MULTISTRINGED AND
MULTISTRANDED
SUPPORTIVE
RELATIONS AND THEIR
AGENCY IN CONFLICT
TRANSFORMATION

ELICITING POTENTIALS FOR CONFLICT
TRANSFORMATION

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Submitted to: NORBERT KOPPENSTEINER
Date of Submission: September 11, 2019
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1 INTRODUCTION: MY PERSPECTIVE ON SUPPORTIVE RELATIONS AND MY RELATION TO THEM

Congratulations and thanks to the Globe! If you are reading these lines and you are not my supervisor or some other part of my direct supporting network and reading through one of the thesis drafts, then we finished the thesis. Thank you. Without you, this would not have been possible.

Currently I drift through the web of life as a forty three years-old Austrian Roman-Catholic agnostic single woman, as Fleming might put it (Fleming 2016, 4). I commute between Vienna and my Austrian home village. Around the latter I meddle in different things such as being a learning aid and support for Afghan refugee friends, and I enjoy spending time and exchanging with them. I supporting my family in the restaurant and receive support from them in housing and care and love which nourishes and energizes me. In Vienna I stay with a friend and mainly collaborate with the Austrian Fellowship of Reconciliation around a Colombian accompaniment project and working groups with and for human rights activists in Colombia and in Turkey. In this engagement I am also gaining a lot of experience about peace work in Austria.

With the following lines about how I see myself and my position in the world, I want to allow the reader to put the choices, arguments, deductions, analyses and interpretations presented in this work into the perspective of my current cosmovision and position in the web of life.

I guess that that “I am, what returns, if one goes where I went to, as roughly translated from “Ich bin das, was zurückkommt wenn man dorthin geht, wohin ich gegangen bin.” (Dürrenmatt 1949, 2. Act). Dürrenmatt´s quote encompasses for me
becoming and being. Becoming by the life journey up to the being, where and which I am right now, which is where I came back to, came to and will move on from. Thus I will explore some fragments of my becoming in order to shed light on what formed the current I.

I was born in the above mentioned small village in Austria, where my family owns a traditional little rural inn. In my home village and the catholic boarding school where I spent most of my adolescence guilt, obedience and working hard were omnipresent. I attribute these values mainly to Catholicism and the capitalist world system. During childhood one of my neighbors was back then an about 60 years old single woman. She nicely condensed these values whenever trying to ease my troubles during adolescence to “Da oimächtige loadt uns ima groad so vü auf, wia ma datroagn kinnan”, freely translated by the author as “The almighty always burdens you with as much as you can barely carry, but you can still carry.” Basically, there is no escape, no degree of freedom until the end of your days. I am convinced, that catholic thinking of guilt and redemption are a part of me. Indeed, I think that most of my feelings of guilt for not keeping up to families’, friends’, and societies’ expectations, have been self-inflicted and at the same time owed to this background.¹

My rucksack of guilt became already full during adolescence and I slipped into my first depressive crisis. I now read it as a culmination of the effects of the self-applied measures to counterfeit my own suffering of self-doubt and constantly feeling as a burden to my family and the world as a whole. The measures I had applied were twofold. On the one hand I was trying to be ‘useful’, from which I probably hoped to receive acknowledgment and justification for my existence. I was trying to distinguish myself with high performances at school and by helping and supporting as much as

¹ I do not strongly opine on which parts might be genetically or socioculturally inherited or through processes we might not be able to detect.
possible in our family’s restaurant. On the other hand I was isolating myself. I started cutting down social, amicable and trusted relationships which might have criticized me, needed me or even worse, wanted to support me.

Eventually I broke down and stood up again with the help of others. From this episode onwards, cyclic periods of depression, isolations and attempts of reconnections kept accompanying me for about 15 years. I did only survive and bare the suffering because of the repeated help, support and still to me unbelievable patience of friends, colleagues, superiors and family.

Nevertheless, I feel that I was not understood during those episodes. My impression is that most people were not able to grasp my suffering and despair and at the same time I realize that I could not make myself understood. I hope that this experience made me sensitive to at least trying not to judge others’ feelings or sufferings and to listen carefully and with all senses.

I finally started psychotherapy and using antidepressant drugs with the age of thirty. For about seven years I was visiting different types of psychotherapists, including behavioral, Gestalt and integrative therapists. After about two years of combined therapy, my attitude towards life and specifically towards my life started to change significantly.

I began daring to connect with others without hiding myself. These two years – and the following ones, after my “coming out” as a depressive person, I could also experience the incredible effect of help, support and patience in many different ways. With these supportive actions, or relationships in my opinion parts of these helping persons have elicited constructive change in my conflictive system. At the same time they are now a part of me which I highly value and treasure.
To sum it up, I started to experience relations with myself and others, not as a burden or threat, but as possible resources for energy, self-development, joy and harmony. These emotions and impressions were often elicited by support, which varied from emotional to practical support, as further elaborated in the chapter The Research Problem.

Possibly, professional help and a benevolent supportive social environment present as a family who was not only supporting me, but listening to me and trying to not only accept but understand and value my thoughts and changes in behavior, as well as friends with endless patience and an understanding boss allowed me to focus on healing and *Persönlichkeitsarbeit* (translated by the author to 'intrapersonal work'). Slowly, I started feeling more understood and more confident, and I began to engage with the world and with the topics that had been important and disturbing to me for a long time, such as global justice and human suffering.

Already in early adulthood humanitarian engagement attracted me and thus I spent for examples two weeks in a catholic program for HIV affected families in Peru. When entering the program, my Spanish, the mother tongue of the client families, was not good, nor did I have any idea of pedagogies or of social work, or Peruvian cultures. The whole mission was from my current point of view a fiasco in terms of helping the people. I think I did harm them in a certain way, or at least did not leave a footprint I would want to look back to. Still, this mission allowed me to get to know passionate local human rights defenders working in their own countries. It further showed me how easily social work in this ‘white man comes and saves the poor children’ manner can cause misery. The experience has not been compatible with my vision of human dignity and made me critical on the issues on help and support.
Additionally to the sense of not understanding unequal value system of human beings, self-determination has always been very important to me, i.e. I like to have the perception of taking conscious, self-determined decisions and actions. I do think that there are many preconditions based on the Mitwelt we are embedded in, but that we still have certain degrees of freedom. This does not necessarily mean that we have free will, but that we feel not completely forced into a determined position in space and time of relations.

During my work as a researcher in the field of biomedical engineering with a focus on magnetic resonance imaging for brain research I experienced my self-determination within that work highly restricted by the world capitalist system. I guess that the following two themes bothered me most. First, acquiring research funds has been a very competitive endeavor. Second, these funds were often linked to transnational companies. Again, I did not understand. I wondered why I would have to compete with peer researchers instead of collaborating with them. I did not approve that research that is supposedly aiming at improving the health system of us human beings also draw on funds that would contribute to social injustice and harm the globe. Both concerns provoked pain within myself. While I had learned to mainly embrace intra- and interpersonal relationships, pain provoked by interconnection in the wider web of humans, which did not feel just or ‘right’ came to the fore. Repositioning was the method of choice for alleviating my pain.

Thus, I returned as an international accompanier of local human rights defenders to Latin America and this work allowed me almost immediately to feel being in the ‘right’ place in the web of humans. Especially during the first period there was hardly any moment, in which I did not feel ethically confident with what I was doing.
In 2013 I started accompanying in the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado in Colombia. Its members have tried to non-violently resist in a war-torn rural area against forced displacement for over twenty years. My work was basically living, together with one or two other non-Colombians in one of the rural hamlet of the Peace Community and walking with and advocating for the Colombian small scale farmers and their vision of self-determination. Despite the very restricted movement due to possible belligerent confrontations and land mines, I loved this work and I was feeling motivated, inspired, grounded and connected, when news arrived from my core family. My sister, her husband, their son and our parents informed me that an uncle, who was at that time very close to my family had killed himself. He died only three months after the death of a family member who was a key satellite part of our core family and one year after another family member had killed himself. I had been abroad during all this time. Of course I did immediately talk to my family on the phone. The nongovernmental organization (NGO) I was working for, offered me to take immediate holidays, in case I wanted to visit my family. Fully engaged in my endeavor to be the best international accompanier ever and feeling most grounded, centered and congruent in my actions, I was clear about wanting to stay with the peace community and offer protection. Additionally I did not think at that time, that I would be helpful to my family anyways or that I could offer a supportive relationship to them while I considered being very helpful to the peace community members. My family, who after my ‘coming out’ did understand, that I did live happier after haven broken out of social norms of career, family etc. did of course not pressure me to come home. Kind of proud of myself, perhaps because of my intrinsic high valuation of dutifulness, or because of hoping for acknowledgement, as I did during childhood and adolescence, I walked over to the village representative to tell her the news. Her
reaction was quite different from what I had expected. Her first question was “Cuando tienes tu vuelo?”2 I was immediately interpreting that this was her experience with white, privileged accompaniers, who would just leave whenever they wanted, so I proudly said that I talked with my family and that we decided that I planned to stay with them in the hamlet. She and her whole family looked at me with despise. I was very confused. Then she began to ask me in rage about what I was thinking and if I had a heart. How could I, who would have the economical means and organizational support to be with my family in order to accompany them through mourning and hardship, not leave? Why would I think that this was be a good idea? She continued that all of them, all peace community members would, if possible, just stay with their relatives in such cases. The organization could send another accompanier to the hamlet or its inhabitants would organize themselves better during the time the accompaniers are not around in order to increase self-protection or whatever, but love and care cannot be put into the background, they could not wait. She further asked rhetorically what all the struggle would be useful for, if we didn’t take into account the businesses of the heart, life and death of our close social network? Well, this day I didn’t receive coffee in her house. During the following days condemning gazes seemed to hit me wherever I walked. Still, I felt grounded and sure that my decision was right. Workwise, my decision was reflected in a loss of trust. I consider trust as crucial for working in open conflict zones. I had to regain the community’s trust with shared time.

Only months later, when I came back to my family’s home, I realized my family’s hardships due to the losses. Perhaps, I was intoxicated with being happy with my own, self-determined life and did not listen careful enough to the suffering of people from afar. I started to wonder about caring and empathy from a distance, in the web

2 “When is your flight?” translated by the author.
of global relations (Comins Mingol 2008). These were some of the doubts, which made me look deeper into the relational aspects of peace work.

Interestingly, I am drawn to a sort of nomadic lifestyle. As an adult, I did hardly ever reside more than two years in the same region. This living style possibly allows me to avoid the feeling of being caught, fixed or unfree in a certain social position the global system, or in other words, tightly caught in the web of relations, like in a spider trap. Instead this web made me feel secured and flexible, like a part of a web that’s allowing an immense number of degrees of freedom.

This lifestyle became even more pronounced and consciously chosen after the psychotherapeutic work with myself. I tried to combine the nomadic lifestyle with focusing on living in the presence, which allowed me to explore very different kinds of relationships with an open mind. It often felt good and satisfying. My lived experiences of living happily in Colombia, while my family was going through hardship, and my reactions to it were making me ponder about how an individual could be most wholesomely open, or simply available to various modes of vibrations from different layers of the web of relations, from the global to inter and intrapersonal ones, instead of being tuned to certain layers and neglecting others.

So I started in the last year to more and more ‘go with the flow’ of vibrations of needs I would sense within the web of relations. In my point of view, one passes many receptors and effectors while drifting through the web of life. Through the path of life, we become equipped with more and more receptors and effectors. Drifting instead of stillness, allows for more encounters and thus, the probability of an encounter of adequate receptors and effectors becomes more likely. Additionally, adaptive and creative learning from other receptors and effectors might increase our ways of being able to connect. Thus, it is a journey of constant learning. Ecologic systems which are
in dynamic equilibriums are usually not static connections between parts, but adaption and changing within the system is permanently necessary. Thinking of a web of social relations, receptors and effectors might be a metaphor for needs and the abilities to fulfill a need, or serve as catalysts.

In the first moment it might surprise that this live style did so far not lead to self-abnegation, but perhaps self-care did just happen, as part of the dynamic equilibrium. When considering the layers of intrapersonal relations are part of the web of relations in question, the self is also a player in the overall dynamic equilibrium and therefore self-abnegation would probably considerably disturb a dynamic equilibrium if not counterfeited sufficiently by other parts of the system, which might be supportive relationships – helping hands.

At the beginning of this chapter we started out with the I and how feelings of guilt and injustices elicited on the long run intentions to befriend the I with different relational layers. The journey went towards the inside of the person and outwards from the person. Thus my I slowly found its home as a nomad in the web of relations, in which, after finding a rather congruent I, I could relate with different layers. Somehow, my I felt more and more as a We within this web of relations expanding to the globe. A We which can move, adapt and transform in quite a lot of zones without feeling insecure or abandoned, but secure and fulfilled and sometimes even in harmony.

Adam Curle defines peace as a “state of harmonious, constructive cooperation and just living together” (Curle 1986, Introduction) what he further calls “peaceful relations” (Curle 1986, Mediation). This definition has a similar connotation as He Ping, a Cantonese expression for peace, which can be interpreted as “calm breath in the whole world” (Dietrich 2012, p.48) and corresponds to the concept of peace as
“calm breath in resonance with the divine breath in the whole world” (Dietrich 2012, p.48). So, there are potentials for peace within relations which can be narrowed and broadened from the intrapersonal to the divine or the globe or spiritual. This highly relational notion of peace as harmony is what currently echoes most to me when I do think of peace work, or how I can envision my contribution to a more peaceful Mitwelt, which I imagine harmonious, but not at any price. I feel this notion of peace basically reflected or contained in the theory around transrational peaces, which I came in touch with during Peace Studies in Innsbruck (Dietrich, 2013).

In my opinion, the years of psychotherapy and the encounter with transrational peaces have influenced the herewith presented reflections on my path to where and what I am now significantly. In general development psychology or common descriptions of life-span developments, human development is often described as a sequence from outer dependence through isolation, discovery of the self to expanding again to the outer world and connecting the worlds (see e.g. Gilligan 1982). So far, I consider that my development fits pretty neatly into this model. Thus there seems to be a high possibility, that there is a potential in many individual experiences of supportive relationships, and therefore research on their potential for elicitive conflict transformation seems relevant to me.

In conclusion, the research topic for this thesis arose from my own experiences of the positive influences of supportive relationships towards intra- and interpersonal harmony and how such supportive relationships could possibly contribute towards constructive social change and conflict transformation, without draining certain parties of such relationships or shifting violence from one social sphere to another.
2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Elicitive conflict work was developed by John Paul Lederach out of his unsatisfying experiences with prescriptive conflict resolution methods, especially in settings culturally different to his own background. His doubts led him to the following research question:

How do we foster a pedagogical project that respects and empowers people to understand, participate in creating, and strengthen appropriate models for working at conflict at their own context? (Lederach 1995, 39)

In ‘Preparing for Peace’ Lederach deduced from this question the importance of implicit and explicit social conflict knowledge to foster his pedagogical project (Lederach 1995). With the word explicit he refers to conscious, deliberate dedication to social conflict for example by research or training. Additionally, explicit always implies conscious reflexion on the experienced social interactions. Implicit social conflict knowledge refers to accumulations gained by everyday natural experiences in the certain cultural settings in which they have been experienced. For Lederach, the further treatment of such knowledge is then crucial for the development of basic skills for conflict transformation (Lederach 1995, 45). The resulting design of the elicitive conflict work builds on facilitators’ skills on eliciting basic knowledge already available in the conflict parties. Thus the elicitive conflict work, in contrast to prescriptive conflict work

...does not develop or offer a content solution for the conflict episode, but provides a safe space for the parties, in which they can work on changes
in their relationships along the horizons of their own intelligibility. (Echavarría Álvarez 2014, 58)

Therefrom we can, for the sake of analysis, identify two roles, which are at the same time unified in the conflictive system. On the one hand there is a facilitator, who serves as a safe space holder. On the other hand there are the parties, who bring their implicit social knowledge.

Elicitive conflict transformation is based on the philosophy of transrational peaces, as W. Dietrich details in his first volume of his Trilogy on Many Peaces. Transrationality in turn is strongly informed by humanistic and then transpersonal psychology integrating amongst others, systems theory, deep ecology, all of them influenced by the paradigm shift in natural sciences at the beginning of the 20th century. For a detailed analysis on these influences we refer the reader to the first two volumes of W. Dietrich’s Trilogy of Many Peaces (Dietrich 2012 and 2013).

Thus, ideal qualities of a conflict worker or facilitator aim at enabling them to hold a safe space where different ideas of peace and different interpretations and understandings of conflictive relations can conflate in order to allow constructive change from within the conflictive system. An example for a description of such qualities is the elicitive conflict workers ABC and qualities summarized by the Unesco Chair for Peace Studies online (UNESCO 2014a). ABC stands for Awareness, Balance and Congruence. These qualities and behavioral guidelines are basically representing Rogerian principles for the client-centered approach (Rogers 1961; Biermann-Ratjen and Eckert and Schwartz 1997).

The Rogerian approach in its facilitation mode puts a strong emphasis on the clients’ perception and reality of “being understood”. The facilitators ABC can be a

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1 Later transformed into person-centered
vehicle for making the other conflict parties feel understood. Thus, they can be enabled to use their voices’ echo properly to transform relations constructively.

Trainings for elicitive conflict workers as for example offered during Peace Studies in Innsbruck and in different workshops focus on methods derived from humanistic and transpersonal psychology. Generally, the trainee can experiment within a safe space. Examples are the Clarity Process as introduced by Kabbal (2006), nonviolent communication following concepts of Rosenberg (2005), active listening (Rogers and Farson 1987) and theme centered intervention as suggested by Cohn (2004). The safe space training approach allows to experiment in limit regions, which might have been no-go zones in everyday life or no-go zones when employed as a conflict worker. Simultaneously they also allow for identification and challenge of one’s own limits prior to entering a certain conflictive system. Thus, these trainings can potentially prevent possible negative influences on a conflictive system. Generally, they all aim at the personal development of conflict workers and to provide them with a tool kit for creating a space for conflict parties.

Learning and knowledge acquisition are therefore crucial for conflict transformation. Constructivist learning theory emphasizes the importance of subjectivism and relativism in gaining knowledge (Prawat and Floden 1994). Knowledge, hence the constructed truth, depends then on the social environment and place and time in which it is gained (Vygotsky 1978). Additionally, truth is not to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction (Bakhtin 1984).

We find a similar notion of pedagogical encounters, as moments of interaction between “people who are attempting, together to learn more than they know” (Freire

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4 With no-go zones we refer to zones which represent situations which are outside our comfort zone, in which we feel unsure, unsafe and unexperienced.
2005, 90) in Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed. This notion of learning, where encounters bring to forth knowledge resonate very much with my understanding of learning. Following this thread of thought about encounters, encounters in safe spaces allow for some of these experiences, and for acquiring knowledge. Knowledge gained in every day social engagements can be complementary to knowledge accumulated in safe space experiences.

In conclusion, learning theories with a relational and systemic emphasize on how knowledge is acquired stress the necessity of authentic and real-world social encounters.

An example for a difference between safe-space and real-world experiences, which has had quite an impact in my experiences as a conflict worker is the time frame. Simulations of real world, mostly not clearly predefined periods of authentic relations are limited to the best of my knowledge in training settings to mostly timely clearly constricted relational experiences of short periods. Concretely, for a lot of the families I have worked with in the last four years, war is not a combat simulation of six days\(^5\), but a continuous background noise, with some peaks of combats and forced displacements surrounded by wiggles of insecure, conflictive and complicated living situations. Even in the conflict situations when a conflict worker is deployed, most of the time opting out seems in a majority of settings more viable for the latter compared to the conflict parties\(^6\).

Supportive relationships in everyday life are a special kind of real authentic social experiences, which I experienced as forces that can contribute to constructive change, as described in the chapter My Perspective. In sociology the term of “supports” in \(^5\) a training which I experienced as extremely valuable for living in a war zone

\(^6\) a distinction which has to be made for the sake of analysis here is what I call direct conflict parties and the conflict worker, which is part of the conflictive system, as the some conditions are quite different
human networks mainly refers to economic, emotional and instrumental support (Schnegg 2008, 220ff). I would like to use this definition of supportive relationships as a starting point. Supportive relationships, as I want them to be understood throughout this thesis, can be of all the four qualities but are motivated as helping relationships as described by Carl Rogers:

A helping relationship might be defined as one in which one of the participants intends that there should come about, in one or both parties, more appreciation of, more expression of, more functional use of the latent inner resources of the individual. (Rogers 1961, 40)

Supporting, with the intention of eliciting the appreciation of general potentials of participants, is assumed to be the motivating force for entering such relationships as will be outlined in this work. Additionally, stimulation of the appreciation of potentials of the relations of participants and their networks can be motivating forces for the concept of supportive relationships used here.

As examples I would like to explore supportive relations from my personal experiences of international accompaniment, family assistance and support for refugees in Europe. These examples do encompass all three elements of support just mentioned. The concept of supportive relationships discussed in this thesis, does purposely include economical support. The above mentioned categorization of relationships can be situated in the political, professional and private sphere.

Inclusiveness of different kinds of support, joined by the fact, that at least two supportive relationships with different partners are actively attended, is what I will refer to as multistringed and multistranded. Being in a support group for a certain oppressed community in a foreign country and trying to organize political support for
their claims in your residence country, while supporting a friend in going through
divorce and financially supporting people who don’t receive welfare and are not
allowed to work either is an example for multistringed and multistranded supportive
relationships. Again, multistringed refers to different relationships i.e. with different
individuals at a time. Multistranded is what characterizes the different qualities of
support, which have been introduced above as economic, emotional and instrumental,
(Schnegg 2008, 220f) and when at least two types of them occur at the same time,
possibly within the same relationship, but not necessarily. The examples mentioned
have been described one-directionally from a helper or supporters point of view only
for simplifications and in the service of a clear description of the general concept of
multistrandedness and multistringedness. I’d like to point out that the helper and or
supporter, is at the same time or in other moments also an active, conscious receiver
of support.

Additionally, as will be discussed in detail further below, the supportive
relationships analyzed in this thesis are not thought as relationships of negotiations.
Supportive relationships considered here base support on equity and do not result in
bilateral negotiations of give and take (Gilligan 1982). An example of such
supportive actions that have been disseminated into a web of relations between
communities who didn't even know each other personally, was lived during the
official armed conflict in Guatemala. Threatened by paramilitary groups, various
Guatemalan communities hid for several years in the jungle, being almost constantly
on the run. Knowing that they would not be able to harvest, whatever they would
plant, because they could not stay that long on the same place, they still planted corn,
hoping that another community that might also hide in the jungle, might find it and
thus might be able to survive, by harvesting the crops (Comunidades de Pueblos en Resistencia, CPR Primavera del Ixcán, Personal Communications, Guatemala, 2011).

Going now back to the initial question Lederach rose, learning from supportive relationships of different kinds, could possibly provide in later stages of life implicit or explicit conflict knowledge. This might then help to make the conflict parties feel “understood” and therefore create a proper space for elicitive conflict transformation to happen. In this thesis will try to get closer to how this 'understood' might be fostered by supported relationships.

Supportive relationships are possibly especially suitable for this learning effect. In conflict transformation homeostasis is one of the principles to be looked at, which can help to give direction in conflict work for constructive change, as proposed in the elicitive conflict mapping framework (UNESCO 2014b). When, in everyday life, we build up supportive relationships, something that was not fulfilled or whole is treated energy is entered into the system. Depending on the treatments’ catalyst qualities, it can help to shift the system to a homeostatic state a dynamic equilibrium, which might even persist after the “treatment”. This systemic influx of energy can be a metaphor for the establishment of supportive relationships, and will be discussed in more detail in Elicitive Conflict Mapping Principles (UNESCO 2014b). Also, social engagement as supportive relationships can contribute experiences of constructive changes, which can then also be transformed into explicit knowledge by respective reflection.

Personally, I resonate a lot with non-violent change processes and these are the once I am willing to engage with. Constructive, not creating limiting dependencies but empowering and helpful relationships, which are not patronizing nor forced on a collective or person, constitute to me the most nonviolent, supportive relationships
between people or groups, and thus I consider them most interesting for elicitive conflict work.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the knowledge base of the elicitive conflict worker as well as the conflict parties, are essential initial conditions for an elicitive conflict transformation process to flourish. Safe-space trainings can provide certain lived experiences for broadening this knowledge. Still, authentic, real-life experiences contain complementary information that can hardly be experienced in safe-space training sessions such as described above. In this thesis I would like to explore, how experiencing supportive relationships as supporter and supported observer or secondary influenced individual or group can serve in elicitive conflict transformation for the conflict facilitators’ and conflict parties’ role.
3 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

From the research problem described in the previous chapter, I derive the following main research question:

How can multistringed and multistranded supportive relationships experienced by the potential conflict workers and other potential participants of a conflictive system contribute to elicitive conflict transformation?

