

**PEACE PROCESSES IN COMMUNITY CONFLICTS:  
FROM UNDERSTANDING THE ROOTS OF CONFLICTS  
TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

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1. Executive Summary.....	5
2. Background and Objectives of the Project.....	14
2.1. Background.....	14
2.2. Objectives.....	16
3. Scientific Description of the Project Results and Methodology.....	17
3.1. Theoretical Background.....	17
3.1.1. Communities and Conflicts .....	17
3.1.2. The Notion of Community Conflicts.....	18
3.1.3. Actors and means of actions.....	20
3.1.4. Accommodation Policies .....	21
3.2. Research Design.....	23
3.3. Case Studies .....	25
3.4. Conflict Dynamics .....	28
3.4.1. Identifying Conflict Dimensions.....	28
3.4.2. The Impact of Accommodation Policies on the conflict cycle .....	37
3.4.3. Assessing the Impact of European integration on Conflicts .....	40
3.4.5. Different patterns of internationalization in community conflicts .....	43
3.5. Actors and Repertoires of Action.....	50
3.5.1. The centrality of Actors' Discourses and Representations .....	50
3.5.2. Changing and Complex Repertoires of Action.....	54
3.6. The Key Determinants of Community Conflict Escalation and De-escalation in Europe: a Systematic Comparative Analysis (QCA) .....	59
3.6.1. Overall Results.....	59
3.6.2. The theory revisited: what are the key combinations of factors for conflict escalation, non-escalation and de-escalation? .....	60
3.6.3. Confronting Escalation and De-Escalation: Different Mechanisms, Different Theories? .....	63
3.6.4. Accommodation Initiatives: Mixed Findings .....	64
3.6.5. Paths for Further Research .....	65
3.7. The PEACE-COM Monitoring System .....	67
3.7.1. Design of the Monitoring System.....	67
3.7.2. Presentation of the global results.....	71
3.7.3. Integrating the Gender Dimension .....	78
3.7.4. The Monitoring System as a Key Policy Tool.....	80
4. Conclusions and Policy Implications .....	83
4.1. Some Key Conclusions on Community Conflicts .....	83
4.2. Accommodation Policies: Evaluations and Suggestions.....	85
5. Dissemination and/or Exploitation of Results .....	89
5.1. Workshops and Conferences .....	89
5.2. Publications.....	92
5.3. Science and Society.....	93
6. Acknowledgements and References .....	94
6.1. Acknowledgements.....	94
6.2. References .....	95
7. Annexes.....	102
7.1. Deliverables.....	102
7.2. Contact Persons .....	104

## 1. Executive Summary

Our aim in undertaking the research that is reported in this volume has been to investigate and help European decision makers understand the origins and causes of conflicts currently taking place in Europe, and evaluate their developments, as some of them may interfere with, and even threaten, the standards of democracy the European Union seeks to promote. In order to do so, the PEACE-COM project has studied community conflicts drawn from the range of possible types inside the European Union and in its vicinity and the effects of accommodation policies or of Europeanisation on these conflicts.

As most community conflicts, in Europe as well as in other parts of the world, are multicausal and multidimensional, the PEACE-COM project has used an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from several disciplines of the social sciences. An historical approach has been necessary to promote a comprehensive understanding of conflicts and of their historical dynamics; an economical approach amongst other things to assess the relative deprivation of communities, and the effects of peace programmes; a juridical and political approach to study the institutional arrangements and the political scenes which are often at the forefront of these conflicts; a sociological perspective to investigate the social dynamics; a religious, cultural and symbolic approach has also been useful to understand the imagined aspects of these conflicts. PEACE-COM has thus promoted a truly interdisciplinary research, in order to allow for a global understanding of these complex situations. It has used both qualitative and quantitative social scientific methods like text analysis, interviews and surveys, and has applied innovative comparative methods to reach more authoritative comparative conclusions such as a “systematic comparative case analysis” design, which has allowed us to systematically compare the cases covered.

PEACE-COM has studied the following **twelve case studies**:

- Northern Ireland;
- The Basque Country;
- Cyprus;
- The Francophone - Flemish conflict in Belgium;
- The Central European Roma conflict in Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic;
- The Slovene autochthonous minority in Austria;
- South Tyrol;
- The Russian Minority in Estonia;
- Corsica;
- Kosovo;
- Sandzak;
- Vojvodina.

The cases have been selected to ensure geographical and cultural diversity (throughout parts of Europe: East-West-North-South, Latin v/s non-Latin cases, etc.), but also diversity in shapes, both in terms of issues at stake, and of levels of violence. The aim was therefore twofold:

- first, to cover *all phases of the full cycle of conflicts*, from political mobilisation, to the eruption of violence, and to conflict resolution, because it seems that if we had not included cases where violence is not present, or where actors have given up violent means of action, we would not have been able to fulfil some of our major objectives, namely on the one hand to explain the emergence or not of physical violence in cases of communal opposition, and on the second hand to observe and assess the successes or failures of accommodation policies;
- second, to cover the widest range of dimensions and issues these conflicts can present. The literature on conflicts has indeed identified numerous issues whose presence seems to be concomitant to – or to foster? – conflict situations. Such is the case of language, of culture, or of territory. But in order to assess the real importance of these issues and, perhaps even more importantly, the links that may tie these various issues, we needed to cover as many occurrences of these issues as possible. This task has been made easier by the fact that all the conflicts chosen display several dimensions at the same time, and some of them have displayed nearly all key dimensions over a certain period of time. This is this highly complex web of interactions that we aimed to understand, with a specific focus, for practical reasons, on the post-World War Two period. Our ambition has been to identify key connections and patterns, in order to specify, at a later stage, specific models of community conflicts in Europe.

This sample of cases has allowed us to research the **causes, dimensions or issues of conflicts** currently taking place on the European continent. The causes of the conflicts, peaceful or not, opposing communities in Europe, are not immediately obvious, as some cultural, ethnic or religious groups seem to integrate smoothly in some cases, but not in others. In this perspective, one of the main aims of the PEACE-COM project was to overcome the historical and descriptive complexity of each case, propose a conceptualization of the main dimensions that characterize them. We have thus been seeking patterns of variations across case studies that may be seen by each specialist as unique.

This has led us to identify 16 key dimensions or features of contemporary conflicts in Europe, which we have grouped in 4 clusters:

- *Identity dimensions*, including Religious differences, Identity Claims, and Culture / Linguistic differences;
- *Socio-Economic and Geographic Dimensions*, including Socio-Economic Differences, Population Shifts, and Territorial Issues (Autonomy, Secession, Irredentism)
- *Political Dimensions*, including Centre-Periphery cleavage, Political Access and Access to Citizenship, Elite Manipulation, Security Dilemma and Accommodation Policies
- *“External” Dimensions*, including the impact of Decolonisation and the aftermath of World War I & World War II, the impact of Globalisation, of Europeanisation, the influence and intervention of Motherland/ Fatherland and Neighbouring Countries, and finally the impact and influence of Diasporas and Bordering Communities

According to our findings, several of these dimensions appear to be more salient than others: such is the case of cultural and linguistic differences, of identity questions, of territory, of socio-economic issues, or of neighbouring states and bordering communities. But none of these dimensions seems enough in itself to explain either the emergence or the persistence of conflicts: in all cases covered by this project, several dimensions interact and have to be taken into account in order to understand what is really going on. On the other hand, several dimensions or even paradigms that are often depicted as main causes of community conflicts do not seem to present a real heuristic value. Such is the case of religious factors or elite manipulation which do not seem to help us understanding many conflict situations, even though they admittedly are present in a number of situations.

Another complexity lies in what we could call the shifting temporality of causes: one of the main characteristics of most of these community conflicts is indeed that they feed themselves constantly, they are self-perpetuating, start-up conditions giving birth to new conditions and paradigms in the framework of which new grievances can develop. This peculiarity poses a great challenge to analysis, because some processes which are rightly pointed out as the root causes of a conflict may be a lot less relevant than other dimensions for characterizing or even understanding its current shape. Perhaps even more importantly, research conducted in PEACE-Com has shown that the impact of these various dimensions varies according to the specific settings of the conflict, and in particular according to the other dimensions they are interacting with. In other words, saying for instance that religion plays a central role in a given conflict does not necessarily mean that it has a strong escalating or de-escalating impact, and that this conflict is bound to be violent, or on the contrary of a limited scale. These variations linked to the specificities of each conflict have been taken into account in the setting up of the monitoring system.

PEACE-COM has also shown are strong variations in the appraisal of the relevance of dimensions or “causes” for each conflict, between actors in conflict, which should not come as a surprise, and which illustrates clearly that most of these conflicts are also conflicts about what the conflict is about. There are also striking discrepancies between actors’ and experts’ views on the conflicts. Actors on the ground tend to see conflicts as highly multi-causal, whereas experts focus on a limited number of key dimensions. In particular, on average experts give less importance to political dimensions than do conflict actors. Our research therefore pleads for a systematic integration of actors’ views and perceptions in the conception and implementation of peace programmes, and for further research on reasons for divergences in experts’ and actors’ opinions, as they may explain controversies and unexpected consequences of policies designed to accommodate these conflicts.

The results of our survey of conflict dimensions has thus allowed us to **analyse the policies or initiatives set up to handle these conflicts, at the local, national and international level, and to assess their effectiveness and to point at lacunae or lacks which should be filled**. One of the main problems of accommodation initiatives and policies seems to be the lack of domestic support they manage to convey. This lack of domestic support can often be explained by the difficulties encountered during the implementation phase of these policies, and by the disappointment these difficulties generate among those who had hoped for a quick change. Some other often quoted problems are:

- that Civil Society is excluded from accommodation initiatives in most cases (and most interviewees agree that their involvement would be beneficial); in other words, accommodation policies are very “political” and institutional (as described in the first section of this deliverable), mainly “top-down”, as if conflicts were the results of the actions of political leaders only. This goes against most conflict analysis work that has been done so far on the causes of conflicts;
- that politicians are not the ideal actors to carry out accommodation initiatives (because they often follow a “hidden agenda”, and hold a short term vision of the problem, etc.), but it is mostly them who are in charge of their negotiation and implementation;
- that international attention is very often short-lived, and corresponds to strong escalatory phases or outbursts of violence of a given conflict, when what is needed is a more long-term commitment so as to 1) put adequate and renewed pressure on conflict actors, and 2) guarantee and ensure the implementation of accommodation policies;
- that in many cases “quick-fix” solutions (like the sending of peace-keeping forces, security measures, financial endowments, etc.) are preferred to long-term efforts (working on the root causes, structural prevention of conflict, etc.). Initiatives are not coherent in time and rarely carried out consistently to the end (very few insistence on conflict resolution);
- finally, and this problem is related to the previous, many interviewees stressed the fact that accommodation initiatives should always be accompanied by follow-up measures in order to succeed. This is especially true for international intervention with regard to which most interviewees agreed that “others cannot do the job for us”.

Further to this general assessment, we have examined case by case examples of “good” and “bad” practices in accommodation policies. According to our findings, there are three main cases in which accommodation initiatives or policies have been judged as successful by most conflict actors and experts:

- when small scale measures are implemented, which are not costly for the given society, which benefit to all sides of the conflict, and which are not seen as major endeavours towards one side or another. The use of the term “small scale” is not to be equated here with unimportant. In fact, most of these “small scale” successes are highly politically significant, because they show that accommodation and compromise are possible, and that accommodation initiatives and policies do not necessarily benefit to one side only, namely, that one can move from a “zero sum game” to a “win-win” situation;
- the second instance of success is when the accommodation initiative or policy is able to bring about a triangularisation of the conflict, in other words when an action or a policy is initiated from the outside, by an external actor which can pose itself, it not as neutral, at least as external to the conflict;
- the third instance of success is when there is a strong effort to include all relevant actors in the negotiation and implementation process, even the most violent ones, and when there is no taboo as to the policy sectors and issues that the accommodation policy can address. Examples of these successes are not very numerous, even if there is a growing tendency in policy-making cycles to accept the necessary multilevel and encompassing nature of peace agreements.



Besides these examples of success, numerous examples of failures were given by our interviewees and by respondents to the questionnaire survey. If we except cases of biased accommodation policies (favouring only one side of the conflict, or perceived as such by a significant number of actors), there are two main instances in which accommodation policies seem to be doomed to failure:

- first, when the answer given to the crisis seems unsuited to the stakes and issues, more particularly when it is too radical and excessive, for instance when central power reacts to peaceful demonstrations by sending the army;
- second, when stakes and issues of the conflict are so intertwined that it is next to impossible to deal with one specific issue without generating a general uproar. In such a situation, political imagination is required, and accommodation policies have to be carefully tailored to the specificities of each conflict, even when they deal with an issue until then considered as of secondary importance.

In addition, accommodation policies often seem to fail because of local opposition. Overall, it is the lack of bottom-up measures and the lack or insufficient inclusion of local actors in the negotiation and implementation of accommodation policies which is the most often quoted when trying to explain policy failures. Local actors have to be included and “empowered” in order to be convinced of the righteousness of a given policy. The non-inclusion of civil society actors in discussions, and the top-down style of peace negotiations and processes thus seem to be one of the main explanations for the failure to reach an agreement, or for the difficulties in implementing it.

In addition, according to our findings, it seems that with the exception of North Cyprus, where the European Union’s role is not seen very positively since the rejection of the Annan Plan, and of Belgium and Austria where interviewees are sceptical vis-à-vis the European Union’s involvement, there is an overall positive assessment of the European Union’s role in conflict management and settlement. In most cases, even if no direct intervention is called for, there is an agreement that the European Union can impact positively, in an indirect manner, on the evolution of the conflicts. The main paths of influence are:

- Accession process, Copenhagen criteria, legal documents and protection of minorities
- Financial tool and economic integration
- Intervention in mediation processes, launching of political initiatives, role as a guarantor and as an external monitor
- Indirect political and philosophical influence, change in the notions of sovereignty for instance
- Cultural influence through the promotion of multiculturalism

Our research also reveals that many conflict actors are actually calling for **an increased European Union intervention**, either because they believe it can be an effective mediator and break a deadlock, or because of its capacity in state- and civil society- building, and its legal instruments for the protection of minorities.

Another core goal of the PEACE-COM project was to analyze several ‘thick’, multilayered, dynamic and complex cases of community conflicts, in a comparative *and* systematic way, *and* also over a long period of time (the whole post-WWII period), in order identify the key determinants leading to community conflict escalation and de-escalation. In order to meet this challenge, we opted for a “systematic cross-case analysis” approach. One key overarching result of our analyses is that *single* explanatory factors seldom come out. Rather, in most cases, most factors operate in combination. It not only implies that the key conditions operate in conjunction, but also that there are, for some operationalizations of the outcome at least, different combinations of conditions (different causal ‘paths’) leading to the outcome. In other words: **there is not a single one-size-fits-all explanation, be it for conflict escalation, non-escalation, de-escalation or non-de-escalation.**

A first key empirical finding concerning **conflict escalation**, which confirms existing literature on the topic, is that ‘identity entrepreneurs’ play a key role in conflict escalation, especially in the passage to violent conflict. However this factor does not operate alone: those identity entrepreneurs are often more ‘efficient’ in their attempts to escalate the conflict when some latent cleavages (or conflict dimensions) can be re-activated. In another core combination of escalating factors, the crucial factor has to do with perceptions, in three ways: (a) the framing of the conflict (in particular paradigm change or paradigm discordance, i.e. a disagreement on the core issue at stake in the conflict); (b) the perception of one’s own community; and, linked with the previous point, (c) the perception of the other community or ‘camp’. The more explosive situations are, firstly, those in which the conflict is deeply entrenched, in the framing of the conflict, on who are the “culprits” and who are the “victims”. Secondly, some dynamic identity entrepreneurs must be there to instrumentalize those entrenched paradigms. Third, and last but not least, are those situations in which one community is (or, rather *perceives* it is) being durably alienated, not ‘recognized’ by the other community. These factors must operate *in conjunction* – thus, the mere presence of one of these factors alone is not a sufficient condition to witness conflict escalation. For the passage to open warfare specifically, a crucial factor is the absence of significant *ex ante* accommodation initiatives. This factor must however be complemented by another factor: the claims at stake (which are not met by accommodation initiatives) must stem from minority communities. In particular, not responding to peacefully expressed grievances from minority communities is an almost certain path to further escalation, especially if some radical groups are ready to be mobilized on the ground. In this respect, the worst way to respond to peacefully expressed grievances is to resort to armed repression. Conflict escalation is often the result of violent of militarized response from the central State (against the peacefully expressed demands of the ‘periphery’, namely the minority community). Such militarized responses are sometimes framed by the central State as ‘accommodation’ policies, but in fact they can only be viewed as such by the allies on the ground, and thus cannot contribute to any form of ‘real’ pacification

For the identification of core mechanisms of durable **non-escalation**, a first combination of factors centres around the fact that the conflict is more of the ‘cultural’ kind (e.g. religious, identity, language) – but this it itself does not guarantee non-escalation. The key narrative is twofold. On the one hand, when the cultural dividing line does *not* strongly coincide with socio-economic or territorial dividing lines – thus the ‘cultural’ minority community is not, for instance, also socio-economically underprivileged than the ‘cultural’ majority community and, consequently, there is little reason to engage in more radical action. When the main societal cleavages do not overlap, this produces a more pacified and

compromise-seeking political interaction. On the other hand, even if there is some form of local contention (e.g. non-conventional actions on the ground, at the local level, which could radicalize the conflict), there is not a broad reservoir of radical ‘identity entrepreneurs’ to instrumentalize this mostly cultural conflict. A second, specific path towards non-escalation is the combination of no prior experience of ‘efficient’ use of violent means in the conflict, and of little or no intervention from ‘external’ players. A third and last causal narrative leading to non-escalation has to do with what we could define as an ‘inversion’ of the logic of contention. These are situations in which, paradoxically perhaps, the ‘non-conventional’ modes of action are more often used by the majority community, and not by the minority which seeks to obtain more rights. Because the activists of the majority group are not particularly criminalized by the judiciary system, this does not encourage further escalation. In the same line of argument, those who are the “dominated” community and who feel they are being discriminated against are also those who are more open to discussion and negotiation. This interesting finding runs counter to some well-established theories and models (e.g. ‘relative deprivation’ and ‘political opportunity structure’) which predict that protest and violent or more radical means of action are most likely to be initiated by the more dominated or minority groups.

As far as **de-escalation** is concerned, our analyses of the causal paths were, on the whole, less convincing than those for escalation or non-escalation. De-escalation does not necessarily equate with finding a ‘solution’ to the conflict. Actually when conflicts quickly and strongly de-escalate, it seldom corresponds to ‘real’ de-escalation. Such evolutions are rather imposed by force, without addressing the root causes of the conflict. This leads us to consider the first explanatory factor: repressive and security policies which impose de-escalation through police or military action (or even less conventional armed action), thereby ‘freezing or ‘containing’ the conflict. A second set of factors leading to conflict de-escalation is more linked with accommodation policies: the fact that such policies are able, more specifically, to address some *political* claims of the minority community, also combined with the fact that ‘friendly neighbours’ *on both sides* are involved in the formulation and/or implementation of the pacification policies. Finally, one different factor has to do with ‘self-other’ perceptions. The conflict-decreasing potential of these perceptions can only be activated when at least one ‘camp’ does *not* perceive the other as ‘alien’. Such a configuration opens up some possible space for negotiation and accommodation, with or without the intervention of external facilitators

From a policy perspective, this means that **there is no single ‘best recipe’ strategy to avoid conflict escalation or to ensure conflict de-escalation**. It is highly unlikely that a ‘recipe’ for community conflict de-escalation or non-escalation which has proved effective in a given national setting can be simply ‘exported’ and applied to another national setting and also yield fully satisfactory results. For one thing, there are many ‘contextual’ factors (outside of our analytical models) which could intervene at some stage in the causal process, and modify the eventual outcome in terms of level of conflict. Second, one should not confuse an analytical model with the complexity of the real world – any analytical model is vastly over-simplifying reality. Third and not least, some core factors of conflict non-escalation in some countries simply cannot quickly be implemented in other countries, because of objective, factual differences.

Our analyses further demonstrate that some *ex ante* accommodation initiatives are actually counter-productive. Indeed they lead to conflict escalation, in the short term or in the longer term, because they are perceived by one ‘camp’ as single-sided. There is a clear link between this observation and another of our key finding: ‘soft’ (i.e. non-military) accommodation initiatives can only yield results under some very demanding conditions – only if: (a) they bring all the conflicting parties around the table, even the more radical groups which are labelled by some as ‘terrorists’; and (b) they are encompassing, i.e. dealing not only with outbursts of violence, but also with the root causes of the conflict, whether political, economical, social, cultural, etc.

Another major objective of the project was to develop indicators to observe and assess the evolution of conflicts. Building a **monitoring system** aimed at monitoring the conflicts covered in PEACE-COM which are all situated in the EU or at its periphery, but range from peaceful situations of tension to violent conflicts, has been a challenging task. We have been aiming at monitoring conflicts which are situated within a specific environment in Europe, therefore certain generic indicators widely used in monitoring conflicts do not apply. The monitoring system in its original form has been tested on 10 cases: Basque Country, Belgium, both cases of Cyprus and Northern Cyprus, Estonia, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Sandzac, the Slovene minority in Austria and Vojvodina.

The testing of the monitoring system has largely confirmed the hypotheses and results detailed above, for instance that the most salient dimensions are the ones that contribute most often to the escalation of conflicts, or that it is never a single dimension that is responsible for the escalation of a conflict but rather the interplay between various issues.

The monitoring system has allowed us to point at the escalation of the following cases:

- Belgium, where the conflict is escalating mostly because of the prevalence of identity issues, but socio-economic dimensions also contribute to fuelling the conflict. The low scores of the dimensions of Europeanization and accommodation policies reflect a situation in which few peace initiatives have been initiated by the EU or international community in order to mitigate or settle the conflict;
- Estonia, where it is the combination between identity issues and political issues that keeps the conflict escalating. Yet socio-economic and territory issues contribute to mitigate thus escalation;
- Cyprus: both sides of the Cypriot conflict are experiencing a situation of escalation, which results from the combination of identity issues, political issues as well as socio-economic and territory issues. Few peace factors mitigate this escalating situation, and accommodation policies have a counter-productive output;
- Kosovo: the conflict in Kosovo is escalating due to a combination of factors pertaining to identity and political issues, as well as socio-economic and territory issues. However, the Kosovo case is remarkable because of the high escalating impact of external factors;
- Sandžak, where these external factors are also present, but not combined with the same explosive combination of identity issues and socio-economic and territorial issues

On the other hand, some other cases are currently de-escalating:

- Northern Ireland, where the de-escalation is caused by the fact that apart from identity issues, all other dimensions of the conflict contribute to an appeasement of the conflict. The external dimension is particularly de-escalating;
- Similarly, in the Basque Country, all dimensions show the same de-escalating trend;
- Like in Northern Ireland, in the case of the Slovene minority in Austria, escalating trends pertaining to identity issues are mitigated by the de-escalation of all other dimensions of the conflict;
- Vojvodina, which shows an original situation in which the identity dimension actually does not contribute to the escalation of the conflict. The most contentious issues in the conflict are today socio-economic and territorial ones, as well as political ones, but peace factors (especially pertaining to Europeanization) lead to a general de-escalation of the conflict.

On the whole, our research shows that the content of community conflicts, their degree of violent escalation, their capacity to reach accommodation, do not only depend on « objective » factors, such as economic deprivation, violation of minority rights and identity, contested territories, population shifts, foreign interference, etc. but also on the perceptions of the main actors involved in these conflicts of these “objective” factors. These objective factors are interpreted differently by each community, and framed in discourses that offer a legitimizing explanation to the community in terms of the nature of the conflict, the nature and objectives of the opposing camps, the legitimacy of the community claims, the choice of means of action, and the need and acceptability of accommodation policies. It is therefore crucial to examine, understand and take into account the interplay between ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ factors of conflict, in order to design adequate responses to escalation phenomena, and to appease existing tensions.

## 2. Background and Objectives of the Project

### 2.1. Background

The process of Europeanisation raises questions concerning the transformation of collective identities and the organisation of democracy, especially in states where a range of social processes coalesce around generally shared perceptions of community difference. Is such a thing as community coexistence possible, or does peaceful coexistence imply some kind of erosion of community?

We cannot take for granted the fact that integration in Europe will bring automatically a solution to these conflicts, especially because some of these community conflicts, as in Belgium, endure and keep on reconstructing even decades after the integration of the country in the European space. One might add that Europe may even sharpen certain kinds of conflict by making claims for autonomy or even independence more credible: it frees many small potential states from, precisely, the small state syndrome. By lessening the relevance of territorial integrity of current nation-states, it seems easier for smaller communities to claim their independence, or at least a greater autonomy. Moreover, the wide range of possible shapes these conflicts can take (from the violent conflicts of the Basque country or of Northern Ireland, to the mainly institutionalised forms, though not always exempt of violence, of the conflict between Flemish and Walloon communities in Belgium, to the economic aspects of the conflicts in Italy) stresses the necessity for the European Union to adopt different strategies and behaviour *vis-à-vis* these situations.

