupied by violence? Of what now exist as community values, which can be adapted to the needs of peace?
- Within the community sphere: What are the new definitions of "community?" Have different codes evolved regarding conflict, friendship, neighborliness, the interactions between villages, communities, nationalities, religions, and the organization of collective work? What are the values and solidarities stressed? How are they concretely expressed? Are there changes in community leadership? How are pre-war figures of authority viewed, in particular, teachers, religious leaders, and traditional healers, and how might they be used to support community solidarity in the period of aftermath? How might they undermine new forms of solidarity that are nonviolent? Have any new community structures or leaders, based on or espousing particular values and beliefs, emerged? And what sorts of effects might their presence have on efforts at solidarity and non-violence?

To explore how communities are attempting to work with or reverse negative and destructive patterns of mass violence, we will ask, in the two areas listed above, what familial codes and values have been reinstated or revised in ways that promote social solidarity and mutuality. To simply look for the re-establishment of old modes of operation is not enough. Changes may well be needed, as in changes that may improve the lot of women, for example, while also promoting family solidarity and mutual aid. At the same time, traditional modes have always been transformed by events, and are likely to be romanticized by different parties in the aftermath. This too must be considered in any effort to "return" to traditional values and practices. Within the community sphere, we will explore how community can be defined in ways that do not aggravate or reinforce divisions on which mass violence was based, what new or resurgent structures or leaders promote community rather than division?

2. Ways in which people identify themselves vis-à-vis society and state, the values they attach to both, and by what criteria they judge programs of assistance conducted by the state or the international community in order to build peace (transitional justice, programs of demobilization and reinsertion of former combatants, programs of psycho-social support, institutional reforms towards the democratization of the state, security issues, etc.).

To build peace in post-mass crime societies or prevent the recurrence of collective violence generally requires people to redefine their understanding of 'us' and of 'them' in relation to their environment. Both representations and expectations of society and state change as a result of mass violence, particularly when the latter has legitimated, supported or even armed the perpetrators of mass crimes. ***This may bring into question whether the state should hold a***

monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, which in turn undermines the basis of law and order. Representations of the collective ‘self’ may also be deeply affected. Questions such as ‘Who are the people?’ ‘What is the state?’ or ‘What will happen to us as a people?’ need to be answered in new ways. Both self-representation and the ways of exercising citizenship may undergo fundamental changes. Political leaders may seek to lock people in assigned identities and nationalities for political reasons, while individuals themselves may find these identities conflicting or confining. At the same time, programs of international assistance often distinguish people according to functional categories (victims, disabled persons, missing people relatives, refugees, displaced persons, returnees, etc.), which may deny their existence as citizens or reduce their experience of war and post-war situations (and the suffering attached to it) to one or another pragmatic aspect. These definitions may or may not parallel or support other self-definitions that are culturally or biographically based. But these self-definitions are central to how individuals see the world and determine to move in it or against it. Thus, it is important to explore the different ways in which people try to re-define themselves at individual and collective levels and how these definitions lead them to assess aid programs, express their own demands and hopes, make their own plans, and otherwise shape society and state consciously or unconsciously.

Here we will be looking both for what attitudes and beliefs tend to sustain negative and distrusting views of the state and society, and which tend to encourage effective use of outside aid, functional civic and state structures, and community.

3. Public and private rituals and the narratives that sustain or reconfigure collective and individual memories of the history, causes, and course of mass violence. These rituals and narratives express in a variety of forms the post-massacre reality by which people plan and react to reconstruction and set about righting their world. They are the clearest representation of attitudes toward the violence, efforts to glorify or suppress it, and its lasting effects on structures of meaning and social life.

In particular, the research will look for those rituals, narratives, and forms of artistic expression that link or separate the two dimensions of family/community and state. It will examine how communities rebuild by opening and weaving these two dimensions together in positive ways, or remain trapped in war-based versions of these. We will look for the deeper cultural stories, myths, structures, and patterns that underlie those visible at the family/community and state levels.

Overall, we will seek to see how ***violence changed belief systems to support or defend whatever violence took place, and how belief systems are being re-interpreted and/or re-asserted in the post-war period in ways that either encourage or discourage further violence.***

The production and reproduction of cultural materials during and after massacre is a complex and ambiguous process in which the symbolic world and the imaginary play a decisive role in the transformation of meanings of history and belonging. Experiences, memories, nightmares, and rumors of violence (which, to a large extent, like the legends, constitute people’s dreams and tell the community what goes on below the collective consciousness) converge to shape and re-shape moral categories—particularly those of good and evil—during and after violence.