Simply speaking, there needs to be a soil, to elicit from and there needs to happen some understanding between the participants of the conflict and conflict worker, so that an elicit conflict transformation process can be fruitful. Supportive relationships, as defined descriptively in the previous chapter shall thus be understood throughout this thesis as a broadening of the term helping relationships described by C. Rogers (1961), which is in terms of attitude, behavior and experience part of all forms of supportive relationships described above. The dimensions of private and public sphere as different levels of conflictive systems and its penetrations as well as differences of how these relationships play out, depending if they are based on a primary working, private, voluntary, organizational or personal base, will be addressed by the examples of experiences chosen.
4 METHODS AND STRUCTURE

In this chapter I would like to outline the methods used in order to get closer to the research question stated above. In a first step, I try to approach the topic of supportive relationships and its influences on society and individuals by available literature and scientific findings. In a next step reflections on some personal examples of perceived supportive relationships and its perceived change making qualities will be presented and analyzed using different scientific frameworks as metaphors. The relational qualities are further discussed using different learning and knowledge acquisition theories. The personal examples of supportive relationships are followed by non-expert interviews of partners about their perceived supportive relationships and reflections about them. In my opinion these interviews are a crucial part of the thesis, as they might be able to ground the hypotheses with perceived experiences (Freire 2005, 112-114). For the interviews, the qualitative theme centered approach is used and further detailed below.

Furthermore, elicitive conflict mapping and its main principles will be used to find possible pathways of how supportive relationships could directly help as elicitive tools for conflict transformation and how the experiences of such relationships might enhance elicitive conflict mapping capacities. In a final step, knowledge on relationships gathered from these different resources and in different ways, will be connected and analyzed with respect to the research question.

4.1 BACKGROUND

Supportive relationships as outlined in The Research Problem, do include relationships of economic, material, emotional or caring support, and are thereby all considered as showing the characteristics of helping relationships under the premise
of positive regard described by Rogers (Rogers 1961; Biermann-Ratjen and Eckert and Schwartz 1997) and non-bargaining relationships (Gilligan 1982). Hence, principles of helping relationships (Rogers 1961; Kolb and Boyatzis 1968), will be reviewed, after looking into varies types and qualities of supportive relationships (Heron 1999; Vogelauer 2005).

Additionally, possible knowledge acquisition or learning from the experiences of such processes will be reviewed including Freire´s pedagogical theories (Freire 1998 and 2005), Mezirow´s transformative learning (Mezirow 1990) and Kolb´s learning circles (Kolb 1984), all influenced by critical constructivism and humanistic psychology. Transpersonal aspects are included through Heron´s learning circles (Heron 1999). Furthermore, we will add to this picture recent neuroscientific views on learning (Blakemore 2012; Damasio and Carvalho 2013; Owens and Tanner 2017).

To come full circle, I will close with a list of desired capacities for elicitive conflict workers. The information provided in chapter Background, will serve in the subsequent chapters for analysis and conceptualization of possible influences of supportive relationships on elicitive conflict work.

4.2 MY EXPERIENCES
I imagine and experience myself as being an integrated part of a web of relationships, with many of them being supportive, from which I can withdraw security and harmony. The word can is chosen in order to indicate a possibility. Hence, I consider relationships as a potential. Security and harmony are crucial elements for my feeling of peace and indicative for the modern and energetic peace families respectively (Dietrich 2012). Looking through the lenses of physics, I even consider myself as an interference of different relations in the energetic field of life in a certain moment,
being in the presence, but at the same time being history, which is stored within these
relations. Fluctuating energy connects many different spheres and can play out in
many different ways. I would like to use three examples of experiences which are
built up by different kinds of relationships with different qualities of supportiveness.
They will be analyzed by first reflecting on some concrete story lines within these
networks and subsequent interpretations of some interferences of the different
relationships.

First, I would like to explore some relationships I experienced while working as
an international accompanier in different organizations and places in Latin America.
An introduction of the theory and praxis of international accompaniment (Mahony
and Eguren 1997; Mahony 2007; Koopman 2012) as peace work will precede my
narrative of different relationships that were developed throughout my engagement in
Latin America within the framework of international accompaniment. Considering the
relational emphasize of this thesis, it seems indispensable to also turn the attention to
the specific interpretations and concerns and terms around interferences between
accompaniers and accompanied individuals and organizations in international
accompaniment.

Second, I will engage with what I called family assistance in the introductory
chapters. It refers to different ways of caring about, taking care of and also caring—as
nursing body and soul. I experienced many of such relationships in what I consider
the field of my family. It includes the being taking care of and cared I experienced
during peaks of my recurrent depressions and how intra-family relations played out
after a severe injury of a family member.

Third, the developments of relations when engaging with minor not accompanied
male Afghan refugees I met in Austria will be described. Using modern lenses of
this third pool of experiences might be considered most narrowed down to an appropriate researchable pool within a geographically limited area, a very specific group of people etc. Looking at it through the lenses of supportive relationships with its four types and subtypes such as economic, emotional, caring, learning housing and other supports I personally consider it at least as broad as the other examples mentioned.

Let me share a few words on why these examples seem relevant to me. The severe injury of a family member surprised us during a time when I was already engaged in several relationships with minor male Afghan refugees, which I hoped to be or become supportive relationships as soon as possible. At the same time I had scheduled some support events for a Colombian non-violent resistance human rights organization which I had accompanied prior to this period. In spite of the manifold tasks I wanted to accomplish, I did not feel overburdened after the accident happened. In fact it was the period, when I started becoming aware of the feeling of joy and motivation for life I could gain from all these different activities, of being with these different people without being a main architect or civil engineer, but perhaps passing on every now and then a brick in building a society that can provide security and harmony. At the same time I started sensing quite intensively how the supportive situations that I had experienced in the past would not only guide me and inform me but primarily would help me to understand certain parts of potential conflictive situations or misunderstandings. This understanding helped – at least that was what I felt – me and several other individuals in finding orientation, pathways and leadership towards positive cooperative change themselves. Even more so, I sensed that supporting or helping started to become contagious and listening with positive regard almost a sports. Hence, this period motivated me to let go as good as it gets and let
myself get caught in the net of supportive relationships. Then I started wondering if I
did perhaps just put on the proper lenses in order to perceive specific qualities of
relations and their potential. Eventually I decided to reflect more on the subject and
started to write this thesis.

4.3 NON-EXPERTS INTERVIEWS
Non-experts, theme-centered interviews as described by Schlehe (2008, 128) were
conducted with five individuals, for the sake of shading light on how possible
constructive changes might be proliferated by supportive relationships as defined
above. I was interested in possible spontaneous, incidental reflections of the
participants on changemaking factors as awareness, balance and congruence, or other
recommended abilities of elicitive conflict workers (see The Research Question and
Background). Furthermore, I was eager to find out if changes within such qualities
and abilities were part of the interviewees reflections.

I chose the participants by the following criteria. First, they shared with me in
some point in time a relation which I perceived as a supportive relationship.
Additionally, social positions, which manifest in age, class, profession, rural or urban
living context and their cultural background, as well as accessibility for the interview,
have been taken into account in order to have some variety. This choice of interview
partners with whom I do have personal face-to-face relationships comes with a certain
emotional closeness between the interview partners and me as the interviewer. The
tension caused around the issue of closeness and distance (Beer 2008, 128ff) was
explicitly mentioned to the potential interview partners, which was at the same time
part of raising my own awareness around the topic.

After having established a first list of potential interviewees, I talked to the
candidates about the general idea of my thesis and the possibilities of interviewing
them. I noticed in several people, explicitly the ones from my close cultural ‘Austrian’ setting, that especially the idea, that our relation would have “helped” them during a certain period of time, and that I reflect on that as “help” and would moreover publish this in my thesis, made them feel very uncomfortable. Consequently, I decided to remove some of these people from the list: I had the impression, that the mere idea of having received help, was like “losing the face”. As Lederach points out several times, not losing the face is quite crucial to elicit potentials (2005). In these situations, I felt that trying to analyze, reflect on having received help from me, being the one who potentially helped the interviewee, would make them feel ashamed. Interestingly it was the other way around, when people felt that, they were themselves the protagonists in terms of helping. The just opposite effect happened with the potential interview partners from Colombia. They were more than willing to talk about how my presence and actions positively influenced their lives, but hesitant or perhaps unable to seeing themselves as helping agents within my web of relations, with the support directed towards me. I hope to find more insight into this observation through the analysis of the actual interviews.

The interviews with the final participants were conducted in German and Spanish. Following the approach of theme centered interviews, I first tried to raise awareness of the interviewer’s and interviewee’s dependencies on their backgrounds and closeness or distance we had within the web of relations. The introducing question was kept as general and open as possible, to allow the interview to follow the implicit knowledge of the interviewee, which might not be explicitly asked in this question,

\footnote{Obviously as we are doing only a few qualitative interviews, this is only a personal observation and I do not claim any statistical relevance for it.}

\footnote{In my opinion, the relationships I refer to had not been between accompanier and accompanier or other relationships of strong interdependencies in a colonial sense or in terms of inequality}
but might be elicited by the open question. The first part I focused on listening, with positive regard to the interviewed person, trying to understand them, without putting oneself into the center of the theme. Later on, I only individualized secondary, confronting and detailed questions, if perceived useful in the moment of the interview and finally we reflected collectively on the supportive relations.

Generally, the interviews were not conducted in neutral places, as often suggested in ethnography, but in the participants’ places or via internet, with the interviewed persons choosing where or how to conduct the interview. Prior to the interview, I tried to convey to the interviewed person the purpose of the study and why I thought that their view would be very valuable for the thesis. Additionally, I initially point out that the interviews would be anonymized, if preferred. After I experienced the first non-constructive reactions on interview requests, as described above, I decided to explicitly explain prior to the interview, that the relations between the interviewee and me and the actions that happened during this relationship, were not promoted by me in order to investigate certain things, but that the relation happened ‘from the heart, and was received with the heart’. As I had experienced in earlier conversations, with the participants in question I had the understanding that the expression ‘von ganzem Herzen / desde el corazón / from the heart’ und ‘mit ganzem Herzen / con todo mi corazón / with all my heart’ were understood as the message I wanted to transmit.

After explaining the concept of supportive relationship of this thesis, the introductory and thus main question, of the interview was:

“Can you remember and tell me about having been in a helping, supportive relationship, as receiver and/or giver, what you have learned from it and how it has changed you in relation to your Mitwelt.”
In German: “Erinnerst du dich an irgendeine helfende, unterstützende Beziehung, eine Beziehung bei der du jemandem geholfen oder dir geholfen wurde. Kannst du mir erzählen, i) wie es war, ii) was du gegebenenfalls daraus gelernt hast und iii) wie es gegebenenfalls dein Verhalten in Beziehungen verändert hat?”

In Spanish: “Te acuerdas de alguna relación en la cual has recibido o dado apoyo? Podrías contarme, i) cómo te fue, ii) que has a caso aprendido de ella y iii) como a caso ha cambiado tu forma de relacionarse con las y los demás y tu alrededor?”

After this first part of the interviews, I invited the participants to reflect on a situation between the participant and interviewer as a helping relationship, based on the same question of the first part of the interview, only that the interviewer, i.e. I suggested one or two specific relational processes, that I have experienced supportive in the sense of this thesis. I therefore tried to use, when appropriate and available, two processes: One, in which the helper was perceived as being the interview partner and another one, where I interpreted my actions towards the interview partner as supportive. I tried to mention both events at once. Thus, I hoped to balance out the culture masks which would lead to immediate judging, or losing the face as mentioned earlier in this chapter. I hope that this procedure opened up deeper layers for reflection. I tried to prevent the trap of the interview partner telling me, as they know me, just what they think what I wanted to hear.

Eventually, I will describe and give an account of the complete partner interviews in a way that a general analytical discussion is possible and privacy is not violated.

As mentioned above, episodes are then examined on information related to elicitive conflict workers’ capacity building (see Background).
4.4 ELICITIVE CONFLICT MAPPING

After reflecting on supportive relationships in literature, personal experiences and the narratives of different individuals, I will try to get closer to the possible roles of supportive relationships in finding and giving possible directions in elicitive conflict mapping by using the basic principles of the framework of elicitive conflict mapping.

Elicitive conflict mapping is thought to give orientation to a conflict worker within a certain conflict in the sense that the conflict worker might get a grasp on which next actions or steps to take or not to take. The basic principles, which serve as a relational compass within the conflictive system, are correspondence, resonance, and homeostasis (Dietrich 2014a, 52).

Although the systematic use of these principles in conflict work is pretty novel, biomechanical applications and concepts of resonance, correspondence and homeostasis, have accompanied me for many years from studying physics to researching in the field of magnetic resonance imaging of the human brain, part of the human being, an open dynamic systems (Soellinger 2008). I am eager to explore the possibilities of these principles for conflict transformations and conflict situation determinations and the potentials which might become accessible not only through the three principles stand alone, but through the integration of possible interdependences of correspondence, resonance and homeostasis, as observed in magnetic resonance imaging of human beings. Nevertheless it is important to mention, that the translation of the principles to individuals as persons and social groups has to be done with great care and benevolence by extracting principles from a different model and therefore neglecting several properties, which might be bond to the principles in the biomechanical model, but not in its metaphoric use and
additionally for the things we might not know yet or might not see yet (Bertalanffy 1968).

Hence, I will shortly introduce the three principles as understood in elicitive conflict transformation and roughly address my relationship to them from prior engagements in natural sciences. I will try to give a basic idea of how magnetic resonance imaging interpretations of resonance, correspondence and homeostasis can be of help when looking for orientation into social systems, how supporting relationships might give examples of correspondences, resonances and dynamic equilibriums and how these principles might contribute in these example to the emergence of constructive transformation of conflictive systems in the corresponding chapter.
5 STATE OF THE ART

Relational aspects and conflict transformation are key aspects of the research question. Concerning conflict transformation, I was mainly introduced to the methods of elicitive conflict transformation and the corresponding philosophical theory of transrational peaces as outlined by Wolfgang Dietrich during my studies in Innsbruck. Methods and theory are presented in the Trilogy on Many Peaces by Wolfgang Dietrich.

The first part focusses on different families of varying concepts of peace, culminating in the theory of transrational peaces (Dietrich 2012).

The second part connects the theory of transrational peaces to the methods of elicitive conflict transformation (Dietrich, 2013). It strongly builds upon conflict transformation methods described by J.P Lederach (1995). John Paul Lederach introduced the term elicitive and then only used it for a certain time period (Lederach 1995, 37-73). The word elicitive itself was taken from humanistic psychology (Dietrich 2014b, 53) and gives a first hint how Lederach's approach contributed to bridging humanistic psychology with peace work. Especially Carl Rogers’ work, but also Paulo Freire have strongly influenced John Paul Lederach’s work (1995, 2005). The different communicative methods Wolfgang Dietrich suggests as capacity building methods for elicitive conflict workers (Dietrich 2013), show influences of Paulo Freire's combination of praxis and reflection, which is outlined in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed. The importance of dealing with issues in the here and now, in its very own realities, suggested by Freire in the same work has also influenced John Paul Lederach significantly and is still an important characteristic of elicitive conflict transformation (Freire, 2005; Dietrich 2013, 40). Lederach himself was further more
strongly influenced by Adam Curle’s work. The Quaker Adam Curle was founding professor of the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford in the United Kingdom. His efforts in conflict work were mainly built on psychology, anthropology and development theory (Woodhouse 2010, 2016).

So, for a general introduction into humanistic psychology I started out with a comprehensive textbook on client centered therapy (Biermann-Ratjen and Eckert and Schwartz, 1997), focussing on Carl Rogers approach, which I complemented with some of Carl Roger’s original texts (1961 & 1969). Before these specific readings, Erich Fromm and Paul Watzlawick had laid ground for my understanding of humanistic psychology. For the different communication based safe space capacity building methods mentioned throughout the thesis, I agree with Dietrich (2013, 44) that the writings of Ruth Cohn, Virginia Satir, Fritz Perls can still be considered state of the art. I would think the same for Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication and Ruth Cohn's disciple Friedemann Schulz von Thun's German classic on communication *Miteinander Reden*.

My knowledge on the transpersonal psychology has for a great part been informed by Sylvester Walch’s lectures during the studies in Innsbruck (2013) and John Heron’s late work (2013).

So, mainly Wolfgang Dietrich, John Paul Lederach and Adam Curle influenced my understanding of elicitive conflict transformation and the way the term is used in this thesis. Carl Rogers’ person centered therapeutic approach has been essential for understanding the capacity building methods suggested for elicitive conflict transformation work. His early work additionally guided me for the definition of qualities of supportive relationships under consideration (1958). Rogers’ disciple Kolb's further elaborations were equally important (1978).
The interdisciplinary approach of the thesis calls for getting in touch with philosophical, sociological aspects, as well as physics and neuroscience.

Methods suggested by the Michael Schnegg have been a source for the dimensions of support introduced in chapter background (2008) and are based on social anthropology.

In the same chapter and in chapter My Experiences the physical and neurobiological considerations are based on my prior studies and research positions in physics, biomedical engineering and life sciences circling around magnetic resonance imaging in medicine. Apart from the lectures on Experimental Physics during these studies, especially the 2nd and 3rd volume of “Feynman Lectures on Physics” (Feynman and Leighton and Sands 1963) are classical, significant sources for understanding the basics ideas of quantum mechanics as well as electromagnetic phenomena, which dominate my perspectives on relationships in general, and have a strong influence on my understanding of correspondence, harmony and resonance. Further direction of my understanding of resonance and also homeostasis I attribute to my background of Magnetic Resonance Imaging. In my opinion the classics reference work on Magnetic Resonance Imaging “Magnetic resonance imaging: physical principles and sequence design” by E.M. Haacke et al contains a useful description of the corresponding effects (1999).

In Chapter My Experiences, the basic theory of international accompaniment has been taken from Luis Enrique Eguren and Liam Mahony. Both of them were one of the first International Accompaniers using the dissuasion model described in My Experiences. They have been founding members of Peace Brigades International, one of the oldest non-governmental international accompaniment organization using privilege related to specific citizenships and the nation state model for protection.
Luis Enrique Eguren's and Liam Mahony's book Unarmed Bodyguards has become standard literature for international accompaniment (Mayony and Eguren).

The so far presented viewpoints on relationships have a rather systemic character, which also goes in line with the postmodern development of peace studies in the USA, influenced by general systems theory, which goes for a great deal back to Elise and Kenneth Boulding (1956, 1961), who again were important resources of inspiration for Adam Curle (Woodhouse, 2010). Additionally, Ludwig Bertalanffy (1968) and Gregory Bateson (1972, 1979) have been important for fostering my understanding of systemic thinking across different scientific disciplines.

In contrast, continental European postmodern peace studies have mainly built on poststructural theories, including philosophers such as Lyotard (Dietrich 2013, 302). In “Der Widerstreit” Lyotard proclaims plurality as a necessity as differences between discourses are unbreachable (1983). This postmodern, poststructural pluralist view is also present in Martínez Guzman’s “filosofía para hacer las paces” (2001, Martínez Guzman 2000, 66). Martinez Guzman’s theory is further influenced by German Idealism, and as such, the philosophy itself, 'Hacer las paces' is at the same time the method. During my studies at the University of Peace in Castellón de la Plana, Spain, I did not only get in touch with Martínez Guzmán’s work, but was enchanted by his coworker and research assistant Irene Comins Mingol’s presentation on “The ethics of care and peace” (2003, 2008), which builds on Martínez Guzmán’s philosophical current and calls for an integration of an ethics of feelings of caring about and for someone and Kantian ethics of justice, mainly defined between equals in power (Comins Mingol 2003, 157). I do think that Comins Mignol's work significantly influenced my sensitivity of relating social actions such as nursing family members or

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9 This is in contrast to Dietrich’s approach, in which transrational peaces is considered the theory and elicitive conflict transformation the corresponding method.
caring for the wellbeing of the other as parts of supportive actions to conflict transforming, be it for conflicts with different parties involved or doer-less conflicts (Dietrich 2018, 294).

This poststructuralist, rather idealist approach towards an epistemological turn in peace studies by focusing on constructive intersubjective relations represented as caring relationships also builds on earlier formulations of ethics of care, mainly categorized as sociological, psychological feminist theories. In the book “In a different voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s development” the US-American psychologist and educational scientist Carol Gilligan criticizes her former mentor Lawrence Kohlberg’s established theory on moral developmental stages and its differences between boys and girls, hence men and women. (Kohlberg, 1977). Gilligan’s view on differences in reacting on moral dilemmas between boys and girls, despite of possible methodological shortcomes of the study (Held 2006), uncover a spectrum of decision making processes, which are mainly based on the decision's influence on the relationships and the individuals in these relationships, in contrast to abstract concepts of justice. Gilligan would further consider relationships based on an ethics of care as relationships, which would, simply speaking not have an emphasize of equaling out the amount of supports two individuals give each other. To me, Gilligan's concept of non-bargaining relationships has been useful in defining supportive relationships as to be understood throughout the thesis, whereas I do not fully agree with the moral aspects of Gilligan's work and also did not use them for this thesis.

Per definition, relations and their qualities are key elements in sociology. Ontologically, sociologists distinguish between subjectivism and relationalism. The latter corresponds to relational sociology. Pierpaolo Donati is one of the most famous
European scholars for relational sociology. Compared to subjectivism, with the ontological unit of relational subject, he claims the relation itself as the ontological unit. Hence, he aims at focusing on human beings as being constituted relationally as persons (2011). Consequently, the emergence as persons lies in the relation itself (Donati 2011, xvi). One of Donati’s primary objection to other sociological theories that try to integrate relationality is the fact that these theories would not succeed in giving relations a non-derivative, but constitutive, foundational character. Donati identifies Georg Simmel’s works as the first relational theory with social relation as a fundamental theoretical category. This category was the interaction, further specified as *Wechselwirkung*, a reciprocal interaction. Additionally, Simmel derives then social objects as “substantialized” social relations, (Donati 2011, 6-7). Jumping back to the beginning of this paragraph, persons, could be interpreted as substantialized social relations, although for Simmel it might have been other things, such as for example money. For this thesis, it seemed interesting to that interpreting persons as substantialized social relations brings us closer to the description of relationships described in the Chapter Research Question, where they are described as interferences of different waves. Waves, such as electromagnetic waves, do usually describe *Wechselwirkungen* of different types. Hence, relational sociology provided me a tool for not only looking at relations from the relational subject to the relation, but also vice versa, similar to particle and wave descriptions in quantum mechanics.

Furthermore Donati claims, that these relation might bring into being so called relational goods (Donati 2016). The producing entities of such goods are then the *relational subjects*, which can be persons or social formations. This relational subjects are only considered as such during the existence of the relational good (Archer 2011, p.xi). Furthermore, Donati claims that subjects that bring to existence relational goods
are not any relational subjects, but do have certain features, which allow them to produce relational goods in contrast to other relational outcomes, such as so called relation evils.

I do think that Donati's work, although it is not explicitly present in the thesis, inspired me to think of characteristics of different supportive relationships and their evolvements not only from the relational subjects point of view, which I consider important, as the predominance of humanistic psychology in elicitive conflict transformations methods often dragged me into a very one-sided and subjective view on relations. At the same time, I was trying to avoid the idealistic and moral separation of good and evil relational outcomes, especially in causal relations to specific characteristics of relations, as suggested by Donati.

Learning and knowledge acquisition theories play an important role in this thesis, as the knowledge base of the conflictive system including the conflict worker is essential for elicitive conflict transformation. Jack Mezirow's critical constructivist approach to learning, which has again been influenced by Paulo Freire, has been very important for highlighting possible rational learning pathways in supportive relationships. For the affective and transpersonal aspects of learning, especially Heron's broadening of Mezirow's approach useful. Recent neuroscientific findings on correlations between certain neurotransmitters and learning, as well as Damasio's work on feelings, mind and matter (2013) have been useful sources for supporting the theories of learning pathways which include reason try to unify experiences, conscious reflections and beyond.
This chapter aims at providing elements for the thesis, which allow embedding, analyzing and possibly also contrasting my own and others’ personal experiences laid out in the subsequent chapters with respect to the research question. Elicitive conflict mapping will be separately addressed in a later chapter.