Our aim in undertaking the research that is reported in this volume has therefore been to investigate and help European decision makers understand the origins and causes of these conflicts, and evaluate their developments, as some of them may interfere with, and even threaten, the standards of democracy the European Union seeks to promote.

In the context of enlargement, it is moreover essential for Europe to think about the consequences of Europeanisation on the situation of the minority groups and communities inside the countries that will join, or have recently joined, the Union. In new member states, it is particularly urgent to look at the existing community conflicts and also to monitor their evolution in relation to the process of enlargement. Moreover, the wide range of shapes such conflicts can take rules out the possibility to deal with them in a standardised way.

More generally, it is important to reflect on the claims and situations of those communities, whether religious, linguistic or cultural, inside the Union in its current shape. Integration into a wider Union might provoke further identity withdrawals of those groups which perceive their collective identity as at risk.

The fact that the European Union, through its Common Foreign and Security Policy, has set itself the task of intervening in the conflicts raging in its vicinity, has led to various interventions that comprise a strong EU dimension. But these interventions concern primarily adjoining territories to the Union, rather than countries inside the Union. This has led the fact that the EU is more interventionist in accession and eastern countries (except for Cyprus), where it has launched several peace programmes and policies (e.g. in the former Yugoslavia), than in the countries inside the Union, where the community conflicts are assumed to be a matter of domestic policy for each of the concerned

countries. This clearly raises questions about the future treatment of these conflicts after the enlargement, and in particular about the attitude the EU should henceforth adopt: is there anything to learn from the existing peace programmes (e.g. in Yugoslavia or in the Baltic countries), and should the EU be more active towards community conflicts in Belgium, Northern Ireland or Spain?

## ***2.2. Objectives***

The PEACE-COM project has studied community conflicts drawn from the range of possible types inside the European Union and in its vicinity and the effects of Europeanisation on these conflicts. Moreover, PEACE-COM has devised a set of empirical indicators to observe and assess the development of these community conflicts inside the European Union, but also in bordering countries and in candidate states.

Beyond this overall goal, specific research objectives of the project were:

- To promote a better and more comprehensive understanding of conflicts and their historical dynamics in relation to the whole range of social processes with which they interact, by using a multi-disciplinary approach : political, economical, social, but also religious, cultural and symbolic;
- To refine the typology of community conflicts, and drawing from it conclusions in terms both of social science and policy;
- To assess the importance of factors such as the involvement and role of women and children, and of international and non-governmental organisations, in these conflicts; it is indeed crucial that the initiatives in favour of accommodation, coming from the civil society, are taken into account by policy-makers;
- To study what effects Europeanisation is producing on these conflicts, in particular to assess the implications of European integration in accession countries affected by community conflicts; the monitoring of community conflicts inside the Union and in accession countries has helped us assess the positive and negative effects of integration in the European Union;
- To analyse the policies or initiatives set up to handle these conflicts, at the local, national and international levels, to assess their effectiveness and to point at holes or lacks which should be filled;
- To explore the ways the European Union could help resolve these conflicts, and to study the effects of the current policies of the European Union on these conflicts;
- To develop indicators to observe and assess the evolution of these conflicts. These indicators have been built in order to be used for policy purposes, and especially in order to set up peace programmes.



### 3. Scientific Description of the Project Results and Methodology

#### 3.1. Theoretical Background

The theoretical basis of our research is delineated by the notion of community conflicts and by the various dimensions they may display.

##### 3.1.1. Communities and Conflicts

As mentioned in the previous section, one of the objectives of the PEACE-COM project was to promote a better and more comprehensive understanding of community conflicts. Community conflicts are a blind spot of research, even though certain of their aspects have been extensively studied. Such is the case of identity strategies, of national identities, of regionalisms or of ethnic conflicts (Banton: 1977; Horowitz: 1985; Rex: 1986; Hutchinson and Smith: 1996; Wilson: 2001). But while these studies help us in understanding specific aspects of community conflicts, they fall short of an overall view and explanation, which would be necessary in most of these cases. Indeed, many so-called “ethnic conflicts” combine cultural, political, economic and symbolic dimensions; in other words, they are not simply *ethnic*, and to identify them as such alone, reduces the possibility to understand them and to find appropriate ways to solve them. The same can be said about most linguistic, religious, cultural or minority conflicts. Moreover, the various aspects of community conflicts evolve in time, and this has crucial consequences for the nature of the conflicts. The conflict in Ireland for example, which was, at its beginning, mainly a colonial and religious problem, has evolved into a mostly political and cultural question, the religious dimension having lost a part of its relevance.

A lot of English-speaking surveys have developed the notion of “ethnicity”, which Barth (1969) defined as “a form of social organisation, based on a category assignment which splits people up on the basis of their supposed origin, and confirmed by the implementation of socially discriminating cultural marks in social interactions”. As such, “ethnicity” fits into an interdisciplinary and multifaceted approach, insofar as, according to Martiniello (1995), it combines surveys on individuals (feeling of membership), groups (mobilization and collective action) and structural constraints (cultural, political, economic and symbolic dimensions). As a consequence, it seems to be particularly relevant for comparative research (see also Poutignat and Streiff-Hénart: 1999; Cahen: 1994; Glazer and Moynihan: 1975). This *sociological* definition of ethnicity, which ties its constructivist and dynamic aspects, can therefore be considered as a heuristic and conceptual foundation to the study of conflicts.

At a more general level, the multidimensional concept of community conflicts ties together all the dimensions these complex situations can present and allows their separate analysis.

Another explanation can be put forward, in order to explain the inadequacy of research concerning community conflicts: research in this field is usually conducted as a matter of urgency, when a conflict arises or gets more violent. Research on community conflicts is therefore very often trapped in the specificity of case studies. As a result, comparisons are underused, even though they have proven to be very fruitful (Landman: 2000; Mayer: 1989;

Wright: 1992), in particular when they go beyond the juxtaposition of case studies. In order to transcend the specificity of conflicts such as the Northern Irish or the Cyprus conflicts, the Russian minority problem in the Baltic States, the Basque or Catalan regionalisms, the concept of community can be used (Cohen: 1985) in a comparative perspective.

Most of the internal actors of these conflicts indeed describe themselves as members of specific communities, which Benedict Anderson (1992) famously called “imagined communities”. In these situations, the term of “community” refers to what Ferdinand Tönnies (1977: 56) has described as a “Gemeinschaft”, i.e. a community that, building on blood or place ties, becomes progressively a “community spirit”. The building of such a community, as Weber (1964) points out, depends closely on the meaning and representations that its members attach to it. Therefore, political communities are not only interest communities, but above all emotional communities (Sloterdijk, 1998). Moreover, this process of “communalisation” (in the sense of Weber’s *Vergemeinschaftung*) is backed by a very powerful identity assignation, as, in most cases, membership in these communities does not derive from the free will of the individuals, but depends on their family origins. This community membership assigns to them a social, political or cultural identity, from which it is very difficult to escape.

Therefore, the word “community” as it has been used in the PEACE-COM project, presents a holistic dimension, in the sense that membership of the community transcends other possible memberships, and leaves its mark on most activities the individual may be engaged in. It may be possible to leave the community, but it is in any case very difficult, if not impossible, to join another one. However, the concept of community is very elusive to define. As Peter Hamilton states (in Cohen: 8), “the concept (...) provides both a means of encompassing a wide variety of social processes and an idea which has much more than simply *technical* meaning, for it refers to symbols, values and ideologies which have popular currency. People manifestly *believe* in the notion of community, either as ideal or reality, and sometimes as both simultaneously”. The study of the structural dimensions of communities has therefore to be complemented by a study of what belonging to a specific community means to its members; this is why the case studies on which PEACE-COM has been built have been focusing on practices as well as on actors’ discourses.

### **3.1.2. The Notion of Community Conflicts**

Conflict arises when different communities pursue different or even contradicting goals and aims. The expression “community conflicts” thus doesn’t only describe armed conflicts or wars, but also tense situations where communities with diverse interests oppose each other by peaceful (e.g. institutional) means (Marret, 2001:15), and that are always likely to degenerate.

One of the theoretical as well as empirical questions raised by this concept of community is the bias that may be induced by the use of a term that is also used by the actors in conflict, and which may therefore lack distance. While we are well aware that the communities are social products that depend on the actors’ actions and discourses, it seems useless to deny their practical consequences. Cultures and representations may be of an abstract imagined nature, but they produce practical effects that are incomprehensible without them. This is the case even of community conflicts occurring under prosperous economic situations and in the absence of a bloody history (e.g. in Belgium).

In the framework of the PEACE-COM project, by ‘conflict’ we mean the pursuit of goals perceived as incompatible by different groups. This suggests a broader span of time and a wider class of struggle than armed or violent conflict. The word ‘conflict’, as meant below, therefore applies to any political conflict, whether it is pursued by peaceful means or by the use of force. Usually analysts use the figure of 100 people killed per year to determine if the conflict is or has become ‘violent’, but one must keep in mind the fact that violence can be direct (murder, bombing...), structural (e.g. economic deprivation because of discriminatory policies) or cultural (what Bourdieu calls ‘violence symbolique’).

There has been, for several decades, both in academic circles and between actors on the ground, a ‘conflict about conflicts’, and especially about labels that can be used in order to describe them. O’Leary and McGarry (1995) talk about “meta conflicts”, conflicts about what the conflicts are about, and explain that the terms in which conflicts are framed by actors in opposition are part of the conflict themselves. Theories and models elaborated by academics and researchers play of course an active role in these semantic quarrels.

According to the element (claims, issues or types of actions) on which the emphasis is put, different labels have thus been used:

- *focus on the claim*: separatism, irredentism, secessionism, nationalism... According to the name that is given to the claim, disqualification or legitimization processes are at play, “nationalism” or “regionalism” have for instance a more positive connotation than irredentism and secessionism that seem to refer to illegitimate claims. Of course there are conflicts about naming, because according to the name that is given, groups are supposed, or not, to be entitled to auto-determination. For instance, Kymlicka (1995:10-33), differentiates two types of situations: first, polyethnicity which refers to an internal social diversity resulting from international migrations, and second multinationality which refers to the coexistence of several “historic” communities in the same state, resulting either from a war, or from a hazardous border drawing. In the first case, auto-determination does not even seem to be an option for the concerned groups, whereas it is considered as legitimate in the second.
- *focus on the central issue of the conflict*: ethnic, identity, religious, territorial... There is a wide use of the “ethnic” vocabulary, by the actors as well as by the academics, in order to describe conflicts that oppose communities in Europe. However, there are some exceptions where authors as well as actors are less likely to use this kind of vocabulary (for instance Corsica, Belgium or Northern Ireland), a reluctance which may be explained by the geographical location of these conflicts (in Western Europe, where nation-state building is supposed to have put an end to ethnic phenomenon, at least inside “ancient” national communities), and not by fundamentally diverging characteristics. Other labels are therefore used, such as identity, linguistic, cultural, religious or territorial conflicts, which tend to put the stress on the concrete issue on which the conflict builds. Apart from the fact that some of these labels can be understood negatively, especially in some national contexts where for instance religious mobilisations are not deemed legitimate, it must be noted that most of these labels depict conflicts as if they were mono-dimensional, which is hardly ever the case.

- *focus on the actions*: “cultural claims”, “regionalist party”, “guerrilla”, “terrorism”, etc. Here the stress is rather put on the kind of mobilizations that take place, on their extent, as well as on the means and repertoires of actions that are used. At first sight, this approach concentrating on actions rather than on claims seems to be more objective, but the use of highly contested terms such as ‘terrorism’ proves that disqualification processes are at play here too. Moreover, these labels focus on the most visible aspects of conflicts, and therefore tend to neglect social processes that sustain them.

These various labels reflect meaningful variations between situations (e.g. between a claim for cultural rights, and a claim for independence), and point to important dimensions these conflicts can present. As a consequence, and because these theories may address various levels or issues of the conflicts, there is some overlapping between them. However, by choosing to reflect on one aspect – a type of actors, of claims, a geographical location, etc. – these terms tend to oversimplify reality, by reducing conflicts to what is presented as being their most remarkable characteristic. This in turn leads to misguided policies, trying for instance to fight terrorism instead of addressing the reasons why individuals might be led to use such radical means of action.

The choice of using the expression “community conflicts” in PEACE-COM therefore derives from the belief that all these situations are multidimensional and should be understood as such, and that beyond obvious variations, these mobilizations and claims are always based on a primary and fundamental perception, of a “community” that would be intrinsically different from the rest of the world. In many instances, this sense of “us” even pre-exists ethnic identity, which it can however help to ‘create’ or re-enact. In the PEACE-COM project, the concept of community conflicts has thus been used as a tool to build a transversal and integrated approach.

### **3.1.3. Actors and means of actions**

In order to avoid the reification of these conflicts, or any essentialism, it has been necessary to analyse these through a sociology of mobilisations, that favours the study of the actors and their discourses, and of concrete situations. It is indeed possible to talk about a community political culture, in which actors, discourses and situations are embedded. According to Badie (1991:122), it is a culture which relates the political space to the group rather than to the territory; moreover, the political identity of the actors refers to another group rather than to a stable centre; and finally, the political power is a substantial construction related to the group rather than to an abstract system of delegations. These common characteristics of community political cultures invite us to focus on three main dimensions: the political space and its actors; the political identities of these actors; and finally the nature of the political power, and of political processes.

The community conflicts we are interested in generally arise in polyethnic or multinational societies. According to Kymlicka (1995:10-33), polyethnicity refers to an internal social diversity resulting from international migrations, whereas multinationality refers to the coexistence of several “historic” communities in the same state, resulting either from a war, or from a hazardous border drawing. But there may be other explanations for the current

rise of sub-state forms of nationalism in Europe and elsewhere. Guibernau (1999: 19) for example stresses the fact that these conflicts “can be interpreted as a product of the dialectic nature of globalization which consists in mutually opposed tendencies. Thus the globalization of the economy and social relations which contributed to the weakening of the nation-state, also seems to have contributed to the intensification of regional forms of nationalism”. As Badie points out (1997:450), citizens are now increasingly appealed by three competing powers: the Nation-State, the transnational actors, and what he calls “identity entrepreneurs”, which propagate a community-based representation of society. These “identity entrepreneurs” act as mediators between the individual needs and the group’s aims. The scope of uncertainty that lies between these two types of needs, which can be diverging, is a space for political creativity, where the community is both a symbolic construction that is at stake in the discourses, and a subject matter of politics.

This uncertainty explains that some community conflicts turn out to be extremely violent, while others remain quite peaceful, and find their expressions in constitutional disputes rather than in military confrontations. But, as Ignatieff points out (1999), when “blood and belonging” are considered as criteria of essential importance, violence is more likely to erupt, for example in “Freedom Fighters” movements. The recent decades have however seen the proliferation of so-called “low intensity conflicts” (Molloy, 2001), where actors use a double strategy, melting political means with military engagement when their aims aren’t satisfied. These situations often result in counter-insurgency techniques implemented by governments. Such measures have not always been successful in suppressing violence (Beckett, 2001) – indeed they have fed the continuation of these conflicts.

### **3.1.4. Accommodation Policies**

In most of these community conflicts, the outbreak of violence depends on the ability of political systems to incorporate the community actors in the democratic process, and on the state’s resistance to the changes initiated by these actors. In democratising states, this integration can be more problematic than in consolidated democratic states, because they lack the mechanisms for controlling and institutionalising these conflicts (Newman 1996: 241-242). In these cases, the consociational model developed by Lijphart (1977, and subsequently conceptually stretched to consensus democracy, 1984, 1999) that contains incentives for group participation, can provide a solution that however depends on the fulfilment of a series of conditions, e.g. the willingness of group elites to co-operate, and the support from the members of the communities for the success of this co-operation. These conditions explain why this classical model of conflict resolution is seldom used, and is often challenged by competing solutions.

Indeed, if there is often a consensus about the causes of the conflicts, there remains a lack of cohesion among theorists about the way to prevent and solve community conflicts. This lack of consensus partly derives from the complexity of the conflicts themselves, in particular since the end of the Cold War and the fact that the interstate model has lost a part of its pertinence. The situation has become more complex as a growing number of institutions and individuals intervene in conflict resolution: states, networks of activists and NGOs, supranational organisations such as the UN, foundations and think-tanks, etc. But

the diversity of the solutions proposed by the theorists also derives from differing conceptions of the conflict in itself, and of violence.

Psychology with the “Frustration / Agression Theory” (Dollard, 1939), and political science with the model of collective and violent action (Gurr, 1970; Tilly, 1978), have been amongst the first disciplines to focus on conflicts and ways to solve them. Boulding with the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Galtung with the *Journal of Peace Research* and Burton have then developed this field of research, and analysed the conflict as a mean of individual or collective action, not to be considered as a pathology. Since the beginning of the nineties, research on conflict resolution has concentrated on the negotiation phase, in particular in multicultural societies (Cohen, 1997; Faure and Rubin, 1993; Isajiw: 2000), and has focused on the mediation work between opposing actors.

One other aim of this research has also been to critically assess the existing modes of conflict resolution, especially when their ultimate aim was peace agreements, with no concern for the period following them. Some research has indeed shown (Crowley, 2001; Tidwell, 1988; Rothstein, 1999; Miall, Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, 1999) that the problem of reconciliation was at least as important, if not more, than the fact of reaching an agreement, in particular because, especially in protracted conflicts, the behaviours as well as the feelings and opinions of the actors need time to evolve. Moreover, as Burton (1991: 73) points out, there is a big distinction between conflict resolution, management and settlement. Management is “*by alternative dispute solution skills*” and can confine or limit conflict; settlement is “*by authoritative and legal processes*” and can be imposed by elites. By contrast, “*conflict resolution means terminating conflict by methods that are analytical and that get to the root of the problem. Conflict resolution, as opposed to mere management or ‘settlement’, points to an outcome that, in the view of the parties involved, is a permanent solution to a problem*” (1991: 72). This implies that one has to involve the main community actors in the search for accommodation, and that there can be no settlement without taking their aspirations into account.

This approach has also proven that policy-makers and NGOs, while devising peace programmes, have to take into account the identities (positive and negative) of the actors implicated in these conflicts, their memories and visions of the past and of the conflict (Volkan, 1988), but also their states of mind, such as the ethnic victimisation (Montville, 1990).

By focusing on the actors and their opinions, on their means and repertoires of action (WP4), on the policies set up in order to solve the community conflicts, as well as on a monitoring system that assesses the evolutions of these conflicts in relation to the peace programmes and to the process of European integration, the PEACE-COM project has therefore been aiming at questioning and refining the main findings of existing research on community conflicts, and on conflict resolution.

### ***3.2. Research Design***

As most community conflicts, in Europe as well as in other parts of the world, are multicausal and multidimensional, the PEACE-COM project has used an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from several disciplines of the social sciences. An historical approach has been necessary to promote a comprehensive understanding of conflicts and of their historical dynamics; an economical approach amongst other things to assess the relative deprivation of communities, and the effects of peace programmes; a juridical and political approach to study the institutional arrangements and the political scenes which are often at the forefront of these conflicts; a sociological perspective to investigate the social dynamics; a religious, cultural and symbolic approach has also been useful to understand the imagined aspects of these conflicts. PEACE-COM has thus promoted a truly interdisciplinary research, in order to allow for a global understanding of these complex situations.

While each discipline admittedly has its favourite methods, comparability of methodology and data thereby obtained remains a priority. This has been ensured by a double link:

- first by the use of a common typology of conflicts, which has been constructed during the first part of the project; this common typology has facilitated the exchanges between partners and disciplines, by providing a framework for analysis;
- secondly, by a common focus on actors, and in particular on those actors whose actions or discourses have an effect on the evolution or on the shape of these conflicts. This theoretical standpoint, by providing anchorage points, has ensured the avoidance of essentialism.

In terms of analytical methods and techniques, the consortium has used both qualitative and quantitative social scientific methods:

- *Text Analysis:* a documentary analysis of the actors' discourses (party programmes, iconography, NGOs brochures, etc.) has been undertaken, as well as a review of academic literature, the press and policy documents. The written material combined with interviews has provided the basis for a complete description of actors' strategies in the cases studied.
- *Interviews:* The project has conducted qualitative interviews with some 150 key actors of the respective conflicts. The sample reflects as even a spread as is possible across political parties, journalists, activists of Non Governmental Organisations, etc.
- *Survey:* The PEACE-COM project has also conducted an elite survey, which has been administered to more than 250 respondents, including political actors, local business elites, government officials, activists of Non Governmental Organisations and journalists. Each actor has received a questionnaire, concerning his or her personal and professional career, his or her organisation's or institution's strategies or actions, and his or her readiness to conflict resolution and dialogue. This survey has therefore provided comparative data

on actors, strategies and policies, which has been used throughout the whole project.

On the other hand, the consortium has been involved in a concerted effort to apply innovative comparative methods to reach more authoritative comparative conclusions. To reach this goal, the consortium has resorted to a “systematic comparative case analysis” design and specific innovative techniques, in order to systematically compare the 12 cases on which some qualitative and quantitative data has been gathered (see above), as follows:

- synthetic description of each one of the 12 cases;
- “reduction” of these 12 cases to a complex set of “condition” variables (different operationalisations : dichotomous, multivalued and “fuzzy” [fuzzy-set scores]) and an “outcome” variable (the dependent variable). Several outcomes have been considered (such as the type of conflict, the move toward conciliation or increased conflict, and the ultimate outcome of the conflict: compromise/accommodation or violence/war).
- systematic analysis of the 12 cases thus operationalised, with the help of a set of innovative comparative techniques: Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), and more precisely crisp-set QCA (csQCA) and multi-value QCA (mvQCA), using a specific software (TOSMANA). These are non-statistical methods currently developed by an interdisciplinary team of European and U.S. methodologists and social scientists, which allow one to logically minimize a certain number of cases. Each case consists of a configuration linking an outcome variable and a certain number of conditions. They are particularly well-suited for the analysis of an intermediate number of cases (“small N”) that does not allow one to resort to either purely qualitative or quantitative tools. They are holistic, in that they allow one to take into account the complexity and uniqueness of each individual case. On the other hand, they are also analytic and they allow one to ultimately identify “patterns of multiple conjunctural causation”, in a logical and holistic manner, and to determine “the number and character of the different causal models that exist among comparable cases” (Ragin 1987). They are a powerful heuristic tool as they can be used for several purposes: summarizing data, producing typologies, elaborating new theories or models, but also testing existing theories, models and hypotheses.
- Qualitative re-interpretation of the 12 cases on the basis of the “minimal formulae” (which identify “key causal conjunctures” that lead to a specific outcome) produced by these methods; collective discussion between the case specialists.



### ***3.3. Case Studies***

Given the large number of community conflicts, and their diversity, the PEACE-COM project did not aim to cover all case of conflicts in Europe and in its vicinity. A deliberate selection was made, following criteria of diversity and geographical scope. Moreover, case was taken to select conflicts displaying different social functions. A conflict is not always a bad thing, especially when non-violent, for example, because it can make easier the expression of opinions of minority groups, which would otherwise not have been mentioned. On the other hand, consensus, or generalised apathy, is not always a good thing and indeed may be worse than conflict. Therefore, our selection has taken also into account this disintegrating or integrating role of conflicts.

PEACE-COM has thus covered the following twelve case studies:

- Northern Ireland;
- The Basque Country;
- Cyprus;
- The Francophone - Flemish conflict in Belgium;
- The Central European Roma conflict in Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic;
- The Slovene autochthonous minority in Austria;
- South Tyrol;
- The Russian Minority in Estonia;
- Corsica;
- Kosovo;
- Sandzak;
- Vojvodina.

