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ICIP

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INTRODUCTION

The language of nonviolence

Pablo Aguiar / Sandra Martínez

International Catalan Institute for Peace

In the era of post-truth, brought along by emotive populism which leads to a constant perversion of language, words have become flexible and are being twisted to an extreme extent, losing their original meaning due to excessive use or manipulation, whether intentional or not. For this reason, we believe it is suitable to avoid, as much as possible, conceptual ambiguities, in order to contribute to the definition of narrative limits. This new edition of the magazine *Peace in Progress* is launched with the intention of entering into the analysis of one of the words that constitute part of the hard core of what we could call the peace lexicon: nonviolence, a term which, recently, has been appearing quite often in the media, in informal conversations, debates, banners and even legal resolutions.

This is not the first time a monograph of *Peace in Progress* is dedicated to nonviolence. We already addressed this topic in issue number 7 (2011), but in that occasion, we intended to give a general overview of the Catalan tradition in favour of nonviolence, without any concrete chronological focus.

In fact, this monograph was also born with the aim of stimulating knowledge and critical reflection on experiences of nonviolent struggles, but from a different contextual perspective: in recent years, Catalonia has gone through an intense social and political debate and process, linked to the right to self-determination and the independence of Catalonia, which has set the scene for a wide range of events and promoted several actions of citizens' mobilisation. This process has generated a socio-political turmoil which is of direct concern for us: the initials of ICIP are specific and stand for being International, in favour of Peace, but also for being Catalan, and we

cannot obviate a reality which is so nearby. As such, for the first time since this magazine was founded, the focus will not be put on geographically remote locations. The exceptionality of the context that surrounds us compels us to analyse it.

**“ We are International, in favour of Peace and
Catalan: the exceptionality of the context that
surrounds us compels us to analyse it ”**

At this point, we believe it is important to highlight that this monograph does not take any political position. Based on our plurality and ethical non-indifference, it is our priority to highlight a palpable evidence: civil society, through different outlets, has repeatedly defended a socio-political process that uses nonviolence as a mechanism of identification to materialise a project for a future of social change. This choice in favour on nonviolent action directly invites us to start a joint, more serene and deeper reflection on different elements that revolve around a project of radical transformation of society in all its dimensions: personal, relational and, also, structural. The motivation of this monograph lies, as such, in analysing the Catalan context with respect to the active and committed positions that have been adopted, rejecting all demonstrations of violence, thereby emphasising the positive project, promoted by nonviolence. This analytical approach, from different perspectives of the phenomenon, has allowed us to demonstrate that the conflict and the will to change can be channelled in a constructive manner, far from being passive, submissive or conformist. Therefore, this is not a matter of focussing on the content of the Catalan independentist process, but rather of the shape it has taken, in which it has been built on different initiatives and tools of peaceful civil resistance and, also, on disobedience.

In the first article, David Cortright offers us an analysis of the movement in favour of Catalan independence through a review of the principles of strategic nonviolence and the classic methods of mass mobilisation used by Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and other pioneers of civil resistance strategy. Subsequently, Jordi Mir contextualises the evolution of activism in Catalonia and invites the reader to reconsider matters such as

legality and legitimacy, especially regarding what they do for the acceptance or criminalisation of nonviolent civil disobedience.

“ The choice in favour on nonviolent action directly invites us to start a serene and deep reflection on different elements that revolve around a project of radical transformation of society ”

Beyond the reflections of a more theoretical nature, the monograph also addresses concrete experiences more in detail. With the aim of giving visibility to the peaceful component of the different popular initiatives that have been arising in the defence of liberty, democratic values and human rights, Marina Llansana and Sandra Saura highlight, in their respective articles, the creation of a range of collectives, organisations and campaigns which have promoted the nonviolent character in all the mass mobilisations and rallies in the framework of the Catalan socio-political conflict. From his side, Pedro Ma Uruñuela bases his article on conflict theory to demonstrate the urgency of breaking the vicious circle of polarisation which feeds on a lack of reflection and a high degree of disinformation. The article becomes a decalogue of key tools, ranging from cooperation, dialogue, active listening, the recognition of legitimacies, mutual understanding and the respect for other people's feelings, in order to minimise all possibilities of social division.

Finally, we highlight the weight that social networks have nowadays and the role they play as tools for the promotion of citizen organisation and collective action, starting from an interview with activist Simona Levi, focussing on the strategic use of digital tools and how they can contribute to the renewal of participative democracy.

To finish, we want to dedicate this monograph to two beloved people who have recently passed away: Jaume Botey, teacher, friend and collaborator of ICIP, a reference in the fight for dignity and justice and a key figure of the history of the Catalan Peace

movement; and Gene Sharp, one of the main references in the research on peace and nonviolence at an international level. Thank you both for all you have taught to us.

Photography : Demonstration «No tinc por» in Barcelona, August 2017: Mariusmm.

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Gandhi for Catalonia

David Cortright

Professor on nonviolent social change at the University of Notre Dame

To date the movement for Catalanian independence has followed the nonviolent path, employing classic methods of mass mobilization, independent action and non cooperation utilized by Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and other pioneers of civil resistance strategy. Gandhi described his method as *satyagraha*, which he defined as forcefully upholding truth, based on the principle of *ahimsa*, or non-harm¹. He considered *satyagraha* an effective “weapon” to be used in struggles against injustice and oppression. *Satyagraha* became the basis for the national freedom movement to end British imperial rule in India. Martin Luther King Jr. employed the method in the struggle against racial segregation in the United States, winning the right to vote for African Americans and outlawing racial discrimination in public facilities. Nonviolent methods have been used in Ghana, the Philippines, Indonesia, South Africa, Nepal, Chile, Serbia, Tunisia, Guatemala and many other countries to achieve political freedom and end repressive rule.