In order to analyze different pathways for generation of knowledge, which then can serve as potential for elicitive conflict work I additionally present some theories on acquiring, retaining and recalling knowledge. Subsequently a short review on some of the abilities an elicitive conflict worker might benefit from is presented in order to compare them later on with the possible changes and insights gained from the different concrete experiences presented.

Investigations of supportive and helping relationships do have a long history in sociology as well as in psychology. From a humanistic psychology point of view, supportive relationships presented in chapter The Research Problem is grounded in a Rogerian understanding as a relation in which at least one of the parties has the intent of promoting the growth, development, maturity, improved functioning, improved coping with life of the other. (Rogers 1958, 6-7)

With respect to the actions, in terms of “the help provided”, which I categorize as supportive actions in the sense of this thesis, I introduced the following three dimensions of support: economic, emotional and instrumental (Schnegg 2008, 220f). I decided for these three dimensions, as they allow me to extrapolate from my experiences of supportive relationships in these different dimensions or its intersections, to a more general idea of the kinds of support, which are under
investigation and mentioned in the personal interviews presented in the following chapters. This generalization also allows then, ethnographically, to apply the concept to individuals with different sociocultural backgrounds (Schnegg 2001, 20), which I consider very important, especially because of the claim of multistrandedness of supportive relationships on the one hand and my personal motivation for this thesis rooting in a nomadic lifestyle, including multistrunged relationships with individuals embedded in different sociocultural backgrounds.

The chosen dimensions have been traditionally used, amongst others, for differentiating social support in sociology. There, the term social support refers to a social environment that is thought to be beneficial for the physical and mental health for the individual. It includes structural, material and functional dimensions. The structural dimensions refer to the existence of the relational web and its interpersonal relationships as such. Obviously, the material dimension refers to material resources that are available within the structure, such as potentially available tools or food and alike (Rodriguez & Cohen 1998, 535). Functional support is referring to actions of support executed within the social network. Depending on the focus of investigations, different dimensions of functional support have been used. Not only economic, emotional and instrumental support dimensions are found commonly, but also informational, tangible, or nursing dimensions (Rodriguez & Cohen, 1998, 539). As outlined in the preceding paragraph, the functional dimensions of economic, instrumental and economic support seemed most appropriate to me. I did not choose informational support as a dimension on its own, but rather locate it within instrumental support. The same goes for teaching lessons or alike.
Conceptually, one can further distinguish between social support in the sense of social integration in daily life in contrast to social support in situations of stress, or special need and the effective support given in longterm relationships. I think that, integrating the Rogerian preconditions for a helping relationship, the latter kind of support, is a further approximation to supportive relationships as envisioned in this thesis. The conceptual distinction between relating socially as in daily life and supporting proactively, without being necessarily unidirectional, allows for narrowing down the concept of supportive relationships. Activities which Schnegg (2001, 19) calls, wider social activities, for example drinking every now and then coffee with someone or playing cards with someone every months can be socially supportive, but the relationships between participants would not be per se called at any moment helpful relationships. They could potentially become ones though, if these activities lead to transitional economic, instrumental or emotional support which is granted within this social network to one or more of the participants who are in need of the kind of support given. Now again, this support could be manifold and range from helping out by providing information, accompanying physically and or emotionally, coaching through problems in work-life, motivating to take certain or changes, helping out with money, food, living, offering different truths in order to ground certain emotions, concrete teaching, nursing, consulting or supervising (Vogelauer 2005, 20). Concrete examples will be presented in the two following chapters.

So far, the chapter The Research Question and the backgrounds presented in this chapter indicate the possibility that supportive relationships, experiences of relationships of care and being taken care of can contribute to social change. But, this alone, does not answer if and how supportive relationships can contribute to elicitive conflict transformation. At a first glance, it might suggest the promotion of supportive
relationships and relational goods as a prescriptive conflict transformation method, which is not the aim here. As we want to focus on elicitive processes, the learning and knowledge creation through such experienced relationships play a crucial role, as has already been outlined in The Research Question.

Therefore, we will look into some theories and hypotheses on learning, which have been mainly informed by critical constructivism, humanistic psychology and will then add a theory which includes transpersonal and spiritual dimensions of learning. By relating these theories with neuroscientific findings and interpretations, we will discuss possible knowledge storing and retrieving pathways with respect to supportive relationships.

Already in 1952 C. Rogers expressed about knowledge acquisition:

I have come to feel that the only learning which significantly influences behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning. Such self-discovered learning, truth that has been personally appropriated and assimilated in experience, cannot be directly communicated to another. [...]

This whole train of experiencing, and the meanings that I have thus far discovered in it, seem to have launched me on a process which is both fascinating and at times a little frightening. It seems to mean letting my experiences carry me on, in a direction which appears to be forward, toward goals that I can but dimly define, as I try to understand at least the current meaning of that experience. The sensation is that of floating with a complex stream of experience, with the fascinating possibility of trying to comprehend its ever-changing complexity. (Rogers 1969, 1-2)

These experiences can be of very different kind, as for example the experiences of different relationships I am currently floating in or with. Experiences, as expressed for
example in Freire´s and Mezirow´s works, are crucial for conscious understanding and memorizing knowledge.

Over lifetime individual experiences of cultural or contextual nature create what Freire calls mindsets and Mezirow names frames of reference or meaning structures. They influence how a person acts and interprets certain events or episodes (Mezirow 1990 and Calleja 2014, 121). As the learning processes, which I find relevant for this thesis are not mere bank education but processes which involve possibilities of changing these frames of references, by being situated in the persons realities and in their here and now, I will focus on theories including such transformations.

Mezirow´s transformative learning theory (1990), which is mainly influenced by Kuhn´s paradigm shift (1962), Habermas´ theory of communicative action and the domains of learning (1971, 1984) and Freire´s concept of conscientization, tries to provide a model for how adult learning can not only change content, but meaning structures and perspectives, through which we interpret and behave in social interaction: the frame of reference.

Following Mezirow´s learning theory, this frame of reference can be modified. The ways how situations are perceived and judged can be changed; perspectives can be transformed through transformative learning.

Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world; of formulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting upon these new understandings (Mezirow & Associates 1990 in Calleja 2014, 130).
Perspective transformation is often initiated by a so called disorientation dilemma. It describes experiences, that put into question unquestioned presumptions which form our frame of reference, as the frame of references does not offer any sound, appropriate, uncomplicated, non-conflictive ways how to act in the situation. Therefore a disorientation dilemma is an experience, which trigger emotions of shame, guilt, surprise and anger, which are, most often subsequently guiding the individual towards a critically reflection on how it determines its view on itself and the world it is embedded in, accompanied by look out for experiences and options of new roles, relationships and actions, which can then be implemented. (Calleja 2014, 129; Mezirow, 1990).

It is important to highlight that perspective transformation, triggered by disorientation dilemmas, does not only consist of learning additional skills, problem solving techniques or competencies, but it transforms the frame of reference by transforming the way of thinking. Perspective transformation is changing the way of thinking from an unexamined, using stored knowledge way of thinking, to a more examined and more critical reflective way of thinking, which then allows to integrate and to plan new roles, relationships and actions.

For exploring the relevance of transformative learning theory for the research question I suggest a little thought experiment. Let us therefore assume an adult individual, who is used to act under the frame of reference of a reasonable, independent and generally considered as equal human being, who has agreed on certain rules and principles following an ethics of justice, as shortly mentioned in the chapter The State of Art. Being helpless, not being able to act upon a situation as usual, under the before mentioned frame of reference autonomously, in the meaning
of on one’s own account, causes a disorientation dilemma. A loss of a beloved and integrated family member or friend, a severe illness or physical integration, a threat to the economic well-being or threats of security such as open war activities or natural disasters are examples of situations leading to a disorientation dilemma and the emotions attributed to it. Interestingly, several interview partners referred in the interview to such events (see chapter Interviews).

Since transformative learning theory has been influenced by Freire’s theory of conscientization and critical consciousness and considering Freire's influences on elicitive conflict transformation, it seems worthwhile to go through the same thought experience using the three stages, following Freire’s theory, necessary for a critical consciousness to grow. It might bring us closer to the importance of critical reflection for knowledge acquisition in relation to supportive relationships. Intransitive, semitransitive and transitive consciousness are the three stages Freire describes (1974).

The first one is an episode of feeling or being disempowered. For the individual of our thought experiment, this could be a situation of suddenly needing help and not knowing how to get it. Or it could also be sudden impotence towards a situation where parts of the Mitwelt for which the individual feels responsible, seems to need help, but the individual does not know is not able to provide the help or does even not know how help could be provided. I purposely use the word disempowered, to refer to the newness of the state of feeling powerless. This stage sounds similar to what Mezirow calls a disorientation dilemma.

During the second stage, the stage of semitransitive thought, the individual manages to create first small degrees of freedom, id est the individual is in so far
empowered that it can accomplish small, concrete actions in order to address the
problem. So, there is some change going on, but still in small steps and rather action
driven. As for our thought experiment, first moves toward small supportive actions,
either receiving or giving are made, relational actions start to happen.

In the end this leads, following Freire’s theory, to *critical transitivity* or a *critical
consciousness*. Following Freire, it is a state of consciously perceiving different levels
of causal principles and connections to problems, which allows bringing forward
actions which do provoke critical change, thus changes within the system which
tackle root causes of problems. At this point I would like to stress, that under the
systemic approach of elicitive conflict transformation I would translate a state of
critical consciousness into a becoming aware of systemic interconnections and one's
position in the system and options of action which result from this position to
hopefully contribute to constructive transformation. In the following, critical
consciousness I will rather interpret critical consciousness in this manner. 10

The process of getting to the third stage involves critical reflection and self-
reflection. In our thought experiment, the stage of critical consciousness could be
entered when the individual becomes consciously part of a supportive relationship
with all the properties and conditions detailed in The Research Problem. Especially, as
the supportive relationships aim at empowering the subjects involved.

Freire also points out the importance of a community between reflection and
action:

10Furthermore awareness of processes in the inter- and intrapersonal layers of a
conflictive system, as used for elicitive conflict mapping might be comparable in
certain elements with critical consciousness, but its investigation would be out of the
scope of this thesis.
discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be a praxis. (Freire 1970, 65)

This community is what allows for conscious understanding. With conscious understanding I refer to Lucien Goldman’s (1969) concepts of real and potential consciousness as also discussed by Freire in ‘The Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ (Freire, 1970). Potential consciousness can occur when certain socioculturally shaped mindsets are rationally challenged by people and/or ideas differing from this mindset. This potential consciousness only can turn into real consciousness by practicing the “other, differing” reality in a long term manner (Freire 1970, 113-114).

Some types of supportive relationships do probably allow for such interactions, and can be considered as opportunities for transformation of potential consciousness to real consciousness. Interestingly, the long term manner of experience seems crucial. Some supportive relationships might fulfill this prerequisite. For others, the hypothesis of long term experience gained through multiple not so long term supportive relationships, might also apply for the transformation of potential to real consciousness. The multistrandedness of supportive relationships might even increase the plurality of shared experiences and real consciousnesses. An example of such an experience, which I will explore in the next chapter, is sharing everyday life and having a close relationship of accompanier and accompanied. Growing up and being educated with a Eurocentric, capitalistic, worldview in Europe after the 2nd world war, creates a certain mindset. Probably only the lived experience, by sharing living spaces with Colombian rural peace communities allowed for a conscious

11 At this point I want to make clear that using Paolo Freire’s text ‘The Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ (Freire, 1970), is only meant for the pedagogical part towards broadening consciousness and the concept of praxis, not for its concept of power.
understanding (Goldman 1969, 118) of anything different from the indoctrinated worldview practiced on a daily basis, probably needs tested feasibility (Freire 1965, 113).

So far, we have looked into conscious social learning processes based on experience and reflection, without taking into account any transpersonal or transrational aspect. Mezirow's theory of transformative learning has been criticized for this focus on consciousness and reason. Especially for conflict work, Heron’s comprehensive book *The complete facilitator’s Handbook* (1999) provides further insight into learning, more precisely and at the same time very broadly, into holistic learning. This involves learning within the “physical, perceptual, affective, cognitive (intellectual, imaginative, intuitive), conative (exercising the will), social and political, psychic and spiritual” (Heron 1999, 23) aspects of a human being. As a consequence, learning happens in different domains: the intrapersonal, interpersonal, cultural realm of social institutions, the ecological and the transplanetary and transpersonal\(^{12}\). I dare say, that all main layers of the elicitive conflict mapping model, are addressed here.

Calling into memory definitions for elicitive conflict transformation, the ability of initiation of change in all these domains creates potential for constructive changes in conflictive systems.

Moreover, relevant to this thesis, face-to-face social interactions, group spaces, consciousness-raising or support groups are some of the spaces, which are crucial for learning in the interpersonal and cultural domain (Heron 1999, 315f) and therefore for developing potential for initiating change in the corresponding domains, or even

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\(^{12}\) For a detailed discussion on the use of transpersonal or transplanetary I refer the reader to the original text. (Heron, 1999)
beyond, when taking into account resonance between the different domains. Supportive relationships do take place in the above mentioned spaces and interactions respectively. They can therefore contribute to learning initiating changes along the respective domains and beyond.

Still, being in a supportive relation as such, experiencing several supportive relationships, might not lead in itself to the acquisition of the capacities just described, but might require certain steps of experience and reflections, as already proposed by Freire and Mezirow and mentioned above. As Heron puts it, common experiential learning cycles, as for example described by Kolb (1978, 1984), focus on how knowledge can be grounded taking into account only humanistic, cognitive domains. Concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation are the four stages in the experiential learning cycle which follow sequentially in the order of appearance, whereby any of the four stages can be the starting point. Concrete learning can be an acquaintance with a new experience, or the reinterpretation of an experience. Reflective observation of this change then feeds the abstract conceptualization which is subsequently tested in the active experiment and cyclic concrete learning creates adapted, new knowledge again – and so forth. Thus, knowledge can be adapted or readjusted depending on experiential testing in various cycles, where concrete learning experiences are incorporated. This learning theory integrates perception, inner reactions as well as outward actions and reflections. Learning then expresses itself in potential changes in perceiving, thinking and behaving.

Still, these learning circle leave out the *between, beyond and within* human beings, or in other words the spiritual and/or the transplanetary or transpersonal. Heron claims
that inclusion of these domains is also part of humanism, as humans would not be humans without them. Equivalent to the above mentioned similarities with elicitive conflict mapping, analogies between this humanistic wave and transrational peaces suggest, that the theory of Kolb’s experimental learning cycles is import for thinking about learning affects transrationally, but not inclusive enough. It does not cover the learning aspects of beyond, between and within (Heron 2013).

Awareness of the lack of aspects beyond reason in learning theories reflects the paradigm shift, which Heron detects as the 4th humanistic wave (Heron 2013), and in the philosophical approach of transrational peaces, room is provided for such aspects (Dietrich 2011). About a century ago the paradigm shift provoked by quantum mechanical findings and its seemingly contradictions with Newton mechanics have been consolidated with the correspondence principle. In a similar manner, transrationality does not devalue experiential learning theories as introduced by Kolb (1984) or Mezirow (1990), founded in psychosocial and biological knowledge, but ground the theory and embed it into more influences of different layers.

Heron’s learning cycle therefore adds to Kolb’s experiential learning cycle psychic and spiritual capacities for learning. He describes these additional capacities also as capacities for feelings.

This capacity for feeling is the ground of personhood, is that in which all other psychological functions are latent and out of which they emerge. It is the guiding entelechy of personhood, the formative principle and potential which can be evoked to shape our inner development. It is a profound and immediately accessible spiritual principle, the manifestation of divine life immanent within the psyche. (Heron 1999, 46)
At the same time, feeling is the capacity of persons of attuning and resonating with a wider unity of being.

Feeling, in short, enables us to engage with and participate in our various experiential realities, to differentiate them from each other and to know that we are distinct from any one of them while being in a unified field with it (Heron 1999, 45)

At this point I would like to stress the strong relational notion of such a definition of feeling again. As I interpret it, the feeling lies within the experience and not within one of the subjects alone. At the same time it is integral to changes of behavior, the way of thinking and the way of perceiving of the subjects or individuals, central to the to the experiential learning cycle as described by Kolb (1984). If the capacity of feeling lays ground for the changes in the cognitive categories, the learning process’ influences on the level of feeling is fundamental.

Finally, Heron suggests a primary experiential learning cycle, where learning starts with feeling into a situation, from which intuitively meaning is gained using imagination, which then might allow some generalizations and conceptualization for new situations which are then tested in intentional action. Feeling again into this situation opens up the next cycle and so forth. Secondary cycles include reflections within a wider web of relations. (Heron 1999, 289ff)

All learning theories mentioned in this chapter did explicitly include experience as an essential part of learning. I understand experiencing something as being as an individual consciously present in a situation. Heron especially mentions the feeling into a situation as a starting point for learning. For Heron, feeling allows us to differentiate each experience, and then consequently learn from the differences of
several experiences, running through intuitive, imaginary and conceptual stages and feasibility and testing, with the purpose to learn from the differences of the initial and the testing experience, whereas the testing experience can again initiate a new learning cycle. The imaginary and conceptual phases are considered as cognitive stages, which emerge and are nourished from the feeling into a situation, physical and affective (Heron 1999, 23). At the same time, feeling is for Heron a possibility to experience one’s own person and its distinction from the environment simultaneously with the experience of existing in an environment, including other individuals. Hence, feeling allows the experience of personhood in at least two ways, as a unity and a difference.

Damasio, one of the mostly discussed neuroscientists of this century also points of at the central role of feelings in human development. He hypothesizes that, from an evolutionary point of view, the emergence of the mind in a sense, that organisms become aware in some way of their own existence, emerged with feelings (2013). Feelings paved the way for the establishment of higher levels of cognition and consciousness, culminating in the modern human mind. (Damasio 2013, 150)

Despite some differences in the definitions of feelings by Damasio (2013, 143) and Heron (see above), this hypothesis underpins the importance of including felt experiences as a crucial element into learning. Feeling appears essential in experiencing one’s own existence within the surrounding environment, unity and difference, and for regulation of action within the system, including cognitive adaptations (Damasio 2013, 149). Supportive relationships are an experiences, which continuously call for adaption. Conscious reflections on the supportive relationships might happen either within the relationship or later, while eliciting and looking for
reflections, therefore learning processes can have already happened during the experience of the supportive relationships or can still happen in later moments, while doing elicitive conflict transformation or preparing for it.

Let's now have a closer look into neuroscientific findings on feelings and learning. There is neuroscientific evidence that so called neural maps, hence, biologically connected neurons of the central brain and their assignation to certain functions, allow for basic regulation of physiological homeostasis, for example regulation of the heart rate. For more complex life situations, the hypothesis is that the felt experience is helping to deal with overall regulation, as the feelings, such as fear or pain, are already an abstracted systemic parameter, that includes several deviations of physiological parameters from norm values stored in the neural maps (Damasio 2013, 145). When feelings are involved in complex regulation, so Damasio, information is likely to be not only transported along neuronal axons, using specific end-dentic synaptic connections to connect in between different neurons, but rather interconnect alongside the axons affecting a broad range of axon bundles. Hence, they evoke a spatially broad and complex corrective regulation, which is neither autonomous nor limited to a small region of the brain, but becomes a conscious feeling. Consequently a certain flexibility in voluntary behavior becomes possible (Damasio 2013, 150). Then, new neuronal pathways might be generated and the learning cycles might initiate wiring, growth and strengthening of neuronal connections, by repeated similar stimuli, which is learning (Owens, and Tanner 2017, 3).

Despite looking at several learning theories we have not explicitly looked at how acquired knowledge can be retrieved again, which is essential, when we want to be
able to retrieve this knowledge by or in elicitive conflict transformation. To retrieve 'by' or 'in' here refers to the various possibilities of how prior experience of supportive relationships can contribute to elicitive conflict transformation. To be retrieved by elicitive conflict transformation refers to the possibility that experiences of supportive relationships might open up degrees of freedom of actions for changing the conflictive system, i.e. transforming the conflict constructively. Retrieving in elicitive conflict transformation refers to using the knowledge within the process of eliciting, id est using the knowledge to create a space in which ideas and ways for constructive change can be elicited. In both cases, access and use of the learned are essential and I consider neuroscience a very useful source for looking into this question.

There is plenty of evidence, that it is the easier to recall information, the better the neuronal wiring of the connection to the information in question is (Owens and Tanner 2017, 4). Taking into account that wiring is strengthened through repetitiveness of similar events, experiences of many supportive relationships, are likely to serve for strengthening of wiring, and therefore its information is likely to be able to be elicited when useful. The experience of similar events, but not identical events additionally allows for different access points to the memorized information, as slightly different felt experiences do strengthen certain core connections of fiber bundles, and at the same time differences allow for a variety of connections offerings slightly different knowledge. Hence, there are more connections to the core memory and at the same time a more complex network, with more degrees of freedom does exist and can be activated, especially when a complex situation is to be affronted (Owens and Tanner 2017, 5; Damasio 2013, 149). Thus, multistringed and multistranded supportiveness might enhance the learning effect of supportive relationships as such and at the same time increase the possibility of being able to
recall partial knowledge or skills gained in the experiences which might be useful for transformation of conflictive systems.

Looking into neurobiology, there is another feature about increasing neuronal connections which seems relevant for learning and supportive relationships. Storing knowledge is enhanced when the neurotransmitters Dopamine and Acetylcholine are around. (Owens and Tanner 2017, 3). Dopamine is associated with the feeling of reward, whereas Acetycholine is enhanced in novel situations or when individuals are surprised. Interestingly, we did already find the “surprise” element in Mezirow’s disorientation dilemma, which might put our brain into full attention.

In my opinion, supportive relationships have a high potential for containing both elements, and subsequently are likely to trigger both of these neurotransmitters. Hence, knowledge retrieved from experiences of supportive relationships seems to be stored easily, and repetitive similar experiences should provoke enhanced wiring in the brain easily, which in turn suggests that the knowledge constitutes a potential which can be elicited.

While knowledge bases are relevant for all conflict parties, the eliciting capabilities are specifically expected from the elicitive conflict worker. Actually, this is mostly why the conflict worker is called into the conflictive system. As already mentioned in The Research Problem, recommended abilities for elicitive conflict workers are Awareness of the self, one’s fantasies and one’s surrounding, Balance between self-protection and compassion and Congruence in communication (UNESCO 2014a). In the second part of the Trilogy on Many Peaces (Dietrich 2013) an additional shortlist of recommended abilities for a conflict worker, taken originally from Lederach (2003, 48-60), has been presented:
The capacity to see the situation beyond the urgent push for an immediate definition of the problem and a quick solution;

The capacity to integrate multiple time frames;

The capacity to turn contradictions, opposites, situational dilemmas, and paradoxes into choices;

The capacity to be on friendly terms with the fundamental complexity of conflicts;

The capacity to see identity needs behind seemingly factual issues.

(Dietrich 2013, 30)\(^{13}\)

We shall use this list in order to assess possible influences of supportive relationships on the capacities of a conflict worker on the basis of the experiences presented.

In this chapter, I first tried to identify three main dimensions of supportive actions, namely instrumental, emotional and economic support. They are intended to be useful in bridging the abstraction of the concept with the concrete examples introduced through qualitative interviews and the accounts of some of my own experiences. Pathways of how experiences of supportive relationships can be turned into a knowledge base for the process of elicitive conflict transformation are indicated in the discussion of different learning processes. I also tried to convey that supportive relationships show potential for being part of a non-classroom learning process, not only for creating a proper atmosphere and conditions for using stored knowledge of participants on how constructive change could come by, but also the knowledge and

\(^{13}\) The translation was taken from the English version of (Dietrich, 2013): DIETRICH, W: *Elicitive Conflict Transformation and the Transrations Shift in Peace Politics*. Springer, 2013
skills elicited through conflict transformation processes themselves. Here again, unity and difference come into play, as the knowledge for the process and elicited by the process might be very different, but also identical. Additionally learning theories were presented to indicate how multiple experiences of supportive relationships as understood in this thesis might change individuals' frames of references for interpreting experiences and deciding on further actions. These experiences might contribute on the one hand to a more systemic inclusive view on conflictive episode and on the other hand increase the plurality of imaginable ways of transformation. So, in the following chapters, learning and knowledge gain processes, will be an integral element of the connections between supportive relationships and elicitive conflict work pointed out. The background presented here is intended to highlight the likelihood and possible forms of learning as such happening within supportive relationship. Hence, following mentions of learning pathways are referring to the theories just presented. The chapter closes with elicitive conflict work and its practitioners’ desired capacities. Generally, theories and thoughts provided in this chapter will be used for analysis and interpretation of concrete experiences of possible supportive relationships presented in the following chapters.
7 SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS: MY EXPERIENCES

In the beginning of the previous chapter I introduced different dimensions of supportive actions as constitutive elements of supportive relationships. This chapter mainly aims at describing personal examples of various supportive relationships as such and also addressing multistrandedness and multistringedness. Background information, reflections about the experiences of these relationships and their possible influences on and connections with elicitive conflict transformation will accompany the narratives.