The cases have therefore been selected to ensure geographical and cultural diversity (throughout parts of Europe: East-West-North-South, Latin v/s non-Latin cases, etc.). But above all, we have been careful to include conflicts presenting various shapes, both in terms of issues at stake, and of levels of violence. The aim was therefore twofold:

- first, to cover *all phases of the full cycle of conflicts*, from political mobilisation, to the eruption of violence, and to conflict resolution., because it seems that if we had not included cases where violence is not present, or where actors have given up violent means of action, we would not have been able to fulfil some of our major objectives, namely on the one hand to explain the emergence or not of physical violence in cases of communal opposition, and on the second hand to observe and assess the successes or failures of accommodation policies; we have therefore included in our study enough cases in order to cover all five stages proposed by the

Interdisciplinary Research Program on Causes of Human Rights Violations (PIOOM)<sup>1</sup> at Leiden University:

- *peaceful stable situations*, with a ‘high degree of political stability and regime legitimacy’, where a distinct minority coexists peacefully with a majority whose cultural background and heritage differs largely, as in the case of the Slovene minority in Austria, of Roma in Central Europe, or of the Russian minority in Estonia;
  - *political tension situations*, with ‘growing levels of systemic strain and increasing social and political cleavages, often along factional lines’, as in the case of Vojvodina. Sometimes these conflicts currently take or have taken in the recent past – since the second World War – a violent form, without causing human casualties, as in the case of South Tyrol, but there are also cases where the coexistence of several communities with distinct identities does not entail any specific form of physical violence, as in the case of Belgium;
  - situations which present or have recently presented the features of a *violent political conflict*, where tension has escalated to ‘political crisis’ inasmuch as there has been an ‘erosion of political legitimacy of the national government’ and / or a ‘rising acceptance of violent factional politics’ with a number of people killed in any one calendar year up to a hundred. It is the case of the Basque Country, of Cyprus, of Sandzak or, before 1975, of Corsica;
  - *low intensity conflicts*, where there is ‘open hostility and armed conflict among factional groups, regime repression and insurgency’ with 100-999 people killed in any one year; it was the case of Northern Ireland up until the end of the eighties;
  - finally, *high intensity conflicts*, where there is an ‘open warfare among rival groups and /or mass destruction and displacement of sectors of the civilian population’, with 1000 or more people killed; it was the case of Kosovo during the nineties.
- second, to cover the widest range of dimensions and issues these conflicts can present. The literature on conflicts has indeed identified numerous issues whose presence seems to be concomitant to – or to foster? – conflict situations. Such is the case of language, of culture, or of territory. But in order to assess the real importance of these issues – for instance, according to a whole part of the literature, religion is a major factor explaining the appearance of violence – and, perhaps even more importantly, the links that may tie these various issues, we needed to cover as many occurrences of these issues as possible. This task has been made easier by the fact that all the conflicts chosen display several dimensions at the same time, and some of them have displayed nearly all key dimensions over a certain period of time. For instance, at the root of the Northern Irish conflict lies a

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<sup>1</sup> PIOOM was hosted by the Centre for the Study of Social Conflict at Leiden University, and supported by the United Nations in the framework of its programme on conflict prevention. For a discussion of this typology, see:

<http://www.pcr.uu.se/conferenses/Euroconference/paperjongman.doc>

colonial situation, where access to citizenship was denied to a community identified through its religious allegiance; this religious division itself overlapped strong economic disparities and cultural differences, which were instrumentalized by a political elite. Nowadays, the colonial or citizenship issues have nearly completely disappeared from the political scene, but the politicization of the divisions they created, remain. We are therefore facing situations where present issues and dimensions are tightly linked to past issues and dimensions, but also to other current issues and dimensions. This is this highly complex web of interactions that we aimed to understand, with a specific focus, for practical reasons, on the post-World War Two period. Our ambition has been to identify key connections and patterns, in order to specify, at a later stage, specific models of community conflicts in Europe.

### ***3.4. Conflict Dynamics***

#### **3.4.1. Identifying Conflict Dimensions**

The causes of the conflicts, peaceful or not, opposing communities in Europe, are not immediately obvious, as some cultural, ethnic or religious groups seem to integrate smoothly in some cases, but not in others. In this perspective, one of the main aims of the PEACE-COM project was to go more in-depth into situations where conflict is sometimes open, sometimes blurred, and to propose general hypotheses on the conflicts that appear or endure nowadays in Europe, and, by overcoming the historical and descriptive complexity of each case, propose a conceptualization of the main dimensions that characterize them. We have thus been seeking patterns of variations across case studies that may be seen by each specialist as unique.

Authors advance conflicting theories on the emergence of community conflicts in Europe, putting the stress on different factors, reasons or dimensions, as key explanations, with various combination possibilities. For the sake of clarification, we have classified these explanations in 16 main groups, which may in some authors' books and articles in fact overlap or even merge, or are sometimes divided into further categories. Each of them has to be read in relation to the others, as none of them is able to provide an overall and encompassing explanation for the emergence or endurance of conflicts. Each of them simply stresses one or two factors as the main "cause" of community conflicts, without denying that some other factors may also intervene.

First, there are conflicts that can be mainly related to **cultural dimensions**, understood in a very broad manner. These dimensions can be divided in three main clusters:

- the first cluster deals with the **religious dimension**. Some authors argue for instance that religiously divided societies are more prone to intense conflicts than countries where people have conflicting claims to resources based on interest groups or language divisions. However, the case studies that have been used here show that no straightforward conclusion should be taken concerning the real impact of religious differences, without a closer look at the real influence of clergy and faith in the conflict, and at the extent to which actors in conflict frame it in religious terms. The Sandžak case for instance shows that it is in fact the pre-existing conflict between ethnic groups, and more specifically between Muslim Bosnians and Orthodox Serbs, that has increased the religious consciousness of the population. This growing faith in turn generates its own dynamic of estrangement and distancing from other groups. Even in cases where the conflict is framed, both by internal and external actors, in religious terms, religion is not necessarily the main issue or cause of the conflict. In Northern Ireland for instance, the conflict is not about religions themselves, about the virginity of Mary, the cult of the Saints or the power of the Pope, but it is rather an indication of the cultural significance of religion as a marker of identity.

- the second cluster focuses on **identity conflicts**; in this perspective, conflicts can be described as oppositions between communities, which relate to primordial affiliations, in the sense that community is supposed to pre-exist any other kind of affiliations and feelings. These primordialist representations also focus on the importance of the past, of traditions and of myths, in the making of the community; conflicts are thought to arise

between groups which are long-standing rivals. In almost all cases, the stress put by a group on its identity allows for its differentiation from the rest of the world. However, the virulence of these 'narcissisms of minor differences' can be more or less important. In the Basque country for instance, there is a strong insistence on the Basque collective identity, even by moderate nationalists, but which is not necessarily accompanied by a denigration discourse on other groups' identities; this identity discourse nevertheless legitimizes a confrontational attitude towards the central Spanish state. Another example is found in Kosovo, where antipathies are not very old, but are depicted as such, and justify aggressive attitudes towards the other community.

- a third cluster of conflict dimensions stresses the importance of **linguistic differences**. This element of linguistic opposition is present in nearly all cases studied, even if it is not always the main current issue or cause of the conflict situation. In some instances, as in the case of the Slovene minority in Carinthia, it however seems that linguistic cleavages are in fact the main explanation for the maintenance of group boundaries, and for suspicious attitudes, which however are more the fact of German speaking nationalists than of Slovenes themselves. The South Tyrol case study also presents very interesting features regarding this linguistic question. Language indeed corresponds to a deep division inside the society, which has sometimes had violent implications, but which has nevertheless been overcome through the setting up of consociational premises. In this case, language is used as an ethnic mark, and linguistic divisions have given birth to "parallel societies" which are largely autonomous. However, in spite of a recent history of violent confrontations, this cleavage is not accompanied by a process of identity withdrawal and of victimization.

Another type of community conflicts taking place in Europe can be defined through their **socio-economic and geographical dimensions**.

- first, there are conflicts related to **socio-economic factors**, with differences in economic and social developments inside a state's boundaries, in other words when modernization and development follow uneven patterns on the territory, or when a specific ethnic, linguistic or cultural group is economically and socially discriminated against. What is striking is that both economic discrimination and privilege can politicize or reinforce the political relevance of cultural and community identities. Indeed, territories which are wealthier than the rest of the country are very often those where regionalist or autonomist feelings are stronger. This can be explained by the fact that these regions contribute more than they receive from the national State. These kinds of arguments are very clear in Belgium in the discourses of the Vlaams Belang, for example. But the counter argument, for economically disadvantaged regions or groups, seems valid too. For instance the feeling, established or not, of being or having been despised or treated unfairly in the past by the central state gives very often a strong basis for opposing the state or the specific cultural group that embodies it. The case of Roma in Czech and Slovak Republics illustrates another socio-economic pattern: Roma have been for centuries victims of discrimination, segregation and social exclusion, organized at state level, and legitimized by popular prejudices and stereotypes. Nowadays, some state policies aim at correcting these discriminations, but due both to the persistence of negative attitudes at the grass-root level, and to the scattering of Roma communities, improvements are very slow to come about. One of the striking features of this case study is thus the relatively low level of political

mobilisation on the Roma side, in spite of the numerous grievances on which political organizations could build on.

- second, there are conflicts linked to **demographic factors**. Population shifts and demography indeed play an important role in national conflicts in two main instances, which may overlap: first, when important waves of migration modify the demographic balance of a specific geographic zone, migrants or refugees can be seen as invaders who jeopardize political structures as well as political cultures, especially if they are claiming rights for political access as shows the case of Vojvodina, where the Hungarian minority is gaining political weight, develops its opposition to the Serbian government. Second instance where demographic criteria are important, when two or several communities of comparable sizes share the same political space; in this case, as demography can be one of the basis for the sharing of political power and positions – especially in democratic societies – any change, and in particular any increase in the demographic weight of one of the communities, induces changes in the political landscape as a whole. These changes are often seen as a threat by the other communities, who wish to retain their positions and privileges. An illustration of this kind of situation can be found in Northern Ireland, where two communities fight over the future of the region. Despite the fact that demographic patterns do not suggest any significant political change before at least two decades, they have been highly politicized, and demonstrate again that demography is always highly politicized in divided societies.

- third, most conflicts seem to be about **territory**. Indeed, the territorial dimension is decisive in nearly all the cases studied here, and sometimes diverging territorial claims are even at the roots of the conflict itself. The cases covered here show that territory can be at the centre of the conflict whether it is its symbolic or material signification that is stressed, or both. In the Kosovo's case, there is a strong link, at the discursive and symbolic levels, between territory and identity, which are considered as non negotiable and absolute values, and which make accommodation and peace settlements difficult. Another example can be found in the Cyprus's case, which presents completely different patterns, as communities are nowadays living on different parts of the island; control of territory has been here referring to complex geopolitical issues, which are accompanied by local and 'smaller' territorial issues, whose complexity is as high. When territory is vested with a symbolic and emotional meaning, as it is the case for lost properties here, physical separation of communities, in an attempt to deal with territory as a material object only, proves insufficient to bring about peaceful coexistence. The use of the territorial rhetoric by the conflicting parties illustrates, both at the internal and external level, the "*reversal of the principal of territoriality*" explained by Bertrand Badie (1995: 102 & following). Badie identifies the "*end of the territories*" as the main cause of challenging of the national-state model. Territory is becoming the principal marker of identity, the natural prolongation of one group's identity, erasing the political ideal of the Nation-State. Nation-States are being challenged by territorial claims. In terms of issue, the territorial dimension refers to the challenging of the State's sovereignty, and can be divided into two main components. The first component refers to the claims made by a community within a Host-State. They can be either claims for *autonomy*, in a broad meaning, and as a challenge to the domestic sovereignty or claims for *Secession*, closely linked the principle of self-determination. The difference between autonomy and secession comes from the challenge to territorial integrity. Autonomy, as a technique of internal organization, is an elastic concept that may refer to different degrees and forms of autonomy (federalism, consociation and so on). But

autonomy does not suppose any challenge to State's sovereignty and supposed the maintenance of allegiance to central authority. At the same time, it is true that the recent development of paradiplomatic relations by regions constitute defies States' sovereignty. Secession, on the other hand, constitutes a direct challenge to international legal and Westphalian sovereignty because secessionist movements defy the principle of territorial integrity such as in Transnistria. The final aim of secession is the grant of international legal and Westphalian sovereignty. But State's sovereignty can be also challenged by the external territorial claims, mainly irredentist claims, made by external conflicting parties such as Diasporas, bordering communities or kin-States. This is the third component of the territorial dimension. Irredentism, as we understand it, encompasses both territorial and cultural claims. For instance, Hungary's politics with respect to Hungarians living outside of Hungary's territory may be seen as a kind of interference into internal affairs. Our research therefore calls for a further qualification of the territorial dimension either as autonomist claims, secessionist claims, or irredentism.

**Political dimensions** make up a third type of community conflicts. They can in turn be divided in four types.

- The first type is **centre-periphery conflicts**. Here conflicts are the result of power relations between the central – or 'foreign' – state and a specific region or territory, which tries to gain or regain more independence and / or rights. In fact, some examples like the Corsican one show that regionalist claims can at least partly be understood as *reactions* against centralist policies, and that feelings of specificity as well as desire for a specific status did not always pre-exist. But completely diverging processes are at play in other cases like the Basque case, where a multi-secular tradition of self-government exists, and where the Spanish State, since the democratic transition, has granted the Basque country an autonomy status. Here it is the national policies regarding the state structures that can be understood as reactions to autonomist claims.

- A second type of conflicts arises when there are troubles related to the **access to the political scene and to citizenship**. In countries characterized by the strong nationalism of their majorities, there is indeed a tendency to give to minorities only rights that are thought as non-threatening in the eyes of the majority, and to grant a preferred status to the majority. Such is the case of Estonia, whose population, after its declaration of independence in 1991, comprised a one third minority of Russian speakers. Restricted access to citizenship is one characteristic of Roma's situation too, especially in Czech and Slovak Republics, where the difficult access to citizenship has not led to political mobilization, but rather to a specific social behaviour reinforcing the estrangement of Roma from the society they live in. It has also generated several waves of migration towards western countries.

- A third cause of political conflicts can be found in the **role of elites**. Here conflicts are understood as a result of identity manipulation efforts by political entrepreneurs, whose main goal is actually to gain or retain power. In that sense, elites "construct" the conflict in order to serve their own interest, and they manipulate group identities. They thus drive the conflict 'from above'. In Belgium for instance, political elites are the major defenders of community cultures and identities. In Corsica, the process of elite manipulation is even

more obvious, as only a small minority of the population favours the independentist option put forward by nationalist leaders.

- A fourth political cause has to do with **security dilemma** dimension, which takes into account the issue of the level of violence, and threat of violence, in a given conflict. Autonomist and separatist feelings, or conflicting attitudes towards other groups are said to develop when a group prefers to secede rather than to participate in the regime and possibly weaken its position. Conflicting attitudes can also develop when a group's access to political scene is hampered by various legislations and procedures set up by the central state; these measures leave the group with few other options for expressing its feelings and claims than protest and opposition. In the Sandžak case, the attitude of the Serbian central state towards the Bosnian minority has clearly led to its radicalization, to its estrangement as well as to its tendency to look elsewhere – in Bosnia-Herzegovina – for protection. Another radically different example is given by the case of the Slovene minority in Austria. Here mobilization derives from the reluctance, on the side of the German-speaking majority, to allow the political representation of Slovenes. It is the majority that feels threatened by the minority's demands;

- finally, according to our findings, **accommodation policies**, and actors initiating and implementing them, should be considered as a full conflict dimension, impacting on the shape, evolution, escalation and de-escalation of conflicts. In the Kosovo case for instance, it is the implementation of confrontational accommodation policies during the eighties that has clearly led to an escalation of the conflict. In some other instances like in the Northern Irish case with the 1998 Peace Agreements, accommodation policies have managed to bring about a significant de-escalation of the conflict. For obvious reasons, we have included the “accommodation policies” dimension in the political clusters, but it is worth keeping in mind that they may be initiated and implemented by external actors.

Finally, some conflicts in Europe are linked to so-called **external factors**.

- There are conflicts linked to **decolonization processes, and to the aftermath of WWI and WWII**. For instance, decolonization factors lead to the disintegration of states or of political structures that used to provide a link between different cultural groups, as it is the case in Cyprus. The impact of colonization in Cyprus has been particularly interesting and strong during the first half of the 20th century, as it has generated diverging affiliations and political options on the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot sides. Another kind of configuration can be found in Estonia, where the Russian occupation and the enforced russification of the Estonian society were replaced by policies of ‘re-estonianisation’ of the society which are supported at the popular level. Many conflicts can also be analysed as “rest-overs” or “unfinished business” from the first and or the second world wars.

- Most authors working on nationalism or ethnic phenomena also stress the importance of **globalization processes** for understanding the rise of sub-state nationalisms, regionalisms or community-based mobilizations (Guibernau, 1999). For many authors communal opposition is indeed often linked to globalization and transition to market economy, for instance in Eastern Europe. Globalization and liberalization are seen as “triggers” for cultural conflicts. Economic reforms and institutional transformations bring about new rules and norms as well as power shifts, and break old “social contracts” on which the distribution of resources were grounded.



- We also argue (and this will also be documented in the next section), that due to the specificity of our sample of case studies which were chosen in the European Union or its vicinity, **Europeanisation** should also be included as a full “external” dimension of the conflicts covered here. This impact of European integration is particularly clear in the case of Cyprus for instance, but can also be traced in many other cases like the Northern Irish one.
- Closely related to the question of decolonization, **neighbouring countries** often play an important role in enacting or sustaining national conflicts. They are sometimes competing for territorial control and are thus favouring allegiance of one of the communities in opposition; or they can be used by communities in conflict themselves as a way of legitimizing their secessionist claims. The case of South Tyrol perfectly illustrates the case of a territory disputed by two bordering countries, Italy and Austria, and whose fate has long been depending on other factors than the will of its population.
- Finally, the existence of **bordering communities** and/or the presence of **Diasporas** coming from neighbouring countries can also be an important dimension of conflicts, as these neighbouring countries can feel entitled to intervene and intercede in favour of the members of their diasporas. Even if this involvement is not very important, it can cause a state of tension in the wider population, and make relations between neighbouring countries more difficult, as shows the case of the Hungarian diaspora in the Vojvodina region.

The list of conflict dimensions elaborated in PEACE-COM thus looks as follows:

Identity Dimensions	Religious differences
	Identity Claims
	Culture / Language
Socio-Economic and Geographic Dimensions	Socio-Economic Differences
	Population Shifts
	Territory (Autonomy, Secession, Irredentism)
Political Dimensions	Centre-Periphery
	Political Access and Access to Citizenship
	Elite Manipulation
	Security Dilemma
	Accommodation Policies
“External” Dimensions	Decolonisation, Aftermath WWI & WWII
	Globalisation
	Europeanisation
	Motherland/ Fatherland, Neighbouring Countries
	Diasporas, Bordering Communities

According to our findings, several dimensions appear to be more salient than others: such is the case of cultural and linguistic differences, of identity questions, of territory, of socio-economic issues, or of neighbouring states and bordering communities. This of course does not tell us anything really new about community conflicts in Europe, apart from the fact that none of these dimensions seems enough in itself to explain either the emergence or the persistence of conflicts. Indeed, in all cases covered by this project, several dimensions interact and have to be taken into account in order to understand what is really going on. In addition, what is clear is that these various dimensions have very different implications and meanings on the ground, both for the actors and in terms of conflict resolution. In other words, saying for instance that socio-economic issues are essential in a conflict can both point towards discriminating policies generating mistrust, and to socio-economic differentials accused by a favoured community of hampering its own development.

On the other hand, several dimensions or even paradigms that are often depicted as main causes of community conflicts do not seem to present a real heuristic value. Such is the case of decolonization or globalization paradigms, that are too general and oversimplifying, or that, as far as decolonization schemes are concerned, have simply lost part of their relevance in nowadays Europe; in the same manner, religious factors or elite manipulation do not seem to help us understanding many conflict situations, even though they admittedly are present in a number of situations.

Despite the fact that most of these dimensions are often presented by conflict actors themselves, as well as by many experts, as explanatory paradigms, it seems to us that some of them, rather than explaining the reasons for conflicts to emerge, in fact describe one of their characteristics, as being the most salient or visible. In other words, they focus rather on conflict issues than on conflict causes. Descriptions are certainly useful, but they surely are not enough to understand what is really going on. For instance, the fact of denying citizenship to a whole section of the Russian speaking population in Estonia did not cause the conflict – it is rather one expression of it – but has certainly become a central conflict issue; the same can be said about fertility rates in Northern Ireland, which have gradually become an important issue in the conflict opposing Catholics and Protestants, but are certainly not at its roots. The reverse can be applied to theories that focus on the role of elites or of globalization in the emergence of conflicts: while they clearly provide explanations on the emergence or persistence of conflicts, they do not say anything on their actual issues, on what conflicts are about. For instance, saying that political elites play a fundamental role in the conflict in Belgium does not tell us anything about the real content of the opposition between Walloons and Flemish communities.

Some dimensions presented here, however, can be interpreted both as causes and as issues. Such is the case of religion, language, identity, socio-economic disparities, territory... In this perspective, it seems that a good understanding of conflicts requires that we pay attention *both* to historical causes and current issues, as complex interaction processes are at play between them.

Another complexity lies in what we could call the shifting temporality of causes: one of the main characteristics of most of these community conflicts is indeed that they feed themselves constantly, they are self-perpetuating, start-up conditions giving birth to new conditions and paradigms in the framework of which new grievances can develop. This peculiarity poses a great challenge to analysis, because some processes which are rightly pointed out as the root causes of a conflict, like, say, colonization in Ireland, may be a lot less relevant than other dimensions for characterizing or even understanding its current shape. This raises another question: where do we have to stop in our search back in time for conflict 'causes'? One way of dealing with this problem is to retain only historical causes that help us to understand current issues of conflicts, and to which actors still refer. In other words, confronting the discourses of actors, with those of historians and other academics, can be useful in order to assess the salience of an issue, or the relevance of a cause, how ever far it may take us back in time.

Perhaps even more importantly, research conducted in PEACE-Com has shown that the impact of these various dimensions varies according to the specific settings of the conflict, and in particular according to the other dimensions they are interacting with. In other words, saying for instance that religion plays a central role in a given conflict does not necessarily mean that it has a strong escalating or de-escalating impact, and that this

conflict is bound to be violent, or on the contrary of a limited scale. These variations linked to the specificities of each conflict have been taken into account in the setting up of the monitoring system (see section 3.7. of this report).

Significantly, there are strong variations in the appraisal of the relevance of dimensions, according to the person (expert or conflict actor) who is being asked, a discrepancy which illustrates clearly that most of these conflicts are also conflicts about what the conflict is about. However, some dimensions seem to be less controversial than others: such is the case of religious differences and of culture/language differences. One can make the hypothesis that these dimensions are less contentious because they refer to “obvious” or highly visible cleavages between populations, that are easily grasped by both actors on the ground and experts. On the contrary, some dimensions like elite manipulation, political access and centre-periphery cleavage are more contentious, a fact which is not really surprising as these dimensions are political ones. They are therefore more likely to be the focus of diverging opinions.

On average, actors in conflict give more importance than experts to most dimensions, especially identity claims, socio-economic differences, territory, centre-periphery cleavage and elite manipulation. This finding is more difficult to explain, as it may be related to various elements: first, as we have just seen, actors in conflict often disagree on what the conflict is about, and therefore put the focus on diverging explanations or features of the conflict, whereas experts, even if they do not always agree, tend to stick to a few key explanations; second, there may be a scientific bias – possibly inferred by the methodology used in PEACE-COM – towards the reduction of the conflict to a series of “key causes”, to the detriment of other causes seen as secondary, even if they seem highly salient in the eyes of the actors on the ground; third, experts and actors on the ground may differ in their understanding of what a “relevant dimension” is. In other words, actors on the ground may have mistaken “relevant” for “present”.

This discrepancy between actors’ and experts’ appraisal of the situation on the ground poses several challenges both for future research and for the setting up of peace programmes, especially because most accommodation policies deal with what experts judge as the most important issues in each conflict. If there is a strong divergence between the experts’ judgement, and the opinions held by the actors on the ground, then the policy is more likely to fail. In addition, PEACE-COM as well as other research projects has shown that taking the actors’ views into account is crucial both for the understanding and the resolution of conflicts. Most of these conflicts are also interpretation conflicts, and it is quite obvious that the actors’ perceptions, even if biased in the eyes of experts, are to be taken seriously. PEACE-COM results therefore plead for a systematic integration of actors’ views and perceptions in the conception and implementation of peace programmes, which should also be more bottom-up, as underlined in the next section.

It is also interesting to note that the interpretation of some case studies covered by the project is more contentious than others. According to the case study at stake, there are between 4 and 9 dimensions which are assessed differently by actors and experts. The apparently less contentious cases are the Belgian and Cypriot cases, with only 4 dimensions interpreted differently by actors and experts, whereas the Sandzak and Vojvodina cases display 9 contested dimensions. Explaining such a trend is not easy, but one may think that

these last two conflicts are also those which are the less documented amongst our sample. They can also be depicted as “fuzzy” situations, where the positions of the actors on the ground are so dependent on external variables (esp. the future status of Kosovo and the negotiations for an EU accession).