In all of these cases popular movements were campaigning against grave injustices (foreign rule, racial apartheid, dictatorship) in which the moral argument was clearly on the side of the civil resistance campaign. The success of a nonviolent movement depends on seizing the moral high ground in a dispute and attracting the sympathy and support of third parties. This requires political objectives that go beyond self-interest and appeal to higher values of human dignity and freedom. If a movement is perceived as seeking to maintain privilege rather than overcoming oppression, it will be more difficult to attract the support needed for success.

Nonviolence has been used in many countries to end authoritarianism and establish democracy, but the present case is not a struggle against dictatorship but rather “a clash of democratic legitimacies,” as one writer termed it, the demand for

independence in democratic Catalonia vs the constitutional integrity of the democratically elected government of Spain². The Madrid government showed its authoritarian teeth in harshly suppressing the October 1 referendum and cracking down on movement leaders, but the basic structure of the state is democratic. This is an important political reality, which in light of Spain's difficult history should be respected. It also raises questions. Can a movement be considered democratic if it seeks to undermine the structure of a democratic constitutional order? What are the consequences for peace of severing the linkages that hold a state together?

“ The success of a nonviolent movement depends on seizing the moral high ground in a dispute and attracting the sympathy and support of third parties ”

Social movements that strive for major political objectives such as political independence or territorial autonomy almost always face violent repression from their adversaries. In their empirical study of nonviolent civil resistance, scholars Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan have found that campaigns for significant political change encountered repression in 88 per cent of the cases examined³. We have seen evidence of this already in the brutal behaviour of Spanish security forces in their attempt to crush the vote. Nonviolent movements do not cause physical harm to their adversaries, but the repression unleashed against them can result in casualties, suffered mostly by those in the nonviolent campaign. In the U.S. civil rights movement, 55 civil rights workers were killed, including King. This is not an argument for refraining from action, since many of those who struggle for justice are willing to suffer for their cause, but it does raise the question of relative justice. Is the goal politically and morally compelling enough to justify the sacrifice necessary to achieve it?

Chenoweth and Stephan identify two major factors that are most often associated with political success in civil resistance campaigns: mass participation and loyalty shifts⁴. Movements that have the largest levels of mass support are most likely to achieve their

political goals. A movement that can mobilize hundreds of thousands of people in the streets and win millions of votes in a referendum clearly meets the threshold of mass participation. Loyalty shifts are also necessary, however. Success depends on the ability of a movement to convince supporters of the opposition to switch sides or remain neutral. This is especially important among members of the security forces. Many analysts have emphasized the importance of winning the sympathy and support of those who were previously uncommitted. Writer Barbara Deming called this the “special genius” of nonviolence, the ability of a nonviolent movement to attract the support of those who were indifferent or hostile to the cause⁵. Political analyst Gene Sharp referred to this as the art of winning over third parties⁶.

“ Loyalty shifts are necessary. Success depends on the ability of a movement to convince supporters of the opposition to switch sides or remain neutral ”

Achieving loyalty shifts requires a strategy of gaining allies and cultivating support in the ranks of the opposition. Gandhi recognized that he could not gain independence for India unless he could win support for his cause among important constituencies in England. When he visited London in 1931 for the round-table negotiations on self-rule, he visited and was cheered by textile workers whose factories were losing production because of the freedom movement’s boycott of British imports. He also met with writers and cultural luminaries to win their support. This cultivation of British public opinion paid off in 1945 when the Labour Party came to power and promptly agreed to negotiate the terms of political independence. King likewise recognized that African Americans as a minority could not defeat segregation without the support for white allies. He cultivated the support of religious communities, labor unions, and powerful groups within the Democratic Party to gain the political support needed to win victories for civil rights.

In his famous *Letter From a Birmingham Jail* King identifies dialogue as one of the four essential steps of nonviolent action⁷. The purpose of a civil resistance campaign, he argued, is not to defeat the adversary but to achieve reconciliation, to generate enough pressure to bring the opponent to the bargaining table and reach a negotiated solution. Gandhi also emphasized the necessity of negotiation and dialogue. The goal of political struggle, he believed, is to exert pressure for negotiations to achieve social betterment.

**“ The impetus for resolving the Catalan crisis
may have to come from civil society, which would
fit well with the Gandhian tradition ”**

The commitment to dialogue implies a readiness to compromise. Accommodation is a common mechanism for achieving political change, according to Sharp⁸. It occurs when the nonviolent campaign generates enough pressure to impose costs on the adversary and creates incentives for coming to the bargaining table. The adversary still has power to say no, but the price of rejecting the demand for change becomes too high and a negotiated solution becomes the preferred option. For its part the nonviolent campaign agrees to accept an agreement that may be short of its maximum demands but that achieves sufficient change to satisfy its supporters and achieve greater justice.

In the case of Catalonia, for a negotiated solution to emerge both independence leaders and the government must be prepared to make concessions. This seems hard to imagine now in the midst of partisanship and brinksmanship. The impetus for resolving the crisis may have to come from civil society, which would fit well with the Gandhian tradition. Citizen initiatives will be needed on both sides to identify consensus solutions and pressure political leaders to negotiate a political agreement that meets the demands of justice and avoids violence.

1. M.K. Gandhi, “On Satyagraha,” February 25, 1919, from *The Life and Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Patiala House, Tilak Marg, New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of

Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1999), 17, 29, 299.

2. Francisco de Borja Lasheras, "Three myths about Catalonia's independence movement" Commentary, European Council on Foreign Relations, September 22, 2017.

3. Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 51.

4. Chenoweth and Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*.

5. "On Revolution and Equilibrium," in *Revolution and Equilibrium* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1971).

6. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973), vol. 3, 658.

7. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," April 1963, in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, edited by James M. Washington (Harper San Francisco, 1986).

8. Gene Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Promise* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 2005), 46.

Photography : Protester in Barcelona, June 2011: Joan Sorolla.

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The triumph of nonviolence: the evolution of activism in Catalonia

Jordi Mir

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The military service young people had to fulfil during the sixties, under the Francoist dictatorship, was understood by some of them as an opportunity to receive training in the use of weaponry. It is significant that some of these youngsters who thought this way were activists or travel companions of clandestine political organisations operating against Franco's regime. This understanding was the result of the fact that it was clear for them that a way out of Francoism could, at some point, involve armed conflict in which some kind of confrontation would make the use of weapons necessary. The kind of weapon did not matter, they were generally the ones they could find.

This mentality, which existed among young people opposing Franco and trying to develop alternatives to the regime from within universities, factories or districts, or even without being considered real activism, needs to generate a reflection on how the idea of armed conflict was embedded in the society of that time. This does not seem difficult to understand, especially when thinking about the war that had annihilated the Republic, the Francoist repression, the heritage from two World Wars, the processes of decolonisation, the Cold War, including the emerging collectives which opted for armed action in different places in Europe during the late seventies.

In some specific activist sectors, what was known, what was being studied, what was being theorised was the way towards revolution and social transformation through the use of violence. They clearly considered that the established order was substantiated, partly, as a function of its military power. For example, the Prague Spring in 1968, as well as Allende's government in Chile in 1973, were brought down by the use of weapons. Would it be possible to imagine a revolution, change the world drastically, without

following the path of violence? Does the pacifist way have a future? In a world with this much violence and experiences as the ones aforementioned, many would think not. The nonviolent option, as opposed to violence, has only been present in few collectives. Mainly, in frameworks linked with basic Christianity, when considering the fifties, sixties and seventies.

“ The conviction that it was possible to change the world, based on nonviolent activism, finds its roots in the Christian values, and this mentality started affecting other ways of thinking ”

A concrete case might be able to help us to illustrate this evolution. The filming of *Can Serra. La objección de conciencia en España* (1975-1976) (Can Serra. Conscientious objection in Spain) started in the year 1975. This documentary collects the testimonies of a group of young people who chose not to fulfil their compulsory military service, but rather to disobey the State and work for society through the promotion of education and social assistance. They did so in the Can Serra district of l'Hospitalet de Llobregat. A district which had grown due to the arrival of immigrants from different regions of Spain, starting in the seventies, where all basic services were lacking. The objectors had foreseen to work for one year in the district, as agreed with the district community and the parish. During this period, their work would be documented. Afterwards, they would hold a press conference to present the alternative they proposed to a state they criticised for its militarism and repression. They took into account the fact that, after making their situation public, they would be incarcerated, which is exactly what happened.

The film wanted to make a contribution by spreading their voice, and a distribution plan was set up. For this kind of films, usually one or two copies of the original were made; possibly, for this one, ten would be made. The conventional format was 16mm, but for this occasion, also a Super 8mm copy was made, a domestic format which simplified its projection. An S 8 projector was more affordable than a 16mm model. The film was

distributed through the usual channels of clandestine cinema in that period, and not only was it useful to explain the living circumstances in Can Serra, but also what conscientious objection in Spain represented, through the testimony of Pepe Beunza, considered to be the first Spain's conscientious objector against military service, with a clear intention towards political transformation, and to denounce the militarism which, to his understanding, dominated the world and prevented life from developing properly.

Based on these platforms of ideologies and Christian values, there was a growing conviction that it was possible to change the world through nonviolent activism, without the need to use weapons. And this mentality started affecting other ways of thinking. The eighties seem a key period when defining a change that would grow to considerable dimensions. Gandhi started as one of the first voices to be read beyond the tradition to which he belonged, the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King (despite the fact that he was killed) showed a different path which gave results, the antinuclear movement pointed out that, in the new world, war would only have losers, and the ideas of Einstein, Russell and, especially, E.P. Thompson were particularly present.¹

**“ Society, in its majority, has become nonviolent.
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strategy ”**

We can also highlight other names of persons who developed their activity in Catalonia and who, through their reflections and their activism, contributed to this change: Vicens Fisas, Pepe Beunza, Manuel Sacristán, Francisco Fernández Buey... In a place like Can Serra, people could be found with different ways of thinking and acting (Christians, Marxists, libertarians, antinuclear, ecologists, etc.), working daily to build alternatives to the Franco regime. The mobilisation of the objectors helped in the union of antimilitarism and nonviolence. Also the mobilisations against NATO, against nuclear weapons, in favour of feminism... We could say that there was a consolidation of the

idea that nonviolence aims at disarming the violence, exerted by states, governments, economic and corporate agents, etc. to build societies free from oppression.

During the following decades, this process was not reversed, but rather widened and intensified. The mobilisations against NATO and nuclear weapons contributed to this. This process could not only be seen in Catalonia, but went international. A good example of this aspect was the emergence of the so-called alter-globalisation at the turn of the century, and its clear position in favour of nonviolence. The action methods chosen were civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance². Later came, for example, the massive mobilisations against the war in Iraq in 2003 in several places around the world, with Barcelona being one of the prominent cities.