All parties to the violence and to reconstruction, including displaced persons and refugees, new and resurgent elites, and actors external to the community (journalists, international

organizations, humanitarian actors, research missions and international tribunals) have a role in redefining the world after violence. Everyone after and during violence rewrites history, and all rewrites are for the purpose of some sort of action. Many narratives are written, and many identities are taken on and discarded in the process; these many narratives then become entangled with one another. New histories emerge, spawning new identities and collective attitudes. Therefore the roots and assumptions of such rewritings are critical to any efforts at rebuilding, and must be understood as such.

The goal of the research will be to note those versions of history and cultural values that successfully overcome the distrust, disorganization, destabilization, and distress of massacre by offering cultural values and historical representations of solidarity and community. It will also note where solidarity and community among some promotes disaffection and fear among others, and what sorts of assumptions and values underlie both perspectives. In short, we will be seeking what sorts of beliefs tend toward reconstruction and renewal, and which tend to promote or disguise beliefs that occasioned or were supported by violence.

The pilot series of investigations will be undertaken at the community level in each of the research sites. A period of comparison and exchanges between the different communities and cultures will follow, seeking those perspectives that lead to further violence and those that promote community and resolution of disputes without mass violence. At all points, the research and comparative reflection will be carried out with the support of historians, pedagogues, anthropologists, political scientists, and psychiatrists who have worked on such issues in different countries, in order to connect observations with theoretical research in these fields.

IV. The theoretical and methodological background of the project

The Limits of Political Analysis

If one wishes to help a society to “build peace” following such dramatic situations, it is firstly, and at a minimum, necessary to try to understand how it could have allowed such acts to have been committed within it. This approach naturally supposes the immediate rejection of the notion of a singular explanation, be it ideological or culturalist (that is seeing certain people as particularly belligerent or violent). The perpetration of large massacres may be located at the political level, where the processes of state building, the seizing of power, riches and territory and as well as collective mobilization, are explanatory concepts. Indeed, it is well known that political manipulation, particularly which exacerbates a mutual fear between communities, can have violent consequences and lead to social disintegration.

Still, the political level, albeit significant, is never the only important factor. It contributes, in particular, to the construction of new social identities, but these identities have their roots beyond politics alone. Ethnic identities or divides are no more than one element of wider issues that include other divides and identities, such as those between the generations, between men and women, between social groups, and between urban and rural dwellers. Ethnic conflicts may in fact be less “ethnic” than matters of class and social group. In short, so-called ethnic divides may

hide a deeper imaginal of the culture, in which meaninglessness, poverty, shame, and too-rapid cultural change have left people in need of some sort of order or definition, even at the cost of destruction of others.

When political actors seek to use populations to attain their goals rather than armies, the resultant large-scale movements of people re-configure the boundaries of ethnic identity and social life. Inter-ethnic social networks are soon torn asunder and acts of terror grow. The limits of individual understanding and cultural explanation are soon passed, and what is happening becomes unfathomable. Uncertainty goes beyond ordinary limits and precipitates general violence. The devices of violence and massacre, the mutilation of bodies and of torture, become a strategy aimed at creating “a macabre form of certainty”, in times of a high level of uncertainty. The devastation of bodies paradoxically becomes a device for creating certainty in the face of the assumed power of the “other,” a brutal technique (or folk-discovery procedure) for defining ‘them’ against ‘us’.

In such contexts, violence may lose that ‘productive’ dimension of political ends that political analysis has insisted upon in the last decade. Coercion is no longer monopolized by the State, and ***war or generalized violence come to represent practices of existence***. These practices could also be considered strategies of formation and assertion of individual and collective identity, diffused and profoundly internalized relational models. This perspective helps us to avoid a risk: the assumption that the breakdown of social order, mass atrocities and the ghastly violence that distinguishes them constitute an ‘anomaly’, an exception, a circumscribed time of chaos which can be ended through the installation of State structures.

In fact, ***such a devastating fragmentation of social ties and individual conscience represents an additional problem to consider since it contributes to the paralysis of social rehabilitation as well as of peace building intervention***. It obstructs the reconstruction of everyday life in communities that have lived through a long siege of violence and poverty, because events went far beyond the actions of the state to inconceivable actions carried out in altered states of consciousness for primal reasons barely comprehended in the aftermath. Nor are the acts so performed easily seen for what they were; it is easier to retain the perspective that promoted or allowed them: the other is still other, the dangerous are still dangerous, the untrusted remain untrusted.