In any case, reasons for divergences should be the focus of future research, as they may explain controversies and unexpected consequences of policies designed to accommodate these conflicts. The in-depth scrutiny of our case studies also shows that some dimensions pointed out in the literature as main causes for conflicts in nowadays Europe are not necessarily considered as such both by players on the ground, and by experts. In addition, some dimensions that are traditionally depicted as “external”, such as globalisation or motherland/fatherland are in fact more or less internalised, because they impact on positions and representations held by actors in conflict, and sometimes even become actors of the conflict. For instance, it is clear that Europeanisation and accommodation policies are actual dimensions of conflicts and ought to be treated as such: not only can accommodation policies occasionally contribute to conflict escalation when policies happen to have counter-productive results, but their absence can cause conflict escalation in some cases.

### **3.4.2. The Impact of Accommodation Policies on the conflict cycle**

Firstly, it is important to note that accommodation policies are supposed to have a de-escalating effect on conflicts: however, accommodation policies do not always accommodate. In many instances, accommodation policies have led to an intensification or an escalation of a given conflict, for instance by polarising or radicalising the actors on the ground, as shown in the case of Kosovo, or of Northern Ireland during the second half of the seventies. In some other cases, the effect of accommodation policies is at best disputable. Moreover, the absence or presence of accommodation policies is also a major factor explaining the evolution of a given conflict. In many instances, the absence of accommodation policies has provoked an escalation of the conflict, while well-designed and encompassing policies have obviously had a soothing effect. In addition, the implementation of accommodation policies provokes a repositioning of the actors on the ground, either vis-à-vis the actor(s) or organisation(s) implementing the accommodation policy, or vis-à-vis the content and aims of the policy itself, or both. In this perspective, many conflicts cannot be understood without taking into account the actors involved in these policies, like, say, the UN in Cyprus or the OSCE in Estonia.

Data gathered through the various PEACE-COM work-packages show that some types of accommodation policies are more likely to become part of the conflict cycle than others. Such is the case of intervention and peace keeping operations, but also of negotiation and mediation policies. Initially, intervention and peace keeping operations were meant to provide the conditions for establishing a ceasefire, and to monitor and report on each side’s military activity. They introduced buffer zones, demilitarized areas, and sometimes disarmament of belligerents. But international peace-keeping operations have changed drastically in recent years, with a trend toward operations that blur the distinctions between peace-keeping, postwar societal reconstruction, and forceful intervention. To the traditional problems associated with peace-keeping (choice and timing of operations, perceived partiality of intervening forces, cost and dangerousness of missions, etc.), new challenges

have therefore emerged, testifying for the new, more ambitious mission of peace-keeping operations, such as a higher risk of freezing conflict situations, an increased cost of missions, and a change of the political balance inside the countries torn apart by war, peace keeping forces becoming part of the conflict pattern. In a series of cases covered by PEACE-COM, it is for instance difficult to say whether the “freezing” of the situation (as in the case of Cyprus) and the impossibility to bring about a lasting settlement is actually due to the international intervention, or to the belligerents themselves, or both.

In the same manner, negotiation and mediation policies can also become part of the conflict patterns, because they can be instrumentalized by some political actors, who manoeuvre in order to gain as much as possible. The main danger lies in violence, which can interfere with process at all stages, during pre-negotiations when belligerents try to optimise their negotiating positions, during negotiations when necessary compromises generate the emergence of dissident groups and spoilers, and of course after negotiations, from the part of parties opposing the peace treaty.

In the same perspective, some external actors initiating or implementing these accommodation policies are more likely to be considered by actors on the ground as actors of the conflict itself. Such is the case of motherlands/ fatherlands: Turkey and Greece in Cyprus, Albania in Kosovo, BiH in Sanzjak, Ireland and Great Britain in Northern Ireland, to quote only but a few examples. It is also the case of some international organisations such as the UN in Cyprus or in Kosovo. This trend is particularly obvious when the initiative of the implementation of accommodation policies has been taken by these external actors, whose interference has not been sought for by local actors. Interestingly, the European Union in itself generates on average less negative reactions than other international organisations, and remains seen as an external actor by players on the ground, as shown in the example of Northern Ireland or the Basque Country, where it is mostly praised for its funding programmes.

In existing literature on conflicts, accommodation policies are treated as external factors to the conflict, as independent variables that adapt to the conflict situation. PEACE-COM research shows that the adaptation works both ways, and that conflicts, or more precisely actors in conflict, adapt their actions, discourses and claims to accommodation policies too. In that sense, accommodation policies affect the shape, type and evolution of conflicts.

More precisely, research undertaken in the PEACE-COM project has provided information on the following issues:

First, on the issue of the content and style of accommodation policies implemented in the case studies covered by the project. Our results show that the most dealt with areas of intervention are language, education, cultural policy and local governance, while the least dealt with are property rights, regional autonomy, housing policy and signposts. The analysis also reveals a fair distribution between specific, middle-range and encompassing policies, and that it is a confrontational style of policies which prevails, where policies are implemented without the approval of all sides.

Second, on the question of the actors involved in the negotiation and implementation of policies. The questionnaire survey as well as the expert interviews reveal that accommodation policies are in general very institutionalised processes, with a high

involvement of national and regional authorities and governments, and of political parties, even if they are often seen as partial.

Third, on the issue of international initiatives (see also section 3.4.5. of this report). There is an increasing awareness of international efforts among the concerned populations, but the involvement of international actors varies a lot across case studies, with highly internationalised cases such as Cyprus or Kosovo, and cases where internationalisation is much more discrete (Basque Country, Slovene Minority in Austria, Belgium). In addition, there are various paths of internationalisation, depending on whether internationalisation derives from an initiative taken by international organisations or actors themselves, or from the initiatives of local actors, who are looking for outside help, or who think that external pressure will help breaking the deadlock or avoiding further escalation. International actors can contribute to find solutions through their capacity "to step back", see the situation in a more "neutral" way, consider solutions without all the historical complexities linked to it, and bring about a triangulation of the conflict. However for many conflict actors international actors are not able to understand the complexities of the local situation and therefore cannot propose good accommodation initiatives. Many interviewees underlined that an outsider "cannot do the job for us", even if they can create a momentum for solution the country concerned has to take the necessary measures on its own. In addition, most respondents to the questionnaire, as well as most interviewees stated that international intervention should always be accompanied by follow-up measures to ensure its success (acceptance by the population etc.).

Fourth, on the problems encountered during the negotiation and implementation of policies. One of the main problems of accommodation initiatives and policies seems to be the lack of domestic support they manage to convey. This lack of domestic support can often be explained by the difficulties encountered during the implementation phase of these policies, and by the disappointment these difficulties generate among those who had hoped for a quick change. Experts also identified problems in the setting up or implementation of accommodation policies, like the fact that Civil Society is often excluded from accommodation initiatives; in other words, accommodation policies are too "top-down"; this absence of civil society from initiation, negotiation and implementation of accommodation policies partly explains policies are not accepted or understood 'on the ground', which leads to failure. In addition, international attention is very often short-lived, and corresponds to strong escalatory phases or outbursts of violence of a given conflict, when what is needed is a more long-term commitment so as to "quick-fix" solutions and to ensure that they are accompanied by follow up measures in order to succeed.

Fifth, on the configurations explaining success or failure. There are three main cases in which accommodation initiatives or policies have been judged as successful by most conflict actors and experts: 1) when small scale measures are implemented, which are not costly for the given society, which benefit to all sides of the conflict, and which are not seen as major endeavours towards one side or another; 2) when the accommodation initiative or policy is able to bring about a triangularisation of the conflict, in other words when an action or a policy is initiated from the outside, by an external actor which can pose itself, it not as neutral, at least as external to the conflict; 3) when there is a strong effort to include all relevant actors in the negotiation and implementation process, even the most violent ones, and when there is no taboo as to the policy sectors and issues that the accommodation policy can address.

On the contrary, policies are more likely to “fail” (i.e. are not implemented or fail to produce a significant de-escalation of the conflict) when they are biased or perceived as such by a significant number of actors, but also when the answer given to the crisis seems unsuited to the stakes and issues, more particularly when it is too radical and excessive, and finally when stakes and issues of the conflict are so intertwined that it is next to impossible to deal with one specific issue without generating a general uproar. Overall, it is the lack of bottom-up measures and the lack or insufficient inclusion of local actors in the negotiation and implementation of accommodation policies which is the most often quoted when trying to explain policy failures. Local actors have to be included and “empowered” in order to be convinced of the righteousness of a given policy.

### **3.4.3. Assessing the Impact of European integration on Conflicts**

If we go back to the conflict dimensions identified in the first paragraph of this section, we can have a better idea of how European integration can impact on a conflict. The first dimensions we have identified are *cultural dimensions*, encompassing religious differences, identity questions, linguistic and cultural differences. Because the EU is both a framework within which conflicts can be solved, and an actor in conflict resolution, mediation and negotiation, it can certainly positively impact on cultural dimensions, but only in the long term. This means that Europeanisation might impact on conflict identities, first by changing the attitudes of the conflicting elites by socializing them into a European discourse, for instance by modifying their scale of priority, and by putting Europeanisation at the top of their priorities, instead of pursuing their national conflicting aims. It might also impact on conflict identities at the grass root level, by introducing new discursive framework, favouring discussion and negotiation instead of confrontation.

However, the more entrenched conflicting identities are, the longer these transformations are likely to take. And because identities are not frozen, and are on the contrary influenced by the evolution of the context, it is unclear whether European integration might in fact not lead to further identity withdrawals. Many advocates of European integration present the nation state as an outdated reference, and invite EU (future) members to overcome their divisions, and collaborate. As such, a whole part of pro-integration discourses are in total contradiction with the classical political identities of many communities in conflict, as in Cyprus, the Basque Country, Northern Ireland or Kosovo, to take only a few examples. Moreover, there is a possibility that disagreement on the EU’s role in these conflicts might in effect reinforce divisions and tensions which already exist between communities, because there is a portion of these populations that believes that its identity is threatened by the blurring of sovereignty caused by European integration, and by the setting up of cross-border institutions. More often than not, it is the general support of one community for the EU’s involvement (as the Turkish Cypriot community in Cyprus, or the nationalist community in Northern Ireland), and the sometimes extreme scepticism on the part of the other community which creates the possibility that this involvement will only make divisions greater, and reinforce the old cleavages. What is more, European integration is sometimes perceived as threatening the community’s perceived specificities, by including them in a wider political space, where small communities only play a minor role. As a consequence, the impact of European integration on these cultural dimensions can be extremely ambiguous, and in any case very long to come about.



Second, we have identified *socio-economic and geographical dimensions* of national conflicts (including socio-economic differentials, population shifts, territorial and land issues): European integration can certainly impact positively on socio-economic differentials, through the granting of various economic aids. For instance, the European Union actively underpins and monitors the peace process in Northern Ireland; in order to support it, it has raised its subvention through the Structural Funds and, to a lesser extent, to the International Fund for Ireland, and has led since 1994 other initiatives such as the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. However, these efforts have not always been successful, as for example the funds available through the Peace Programme have not yet been completely taken up by local organisations. What is more, it is also important to recall that the socio-economic impact of European integration can only be called ‘positive’ if, and only if, both sides of the conflict benefit from integration. So far, in the case of Cyprus for instance, it is rather the reverse that is happening, with a deepening of the cleavage between the two parts of the island. The isolation of the Northern Cypriot economy widens the social, economic and cultural divide between the two communities, and thus reinforces the importance and meaning of the border. In this perspective, the accession of Southern Cyprus in the EU ‘creates’ a new difficulty, because it makes the reunification of the island even less desirable for Greek Cypriots. This problem does not appear in other cases of ‘border’ conflicts such as in Northern Ireland, where both sides of the border are integrated – and were integrated at the same time – in the European Union. The case of Kosovo displays here again radically different features, as the prospect of benefiting from economic dividends are rather bleak and far distant in time.

As far as territorial issues are concerned, the European Union can provide an incentive for the settlement of territory-related conflicts – as long as communities in conflict give a predominantly material meaning to “territory”, rather than a symbolic and emotional one – and it possibly can help managing the cultural diversity resulting from demographic shifts. But the EU cannot always hamper these demographic shifts and cannot resolve territorial conflicts if territory is first and foremost given a symbolic rather than a material value.

As far as borders are concerned, it is common to read that Europeanization is provoking the blurring of territorial boundaries by the increase in cross-border co-operation and in migrations. Moreover, the nation-states are supposed to lose part of their relevance by the persistence of a European integrationist dynamic. For instance, in the Northern Irish case, it is obvious that, from a European standpoint, it is the whole ‘island of Ireland’, and not the South or the North taken separately, that has a real viability as an economic region. It is also possible to observe an increase in the exchanges between the Northern and the Southern part of the island. But is it enough to say that the border between the Republic of Ireland, and the United Kingdom has lost its relevance? It is worth keeping in mind that this territorial blurring primarily applies to institutionalised and well established nation-states. But most of the national conflicts taking place in Europe are not primarily conflicts about borders, but rather about the cohabitation between rival communities or groups that inhabit the same territory. In other words, the European construction may have some influence on the states’ boundaries, but it is less likely to do so on local territories.

On those economic and territorial dimensions, we can thus say that even though the financial power of the European Union is great, it cannot solve all the problems involved in national conflicts, and it can even sometimes reinforce some of them, for instance by

creating frustration and resentment on the part of those who cannot benefit from these funds, like in Northern Cyprus, or in former Yugoslavia.

*Political dimensions* (including centre-periphery cleavage, political access and access to citizenship, security dilemma, elite manipulation and accommodation policies) make up a third cluster of conflict dimensions: European integration can certainly impact positively on most of them, especially because Europeanisation has a direct effect on access to citizenship, on political opportunities and rights offered to minorities (esp. through the Copenhagen criteria). European integration also has a great influence on political and cultural elite's priorities and ideologies. However, this political and ideological impact is much less obvious on the greatest part of the population, and it is worth remembering here that those who have suffered the most from the conflicts we are talking about, and who have been its main actors, are the same people that have a very vague experience of what Europe could be. The question therefore remains of how much of these changes in the elite co-operation will find an echo in the "masses", and whether European integration will effectively compensate the vested interest that some elites have in the perpetuation of the conflict. On the other hand, from a political philosophy standpoint, European construction has obviously helped to disqualify violence, terrorism and other violent methods traditionally used in community conflicts, and democracy and dialogue have become the only legitimate means to resolve them. The development of the European Union has thus initiated changes not only in the terminology of conflicts, but also in political concepts and substantive priorities.

A last cluster of conflict dimensions deals with so-called *external dimensions* of conflicts (consequences of decolonization, globalization, aftermath of WWI and WWII, as well as involvement of neighbouring countries, diasporas and border communities). Here again, the impact of European integration is difficult to assess. Even if EU officials tend to favour the freezing of current borders, and seem rather reluctant towards the creation of new states (as shows the Kosovo and Montenegro's cases), it certainly can help manage (de)colonization and neighbouring factors, through mechanisms such as joint sovereignty. But here again, the 'joint sovereignty' model can only work if the two sides of the border are part of the Union. In the current configuration, a joint sovereignty scheme in Cyprus seems very unlikely.

Similarly, European integration can help reducing the influence of diasporas, and can help defusing problems created by the existence of border communities, through the opening of borders, and the free movement of persons. But again, this can only work if borders are really open, and if people are really free to settle wherever they wish. This cannot happen if all sides to the conflict we are dealing with are not part of the EU.

Out of this general overview, it seems that European integration can above all have a positive impact on conflicts characterized primarily by the salience of the following dimensions:

- socio economic and geographic dimensions, esp. socio-economic differentials (provided that it doesn't deepen them in the case of an existing border, if both sides are not at the same stage of integration vis-à-vis the Union), and territory (esp. when it is given a material rather than symbolic value, and when communities in conflict inhabit different parts of this territory);

- political dimensions (esp. citizenship and political access, centre/ periphery cleavage and security dilemma);

- external factors: decolonization, neighbouring factors, diasporas and border communities, provided that both sides of the border are integrated, so that joint sovereignty schemes and free movement of people's principles can apply.

On the contrary, its impact should be rather blurred or slow to come about on conflicts where cultural dimensions are salient.

With the exception of North Cyprus, where the EU's role is not seen very positively since the rejection of the Annan Plan, and of Belgium and Austria where interviewees are sceptical vis-à-vis the EU's involvement, there is an overall positive assessment of the EU's role in conflict management and settlement. In most cases, even if no direct intervention is called for, there is an agreement that the EU can impact positively, in an indirect manner, on the evolution of the conflicts. The main paths of influence are:

- Accession process, Copenhagen criteria, legal documents and protection of minorities
- Financial tool and economic integration
- Intervention in mediation processes, launching of political initiatives, role as a guarantor and as an external monitor
- Indirect political and philosophical influence, change in the notions of sovereignty for instance
- Cultural influence through the promotion of multiculturalism

Our research also reveals that many conflict actors are actually calling for an increased EU intervention, either because they believe it can be an effective mediator and break a deadlock, or because of its capacity in state- and civil society- building, and its legal instruments for the protection of minorities.

### **3.4.5. Different patterns of internationalization in community conflicts**

Research undertaken in PEACE-COM has also allowed us to examine the patterns through which community conflicts get internationalised. External interventions and influences can be classified according to the level of intervention and to the degree of institutionalization of actors originating them. Since actors engaged in community conflicts will appeal in different fashions to these actors, this has led us to establishing a typology of such mobilizations. We can distinguish several cases: at the supra-national level, institutional actors include the UNO, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, etc. These are actors whose intervention is most expected in community conflicts, especially violent ones. INGOs and some transnational social movements such as the Women in Black, who have been active in various conflicts, notably Israel/Palestine and Bosnia, also take an active interest in many community conflicts, although with different expectations and outcomes. At the national level, state actors are key players in community conflicts, but non-state actors play also an important role: NGOs come first to mind, yet the role of non-institutional actors such as opinion leaders and public opinions in general are essential. More specifically, within the broad categories of NGO and public opinion, we ought to distinguish diasporas and their community-oriented organizations.

### 3.4.5.1. Key Players of internationalization

#### *Foreign states and supra-national institutions*

Interference in community conflicts may be prompted any of these international actors themselves, who decide for various reasons to take an interest in the conflict. Yet we will see that actors engaged in community conflicts are not entirely foreign to the framing and circulation of such arguments. The most classical case is the one in which such international actors are foreign governments: here the interference takes the form of third-party mediation in community conflicts. Such mediation activity may be welcomed by one or several actors engaged in community conflicts – as in the case of the mediation of the US in the Northern Irish conflict – but it may also be unwanted by local actors, which then tend to see third party mediators as “nosy neighbors” trying to impose their way to handle the conflict in an authoritarian fashion. The role of neighboring countries, as well as the one of key international actors such as the US, is here paramount. There may also be mediators, intervening in order to help reaching settlements – Switzerland or Norway have repeatedly played that part. However, one notices that such involvement is in most cases all but gratuitous: mobilized third party actors are generally either states where diasporas originating from the region in conflict live, or neighboring states. A channel is therefore necessary in order to get such involvement, and such channel may be in itself an artifact produced by stakeholders in the conflict, as the case of the influence of Irish Americans in the Northern Irish conflict shows.

In the case of supra-national institution, a similar pattern can be found. While the roles of the UN in the Cyprus conflict or of the Council of Europe in the Belgian conflict have been essential, their involvement is not the sole product of the concrete situation at stake in the conflict itself: intervention is here not directly linked to such indicators as the death toll. International involvement in community conflicts is much more directly tied to representations of the state where the conflict takes place, and it depends largely on whether the conflict is considered to be an internal affair or not, which equates to a labeling activity performed by international actors about community conflicts. Such labeling is based on various elements which cannot be boiled down to one single dimension. The structural situation in which the conflict is embedded plays a part in its construction, if several Motherlands or Fatherlands are involved in the conflict. For instance, it can be argued that the Northern Irish conflict has been international by essence since the Partition and the creation of the Irish Republic, which has involved a new state actor in the conflict resolution, alongside the UK. In such situations where the conflict does not oppose state institutions to regionalist rebels but actually involves several states, the international dimension appears to automatically supersede interpretations of the conflict as an internal issue.

A last structural factor appears to be also essential in this labeling activity: the capacity of the state where the conflict takes place to solve it in an effective fashion. When the state is weak – for instance because entire parts of the national territory are in fact out of its control –, the internationalization of the conflict is much more likely. In fact, it can be argued that it is easier for other international actors to decide to get involved in community conflicts involving weak states: for instance, international intervention is in this light much

easier in Serbia rather than in the UK, which is perceived to be a strong state capable of handling situations of crisis between communities by itself.

Yet, even these structural factors are not entirely devoid of active agency on the part of actors engaged in the community conflict. Some actors engaged in community conflicts have played an active part in prompting a change in representation which would help international actors to get involved in the conflict, by reframing the conflict from an international issue to an international one. For instance, Northern Irish Republicans have managed to change this representation in order to sustain an involvement of the American government, through the channel of an active mobilization of the Irish American diaspora. Others actors have not been so successful, as the cases of the Corsicans or the Basque show: both are still perceived as an internal issue to be solved by the French and Spanish states respectively. EU institutions do not automatically play an active part in community conflicts in Europe, and in fact their involvement depends on the initiatives made by local actors in order to appeal to them: therefore, such indicator as the Europeanisation of elites engaged in community conflicts is essential in order to understand the role played by the EU integration on conflicts. The attitudes of local political parties are to be considered here, since some of them join groups at the European parliament, even though they may oppose the process of European integration. Such is the case of the very Eurosceptic Unionist DUP in Northern Ireland: the Europeanisation of its modes of action aims at preventing the process of European integration from bringing about a hidden pro-Republican agenda.

#### *NGOs and civil society organizations*

At the level of NGOs and INGOs, the initiative to get involved in community conflicts may stem from the actors themselves, if they perceive the conflict to be extremely severe or very important in political terms. The latter case exists for instance when the conflict is considered to exemplify a situation of injustice or imperialism or colonialism of such scale that non-intervention would be perceived as renouncing essential political principles defended by the organization. Such is the case for instance for the Israel/Palestine conflict, which is considered by most French organizations belonging to the global justice sphere to be an essential aspect of any anti-neoliberal and anti-imperialist struggle. The existence of such representations is obviously limited to a few conflicts and it is correlated to how high they rank in the media agenda, since conflict events which receive a lot of media attention play a triggering role in prompting the intervention of NGOs. However, involvement in a community conflict is conditioned by symbolic and discursive as well as by material aspects, as we will see.

Firstly, only conflicts which can be framed in ways easily generalized in broad political interpretations receive the attention of social movements such as those involved in the global justice sphere. This can be explained by the fact that their involvement in conflicts abroad is in fact considered as a step in a more global action, such as the fight for minority rights, social justice or gender equality. Secondly, involvement in a community conflict abroad is directly tied to the kind of concrete action which can be designed in support of actors engaged in the conflict. For instance, some actors in the global justice movement value direct action above all other means and repertoires of action: for them, it is paramount that their involvement in the conflict should be directly connected to an action in the field. On the other hand, many social movement organizations of NGOs do not

conceive their involvement in the conflict in any other ways than fundraising and publicity given to the cause, by organizing conferences, concerts, etc. These representations act as a limiting factor to the involvement of NGOs in community conflicts, but they also encourage participation in campaigns and direct interventions, when such means of action are available. Here we find again the role of actors engaged in the conflict, who play a key role in framing the conflict in terms suitable to their NGO audiences and in providing opportunities for them to participate in adequate actions.

### *Public opinions*

Lastly, the level of public opinion abroad is essential to consider in order to explain the participation of international actors in community conflicts. The role of the Irish American diaspora has been examined in relation to both the continuation of the Northern Irish conflict – for instance when the connection between Noraid and the financing of the IRA was examined – and the peace process, for instance to explain the commitment of the Clinton administration to facilitating and bringing momentum to the peace process. However, public opinions, including those defined as diasporas, do not take spontaneously an active part in community conflicts in their homeland: here it is important to consider the specific role played by opinion leaders such as journalists, researchers, moviemakers, artists, or religious leaders. Because of their specific position vis-à-vis certain segments of public opinion, they are capable of promoting certain views on the conflict, of raising outrage and to some extent of prompting action with regards to the conflict, especially in the form of fund-raising. The main task which they perform is to create narratives on the conflict which allocate the roles of the good and the villains to specific actors, thereby promoting a biased and emotionally charged view of the conflict situation. By insisting on such *topoi* as the courage of the combatants or the helpless victims, as we will see further, they reconfigure the perceptions that public opinions have of the conflict, and raise awareness of the fact that the conflict is still going on today.