At the start of the second decade of the 21st century, massive social mobilisation was seen again in Catalonia, in the framework of the 15M movement and the one in favour of independentism, where nonviolence has been the majority conduct. Society, in its majority, has become nonviolent. The rejection of violence is general nowadays, whether it is out of principle or rather as a strategy. This does not mean that there are no more collectives which keep defending violence, even at the point of putting it into practice, but the vast majority of mobilisations we have seen in recent years could be defined as nonviolent. After the 15M rallies, the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH, Platform of Mortgage Victims) became a model of nonviolent conduct, using a wide range of actions going from negotiating in the banking branch to occupying that same branch, or from *escraches* to stopping evictions. We could say something similar about the demonstrations linked to independentism, where clear evidence was seen in the defence of polling stations for the 1st October referendum.

**“ A society which considers itself democratic
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Nowadays, nonviolence is recognised as an act of courage for what concerns the creation of a positive alternative to the existing reality. Nevertheless, nonviolence is challenged from two –very different– positions: by those who consider violence as a better option, or one that should at least be taken into consideration, and by those who consider nonviolence to be violence. Nonviolent conduct, disobedient or not, is easily questioned, even criminalised, when the power which it is challenging considers its stability to be at risk.

I consider it necessary to hold an in-depth public debate on the subject whether nonviolent actions, disobedient or not, represent an attack to democracy or rather an intent to deepen it. The history we've been addressing here should make us reflect on how nonviolence has been siding with processes that were aiming at increasing and deepening democracy, creating a society with more freedom, justice and equality. A society which considers itself democratic should look at the actions of nonviolent mobilisation, disobedient or not, as a nuisance that needs to be addressed and resolved, beyond votes, majorities and minorities. And it would be advisable to insist in the fact that legality or legitimacy does not depend on majorities.

In this present, historical moment, social support and nonviolence, including the possibility of practising nonviolent civil disobedience, should lead us, as a society, to considering its acceptance, and even its regulation. Accepting nonviolent civil disobedience as a society, even reflecting on possible ways to regulate it, implies accepting the need to think about and reconsider our legality, our legitimacies, our ethical concepts about what is just, good, correct, etc. The mere fact of being a law doesn't make a law also just, nor does what we could consider as just stops being so because a law says it's illegal. We should not lose another opportunity to generate a true process of reflection and debate on the place of nonviolence, including nonviolent civil disobedience, in a society which considers itself democratic.

1. Of possible interest for an in-depth study of these topics, the works of Enric Prat: *Movientose por la paz* (Hacer Editorial, 2006) and *Activistes per la pau* (Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2008)

2. Of possible interest for an in-depth study of alter-globalisation, nonviolence and civil disobedience: *Guía para una globalización alternativa* by Francisco Fernández Buey (Ediciones B, 2004)

Photography : Poster on conscience objection. Graphic – artistic sample, 1978.

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Popular initiatives in the defence of nonviolent action

Sandra Saura

Pacifist activist

The history of pacifism and nonviolence is deeply rooted in Catalonia, and it is maybe due to this experience as a society that, at present, we find ourselves on a path of peaceful and nonviolent resistance towards the Catalan Republic. According to Botey¹, since the end of the Civil War, Catalonia has seen groups emerging frequently, in favour of peace or against militarism, such as mili KK, Ganva-Gamba (*Grup Acció No-Violent Antimilitarista* and *Grup Antimilitarista de Barcelona*; Group for Nonviolent Antimilitarist Action and Antimilitarist Group Barcelona), in 1978; the campaign in favour of the “no” vote in the referendum for entry in NATO, in 1986; or the platform *Aturem la Guerra* (Stop the War), since 2002.

This tradition of pacifism has generated a desire for peace in Catalonia which is deeply rooted in society, probably more than in anywhere else in the Spanish state. The five basic steps of nonviolent action (Olivella², Xirinacs³) –dialogue, protest, non-cooperation, civil disobedience and the creation of alternatives– are useful when trying to organise the present path of peaceful mobilisation linked with independentism.

Already in 2009, faced with the repeated negative response of the Spanish state to negotiate on the organisation of a referendum, Arenys de Munt held the first municipal survey on the independence of Catalonia, where the “Yes” vote prevailed with a score of 96.2% on a voter turnout of 41%. Civil society, alongside organisations such as Òmnium Cultural and the Assemblea Nacional Catalana, organises itself and starts creating alternatives, with popular surveys on the independence of Catalonia in the entire territory. Later, on 9th November 2015, the Catalan government, with a majority supporting independentism in the Parlament de Catalunya, organises the poll on

independence. Finally, last 1st October 2017, the referendum on independence took place. This referendum, prohibited by the Spanish government, was an act of civil disobedience and non-cooperation. Getting it done has been a work of nonviolent engineering, since ballot boxes and papers were pursued and hidden all over the country (Vicens i Tedó⁴).

Two days before 1st October, citizens, concerned about not being able to exercise one of their basic rights, the right to vote, organised themselves and became an assembly movement, organised per school and, at a later stage, per district, through the Committees in the Defence of the Referendum (CDR). Afterwards, the power of having so many people organised in districts needed to be preserved for the future Republic, and at present, the majority of CDRs still gather and have become Committees in the Defence of the Republic. This movement operates as an assembly, with all the advantages and disadvantages this brings along, and is organised in territorial –from districts to regions– as well as national assemblies. We are dealing with a pluralistic collective, with people of different ages and origins, but with one common feature: the will and the strength to work on the construction of the Republic in a nonviolent manner.