How can a State be (re) built when such conditions continue to prevail? ***Analysis of the genealogy and the reproduction of violence call for a methodological approach that is able to systematically combine social and political analysis, local history and a global perspective. In the absence of this interweaving, interpretations remain fragmented, leaving key aspects in the shadows***. The experiences of these past years have shown that, from Central America to the Balkans and the Horn of Africa, problems and contradictions in the processes of peace are conspicuous. This is especially the case when it is presumed that these processes can be guided by a simple “desire for reconciliation”.

Trauma and Culture

Anthropological studies have partly begun to fill out this gap, especially in cases that deal with the relation between the dimension of incomprehensibility and the victims' capacity to reconstruct new forms of social ties and concepts. They have demonstrated the importance of considering victims' ability to process the experience of terror and violence inflicted by the 'Other'. Speaking about 'a state of war', as some authors suggest, may be legitimate in order to describe the profound impact of this peculiar social logic of vendetta and counter-vendetta, suspicion and hate. It perhaps illuminates one of the most complex aspects to keep in mind during strategies of peace building: the state of war as an institutionalized reality, as a general cultural experience that fashions *identities*, along the same lines as the family, school, and other social systems. ***In many countries, war and mass violence have become an ordinary condition and not an exceptional state.***

Both Genocide and anthropological studies have developed with very few connections with to the field of peace and state building, however. The impact of mass violence in post-war situations has been mainly considered through judicial processes and reconciliation issues. ***But very little has been documented as to the relation between legal or para-legal processes (international tribunals, truth and reconciliation commission) and social and psychological processes, including those related to the imaginary.*** Indeed, this field is in itself completely disconnected from mental health studies.

Mental health studies themselves are divided between individual and collective perspectives, pro and contra- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) approaches. In psychiatric circles, to speak of "trauma" today means almost inevitably to speak of war and PTSD. However, scenes of contemporary wars have radically changed from the battlefield wars to which the concept of PTSD and its predecessors (shell shock and battle fatigue) were originally applied. The percentage of civilian victims rose from 5% in the First World War to 80% in the Vietnam War. The impact of the conflicts on children in the last few years has been synthesized by various authors: 4-5 million children disabled, 2 million killed, 12 million homeless, more than a million orphans or children separated from their families. Social infrastructure and cultural symbols (schools, hospitals, churches, etc.) represent the current main targets of military action in many so-called "low-intensity wars". In wars of ethnic cleansing, paramilitary groups and even entire populations are used as pawns and fodder, making war a mass enterprise rather than a matter of battles between armies. Yet the combatants in these cases are neither trained for combat nor treated as soldiers. Their own cultural categories must suffice for explanation, and the result is what we mentioned above, a descent into cultural confusion. The bloody reassertion of identity and meaning in the midst of altered states of consciousness rooted in fear and incomprehension must rely on cultural images that recede and shred in the face of such intense and impossible realities.

When looking at more concrete strategies of peace keeping and community rehabilitation, we must deal with another dilemma then: ***how should we respond to the psychological needs of the victims of these atrocities and violence if we do not know the local forms and logics of social ties, their transformations, and above all the cultural strategies of dealing with death, mourning and suffering?*** In this regard, Dr. Eisenbruch, one of the ethno-psychiatrist members of our team, has proposed the useful notion of *cultural bereavement* to underline the many

dimensions forgotten by the notion of PTSD, and to bring to light the necessity of including them within the strategies of rehabilitation and therapy.

Community Rebuilding Through Collective Initiatives

If war changes the way of life of its participants and its victims, ***it produces effects and experiences which often go well beyond psychological categories or psychiatric diagnoses.*** When violence and the kinds of experiences and effects such as those registered in the course of modern conflicts are brought back into the language of the medical-psychiatric sciences, they become less worrisome, but we consequently miss a large part of the big picture when dealing with prevention and rebuilding issues. ***The usual disconnection between the fields of expertise partly explains this reality; whereas everybody understands why mass violence is traumatic to the individuals involved, the collective consequences of such trauma remain largely unconsidered.*** Understanding of the integration of individual and collective levels of experience is highly desirable in the wake of a collective tragedy because the events cannot be simply reduced to a collection of individual tragedies. In such circumstances, it is the culture itself, the possibility of social life, that is under attack, a dimension which is generally worsened by the gravity of symbolic attacks committed at the same time as massacres (ex: the loss of media for transmitting traditions or the repetitive transgression of taboos).