For these reasons, actors engaged in community conflicts often pay close attention to keeping good relations with such opinion leaders. The case of researchers on issues related to Northern Ireland is here particularly clear. While Republicans have managed to secure close relations with leading academic opinion leaders, for instance in the left-oriented part of French academia in the 1970s and 1980s, Unionists have found themselves much more isolated, and have identified it as a weakness in a conflict which they fought was increasingly not only fought locally, but also outside of Ulster and in symbolic fashion. The creation of the Ulster Political Research Group was a tentative answer to this isolation, as it was founded in order to promote research on the political history of Ulster. As a research organization attached to the UDA, a paramilitary Unionist organization, it aims at facilitating research on Unionist politics and at creating political solutions. It is financed by European Peace Programs, which has caused a scandal because of accusations of indirectly financing the UDA. In the same fashion, the tentative to promote research on “Ulster Scots” descendants in the US – that is, the descendants of Northern Irish Protestants – aimed at fostering the same feeling of belonging and connectedness that Irish Americans feel towards Republicans, so far with little success.

Lastly, the care given by actors engaged in community conflicts to promoting a good image of themselves to public opinions is not only reserved to those abroad. There are various

reasons why actors engaged in community conflicts wish to appeal to international supports and internationalize their struggle, including internal ones. In Northern Ireland, references to international supports and partners as well as comparisons with other cases (such as Israel/Palestine) are used in order to legitimate certain political decisions and objectives. Such references can also trigger self-confidence and reinforce beliefs that one's actions are indeed what they should be.

#### **3.4.5.2. Internationalization as a convergence of interests and discourses**

Appeals to internationalization obviously succeed when actors embedded in conflict manage to raise awareness at the international level through discourses that are specifically designed for attracting attention of international or transnational actors. Actors in conflict have thus developed a whole range of possible discourses that can be used in different international settings and scenes, and whose main aim is to lead international or transnational actors to think that it is their best interest or even utmost duty to intervene. Schematically speaking, we can differentiate between five types of discourses, which appeal to different types of international/transnational actors.

Discourses appealing to international institutions are primarily organized around the values of legality, of the rule of law, and of human rights. They appeal to justice and to the setting up of a lawful order that would be in line with the founding texts of the international system, mainly the UN Charter. Some classical principles such as the right to self determination are also used, despite the fact that since the end of the main decolonization process in the 1960s, such appeals have nearly never been successful. However if such discourses may have some impact on international institutions' decisions in situations like the East Timor in Indonesia, actors in community conflicts in Europe have hardly been able to develop them, because the decolonization paradigm (in the framework of which the exercise of the right to self determination has been legitimized) is thought as not being relevant anymore. In other words, separatist or irredentist claims in Europe are mainly interpreted as internal affairs for European states, in which international institutions do not want to interfere, especially if the State in question is not considered as being a "weak" one.

A second category of discourses is made up of discourses directed at motherland/fatherland states. These discourses focus on the value of responsibility, on feelings of culpability, and sometimes also on geo-strategic arguments. In the Northern Irish case, both Catholics and Protestants have been asking their respective "motherland/fatherland" to help them, using a mix of culpability (Northern Catholics having been 'abandoned' by their brothers in the South, Northern Protestants having defended the glorious British heritage in Ireland), of legal arguments (the situation in Northern Ireland being interpreted as a rest-over of the British colonization in Ireland, as being 'suspended' between Britain and the Republic of Ireland), and of appeals to responsibility. If culpability and responsibility certainly are primary incentives for public opinions in motherland/fatherland countries, it has to be said that very often legal and strategic views command the intervention, or non intervention, of state actors – as testified for instance by the fact that the British conservative party has long been supporting the unionist cause in Northern Ireland because of electoral reasons, the unionist elected representatives being included in the Tory parliamentary group.

A third category of discourses is aimed at diasporas. It develops romantic images of the homeland, of an Eden that has been left behind and that embodies a mystified past. It also plays on feelings of culpability for having left a part of the family, or friends there, especially for migrants whose economic situation in the host country is a lot better than in their country of origin. As shown by many authors, diasporas tend to hold on to idealized images of their homeland, to which nationalist movements tend to stick as much as possible. The most trivial parts of the struggle are euphemized, and the stress is put on its most romantic and heroic aspects. The propaganda developed by Sinn Féin in the US perfectly illustrates this point, with a clear focus on the historical and cultural aspects of the Northern Irish conflict.

Discourses directed at like-minded actors make up a fourth category. Here the focus is put on solidarity, on the building of international links on the bases of common causes (workers, freedom fighters...). The idea is to exchange good practices, to discuss political options, latest political developments, but also to build networks of solidarity through which mobilization or support can be developed, and which can foster the exchange of information, but also sometimes of weapons and of various other resources. Networks of nationalist movements have thus been developed in Europe and in the rest of the world, and there are numerous opportunities for nationalists to meet, such as the *Journées Internationales de Corte* organized by the nationalists in Corsica, and to which other nationalist movements regularly participate.

Finally, there are discourses directed at the international public opinion, which play on images of injustice and of suffering. They recourse to emotions, and build an image of the community in conflict as a universal victim. The military aspects of the conflict, except when they convey images of repression and brutality against the community itself, are downplayed, and the stress is put on human rights violations, on deprivation, discrimination and injustice. It is a moral and normative discourse, that asks the international public opinion to act as a witness or as a counter weight against state policies. Its efficiency is obviously decupled in cases of conflicts to which, like in the Northern Irish case, the western public opinion is likely to identify itself, thanks to cultural and geographical proximity.

What appears from the examination of these various categories of discourses, is that interest can be raised through specific discourses, but that internationalization does not automatically derive from them. It stems from a convergence between the interests of at least some of the actors in conflict, and the interests of other international/ transnational actors. In the Northern Irish case for instance, the increasing involvement of the European institutions has been allowed by a convergence between the interests of Republicans who wanted to “de-UKise” the conflict, and a shift in the representations of the conflict held by the British government, not to mention the positive impact of European funds for peace. In this perspective, the intervention of European Union was perfectly timed, and has corresponded to a convergence of opinions between different actors, such as the nationalists, the British and Irish States, international organizations, and public opinions in Britain, the Republic of Ireland and many other European countries. It has to be noted that the shape of this internationalization, and not only its actual existence or not, is partly determined by perceptions at the international level, for instance by perceptions on the ability of a given state to deal with a conflict. A NATO or a NU intervention in Northern Ireland would have thus been unlikely, whereas a specific funding program for peace



activities launched by the European Union is considered as being perfectly acceptable. Such a pattern is very common in Europe, as shown by the Belgian case, where the highly conflictual case of the French speaking community living in the periphery of Brussels has been carefully and discretely dealt with by the Council of Europe, because of an enduring taboo against international intervention in “developed” countries.

### ***3.5. Actors and Repertoires of Action***

#### **3.5.1. The centrality of Actors' Discourses and Representations**

The content of community conflicts, their degree of violent escalation, their capacity to reach accommodation, do not only depend on « objective » factors, such as economic deprivation, violation of minority rights and identity, contested territories, population shifts, foreign interference, etc. but also on the perceptions of the main actors involved in these conflicts of these “objective” factors. These objective factors are interpreted differently by each community, and framed in discourses that offer a legitimizing explanation to the community in terms of the nature of the conflict, the nature and objectives of the opposing camps, the legitimacy of the community claims, the choice of means of action, and the need and acceptability of accommodation policies. Therefore it is essential to examine the discourses that are being used by different actors involved in community conflicts. We presume that communities are rarely monolithic, and that in each community different camps, what we label “community factions” are active at different moments in time during the evolution of the community conflict. The power relations between these factions within a community may also vary over time. Each faction tends to develop a specific discourse about the “other” community, as well as about competing factions within their own community. The features of each of these factions and their interactions are viewed to be central for the (de)escalation of the conflict. It is therefore equally central for the kind of accommodation solutions sought and eventually reached (or not reached, in case of escalation or status quo). Our mapping of community factions drew on the existing available general knowledge of each case team of specialists, completed with information gathered through our actors’ survey, the expert interviews realized in each country, and last but not least a summary analysis of the mainstream discourse for each relevant faction in each community involved in the main community conflict studied in each case.

In order to synthesize the discourse and frames that communities and intracommunity factions use in the formulation of their objectives and their perceptions of the conflict, the Peacecom project has drawn in several work packages on the semiotic approach developed by our Estonian colleague, Ravio Vetik. The semiotic approach is based on the assumption that no ethnic conflict exists in pure ‘objective’ form, but is mediated by the ‘subjective’ perceptions of individuals, which form the basis for ethnic boundary construction between conflicting communities. This assumption is a fundamental feature of social constructivism which assumes that ‘if men perceive social situation as real, they are real in their consequences’. From this theoretical perspective, boundary construction between “self” and “other” does not merely reflect but also creates social reality, and allows for the fact that actors may accomplish this construction in various ways. Consequently, one must not only understand how ‘objective’ factors (language usage, political resources, socio-economic inequalities) affect the dynamics of ethnic conflict, but also understand how ‘subjective’ factors lead in one way or another to the drawing of boundaries between ethnic groups. Incomplete communication constitutes a second fundamental feature of inter-group referential relations, that equally influences the dynamics of ethnic conflict. This is why the same “objective events” are explained in such divergent ways by different ethnic groups. Ethnic relations represent a dynamic semiotic system where communication between the parties is oriented not toward primary, but toward secondary information. Different forms of self-referentiality will lead to different types of boundary construction in

inter-group relations. Each ethnic boundary presents a particular structural constraint to mutual understanding of communities, which in turn affect the dynamics of ethnic conflict. In order to test this hypothesis, Vetik developed a typology of the construction of semiotic boundaries in inter-group relations, that serve as a filter between internal and external, between the 'self' and the 'other'

Based on the first function, Vetik conceives the category of 'non-culture' of boundary construction, i.e. from the point of view of the “self”, the “other” symbolically does not exist. Communication between “culture” and “non-culture” is neither possible nor needed. On the basis of the second function, Vetik introduces two other categories: 'alien culture' and 'different culture'. In the 'alien culture' category, communication between the groups is dominated by the negative elements of identity. Interethnic relations emphasizing the negative aspects of the boundary between internal and external lead to ethnocentrism, in which the 'other's' behavior is perceived as a violation of the values and norms of one's 'own culture'. In the 'different culture' category of relationship, the “other” is longer 'non-existent' or 'an enemy,' but rather is viewed as a “partner”. The 'different culture' relationship uses an ethnorelativist frame of reference that in principle allows for the viability of other frames of reference and facilitates cooperation between communities.

Vetik’s typology combines the three basic categories of 'self-other' opposition in the model for a conflict between two communities, leading to nine different types from the crosstabulation of these two dimensions.

<b><i>GROUP B</i></b>	<b>non-culture B1</b>	<b>alien culture B2</b>	<b>different culture B3</b>
<b><i>GROUP A</i></b>			
<b>non-culture A1</b>	A1B1	A1B2	A1B3
<b>alien culture A2</b>	A2B1	A2B2	A2B3
<b>different culture A3</b>	A3B1	A3B2	A3B3

This typology does has considerable heuristic value for analyzing the dynamics of ethnic conflict in the sense that the placement of concrete conflicts into various types, allows for the framing of hypotheses and for claiming that some phenomena (accommodation vs. escalation) are more likely than others to occur under a given set of circumstances.

Regarding the conflict between Ethnic Estonians and Russians in Estonia, we find that within the Ethnic Estonian community, the liberal and social democratic wing rapidly lost its predominance to the second (and sometime third) faction. Also amongst the Russian Community, the old pro-Union Communist faction of the *ancien régime* rapidly lost its grip on its community and the second, more liberal and social-democratic, current became the predominant faction on the Russian side. In terms of perception of the self/other from the Estonian side, we find that from the end of WWII until 2000, the main faction of the ethnic Estonians perceived Russians in Estonia as “alien other”, and only in 2000 the main discourse shifted to “different other”. The main faction on the Russian side perceived the ethnic Estonians as ‘non-existing’ from the end of WWII until the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), shifted for a few year to an “alien other discourse” and since 1993 switched to the

“different other” discourse. it can be argued that the pre-perestroika situation in Estonia is represented by the type A2B1, and after adopting the new citizenship law in 1992 the situation is better represented by the type A1B2. Hence, the potential most dangerous conflictual period of a combination of mutual “alien other” only occurred during a very short period, i.e.1989-1992, while the most accommodation facilitating combination, mutual “different others” perceptions occurred since 2000.

As far as the conflict between Francophones and Flemish in Belgium is concerned, the potential most dangerous conflictual period of a combination of mutual “alien other” occurred systematically from the 1980 on, while there has never been a period with the most accommodation facilitating combination, mutual “different others” perceptions. This worrisome combination of antagonistic discourses can explain the continuing process of community conflict in Belgium, with its ups and downs, and cumulating in the latest crisis after the June 2007 general elections, where the existence of Belgium it self has been questioned openly by an growing part of the Flemish political and economic elites. Still, the continuing mutual “alien other” perception has never led to any violence. Probably this was also due to the stability of the leading faction in both communities and discourses over time, especially at the Flemish side, which may have socialised elites in being used to deal with the community conflict, by finding transforming the unitary state gradually into a federal state in a muddling through process, concluding temporary bargains that cool down community conflicts for a couple of years, before a new adaptation of state structures is negotiated.

The Cyprus conflict between Greek and Turkish speaking communities, the potential most dangerous conflictual period of a combination of mutual “alien other” occurred only for a short period of time, in 1958-1959 and 1965-1968. Since 1975, after the largest escalation of violence due to the coup d'état of Greek Cypriote extreme nationalists and following Turkish intervention of the North in 1974, the discourses of the predominant factions in each community has remained mainly the “different other” combination, in spite of important changes of the predominance of factions at the Greek Cypriote community. In spite of the predominant the “different other” combination of discourses combined with considerable pressure from international organizations, this has not led to a stable accommodation of the conflict, but some appeasement is noticeable in the last years due shifts in predominant factions at both sides.

Regarding the conflict between the Slovene speaking minority in the Austrian Carinthia Land and the Germanspeaking majority, it represents certainly the least dramatic and complex community conflict compared to the other cases studied within the Peace-Com project. The potential most dangerous conflictual period of a combination of mutual “alien other” occurred for a very long time, during different periods: the first post-war years 1945-1947, 1955-1991, and again after 2000. The most accommodation facilitating combination, mutual “different others” actually never occurred. Still, the conflict has always remained peaceful, with a large number of accommodation initiatives. Probably this is due to the fact that the main issue, on cultural recognition of the Slovenes in the Carinthian province, currently turns around very modest demands from the Slovene side, like the setting up of bilingual topographical signs.

While the historical conflict between the Basque periphery and the Spanish state has been accommodated by granting very large autonomy to the Basque Autonomous Community, the conflict has in no way been pacified, due to the persistence and terrorist actions of the

maximalist *abertzales* faction aiming from the beginning for a fully independent Basque country. In spite of the peaks of the conflict, specially regarding to the increase of political violence, it could be said that the moderate factions have been predominant on the nationalist side. Hence, in terms of Vetik's semiotic typology, in the first years of the transition and consolidation of democracy in Spain, one finds the accommodation-facilitating combination of mutual perceptions of "different others". Since 1978 the conflict enters a phase of mutual "alien other" perception until 1987, in spite of the fact that the moderate in each community remain the predominant faction. The following decade features again a combination of mutual perceptions of "different others". Since 1998, the moderate factions have been replaced by radical nationalists and radical non-nationalists, but without re-entering the dangerous "mutual alien other" type.

The Kosovo case consists of a strong conflict over territory linked with ancient identities, a conflict overlapping with other dimensions as well. Contrary to other cases, both communities are quite homogeneous. The Kosovar Albanians have always perceived the Serbs as "alien others", which was only true for the Serbs in the 1987-1999 period during Milosevic's rule, also the most violent period in the conflict. Since the end of that period, the Serbs moved back to their original post-war discourse of "different other". The long period of low intensity was certainly facilitated by the post-war authoritarian regime. Once this fell apart, ancient hatreds could be fully exploited by ethno-political entrepreneurs, and only foreign intervention managed to bring the level of violence down again.

Similarly to the Kosovo case, identity, culture and language of large cultural minorities (Hungarians and Croats) are the major dimensions of the conflict in Vojvodina, but only since 1988. The main sectors of the Yugoslav and Serbian Communists were dominant until 1997; while the Vojvodina Communist League was also the strongest faction in the camps of the autonomists. In the long pre-Milosevic period, the Serbs held a "no culture" perception until 1997, when they switched into the "alien other" discourse until 1999. But also the autonomists held a "different other" discourse until the mid-1960s, passed into a "no culture" discourse until the arrival of Milosevic (1988). The long period of low intensity was certainly facilitated by the post-war authoritarian regime. Once this fell apart, conflicts between "decentralisers" (Serbs) and "autonomists" (mostly Hungarian and Croat minorities) could be fully exploited by ethno-political entrepreneurs, especially under the Milosevic years. After the 2000 regime change, most (but not all) of the parties see the other side as a partner. The Milosevic years were also in discourse most explosive, both holding an "alien other discourse" and constituted also the most violent period in the conflict. Finally, since 2000 both communities switched into a more accommodating discourse of mutual perception of "different other".

Contrary to the other to cases in ex-Yugoslavia included in our project, in the Sandzak case religion is a dimension present since the beginning, and has been overlapping with the ethnic and linguistic identity dimensions (Serbs being Orthodox and Bosnian Muslim). In the 1945-1990 period, the Serbian authorities did not acknowledge the conflict in Sandžak and Serbs perceived the Bosniak as "no culture". Yet, when in 1963 a new constitution was adopted, the Serbs perceived the Bosniak started to perceive the Bosniaks as "alien others". This continued under the Milosevic regime (1990-2000) were Serbs perceived Muslims as enemies that challenged the legitimacy of the Serbian state. This period of mutual "alien other" discourses was also the only post-war period with increased levels of violence. After 2000, the Serbian side sees Bosniaks as partners. Until the mid 1960s, the Bosniaks also

held an “alien culture” discourse, but since then onwards switched to a “different culture” discourse, as on the Serbian side, facilitating accommodation.

Finally, regarding the conflict between the “Catholic” vs. the “Protestant” community in Northern Ireland, we find a strong example of a community conflict with overlapping cleavages, which certainly contributed to the explosive character of the conflict. Up until 1998, the dominant faction in each community were the “moderates” or “pragmatists”. Yet, since the troubles of 1970 we find the high conflict potential combination of mutual “alien other”, whereby also the level of use of violence went up for an entire decade. Only at the end of the 1990s, even when in the Catholic community the Republicans became the predominant faction, their discourse changed into “different other”, facilitating the emergence and implementation of the “Good Friday” accommodation process.

The qualitative examination of the case studies above does not permit us to identify a systematic causal link between factions, their discourses on the one hand, and on the other hand, the levels of violence in community conflicts and the success of accommodation policies. We do find escalation of conflict in Vetik’s mutual “alien culture” combinations, and more success for accommodation policies in the mutual “different other”. Yet, there are many instances of low-level conflict with mutual “alien culture” combinations like Belgium, while sometimes accommodation occurs when the most radical factions become predominant, as in the Northern Ireland case. While discourses can be flexible, but can not divert too much from objectives and historical factors, community conflicts are often influenced by critical and sometimes external events, such as regime breakdown (Spain, Yugoslavia), the emergence of an extreme and powerful faction (the Milosevic years), the emergence of political entrepreneurs (Haider in Carinthia), the UN intervention in Cyprus, etc.

Community conflicts sometimes are driven by one conflict dimension, often by overlapping but also crosscutting dimensions, by a monolithic or quite heterogeneous and divided community, by dangerous combination of mutual “alien other” discourses, accommodation promoting mutual “different other” discourses, but especially by many hybrid combinations between “no culture”, “alien culture” and “different culture”. Vetik’s semiotic typology admittedly does not offer many hypotheses about the potential outcomes of these quite common hybrid combinations, but opens interesting avenues for future research.

### **3.5.2. Changing and Complex Repertoires of Action**

Research conducted in PEACE-COM shows that a great majority of means is useful for different contexts, demands, and programs, and they are used by very diverse actors. According to recent work on repertoires of action, and along the lines of our own hypotheses, a broad dissemination of some means of action is evident. In other words, in the framework of community conflicts, different means of political action are employed by a growing number of organizations, as well as by a growing number of actors. All this confirms the thesis that states that we are facing “modular” repertoires” that adapt to diverse situations and, additionally, have certain margins for innovation. Regardless of the existence of a community conflict context, we are witnessing a process of *normalization* and diffusion of some means of actions, usually considered means of “protest”. Generally, at

the heart of everyday political life of contemporary democratic systems, specifically in the ones where community conflicts take place, there is evidence that the expansion of this type of actions has become so generalized that actors of diverse natures recover old “protest” repertoires (like demonstrations and strikes), attribute new meanings to them, and usually employ them. With the exception of the means the entail risk of disturbance of public order and/or violence, there do not seem to be large differences in the means through which different organizations or movements present in public life express their demands or interests.

In addition, just as is stated in the notion proper of repertoire, contexts appear as a significant conditioning factor of the specific forms by which actors express themselves. In any case, it must not be forgotten that it is the actors who in the end select the means by which to express themselves. Certainly, the actors opt strategically for using specific means of action.

In the light of our analysis, we can conclude that two sets of political actions, interrelated between them and separable only for analysis, take place. On the one hand, we have the set of actions that have to do with the “everyday political life” of formally constituted democratic systems and, on the other, the actions that belong to a “society in conflict”. In our judgment, this explains the fluency between constrained and contentious repertoires in some cases in which political life operates, in the majority of them, within the limits of western democratic systems. But scenarios with a high degree of conflictuality also emerge, with very different fluctuations according to the phase of the conflict, and in which contentious means reach considerable levels of violence.

Summing up, the techniques utilized in our research grant an advantage to everyday politics and make difficult the analysis of more violent means for the expression of the conflict. For this reason, and also because we situate the analysis in democratic scenarios, it is possible to suggest that there exist conditions for the diffusion of what Tilly has called *contained* collective action. Thus, petitions, demonstrations, parades, and marches correspond to an understood, known, and accepted repertoire that presumes little commitment and a low risk of disturbing public order. Yet due to the fact that we are dealing with “societies in conflict”, there are certain moments in the evolution of the conflict that favour the rise of contentious actions associated to a repertoire of actions that entails risk of violence, high degree of organization, and significant costs for the actors.

In the framework of community conflicts, these two sets of actions permanently interact, a fact which leads us to acknowledge that the frontier between a constrained action and a contentious action fluctuates. Thus, we find ourselves in the face of a wide scope of possibilities that are displayed in the framework of the conflicts, and that range from actions associated to routine political participation to means of protest that entail risk of violence and disturbance of public order. This allows us to infer the existence of the so-called “complex repertoire”.

We have been able to identify a specific type of repertoire of means of political action known by and available to the actors as a means for the expression proper of the conflict. Likewise, we were able to evaluate and describe this set of means in terms of the frequency, effectiveness, and legitimacy. That is, the repertoire combines a broad variety of means associated to normalized democratic life with Tilly’s constrained action and to a set of

means, also considerably wide, that entail, at least, risk of disturbing public order and damage to property. Only the means that imply risk to people clearly divide the actors in regard to frequency, legitimacy, and effectiveness. This is why we make reference of a specific “tool kit” of possible instruments for action when we consider the means that are used in community conflicts in the European sphere, tools that could be used in conflict situations and that are geared to the expression of demands, claims, or a particular political program.

Additionally, we were able to come closer to a characterization of the repertoire in the following terms: it is a broad, common repertoire that is not differentiated by the actors except in the cases where violence occurs: it is easily identifiable as a function of the context, very influenced by *new politics*, and disparate in terms of contagion or diffusion.

Thus we consider (as several authors have done) that the concept of repertoire implies a special complexity due to its multi-dimensional character and, particularly, to the fact that it includes political and cultural factors specific to each context. Thus the repertoire is not simply a set of *means* to put forth claims, but a collection of meanings that emerge during the development of a specific conflict, in a relational way. This is why, as we have mentioned above, a broad variety of means of action and numerous actors willing to carry them out can be observed in the framework of community conflicts.

Likewise, even when certain homogeneity in the use of certain means is suggested, there is also evidence of peculiarities in the employment of means associated to violence, primarily in contexts with a high level of conflictuality. Once again, using the analysis as a departure point, and without disregarding the preponderant role played by the actors in the selection of means of action, our work shows how the context influences to a great extent the forms of political expression that take place during the evolution of a conflict.

On the other hand, there do not seem to be meaningful differences that would allow us to associate certain specific means of action with specific actors; that is, in the case of community conflicts there exists a large variety of forms of political expression that do not always correspond to one or another of the actors involved. An additional feature we have found is that the means of action associated to *new politics* seem to be acquiring more relevance. Lastly, even though we could suggest a high level of diffusion and contagion in the use of certain means of action, it turns out to be evident that this does not happen with other forms of political expression. Thus, while demonstrations are referred to in most of the cases selected, the murals and parades that characterize Northern Ireland, are not mentioned elsewhere.