“ CDRs are pluralistic collectives with one common feature: the will and the strength to work on the construction of the Republic in a nonviolent manner ”

On 1st October, images could be seen worldwide of self-organised groups of people in front of polling stations, disobedient and non-cooperative, in a peaceful and organised manner, but insubordinate to the laws that prohibited the ballot, receiving the blows of the Spanish police's batons. Catalonia's peaceful and nonviolent population raised and let its voice be heard to the entire world, as well as showing the fierce repression of the Spanish state and its prohibition of one of the basic rights, the right to vote.

In fact, since 1st October, the Spanish state has enhanced the repression and started with the first threats, arrests and violent actions. For this reason, one of the main concerns of the nonviolent persons was, at that time, that the conflict could become violent and that the violence, used by the Spanish government, could generate more violence in response. As such, on 17th October, En Peu de Pau (Standing for Peace) saw the light, a social initiative, aiming at extending and giving roots to the peaceful and nonviolent resistance in the defense of liberties. As the result of a shared reflection on the incidents that occurred during the month of October 2017, people and collectives of different sensitivities gathered to discuss the extension and socialisation of the different legitimate social and civic actions, of peaceful and nonviolent nature, which had characterised the mobilisations in the defence of basic rights and liberties, and the responses to the repressive direction the state had taken. Precisely for this reason, En Peu de Pau considers it of vital importance to preserve, strengthen and widen this culture of strictly nonviolent citizens' mobilisations, at present as well as in the future.

En Peu de Pau has three basic objectives: a) generate a pluralistic framework for the coordination and creation of networks, in order to preserve the nonviolent character of civil mobilisations and responses; b) consolidate and extend the practice of peaceful and nonviolent response in the face of the restrictions of citizens' rights and liberties; c) organise active social teams, in the framework of future mobilisations, which offer safe shelter, peace and quiet in a coordinated way, and preserve the nonviolent manner in which they are already working.

“ En Peu de Pau saw the light as a social initiative from people and collectives of different sensitivities aiming at extending and giving roots to the peaceful and nonviolent resistance ”

Since it saw the light, En Peu de Pau is trying to cover four complementary needs, on top of those that were already addressed by a variety of movements and persons. In first place, creating a platform for the coordination and generation of a common rhetoric on

peaceful and nonviolent response, based on the moral authority of those who were already deeply involved and also the agents who are playing an active role in the mobilisations. In second place, turning it into a space for operative coordination for the different collectives that can contribute in improving the organisation and preserving the nonviolent tone of these mobilisations. In third place, providing access to training sessions and resources on peaceful and nonviolent action to everybody. And lastly, develop a communication operative which diffuses all information, related to the three previous points, to all citizens. One of the most visible results of this movement can be found in the 7 commandments. In this way, En Peu de Pau is playing a fundamental role in the persistence of pacifism and nonviolence on the road towards the Catalan Republic.

At present, there are many other peaceful and nonviolent initiatives which are generating alternatives, movements for the new Republic which start to surface. We don't know what will happen to all of them, but with every day that goes by, a new idea arises, a group of new people proposes and produces tools for the creation of the new Republic, based on nonviolence. This creativity, key element in the nonviolent strategy, is clearly visible in movements and proposals which are present on social networks, as for example *Poesia per la República*, *Cafès per la República*, *Universitats per la República*, *Omplim Brussel·les* (Let's Fill Brussels), *Salvem TV3* (Let's Save TV3), *Raons per la República* (Reasons for the Republic), *Teresines per la República*, *Empaperem* (Let's Wallpaper) or the Emma Collective.

1. Botey, J. 2011. *The tradition of Nonviolence in Catalonia*. ICIP online magazine *Peace in Progress* (Number 7, March 2011).
2. Xirinacs, Ll. M. 2006. *Filosofia i pràctica de la no-violència*.
3. Olivella, M. 2016. *Alliberem-nos de la violència i la passivitat. Guia d'estratègia i acció noviolentes*
4. Vicens, L., Tedó, X. 2017. *Operació urnes*. Editorial Columna.

Photography: En Peu de Pau training activitym Barcelona, Autumn 2017: En Peu de Pau.

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The power of people

Marina Llansana

Second Vice President of Òmnium Cultural

That day we still did not know it but it was the first day that Catalan society decided to say “enough,” launching a political process that would end up on the front pages of newspapers from around the world. It was 10 July 2010, the Spanish Constitutional Court had just struck down part of the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia that had been ratified in a referendum, and a horde of people took to the streets to protest under the slogan “We are a nation, we decide” to say that no court could be above the will of the people expressed in the polls.

That massive demonstration was followed by many more that were even bigger, but always with the same spirit: a peaceful mobilization featuring three or four generations of entire families taking to the streets in a festive atmosphere to demand their democratic rights. Later we would call it “the revolution of smiles” precisely because of its peaceful and festive nature. A revolution that reached its climax with the referendum that took place on 1 October 2017, when the smiles froze under the blows of thousands of Spanish police officers bent on preventing people –unsuccessfully– from voting.

Seven years have gone by since Catalan civil society organized around an organization that already existed –Òmnium Cultural, with almost 60 years of history– and of another organization that emerged as a result of the pro-sovereignty movement, the Catalan National Assembly. We did not embark on a nationalist battle; it was a struggle for civil rights, where more and more people of different ideologies and origins came together with the common goal of demanding the right to vote as a fundamental right, as well as other civic and democratic rights. The two organizations that have wound up leading this citizens’ movement have always been clear about the fact that our movement had to focus on active and peaceful civil disobedience, and we have based our entire strategy on the power of organized people engaged in small, ordinary, nonviolent

actions: from wearing a T-shirt and going out on the street on a certain day and time to withdrawing a symbolic amount of money from ATMs, always in the spirit of the revolution of smiles. And that is how, since 2010, Europe's most massive demonstrations in decades have taken place in Catalonia and without a single incident: no broken glass, not even litter in the street. So there is no excuse for the State to have reacted as virulently as it has against a movement of people of peace. And today the leaders of this movement are in prison. This is both shocking and unacceptable.