Therefore, we plan to work cross-culturally and in multiple disciplines ***to identify those elements of violence that lead to personal and social change, and how these changes destroy or bend cultural categories and shared meanings.*** We have sought to make this research practical by focusing on how community beliefs about “ultimate things”—life and death, right and wrong, good and evil, and innocence and culpability—are affected by social disasters in which many are killed. The concepts of right and wrong often become blurred, ‘evil’ becomes a tangible presence, and those who are culpable call themselves innocent. This understanding must focus on the close interplay between the individual and collective levels, as individuals cannot be considered in isolation from the culture to which they belong.

In light of this fact, mass-crime situations require the formulation of both individual therapies and collective initiatives. As individual therapy takes place under emergency conditions, it is not only offered rarely, but its effectiveness is controversial. By “collective initiatives” we mean in addition to those methods used for rebuilding self-esteem, such as psychodrama, other therapeutic techniques that benefit from the dimension of group work be undertaken. Community healing is first and foremost a matter of mobilizing cultural resources aimed at restoring collective memory, encouraging personal narratives and accounts, re-integrating child soldiers into their community, or re-establishing links to the dead whose bodies were not treated with the dignity and the rituals worthy of a human being (as occurred in Guatemala, Rwanda or Bosnia-Herzegovina). All of these efforts contribute significantly to rebuilding human relationships after the experience of mass crime. Likewise, a holistic approach would help us remember that suffering, memory of dramatic experiences, the negotiation or ritual ways of dealing with death, do not concern only “symptoms” or “disturbances caused by stress”, but rather ***a political and moral register.*** This is illustrated in strategies which articulate deletions and reformulation of collective traumatic experiences in particularly efficient ways (through rituals, religious ceremonies, etc.). The delicate balance between forgetting and remembering is affected by a number of factors largely beyond the usual judicial and political categories:

cultural strategies, moral questions, ways in which memories are constructed and narrative landscapes, and in through which communities define their relationship to the past.

In addition to standard medical and psychological variables, work in post-mass crime settings requires understanding and taking account of a variety of factors that affect the meanings and significance that individuals and groups assign to these events. These factors are tied to the culture of the areas, and require attention to the symbolic and social worlds within which people in post-mass crime settings operate. This requires *a trans-disciplinary and holistic approach* be used in a manner that reflects the multifaceted experiences of the persons concerned and reconcile their individual and collective dimensions. Each perspective, on its own, is insufficient for capturing these multiple links, while, from the point of view of the trauma, the links between the fields of psychiatry; politics; sociology; anthropology and law (from a historical perspective) are made naturally. One of the main innovative aspects of this project is the effort to re-articulate, on one hand, what happens at the level of individuals and communities, and on the other, at the level of social and political processes (both at national and international levels). Most existing research focuses on either perspective, partially because they are studied by different disciplines that do not conceptualize and focus their investigations in the same way. This disconnection has consequences on the way we are able to imagine concrete situations. In order to overcome this, the project will develop an innovative trans-disciplinary methodology; it will include methods which refer to different forms of cultural and creative expression (story tellers, techniques of the theatre of the oppressed, drawings, paintings and sculpture). This will allow *the mobilization of cultural endeavors which participates in the re-symbolization process* (for the opening and forging of a pathway between the different systems of truth and different narratives proposed of a same event, so that they may share in mutual recognition).

Post-War Values

Also, we decided to focus our work on post-war values and the reconstruction of codes of conduct, taking seriously variables of what might be termed “soft power” as important factors underlying conflicts *and* reconciliation and the reconstruction of community; these variables may change value under different conditions. *Beliefs and belief systems after violence are not only cultural products but products of a myriad of individual traumas interacting with one another, causing new traumatic incidents, and leaving certain structures of thought in their wake.* Many of these structures of thought are neurologically supported: after violence, many survivors tend to suffer measurably increased rates of general nervous arousal, sleeplessness, anxiety, paranoia, depression, and grief, all of which affect the ways in which they interact with cultural symbols, with each other, and with their remaining family members. Less discussed but made evident in previous research of CERI and the Institute on Violence and Survival, survivors also report extremely expanded or extremely contracted perceptions during trauma, producing experiences—of miracles, transcendent horror, the disappearance of all normal perception—that may not fit with more everyday views of the world. If evil has been felt as a concrete presence, for example, simply seeking to forget or recast it as injustice may not address issues that will emerge later in problems of distrust and retribution, and concretely impact the way individuals depict themselves as human being *and* citizens.