Throughout this chapter I will use different metaphors for describing the relational aspects of the episode. In order to not reduce the aspects I find most relevant for this thesis to a single theoretical framework, I decided to work with a variety of metaphors instead of using a single metaphor for all the episodes. Not surprisingly most of the metaphors are inspired by different physical models. Because of using these different approaches in a very selective way, in order to highlight specific processes I sense in supportive relationships, I methodologically situated concrete description of physical theories alongside the actual narratives and not in Background.

International Accompaniment.

Mahony and Eguren, two pioneers in International Accompaniment describe it the following:

Accompaniment volunteers act essentially as unarmed bodyguards, spending 24 hours a day with human rights workers, union leaders, peasant groups, and other popular organizations that have received death threats for their attempts at nonviolent democratic organizing. Always ready with a camera, the accompaniment volunteer is literally the embodiment of international human rights concern, a constant reminder to those who
choose to use violence that it will not go unnoticed. There will be an international response to whatever the volunteer witnesses. By simply being there, the volunteer is simultaneously encouraging these activists to continue their work, and protecting them from violent attack. (Mahony and Eguren 1997, iii).

This wanted effect of increment in freedom of action by enhancing perceived security is also depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: International Accompaniment. The influence of international accompaniment on the freedom of action of human rights activists. There are always uncertainties given by the perceived borders of aggressors and activist.

Engaging in conflict regions in the sense of this model, I spent half a year in different parts of Guatemala, traveling or staying with witnesses of a legal genocide case and with indigenous people, who fight for the land they are living on or against megaprojects, such as hydroelectric power plants or mining projects. Additionally, I
had the chance to accompany workers who try to fight for their social rights as understood by the International Labor Organization and the different generations of Human Rights (ACOGUATE 2019).

Combining dissuasion, documentation and dissemination on the local, national and international level aims on the one hand at counterfighting the constant threats against human rights defenders and on the other hand at making the human rights defenders' claims heard. Dissemination of past events in the internet as well as the personal dissemination through the accompaniment volunteers in their countries of origin is meant to improve the understanding of problems, fights and dangers of human rights defenders. This political component also aims at raising the awareness for the interconnectedness between the politics and economics in the volunteers’ countries of origin with the human rights violations in the countries, which ask for accompaniment.

Next to these pillars, the personal encounters between human rights defenders and their accompaniers can add a further level of mutual understanding, which might contribute to a peaceful togetherness of different concepts of living. Shared experiences of the accompanied and accommoder, which do strongly cooperate under psychologically stressful conditions, create strong relationships. They often facilitate a very deep mutual understanding, empathy and compassion from both sides. Such a common experience might allow the broadening of one’s own mindset, in terms of different world views (Gillespie 2009; Goldman 1969). Theories on how the experiences can turn into retrievable knowledge have already been explored in chapter Background.

In terms international accompaniment and relational considerations for elicitive conflict transformation I would also like to address the inherent risk of
relating to certain international organizations being often a choice, which might inhibit other potential relational opportunities. A detailed discussion would go beyond the scope of this thesis.

For the purpose of this thesis I would like to further look into two widely accepted working principles or perhaps even 'moral rules' of many international accompaniment organizations, which are often summarized as impartiality and non-interference (PBI 2008). In my opinion these principles have mainly developed out of the modern idea of neutrality and the fear of the accompaniers of their own backpack and its colonizing potential (Koopman 2008; 2012) at and influences of dependencies (Quijano 2001) which both are inherent to the theory behind international accompaniment.

The principle of no interference refers to the working policy of not advising or participating in decision making processes of accompanied individuals or organizations. Depending on the framework of the different organizations, this policy also includes or is accompanied by the policy of not doing labor with and for the accompanied organizations, such as for example harvesting or administrative work. The same holds true for economic support. Furthermore, the strategy of international accompaniment of allowing for the deconstruction of inequalities in access to human rights and then not being needed any more and basically fade out and vanish from the more democratic and less unequal country, states reason for this policy. This seems convincing in a structuralist way of thinking. In my opinion, this non-interference, if applied without any flexibility, not only neglects the systemic influences of being with the accompanied, being part of the conflictive system, as assumed in transrational peace philosophy.
Moreover, as detailed in 4.2, I sometimes consider myself and other individuals as interferences of different relations in the multidimensional field of life. From this perspective, I want to stress the inevitable change in the accompanier as well as the accompanied person and the system they are embedded in. Here is a corresponding story of an experience of interferences.

The episode happened during one of my deployments in an organization doing International Accompaniment, which generally follows the policy of non-interference. In order to respect the individuals involved in this story, the non-presence of their narrative in this thesis, their privacy and the organization’s security policies, narration is put into fictitious time and place, with identical characteristics of how I experienced the place and time.

While I was deployed as an international accompanier in a conflictive zone with different organized armed groups, unequal access to land has often been named as root cause of violence. Jaime was one of the land defenders, who claimed back the land he and his neighbors had been deprived from by armed groups. One day, Jaime was assassinated after having received threats for several months. By then, the international non-governmental organization I had worked with had collaborated with the network around Jaime’s non-violent resistance to land grabbing for several years. I personally got acquainted with Jaime about seven months before his death. I accompanied him several times on the land he claimed, slept at his shag. We were sharing stories, experiences and walks through the forest he tried to protect.

The day Jaime was killed I was on office duty, i.e. my job was basically receiving calls, coordinating and reacting on possible situations of accompaniers who are with accompanied people 'in the field'. The moment I was informed by Tomas, a close
coworker of Jaime and ours, about the lethal shots against Jaime, which had happened about five minutes before the call, a team was on the way to a detour for visiting land claimers of the region – including a visit at Jaime’s, where they were supposed to arrive two days later.

The phone call put me on 'activation' immediately. I did first calls to stop and redirect the team that was on the way to the region, in order to immediately meet up with Tomas to go to the crime scene together. Then I called the headquarter of our organization and we called different public forces, government and embassies etc., which is part of predefined steps in such emergency cases. The killing appeared even more threatening to us, as another land claimer of the same region had been killed only days ago. We cancelled accompaniments of other organizations on short term, and tried to put all our efforts around the killing of Jaime and the protection of his family. At the same time we were trying to feed information into local and national networks, which were trying to push immediate investigations of the crime as a measure against impunity and as such a countermeasure against further assassinations in the near future. The first few days after the death of Jaime, I was busy in the office; the only moments out of the office were the physical and emotional accompaniment of Jaime's family at his funeral.

The second occasion for leaving the office was a weekly meeting with a cooperative community, who has been in non-violent resistance against displacement by armed groups for many years. This cooperative community counts strategically very much on International Accompaniment. Due to the killings of Jaime, we had already canceled an accompaniment of this community, and we were likely to cancel more in the future. At the same time, analysis pointed on higher security risks for this
cooperative community as well. Up until the meeting with the community council and since Jaime's death, I had not exchanged any words with anyone who was not somehow connected to the case of Jaime.

I don’t remember the exact sequence of the meeting, but I do remember the differences to the scenarios I had created in my head before entering the meeting. These scenarios included scolding the accompaniment organization, hence me as its representative present, for not being present or begging for being more present in the next weeks due to the imminent threats to community leaders. Instead, council members asked how the communities affected by the assassinations were doing and how the killings had happened. I gave a short recap and added that this is why we had and will have very limited resources in the near future. After some silence, one of the council members started talking about the difficult security situation in the communities around Jaime’s place and also mentioned the scatteredness of those communities as a security risk; ascertained, that our accompaniment organization was the only one in the other region, in contrast to their community and added, “so, let’s see how we can organize us”. It was one of the most natural supportive reactions I had experienced, and it caught me completely by surprise. There was no direct link or contact between the two communities, despite a common struggle of resistance against land grabbing and for self-determination, but I had not identified any specific togetherness in that struggle so far. Additionally, I received the “so, let’s see how we can organize us” not at all as patronizing or “interfering” in the sense of telling us, the accompaniment organization or the other communities what to do, but it was rather an affirmation, that, together we are in this conflictive system, and the community will also try to do its regulative part.
Then the council, in total seven people, moved on to talk about the probable
grief, fear and restlessness and at the same time business of the affected communities
and possible next steps to come. The analysis was done in a way, I had never
experienced before. It was a dialogic, storytelling, memorizing and at the same time
empathic analysis. I had the impression, that many embodied memories and at the
same time the awareness of the present situation and the uniqueness of the other
communities were integrated. It was neither judgmental nor giving advice. To me, it
was a way of releasing “energy” for eliciting potentials.

While I, the accompanier was probably the only person in this meeting who
“knew” both communities, it was the elaborations of the council, which added a
perspective out of an embodied understanding of certain situations, I did completely
lack; without the communities knowing each other personally. I was mainly listening
and giving factual, informational support when solicited. Intuitively I am convinced
that the energy of the meeting and the embodied memories shared did significantly
interfere with my then self. Transformed through it, myself, as an interference of
different wave packages, I changed my actuation in the conflictive system, which in
turn interfered with the accompaniment organization and the communities around
Jaime. I cannot track it down to a certain change in procedure or a certain decision
which might have been affected by this meetings´ energy, but at the same time, I think
that I was more attentive to certain appearances and facets of the conflictive system
after the meeting.

I consider it important to mention, that only weeks after the meeting, leaders
of the cooperative community of resistance, who had also been present in that
meeting, were attacked by an illegal armed group. Apparently, the common effort of
the community protecting its’ leaders lives in the very moment with physical presence left them alive and only slightly injured. To the best of my knowledge, there was no reproach, not even silent, for our organization because of having focused mainly on the situation of Jaime. Furthermore I did not feel anything alike when I was accompanying in the cooperative community during the next days. Quite the opposite, I wonder, if the joint analysis and reflections around and empathy with the earlier affected community did influence certain autoprotective behaviors, consciously and unconsciously.

Interestingly, the attack happened two days before a big celebration day the community had been planning for quite some time. After the whole community met for hours, we were informed that the celebration would still take place, and security measures shall be put in place accordingly. Still, fear, tension and enhanced attention was in all the communities faces, and to be honest, I was quite nervous and tense too. While accompanying the council member Teresa, some people around her were discussing about the appropriateness of having a party after such an incident. Teresa just mentioned casually, “We are afraid, but we are together. If we make sweets, we’ll have sweets and fear. If we don’t make sweets we’ll still have fear. If we dance, we’ll have fear and dancing. If we don’t dance, we’ll only have the fear” (Teresa, personal communication) One could argue that this is a method of distraction from the problems or the fear. I don’t think so. To me it is rather an integration, acceptance and even appreciation of systemic features of life. It is not about forgetting fear, or letting security guards down, it is about trying to balance out the communities’ and personal needs and take care of different systemic parameters at a time, which do influence each other. At this point I’d like to refer the reader also to the interview with Michaela

16 Name changed
17 (translated by the author)
in the next chapter. She describes something similar. Michaela very much resonated with Teresa’s quote.

I presented this story in order to look into different aspects and definitions of interferences. The classical, modern concept describes International Accompaniment as an action within a structure of different, independent actors, as the accompaniers and the accompanied. Following the theory, accompaniers are intervening with different elements of the structure, including governmental bodies. These interventions and the proper position and interconnectedness of the accompaniers in the structure, opens more space for the accompanied people or organization, to claim their rights without interfering, which is basically assumed in the classic modern model as taking part and influencing decisions and internal community dynamics of community organizations.

In the narrative of the two communities, both accompanied by the same entity we can find many interferences, but possibly they would not be grasped by the modern definition of interference; the interference, transformation and transportation of elicited energy only through the common space with the one community, with the other not being present; the possible change in autoprotective behavior, through being connected by the accompaniment organization with the other community. This connection might include more attention to specific information, emotional memories of own experiences and might have increase attention or the valuing community, adaption to a decreased availability of accompaniers and so forth.

I would like to stress, that the presented elaboration on interferences is not to be read in a negative critique on the classical model of International Accompaniment, but rather as an attempt of looking at it from a different angle. It is an attempt to
highlight the importance of interferences in international accompaniment, which are often seen as something to be avoided. First I do think that they cannot be avoided and second, I think that their systemic influences can also be seen as potentials for transference of systemic energy throughout the wider conflictive systems International Accompaniment is situated in.

But how does this experience and the analysis relate to the research question? From my perspective, these interferences happened not only because of the contractual relationship we had, but a supportive relationship which, from my perspective is most visible between the accompaniment organization, as well as me as a person an accompanier and the cooperative community, but at the same time also between the cooperative community and the community of Jaime. Different aspects of support, being emotional and instrumental in the sense of knowledge and not demanding resources for oneself were provided.

In the interview with Xiomara (see chapter Interviews) we also reflect on a situation in which I was very nervous and Xiomara supported me by “sending me shopping”. This episode happened in the same time period, as the episode just narrated.

So, in my opinion, the episode is an example for a period of multistranded and multistringed supportive relationships, with the peculiarity of being situated within existing working relationships, within the framework of conflict work and as such in a conflictive system. Consequently, we can at least distinguish two possible effects looking at the temporal aspect of its effectiveness: First, the immediate effect in the situation and second, how the experience might change and equip the participants of the situation for later elicitive conflict transformation processes.
First, one of the abilities a conflict worker is supposed to bring is the ability to observe and analyze concrete situations, without the urge of finding neither immediate problem formulations, nor quick solutions (Dietrich 2011, 30; chapter Background). In the episode, I doubt that I would have been able to accomplish this, without the meeting and the way the cooperative community looked at the situation, allowed me to be in the situation with a more patient, observing, open and available mind instead of one of my favorite attitudes: 'we have to fix it—now.'

Second, the training methods, Dietrich describes in the second part of his trilogy aim at shaping certain attitudes of an elicitive conflict worker, such as selective authenticity, openness and self-assurance, attention to and empathy in the relation and congruency in communication. Furthermore they shall help to acquire capacities, additional to the ones mentioned in the previous paragraph like the ability, to create options from contradictions, situation-dependent dilemmas and paradoxes and the ability to befriend oneself with the general complexity of conflicts. (Dietrich, 2011, 28-30, chapter Background)

Retrospectively, I consider the episode with its supportive relationships as everyday life training for these capacities as an elicitive conflict worker. In chapter Background we did look into theories of learning through experiences. The living through and being part of the effect of applying the qualities and abilities within the situation, being able to observe its long term developments and being additionally able to reflect on them, is assumed to be beneficial for a change, a certain memorized interference in the experiencing individual.

Family Support:
As mentioned in the introduction, real-life experiences don’t really have and end or “are done” compared to safe space training situations, which also keep effecting our being after the exercise, but still can and are situationally left at a certain time point. To me this seems especially relevant for the episode related to my depressive cycles, the first example for supportive relationships within family. The example I would like to present took place about fourteen years ago, hence a lot of time has passed, years of different types of psychotherapy, medicines and different experiences have twisted the influenced and conscious memories around this depressive episode significantly. I hypothesize, that the awareness of these changes in framing and the allowance of being these changes an integral part of how the relationships during this episode can, to some extent also by of these twists and turns, today contribute to enhancing capacities for elicitive conflict transformation.

As already mentioned in chapter My Perspective, I have experienced several depressive periods. One of them became rather severe in my end-twentieth, while doing my PhD in Zurich, Switzerland. Talking to people, brushing my teeth, getting out of the flat, sleeping, going shopping and of course working was getting more and more exhausting and wishful suicidal thoughts became increasingly prominent. During that time I basically lived alone and I did not want to bother anybody as I did already feel a burden for and incompatible with the whole world, which I assume is also quite typical for depression. Perhaps it was an expression or coming into existence of the incongruences I experienced at that time. Anyways, not wanting to bother any of my friends and family and at the same time not being able to ‘deal with it’ alone and independently, I miraculously managed to arrive at the office of my health insurance and asked for help. They immediately remitted me to a psychiatrist and psychotherapist. As in all prior talks which I had had in different help desks
During prior crises, the therapist made, at first contact quite clear, that she could not offer any quick fix or significant rapid bettering of my situation and that a long term psychotherapy combined with antidepressant medication would be the most appropriate procedure for the moment. She also highly recommended me to stop trying to work for a while and to talk to my family about my condition.

I did refuse first to take antidepressants, to go on medical leave or to tell my family. I did manage to start psychotherapy, and tried to use different herbal medicine to improve my mood. After a few weeks, Christmas was approaching and I was supposed to go home to Austria, to visit my family. My situation had not really improved, so organizing a train ticket, packing things and getting into the train seemed impossibly difficult. Hence, I tried to convey my family, that I was too busy and that I had a cold, which did not allow me going home for Christmas. Apparently, they did smell the rat. I do not remember anymore what happened exactly and how I outing myself, the only thing I remember was that my sister and her then boyfriend and now husband (see interview Thomas, chapter Interviews) immediately came by car from Vienna to Zurich, to pick me up and bring me to our home village, where I stayed for several weeks. With this journey, years of transforming relationships within our family started.

Retrospectively, I might name the episode a “family surrender” or “family giving-in”. In order to come closer to the transformations I relate to the episode, I will divide the reflection on the bilateral relationships between my sister and I, my mother and I, my father and I and my brother in law, which are the persons I assume to constitute my core family at that time.
My sister and I did have a friendly, not especially close relationship up to this episode. The way I remember it, my sister did learn about my crisis from my mom and as a consequence she decided to pick me up immediately. I was quite surprised about the urgency my sister attributed to the event, as I had assumed since the first severe crisis about 15 years before the episode that my sister did know about my continuous underlying depressive mood.

Right after my first suicidal attempt with my grandma’s cardiac pills at that time, I ran to my mom immediately after trying to swallow them, while my sister was on some school trip. When she came back a few days after the suicidal attempt, she brought me a souvenir, a little stone. From this very instance to the moment my sister arrived in Zurich, it was clear to me, that she had learned from my mom what had happened and I felt very much supported by her throughout the years. I had been convinced about a silent understanding of not talking about it. Instead, my sister would just be supportive without words. So there had been several moments in which I had made eye contact with my sister, to tell her how I felt and she then had -in my perception- answered me lovingly and understanding with her eyes, hence giving emotional support.

Only in Zurich, 15 years later I learned that she had had no idea about my depression. To me, this was simply surprising and in a later moment I gave it also a beautiful perspective of my sister caring and being nice, not because me being so much in need, but just because of affection and sympathy. My sister was quite irritated of not having known and she also experienced it as a lack of trust from my side until I could explain my perspective and the love and support I sensed from her under the assumption she would know.
On the way 'home', after Thomas and Sandra had packed some of my stuff and me into the car, we shared some prior situations and our interpretations of them. To me it seemed quite special, as there was no question of claim of truth or valuations involved, we were simply listening and narrating. Metaphorically I had the impression that, it was a moment in which our spheres of Being somehow sneaked into the other's Being, they kind of connected, based on historical experiencing as “Erleben”, which was a connecting element in this presence of the episode and very beneficial for me throughout the coming months and we can still draw on today.

My brother in law was present, carrying luggage, driving the car. Also when we arrived at the home village, he included me very naturally in my sister’s and his everyday life for several weeks. As explained in chapter Interviews, his natural way of support and acceptance of me kind of becoming a “thing to take care of” for a while, with severe effects to his daily life was very important for me. His memories of the episode can be found in chapter Interviews.

So, when arriving, I stayed at my sister’s house in the neighboring village of my parents’ home in order to avoid my mother’s 'Let’s fix it' attitude and to avoid the self driven pressure of 'I should help' when living in the restaurant of my parents. It seemed most equivalent to my psychotherapist’s recommendation of staying at a place I would be comfortable, safe and at the same time not pressured. It allowed me to not continue with superficially rejecting my mother’s advices of “You just have to try a little harder, then it will work out”, and at the same time trying harder and harder. The quotes and descriptions of my mother’s way of support, possibly sound quite harsh and are incomplete without a short further description of my mother and our relation. I would describe my mother as a loving, caring and extraordinarily
supportive person, who is at the same time tending to work continuously hard and demonstrates perseverance. Obviously, I can only imagine, how strong her call for action and active help, and to 'fix things' must be, when she sees her daughter suffer. Taking into account the workaholic tendency, her capacity of holding a high workload up for a long time and her perseverance, the choice of her advice and support towards 'trying a little harder' and 'pushing through' is also not surprising. The advice from the expert, the psychotherapist, the geographical separation and closeness at the same time seemed to have helped to understandably convey, or it simply showed by the fact, that I was again at a point of not trying any harder any more.

My mother was starting to give up on me, or perhaps on the idea of being able to 'fix' me. She lovingly tried to befriend herself with my decisions to stay at my sister's house and have a break from any work, be it my academic work or at our family restaurant or doing the groceries for the restaurant or anything alike. She also tried to listen thoroughly to me, and started to articulate her own feelings of helplessness and impotence. She attributed them to not being able to actively 'do something' in order to make everyone in the family feel ok, and how she would try to understand but could not really imagine my feelings or struggles. A possible equivalence, and an abstraction, of what our relation was like can can be found in electromagnetism (Feynman and Leighton and Sands 1963, Vol II) and theories about nuclear resonance processes (Haacke 1999).

As a start, Feynman’s interpretation of the effect of a basic electromagnetic field for a charged particle in it, comes in handy:

We can write the force $F$ on a charge $q$ moving with a velocity $v$ as $F=q(E+v\times B)$. We call $E$ the electric field and $B$ the magnetic field at the
location of the charge. The important thing is that the electrical forces from all the other charges in the universe can be summarized by giving just these two vectors. Their values will depend on where the charge is, and may change with time. Furthermore, if we replace that charge with another charge, the force on the new charge will be just in proportion to the amount of charge so long as all the rest of the charges in the world do not change their positions or motions. (In real situations, of course, each charge produces forces on all other charges in the neighborhood and may cause these other charges to move,...). (Feynman and Leighton and Sands 2013, Vol II, Electromagnetism)

I invite the reader to not focus too much on the details of the equation, but on the descriptive part. This interpretation of a charge moving in an electromagnetic, i.e. electric and magnetic, field describes my imagination of how individuals are influencing each other. The way the influencing and influenced field depends on all the bits and pieces we know and don’t know of the entire system moving and communicating.\(^\text{18}\) I imagine my mother and me traveling through and moving within such fields at two 'locations' with very different characteristics, and very different effects on us as individuals.

Let us now go back to the theme of my mother, who was trying to push me, i.e. to give me energy, so that I could move on. My mother would then, not only be a particle\(^\text{19}\) or wave package influenced by the field, but additionally try to send out energy, which physics would again describe as particles or certain wave packages. Wave packages or particle on arrival should ideally excite certain states of mine and consequently, energy potentials of mine could be released and feed back into the

\(^{18}\) Additionally, prior experiences of different magnetic fields can be stored and change local behavior, depending on the material. An example is Ferromagnetism.

\(^{19}\) Not necessarily charged

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system constructively. Under these preconditions, the idea of pushing, as in sending energy wave packages, could constitute an important support.

What could impede, or allow the pushing to constructively interfere? The appreciation through the electromagnetic lens might give us some hints. As already mentioned, energy levels are quantized. Additionally, the realization of an effective energy transfer and or transformation depends on the exciting energy and the energy level to allow for resonate/absorb the energy. In engineering the process of adjustment between the emitting body with the receiving or resonating body is called matching and tuning (Wheeler 2012; MRI Questions 2019).20 Depending on the electromagnetic characteristics of a certain body, be it receiver or sender, electromagnetic fields become differently distorted. Basically these characteristics have to be matched, as a precondition for effective energy transference. Additionally, only if the sender emits wave package with frequencies corresponding to resonance frequencies of the receiver, resonance, hence absorption of the emitted energy and further emission can be achieved (Stiles 2009, 6).