“ The way in which organized civil society has worked in Catalonia has sparked the interest of other citizens’ movements around the world based on nonviolent civil disobedience ”

To understand the inception of this citizens' movement, it is essential to talk about the great joint campaign called “Ara és l’Hora” (It’s time) which the entities launched to summon the citizenry to participate in the non-binding referendum of 9 November 2014. This campaign was civil society’s first great training ground for political action to achieve political and civic objectives outside political parties.

“Ara és l’Hora” had professionals from various business sectors who contributed their talent to create from scratch a way of working with volunteers, but with professional standards. The goal was to produce a campaign that would convince as many people as possible to vote in the popular referendum called by the Catalan government. The campaign was always transparent –the explanatory memorandum is still in Wikipedia– and was based solely on the power of people. Its first objective was therefore to create a large database that would allow the movement not to depend on big sponsors, but on the small economic contributions made by thousands of people and, more importantly, to communicate directly with people without the need of intermediaries dependent on the Establishment; technology made this possible. And always being aware of the fact that a good territorial network based on direct contact between people was what would generate trust and make the movement grow and move forward. Thus we were able to

organize a mega-survey that reached a million households, a marathon of hundreds of thousands of phone calls made by volunteers, and dozens of events organized thanks to the contributions –in time and money– of more than 100,000 people, without a penny of public money. The campaign was a success and helped allow 2,300,000 people to vote peacefully and without incident that 9 November despite the opposition of the Spanish government.

“ The emergence of cross-cutting organizations such as Taula per la Democràcia and En Pau de Pau are proof, once again, of the extent to which nonviolence defines the pro-sovereignty movement ”

Without what was learned with “Now is the Hour” it surely would not have been possible to create Crida per la Democràcia, one of the tools that, three years later, allowed us to reactivate the large network of anonymous people willing to support the binding referendum called by the Catalan government for 1 October 2017. Largely based on new tools such as the WhatsApp messaging service, Crida per la Democràcia again achieved great milestones: mass mobilizations and fundraising based on micro-donations that was used not only to pay for the various actions of the campaign, but also to create a Solidarity Fund to cover the legal expenses and bail of all those people persecuted by the Spanish justice system as a result of the call for the referendum.

The way in which organized civil society has worked in Catalonia has sparked the interest of other citizens’ movements around the world based on nonviolent civil disobedience, and experts from many countries have wanted to learn about the Catalan case because of its exemplary nature. Human rights activists and Nobel Peace Prize recipients such as Rigoberta Menchú, Ahmed Galai, Desmond Tutu, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel and Jody Williams have all joined the “Let Catalans Vote” movement to support the demands of Catalan society, alongside other peace activists from around the world

such as the co-founder and president of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, Mirta Baravalle, and intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky and Zygmunt Bauman.

“ Traditionally, Catalanism has been Europeanist: open, tolerant, peaceful, democratic and inclusive; foundations that in today’s Europe have become so weak that they are hard to recognize ”

Even though the Catalan movement has been exemplary in form and substance, what has happened leads us to think that, surely, for the State, it would have been easier if there were violence in Catalonia. That would have justified their repression, the attacks on institutions, against its leaders and its mobilized citizens. But that has not been the case. In fact, the more the State has resorted to repression, the more determined the Catalan movement has been to express itself peacefully and courageously –without falling into provocations. The emergence of cross-cutting entities such as Taula per la Democràcia (with a large representation of organized civil society, ranging from trade unions to scouts to the cultural world) and En Peu de Pau (Standing for Peace) are proof, once again, of the extent to which nonviolence defines the movement. A movement which, by the way, in February 2017, mobilized in favor of accepting refugees in Catalonia in a massive demonstration of thousands of people under the slogan “We want to welcome them.” The fact is that Catalanism has been Europeanist in the founding sense of the expression “Europeanist”: open, tolerant, peaceful, democratic and inclusive. These foundations in the Europe of today have become so weak that they are hard to recognize.

Last autumn, Òmnium published a video entitled “Help Catalonia, Save Europe,” which amassed more than two million views in record time. In the video we explained that the idea of Europe can only survive if the values of freedom, democracy and human rights, which are so much under threat in Spain today, are preserved. Today Catalonia offers

Europe the possibility of reconnecting with its origins. We are pacifists, champions of social rights, proud of having achieved social cohesion in a Catalonia that is ideologically, religiously and socially diverse. Europe must stop looking the other way, not only to help the Catalans, but also to help itself maintain the values of peace, dialogue and democracy that are at its origins. What happens in the heart of Europe is the responsibility of Europe because it will have consequences for all of its fellow citizens.

Photography : “Cacerolada”: Francis Bourgouin

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IN DEPTH

How to survive political polarization

Pedro Maria Uruñuela

Honorary President of CONVIVES Association

A famous educator, Philippe Perrenoud, asks in his latest book what the fundamental orientation of education is and whether educational centers educate for school or for life. He concludes that we still educate for school and that the most frequent and common problems in life are rarely dealt with at school. He gave the example of conflicts and the limited importance given to dealing with them in the curriculum as a whole.

This reflection brings to mind what is happening in Catalonia and the way in which the conflict has been tackled and is being tackled. We are not politicians; we are educators and what concerns us is that our students learn and internalize a peaceful way of transforming conflicts. In our opinion, this concern has been lacking in both sides to the conflict. We are not interested in who is right; that is not the correct way to manage a conflict. We are much more concerned about the strategies and approaches that haven't been used, the mistakes that have been made and, above all, the way to avoid the harmful consequences for coexistence in school and in any other scenario.