Individuals who suffer, perhaps those who suffer the most, are often those who are the most *invisible*. Yet these provide the fodder for all massacres, and the basis for all armies of oppression. In our experience, it is necessary to find opportune places and occasions so that these people can feel recognized in their fragility and be recognized once more as *people*, not only as *victims*. It is only when survivors are able to exercise the full complement of human emotions—love, hope, success, and joy as well as hate, grief, and loss—that they cease being merely victims. Rather than remaining locked into preoccupations and concerns that are trauma-based, they begin to look to peace. The ways in which this rebirth occurs are most basically cultural, and involve the reassertion of life-affirming values over the nihilistic values that tend to hold sway when human groups are traumatized.

This preoccupation with cultural perspectives is also directly linked to the necessity to identify and recognize locally existing resources. In all cases, even the most devastating, some local resources are already in place, and are more deeply rooted in the complex cultural interpretations of the effects of trauma of that particular place than are outside resources. They are most naturally accessed by survivors, who immediately try to make sense of their world and to find ways to put it back together in a variety of subtle and small ways. The actions undertaken with traditional healers for children traumatized by war and former child soldiers demonstrate the success of strategies deeply rooted in the social and cultural context. Not all traditional practices lead to peace, however; for example, traditions of vengeance may support continuing feelings of rage and a conviction that evil abides in others, laying the ground for future conflict. Local practices and beliefs can result in negative as well as positive outcomes. Nevertheless, local and traditional resources will naturally be used in the aftermath of conflict, and must be understood for that reason. Those that are in support of peace will prove more beneficial than outside interventions with no connection to local perspectives.

A Common International Project

Factors like the importance and effectiveness of local practices explain why this project aims at relying primarily on indigenous efforts, supplying external support rather than imposing external ways of doing things. Therefore, in the preparatory phase, processes were developed to ensure the participation of the local partners (practitioners and academics) in the conception and design of our work. The objective is to initiate a process in which ***local resources, knowledge and information are taken seriously, supported and valorized, instead of being duplicated or simply ignored***. This project is therefore ***an action research effort through which we will simultaneously seek to learn about the dynamics of peace building in post-mass crime situations and to offer immediate help to those processes as the project develops. In addition, this project will also build local capacity to respond to mass-crime situations by supporting the work and training of local researchers and practitioners.***

The project is also a comparative one. This dimension of the work aims to facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge between scholars, professionals, and common citizens from different societies who were affected by the same kind of tragedies. They will be able to relate their own experiences and stories with those of others in similar situations in other different parts of the world. The four countries concerned by the first phase of the project portray different historical trajectories in which sectarianism and different manipulations of identities and cultures have played a major role in the eruption of mass crime. Now, past and

present situations are quite different from one case to another, including in terms of settlement of the situation and capacity to manage diversity inside a given society. The fact that this kind of analysis has to be carried out in a cross-cultural framework calls for additional attention to how the specifics of each context are considered. The time frame difference from Cambodia (1975-1979) and Guatemala (mainly – but not exclusively – the 1980s), to the African Great Lakes area and Bosnia-Herzegovina where the last genocide occurred less than a decade ago (massacres continued in Ituri until mid-2004) should partly contribute to the evaluation of the generational effect. ***The differences in contexts will not be dismissed but should assist in identifying common trends.***

The participants in the project will learn from each other, and develop a sense of solidarity while working on the same kind of issues and developing common conceptual and methodological tools. As such, this constitutes an important objective of the research project. The limited number of countries for the first phase is explained by the necessity to keep a manageable project at the global level and allow actual exchanges and mutual conceptual and methodological support between the teams. Indeed, in addition to intensive seminars, which will bring site personnel together from time to time, the team members will be able to actively participate in other programs through on-site missions, staff exchange and internships. In a second phase, the project will enlarge the experience to other countries, in the four regions concerned. Finally, the comparison should allow us to draw some general lessons and isolate some factors explaining the evolution of each situation and then to contribute to the global reflection thinking on prevention and reconstruction of failed states after mass violence. The geographical and cultural diversity of the selected cases is intended to allow such a global analysis.