Making use of Theme Centered Intervention (TCI) models (Dietrich 2013, D.2; Cohn 2004), the electromagnetic field could be interpreted as the Globe in which the We relationship is defined by the 'characteristics' and how we can open channels for interferences, hence match our perceptivity21. In such system the I, can only get into resonance, when the We meets a matched channel of communication, and specific frequencies are sent to the I, frequencies the I has the potential to resonate with. Now we can also simply see that many inside, outside and between factors

20 For details on Resonance, we refer the reader to Chapter Elicitive Conflict Mapping and Supportive Relationships.

21 Susceptibility would be the most equivalent physical property.
(Heron 2013) need to fall in place for resonance and constructive energy transfer with the I to happen. Any mismatch or mistune might have other effects such as energy transformation by friction, but not elicit effective resonance.

So, in my view, my mother and I slowly went, from the different positions in the field or the Globe, hence the different influences and interferences and crosstalks of other relationships and the things we might not know, into a tuning and matching process with both of us undergoing changes, which fed then back into the system in which we have been immersed, or the field respectively. So these changes allowed our fields to start matching and making energy transfer possible.

During the episode we slowly started to resonate more frequently. Interestingly, the metaphor also suits well for the long term changes my mother and I underwent after the episode. At some point in time I started getting better and my mother and I again started being more mismatched, in the sense of matching as introduced before. My mother tried to support me again by pushing, and I could not make use of this energy. So we entered a new cycle of matching and tuning mainly by pushing ourselves towards open and authentic communication. Until today we have gone through several cycles of matching and tuning, which seem to be overall constructive, and surely there are many of them to come.

Going back to the relation between my sister and me, it seems that some tuning and matching was present, despite the fact that my sister did not know any specifics about my depression.

It seems also relevant to me that the advice from the psychotherapist was quite key for my mother to give up on trying to fix it by supporting me in trying harder.
Especially as I also communicated to my family during the episode, that I had been to several psychologists and psychiatrists over the last 15 years, who were all diagnosing severe depression and recommended combined long term therapies, she might have been able to accept that there is something, she might not be in control of. I assume that my father also did have a prominent role in my mother’s giving in to the situation. Hence I understand these influences of my psychotherapist and my father as possible constructive contributions to field matching for the relation between my mother and me. We will further explore on this example tuning and matching with respect to resonance effects in chapter Elicitive Conflict Mapping and Supportive Relationships.

My father also has experiences and understandings around depressive conditions, as it has been quite common in our core family. During the episode, it was also the first time my father and I talked about depression. I remember the two of us entering the car, a random casual situation, when my father said something like “Michaela, I think I can understand parts of where you are at and that it’s not that you are not trying. Don’t worry.” This one moment changed the relation between my father and me and my life significantly. I understood it also as permission to asking my father about his feelings, motivations, reasoning for certain actions, which I had never dared before, because it just didn’t feel right. From the moment in the garage, I started to feel my father. We started interfering proactively and lovingly. We would still disagree on many things, but I could now address the points or just leave them be and not run into a full tension situation without having even expressed my discontent, which had been quite a pattern in the relationship of my father and I up to that point. We had rather avoided interferences before and residual wave packages we could avoid from interfering were most often happening accidentally and not coherently. The
disturbances do not mean in any way that we would not have talked to each other or not have tried to show our love. There was just always a certain blockage of energy transference and transformation.

Reapplying the metaphor of matching and tuning, a mismatch would block the connection. In such a case, even if the frequencies are in tune, resonance processes cannot occur effectively. Looking at my father’s and my relationship, the mismatch might also be a protective one. Perhaps my father did not want certain frequencies to initiate resonance and hence a distortion of the field would hamper the wave packages to arrive at my I. Possibly he wanted to protect me from certain energy, and or to protect himself from the resonance, and thus the feedback, of his own energy, which could represent some shadow aspects. If so, what made us bring these guards down during the episode? Again, I would like to go back to the comparison of the Globe or the fields we are all immersed in. I wonder if the changes in characteristics of the field allowed for the matching. These changes were manifold, for example my talking at least in my family openly about the depression or my mother’s changes in behavior by giving in. These changes might have transformed, the field, or the globe more towards a safe space for my father and/or me or our relation. I do not have a clear answer to it, but intuitively I tend to the perspective that there was a little bit of all the factors mentioned and many more things I have not grasped.

In summary, the action taken during cycles of matching and tuning do in my opinion basically draw on communicative interactions, which contain methods suggested for elicitive conflict transformation capacity building by Dietrich (Dietrich, 2011); be it consciously or unconsciously. I interpret the supportive conditions of the relationship, as a characteristic which is calling for engaging with the other in
communicative ways, which are useful for creating spaces for constructive transformation in conflictive systems in a professional context as a conflict worker. So, supportive relationships between family members can serve as real-life training situations. At this point, I want to stress that tuning and matching, is here only to be understood in the sense described above, as an energy exchange system. It is not meant as making people more equal or anything alike. Additionally, I want to emphasize the use of electromagnetic fields in this case being of metaphoric nature. Hence I do not refer to my mother’s body’s measurable and continuously changing electromagnetic field, but I understand the metaphor of electromagnetic field as a useful tool for expressing my understanding of my experiences in a systemic view.

Parting from a bilateral relational perspective and moving towards a perspective on the core family system as a whole, I would like to emphasize the change over time I felt from a safe space within the bilateral relationships towards a safe space of the whole core family system surrounding me. I consider all the mentioned bilateral relationship, and the relationship of my family and me as supportive relationships, mainly instrumental and emotional. During the process of drafting this chapter, the relevance of practice and experiences of tuning and matching in not only bilateral but also multilateral relationships for elicitive conflict transformation capacity building became evident to me. Methods like theme centered intervention, active listening or other communicative techniques as well as awareness enhancing techniques can all be contribute to matching and tuning. The importance of the changing field distortions by not only other individuals but also their relations amongst each other and feedback loops of resonances and changing characteristics can evoke varying potentials with new options.
The second episode I would like to share as an example for supportive relationships between family members happened only three years ago, when my brother in law Thomas had an accident and hurt his leg quite badly. As a consequence he could not work for several months. My sister Sandra and Thomas had just recently overtaken the family restaurant from my parents. It is a rural inn, where my core family not only works, but also lives. The accident happened during one of my resting periods between two engagements as international accompanier in Colombia, a conflict work already described above. During this break I kept myself busy supporting minor Afghan refugees and spending time and living with my parents and my nephew. The first relationships will constitute the last example of my experiences. One night, my brother in law slipped on ice and significantly injured one of his legs.

It was the beginning of a busy month in the restaurant. It was fully booked for the following days. Usually, my brother was managing the service while my sister was directing the kitchen, each of them supported by my father and my mother respectively. I was on holidays and my family and I, taking into account the changes we had achieved after the depressive episode described above, were eagerly trying to respect my holidays by not include myself into the restaurant’s working plan. The morning after Thomas’ accident, we, the core family except Thomas, decided in consensus, that we would not close down the restaurant immediately, but try to stay in business as long as we could. I consciously decided to work in the restaurant again, which was basically the first time after the episode of depression described above. Well, it was not an easy task. As we very soon realized, there was a lot of knowledge centralized in Thomas. He was the only one who knew how to use obligatory cash register, he was the one who was doing the shopping, the ordering of drinks, he was
also the one who was responsible for all the bookings and many other procedures we stumbled over while trying. Somehow we managed.

The joint effort and the energy we could release still seems massive to me. We matched and tuned almost perfectly for several months, adapting to the changes, without, at least in my case, neglecting the other strings of relations. These additional supportive relationships were rather helpful for the intense engagement in the restaurant, which lasted for several months. We would organize ourselves such that I could for example study with some of the Afghan minor refugees and go with a delegation to conflict zones in Southeastern Turkey during the episode. Retrospectively I do think, these additional activities allowed me to get out of one core system and stringed myself to different subsystems. Hence, the support of the Afghans and engagement in international solidarity work were probably key elements preventing me from being entirely absorbed by the most prominent at the time, the core-family-work-system and to get me too far away from homeostasis, out of balance (See chapter Elicitive Conflict Mapping Principles and Supportive Relationships).

Talking about the strings an individual is attached to, might provoke the image of a string puppet. So let me once more specify what I mean by multistringed supportive relationships and how the connections could look like. Within these connections one could mechanically speaking not only be pushed, but also pull on and additionally these interactions, create new forces and feed back to other parts they are connected with. Hence, it might be useful to imagine this multistringedness as a system of different springs, for simplification between different subsystems and between individuals in and across the subsystem.22 These strings can improve the springs could be substituted by matched connections with tunable resonance frequencies.

22 If the reader prefers the electromagnetic models, I hypothesize that the metaphor of springs could be substituted by matched connections with tunable resonance frequencies.
number of potential options for situations and positions of steady states, which
permanently change, hence dynamic steady states of the different subsystems. Such
springs can store, transfer and transform energy, between the subsystems, something I
experienced through this episode. For me, such a kind of attachment again does not
necessarily mean a loss of autonomy in the sense of selfdetermination, it rather
reassembles relational autonomy and a conscious giving in to the system of relations,
as discussed in chapter Background and in this chapter respectively.

Next to supporting each other with different activities related to the restaurant
work, providing care for Thomas was essential. After coming home from hospital
after several surgeries, my brother in law not only needed to be brought from one
appointment with doctors and therapist to another but his leg needed specific physical
care. I engaged in changing bandages, cleaning the wounds and massages and
mobilizing activities for the partly paralyzed foot. I particularly enjoyed the latter kind
of caring, which directly fed back in supporting me in many ways. It calmed my mind
down. It also allowed my brother in law and me to create a mutually understanding
relationship, an atmosphere in which we could communicate authentically, without
judging each other and both of us listening to each other, in qualities, I had not had
experienced in our relation before.

Not surprisingly we, the family did felt our tiredness and started to become
uninspired as soon as Thomas could slowly start doing his work again. Fortunately,
we were very aware that this might happen and started planning recreation time, so
that on the long run and to the best of my knowledge none of us ran into burn out or
depression following this episode.
In my case, herpes zoster slowed me down just at the time when Thomas started to physically engage in the restaurant work again, three weeks before my departure for the accompaniment work to Colombia. I focused on recovering. In my opinion, I could start healthy and inspired into the new engagement as a conflict worker. Ever since the family business has been carried out without me and my brother in law can walk again. For some moments he can even play football with his son, my nephew.

In terms of the research question, the example is of interest due to its multistrandedness and multistringedness of the supportive relationships within and between the different subsystems being prominent features. I hypothesize, that the systemic characteristic of real life experiences of supportive relationships do allow for the practice of dealing with or simply being in complex situations without despair.23 At the same time, such experiences of supportive relationships which release agility, beauty and calmness despite the seemingly conflicting demands might help to increase the confidence in possibilities to transform opposites and contradictions into options24 (Dietrich 2011, 28-30; chapter Background). This capacities have been introduced earlier as preferable capacities for elicitive conflict workers. Additionally, such experiences, and conscious reflections on them can help to broaden a knowledge base, which might be helpful in understanding obstacles and limiting realities in creating safe spaces for conflict transformation with conflict parties (See chapter Background). Hence, all these aspects of the specific example, which can and

23 Die Fähigkeit sich mit der grundsätzlichen Komplexität von Konflikten anzufreunden” (Dietrich 2011, 28)

24 Die Fähigkeit, aus Widersprüchen, Gegensätzen situativen Dilemmata und Paradoxa Optionen zu machen (Dietrich 2011, 28)
sometimes must be experienced in every-day life situations, show potential for contributing to elicitive conflict transformation abilities.

Engaging with Afghan refugees

Finally I would like to present support and friendship with Afghan refugees who arrived as minors in Austria between 2013 and 2016. Personally, I consider the following example as still most actively ongoing compared to the prior episodes. Hence, I doubt the word episode to be applicable here and I will rather stick to the terms example or experience. The selection of the relationships with the refugees for this thesis is motivated by its explicit multistrandedness; its multistringedness, as its beginning overlapped with the contingent episode of a family member’s injury and predeployment periods work working in conflict zones, episodes just described; its direct relation to techniques of elicitive conflict transformation, which I consciously had gotten in touch with during peace studies in Innsbruck; its challenging part of cultural differences, which was part of Lederach’s motivation for searching for an elicitive approach; and its direct relation to prior experiences in conflict zones and work with forcibly displaced people.

So, let’s get to the story. After several years in Colombia, I came again back to my parents’ village in October 2015. As mentioned above, I was going to take a break before deciding for the next project. I was pretty much surprised by the so-called “refugee crisis” the Austrian society and public was pre/occupied with and its symptoms in my close neighborhood. A center for minor, not accompanied refugees had been installed. Although it was one of the most prominent topics between the guests of our rural family restaurant, none of my acquaintances had been talking to one of the inhabitants of the refugee home nor has anyone been inside. There were
only some rumors about a buddy system between locals and refugees. Out of curiosity and non-conformity with the silent segregation, I visited the refugee home and offered a timely very limited support, as I was still exhausted from the prior project.

Reflecting on the beginning of the relationships, it seems very naive, that after studying several semesters Peace Studies in Innsbruck, I did not consider this engagement as active conflict work from the very start. I seriously do think that I started the engagement simply out of curiosity and to make a little, but visible whole into the wall between these young men and the population surrounding them. I did rather think, that the preconditions of not focusing on one particular person or taking responsibility for this person, as a buddy, but trying to only short term engage with instrumental help, would prevent me from becoming an integral part of the system of the boys. I wanted to avoid, what is impossible to avoid, becoming part of the system, as I knew, that I would most likely stay in Europe only for some months. Well, if I would have been more clear about the degree of engagement I was about to start, if I had reflected better on my own shadows and if I had had a better understanding of the overall situation of the boys I would probably have known better from the start. Personally, this was one of the most important learning factors of this example in terms of future social engagements.

As recommended from the social workers of the refugee home, I was introduced to a 17 years old Afghan guy, who had just received asylum status in Austria. The idea was to support him in administrative issues for transitioning into a life outside the asylum seekers’ home. Ahmad\textsuperscript{25} and I had very different visions on what this life could look like, in parts as my understanding and experiences of Austrian realities was very different from his. Additionally, I didn’t know Ahmad at that time and most

\textsuperscript{25} Name changed
likely I did not listen well to him either. We rapidly developed a close relationship with many frictions and in my opinion also trust, which allowed me to emotionally support Ahmad. It was only when Ahmad started opening up about his past, that I started listening with all my heart to his claims and the way he claimed certain things. At the same time, Ahmad was surprised, that I would not get into protective mode and become more distant after hearing his stories, as it had happened to him in prior encounters with Austrian citizens from the region.

So we moved on forging a conflictive and caring relationship and I tried to more and more follow his lead, after having tried to convey possible consequences. Several times, from my viewpoint, Ahmad changed his opinions without any prior sign and it was hard for me to except these changes. I would desperately repeat something like,” I don’t understand you” and Ahmad would simply explain, “There are a lot of animals in the forests and each of them is different”26 This phrase accompanies me until today, and it can sometimes bring me back to a simply observing state attempting to listen actively.

Soon, social workers asked for support for two other 16 year-old refugee boys, who were trapped in the asylum seekers' home without any occupation. As I expected Ahmad to become more independent rapidly, I accepted. I tried to do some German and general interest workshops with Ari and Ali27 (see Chapter Non-Experts Interviews), which would hopefully prepare them for applications for public educational programs later on. Retrospectively, I do think that the support was for a greater amount emotional than I had anticipated. Additionally, I really liked it. I did find joy in it. Soon I accepted two more boys for individual classes in Mathematics

26 Im Wald gibt es viele Tiere und jedes ist anders. (translated by the author)

27 Names changed
and German. Perhaps the instrumental support was a vehicle for emotional support, or it was simply intertwined, but in conformity with the supervisors of the boys, the two hours per week, improved their overall mood and motivation significantly.

Although, we didn't talk about very concrete war-related experiences of the past in these first months, I experienced with all guys, despite their strong variations in their socio-cultural backgrounds and personality, a significant opening and letting down the guards after certain communications. I attribute the changes in parts to the transmission of my understanding and experiences in war zones, with combatants, victims and all sorts of categorized and in the end human beings in the midst of war and escape. As far as I can judge, it was additionally beneficial for their opening up, that it was not their war, not their home, not their escape route. It seemed to me that they saw a possibility that someone could understand and at the same time listen to their narrative non-judgmentally. By listening to their narrative, I do not mean that we would frequently talk about their possibly traumatic experiences, but in my opinion, they started feeling more entitled to at least state an opinion on not even war related topics. What I received was a general change in the sense of, 'something of what I think might be understood or listened to, and not be generally received as being completely out of the box.'

Somehow, I did feel a similar thing. Coming back to Austria I sometimes did feel quite alienated to my family and friends. While teaching German or Mathematics in the refugee home, or convincing someone to simply sit by for leaving his room for a bit, I sometimes felt more 'in place' than in the midst of my genuinely loving and caring family. The encounters provided me security and calmness.
So I spent more and more hours in the refugee home and with Ahmad. Just when I had accepted classes with the two individuals, my brother in law was injured and the episode described above kicked in. I decided to give priority to both subsystems and continued with supporting the Afghan refugees while helping with the restaurant and taking care of Thomas. Somehow the refugee home became a refugee for me too. The classes and time with the Afghan boys were becoming a source of energy and inspiration to me. Again, the model of electromagnetic fields and the transference of energy apply here.

Thematically, Ahmad and I were looking for an apprenticeship for him to become a mechanic, which was his dream job and every now and then he wanted to change flat, but none of these issues was resolved before my leave to Colombia. The ones who attended classes continued in the asylum seekers’ home and no significant change in their situation was to be expected.

Although, I had continuously made explicit the transience of my stay in Austria, in order to not raise false expectations, the messages about my new engagements approaching, be it the delegation to Southeastern Turkey or the leave to Colombia, did apparently affect most of the boys more than I had anticipated. To my understanding, there were two main irritating factors. On the one hand, they were disappointed and afraid about losing the relationship, we had carefully built up, which for them probably was the closest they had with an Austrian, in the sense of, how Ari expressed it “I feel like a human being” or, “At least there is one person outside this house, who knows me by my name”. On the other hand, the idea, that I would work in conflictive areas, which has been a pillar of our mutual understanding, seemed to bring additional insecurity into their lives, and I sensed immediate closing up and distancing. As for
the first issue, I could motivate and my entire family and my mother to meet up casually every now and then with Ahmad and Ali respectively. Concerning the security issue, it was my turn, to invest in transmitting the differences of situations I might encounter and their imagination or interpretation from their backgrounds. Security protocols and the theories behind international accompaniment, differences between being a European citizen in Afghanistan or Colombia, hence, theoretical knowledge, combined with laughing together about “my most dangerous war situation ever”, which seemed not dangerous to them, did decrease their anxiety, but could not rewind certain distancing, which I interpret as self-protective.

One year later, when I came back to Austria for holidays, Ahmad was living with my family, after having had some troubles with the law, and he didn't have a place to go after having been imprisoned. Ali was in touch with my mother and was still waiting for his interview for the asylum procedure. As soon as I came back home safely for the first time, they opened up again.

Today, Ahmad just moved to a new flat and is happy with his new job. Ali is still waiting for his second interview for the asylum procedure, after the first application was rejected. Meanwhile he could start and apprenticeship as a tiler, one of the few jobs accessible for asylum seekers. He lives with a friend and every now and then, I visit them, we study, eat and chat together. Ahmad and Ali have been a great emotional support after coming back home from Colombia, after the killing of an accompanied person. They manage to create a safe space for me and I feel most relaxed when I am with them.

With respect to capacity building potentials for elicitive conflict transformation, hence the research question, the relations built did show specific importance for
elicitive worker capacity building in the following aspects. First, the need of integrating and being aware of experiences of different time points into the present encounters for all participants was very prominent. Sometimes abruptly changing emotional states and changes of conduct and decisions, led to a second prominent feature of these supportive relationships: the necessity of the attempt of feeling into and looking at concrete situations, without the urge to understand, analyze, deconstruct and looking for solutions immediately (Dietrich 2011, 28-30; chapter Background). Otherwise, it would have been more likely that the relationships would have been cut or gotten toxic very quickly. The latter has been a very difficult task for me, as it calls for a lot of patience, something I am definitely lacking and working on. In the next chapter, the interview with Ali contains more information about his understanding of the importance of patience.

A challenge, which I do think is very relevant for an elicitive conflict worker, has been the awareness, acceptance and embracement of possible changes of the individuals one is working with. Several times I was quite resistant to becoming aware of the changes, and stuck to my imagination of how the person would be, which was only nourished from prior experiences but not the momentary experiences. Fortunately, some Afghan boys taught me patiently some lesson on accepting them as they were in the moment.

A further relational aspect was the constant balancing between using the knowledge learned and the felt through prior experiences, mainly connected to experiences in war zones with combats and traumatized and forcibly displaced people, without putting my own feelings into the center nor neglecting them; practicing
working towards homeostasis (see Chapter Elicitive Conflict Mapping Principles and Supportive Relationships).

In this chapter I tried to narrate several personal experiences of supportive relationships. Subsequent reflections on different relations within the situations and its interactions revealed several hints for learning potentials for capacities recommended for elicitive conflict workers. Analysis also aimed at showing the specific role of multistrandedness and multistringedness in enhancing the capacity of dealing with complexities, which are usually found in conflictive systems.
Experiences of supportive relationships as defined for this thesis are unique, one-time experiences, each of them with its very own qualities. This chapter tries to elaborate on such different supportive relationships experienced from different individuals. The data which are used in this chapter were acquired by interviewing five non-experts following the protocol described in chapter 4.3 Methods and Structure: Non Experts Interviews.

In a first step, I describe the interview situation and the content transmitted in a narrative style as used in the previous chapter My Experiences. Thus I hope to not exclude the relational aspect between the interview partner and myself.

In a second step, I look into these interviews to possibly find evidence for elicitive conflict workers’ capacity building properties of supportive relationships as already practiced in the previous chapter (Dietrich 2011; chapter Background).

List of participants:

Michaela. School-mate and long-time friend, Austrian, 43 years old, massage instructor. Personal interview, March 2019

Thomas. Family member, Austrian, 47 years old, restaurant owner. Personal interview, February 2019

Xiomara. Colombian, 58 years old, cook, friend. Written exchange, February 2019

Ali28. Afghan, 20 years old, apprentice of tiling, refugee, friend. Personal Interview, March 2019

Anke. Friend and former colleague, German, 40 years old, Professor of Biomedical Engineering. Audio conference, March 2019

28 Name changed.
Michaela and I met thirty three years ago, when we started at the same high school. Our friendship strengthened significantly during adolescence. Back then she was the only person with whom I would sometimes talk about my depressive feelings. After starting our studies in different cities, we did only stay in touch sporadically. Nevertheless, it was always understood, that we were available and present for each other if requested.

In terms of our relation and mutual influences, the following biographical development of my friend seems relevant to me. Michaela has suffered from severe migraine for many years. After many not fruitful attempts of therapies, changes in lifestyle, nutrition and alike, she changed her professional life and transitioned from her career as a media analyst and statistician to being a masseur. The change improved in her and my point of view her and her family’s situation significantly. Meanwhile I was doing my PhD and I was deeply impressed by Michaela’s decision for such a significant change. I experienced this change as very courageous and against all sociocultural norms of our region and upbringing. I further do think that her story of change significantly contributed to the courage for my own leap of faith: changing from natural sciences academic work to applied peace work. I consider this aspect, alongside with our friendship during adolescence, essential for choosing Michaela for an interview.

Michaela currently lives with her husband and daughter in Vienna. Hence, I could visit her in person and ask her about the interview. She was immediately interested and willing. Michaela is generally known as a very diligent person, so it was no surprise to me that she asked me to hand her over the concrete interview questions in

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29 From my perspective the effective use of expensive and cumbersome education, as Michaela and my studies, is most desirable for our parents, of course, I might be completely wrong.
advance. About six weeks after she had received the question, we conducted the interview in her flat, while her husband and child were not present.

Before starting the interview, Michaela stated that she was very nervous. She had chosen an example about receiving help in a crisis. Michaela had no clear idea on why she had chosen this specific example, or why she did not choose any example which would be smaller, than this example which had a very high impact on her and she considers very important. The story was also quite surprising for me, as I hadn’t heard about it before.

About a year ago, Michaela went to the periodic gynecological exam including breast exams. She remembered going there completely relaxed. In her mind she was convinced, or as Michaela phrased it, she ‘knew’ that everything was ok. On the one hand she attributed this conviction to the experiences of prior exams, which all had been without any problems. On the other hand, she had established in her mind the theory, that because of having severe migraine, she would not get any severe diseases not related to her head.