To this effect we also want to help our students develop their critical capacity so that they can assess the facts and information that they receive without assuming that what is true is what comes from "our side," or just the opposite. Our job as educators, and as a society, does not end here. We also want to accompany them in their moral development so that they can build their own system of values.

In the conflict at hand a reactive approach has prevailed: initiatives to manage the conflict have been disregarded in favor of simply "reacting" to what was happening, especially in the case of the central government. With this approach violence has been

resorted to in its various forms: physical violence against people; legal violence, with the application of Article 155; or prosecuting and jailing certain renowned people for their specific activities. We have forgotten what Bakunin already said long ago: “A problem resolved by force remains a problem.”

The relationship and confrontation have been approached from an “I-win-you-lose” perspective, and by both sides: from unilateral decision-making, ignoring all rules and regulations, to the proclamation of the complete annihilation of the opposing side. And if one thing is clear it is that this approach only leads to a situation where both sides lose and nobody wins. Another very clear “win-win” approach is necessary, in which both sides can recognize their legitimate interests and needs, seeking the maximum consensus possible.

“ We have forgotten what Bakunin said: “A problem resolved by force remains a problem” ”

Only with a different approach can political and social polarization be overcome, and the restoration of peaceful coexistence based on respect lead to an agreement. There is a lack of people and organizations concerned about building bridges and recovering another type of relationship. This would allow dealing with existing differences in a different way in order to look for other answers and bring models of positive transformation to the fore. The teaching of how to manage conflicts that we try to teach our students can also be applied to this situation.

But how can one respectfully coexist with people who feel, think and believe differently? First of all, it is not necessary that we all be equal, but rather that we accept and respect our differences and look for the minimum and essential elements for a peaceful coexistence.

There may have been moments of tension that have led to forced silence or avoidance of certain topics in get-togethers with friends, in WhatsApp groups or on work breaks with colleagues. But the strategy of avoidance does not necessarily prevent conflict,

which can remain latent, nor does it repair damaged relationships. The use of verbal violence or the argument of force (instead of the force of argument) do not prevent or resolve conflict either.

Conflict theory proposes cooperation, dialogue, active listening, recognizing legitimacies, trying to understand the other party, and understanding and respecting emotions. It is necessary to recognize the legitimacy of each party regarding their positions and approaches and to look for the part of truth that may lie within. This implies not making value judgments of the other party, or insulting them and searching for hidden intentions. And, above all, it means not “adding fuel to the fire”; in other words, eliminating all statements or actions that do not contribute to defusing the situation and, in fact, make it worse. No one has a monopoly on truth and it is fair that the conflicting parties recognize each other’s legitimacy regarding their aspirations.

“ Only with a change in approach can political and social polarization be overcome, and the restoration of peaceful coexistence based on respect lead to an agreement ”

Emotions are another key point to avoid or reduce polarization. The political and social situation we are experiencing is so emotionally charged that our rational thought is impaired. In addition, this results in a tendency to think not only that our ideas and beliefs are better than those of others and that theirs are therefore wrong, but to despise the other party for not realizing it. In this sense, we have been able to experience, firsthand, estrangement between friends with whom it has become increasingly difficult to deal with certain issues because our emotions have set off alarm bells and we have decided to protect ourselves. We can only resolve this problem on the basis of respect and the will to find common ground, so we cannot eschew dialogue, either to talk about what divides us or to decide, by mutual agreement, how to deal with the situation, or if we are willing or able to do so.

Lack of reflection is another element that fuels polarization. We can experience it in a “live” argument, but it is more forceful when writing or responding to a tweet. In this respect, it is a good idea to transform the popular saying “Think the worst and you won’t be far off” into “Think more and you won’t be far off.”

In addition, uncertainty does not help to keep calm and in this respect we cannot ignore the role played by the media. With regard to the situation in Catalonia these media have clearly taken sides with one position or another, either with opinions that are sometimes presented as news, or with half-truths and even falsehoods, which contributes to consolidate and increase social division. On the other hand, we have a lot of information; so much so that it is difficult to process and, more importantly, to differentiate. Social networking sites, live broadcasting of everything that happens, and the continuous updating of news in digital newspapers does not make it easy for us to calmly analyze the situation. How many moments of tension between relatives, friends and colleagues have been triggered by a rumor based on inconsistent or fake news, or on an isolated incident taken out of context? We enter into a vicious circle that must be broken: we need calm to critically analyze what is happening and truthful and objective information to be able to keep calm in complex situations.

**“ No one has a monopoly on truth and it is fair
that the conflicting parties recognize each
other’s legitimacy regarding their aspirations ”**

In personal as well as in social relationships we must insist on the search for an agreement over the exacerbation of differences; recognition of the other party over contempt or marginalization; the non-use of force and recourse to dialogue over the abuse of power or violence. It is not about coming out ahead or proving who is right. On the contrary, it is more about reinforcing and mending ties; about creating conditions so that we can all live peacefully, reinforcing the many things that unite us and accepting the legitimate differences that lie between us.

And this is precisely the hardest thing for us: to accept that people and groups are very different; that their positions and thoughts are also legitimate and that only from plurality and respect for difference can coexistence be built. This is what we lack, what frightens us and, as a purely emotional reaction, leads us to consider the use of force, consciously or unconsciously, to achieve our own goals above everything else.

Violence leads nowhere. In fact, it only makes things worse. Let us use words; let us use dialogue and thus avoid having to prove our great poet Antonio Machado right, once again, when he said “in Spain, of ten heads, nine clash and one thinks.” Let us use our thinking skills to reach agreements, not to intensify the confrontation.