V. The activities

The preparatory phase of the global research-action project is to be completed by December 2004. ***Preparatory field work*** is to be conducted by local research teams in preparation of a ***two week-orientation and goal-setting seminar***, at the Institute on Violence and Survival (Virginia Foundation for the Humanities / University of Virginia), Charlottesville, VA, in November 2004. This intensive effort is key to finalize the overall framework of the research, discuss methodology, objectives and key research components of the pilot phase (including definition of criteria for the selection of regions in which research will be developed in each country; and for the identification of the communities and focus groups), as well as plan the support needed by the different teams and the exchanges to be developed between countries.

This will result in the launching of a pilot phase of the research in the four target countries in January 2005. At the end of the year, each team should be able to present a first series of hypotheses and results to be tested and confirmed at a larger scale. The first approach to this field research, considered non-threatening and allowing the community itself to guide the work, will be ***the work with focus groups*** selected by the local partners.

Along these lines, during the pilot phase of its research, the country teams will:

- Revise their concept paper and draft research protocol after discussion during the November orientation and goal setting seminar in order to get a common framework for the global project but also address the specificities of each country.
- Finalize with local partners the definition of the criteria for selection of regions, communities and target groups and make the first contacts with the selected communities

(one condition being the existence of a relation of mutual confidence with one association which will participate in the research).

- Define a program of work with each selected community, select the focus groups through which the topics will be explored locally and plan the different tools to be used according to the nature and interests of focus group members.
- Select key themes and words to be proposed to the focus groups in the initiation of the investigations (examples: ‘family’, ‘community’, ‘solidarity’, ‘conviviality’, ‘respect’, ‘peace’, ‘security’, ‘citizenship’, the ‘State’, ‘power’, etc.).
- Organize workshops with NGO staff, students and other individuals (such as teachers) who will play a key role in the contact with the communities in order to explain clearly the context, objectives, and methodology of the research, do pilot group interviews with them, and give them additional tools and skills.
- Conduct a first series of focus group research, using methods which refer to different forms of cultural and creative expression in order to explore the three question areas above: family/community life, relation to the state, and beliefs and leaders. These expressive, non-threatening methods by which people can explore their own often unstudied and unremarked processes of healing and rebuilding include story telling, theatre, drawings, paintings, and sculpture (with a selective use of video). Trans-generational and trans-group exchanges will be encouraged when and where appropriate.
- Conduct non-directive individual and collective interviews in order to confirm some aspects of the analysis, and further investigate the products of the focus groups.
- Analyze and discuss the results of the pilot phase of the research with local partners, which will entail constructing a cognitive social map of the community before and after the violence, showing broken connections, surviving but perhaps changed connections, new connections, and their underlying belief structures and assumptions. Communities, led by their focus groups, will be able to see how they have changed in their basic ways of relating, and to discuss how they may want to alter the current state of affairs where it is not viable. This will not necessarily include returning to pre-war structures, but rather developing structures that take account of the effects of war and yet also support elements of community and family life and statehood that are necessary to viability.
- On the basis of this first series of focus group work, interviews, and analysis, make proposals to adjust the research approach, expand it to other regions, groups and themes, and systematically validate the first results obtained. A report will be produced and all data will be organized in order to be published.

To do this work in ways most likely to ensure its success in areas where any such work is problematic and subject to skepticism, the research team will follow a certain number of rules:

- Each focus group activity will be conducted by individuals representing different disciplines, including representatives of organizations already working with the community.
- They will pay attention to constantly articulating and outlining for review the individual and collective dimensions of what will be expressed within the focus groups;
- They will make use of different forms of cultural and creative expression, and propose them alternatively, complementing their work with non-directive collective and individual interviews, according to the context and the dynamics existing in the group.

V. The outputs

The pilot phase of the project will result in the following products (some being available by the Summer 2005, others in 2006):