With the empirical evidence obtained, we can make reference to the existence of a *complex and changing repertoire* whose singularity is determined, in a certain way, as a function of the context where it operates and, not exclusively under the perspective of the authors who carry it out. Consequently, the analysis of the different dimensions that configure the domestic contexts in which these conflicts take place is revealed in our work as an important element when accounting for the conditioning factors of the available, understood, effective, and accepted repertoire of action. Hence, in community conflicts the “handful of alternatives” to which the actors resort and to which they confer legitimacy are clearly conditioned by the context in which they take place. Summing up, the ideas presented are the basis for the argument that (without regard to those actors who resort to violent actions that were not considered during the first stage of quantitative analysis),



beyond the perspective of the author, the context represents the crucial element for explaining the use of certain means of action and their evolution.

At a second moment of the research, we considered the tools proposed both by classical and more novel analyses in the field of collective action. The concept proper of “repertoire” and the proper dynamic conception of “contentious politics” are proof of the above: However, in the course of our work we have questioned some fundamental considerations of this theoretical baggage; namely:

- In the first place, the classification of political action in terms of conventional and non-conventional (backed by the logic of “institutionalization” of the means) does not prove operative inasmuch as the frontiers of conventionality seem to have blurred. The phenomenon of “normalization of protest” and the so-called *life-style politics* also back this idea. The classification does not account for actions and strategies in contexts of conflict that frequently turn violent. Let’s remember that in many of the community conflicts selected, actions of this type are recurrent and even accepted in specific historical moments.

- In the second place, we must acknowledge that we have available extensive literature on collective action and social movements, which has been enormously useful for approaching the analysis of actions from the perspective of the authors, that the tools proposed have been fruitful in explaining actions in democratic contexts, and that additionally considerable progress has been evidenced in the field of conflict analysis (by granting relevance and rationality to a whole set of actions that includes violence and that had been left out of the analyses of political action). In spite of all the above, in the course of our analytical work, we faced certain difficulties in putting some of these tools into practice. The above could be justified to the extent to which we work with highly complex, contexts of political conflict that also have multi-dimensional natures and disparate historical evolutions.

In this perspective, we are capable of presenting possible criticism on three levels:

1. The differentiation between “*constrained* action” and “*contentious* action” poses some relevant problems at the time of characterizing the *complex repertoire of community conflicts*, inasmuch as we see that the frontier between one means of action and another is not clean cut and fluctuates. Certain actions, such as demonstrations, that are susceptible to a low risk of violence or disturbance of public order in peaceful contexts, frequently degenerate into violent actions (depending not only on the specific moment when they take place but on the actor that carries them out and the way the way the repressive structures of the state act). Although this evolution towards violent actions depends in great measure on the selection of the actors that carry them out, we could suggest here that certain conditioning factors of the context could be susceptible of favouring this degradation

2. Although the literature on collective action has approached *micro-* (identities, narrative, perceptions), *meso-* (organizational structures and mobilization processes), and *macro-* (political opportunity contextual structures) sociological issues to approach the analysis of collective action, the theoretical presuppositions of this type of research grant centrality to the views of the actors when explaining the action. Nevertheless, in our analysis, context reveals itself as an extraordinarily revealing factor, a fact which leads us to acknowledge the convenience of taking a more in-depth look at the contextual factors that define the

structuring of the scenarios where the action takes place (cultural, political, socioeconomic, and international) dimensions

3. Finally, we must make evident how the clearly statist bias of the studies on collective action presuppose certain limitations at the time of accounting for political action in community conflicts. Many of these conflicts have been internationalized and clearly affected by broad globalization processes that affect the way political action is put into effect (technological and communication structures, diffusion of means of action, externalization of the protest, cycles of “global” violence, etc.) Hence, approaching the complexity of the global processes and the numerous tendencies of change that affect domestic contexts widens our understanding of the conflicts; on the contrary, our understanding is reduced when we overlook the scenario beyond.

## 3.6. The Key Determinants of Community Conflict Escalation and De-escalation in Europe: a Systematic Comparative Analysis (QCA)

### 3.6.1. Overall Results

One core goal of the PEACE-COM project was to analyze several ‘thick’, multilayered, dynamic and complex cases of community conflicts, in a comparative *and* systematic way, *and* also over a long period of time (the whole post-WWII period), in order identify the key determinants leading to community conflict escalation and de-escalation. This was a very ambitious goal indeed. We dare say that this goal has been largely reached. In order to meet this challenge, we opted for a “systematic cross-case analysis” approach. Within this approach, we exploited a set of techniques – Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) – which are both formal and case-oriented, and which enable one to systematically identify core regularities across cases, in the form of key combinations of *conditions* leading to an *outcome* of interest.

In more concrete terms, in the course of the PEACE-COM teamwork, we were first able to grasp the historical and narrative details and specificities of several ‘thick case studies’, and then to synthesize them into comparable ‘synthetic case descriptions’ SCDs. On this basis, we were able to then build a quite complex model (as many as 13 potential explanatory factors, or *conditions*), and to operationalize different types of outcomes in terms of conflict escalation, non-escalation, de-escalation and non-de-escalation. Thanks to the power of Boolean<sup>2</sup> minimization algorithms in the QCA analyses, we were able to identify core regularities in the form of key combinations of conditions linked with the outcome of interest in clusters of specific cases. Finally, to square the circle, we were able to make sense of those core regularities, by going back to the ‘thick’ cases with their specificities to unravel some key causal mechanisms leading to conflict escalation, non-escalation, de-escalation or non-de-escalation.

One key over-arching result of our analyses is that *single* explanatory factors seldom come out. Rather, in most cases, most factors operate in combination. This multiple conjunctural causation (to use QCA terminology), which has been empirically confirmed by our analyses, is in line with core theoretical expectations of the PEACE-COM project, and also with other findings in the project when the ‘monitoring system’ was tested on the actual cases (see next section of this report). It not only implies that the key conditions operate in conjunction, but also that there are, for some operationalizations of the outcome at least, different combinations of conditions (different causal ‘paths’) leading to the outcome. In other words: there is not a single one-size-fits-all explanation, be it for conflict escalation, non-escalation, de-escalation or non-de-escalation, respectively. Note that, from a policy perspective, this also means that *there is no single ‘best recipe’ strategy to avoid conflict escalation or to ensure conflict de-escalation, for instance* (see below, however, for some indications of some key combinations which have proved more crucial in the actual conflict situations).

Altogether, there is not one single potential causal factor which *never* comes out in the key causal combinations – thus all the single hypotheses which were formulated can, to a limited extent at least, find some empirical confirmation. However we must make two crucial qualifications here: (a) very few of these hypotheses are confirmed in a separate way,

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<sup>2</sup> Boolean algorithms for the more simple, dichotomous csQCA, and more complex set algorithms for the multi-value QCA (mvQCA) analyses.

as one must, most often, combine different conditions to account for the outcome; and (b) only some of the potential conditions come out much more frequently and can be considered more as ‘core’ factors (see next section).

### 3.6.2. The theory revisited: what are the key combinations of factors for conflict escalation, non-escalation and de-escalation?

Here below, we try to bring out some key mechanisms – most often dynamic combinations of factors – which seem to have played a more important role to explain variation in the intensity of community conflicts. Note that, because we have adopted a case-oriented approach, our assessment of the extent to which a given causal path is ‘important’ is not primarily based on frequency considerations. In other words: the ‘importance’ of a causal path is rather assessed in terms of its *relevance for a case or a cluster of cases with a similar outcome*.

As shall clearly come out of the sections below, we identify qualitatively and substantively different ‘stories’, ‘narratives’ or ‘causal paths’ when we examine, respectively, escalation, non-escalation, de-escalation or non-de-escalation. In other words: for instance, the potential ‘good recipes’ which lead to conflict de-escalation are not the opposite of the recipes for conflict escalation (see causal asymmetry, here above).

#### 3.6.2.1. Escalation: Key Mechanisms

A first key empirical finding is that ‘identity entrepreneurs’ play a key role in conflict escalation, especially in the passage to violent conflict. However this factor does not operate alone: those identity entrepreneurs – who are particular type of political entrepreneurs embedded in a specific community – are often more ‘efficient’ (so to speak) in their attempts to escalate the conflict when some latent cleavages (or conflict dimensions) can be re-activated (e.g. in Sandzak or Cyprus).

In another core combination of escalating factors, the crucial factor has to do with perceptions, in three ways: (a) the framing of the conflict (in particular paradigm change or paradigm discordance, i.e. a disagreement on the core issue at stake in the conflict); (b) the perception of one’s own community; and, linked with the previous point, (c) the perception of the other community or ‘camp’. The more explosive situations are, firstly, those in which the conflict is deeply entrenched, in the framing of the conflict – there is stability in how the conflict is framed (non-change of conflict paradigm), on who are the “culprits” and who are the “victims”. Secondly, some dynamic identity entrepreneurs (see above) must be there to instrumentalize those entrenched paradigms. Third, and last but not least, are those situations in which one community is (or, rather *perceives* it is) being durably alienated<sup>3</sup>, not ‘recognized’ by the other community (e.g. Ireland, Cyprus). Note that these factors must operate *in conjunction* – thus, the mere presence of an “alien v/s alien” self-other perception<sup>4</sup> is not a sufficient condition to witness conflict escalation. The Belgian case (in some periods) is a perfect case in counterpoint: there is an “alien v/s alien” self-other

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<sup>3</sup> In two ways : being considered as menacing « aliens » (see next footnote) or, even worse, being considered as « non-existing » or not worth considering.

<sup>4</sup> Meaning : each community perceives the ‘other’ community (out-group) as an *alien*. In this context, there is a domination of accusations, ethnocentrism and prejudices; and there is the perception of an open conflict between the community groups, and of the impossibility of compromises.

perception, but this country has never gone beyond ‘stage 2’ conflicts (political tension situations). This is a reminder that the factors discussed here very seldom operate in isolation (see previous section).

Third and last, for the passage to open warfare specifically, a crucial factor is the absence of significant *ex ante* accommodation initiatives. This factor must however be complemented by another factor: the claims at stake (which are not met by accommodation initiatives) must stem from minority communities. In particular, not responding to peacefully expressed grievances from minority communities (e.g. because some of these demands are considered as unacceptable, ‘non-discussable’ or irrelevant<sup>5</sup> by the dominant community) is an almost certain path to further escalation, especially if some radical groups are ready to be mobilized on the ground. (e.g. Northern Ireland in 71, Kosovo in 88). In this respect, the worst way to respond to peacefully expressed grievances is to resort to armed repression (e.g. once again Northern Ireland in 71, and Kosovo in 88). Conflict escalation is often the result of violent or militarized response from the central State (against the peacefully expressed demands of the ‘periphery’, namely the minority community). Such militarized responses are sometimes framed by the central State as ‘accommodation’ policies, but in fact they can only be viewed as such by the allies on the ground (e.g. the ethnic Serbs in Kosovo), and thus cannot contribute to any form of ‘real’ pacification (quite the contrary, as demonstrated above).

### 3.6.2.2. Non-Escalation: Key Mechanisms

For the identification of core mechanisms of durable non-escalation, we examined three countries or regions over a long period of time: Carinthia (Austria), Belgium and Estonia. A first combination of factors accounting for non-escalation centres around the fact that the conflict is more of the ‘cultural’ kind (e.g. religious, identity, language) – but this in itself does not guarantee non-escalation, as the cases of Northern Ireland or Kosovo (see above) clearly remind us. The key narrative is twofold. On the one hand, when the cultural dividing line does *not* strongly coincide with socio-economic or territorial dividing lines – thus the ‘cultural’ minority community is not, for instance, also socio-economically underprivileged than the ‘cultural’ majority community and, consequently, there is little reason to engage in more radical action (e.g. the Slovene speakers in Carinthia). Note that this is a rejoinder to the famous Lipset & Rokkan theory of “cross-cutting cleavages”: when the main societal cleavages do not overlap<sup>6</sup>, this produces a more pacified and compromise-seeking political interaction. On the other hand, even if there is some form of local contention (e.g. non-conventional actions on the ground, at the local level, which could radicalize the conflict), there is not a broad reservoir of radical ‘identity entrepreneurs’ to instrumentalize this mostly cultural conflict.

A second, specific path towards non-escalation, which mainly accounts for the Belgian case (and also, to a lesser extent, to the Estonian case) is the combination of no prior experience

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<sup>5</sup> Quite often because the minority community itself is *perceived* by the majority community as not relevant (see previous footnote), and/or as being a threat to the integrity of the majority community (e.g. the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, from the main Serb perspective ; or the Northern Irish Catholics, from a Protestant perspective).

<sup>6</sup> Note also that this is actually the exact opposite of the Northern Irish case in the 60s, for instance, where there was a perfect “match” between the religious, territorial and socio-economic cleavages, with as result a pretty explosive situation.

of ‘efficient’ use of violent means in the conflict, and of little or no intervention from ‘external’ players. The first factor is quite straightforward: neither of the two sides of the conflict can refer to past ‘glorious victories’ over the enemy on the battlefield, nor can they maintain the memory of a humiliating defeat and plead for revenge (for a perfect counter-example, see the Kosovo case). However this factor does not operate alone – after all, in theory, some leaders on either side could very well envisage to make a move away from the peaceful conflict-solving tradition, and go for more violent means of action. The second factor, thus, equates to the fact that no external player intervenes to further radicalize the conflict – when such players intervene, most often this has negative consequences (e.g. the role of the Albanians in Albania vis-à-vis the Kosovo context). In the Belgian case, neither ‘proximate’ external players (neighbouring countries, diasporas, etc), nor more ‘global’ external players (e.g. U.N., etc.) significantly mingle in the conflict. Thus, the conflict maintains its solely ‘domestic’ dynamic, and more routinized practices can be reproduced, generation after generation of political leaders<sup>7</sup> – typically: pacts, compromise agreements, log-rolling and ‘package deals’ in the Belgian case.

The third and last causal narrative leading to non-escalation has to do with what we could define as an ‘inversion’ of the logic of contention. These are situations in which, paradoxically perhaps, the ‘non-conventional’ modes of action are more often used by the majority community (e.g. the German-Austrian nationalists in Carinthia), and not by the minority which seeks to obtain more rights. Because the activists of the majority group are not particularly criminalized by the judiciary system, this does not encourage further escalation. In the same line of argument, referring again to the ‘self-other’ perception theory (see above), those who are the dominated community and who feel they are being discriminated against are also those who are more open to discussion and negotiation (e.g. the Slovene speakers in Carinthia, and the Russian speakers in Estonia). Note that this interesting finding runs counter to some well-established theories and models (e.g. ‘relative deprivation’ and ‘political opportunity structure’) which predict that protest and violent or more radical means of action are most likely to be initiated by the more dominated or minority groups.

### **3.6.2.3. De-Escalation: Key Mechanisms**

As a note of caution, let us first concede that our analyses of the causal paths towards de-escalation were, on the whole, less convincing than those for escalation or non-escalation (see also below). Therefore, we had a more difficult time finding meaningful interpretation for the minimal formulae. Second, we have revealed, in the process of the analyses, that de-escalation does not necessarily equate with finding a ‘solution’ to the conflict. For instance, in Kosovo in the mid-1980s, the conflict was only “frozen” through military and police action, laying the foundation for even stronger escalation up to high-intensity conflict in the early 1990s. Actually when conflicts quickly and strongly de-escalate, it seldom corresponds to ‘real’ de-escalation. Such evolutions are rather imposed by force, without addressing the root causes the conflict. This leads us to consider the first explanatory factor: repressive and security policies which impose de-escalation through police or

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<sup>7</sup> Indeed this can be nuanced somewhat – see the current difficulties in maintaining the « Belgian model » of compromise arrangements, as we finalize this report.

military action (or even less conventional armed action), thereby ‘freezing or ‘containing’ the conflict.

A second set of factors leading to conflict de-escalation is more linked with accommodation policies: the fact that such policies are able, more specifically, to address some *political* claims of the minority community (e.g. Northern Ireland in the 70s), also combined with the fact that ‘friendly neighbours’ *on both sides* are involved in the formulation and/or implementation of the pacification policies. For instance, in Northern Ireland in the 70s, the involvement of the Republic of Ireland (which was viewed by most Nationalists as a *de facto* ally, as a ‘motherland’), in co-operation with the British government (i.e. with the ‘motherland’ of the other conflicting party), was a crucial conflict de-escalating factor.

Finally, one different factor has to do (once again) with ‘self-other’ perceptions. The conflict-decreasing potential of these perceptions can only be activated when at least one ‘camp’ does *not* perceive the other as ‘alien’. Such a configuration opens up some possible space for negotiation and accommodation, with or without the intervention of external facilitators (e.g. the Cyprus case during the 50s). Conversely, in ‘alien v/s alien’ situations (see above), there is rather a potential for further escalation.

One last word should be said about *non*-de-escalation, especially for conflicts which remained stranded at a rather high level of conflict, namely the Basque case throughout the post-Franco period and the Irish case in the late 80s and early 90s. The key combination here is that (a) some form of accommodation policies have been initiated and implemented, but however (b) those accommodation policies have remained subject to contestation, at least within the ranks of more radical organizations on both sides. Therefore, a certain ‘reservoir’ of activists is kept mobilized for more violent means of action in the conflict.

### **3.6.3. Confronting Escalation and De-Escalation: Different Mechanisms, Different Theories?**

Examining the main ‘causal narratives’ in the three sections here above, one notices that there is little symmetry in the findings – meaning, for instance: the explanation of conflict escalation is not opposite to that of conflict de-escalation. There are some small bits and pieces of symmetry here and there – e.g. the absence or presence of radical ‘identity entrepreneurs’, or the presence v/s absence of adequate and well thought-out accommodation initiatives. However, these symmetries are only partial, because they only cover one ‘ingredient’ in more complex ‘recipies’. This is actually a key empirical finding of our systematic comparative analysis: we can corroborate our over-arching hypothesis according to which there are no generic mechanisms which lead to conflict escalation and which, if inverted, would lead to conflict de-escalation.

We also note that our explanations are altogether more solid and empirically convincing for conflict escalation than for conflict de-escalation. Why is it so? A first tentative answer, more on the theoretical front, could be that the theories we mobilized, as well as the model we derived from those theories for the purpose of QCA analyses, is more geared towards escalation than de-escalation. It could mean that, for further analyses, we might have to consider more seriously the fundamentally asymmetric nature of the two phenomena

(conflict escalation v/s conflict de-escalation). In practical terms, would this mean that we should look for (partly?) different theories (and consequently [partly?] different empirical models) to account for, respectively, escalation and de-escalation? At this stage, we leave this question open to debate.

A second, quite different tentative answer, more at the substantive and ‘real-life’ level, would be to contend that conflict de-escalation processes are, by nature, more complex, more ‘fuzzy’, more contradictory than escalation processes. For instance, one could contend that, in a given society consisting of well-identified communities, it is quite easy for *one* small group (e.g. dedicated radical activists around one charismatic ‘identity entrepreneur’) to cause conflict escalation; conversely, it is much more difficult for large groups (several of them, as the conflict has engulfed many components of society if it has escalated) to find some way towards conflict de-escalation. If these statements are altogether correct, it is quite logical that one would meet more difficulties in discovering the ‘recipes for de-escalation’ which work and to clearly link these recipes to clusters of cases.

#### **3.6.4. Accommodation Initiatives: Mixed Findings**

It is useful to focus specifically on the impact of accommodation initiatives broadly defined (because naturally they are of direct interest from an EU policy and intervention perspective. All things considered, our findings with regards to accommodation initiatives lead us to challenge some too simplistic and pre-conceived ideas, and also to differentiate between different types, modalities and ‘best practices’ (and ‘worst practices’, too).

First, our analyses demonstrate that some *ex ante* accommodation initiatives are actually counter-productive. Indeed they lead to conflict escalation, in the short term or in the longer term, because they are perceived by one ‘camp’ as single-sided. This was clearly the case in Sandzak and Vojvodina, for instance, where the domestic (i.e. mostly Serb-driven) accommodation initiatives were rather ‘peace-keeping’ measures which did not involve the local stakeholders, on the ground, and which sparked further escalation.

There is a clear link between this observation and another key finding of ours: ‘soft’ (i.e. non-military) accommodation initiatives can only yield results under some very demanding conditions – only if: (a) they bring all the conflicting parties around the table, even the more radical groups which are labelled by some as ‘terrorists’; and (b) they are encompassing, i.e. dealing not only with outbursts of violence, but also with the root causes of the conflict, whether political, economical, social, cultural, etc. A ‘textbook example’ case – a rare case, actually – of such a process is the one which eventually led to the ‘Good Friday’ agreements in 1998 (Northern Ireland).

Another important point is that the ‘accommodation initiatives’ label is a very broad one. It corresponds to many different types of initiatives or policies: ‘domestic’ v/s ‘external’ ones, ‘benevolent’ v/s ‘repressive’ ones, ‘soft’ v/s ‘hard’ ones, etc. The point we want to make here is that our analyses have not produced empirical conclusions about the impact (jointly with other factors) of accommodation initiatives *in general* on community conflicts. Rather, we have established some causal links between *some sub-types* of accommodation initiatives which, *together with other factors*, have a conflict-increasing or conflict-decreasing effect. This is no small nuance – indeed, in the preceding sections, we have discussed at lengths some



scenarios in which a particular type of accommodation initiative proves counterproductive. For instance, quite many ‘domestic’ accommodation initiatives are more tricky in their effects because they are often perceived by one ‘camp’ (often rightly so) as one-sided. In other examples (e.g. former Yugoslavia), we showed that, specifically, more ‘repressive’ accommodation policies initiated by the central authorities yielded catastrophic results in the longer run. And so on. The bottom line is that accommodation policies are very difficult tools to manipulate.

To broaden the picture a bit more, let us conclude on the possibilities for a given public authority (e.g. national, European, etc.) to have a decisive impact on a community conflict, more specifically in terms of de-escalation or, even better, in terms of non-escalation (conflict prevention policies). Space does not allow us to develop this point at length, but our systematic comparative findings enable us to identify a key difficulty. In substance it is highly unlikely that a ‘recipe’ for community conflict de-escalation or non-escalation which has proved effective in a given national setting can be simply ‘exported’ and applied to another national setting and also yield fully satisfactory results. For one thing, there are many ‘contextual’ factors (outside of our analytical models) which could intervene at some stage in the causal process, and modify the eventual outcome in terms of level of conflict. Second, one should not confuse an analytical model with the complexity of the real world – any analytical model is vastly over-simplifying reality. For instance, in our models, we give attributes to organizations, or states – but these attributes are always changing, and some organizations (e.g. activist organizations) can quickly shift their goals and properties depending on the ‘political opportunity structure’, etc. Third and not least, some core factors of conflict non-escalation in some countries simply cannot quickly be implemented in other countries, because of objective, factual differences. For instance, a deeply rooted political accommodation culture (e.g. Belgium), which proves to be a key (and quite self-evident) factor of non-escalation, cannot be imposed by decree in, say, regions in former Yugoslavia. Other example : in objective terms, the socio-economic situation of the Slovene speakers in Austria is much less problematic (as compared to that of the majority community Carinthia) than, say, that of the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo vis-à-vis the Serbs in that same region, or that of the Turkish Cypriots vis-à-vis the Greek Cypriots, and so on.

### **3.6.5. Paths for Further Research**

Naturally, this systematic comparative analysis effort opens up further paths for analyses and reflections. Here below, we discuss a selective list of some key remaining topics, challenges and avenues for future research.

First, although we have (rightfully) argued that our core goals of this whole comparative enterprise are largely met, there is still some ample room for methodological refinements. Probably the most challenging aspect is the time dimension, which we have operationalized in a quite crude and ‘mechanistic’ way, for the purpose of model-testing. Some core issues in this respect would be: more fine-grained operationalization of sequences, process-tracing, better distinction between short-term and longer-term ‘causes’, etc. Another challenge is that of cross-system diffusion, i.e. the influences from one case to another, which we have simply not considered in our analyses.

Second, some specific aspects and variables of the models could be refined. For instance, we could have a more nuanced look at dimensions of conflict, by not only considering

salient v/s not salient dimensions, but also “latent” dimensions – as such “latent” dimensions prove to be a key resource for ‘identity entrepreneurs’ (see above).

Third, some aspects which were not included in our models could be added, if only for the sake of performing further ‘cross-validating’ tests. One possibility would be to also consider more ‘institutional’ conditions in the search for key causal factors: e.g. more or less “democratic” regimes, with more or less high “procedural quality” (e.g. independent judiciary etc.) and organized civil society organizations and networks, etc. Such a perspective could enrich the comparison – e.g. some former Yugoslav regions could be better contrasted with, say, some West European cases, etc. However such an institutionalist perspective would also have its limitations. Indeed a key richness of our PEACE-COM theoretical framework and empirical analyses is that they are more ‘actor-centred’. Another specific aspect to be included could be the issue of the uncontrolled circulation of weapons ‘on the ground’, in the local communities, which can quickly lead to escalation as soon as the ‘containment’ strategies (military occupation, police presence etc) are a bit weaker. This also opens up the way for broader comparisons (PEACE-COM examples: former Yugoslavia cases, v/s other cases such as Israel-Palestine, or the Great Lakes region).