At this point Michaela interrupted herself, and comforted me with, “No worries. The story has a good ending”\(^{30}\) (Michaela, personal interview, March 2019). Apparently it was quite obvious to her, how emotionally touched I was by the beginning of this interview.

At the gynecologist, Michaela did a mammography and ultrasound examination and the doctor was concerned, that there ‘might be something’. Although he claimed, that most likely it would not be anything, and if so something, it would be very small, the possible diagnose hit Michaela completely unprepared, she never had imagined before to end up in such a situation. The news put her off.

\(^{30}\)Keine Sorge, es geht eh alles gut aus. (translated by the author)
Michaela considers herself a pessimist for issues related to herself. She contrasted this pessimism with the optimism she would have, if it were a different person affected. If someone else came to her with a similar problem, she would rather lean towards the analysis, that in the end there will be no problem as the chances are really low. Additionally, she would think of several possibilities how the situation could unfold. But for the situation involving her, she could not act identically.

The next thing, Michaela remembered was calling her husband. He was at work, and offered to come to her if needed. Michaela refused. Afterwards she called her friend Mary.\textsuperscript{31} Mary simply came over to Michaela’s place, despite being at work. Michaela remembers that visit as very hard, because she had to talk about the topic. So in a first moment, the situation became even worse for Michaela. At the same time, she experienced the feeling of someone being with her as 'cool' and 'comforting'.

At this point Michaela was moved to tears and said, “See, I am still not over it. Perhaps the story was not such a good choice”\textsuperscript{32}. (Michaela, personal interview, March 2019)

My friend specified further, that the knowledge of having somebody at hand, if needed, was probably the most comforting and surprising thought as she was not used to needing a go-to person. She describes herself as rather self-contained, and usually coping with problems on her own, often without even consulting her husband. She did not remember challenges in her life, in which she felt the need of sharing with others. Quite the opposite, Michaela remembered being repeatedly criticized about not sharing her concerns. So for my friend, the experience with Mary showed her how useful it can be to share certain concerns.

\textsuperscript{31} Name changed

\textsuperscript{32} Schau, ich hab es noch immer nicht verkraftet, vielleicht war es doch nicht so gescheit, das zu erzählen.(translated by the author)
Michaela then highlighted the importance of the interplay between the different ways of supports of Mary and her husband, which “complemented each other neatly”\(^{33}\) (Michaela, personal interview, March 2019), as she put it. While Mary was mainly listening, Michaela’s husband was good at putting the situation into different perspectives and contributing to some easier moments by diversion. In her opinion, the combination was what allowed her to get through the two weeks between the first examination and the follow up examination, which did not confirm the suspect of any potentially malign breast tissue. Michaela was also impressed by the sensitivity of the people around her with respect to timing, especially Mary. Mary did just know when to talk about the concerning topic and when not to, without Michaela needing to communicate it consciously and explicitly.

During the two weeks between the two exams Michaela’s eleven years old daughter was at a scout camp. Although Michaela did not want her daughter to know about her health concerns, she volunteered for a week in the kitchen team of the camp as had been planned before. Retrospectively, Michaela evaluates the decision to participate as beneficial. While being there she realized that it was a good distraction, a lot of work and that she could have fun regardless. Hence, she evaluated the whole situation as supportive. She could and would not track this support down to single persons. The situation made it easier to get through these weeks.

During the interview, Michaela recognized a huge difference between being the affected person or potentially supportive person. The difficulty in putting oneself the theme into a more fact including perspective, in limiting the emotional reaction can be handled much easier with someone bringing in other perspectives, which are not without any emotions, but the emotions play out differently. Mary and Michaela’s husband at least tried to limit these emotions.

\(^{33}\)… haben sich wunderbar ergänzt. (translated by the author)
In this situation of crisis, Michaela was further surprised about how little she could apply to herself the knowledge she gathered by working in a medical environment, which gave her insight into the high probability of first diagnoses being wrong and the wide range of possibilities adhering to these first diagnoses. Because of herself reacting purely emotional, without making any use of the knowledge she had available, when she herself was the patient, Michaela doubts that anyone could come to terms with such a situation alone. This was the final message of Michaela’s freely narrating part.

Then, I asked Michaela if she could go more into detail with respect to the experience in the scout camp and the way, she experienced her husband’s support.

Concerning the summer camp Michaela pointed out that she did not know the people at the camp very well, nor did they get to know about her worries. The open and positive way people at the camp included her did allow her to widen her perception of her self. My friend started observing herself laughing and cooking and spending time beautifully simultaneously to being terrible scared about her own health. At this point I exchanged with Michaela the anecdote of the Colombian community leader Teresa, 34, already mentioned in My Experiences. “We are afraid, but we are together. If we make sweets, we’ll have sweets and fear. If we don’t make sweets we’ll still have the fear. If we dance, we’ll have fear and dancing. If we don’t dance, we’ll only have the fear”. (Teresa, personal talk). Michaela highly agreed with this statement as describing very well her underlying feeling during the summer camp. The experience made my friend, as she said, change her concept of personhood, she started to feel that “I am so much more than this individual” (Michaela, personal interview, March 2019) in the sense of life is so much more than her person, it is also not only about her body, her Self is connected with other persons.

34 Name changed.
In my opinion, this experience is highly relational and this change of understanding of the self might be considered as transformative learning.

With respect to her husband’s support I learned that he was pretty strict in making her adhere to the present facts and not on the worst case scenarios, without excluding them and with affirmation of “we will be able to get through it” (Michaela, personal interview, March 2019). Michaela reflected that she could positively receive such a comment from her husband, as they have already experienced different complicated episodes together, which substantiate this affirmation.

Additionally to this account, we entered a rather dialogical interview style about the two last sub-questions. On the question, if she learned something from the episode, she answered:

Yes, but nothing I could not have told you before. The feeling does not represent the factual reality- or, I don’t know how to express it better, that from this feeling you cannot get out alone. (Interview Michaela 2019)

Although she knew about the factual reality, Michaela had not known about the impossibility of getting through this situation more independently. She had anticipated being able to integrate factual knowledge better. “The sense of self seems not to be the real one” (Michaela, personal interview, March 2019). As a consequence, Michaela’s admiration for individuals who are able to stay fact based, even more so if their life threatening diagnoses have been confirmed and increased.

On a more personal level, Michaela assessed the experience of the worst case scenario not coming true as important. She hopes that it might help her to not always focus only on this singular option in future crisis situations; to try to believe in others
arguments, and not disqualify them all as attempts of calming her down, but as often useful inputs, which indicate alternative possible developments of a situation.

In reference to the third part of the interview question, Michaela observed no specific changes in the relation with Mary and her husband, with whom she has a very close relationship 'anyways'. For her, it was an episode within these relationships. She also doubted significant changes in how she generally relates with people.

Rather, Michaela stressed the importance of not being alone during a crisis and that she would now, due to this knowledge, probably act differently if someone were in crisis. She would give higher priority to showing the person in crisis the general existence of different options, and not only one path of development, in comparison to delivering pure knowledge in the support she would offer. She would stress her being present, as being available, but not necessarily temporarily permanently present. Michaela stressed the quality of being present not as spending time together in the same room, but letting the other person truly know and understand, that there is someone the person could call. The knowledge of this possibility is in Michaela’s view already a huge portion of support. She never called Mary out of immediate need except for the first call, but possibility helped her a great deal.

In continuation I asked my friend to comment on the time when we were adolescent friends and Michaela supported me during depression. I shared with her, that this support was beyond my imagination. Michaela never gave me the feeling of being an annoyance or burden for her. She was, in my view, simply there for me, simply present. I further shared with Michaela, that I could not imagine being able to give such an unconditional kind of support. Support and presence which were transmitted as if they were effortless and easygoing.
Again, we shared some tears, while smiling. Michaela first put the episode into perspective of typical adolescent friendships, when friends become the go-to persons. Hence, she did not define it as support, but a mutual relating in a way which corresponded our ages. These relations, as Michaela put it, adhere to certain rules and one that stuck out for Michaela is the importance of trust built upon confidentiality a certain uniqueness of the relationship. She referred to her twelve year-old daughter, where she starts observing similar developments. For my friend, our situation was “just as it was.”35 This sentiment did not exclude Michaela worrying a great deal about me and feeling “responsible”36 for me. My friend highlighted our relation during adolescence as a first experience of mutual responsibility. Additionally, my depression was not that overarching for her, it was part of it and no more. Her feeling about the relation was “No matter what, we will go through it together.”37 And she had a feeling of certainty about the fact, that the situation would resolve itself somehow.

The second example I shared was about a one-time massage Michaela provided me some years ago, just before stepping on the airplane for going for a one year deployment as an accompanier to Colombia. I had been suffering some backaches for several months, but her one-time massage gave me great relieve for a very long period. First, Michaela would not categorize it as a supportive action. For her it is a significant difference in the approach between supportive action and giving a massage, which is her profession. Additionally, she did not expect such an effect by just one massage, and therefore she would also not count it as support she had intended in a way to give in order to truly transform a situation. To me it still was a

35 Das war halt so. (translated by the author)

36 Verpflichtung. (translated by the author)

37 Egal, was passiert, wir gehen gemeinsam durch. (translated by the author)
supportive act, and I think that I did learn from it to not leave out of sight simple solutions or transformations.

Reflecting on the interview with regard of the research question, the A of Awareness from the recommended conflict worker’s ABC, sticks out the most (UNESCO 2014a; chapter Research Problem). In Elicitive Conflict Mapping Online (2014a), awareness expected from an elicitive conflict worker has been separated in awareness of the own personality, awareness of the surrounding world and awareness of the own fantasies. During the interview, Michaela reflected on the learning affects, attributed to the supports she received in all three categories. For the first, she refers to the actualization of her self-perception through the interactions with Mary and her husband. In terms of awareness of the context, I consider the broadening of her self-perception as well as the perception of her surrounding as a potential for her personal constructive development as relevant. Michaela reflected explicitly about the difficulties of confronting one’s own fantasies and how she would try to use this knowledge in possible future supportive relationships.

Thomas and I have known each other for more than 20 years. He has been married to my sister for about 20 years now and every now and then we do share living spaces, as for example during two of the episodes described in My Experiences, or during this thesis writing process. When asking him for an interview, my choice was mainly motivated by the shared experiences and changes within our relationship I perceived when he hurt his leg (see My Experiences). My brother in law was the first person I interviewed for this study. As for the living situation we conducted the interview at home, without anyone else being present. I tried to explain the research question and the interview question in detail and Thomas took some time to think
about an appropriate example. He has experienced many and still the question seemed complex to him. He first analyzed:

Generally there are a lot of supportive relationships. There are close relationships, through which help is provided just because one subject of the relation wants the other subject of the relation to feel better. And then, there are many people who help, because they want to move forward in their own agenda. There is plenty of the latter type of help, as basically everyone who wants to progress in the economic system uses them, but I guess these are not the ones meant here.38 (Thomas, personal interview, February 2019)

Thomas chose a situation of crisis, which hit him unprepared, and was an for him an example of example “when the wheat is separated from the chaff”39 (Thomas, personal interview, February 2019). Thomas further detailed:

I had lived a long time, as if I were indestructible, I just moved forward and managed everything by myself. But then, you can really come into situations, in which this is not possible any more. You cannot do everything alone anymore. […] It is in such situations of crisis, when you receive help, which you would not expect and you could not even imagine, from different people, who seem to really like you and just help without caring about their own benefit.40 (Thomas, personal interview, February 2019)

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38 allgemein gibt es eine Menge von helfenden Beziehungen, wo du hilfst oder vice versa. Es gibt enge Bindungen mit Hilfe einfach nur weil man will, damit es dir besser geht, und dann viele, die helfen, weil sie weiterkommen will. Letzteres gibt es massenhaft, weil im wirtsch. System jeder weiterkommen will, aber die werden es wohl nicht sein hier. (translated by the author)

39 Wenn sich der Weizen vom Stroh trennt. (translated by the author)

40 Ich habe lange so gelebt wie wenn ich unzerstörbar wäre, man fährt dahin und managed alles selber. Du kannst aber in Situationen kommen, wo das ganz einfach nicht mehr möglich ist, dass du es alleine schaffst. In so einer Situation, dass du von Menschen, die dich anschienend mögen, Hilfe bekommst, die du nicht erwartest und dir auch nicht vorstellen kannst. Menschen helfen ohne zu fragen warum oder was bekomme sie davon bekommen. (translated by the author)
In terms of accepting help, or entering such a supportive relationship, Thomas reflected on himself as a person who would only receive such help, if being completely helpless, without any other viable options. Even in such a case, he hypothesized, that he could accept support from and show his helplessness in front of very close people. He ran into such a situation of helplessness, when he went bankrupt with a company he had tried to revitalize again, which severely affected the financial situation of the family.

Before reflecting on specific supportive relationships, Thomas pondered over possible changes he experienced through the supportive relationships during the crisis into which, as he insisted, he maneuvered himself and others helped him to get out. He reflected that, despite the general impression that the experience did not change him significantly, he has become more conscious about the true importance of family. In the moments of crises only the core family members supported him relentlessly and only very few friends remained supporting a bit.

Then Tomas turned to the concrete relation between his wife, i.e. my sister, and him. He introduced her as a person who always has been considerate of Thomas’ professional career. She always stood back for his job. As Thomas put it, this was 'all good' as my sister would not be as career-minded as he was and as long as everything worked out fine. For Thomas, it was when the company went bankrupt and the financial situation became very tense, that he realized how his wife stands by him, which in Thomas’s view is easy when everything is fine, and life is easy. For him, standing by someone becomes difficult, and you get to know the other, in the way they stand by you when you run into crisis.
Then Thomas claimed, that nevertheless he has not changed his behavior towards his wife. He mentioned how he could have become more thankful, or something alike, but that he was not that kind of guy. He neither noticed any change in his way of going forward in his professional career and the dynamics between his wife and him. Although Thomas considers crisis, where somebody has to help you out as very dramatic, he emphasized again, that he did not change. He further added, that he gets angry about not being more thankful by showing containment, but in the end he cannot help it. Overall Thomas maintains supportive relationships mainly within family, as in his opinion they create a certain dependency. Hence, he prefers receiving help for money, i.e. paying someone for helping him, if it is not a core family member.

For Thomas, helping becomes challenging, when someone, who is not a family member needs help. Thomas sees less self interest in helping someone who is not a family member than supporting the own family, and its smooth functioning, as one might not benefit from a later wellbeing of a non-family member or its subsystem.

In that moment of the interview my brother in law seemed to receive my wondering about this statement because of the support he was providing in my opinion to two Afghan refugees. So, looking at me, he mentioned exceptions to his observation, as the two Afghans Ahmad and Muhammad. As mentioned above he did open his house for Ahmad, after being released from jail. Additionally, he economically supported Muhammad, a further Afghan refugee significantly. Thomas explained that this kind of help was for him rather a bargaining relationships as he was also benefitting by the work they did for him. Thomas furthermore considers supporting as an easy and natural task, as long as there is no notable loss in his own
life quality or any significant economic disadvantage, still he added that you could have personal satisfaction of the other person doing better. Still, Thomas reflected, that such support would not be an easy task for him.

My brother in law continued with a second kind of support he mainly avoids. He does not sign petitions for some specific cause. He fears the risk of being on lists, which might have consequences in a later moment of life. Again, he does not want to put his family into a certain corner and characterized himself a little cowardly in that respect. He referred than to history as an indicator for the security risk of putting one's name behind engagements for certain issues.

Then the interviewee returned to reflecting on possible changes of himself through the experiences of support through the crisis. Despite not believing that the experience of the failure did especially change his behavior towards other individuals, he acknowledges a probable linkage between the experiences of supportive help from the family during the crisis and his current work life organized around the family unit opposed to former business life in big companies and company groups, which he is “crazily happy about” 41. In his opinion, all members of the family-working-compound do have a common goal, which is, the family being fine and might not look the same for each of the members and be overlayed with certain individual goals.

Still, in his opinion, everyone wants the overall budget to work fine, also with certain self-interests, for which he named two examples: my parents are content when the house is kept in shape and there are no conflict within the family; I am happy when the restaurant works well, because then I can come home, and rest and

41 worüber ich wahnsinnig froh bin. (translated by the author)
visit in a comfortable and positive environment, which he interprets and I agree, I do really like. All these aspects of working and living in a family compound Thomas mentioned as very satisfying for himself and something he was missing when working in a big company, being well paid, for less personal risk – still, he highlighted again the surplus of the current situation.

Everything you do, you do for yourself, not in an egoistic sense. You can directly work on what you want, the things. In a transnational company you work for something, someone wants to have for economic, monetary reasons. I don’t want that, not in the way which makes rich people richer. In comparison, I rather prefer to help someone, who is in need.\(^{42}\) (Thomas, personal interview, February 2019)

When Thomas was finished with his comments, he asked about the examples I wanted to talk about. So, I remembered him of my episode of severe depression, which has already been described in My Experiences. First of all he did not remember it as severe, but considered his wife, my sister Sandra more sensitive. So he basically remembered that I was not doing very well. On my comment, that I was very surprised and that for me it was very huge, when they just drove to Zurich, packed me in the car, and took care of me, he responded:

There is probably people who cry out for help quite quickly and others, who wait until they are really stuck. Perhaps, you experience such situations, or support more consciously, if you really didn’t know how to move on by yourself anymore. Such situations can occur due to

\(^{42}\)Man tut alles, was man tut, für sich selbst, nicht im egoistischen sinn. Man kann an dem arbeiten was man selber haben möchte, materiell. Im Konzern arbeitest du für das, was jemand aus monetären Gründen haben möchte. Das will ich zb. Nicht so, reiche reicher machen. Da ist es mir lieber ich helfe jemandem, wenn ich kann, dem es schlecht geht. (translated by the author)
health issues, getting hurt, or by creating financial disasters. Financial disaster as such would not be as severe, but for me it was the fact of failing, especially if you hadn’t experienced it before.\textsuperscript{43} (Thomas, personal interview, February 2019)

Consequently, Thomas considered the emotional support from his and my parents more relevant than the additional economic support he received. Nevertheless he evaluated financial support as necessary for starting over again. “Our parents are simply like that. They help, without giving a second thought. They are just parents.”\textsuperscript{44} (Thomas, personal interview, February 2019) He substantiates the observation with the unconditional support his parents offered his brother help after committing a crime.\textsuperscript{45} Thomas pointed out that he cannot generalize the observation on support to family networks, with some being more and others less unselfish or altruistic. In continuation he mentioned parents who spend their holidays without their children as an example for being rather not unselfish and contrasts it with the relation we experienced with our parents during childhood. He assesses our parents as dedicated and self-sacrificing with respect to their children. Thomas did not have a clear opinion about the origins of such educational patterns being genetic or societal, but assumed that it would be a mixture.

\textsuperscript{43}Es gibt Leute, die schnell um Hilfe schreien weil sie so sind und andere, die das nur tun, wenn sie wirklich nicht mehr weiterkönnen. Und diese nehmen das dann vielleicht auch bewusster wahr. Du kannst krank werden, dich verletzen oder ein finanzielles Desaster hervorrufen, etwas wo du nicht mehr hinaus kannst. Finanzielle Desaster sind eigentlich nicht so krass, da beginnt man wieder von vorne, aber bei mir war es vor allem das Scheitern, die Niederlage, vor allem, wenn du sie noch nie wirklich gehabt hast. (translated by the author)

\textsuperscript{44}Unsere Eltern -deine, meine- sind so, helfen, und überlegen nicht lang. Das sind einfach Eltern -zumindest unsere. (translated by the author)

\textsuperscript{45}For respecting the brother’s privacy, I will not go into detail here.
Compared to core family-support, my brother in law was convinced that you would have to return the support from people who are not core family members. He called it “support from outside” (Thomas, personal interview, February 2019). In Thomas' view, family members, who provide support in the way our parents did would never claim for receiving something in return. So, due to these differences Thomas does not like for example to borrow something 'from outside', because then he has a feeling of having to give something in return. For my brother in law, this part was one of the most stressful ones in his former job as a key account manager for a telecommunication company. It was about networking. He described networking as “Looking for help for someone for maintaining in turn business with them. To do so, you try to be friend with as many people as possible.” (Thomas, personal interview, February 2019). Thomas experienced himself very incongruent or even false by doing this and attributes his high stress level during this occupation to these rules of conduct. He concluded with “I could never have done that job forever.” (Thomas, personal interview, February 2019)

Combing posteriorly through the interview in the search of possible evidence with respect to the research question, the aspects of congruency and centrality of family mainly attracted my attention.

In my opinion, Thomas kept circling around the differences about his prior professional life, networking and current situation of working in his family compound during the interview. Only at the very end he opened up about himself feeling incongruent during his prior work. Prior to this reflection, he emphasized the

46 Hilfe von aussen. (translated by the author)

47 man muss Hilfe für jemanden besorgen, damit man mit dieserr Person wiederum Geschäfte machen kann, das heisst man muss sich mit so vielen Leuten wie möglich gutstellen. (translated by the author)

48 ich hätte das nie mein ganzes Leben lang machen können. (translated by the author)
unconditional support without bargaining of different family members, who would 'just do it'. He also reflected on the more direct benefits he can achieve for him and his family working in the family compound. To me all these statements point towards possible learning affect in understanding and appreciating congruency, the C of the elicitive conflict worker’s ABC introduced in previous chapters. (UNESCO 2014a; chapter Background)

In contrast, the prominence of family solidarity as a positive value as gained knowledge feels unsettling with respect to elicitive conflict work. As mentioned in the analysis of my experiences with Afghan refugees, actualization of the current self of the different conflict partners seems very relevant for creating spaces for constructive transformation. Additionally, we just mentioned in the reflections of Micheala’s interview the importance of being aware of the current context. In Thomas´ interview, I experienced the value of family as quite fixed, structural. I wonder, if the sentence 'they just do it' then easily turns into 'they must just do it', a Truth, which would lead on the one hand probably to prescriptive conflict work and on the other hand contradict Lederach’s original call for elicitive conflict work to bridge sociocultural differences (see Research Problem).

Xiomara, a fiftyeight years old Afrocolombian woman, has been working as a cook and cleaning lady for an international accompaniment organization. We both got to know each other in 2016. I was an accompanier and started working and living in the house where Xiomara works. At the beginning, I experienced Xiomara as a rather reserved and not very friendly person, who did not seem to like her work, who seemed always tired and was mostly in a bad mood or depressed. Additionally, I felt some tensions between some accompaniment team members and Xiomara, and some friendships between others. Still, from the very beginning there was something about
Xiomara I resonated with and which made me feel comfortable around her. Soon, I learned from her that she really was not be happy about doing this work, but that she and her whole family depended economically on the money she earned with this work. Perhaps it was the congruency and authenticity with which she lived the dislike and at the same time necessity of the work, which made me feel comfortable and in a safe space. Anyhow, I stuck quite a bit around her. From my point of view she didn’t really care about me until the day she had to bring Xiorelys to work. Xiorelys is Xiomara’s grandchild, and at the same time her foster child. She was almost five years old when I met her and we connected immediately. This was the day, Xiomara started calling me 'friend of Xiorelys.' We started talking about our lives, learned about our common experiences of depression and three months later, we called ourselves by 'friend' and shared another eight months working together. And we also spent some free days with Xiomara’s family. Most of the days we would not even talk a lot, sometimes we would simply except our 'bad days' and try to support each other, if requested. I guess, we share a high level of mutual understanding, despite the fact that I have a very hard time to understand Xiomara’s particular Colombian dialect, and I might interpret facts not always correctly, which did to the best of my knowledge not affect our relation significantly.

When I asked Xiomara if she wanted to participate in an interview about supportive relationships, she was quite excited about the fact that I would think about

49 This is a quite common phenomenon in Colombia, which is called “hijos de crianza”. I think that this community or tribe oriented non-public care system as such would be very interesting in terms of supportive relationship, but it would go beyond the scope of this thesis.

50 Actually, a lot Colombian women take care of other children of neighbours or family members who would not

51 We played domino with the weirdest rules I ever played.

52 amiga de Xiorelys
her and her knowledge and experiences in this academic context. As she was in Colombia, with internet access limited to her working hours, and I in Austria, we decided to do the interview by written exchange of questions and answers. This procedure did also avoid the oral misunderstandings just described.

For talking about supportive relationships in her life, she chose the episode after the violent death of her husband. In her first written reply, she explained that she did not know how to confront life, especially with her three little kids, and being alone with them. Xiomara’s family did realize her ‘fragility’ and supported her emotionally. Xiomara stressed, that her family had not left her alone; they had accompanied her even in the most difficult situations. When she fell after the loss into severe depression, there was always someone of her family who talked to Xiomara and tried to motivate her.