- Immediately after the orientation and goal setting seminar: three concept and methodology papers presenting tools and skills needed by field personnel to use in both research and in community practice + four concept papers prepared by each field team regarding the main post-massacre issues in their country. These resources will be posted on the existing project website (to be extended); additional online working papers will be available during the course of the preparatory phase of the project. A listserv will be set up to allow communication between the team members. In addition to the project website, these papers will be circulated through specific listserves, such as TJNetwork (operated by AAAS and CSVN), which provides a vehicle for researchers working in the area of transitional justice to communicate with each other and share resources.
- In each target country, workshop and training sessions with local students and NGO staff who will participate in the research in order to brief them on the methodological issues and give them additional tools and skills. In each region selected in the pilot phase, at least one training session should be organized before the launching of the first series of investigation and a second one at the end, to discuss the provisional results of the research and assess the process. Moreover, the team will develop activities in order to ensure that the first results of the research are disseminated and discussed in the communities (workshops, festivals in which the communities could present their artistic productions, etc.).
- Specific attention will be paid to the translation and diffusion of the results in the countries themselves. At least one article will be published in each country before the end of 2005 (potentially in two formats: for a local academic journal and a NGO newsletter). In addition, conferences and other academic activities will be organized in collaboration with the academics implicated in the project. Students supervised by these academics will do internships and participate in some phases of the field research.
- During the pilot phase, two seminars will be organized in each country, with local practitioners and academics to discuss the methodology and first results of the research. One seminar will be organized in 2005, the other one in 2006. The second seminar will be enlarged to representatives of international NGOs and agencies. These workshops will serve both as an element of evaluation of the pilot phase and a trial of the organization of future international workshops, in collaboration with the Peace and Governance Program of the United Nations University. Immediately after the second meeting in each country, the international coordinators of the project will be in charge of proposing the structure of ***a handbook (or several tool kits) for both local and international practitioners intervening in post-massacre situations. Indeed we anticipate that the project will result in a series of concrete proposals to support the change necessary in the modalities of intervention in post-massacre situations.*** A first draft will be circulated among the members of the teams and key-partners of the project so that by the end of the preparatory phase, a full proposal may be presented with a pilot testing and dissemination plan, to be

executed in the next phase of the project, with the support of some members of the team. This activity will be organized in collaboration with UNU who will raise matching funds for it.

- On the basis of the workshops, discussions will also be held about the kind of *concrete policy recommendations* to be made in order to support a better understanding and consideration of local perceptions and stakes of post-massacre situations when interventions are decided and planned.
- During the preparatory phase, at least two articles will be published (or will be in the process of being published) in international academic journals, and members of the team will make scientific communications during international conferences (several invitations have already been extended to the project leaders). In 2005, an edited volume will be published by the United Nations University Press. It gathers the results of the previous phase of the research and provides the basis for a multi-disciplinary and comparative work on situations of post-massacres: Beatrice Pouligny, Simon Chesterman & Albrecht Schnabel (eds), *Mass Crime and Post-conflict Peace Building*, UNU Press. In 2006, the project team should propose the outline of the next volume gathering the results of first field investigations.

VI. The team

About the CERI

The Center for International Studies and Research was founded in 1952. It is France's foremost center for research on the international political system. It is made up of some sixty researchers and fifteen support staff. The CERI's mission is to bring together area studies specialists and international relations experts. It analyzes the contemporary political world, with a strong emphasis on an interdisciplinary approach: its research fellows include not only political scientists but also economists, sociologists, historians and anthropologists. Conflict analysis and resolution (particularly new forms of conflict and security issues) is a central component of CERI's research program.

Project Director:

Dr. Beatrice Pouligny, political scientist, is a Senior Research Fellow at CERI-Sciences Po, Paris, France and professor at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris. She has researched extensively on conflict resolution and the different dimensions of rebuilding war-torn societies, focusing on the perceptions and strategies of local actors and the interactions between local and international processes. In this perspective, she has also developed a reflection about the ethical issues raised by such a work and the ways to involve local partners in it. She has had previous field experience with the UN and NGOs in Latin America, Caribbean and Africa. In 2002-2003, she received an award from the Fulbright Commission (New Century Scholars Program).

Co-director of the project:

Dr. Roberta Anne Culbertson, anthropologist with a strong background in mental health issues and work with survivors of violence, Director of the Institute on Violence and Survival of the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities / University of Virginia.

The history of the project:

In February 2001, a trans-disciplinary research group on post-massacres issues was created under the leadership of Dr. Béatrice Pouligny and Dr. Jacques Sémelin as a co-organizer. During this initial brainstorming phase (2001-2002), CERI created a space in which political scientists, sociologists, historians, anthropologists, lawyers and psychiatrists reflected together upon the issues faced in such situations in different countries on the basis of concrete experiences. Furthermore, the group's sessions were open to practitioners, both military and humanitarian. Twenty-three papers were presented and discussed during eight sessions.¹ Furthermore, a website was created and exchanges were enlarged to field teams in different countries. On the basis of the first findings, the International Peace Academy (New York) and the United Nations University (Tokyo) joined the CERI to launch an international call for contributions in order to draw a first account of present research on these issues. After the selection process, a meeting was organized in New York, in June 2003. An international pluri-disciplinary team dealt with different aspects of how best to approach rehabilitation of post-mass crime societies. As a result, an edited volume is under preparation and will be published by the UNU Press in 2004. It emulates our collective reflection and provides a basis for moving to the fieldwork-based phase of the project, which aims to understand the multiple ways collective frames of reference have been transformed by mass violence; and to develop tools in order to help identify and support local resources to build peace and prevent the re-emergence of conflict. As a whole, this brainstorming period has resulted in the progressive construction of the research agenda and identification of pilot countries where field work was to be initiated.