This last remark actually opens up a broad potential for further generalization of our findings, and for expanding further our “pool” of empirical cases. With some caution, it is possible for us to extend some of the conclusions of our QCA analyses (“modest historical generalization”) to the whole European space in the post-WWII period, because our comparative research design (case selection) enabled us to cover a broad diversity of cases and situations. As to other useful empirical cases to confront with the current pool of PEACE-COM cases, there are many fruitful possibilities. One key possibility is the Israel-Palestine conflict, which could help us to fine-tune the interpretation of some core ‘causal paths’ we have identified – especially for escalation and non-de-escalation (e.g. non-inclusive accommodation initiatives and their perverse effects, limitations of ‘repressive’ policies, etc.). Another possibility is various countries in the Great Lakes region, and current-day Kenya (e.g. the role of ‘identity entrepreneurs’ who instrumentalize latent cleavages, etc.). Many other cases could also be envisaged in other regions of the globe, especially those which are of particular interest for the EU (e.g. Caucasus region, former Soviet Republics, etc.). Naturally, such a broader empirical scope would also necessitate some reflections on the applicability of some of our assumptions in a non-European (and non-liberal democratic) context, e.g. with regards to the presence of consolidated civil society and state institutions, etc. Naturally, we should not too quickly over-generalize our current findings. For instance, the role of the EU with regards to intervention in community conflicts is fundamentally different within the EU and outside of the EU boundaries.

### ***3.7. The PEACE-COM Monitoring System***

#### **3.7.1. Design of the Monitoring System**

Building a monitoring system aimed at monitoring the conflicts covered in PEACE-COM which are all situated in the EU or at its periphery, but range from peaceful situations of tension to violent conflicts, has been a challenging task. We have been aiming at monitoring conflicts which are situated within a specific environment in Europe, therefore certain generic indicators widely used in monitoring conflicts do not apply. The difficulty lies not in documenting indicators but in predicting the impact that each of them has on the conflict. Case-study experts have for instance disagreed with the widespread argument that widening socio-economic inequalities or absolute impoverishment played a significant role on the conflicts studied in PEACE-COM. This leads us to conclude that socio-economic issues play different roles according to the general context in which they are situated, thereby preventing us from trying to deduce any macro-theory of the monitoring of conflicts from our study. On the contrary, we have been led to analyse more thoroughly the specificities of certain combinations between the idiosyncratic situation of each conflict and the European environment where they take place.

Our review and critique of existing monitoring systems, as well as the results gathered during the project, allowed us to point at key issues and aspects to be considered when building the Peace-com monitoring system:

- Indicators on conflicts vs. indicators of violence

We aim at monitoring conflicts, not only levels of violence. This choice deserves some explanations. Most early warning systems have been designed in order to monitor violent conflicts, when some conflicts covered in the PEACE-COM project have never been violent in the generally accepted meaning of the term. One could argue that this diversity begs for the inclusion of indicators related to violence in the monitoring system, precisely in order to be able to understand the variety of situations. However, the primary aim of a monitoring system is to allow tracking escalating or de-escalating trends in a given conflict, not to perform comparative analysis between violent and non-violent conflicts – although the results obtained from the testing of the monitoring system allow for some comparative perspective. By postulating that violence is an output of a conflict among others and not one of its dimensions, we are therefore able not monitor violent as well as non-violent conflicts over time

For this reason, we decided not to include factual indicators on the level or type of violence that each conflict displays in the monitoring system. Rather, we focused on indicators pertaining to the dimensions of conflict. This stance has important consequences for instance when we are considering the gender dimension of monitoring (see below), since for instance it takes the focus away from analysing the types of violence performed or the identity of the victims in order to put the dynamics of the conflict in the forefront.

- Assessing the accessibility of data

Bearing in mind that we should integrate qualitative and quantitative data, both types of data have been included in the monitoring system. The relevant criteria for the selection of

data include not only their link to the indicators which are being monitored, but also their easy access. For quantitative data, we assumed that the users of the monitoring systems were in most cases not in the position to conduct surveys, or did not have time for it. Therefore, we included quantitative indicators which can be easily documented, most of them from the Internet: data on GNP, Gini index or literacy level are monitored by such organizations as the World Bank. Qualitative data dealing with the points of view of the various sides involved in the conflict (see below) can be accessible mostly through the discourses of such actors, which have also been analysed in PEACE-COM.

- Measuring the impact of Europeanization

We aim at assessing the impact of Europeanization on the various conflicts covered by the project, which led us to introduce a specific set of indicators covering this process. This commitment required us to develop an analysis of the links between the Europeanization process and community conflicts in Europe: here the concept of Europeanization does not refer primarily to the European construction and integration, but to the Europeanization of conflicts, that is the process through which the European dimension has an impact on the conflict situation. Such links between the evolution of community conflicts and the Europeanization process can indeed be sorted in a typology, which allows us to develop specific indicators related to the Europeanization process:

Firstly, Europeanization refers to the accession or association negotiations for countries which are not part of the EU yet. The literature on conflicts stresses the de-escalating role of such negotiations, yet they only concern a few cases in the conflicts covered in PEACE-COM; moreover, the Cypriot case exemplifies the fact that accession negotiation do not alone lead to a final settlement in a community conflict.

Secondly, the EU can be actively involved in helping parties in conflict reach a settlement, either by acting as a third-party mediator, or by promoting accommodation policies aimed at mitigating tensions. The allocation of so-called “peace funds” is often one of the most visible aspects of such involvement of the EU in the conflict. It is not limited to member states and not even to the periphery of the EU.

Thirdly, the Europeanization process can be assessed in the implementation at the national and local level of European policies in member states. Not all such policies are relevant for the monitoring of a conflict: the most decisive are policies pertaining to the protection of minorities and minority languages on the one hand, since they change the normative framework within which member states deal with their minorities. On the other hand, redistributive policies such as structural funds can also play an important part in improving the economy of regions impoverished by conflicts. Other policies may also have an impact by modifying the structural or discursive environment where the conflict takes place, such as the policies promoting gender equality or women’s rights: yet the literature on conflicts seldom gives any indication on how these policies may impact on the escalation or de-escalation of community conflicts per se.

Lastly, the Europeanization process includes a change in how actors involved in a community conflict frame the situation in order to include the European level, which in turn allows them to develop strategies directed at European institutions. This orientation can be assessed in the representations of key actors such as the elites, or in political

mechanisms such as the tendency of political parties to mobilize not only at the national, regional and local level, but also at the European level – for instance by belonging to a Eurogroup at the European Parliament. It is important to note that such indicators do not necessarily refer to peace factors: for instance, parties representing one side in a community conflict may find themselves reinforced by teaming with like-minded parties at the European level.

From this typology, one can draw several conclusions regarding the impact of the Europeanization process on community conflicts and therefore on how to include indicators pertaining to Europeanization in the monitoring system:

- the Europeanization process concerns both regions within and outside the EU, although not with the same mechanisms;
  - it includes both institutional changes and symbolic aspects through the transformation of representations and discourses;
  - the Europeanization process is not to be mistaken for a peace factor. In many cases, it may even lead to an escalation of a community conflict, either by empowering local actors to continue the conflict or by not providing them with the aid and tools that they would need in order to bring about a settlement. As we will see in the case of accommodation policies, the absence of European policies may in this case be an escalating factor, yet it is difficult to measure for monitoring purposes.
- Measuring the impact of accommodation policies

We have also expressed our commitment to include in the monitoring system not only the outcome of indicators describing the conflict, but also the one of peace factors. Among them, the actual or potential effects of accommodation policies – including counter-productive effects – are particularly interesting to document.

The tools of public policy analysis as well as the other results of the project have allowed us to design indicators measuring the impact of accommodation policies on community conflicts. Firstly, it is important to note that accommodation policies are supposed to have a de-escalating effect on conflicts: measuring the absence of effect or escalating effect that they may have is therefore related to unforeseen effects of these policies or to policy failures. Indicators related to accommodation policies in the monitoring system are therefore normative by essence – as opposed to all other dimensions covered in the monitoring system, for which impact measurement is disconnected from a preconceived notion of how they should interfere in the evolution of the conflict.

The literature on accommodation policies has helped us establish a typology of their most common themes, targets and tools. Among them aid for reconstruction, to the reintegration of former combatants or victim relief, as well as Truth and Reconciliation commissions are popular directions for accommodation policies, and they have often been transferred from one conflict to another, with various results. Accommodation policies may also aim at improving dialogue between communities in conflict through forums and spaces for dialogue.

We have distinguished between accommodation policies and an actual peace process, since accommodation policies do not aim systematically at reaching a final settlement: some of them may be targeted at a reduction of violence for instance, or at an improved management of non-violent tensions between communities. This distinction has allowed us to monitor the effects of major peace processes as well as of smaller scale initiatives taken at the local level or covering only one specific aspect of the conflict.

Our goal has been to measure the outcomes of accommodation policies on community conflicts, not to analyse the whole policy cycle of peace processes. For this reason, we did not include indicators pertaining to decision-making processes surrounding these accommodation policies in order to focus on their implementation. However, it is important to verify whether they have been implemented in a situation of consensus or whether some actors involved in the conflict have felt estranged from them, which would greatly reduce their efficiency.

- Integrating different kinds of data in the monitoring system

When we defined the scope and nature of the monitoring system, we opted for a multi-dimensional approach in which we defined that we ought to take into account three different kinds of data:

1. Monitoring aspects of the conflict refers to monitoring how the conflict manifests itself overtime: these descriptive indicators allow us to break the multiple aspects a given situation into smaller units that can be compared to each other and assessed separately, as we have seen previously. Here the structural conditions in which the conflict is taking place, which are the main focus of most early warning systems, are "unclustered" in order to monitor specific aspects separately. The shortcoming of this analytical method is that we do not address the interrelations between these specific aspects, and therefore we are not able to take "explosive combinations" as units for monitoring the conflict.

2. We also monitor triggering factors induce change within the conflict situation, or prevent it. These indicators refer to destabilizing events. The emphasis of our monitoring tool is put on such events: we postulate that the so-called structural conditions of the conflicts actually manifest themselves through events that may be repeated over time.

3. Finally, it is important to include within the scope of analysis the perception that various actors have of the conflict, which includes three aspects:

- The main paradigm refers to how within each "camp" the conflict is mainly framed at a moment in time.
- The perception of Self in relation to the Other can help predict how negotiation and/or collaboration with the "other side" or the adversary can occur.
- Within-community differentiation or factional predominance allows us to gain depth in our understanding of the perception of actors, since these perceptions are not unified but themselves the subjects of conflicts (quarrel of interpretation about the conflict).

- Taking the perceptions of actors into account

This last commitment to take the perception of actors into account brings up considerable difficulties and questions. Two options are here available: either to associate to each case study a number of monitoring system forms filled out from the point of view of a variety of actors, or to incorporate the perception of actors in the monitoring system itself by translating it into indicators of diverging representations.

The first option seems at first glance to be very promising, since it allows materializing how both “sides” in a conflict can perceive entirely different realities and feel threatened by different aspects of the conflict situation. This might lead to conflict escalation and is certainly a factor rendering accommodation and settlement more difficult to reach. However, such choice creates new issues, since then we have no way of deciding how we synthesize diverging views of the situation into a single monitoring system form, unless for instance we dismiss minoritarian views and take into account the representations of the most powerful actors for each given dimension.

The second option involves introducing the perception of actors in the items proposed in the monitoring system. Obviously there is a clear divergence of objectives between the thick-case analysis and the EWS. The case study aims at gaining an in-depth understanding of the dimensions and mechanisms of the evolution of a given conflict in time. On the other hand the monitoring system must be synthetic so that it can concentrate on predicting possible evolutions of the conflict. Therefore, we chose not to introduce a systematic comparison of the points of view of all actors, but rather to rely on the synthetic description performed by case experts. However, at some points in the monitoring system, situations relating to the perception of one or several actors have been introduced. Whether this is enough to address the complex issues created by different interpretations of the same situation and to track how they impact on the escalation or de-escalation of the conflict - is open to question. This has allowed us to render visible the fact that some actors play a greater role in the escalation or the de-escalation of a conflict. Among the most influential actors, intellectuals and politicians were said to play a great role, while others such as groupuscules or civil society seem to have a limited influence.

### **3.7.2. Presentation of the global results**

The monitoring system in its original form has been tested on 10 cases: Basque Country, Belgium, both cases of Cyprus and Northern Cyprus, Estonia, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Sandzac, the Slovene minority in Austria and Vojvodina. Indeed the testing process involved several phases: the monitoring system was first tested on the cases of Northern Ireland and Estonia, and then other teams applied it to their own case studies. After the testing phase, the monitoring system has been finalized with the objective of providing a clear and easy to use instrument for early warning purposes.

An easy way to materialize the probable evolution of the conflict is to assess how escalating factors and de-escalating factors contribute to the current trends. Obviously they do not in reality add up to each other, yet it is clear that situations of stalemate can result from highly escalating dimensions being neutralized by highly de-escalating ones. Therefore, it makes sense to apply scores to the dimensions according to their expected impact on the conflict (escalating, de-escalating, disputable), in order to obtain a more general score which will indicate the probable evolution of the conflict.

The testing phase has demonstrated that it was much easier to assess the impact of the most salient dimensions because they materialize in triggering events which case study experts are used to associate with escalation or de-escalation. On the other hand, indicators which are considered to have a low impact on the conflict are much harder to trace, and are likely to have a disputable effect – if any – on the conflict. Therefore, it makes sense to give more weight to the most important indicators, which will compensate for the relative uncertainty surrounding more limited impacts.

We have therefore adopted the following mode of calculation:

High escalating impact: + 4

Medium escalating impact: + 2

Low escalating impact: + 1

Not applicable, disputable effect: 0

Low de-escalating impact: - 1

Medium de-escalating impact: - 2

High de-escalating impact: - 4

- Going beyond escalation or de-escalation: identifying key issues pertaining to the evolution of the conflict

In our monitoring system, we chose – as is done in other EWS – to calculate a grade for each conflict which would indicate a level of conflict or a level of escalation at a given moment in time. However, our commitment to take multidimensionality into account prevents us from claiming that all dimensions add up and balance each other in a simple way. Rather, what appeared very clearly in the first results of the testing phase, is that for each case a limited number of indicators play a major role. Some of them are highly idiosyncratic, and some of them are more generic. Therefore, the monitoring system may become predictive not just by grading conflicts on a single scale, but also by telling us where to look for the most likely outcomes in the table. Its goal is not to provide a simplistic overview of the case studies, but to help its users hierarchising information.

For this reason, the attribution to each indicator of a level of significance is a very important step which has a major impact on the final result. We have therefore aimed at reducing the level of uncertainty attached to the significance of indicators by trying as much as possible to avoid the status “disputable”. “Good” indicators are the ones in which a clear pattern emerges from the various cases studies. This is not the case when all of them point to the same answer (in which case it is generic and does not tell us anything about the specific evolution of the conflict): for example, concerning the indicator “Existence of a discourse of past injustices”, all five case studies have attached a medium escalating role. On the other hand, the most useful indicators point to a set of clearly differentiated situations. Such is the case for the indicator “Existence of contested borders and territories”, to which the Northern Irish, Basque and Cypriot cases attach a high escalating significance, when the Slovene case, in which “there are no contested borders and territories”, gives it a low de-escalating significance.



- Escalating conflicts

As is expectable, the most salient dimensions are the ones that contribute most often to the escalation of conflicts. Such is the case for the dimension of identity, which often plays a strongly escalating role in the cases covered. Yet, it is usually not a single dimension that is responsible for the escalation of a conflict but rather the interplay between various issues.

<b>Belgium</b>	
Dimension	Score
Identity	23
Socio-economic geography	14
Political	-2
External	-8
EU	0
Accommodation	-1
Total	26

The Belgian conflict is escalating mostly because of the prevalence of identity issues, but socio-economic dimensions also contribute to fuelling the conflict. The low scores of the dimensions of Europeanization and accommodation policies reflect a situation in which few peace initiatives have been initiated by the EU or international community in order to mitigate or settle the conflict.

<b>Estonia</b>	
Dimension	Score
Identity	21
Socio-economic geography	-7
Political	10
External	2
EU	-6
Accommodation	-2
Total	18

In Estonia, it is the combination between identity issues and political issues that keeps the conflict escalating. Yet socio-economic and territory issues contribute to a de-escalation of the conflict.

<b>Cyprus</b>	
Dimension	Score
Identity	43
Socio-economic geography	19
Political	31
External	10
EU	-5
Accommodation	5
Total	103

<b>North Cyprus</b>	
Dimension	Score
Identity	41
Socio-economic geography	19
Political	32
External	6
EU	-4
Accommodation	5
Total	99

Both sides of the Cypriot conflict are experiencing a situation of escalation, which results from the combination of identity issues, political issues as well as socio-economic and territory issues. Few peace factors mitigate this escalating situation, and accommodation policies have a counter-productive output.

<b>Kosovo</b>	
Dimension	Score
Identity	28
Socio-economic geography	14
Political	23
External	31
EU	-6
Accommodation	-4
Total	86

Similarly, the conflict in Kosovo is escalating due to a combination of factors pertaining to identity and political issues, as well as socio-economic and territory issues. However, the Kosovo case is remarkable because of the high escalating impact of external factors.

<b>Sandzak</b>	
Dimension	Score
Identity	0
Socio-economic geography	5
Political	24
External	31
EU	-7
Accommodation	-3
Total	50

These external factors are also present in the region of Sandzac, but they are not combined with the same explosive combination of identity issues and socio-economic and territorial issues.

○ De-escalating conflicts

<b>Northern Ireland</b>	
Dimension	Score
Identity	27
Socio-economic geography	-3
Political	-13
External	-30
EU	-11
Accommodation	-11
Total	-41

The de-escalation of the conflict in Northern Ireland is caused by the fact that apart from identity issues, all other dimensions of the conflict contribute to it. The external dimension is particularly de-escalating.

<b>Basque Country</b>	
Dimension	Score
Identity	-24
Socio-economic geography	-7
Political	-41
External	-17
EU	-12
Accommodation	-6
Total	-107

The conflict in the Basque Country is de-escalating since all dimensions show the same trend. We should however notice the relatively high proportion of missing or “Not Applicable” answers in the monitoring form.

<b>Slovene minority</b>	
Dimension	Score
Identity	21
Socio-economic geography	-8
Political	-10
External	-9
EU	-7
Accommodation	-4
Total	-17

Like in Northern Ireland, in the case of the Slovene minority in Austria, escalating trends pertaining to identity issues are mitigated by the de-escalation of all other dimensions of the conflict.

<b>Vojvodina</b>	
Dimension	Score
Identity	-20
Socio-economic geography	9
Political	8
External	-13
EU	-15
Accommodation	-9
Total	-40

The Vojvodina conflict shows an original situation in which the identity dimension actually does not contribute to the escalation of the conflict. The most contentious issues in the conflict are today socio-economic and territorial ones, as well as political ones, but peace factors (especially pertaining to Europeanization) lead to a general de-escalation of the conflict.

### 3.7.3. Integrating the Gender Dimension

The question of how gender issues could be monitored was raised, and it is not easily answered. Two solutions are available:

- treating gender as a specific dimension of the conflict, which means introducing a cluster of gender-specific indicators in the monitoring system
- considering gender as a cross-cutting aspect of all dimensions (e.g. identity, political, socio-economic), which means adopting a posture of gender mainstreaming throughout the monitoring system, asking for each dimension how it results from gender patterns.

- Theoretical issues pertaining to gender and community conflicts

Before choosing between both options, it is important to explore fundamental issues to be taken into account when considering this task of monitoring gender aspects of community conflicts:

- “Gender” does not mean “women”. In fact, it can be argued that some gendered patterns such as segregation in public spaces can be more easily tracked using indicators pertaining to women than men – since gender-specific prohibitions tend to be more often targeted at women. Yet it is as important to understand how men are involved as such in community conflicts as it is for women. Moreover, if we adopt a constructivist perspective on the birth and reproduction of gendered categories, we ought to acknowledge the fact that masculinities and femininities are mobilized and shaped by community conflicts in a dynamic fashion. This results in considering that gendered patterns in conflicts are not limited to a set of binary categories – men and women – defined in relation and in opposition to each other. Rather, the literature on gender and conflicts shows that different archetypes of men and women are mobilized in the actors’ discourses, such as in the case of the differentiation between mothers sacrificing their children to the cause or raising sons to pursue the fight on the one hand and women taking up arms alongside men on the other hand. These archetypes can cohabite in a single conflict, therefore providing actors engaged in the conflict with a set of gendered models.
- Gender-specific mechanisms of community conflicts should appear clearly in the monitoring system, since the objective is to take them seriously and not to pay mere lip service to a generic requirement to take gender issues into account. This commitment appears at first glance to speak against the option of gender mainstreaming, since it is often the case that a decision to consider gender as a cross-cutting issue results in a situation in which it is nowhere actually taken into account.
- Even though there is a growing body of literature studying gendered aspects of community conflicts – especially armed conflicts -, we are limited by the fact that there is currently no comprehensive theory of how gendered issues contribute to the evolution of conflicts. Most research on gender and conflicts has in fact dealt with how the conflict manifests itself in gendered ways, with an important literature on the victimology of women and more recently on women as perpetrators of violence. Similarly, the research on masculinity and conflicts has so far mostly focused on men and violence. This contradicts our theoretical choice not to monitor violence but dimensions of the conflict, and sheds light on a major hole in the literature on gender and conflicts. To say it otherwise, even though we begin to have a pretty good idea of how conflicts affect women and men in different ways, we have no idea of how issues affecting women and men in different ways contribute to the escalation or de-escalation of community conflicts. For instance, the existence of women’s movements in regions where conflicts take place should not be considered as a de-escalating factor, since these movements may very well mobilize in favour of the conflict. This is a limitation of the monitoring system which cannot be overcome: it bears on the current results of the research on conflicts, and should therefore be updated with further progress in this field.

- Constructing gender-specific indicators within the framework of the monitoring system

Given this lack of comprehensive theory of how gender patterns affect the evolution of community conflicts, it appears difficult to treat gender as a dimension of conflict in the same fashion that we have with identity, political and socio-economic issues. The best results that can be obtained as of now can be reached by identifying gendered patterns in each dimension already covered in the monitoring system:

- Identity issues encompass gendered patterns in several ways. Gender-specific organization may cut across community or ethnic divides: this is especially the case for women's associations.
- In conflict situations, the use of stigmatizing gender stereotypes is a common way to vilify the other side: therefore, we can deduce that the spreading and radicalisation of such stereotypes is an escalating factor for the conflict.
- Conflict situations also involve a radicalisation of gender stereotypes within each community, generally by promoting traditional gender roles. Other, conflict-related gender stereotypes may also be spread, especially in situations of violent conflicts where stereotypes related to gendered combatants and/or victims become widespread.
- Worsening socio-economic conditions for one category of individuals are likely to affect the conflict when they parallel communitarian divides. Women are often concerned by a higher unemployment rate than men: in communities already affected by higher unemployment rate, this contributes to the impoverishment of households.
- Public policies may directly or indirectly tackle socio-economic inequalities between communities: for instance, gender equality programmes are likely to promote women's employment and therefore to contribute to improving the socio-economic status of the poorer community.
- Community conflict situations are characterized by an unrepresentative political system, where one share of the population is excluded from representation either de jure or de facto. Women are one category which is particularly interesting to consider in order to identify these patterns of exclusion.
- Finally, the literature on gender and conflicts shows that accommodation policies often fail to include a gender perspective, which is a factor of inefficiency. This inclusion not only materializes in specific aid for women, but also in associating women to policy design. In this perspective, our research shows that accommodation policies including programmes aimed at men specifically and not only women are the most likely to tackle gender aspects of the conflict.

#### **3.7.4. The Monitoring System as a Key Policy Tool**

Designing a monitoring system is a tricky business since the users of such tool – who in general are stakeholders in the conflict with a specific interest in bringing about peace – tend to expect too little and too much from it. They expect little when they assume that it will not provide them with any new information on a conflict which they already know



very well, being experts in the case study, but only a mere evaluation of its escalation or de-escalation. Yet the monitoring system can also be used as a tool telling readers where to look for in order to identify key issues likely to cause the conflict to escalate or de-escalate. Moreover, by integrating a comprehensive and comparative way to consider community conflicts in Europe, it forces users to reconsider their previous conceptions of what the conflict is about – since community conflicts articulate several dimensions which render them more complicated than situations labelled as “religious conflicts” or “remnants from colonial situations”. It also tells to look beyond some preconceived divisions between violent and non-violent conflicts, or beyond conflicts within and outside the European Union.