Xiomara remembered that she had met after some time a cousin through this net of family support. This cousin was in Xiomara’s point of view the person who allowed Xiomara to see life differently and who pulled her out of the hole, her lethargy.

Although I, knew about the assassination of Xiomara’s husband and some of the hardships she has encountered afterwards, I had never heard about this cousin before. I further inquired, what it was, that this cousin did. Corresponding to Xiomara, the cousin would try to force her out of the house when she was sad, would talk to her a lot for making her laugh and not being in a depressive mood, or put on music. She also tried to advice Xiomara about getting out of the crisis situation. Xiomara is convinced that these advices helped her a lot. Together they started selling lottery tickets in order to slowly resolve the economic issues, especially for the sake of the children.

53 Background information added by the author: The episode happened about 18 years ago
In terms of possible changes in her life due to these supportive relationships, Xiomara notices a changed in her attitude towards life: “We cannot get stuck in our thoughts”\textsuperscript{54} (Xiomara, written exchange, Febrero 2019), because if we did so we would be unable to confront the difficulties of life and to motivate each other for moving on. She also learned from the experience about the importance of knowing people, who serve as teachers for life. For Xiomara, these lessons we learn are what finally wake us up from letdowns of life. “Learning to work is what strengthens and inspires us to change one’s own future, like honorable people”\textsuperscript{55}(Xiomara, written exchange, February 2019).

She further added her lesson on “one must not let oneself be carried away by the circumstances of life but one must put effort to what one wants, to get ahead, set goals and pursue them”\textsuperscript{56} This sentence immediately reminded me of the interpretation of mother’s giving in to the circumstances, i.e. my depression, as described earlier (chapter My Experiences). At the first glance, the two directions of actions of Xiomara and my mother could be interpreted as opposites. Looking again at the Globe, the We and the I of Theme Centered Intervention (Cohn 2004), giving in and pursuing what one wants can both shift the systems towards a dynamic equilibrium taking into account the different spheres and the respective initial positions of the individuals within the system.

\textsuperscript{54} Que no podemos quedarnos pensando. (translated by the author)

\textsuperscript{55} El aprender a trabajar nos da fuerzas y ánimo para cambiar nuestro futuro como personas de bien (translated by the author)

\textsuperscript{56} una no debe dejarse llevar por las circunstancias de la vida sino que hay que ponerle empeño a lo que se quiere, para salir adelante […], tratarse metas y lucha por ellas (translated by the author)
After this written message exchange, I wrote to Xiomara about an occasion in which her support was crucial for relieving stress, which had accompanied me and negatively influenced the whole team for several weeks. She remembered:

You came down from the office and looked exhausted and the only thing coming to my mind was sending you out to run some errands for me.\(^57\) (Xiomara, written exchange, February 2019).

Xiomara further remembered that she felt very good, as only a little advice could help so much, which was approved by my feedback after coming back from running errands, how much better I felt.

Apparently, Xiomara observed my cycling around difficulties, which created a conflictive and non-constructive tension within our working team. The support she chose, did work perfectly with me, as she considered, when deciding for the 'intervention', that I would not leave the work environment just for fun, but that I would not reject her request for helping her by running errands, which in turn was intended to distract me. The support, which might seem little, significantly lowered the tensions within the team and increased constructive collaboration.

Analyzing the interview with Xiomara with respect to the research question, the tested feasibility of self-healing and self-adjusting properties of the effected system caught my attention. The understanding and believe in the self-healing potential of a conflictive system has also been listed as one of the recommended qualities of a conflict worker in Dietrich (2011, 28). Xiomara mentioned that her cousin came into the core system after some time had already past. A time in which the family supported her with presence, by telling her stories and so forth. Xiomara applied a

\(^{57}\) que vajaste de oficina y tenías una cara de cansancio y lo que se me ocurrió ,fue decirte que salieras para dar vueltas para mi. (translated by the author)
similar strategy of support, when I was distressed. She did not try to resolve or put in order my thematic stress factors, but sending me buying errands, could be interpreted as buying time for the system to unfold possible self-adjusting processes.

From the interview, family also sounds like a very crucial factor for Xiomara. In comparison with Thomas, I did not get the impression, nor from the interview or from my relation with Xiomara, that she would attribute the feature of support uniquely to family; in my interpretation for Xiomara it just happened to be family at that time.

Ali and I first met about three years ago, as also described in My Experiences. Generally, our relationship around the interview situation was what I would call weird. First, it took me a long time to ask him, if he would generally be ok with being interviewed with this thesis. Somehow I was worried, that he would feel uncomfortable in being asked about interpersonal issues, despite the impression, that we have a relationship in which we trust each other.

In my opinion this trust is nourished by respect and mostly sensitive avoidance of possible hurtful, uncomfortable topics. Nevertheless I feel certain, that I could and would mention to him issues or problems in our relation. I also think that there is a clarity and openness from my side, that we could discuss any topic he wanted. Generally, we hardly ever talked about my life and mainly talked about his apprenticeship, administrative everyday staff and asylum related things. It was in this kind of theme centered setting, that we got to know each other, when I started to give voluntarily mainly German lessons for some young Afghans in a neighboring village. At the same time, we have spent quite some 'quality time' together. Being with Ali and his roommate in their one room flat, joking and eating Afghan food has been one of the most relaxing and beautiful moments I treasure and which charge me with energy.
Retrospectively, I think I was worried that after the interview we might not have this kind of relationship anymore. Nevertheless, I considered his input for this thesis very valuable and I had the impression that we had a good mutual understanding and that he understands German well enough, so that language barriers during the interview should be overcome quite easily. At the same time, I saw the possibility that he could feel valued by being invited to give his view on things.

I guess that these doubts have been reflected incongruences within the process around the interview. Should I go forward with the interview or should I not? Is it good or is it bad? For this interview, I do think that I put more thought into the dichotomy than in preparing myself appropriately for the task. I placed my general request for interviewing him at the end of one of my visits at his home, just before I had to leave. Without any further thought, I did use the word 'interview'. In Austria we usually refer, within the context of asylum seekers to 'the interview', when we talk about 'interviews' requested throughout the process of applying for asylum. Synchronous to when I asked about Ali’s availability for the interview, Ali has been an Asylum seeker for almost five years and had left his home country Afghanistan years before. His first application for asylum was rejected and he is now waiting for the second 'interview', which he currently sees as his last chance for staying in Austria and not being deported.

Let’s go back to the experience of asking Ali for an interview. When I asked him, I interpreted his overall response, as if he had not fully understood. Before I had to leave he just asked me to explain the request again next time, as he needed more information. Only hours later I figured that Ali’s rather confused expression might have also been attributed to the use of the key word 'interview'. When I told my sister,
that I finally asked Ali for an interview, she almost shouted at me: “Did you seriously use the word 'interview'? He must have gotten a heart attack!” Well, she was right.

When Ali and I met next time, I tried to explain what kind of interview I wanted to do and that I could anonymize it. Additionally, the information that Thomas, my brother in law, whom Ali highly respects was also interviewed, did convince Ali to give it a try. Two weeks later I visited Ali to organize some administrative stuff and to do the interview. Surprisingly, his roommate was also present. Ali complained about headaches and tiredness, but said that he still wanted to try to do the interview. We decided to not take any recordings.

After stating the question, he first answered that he couldn’t remember really any supportive relationship from Afghanistan and for his lifetime away from Afghanistan he thought that he had been left alone, without help. Well, I did not believe this answer. So, I reminded him of some examples of stories he had told me earlier about people, who had been friendly to him on the route from Afghanistan to Austria. I mentioned for example, two Turkish women, who had provided him for a while with delicious food. So, Ali remembered, that these women were very friendly to him and also helped with clothes and other stuff every now and then, and then he doubted: “But is that really what you mean[by supportive relationship]? I don’t think that their help did bring me to a better or more independent place, it basically helped me to survive, but didn’t get me anywhere.” (Ali, personal interview, March 2019) I said I would look into that during the analysis of the interview. Then Ali mentioned my support. Somehow I felt very uncomfortable in my situation as supporter, and I asked him to leave me out. He commented with "But then there is no one I could think of, that supported me like you, for finding me for example a school without any personal

Retrospectively, I agree with Ali and therefore I will not analyze this example any further
benefit” (Ali, personal interview, March 2019). To get out of this uncomfortable position, I asked, in a low voice, about Ali’s roommate.

That works well. We understand each other, he listens to me and I trust him. We share our money. We share our food, when I am tired he cooks, when he is tired I cook. But its mutual and just normal, that is how we live, how else should it be? (Ali, personal interview, March 2019)

Ali then continued, that he would rather remember situations of lacking support in the last year, even when he had asked for it, and giving support would have been, to the best of his knowledge, possible. As examples, Ali mentioned his first months in a refugee home for minor unaccompanied asylum seekers and the process of applying for asylum. He did not feel supported by the youth workers who were in charge, when he had to share a room with a drug addict person with mental problems for four months. The lack of support made Ali basically isolate himself for the sake of his own safety. He neither felt supported, nor heard by his advisors during the first year of the administrative asylum seeking process. In his opinion, they had not taken his requests or proposals into account. Ali also felt very much left alone and unsupported, when the interviewer of the Austrian agency for asylum applications made very clear, that in his opinion, Ali would lie, which was also the reasoning for the rejection of Ali’s asylum status.

I intervened again and asked if he felt similar now.

To me, time and patience are more crucial than people. When the classes for the apprenticeship started, it was very difficult for me to understand anything. Now I do. Your mom, your family and you, being connected to this family for a long time, especially also doing some physical things together, like collecting apples and pears together and receiving genuine recognition did only come with time and patience. (Ali, personal interview, March 2019)
Personally, patience is something I am really troubling with. And I was very much thrilled when Ali mentioned patience in the interview, because I have observed and 'categorized' Ali as an extraordinarily patient person. Reflecting on the interview, I can even hear a say of his in my head: “Everything evolves with patience”59 (Ali, personal interview, March 2019), a phrase Ali would use for himself or for my sake, when I start complaining about his asylum process, my master thesis and many other things. Indeed, he has been a great support in practicing patience.

Finally Ali reflected on the fact that proposed, but not accomplished support is very difficult for him, especially in a long term relationship, as it keeps him in a state of waiting, not knowing when to choose other options instead of being patient and letting time pass for something to happen. He especially refers to “I’ll get that done for you”60 (Ali, personal interview, March 2019) statements of Austrians, referring to the recognition of his refugee status, who then have not mentioned the topic anymore and did not accomplish. Then Ali complained about his headache again, and we finished the interview and we drank some tea together.

Going over the interview with respect to the research question, time and the related patience are most prominent to me. I identify hints for two levels of time being relevant. One level can be considered as a meta-level of supportive relationships. The sentence, 'Everything evolves with patience', also applies in my interpretation to possible opportunities, not necessarily related to supportive relationships but also not excluding them. The second level is directly related to supportive relationships and I deduce it from the sentence, “Your mom, your family and you, being connected to this family for a long time, especially also doing some physical things together, like collecting apples and pears together and receiving genuine recognition did only come

59 Alles kommt mit Geduld. (translated by the author)

60 Das mach ich schon. (translated by the author)
with time and patience” (Ali, personal interview, March 2019). Both of these levels and the awareness about their systemic role, is relevant for elicitive conflict transformation workers. In my opinion, this awareness also a beneficial asset for the conflict participants, as it might increase the patience to allow more options to arise without jumping into quick solution attempts.

Anke and I first met in Zurich, Switzerland, while doing our PhDs in Biomedical Engineering, Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy and Imaging respectively. We became friends quite quickly. When we moved into different parts of the world and I started changing professionally from engineering to peace work our contact slowly diminished. Still, we have kept in touch.

During the time we shared in Zurich, Anke accompanied me through a long period of depressive crisis in an authentic, empathic and patient way I could not even have imagined, if I had not experienced it. It would have been out of reach for untested feasibility (Freire 2005) or of any potential for eliciting transformation I could think of. Therefore I consider Anke’s input very valuable for this thesis.

Anke immediately agreed on the interview and we arranged a date to do the interview via Internet. Anke just moved to Texas, USA where she got appointed as Professor and Director of the Advanced Imaging Research Center of the Southwestern University of Texas. Unfortunately our internet connection was not sufficient for a video conference, so we had to limit our self to an audio conference. After catching up on our lives, we were in a quite positive, excited mood. We identified many similarities in the day to day problems of our so called work-life, despite the difference of themes and subsystems, namely research industry and international NGO world we work in and I experienced a rather surprising mutual understanding.
After explaining the research problem and posing the research question Anke started with an example from her work-life. While researching as a postdoc and junior group leader in biomedical research, Anke got acquainted with a professor and head of a biomedical research center, of the same University, but not the same institute, Mr. Wieser\textsuperscript{61}. Although his institute had no direct connection to the one Anke was working at, he did repeatedly supported her with advice and courage at what she calls 'the early stage' of her career as a researcher in biomedical engineering. Multiple times he pointed out to her some little things which Anke would have just put aside, but turned out to be helpful in later moments of her career. Mr. Wieser did for example encourage Anke to request as soon as possible to be named as last author in publications. Furthermore Mr. Wieser gave her hints and advises, from framing to administration, for successful applications of some specific grants. Although there is no ultimate proof, that the counseling made the grants successful, Anke doesn’t doubt its’ significant contribution. This kind of counseling was not continuous, but popped up in certain moments of Anke’s career.

In another moment, Mr. Wieser did give Anke some insights to appeal procedures and the politics behind them\textsuperscript{62}, which possibly prevented a throwback in Anke’s career or a significant deviation of the path she was envisioning at that moment. Anke mentioned that Mr. Wieser had given similar support to several young researchers.

To the best of Anke's and my knowledge, these advises came without any specific benefit for Mr. Wieser. They were so special and important for Anke, as they broke with quite common patterns of bargaining insider relationships in the research communities she and I have experienced. At the same time, Anke highlighted that she would not want to miss certain win-win relationships within the research community

\textsuperscript{61} Name changed

\textsuperscript{62} For clarification: not in the sense of illegal insider trading, but legal tips and tricks
as constructive cooperation processes. Such cooperation allowed her to create research projects she would not have been able to set up without cooperations; she calls the web of such relation her professional network. Anke puts the cooperative path through professional life in a competitive research environment in contrast with the opposite behavior which she observes frequently, which she calls blocking, hence not using relationships constructively, but rather trying to slow down others in the forthcoming in their career by hiding information instead of cooperation.

In Anke's opinion, on the one hand blocking will be reflected to oneself in some moment if applied too often. Additionally, it slows down the thematic forthcoming of the research issues, in contrast to bringing different knowledge and resources together. Anke further mentioned the importance of certain compliance, the importance of having an idea how far one can go or can let things go, so that the overall system does not break down. She further recommended paying attention to the difference between win-win relationships and nepotism, which she considers as frequently being hardly distinguishable.

At this point, I would like to give the reader some background information about what Anke would possibly call her 'need for freedom and doing new things'. Following her own descriptions, which I strongly agree with, she becomes rapidly nervous and restless, when she is ought to do things, she is not convinced of or do not excite her thought processes. I do think, that constructive cooperations have enabled her several time to start and dare new endeavors, which excites her and makes her congruently live up to her potential. The more stunning it still is for me, how she could stand by my side, support me, guide and protect me and most of all listened to my same grieving over and over again during an episode of depression for more than a year, without ever losing the patience to listen.
Her support while I went through phases of severe depression (see My Experiences) was also the example I presented as a supportive relationship in which I received emotional support from Anke. In her eyes, “it was simply as it was”\(^{63}\) (Anke, audio conference, March 2019). She remembered that there was simply a good, positive feeling between us from the start and that she never doubted what she was doing at that time. She was aware that I was suffering, and she did not feel like it was ‘whining’\(^{64}\), she could understand the pain, although she could not understand the reasons or outside causes.\(^{65}\) When I asked Anke about how tiring and exhausting this support had been for her, she reflected that it was surely ways more exhausting through my exhausted eyes of my then reality, than it was for her.

Anke additionally described a supportive relationship from her private life with a long term friend of hers who was diagnosed with a life threatening disease. Anke tried to give instrumental support, by explaining and discussing medical results and interpretations and different ways of treatment. In this example Anke evaluated her contributions as an advisor without a personal/professional interest and as a listener who ‘just listens, to whatever you want to get rid of’ as important. Associated with this example Anke claimed her long term friendships to be characterized of giving and taking not being balanced in the moment or a certain topic, but on a long term run beneficial for both individuals.

Concerning certain changes of hers or learning effects due to the experience of these supportive relationships, Anke stressed the role model effect: The situations she had received support in, made her more prone to support others, and to find joy and

\(^{63}\) das war einfach so. (translated by the author)

\(^{64}\) German: Jammern

\(^{65}\) Retrospectively, I think, in the end was in the end secondary, as she could understand how desperate I kept feeling
energy in the experience of someone getting out of their crisis. She also mentioned the gain of trust that 'life will go on' although situations might seem quite hopeless in certain moments. This trust, in turn manifests in a feeling of security, in this sense, she mentioned social networks as security.

Anke then further elaborated on security and compared engaging in supportive relationships with her experiences with traveling.

At first, leaving the known territory was exciting, but also frightening: How would I find where to sleep, what to eat, how to move from place to another. The more you travel into new places, the more you experience that it will work out somehow, and you start feeling more secure and start daring to travel in more and more adventurous regions.66 (Anke, audio conference, March 2019)

This comment was basically Anke’s concluding statement and we transitioned into a casual friendship conversation. We felt quite excited and positively motivated by the interview, which reminded us and brought to our consciousness so many constructive moments within the competitive professional surrounding or biomedical research.

Basically, Anke did already analyze a relevant theme in terms of the research question in her interview herself. I can only echo this analysis and point to the connections with the context provided in the Research Problem. One of the most important features of the capacity building training provided for elicitive conflict work is the exploration of one’s individual limit regions and no-go zones during possible deployments as a conflict worker (Dietrich 2011). Anke’s metaphor of traveling, and exploring geographically into unknown zones, with supportive relations

66 Am Anfang war es spannend, aber auch ein bisschen beängstigend in neue Länder zu reisen: Wie such ich mir einen Platz zum Schlafen, Essen, wie komm ich von einem Ort zum andern? Umso mehr man dann zu neuen Orten gereist ist, m so mehr merkt man, dass es schon irgendwie gehen wird, und man fühlt sich langsam immer sicherer. Dann traut man sich auch immer mehr in noch abenteurlichere Gegenden zu reisen. (translated by the author)
as catalyst for exploring new challenges, directly points to the potential of supportive relationships for elicitive conflict work capacity building.

Anke also described on a factual level, how Mr. Wieser made her aware of how to address different challenges in maneuvering through the academic world. The repeated reference from Anke about Mr. Wieser’s contribution to her better understanding of the context itself is no proof for a training in awareness of the context. Nevertheless, the fact that she also tries to support other colleagues in a similar possibly indicates a rise in awareness of the context, which might possibly also be translated into other domains than Anke’s work-life.

In this chapter, I presented five different interviews on supportive relationships and their possible change making properties. For each interview, I did looked for information on possible training effects of supportive relationships for elicitive conflict work. I identified hints for possible training effects in awareness, congruency, understanding of self-healing and self-adjusting of systemic processes and experimenting limit zones for stepping into former no-go zones.
9 ELICITIVE CONFLICT MAPPING PRINCIPLES AND SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

So far, we looked at contributions of supportive relationships to increasing the elicitive potentials for transformation by broadening the knowledge base of conflict parties and conflict workers likewise. We also evidenced possible pathways of how supportive relationships can improve under real life conditions capacities which are recommended for elicitive conflict workers. For the actual deployment of an elicitive conflict worker in a conflictive system, an orientation in the conflictive system in relation to the conflict parties and their interrelations becomes in itself an elementary part of elicitive conflict work.

Elicitive conflict mapping was introduced by Dietrich as a tool which can be used to give the conflict worker orientation (2018). The maps further provide indicators for possible first directions of movement or processes which elicitive conflict workers might consider as possibly beneficial for constructive transformation (Dietrich 2018, 5). In theory, we deal with an infinite number of possible next conditions in an open system, as which a conflictive system is treated in transrational peace approaches.

The elicitive approach (...) is an opportunity aimed primarily at discovery, creation and solidification of models that emerge from the resources present in a particular setting and respond to needs in that context. (Lederach 1995, 55)

Still, practical elicitive conflict work becomes more tangible with several concrete options of next actions. Within the package of theory, methods and practice of transrational peace philosophy, elicitive conflict transformation and elicitive conflict mapping respectively, homeostasis, correspondence and resonance are suggested as guiding principles for relational orientation in the conflictive system. (Dietrich 2018, 36-53). Therefore, I consider embodied understanding of these principles as an
additional important asset for an elicitive conflict worker. Hence, I elaborate in this chapter on possible perceptions of these principles within the supportive relationships and episodes around them. I will further explore how experiences from supportive relationships can inform elicitive conflict workers’ understanding of using the principles for analysis and possible orientation.

**Correspondence**

is a tantric principle that basically says that everything that happens between individuals has its equivalent in persons. Thus, the narrative about an interpersonal conflict tells the elicitive peace worker a lot about the internal processes, energies and blockades of the parties. It has to be considered that every change of external affairs and relations has an impact on the internal condition of the people involved – and vice versa. The energy of any conflict as a strictly relational issue finds its way always along these lines. (Dietrich, 2014, 55)

As a physicist in magnetic resonance imaging, I got in touch with the following, similar interpretation of correspondence. Magnetic resonance imaging experiments, which can be modelled with electromagnetic wave dynamics, are suitable for retrieving varying types of information. For human beings, examples are tissue density, detection of compartmentalization of different constituents of human tissue, brain activations, absolute or relative myelin content in brain tissue or dynamic flow
patterns of different body fluids (Haacke 1999; Soellinger 2008). All of the above mentioned properties of human tissue are measured using a single phenomenon: resonance (see also further below) of hydrogen nuclei. These are abundantly present in the human body, as the human body mainly consists of water.

After a transient exitation of these hydrogen nuclei from the outside of the tissue, the hydrogen nuclei in question are part of, the hydrogen nuclei’s reemitted energy provoked by the resonance phenomenon relaxes towards the state before the excitement started.67 This relaxation happens through energy exchange of the molecular surroundings. Roughly speaking, the effect of transferring the energy bundled through resonance of the hydrogen nuclei corresponds to the connections and possible energy exchanges between the hydrogen nuclei and the surrounding nuclei. Now, there are different pathways of energy transfers, between and the relaxation of the system through the use of these different pathways can again give specific information about the surrounding nuclei.68

For me, this image of signals coming from hydrogen nuclei containing information about their relation with surrounding nuclei, and vice versa, helps me to understand correspondence in elicitive conflict work as a reflection of what is happening in the relational layers within the intrapersonal level. Although I agree with Dietrich, that the layers he proposes in the extended Lederach pyramid (2018, 30) cannot be translated one to one into Cartesian everyday life as a mathematical

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67 These descriptions are all based on models, which try to explain overall phenomena, but do not represent what actually is happening to a single hydrogen nucleus in the moment. Nevertheless the models have proofen to be very helpful. In a certain way, he correspondence principle in its interpretation of physics is even is already intrinsically applied here.

68 A further analysis of these different pathways is out of the scope of this thesis, but the interested reader can find entry points to these topics by looking into MRI relaxation phenomena e.g. in Haacke (1999)
formula (2018, 50), it is helpful for me to think of different relaxation pathways in magnetic resonance imaging as the correspondences between those different layers.

Translating the phenomenon from the particle view into wave dynamics leads us to the interrelations we have already been starting to explore as tuning and matching. Penetrating fields do change each other at every point in time and space and do contain information about their exchanges. As already exemplified in chapter My Experiences, these penetrating field can be considered as relations.

Taking into account that conflict workers are part of the system, energy emissions and resonances coming from or going through the conflict workers are also modulated by the influences of the environment, topics they carry in the backbacks of their different layers. Hence, introspection on possible shadows and disturbances is important for the verbal and nonverbal communication of the conflict worker within the conflictive system (UNESCO 2014a).

It was only after going through these different views on correspondence influenced by my prior experiences that I could identify possible evidence of correspondences in the narratives of the different supportive relationships.