Field institutions and international academic advisors:

Dr. Pouligny devoted the past year and a half to traveling to each of the countries under examination in the project. She visited each country twice and had previously circulated a project proposal translated into the official language of each of the countries. She traveled in the different regions of each country and met local academics and practitioners working on issues close to the concerns of the project in order to get their feedback on the substance of the project, its objectives, its methodology, and the possibilities of collaboration. In each country, Dr. Pouligny also made field pre-investigations and participated in local organizations' activities. All the potential partners were invited to debriefing meetings at the end of each visit. A network was then constituted and all the individuals and institutions concerned continue to receive information on

¹. Themes of the sessions : (1) Presentation of the program: objectives and methods; (2) Researching and intervening in 'mass crime' situations: ethical challenges; (3) Histories and memories of massacres; (4) Ideologies and imaginaries: before and after; (5) Social links, mass violence, and reconstruction; (6) Perpetrators / Victims: a trans-disciplinary general approach; (7) Perpetrators / Victims: Profiles and trajectories of individuals serving in militias; (8) Perpetrators / Victims: The specific situation of 'child soldiers'. For more information and the meeting reports, see the CERI thematic website '*Making Peace*': *From Mass Crime to Peacebuilding*: <http://www.ceri-sciences-po.org/themes/pouligny>

the evolution of the project. During the meetings, the question of the choice of a local institution to coordinate and administrate the research was discussed and decisions made in agreement with the different organizations concerned. Finally, it was decided to put in place local advisory committees in each of the country.

In East Congo, the local context is complex at best. The leaders of local organizations themselves warned us about the difficulty of one local organization coordinating and supervising this kind of work (including the difficulties of moving from one area to another). In agreement with them, we suggested that the Association Frantz Fanon, an Italian NGO with a base in Kampala (Uganda), serve as a formal coordinator. In recent years this Association has promoted various initiatives and projects in Italy and various African countries, based on counseling and psycho-social support with the aim of developing community based care in which survivors of violence and immigrant groups are seen as sources of valuable cultural information and resources, rather than just patients or victims. The Association has been developing research activities in East Congo since 2001. The project will be supervised by Dr. Roberto Beneduce, psychiatrist and anthropologist, Associate Professor of Cultural and Psychological Anthropology (University of Turin, Italy). Local coordination units have been put in place in Bunia (Ituri), Butembo and Goma (North Kivu), Bukavu (South Kivu). The individuals in charge of these provisional co-ordinations are local NGO staff or academics.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), the work will be coordinated by DUGA (*rainbow*), a Bosnian association which provides psychosocial relief and educational support for the specific problems faced by young-people in the post-war period. The network of local organisations constituted for this project includes organizations from the two components of BiH. They will receive the support of Dr. Jean-Claude Metraux, psychiatrist, at the head of a team of the University of Lausanne (Switzerland).

In Cambodia, the Centre for Advanced Studies (CAS) will serve as a base for the project, with a partnership with the Buddhist Institute (BI). They will also form a consortium including various organizations of the Cambodia civil society which already work with a network of community based groups across the country. They will receive the support of Dr. Maurice Eisenbruch, psychiatrist and anthropologist, Center for Culture and Health, and a multi-disciplinary team of the University of New South Wales, Sydney (Australia).

In Guatemala, the work will be coordinated by the Equipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Acción Psicosocial (ECAP), a Guatemalan NGO who provides psychosocial relief and educational support to local communities who have been victims of mass violence and conducts research on the psycho-social effects of this violence. They will also rely on a local network of Guatemalan organizations and the Maestría en Psicología Social y Violencia Política de la Universidad de San Carlos (Guatemala).

Other colleagues will serve as advisors on specific issues, particularly on transitional justice and ‘reconciliation issues’, ethics of research-action with traumatized populations. We will also mobilized artists and story tellers who have worked extensively in violent and post-war contexts on the development of cultural tools to support expression and recovery process (practice of the *theatre of the oppressed*, drawings, sculpture with different techniques using materials that can be found very easily in the field).