However, users of monitoring systems expect too much when they ask these tools to provide them with explanations on how and why are various dimensions of conflicts connected to each other. It is not the purpose of a monitoring system to explain how some political aspects of the conflict in fact reflect socio-economic issues, for instance. Even if the quest for understanding domino effects is very important in the analysis of community conflicts, it should not lead us to falsely assume that one dimension commands all others at a deeper level. Similarly, users of monitoring systems expect too much when they hope to find in them clues about what to do in order to bring about peace. A monitoring system functions as a reminder of dimensions to be considered and helps hierarchizing between them, but it does not provide directions for action.

From a scientific perspective, designing a monitoring system has proved to be an excellent way to review existing theories on conflict escalation and de-escalation and to assess their compatibility with each other. Some intuitive results have been confirmed, such as the one claiming that it only takes one escalating side for the conflict itself to escalate. While testing the monitoring system on their case study, the Belgian team noticed that most answers would differ would the form be filled from a Dutch or a Walloon perspective. This is not a problem if one side at least considers the situation to be escalating, as in the Dutch case – the high saliency of the so-called “security dilemmas” lead us to conclude that if one side perceives threats of an escalating conflict, this has in turn escalating effects. This result has important consequences for the applicability of the monitoring system: since we rely on the opinion of case study experts to apply the monitoring system, we indeed simplify the perception that actors engaged in the conflict have of the situation. Knowing that this simplification does not endanger the capacity of the monitoring system to formulate a prognostic is of paramount importance for us.

Designing and testing the monitoring system has also allowed us to point at holes in the available research on the mechanisms of conflict escalation and de-escalation. Firstly, we have demonstrated that Europeanization and accommodation policies are actual dimensions of conflicts and ought to be treated as such: not only can they occasionally contribute to conflict escalation when policies happen to have counter-productive results, but their absence can cause conflict escalation in some cases. This remark points to promising directions in the analysis of community conflict dynamics in Europe. Secondly, we have verified that gendered aspects of conflict escalation and de-escalation are still largely unknown: the construction of gender patterns in societies divided by a community conflict as well as gendered discourses on communities and conflicts are two fields which

appear particularly promising to investigate. The greatest challenge ahead is to be able to integrate them into a comprehensive theoretical framework.

Lastly, monitoring systems offer fruitful objects for raising key epistemological questions related to conflict studies and especially to the normativity displayed in a great deal of the literature on conflicts. It often appears self-evident to study conflicts from a point of view valuing peace as a normal and desirable state of affairs from which some regions have unfortunately departed. Most research carried on violent means of actions and the actors likely to resort to them implicitly state the fact that the world would be a better place if they had chosen non-violence instead, and that therefore non-violent ways of expressing disagreements and pushing claims forward should be privileged. The limitations of this implicit normative referent for the study of community conflicts are obvious: they prevent us from fully grasping in a comprehensive fashion the worldviews and representations of actors who are most responsible for conflict escalation and whose participation is most needed for any peace process to succeed. In the case of monitoring systems, we are dealing with tools which are intrinsically normative since they aim at measuring how a given situation departs from a peaceful and stable equilibrium. By forcing us to face this normative framework of thought, we are led to better explore how it shapes not only our understanding of community conflict situations, but also our imaginaries of peace and conflicts.

## 4. Conclusions and Policy Implications

In this chapter we summarise our conclusions from our research and discuss their policy implications.

### *4.1. Some Key Conclusions on Community Conflicts*

Research undertaken in PEACE-COM has shown are strong variations in the appraisal of the relevance of dimensions or “causes” for each conflict, between actors in conflict, which should not come as a surprise, and which illustrates clearly that most of these conflicts are also conflicts about what the conflict is about. There are also striking discrepancies between actors’ and experts’ views on the conflicts. Actors on the ground tend to see conflicts as highly multi-causal, whereas experts focus on a limited number of key dimensions. In particular, on average experts give less importance to political dimensions than do conflict actors. Our research therefore pleads for a systematic integration of actors’ views and perceptions in the conception and implementation of peace programmes, and for further research on reasons for divergences in experts’ and actors’ opinions, as they may explain controversies and unexpected consequences of policies designed to accommodate these conflicts.

Second, our research shows that the lists of conflict dimensions provided in the literature do not provide a sufficiently adequate and encompassing account of conflicts causes and issues. Taking into account research done on the twelve case studies covered by PEACE-COM, we have subsequently put the stress on the need to better include factors such as:

- Diasporas, which should be dissociated from motherland/fatherland. While Diasporas and border communities admittedly refer to relatively close processes and actors, there are strong differences between on the one hand actors involved in Diasporas or bordering communities, and on the other hand motherland/fatherland involvement;
- The Europeanisation process, as its impact is partly independent from the other conflict dimensions previously identified. Europeanisation can lead to an escalation or a de-escalation of a given conflict, and amongst other impacts, the Europeanisation process can provoke a change in the way actors frame the situation, which in turn allows them to develop strategies directed at European institutions. As such, Europeanisation can both be an issue and a cause of conflicts, as well as a major factor in their development;
- Accommodation policies. Indeed, conflicts, or more precisely actors in conflict, adapt their actions, discourses and claims to accommodation policies implemented by national and international agencies. In that sense, we think that accommodation policies in their various shapes, whether initiated and implemented by national actors only, or by international organisations, should be treated as full dimensions of conflicts rather as “solutions” administered independently and neutrally;

Third, PEACE-COM has further explored the escalating or de-escalating impacts of conflict dimensions or 'features'. It concludes at the need to better research the interplay between different kinds of elements, most notably the representations held by the actors, and the interaction with other dimensions, for instance the evolution of the context in which they are embedded. In most cases examined in PEACE-COM, these elements have different, sometimes contradicting, impacts on the development of conflicts, and no simple and general rule can be drawn. Conflicts are always multi-causal and evolving, and all dimensions may be considered as root causes, as triggering or as soothing factors, or all at the same time. An adequate framework for analysis of conflicts should therefore be multidimensional, dynamic and multileveled, in order to grasp and account for this complexity.

Finally, our research has shown that the internationalisation trend that can be witnessed in many conflict situations is the result of a convergence between strategies developed by internal and external actors. However, there are several configurations of internationalisation, according to the capacity of local actors to attract international attention, and to the willingness of external actors to intervene or to co-operate. It has to be noted that the shape of this internationalization, and not only its actual existence or not, is partly determined by perceptions at the international level, for instance by perceptions on the ability of a given state to deal with a given conflict. A NATO or a UN intervention in Northern Ireland would have thus been unlikely, whereas a specific funding program for peace activities launched by the European Union is considered as being perfectly acceptable. Such a pattern is very common in Europe, as shown by the Belgian case, where the highly conflictual case of the French speaking community living in the periphery of Brussels has been carefully and discretely dealt with by the Council of Europe, because of an enduring taboo against international intervention in "developed" countries.

## ***4.2. Accommodation Policies: Evaluations and Suggestions***

In PEACE-COM, we have put the stress on the question of evaluation of accommodation policies, both past and on-going, in order to learn more about the reasons for success and of failure of implemented policies. Questions about the assessment of the various accommodation policies implemented policies have been asked both in the questionnaire survey and during the interviews with the case study experts.

The first thing to note is that if accommodation policies are no exception in the tendency of conflict actors to polarising issues and problems (in many cases, when one “camp” sees an initiative as positive, then the other is likely to view it negatively), some accommodation initiatives also generate strongly negative assessments in all concerned camps. In other words, most accommodation policies are either the focus of contradictory assessments, depending on the “camp” who is talking, or they are rejected by all sides. In Cyprus for instance, many questionnaire respondents on both sides (North and South) mentioned the Annan Plan as a “bad case” of accommodation policies. In the same manner, in Austria questionnaire respondents very often mentioned the setting up of bilingual signposts as a bad case, either because they were simply against it, or because they thought that this incompletely implemented initiative was a failure.

One of the main problems of accommodation initiatives and policies thus seems to be the lack of domestic support they manage to convey. This lack of domestic support can often be explained by the difficulties encountered during the implementation phase of these policies, and by the disappointment these difficulties generate among those who had hoped for a quick change. This kind of disenchantment process is obvious in many cases covered by our project: obviously in Cyprus, where Northern Cypriots resent the non implementation of the Annan Plan; in Austria regarding the setting up of bilingual signposts, as mentioned above; to a certain extent in Northern Ireland, where the difficulties of the implementation of the 1998 agreements, and in particular of decommissioning have encouraged pessimism among the Protestant/loyalist population; in Vojvodina, where the setting up of National Councils for Ethnic Minorities was welcomed by most, but later generated disappointment because they do not function properly, etc.

Experts also identified problems in the setting up or implementation of accommodation policies that are actually encountered in many cases. The five most-often quoted problems are:

- that Civil Society actors are excluded from accommodation initiatives in most cases (and most interviewees agree that their involvement would be beneficial); in other words, accommodation policies are very “political” and institutional (as described in the first section of this deliverable), mainly “top-down”, as if conflicts were the results of the actions of political leaders only. This goes against most conflict analysis work that has been done so far on the causes of conflicts;
- that politicians are not the ideal actors to carry out accommodation initiatives (because they often follow a “hidden agenda”, and hold a short term vision of the problem, etc.), but it is mostly them who are in charge of their negotiation and implementation;
- that international attention is very often short-lived, and corresponds to strong escalatory phases or outbursts of violence of a given conflict, when what is needed is a

- more long-term commitment so as to 1) put adequate and renewed pressure on conflict actors, and 2) guarantee and ensure the implementation of accommodation policies;
- that in many cases “quick-fix” solutions (like the sending of peace-keeping forces, security measures, financial endowments, etc.) are preferred to long-term efforts (working on the root causes, structural prevention of conflict, etc.). Initiatives are not coherent in time and rarely carried out consistently to the end (very few insistence on conflict resolution);
  - finally, and this problem is related to the previous, many experts interviewed stressed the fact that accommodation initiatives should always be accompanied by follow-up measures in order to succeed (e.g. to create a genuine dialogue between the two communities in Estonia after the OSCE intervention, or to establish contacts between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots after the opening of the borders). This is especially true for international intervention with regard to which most interviewees agreed that “others cannot do the job for us”.

Further to this general assessment, we have examined case by case examples of “good” and “bad” practices in accommodation policies. This in-depth analysis reveals that if there is no ready-made recipe for success, there are patterns or configurations in which a given accommodation policy is more likely to succeed. On other hand there are obviously, if not recipe for disaster, at least measures that should be avoided if further tension or escalation of the conflict wants to be avoided.

According to our findings, there are three main cases in which accommodation initiatives or policies have been judged as successful by most conflict actors and experts:

- when small scale measures are implemented, which are not costly for the given society, which benefit to all sides of the conflict, and which are not seen as major endeavours towards one side or another. The use of the term “small scale” is not to be equated here with unimportant. In fact, most of these “small scale” successes are highly politically significant, because they show that accommodation and compromise are possible, and that accommodation initiatives and policies do not necessarily benefit to one side only, namely, that one can move from a “zero sum game” to a “win-win” situation;
- the second instance of success is when the accommodation initiative or policy is able to bring about a triangularisation of the conflict, in other words when an action or a policy is initiated from the outside, by an external actor which can pose itself, it not as neutral, at least as external to the conflict;
- the third instance of success is when there is a strong effort to include all relevant actors in the negotiation and implementation process, even the most violent ones, and when there is no taboo as to the policy sectors and issues that the accommodation policy can address. Examples of these successes are not very numerous, even if there is a growing tendency in policy-making cycles to accept the necessary multilevel and encompassing nature of peace agreements;

Besides these examples of success, numerous examples of failures were given by our interviewees and by respondents to the questionnaire survey. If we except cases of biased accommodation policies (favouring only one side of the conflict, or perceived as such by a

significant number of actors), there are two main instances in which accommodation policies seem to be doomed to failure:

- first, when the answer given to the crisis seems unsuited to the stakes and issues, more particularly when it is too radical and excessive, for instance when central power reacts to peaceful demonstrations by sending the army;
- second, when stakes and issues of the conflict are so intertwined that it is next to impossible to deal with one specific issue without generating a general uproar. In such a situation, political imagination is required, and accommodation policies have to be carefully tailored to the specificities of each conflict, even when they deal with an issue until then considered as of secondary importance.

In addition to these two specific cases of failure, there were also numerous examples quoted by our interviewees and questionnaire respondents where policies failed because of local opposition: for instance in Austria, where the policy concerning the setting up of bilingual signposts is not implemented because of the opposition of the German speaking community; in Cyprus where the Annan Plan failed because of the opposition of a part of the Greek Cypriot Community; in Sandžak where religious teaching, perceived as undermining the communities' identities, has seemingly led to a further radicalisation of the communities, etc.

Overall, it is the lack of bottom-up measures and the lack or insufficient inclusion of local actors in the negotiation and implementation of accommodation policies which is most often quoted when trying to explain policy failures. Local actors have to be included and “empowered” in order to be convinced of the righteousness of a given policy.

The non-inclusion of civil society actors in discussions, and the top-down style of peace negotiations and processes seem to be one of the main explanations for the failure to reach an agreement, or for the difficulties in implementing it. A similar position is held as far as the implementation of policies is concerned. In the eyes of many interviewees as well as of conflict actors, the implementation phase, just as the negotiation phase, should rely more on local and civil society actors, instead of sticking to a top-down style of policy, and of treating local actors as pure underlings.

In sum, our research has shown that the multidimensional and dynamic character of community conflicts should be fully taken into account in the setting up of accommodation policies, which should thus:

- (a) be all-embracing (must consider all the dimensions of a given conflict, must also consider all the intervening parties);
- (b) not consider that there is a “single best recipe” (because of the variety of shapes conflicts can take, but also because they should take into account the fact that the different stages of (de-)escalation, call for different initiatives);
- (c) be regularly assessed (monitored), because through time the ‘configuration’ of the conflict is quite likely to have changed – and thus would call for another accommodation “package”;

On the whole, the content of community conflicts, their degree of violent escalation, their capacity to reach accommodation, do not only depend on « objective » factors, such as economic deprivation, violation of minority rights and identity, contested territories, population shifts, foreign interference, etc., but also on the perceptions of the main actors involved in these conflicts of these “objective” factors. These objective factors are interpreted differently by each community, and framed in discourses that offer a legitimizing explanation to the community in terms of the nature of the conflict, the nature and objectives of the opposing camps, the legitimacy of the community claims, the choice of means of action, and the need and acceptability of accommodation policies. It is therefore crucial to examine, understand and take into account the interplay between ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ factors of conflict, in order to design adequate responses to escalation phenomena, and to appease existing tensions.



## 5. Dissemination and/or Exploitation of Results

The PEACE-COM project has sought and continues to seek the dissemination of its results through various means. In this chapter we outline what forms of dissemination that have been undertaken by the project and its individual partners during the project's lifetime and those planned in the mid-term future following the completion of the project's contractual period.

### *5.1. Workshops and Conferences*

PEACE-COM organised 7 own workshops, conferences or panels:

- The first took place in June 2005 in Nicosia and included presentations by PEACE-COM partners on the project's preliminary findings as well as presentations by external participants working on similar topics. The workshop, "Community Conflicts in the Post-Soviet Era", was supported by INTAS. The agenda of this meeting can be downloaded at the project's Web Site.
- The second, "Community Conflicts in Europe - Examining Divergences and Convergences", hosted by the ICCR, took place in Vienna the 1st December 2005. The agenda of this meeting can be downloaded at the project's Web Site.
- A seminar on the PEACE-COM project and its results was organised during the first Graduate Conference of the ECPR in Essex in September 2006. It was entitled "Violent and Non-Violent Nationalist Conflicts in Europe". The seminar was open to researchers and students.
- The project results were the subject of a workshop organised during the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops that was held in Helsinki in May 2007. The workshop, entitled "Community Conflicts in the context of European integration – Dimensions, Divergences and Convergences" gathered 15 researchers from the PEACE-COM consortium, as well as a comparable figure of external researchers and postgraduate students.
- The PEACE-COM consortium also presented the project's results during a panel organised in the framework of the Congrès des Associations Francophones de Science Politique held in Québec in May 2007. The panel, entitled "Conflicts communautaires et mobilisations collectives" allowed 7 PEACE-COM researchers to present the results of the project regarding the application of the sociology of mobilisation to the study of conflicts.
- A panel entitled "Seeking Support or Avoiding Interference? The Internationalization Dilemma in Community Conflicts" was organised in the framework of the ECPR General Conference organised in Pisa in September 2007. It allowed several PEACE-COM researchers and post-graduate students to present hypotheses and results regarding the internationalisation of conflicts in contemporary Europe.

- A seminar entitled “Peace-keeping and intervention policies: evaluation of their impact and improving evaluation tools” was organised at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in November 2007. It was attended by some 40 Israeli and Palestinian researchers who discussed with two PEACE-COM consortium members the results of the project and their transferability to the situation in the Middle-East.
- The final results of the PEACE-COM project were presented at a policy seminar organised in Brussels in September 2007. This seminar was primarily attended by policy-makers, but also by researchers. The agenda of this meeting can be downloaded at the project’s Web Site.

In addition to above, the PEACE-COM project’s results were presented at the following forums:

- ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, Granada, Spain, Workshop “Patterns of Regional Democracies”, 14-19 avril 2005. Paper presented by Elise Féron, « The Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland : A model for regional democracy ? »
- Seminar organised at the Institute of Political Studies, Lille, France, « Modes de gestion de la diversité culturelle en France et au Danemark », 25 avril 2005. Paper presented by Christophe Roux, « La question corse, une approche comparée ».
- ECPR General Conference, Budapest, Hungary, Section 11 “Governance and Civil Society in Europe”, Panel N°3 “Organised Civil Society and Linguistic and Cultural Minority Rights”, 8-10 September 2005. Paper presented by Elise Féron, « A Way Out of Sectarianism? Civil society organisations and the representation of communities in Northern Ireland »
- XVè SISP Congress, Cagliari, Italy. Panel « Le società culturalmente divise: democrazia e conflitto », 21-23 September 2005. Paper presented by Christophe Roux: « Il mito giacobino : la gestione della diversità culturale in Francia. Il caso della 'questione corsa' ».
- ECPR General Conference, Budapest, Hungary, 8-10 September 2005. Paper presented by Christophe Roux: “The French Jacobin Myth and the Corsican Question: Managing Culture or Political Conflict?”.
- Seminar « Ex-combattants, que faire de soi après la guerre ? », CERI, Paris, France, 8 Novembre 2005. Paper presented by Elise Féron : « Pérenniser les dividendes du conflit? Les chemins de reconversion des paramilitaires nord-irlandais ».
- Conference « Le conflit nord-irlandais et le processus de paix », Festival Eskal en Irlande, Université de Rennes, France, 7 February 2006. Paper presented by Elise Féron.
- ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, Nicosia, Cyprus, 25-29 April 2006. Paper presented by Elise Féron and Fatma Güven Lisaniler: “The Cyprus conflict in a comparative perspective. Assessing the impact of European integration”.
- International Conference on Comparative Social Sciences, Session 8 « Globalisation and conflicts », in Tokyo (Japan), 15-16 July 2006. Paper presented by Benoît

Rihoux: “A Dynamic Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) of Community Conflicts in Post-WWII Europe: Why Do Conflicts Escalate and De-escalate?”.

- ISA Congress, Chicago, United States, 28 Feb – 3 March 2007. Paper presented by Elise Féron, “Religion and Conflicts– Religion as a root cause or as a triggering factor?”.
- Universität Hannover, Forschungskolloquium Europäische Sicherheit, Hannover, Germany, 12 December 2006. Paper presented by Elise Féron: “The Impact of Europeanization on Nationalist Conflicts”.
- Congrès de l’Association française de science politique, Toulouse, France, 6 September 2007. Organisation by Elise Féron of a workshop « on « Récits sur la guerre : Une comparaison Irlande, Algérie, Afrique du sud ».
- Congress of the Standing Group on International Relations, ECPR, Turin, 12-15 Sept 2007. Paper presented by Elise Féron, “The impact of Europeanisation on Community Conflicts. A mapping exercise”.

## 5.2. Publications

The following articles or chapters have appeared in journals or collective publications:

- Article « Du fusil au bulletin de vote, Les républicains nord-irlandais et la mythologie de la lutte armée », *Politeia*, France. Authored by Elise Féron (September 2005)
- Book Chapter « Entre appropriation et distanciation ; le recours au passé dans la construction des identités communautaires en Afrique du Sud, Irlande du Nord et Israël », in *Faire de la politique comparée*, Paris, Khartala. Authored by Elise Féron (October 2005)
- Book Chapter « L'identité nationale en perspective comparée. Le débat politique contemporain en France et en Italie » in *Faire de la politique comparée*, Paris, Khartala. Authored by Christophe Roux (October 2005)
- Book Chapter « Corse : vote à gauche, île de droite », in Dolez B., Laurent A. et Patriat C. (dir.), *Le vote rebelle. Les élections régionales de mars 2004*, Dijon, Editions Universitaires de Dijon, coll. "Institutions". Authored by Christophe Roux (2005)
- Article « Paths to reconversion taken by Northern Irish Paramilitaries », *International Social Science Journal*, 189, September 2006. Authored by Elise Féron
- Special Issue Innovation (Vol. 19, Nos 3&4) *Community Conflicts in the Post-Soviet Era*; Guest Editors: Liana Giorgi and Niki Rodousakis, December 2006
- Short article in ICCR Newsletter *Broadsheet* (2006-2007) on the problem of signposts in the Carinthian Slovenian minority conflict, authored by Niki Rodousakis, December 2006
- Article « Irlande du Nord. Le chemin de la paix semé d'embûches », *Alternatives Internationales*, n°24, Avril 2005, p.20. Authored by Elise Féron
- Article « Religion and Conflicts. Towards a Framework for Analysis », *Arès*, n°58, Vol.XXIII (3), May 2007. Authored by Elise Féron
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- Book Chapter : « The internationalization of community conflicts and the construction of transnational solidarities: the Northern Irish case in a comparative perspective », in Mathias Albert, Gesa Bluhm, Jan Helmig, Andreas Leutzsch, Jochen Walter (eds.), *The Communicative Construction of Transnational Political Spaces and Times*, London, Routledge, Forthcoming 2008. Authored by Brigitte Beauzamy and Elise Féron
- Book Chapter : « The Cyprus conflict in a comparative perspective: Assessing the impact of European integration », in T. Diez, N. Tocci (eds.), *Cyprus, A Conflict at the Crossroads*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2008. Authored by Elise Féron and Fatma Güven Lisaniler

### ***5.3. Science and Society***

The Monitoring System developed by the PEACE-COM project, as well as all written deliverables, are available on-line for inspection and use at <http://peacecom.spri.ucl.ac.be/>

The project's Web Site launched in January 2005 will remain online also after the project's contractual end.

## **6. Acknowledgements and References**

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## 7. Annexes

Publications (actual and forthcoming) are listed in chapter 5.

### 7.1. Deliverables

All deliverables can be downloaded at the project's Web Site at <http://peacecom.spri.ucl.ac.be/>

#### Deliverable 0

FERON Elise (ed.), *Inception Report*, February 2005

#### Deliverable 1

FERON Elise (ed.), *Community conflicts in Europe: A review of the literature*, March 2005

#### Deliverable 2

GIORGI Liana (ed.), *Questionnaire Report*, September 2005

#### Deliverable 3

TAMAS Pal (ed.), *Models of accommodation policies*, December 2005

#### Deliverable 4

BEAUZAMY Brigitte (ed.), *Indicators to monitor community conflicts*, December 2005

#### Deliverable 5

*Workshop on models of community conflicts in Europe*, December 2005

#### Deliverable 6

DE WINTER Lieven (ed.), *Actors of community conflicts: Attitudes and opinions*, May 2006

#### Deliverable 7

MORAN Maria Luz (ed.), *Models of Action*, November 2006

#### Deliverable 8

RIHOUX Benoît (ed.), *A systematic comparative description of 12 community conflicts: key conclusions*, September 2007

#### **Deliverable 9**

FERON Elise (ed.), *Community conflicts and modes of conflict resolution in Europe: A Typology*, September 2007

#### **Deliverable 10**

DE WINTER Lieven (ed.), *Actors of community conflicts: Discourses, attitudes and networks*, September 2007

#### **Deliverable 11**

MORAN Maria Luz (ed.), *Repertoires and Means of Action*, September 2007

#### **Deliverable 12**

FERON Elise (ed.), *Accommodation policies in community conflicts: models and areas of intervention*, September 2007

#### **Deliverable 13**

BEAUZAMY Brigitte (ed.), *Community Conflicts in Europe: A Monitoring System*, September 2007

#### **Deliverable 14**

*Workshop on accommodation policies*, September 2007

#### **Deliverable 15**

*Final Plan for using and disseminating Knowledge*, January 2008

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