In chapter Non-Expert Interviews on Supportive Relationships I presented the interview of Ali. As already mentioned, he was quite frustrated and not feeling helped by different people when first arriving in Austria. Basically he felt lacking support for a long time. At the same time, he considered the following as supportive:

being connected to this family for a long time, especially also doing some physical things together, like collecting apples and pears together and receiving genuine recognition […] (Ali, personal interview, March 2019)
The importance of being valued by a community evidences a correspondence between the intra-personal socio-emotional layer and the inter-personal, relational communal layer, as described by Dietrich:

it might seem evident that there is correspondence between the emotional need for belonging by every human being and the outer acceptance in a concrete community. Traumatic experiences of exclusion may for instance permanently disrupt a person’s trust in their inner sense of belonging and from there induce types of behavior that further produce negative reactions by specific communities, these in turn contributing to an inner sense of frustration. (Dietrich 2018, 37)

Although, the correspondence between these two layers might seem quite obvious, when looking at Ali’s example and his biography, I do think that it is always important to have these correspondences in mind. They are important elements for possible directions towards the epicenter of possible conflicts and for creating a safe space.

Personally, the understanding or perspective of the correspondence between Ali’s sense of belonging and community forming relationships, allows me to gain some understanding of certain emotions, I was sometimes surprised and did not understand. It further allows for possible explanations for moments in which I could not resonate with Ali.69 Additionally, the example does again point on interdependences of the different principles, which will be further addressed below.

Resonance

In the model of intrapersonal, interpersonal, communal and global layers (Dietrich 2018, 30) used for elicitive conflict mapping, the changes provoked by somebody or

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69 In order to respect Ali’s privacy, I will not further comment on these experiences, which he did not mention in the interview.
an action getting 'in contact' with the conflictive system and become with that contact part of the conflictive system, are described in the following way:

within the framework of ECM [Elicitive Conflict Mapping], the relationship of contact boundaries at work is determined in each encounter by resonances, which vibrate through all intra and inter-personal layers. (UNESCO 2014)

Again, as being trained in physics and specialized in magnetic resonance imaging, my concept of resonance is very much nuanced by the models used in magnetic resonance imaging. These models have a focus on the selectiveness of pronunciations of resonances, the eigenfrequencies or natural harmonics, which I do think is relevant for exploring potentials of elicitive conflict transformation tools. In magnetic resonance imaging information about the observed is received by detecting reemitted energies. These energies are released after hydrogen nuclei were brought into resonance. Therefore these nuclei are energetically excited by specific electromagnetic waves within a magnetic field. Hence, excitation, which allows the hydrogen nucleus to resonate, is only possible at specific frequencies, i.e. specific energies. The way, the energy is reemitted after resonance contains information about the parts of the system that are resonating and what they might be surrounded by. The latter effect corresponds to the principle of correspondence just discussed. The direct interrelation of resonance and correspondence will be discussed further below.

But let’s stick for the moment to the evocation of the resonance. In chapter My Experiences, I did already introduce some bits and pieces of resonating electromagnetic circuits. I mainly described the transformative process by using the metaphor of tuning and matching. This tuning and matching between senders and receivers of electromagnetic waves is the process necessary between two or more
entities of the system, in order to allow resonance, hence exchange energies at the eigenfrequencies.

In the episode of depression I described earlier, I exemplified the tuning and matching process first between my mother and me. In social interactions I consider it a recurring, active process, which sometimes allows for resonance, but then again retuning and matching, which is every time different, becomes necessary, and only in very rare cases happens by chance, to allow moments of resonance to happen. The active part of tuning and matching from the perspective of a feedback loop, also asks for a genuine observation of dissonances, a constant situation update. I consider the competencies and abilities of an elicitive conflict worker shortly presented in the introductory chapters as tools for tuning and matching.

In the example of my depressive episode, I tend to think that the influence of my psychotherapist and my changes while going through therapy were active tuning and matching elements. Additionally, I do think that my father’s vibrations of his family experiences resonated with my mother in some moments. Also my father and me managed to match and tune in order to resonate more often instead of being blocking or perhaps being dissonant. It seems likely to me that both resonances contributed significantly to the tuning and matching of my mother and me, which also allowed us to finally resonate in some moments. This crosstalk between the different resonating entities can be extended to whole systems, which highlights again the often widespread influences of any energetic changes within a system.

Once more, I would like to emphasize the equivalence of matching and tuning with the active parts in elicitive conflict work which allow for possible resonance to happen:

Elicitive conflict work is more than a musical metaphor for social interaction. Those relying on willful actions, on “making peace”, will find themselves tense
and not in resonance with the involved parties. (...) This is commonly found as an effect of purely idealistic will and actions. Those, however, who entirely rely on peace just happening do not shape what lies within their power. The art of elicitive conflict transformation lies in making peace and allowing peace to take place at the same time. (Dietrich 2018, 43)

I would interpret some of the moments I shared with my family system as moments of peace induced through resonance, which was allowed to happen by tuning and matching, i.e. application of elements of tools suggested for elicitive conflict transformation.

Conflictive moments with Ahmad, which I also mentioned in My Experiences could in my opinion constitute examples for trying to “make peace” by only relying on willful action and not trying to get into resonance.

Examining Anke’s interview (see Non-Experts Interviews) for possible traces of resonances I figure her contrasting of cooperation and blockage between scientists relevant. Assuming that constructive cooperation, as described by Anke needs a certain level of understanding each other and each other’s view on the theme to work on, at least tuning and matching procedures will be active during cooperation, and some resonance might be achieved. In my understanding, human beings who use strategies of blocking will hardly be able to even start tuning and matching and less so resonate. Having said this, does not mean, that cooperation and resonance are synonymous. Practically speaking, I think that we can resonate with people, and still not cooperate with them, and we can cooperate with people, without resonating with them.

Homeostasis
Bertalanffy’s general system theory tries to integrate several system theories, which origin from different scientific disciplines. It aims at bridging the gap between mechanical systems and human beings, without reducing persons to robots, and additionally giving also space for the not yet perceivable (1968). For the feedback driven regulating tendencies he uses Cannon’s concept of homeostasis (Cannon, 1932). It describes the tendency of biological systems towards a certain steady state or dynamic equilibrium. Dynamic equilibrium encompasses true equilibriums, dynamic steady states with different regulations processes (Bertalanffy, 1968). An important property of homeostasis in open system theory is the steady state’s independence of initial conditions, the so called equifinality. Bertalanffy’s understanding of homeostasis has been introduced as a further principle in elicitive conflict mapping, where homeostasis represents

the self-regulatory quality of open systems, such as individuals and groups, which strive for dynamic equilibrium. Homeostasis invites the elicitive conflict worker to understand facilitation as external environmental energy that can contribute to restoring the harmonization of intra and interpersonal tensions and conflicts. (UNESCO 2014b)

My scientific encounter with the concept of homeostasis is again related to my experiences in magnetic resonance imaging. For magnetic resonance imaging on living beings, such as humans, the resonance effect with hydrogen nuclei can only occur, if the living tissue, in which the hydrogen nuclei are embedded in, is in a certain dynamic equilibrium, so that, the energy thought to provoke resonance of the hydrogen nuclei is not 'absorbed' by the system earlier. Hence, an important step for making resonance happen, is that the surrounding is in a dynamic equilibrium.

Translating the concept into a social context, certain secure, safe circumstances or surroundings seem important for resonances to happen, be it inter- or intrapersonal.
An example from the intrapersonal context – with all its correspondences in the different layers, are healing processes of traumatic experiences, which are more likely to happen in secure safe and 'sound' embedding, which I imagine like an overarching system in dynamic equilibrium. Once gotten out of dynamic equilibrium, an open system tries to absorb external energy in order to restore a dynamic equilibrium. Taking under consideration the concept of equifinity, the introduced energy would not define the steady state, but make it possible.

From my point of view, mainly Xiomara’s and Anke’s interview (see Non-expert Interviews) offer examples for applying the principle of homeostasis in order to understand conflict dynamics and possibly identify directions or energy holes to be filled, in order to make experiences of constructive change happen.

I determine two different regimes of possible dynamic equilibriums in Xiomara’s account. First, Xiomara’s family supports her in caring for her and listening to her. I think that her family can be interpreted as a potential of external environmental energy. This resource might have brought 'Xiomara’s surrounding system', the system 'she as a persona', is embedded in, towards a dynamic equilibrium, which allowed in a later step resonance to happen, resonance which might have allowed the supportive relationship between Xiomara’s cousin and Xiomara. Looking at a second regime, Xiomara’s intrapersonal system, the external energy provided by the cousin, might have contributed constructively to Xiomara’s moving towards a dynamic equilibrium in the sense of healing.

In order to avoid confusion, it seems worthwhile to mention explicitly, why the perspective of the two regimes is in my opinion in accordance with general open systems theory. The two different regimes refer to different boundaries of the open system under consideration. But, the regimes do not limit the perspective to certain
singular measures of the system. Only the latter would in my point of view contradict Bertalanffy’s understanding of general system theory.

Additionally, it seems important to mention, that looking at 'Xiomara’s surrounding system' and 'Xiomara’s system as persona', her intrapersonal system, does not neglect the aspect of correspondence between the interpersonal layers. As we are looking at an open system communication with the external environment is not neglected. The same holds true for resonating effects.

I am aware, that these analyses of Xiomara’s interview are risky: they contain intuition, selective and subjective definitions of systems, there is neither proof for them, nor do we know many different aspects on the episode. Still, they resonate very much with me and seem to help me to understanding Xiomara’s interview, her sufferings and her inner struggle, which I consider a conflict.

Besides the above mentioned resonances in Anke's interview, I think to also see traces of external energies contributing to a dynamic equilibrium, which allows for constructive changes or possible resonances. The external environmental energy is represented by, or delivered through the interactions with Mr. Wieser and the according actions taken after the interactions. Thinking of Anke’s analysis, that she would have gotten into difficult situations, if Mr. Wieser hadn’t given her the right advise at the right time, a picture of a spinner pops up in my mind. I imagine a spinner in dynamic equilibrium, which is starting to wiggly weirdly until after some specific push at the right time, the spinner is again in dynamic equilibrium and spins smoothly. Granted, the isolated mechanic model of an isolated spinner is not an open system, but putting it into the real world, with all the surroundings, the table it is on, the air and its friction, and many other influences, it is.
Homeostasis – Resonance – Correspondence

Following the analyses of Xiomara’s interview, the dynamic equilibriums in the different regimes and resonance effects are connected. One way of transferring external energy into the system can be through resonance, and at the same time, energy transfer to the overall system can possibly allow energy transfer by resonance, as tuning and matching becomes possible, when constructive contact possibilities emerge out of the chaos, when the overall system is tending towards a dynamic equilibrium. The principle of correspondence then is essential for the intra- and interpersonal tuning and matching procedure. In my opinion, these cross relations and independencies open up many opportunities for elicitive conflict work.

In magnetic resonance imaging correspondence and resonance go hand in hand. Resonating energy is in a way coded with information corresponding to the surroundings. In many cases, the surrounding tissue can be determined by knowing the resonance emission patterns of neighbouring hydrogen nuclei. Translating this model into social systems, energy stemming from inter and intrapersonal resonances, is coded with contextual information. Therefrom I hypothesize that specific resonances can bring to forth earlier hidden systemic corresponding properties from different inter- and interpersonal layers, which then might indicate potentials for directions of actions for conflict workers.

In this chapter, I tried to integrate lessons learned from magnetic resonance imaging and the three principles of elicitive conflict mapping. The integration aimed at grounding possible interpretative values of these principles in conflict work with applications to the examples of supportive relationships presented in previous chapters. Using the interviews, correspondences and their transferences have been evidenced as useful tools for identification of possible blockages in communication.
and lack of mutual understanding and highlighted the importance of introspection for conflict workers. The lack or resonance and following lack of balance in the interplay between active and passive support has been identified as fixed expectations and following frustration in an example of an intercultural supportive relationship. In contrast, traces of resonances and their emergence, possibly influenced by cross-talking resonances and psychotherapeutically external interventions vibrating through the supportive system were highlighted. Dynamic equilibriums were analyzed from different point of views using an interview. Depending on the choice of boundaries of open systems, different energies could be considered as external, which can open up different perspectives on conflicts for elicitive conflict workers. Support was considered as external environmental energy, which contributed to a dynamic equilibrium in the system of the person who received support.

Finally, I hypothesized, that the awareness of the interrelatedness of the three principles and especially the consideration of resonances being modulated by correspondences might show access points to surprising additional potentials for constructive change in conflictive systems.
The presented analysis and discussion is not a claim for a universal truth about influences of supportive relationships on conflict analysis, but rather an attempt of identifying potentials and evidences, which are in the world and therefrom vibrate through the world.

In terms of methodology, I would like to highlight, that translations of the narratives into physics, mostly electromagnetism and magnetic resonance imaging as being part of my biographical background was and endeavor I was slightly hesitant about. I was afraid of falling into trying to make experiences fit into models, so that I could use theories that had been established in any case. To counteract such tendencies, I tried to only use these translations, when the concept popped up in my mind without, to the best of my knowledge, purposely trying to match them and I tried to only mention them in this thesis when contributing, in my point of view, to a deeper understanding of the matter. Surprisingly, this happened more often than I had anticipated. From the beginning of this thesis, I was aware of the predominance of the magnetic resonance imaging concepts of resonance, correspondence and homeostasis in my understanding of the elicitive conflict mapping principles. The predominance of the kind of unconscious, automatic interpretation and translation of relations in general into interferences of electromagnetic fields was quite surprising and at the same time very inspiring for me. Simultaneously, I experienced the process of describing and retranslating these insights as very challenging, and I am not sure to what extend it has been possible, but I hope to at least inspire the readers to use their own metaphors and languages for engaging with relational aspects.
When circling initially around the research problem, I did not narrow myself down to a clear definition of who or what would have the agency and would make contributions of supportive relationships effective within elicitive conflict transformation processes. I still cannot crack these factors down to a clear answer, as in my opinion, the answer depends very much on the frame of perspective we look at it, similar to particle and waves, persons and their fields and all their layers. The traces I identified I mainly described as persons having been in supportive relationships and then being part of conflictive systems. I do not claim any certainty that the knowledge gained in these supportive relationships is only transferred through a spatially limited mind and body of these persons into other conflictive systems. The study did further not give any insight about knowledge being directly transferred or if the recognition of certain knowledge is enhanced through prior experiences, which would as such improve elicitive properties for elicitive capacities. At this state, I don’t consider it key for the research question either. I just did not see or unconsciously not look at these aspects in the interviews and my experiences, which have been the key guiding elements of this thesis. A conscious intentional search for other pathways of agency would most likely open up way to further perspectives on the presented ones and additional pathways.

Going back to the research question it seems important to first discuss possibilities of supportive relationships within and around conflictive systems during conflict transformation processes with elicitive conflict workers at work. The way, I defined supportive relationships in this thesis, I consider effective relations of a conflict worker with the other conflict partners as supportive relationships themselves. With effective I refer to relations which contribute to transformations of the conflict systems which are considered by the conflict parties as constructive changes. I would
further interpret most of the crises narrated around the relationships presented in this thesis as one-party or intrapersonal conflicts\textsuperscript{70}. Taking into account these similarities, it seems plausible to understand supportive relationships as real-world training situations for deliberate elicitive conflict work. In this context I would like to highlight the difference between such supportive relationships happening during a conflict transformation and the approach, of proposing practicing supportive relationships between the conflict parties, which I would rather categorize as prescriptive. I suspect the latter approach to having a tendency to cover up conflict epicenters instead of creating conditions for the conflictive system to evolve towards steady state equilibrium.

In the previous chapters, different stories of supportive relationships from my own and some acquaintances’ experiences were presented. I mainly identified traces of possible influences of such relationships on abilities requested from elicitive facilitators as well as supportive relations’ potential to create knowledge bases to elicit from. Hence, the traces identified focus on enhancing capacities and potentials for actual elicitive conflict work.

Taking into account my experiences and the study participants’ stories told about supportive relationships, awareness about the processes of support seem to be important for the learning effect. Hence, the experiences presented indicate conscious reflection a beneficial step for the transformation from living through the supportive towards knowledge. In my opinion especially Michaela’s interview and Anke’s interview, as well as the influence of my psychotherapeutic reflexion practices in the supportive system of my family during my depressive episode are examples for the possible role of awareness. This insight is additionally supported by several learning

\textsuperscript{70}They are often a part of a bigger conflictive system, as for example the Afghan war etc.
theories. In my opinion Paulo Freire’s concept of praxis and reflection is in line with these observations.

A further learning aspect, which I was experiencing during this thesis process, is the possibility of posterior reflection for gaining further knowledge from a prior experience. I identified different supportive relationships and the way they evolved during and after the episodes, especially when writing about the support of my family during one of my depressive episodes. I am convinced that even fifteen years after the actual experience becoming aware of these systemic changes and how they might have happened by different supports from different human beings enhances my confidence in the self-healing of certain conflictive systems and slightly calms the urge of looking for imminent solutions, my impatience. Heron’s learning cycles introduced earlier, support the evidence of such learning processes.

Taking into account the framework of transrational peace philosophy, dealing with multistranded and multistringed supportive relationships constitutes a very explicit confrontation with complex social systems. Therefore, engaging within such systems, especially in the open minded and conscious way as described by the Rogerian principles, which I based supportive relationships under consideration on, constitutes for me an important practice for becoming aware of the systemic properties of life. An embodied understanding of the systemic nature of our encounters and of our conflicts is in my opinion very useful for any party of conflicts. It includes the one purposely called in the conflict as conflict workers, as well as parties of the initial, i.e. before the conflict worker coming into the core system, conflictive system itself. A systemic understanding of the conflict of the initial conflict parties is in my opinion beneficial for creating a space in which elicitive conflict work can flourish.
With respect to the conflict worker, I think that the real world examples of supportive systems highlight a capacity building possibility which is complementary to safe space trainings as conducted during the master’s program of peace and conflict studies in Innsbruck. This is in agreement with the hypothesis presented at the beginning. I sense examples for such a systemic understanding in Thomas’ reflection on the influences of the supports he received towards his current choice of organizing his life. The intertwined supports around my depressive episode also highlight some systemic pathways. The possible systemic distribution of intrinsic knowledge about conflicts between two Colombian communities, during my employment as an international accompaniment, is a further example. The latter example additionally exemplifies in my opinion the confluency between supportive relationships and conflict work.

For me, acting and positioning myself within constantly evolving social systems, which do have a history a presence and a future, was something I could not grasp during the safe space trainings in Innsbruck. Applying certain practices like active listening, self-awareness or some principles of theme centered intervention within real life supportive systems or while reflecting on these systemic episodes of supportive relationships, have in my opinion contributed beneficially to my understanding of social (sub)systems and how unexpected paths of evolutions can sometimes even be beneficial for the participants of different systems, including conflictive systems.

This brings me to a further insight I gained through this thesis writing process and which I consider specifically relevant for my future engagement in peace work: Somehow I have been trying to resolve the felt dichotomy between being active and letting things happen; perhaps even between making peace and letting peace happen. Retrospectively, it seems quite likely to me, that I was not only choosing the research
question due to the topics addressed earlier but also out of the incongruences I have felt in previous engagements around having opinions, concrete ideas of how situations could evolve, expectations how they should evolve, what I should do or not do, say or not say. The dichotomy between activity and passivity has been accompanied by the inner judge, who was a very prominent topic in earlier psychotherapeutic sessions. The dichotomy came in very handy for blaming myself for any evolvements not considered as beneficial. I could either judge myself for 'I was too active' or 'I was too passive'. Looking back, I think that the example about interferences in international accompaniment is in parts an expression of this unresolved issue of a certain need of separation, related to a judgement, between active and passive interactions or also elicitive or non elicitive conflict work.

When I was focusing on the chapter Elicitive Conflict Mapping, and carefully wrote down the elicitive interpretation of homeostasis, I noticed some relieve within myself. I started imagining the tendency of a system towards a steady state as interplay between making and happening, as a guide for conflict work. I started to get a feeling of understanding how action towards balance might be useful, so that peace can happen. My view became clear for several examples of such interactions between actions and transformations happening in the interviews conducted. From the new point of view, the question if my engaging would be active or passive did not seem applicable any more. It rather turned into an 'it depends'.

With respect to my learnings about distinction and similarities of prescriptive and elicitive transformation approaches, I refer the reader to the beginning of this chapter.

When formulating the research question, I was also inspired by a wishful thinking of supportive relationships perpetually providing enough indirect reflection and encounter with the self of the conflict worker for the conflict worker’s inner system to
perform in steady state sustainably. In my opinion, the thesis did not bring forth convincing evidence that constant active engagement in supportive relationships in conflict workers’ everyday life would provide sufficient sustainable selfcare for elicitive conflict workers. Looking into the example of the supportive relationship between Ali and me, I hoped to find evidences, that the understanding he provided and the joy and relaxing moments we shared in his flat would be a source for sustainably drifting in the multistringed and multistranded supportive relationships at that time. Looking at the time evaluation of the episode increasing tiredness culminated in an illness of the nervous system, which I interpreted as a sign force myself to take care of myself and listen to myself, which actually meant, to quit some of the supports I had been providing. Even interpreting the outbreak of herpes zoster as a self-healing systemic process, shows, that my system was out of steady state, which is not a sustainable condition. Other experiences presented showed examples of how catalyst energy for conflict transformations could be transferred through multistringed and multistranded relationships, but I could not identify in any of the experiences presented traces of substitution of direct work with oneself by indirect pathways, for example through correspondences or resonances within the supportive relationships. I intuit that my initial wish of finding evidences for perpetual active engagement in supportive relationships without becoming exhausted, burned out or needing a break to the expectations nourished by my inner judge relaying on values transmitted through my sociocultural background of an achievement society within a catholic environment. So, I take from these reflections, that will try to not neglect inner work when preparing myself for possible future engagements as an elicitive conflict worker.
Families were a recurring topic for a resource of support. Throughout the thesis mentions about family relations have been positive, and the same holds true for almost any relations mentioned in the narratives of the different experiences. I attribute this to the way the research and interview question were posed. I fear that this prominence of family relations with a positive connotation can mislead us to the deduction, that family is the key to transform conflict constructively and to live peacefully. Family systems do carry their shadows. Looking into history books or taking a look towards the conflictive moments of relating within our own families and between families we find evidences of these shadows. Reflecting on the constructive relations between me and my family and within my family narrated in My Experiences, is not intended to draw or provoke an idealistic view of family systems, it is attributed to the focus on relationships which foster constructive change. Sticking a moment to my family system, as it is the one I have additional information at hand, recurring depression and suicides of several family members are likely to be related to conflicts, which do include the family system and family members as conflict parties. Nevertheless, various interviews have shown potentials for support in family systems, which can be an important ground to elicit on and to find first common understandings in conflict transformation.
11 CONCLUSIONS

For me, supportive relationships can have an influence on elicitive conflict transformation processes by building up a knowledge base and by training skills and abilities important for elicitive conflict workers. Especially, maintaining multistrunged and multistranded relationships can train the understanding of complex systems, as conflictive systems usually are.

Nevertheless, multistrunged and multistranded supportive relations alone probably won’t be sufficient preparation and self-care for an elicitive conflict worker, if these supportive relationships are defined as interpersonal.

In terms of preparation, trainings of communication capacities, awareness and reflection methods are important for reflecting and understanding supportive relationships, even more so if engaging in multistranded and multistrunged relationships. This awareness and gain in understanding is important for the transformation of the experience of supportive relationships into retrievable knowledge for elicitive conflict transformation.

Looking into self-care, the thesis showed evidences of possible lacking self-care and insufficient awareness trainings through engagement in interpersonal supportive relationships only. Capacity building methods suggested and trained for example in safe spaces during the master’s program in Innsbruck provide tools for introspection, self-actualization and self-care.

During the preparation of the non-expert interviews, I was intrigued by the different reactions of possible study participants to my request. Some seemed to feel more confident with talking about having supported others than others (see chapter 4.3). I was hoping to find in the actual interviews some hints on possible patterns of
these reactions. But, I did not. I still find it an interesting phenomenon, which might
be an entry point for further studies.

I personally take from this thesis that, alongside all the joy and capacity enhancing
potential for elicitive conflict transformation I can gain from drifting between multi
stranded and multi stringed interpersonal relationships, it is important for me as a
possible future elicitive conflict worker to additionally pay attention to intrapersonal
relating, clearing and self-awareness processes. Additional investigations might also
be able to shade more light on back feeding multilateral relationships and their
influences on intrapersonal balances.

All in all I hope that this thesis can support the We and the Me in opening
potentials for elicitive conflict work.
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