Photography: General strike on October 3, 2017, in Barcelona against police repression on October 1. Art Maximo

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RECOMANEM

Materials and resources recommended by the ICIP

Books

ICIP book series

As part of its work in the training in and promotion of peace culture, ICIP has five book series, created in collaboration with various Catalan publishers. Each one is specialized in specific thematic areas, and there are a total of 58 titles. On the subject of nonviolence, the Institute has the “Nonviolence and the struggle for peace” series, with books by international experts such as John Paul Lederach, Aldo Capitini and Nel Noddings, and the “Classics of peace and nonviolence” series, with texts by Martin Luther King, Hannah Arendt, Mahatma Gandhi and Lluís Maria Xirinachs, among others. Several titles focusing on nonviolence have also been published in the “Tools for peace, security and justice” series, from authors such as Pepe Beunza, Jean-Marie Muller, the Study Group on Feminism and Nonviolence, and the State of Peace Seminar.

Incidentally, the ICIP Library also has a specialized collection in the areas of peace culture, security and conflicts. The catalog is constantly growing and most publications are available on loan.

Website

En Peu de Pau

The social initiative En Peu de Pau (Standing for Peace), created in Catalonia in October 2017 with the aim of promoting peaceful and nonviolent civic resistance, has carried out a dissemination and reflection project to strengthen the culture of nonviolence in citizen demonstrations. As a result of this work, they have organized workshops and

developed training materials on nonviolent action and resistance. These materials make up a set of seven commandments available in Catalan and Spanish that address the theory and practice of nonviolence and civic participation from different perspectives.

By way of example, the first and second commandment, devoted to street protests, offer information and advice to exercise the right to demonstrate without falling into the trap of violence. They deal with everything from physical self-protection against repressive actions by the police to how to carry out passive confrontation actions that are characteristic of peaceful resistance or how to act in case of arrest.

In other volumes, reference is made to aspects such as nonviolence on social networking sites, the criteria for assessing the coherence and effectiveness of a nonviolent action, nonviolent civic actions for freedom, and attitudes of nonviolent force as a way of understanding life and relationships.

Documentary

Noviolència

Nonviolent action has been used by social movements around the world, both in the struggle for human rights under dictatorial regimes, as well as in the defense of social and labor rights in democratic countries. History has shown us that the force of nonviolence has led to major structural and social changes through citizen participation.

The documentary *Noviolència* (Nonviolence), from the Televisió de Catalunya program *Latituds*, takes a look at the major events of the twentieth century based on nonviolent struggle, such as the mass protest movement against racial segregation in the United States, the road to independence in India, the demands of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and the 15-M movement in Spain.

Co-produced by ICIP, the film's guiding thread is a workshop on methods of nonviolent action given by Paco Cascón at the Autonomous University of Barcelona's School of Peace Culture. Cascón has achieved worldwide recognition in the field of peace education, mediation and negotiation. Through his workshop and archive images, the

documentary introduces the spectator to nonviolence and civil disobedience, the tools that are available and the implications entailed when adopted as a philosophy of life.

As a complement to the documentary, ICIP has produced an educational guide to work and reflect further on nonviolence as a philosophy of life and tool for dealing with conflicts.

Campaign

#WeAreDefenders

In September 2017, human rights organizations grouped together in laFede.cat, Defender a quien defiende, Iridia Human Rights Center, the Catalan Association for the Defense of Human Rights and Reraguarda en Moviment launched the #WeAreDefenders campaign. The initiative was born with the aim of defending human rights in the current context of demonstrations and political conflict in Catalonia, which reached its peak with the celebration of the referendum of 1 October and the Spanish government's repressive response.

The campaign has five main resources. The first one is a manifesto that highlights the importance of protecting the right to freedom of expression and of the press, the right to freedom of assembly, the right to privacy and the right to a fair trial. In this regard, the campaign has produced a guide with legal advice and argumentation for use in the case of a violation of basic rights.

The third resource is a legal and psychological team of ninety professionals who offer assistance to citizens and social movements that have experienced arrests or assaults, especially during demonstrations. In order to consolidate comprehensive protection, a network of observers has also been set up to gather information and monitor possible rights violations on site.

Finally, #WeAreDefenders has published a report that includes civil and political rights violations committed in September and October 2017 with the aim of presenting it to the appropriate national and international authorities, and disseminating it among the citizenry, institutions and public authorities.

Website

Nonviolence International

Nonviolence International is a network of resource centers that promotes the use of nonviolent action. It was founded in 1989 in the United States by Palestinian activist Mubarak Awad and is currently one of the organizations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

The network develops various programs and partnerships in Canada, Latin America, Southeast Asia, the Middle East –mainly Palestine– and Ukraine. Its activity is focused on the research and promotion of nonviolence and the culture of peace and on the reduction of violence around the world. To achieve this, their efforts focus on the development of materials (manuals, books, radio programs, educational resources, etc.), training groups in nonviolent methods, conflict mediation, and working together with other religious and human rights organizations, among others.

The Nonviolence International website has a section with its own educational resources and materials, including the largest collection of methods of nonviolent resistance –more than 300 entries– with examples and a brief explanation of each one. The website also offers a comprehensive list of links to manuals, training programs, articles, books and bibliography of their own and of others, and a list of organizations that use nonviolent strategies.

Website

International Fellowship of Reconciliation

Established over a hundred years ago, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) is one of the most experienced organizations in the struggle for the transformation of unjust political, social and economic structures through the power of nonviolence. It currently carries out its work through 71 member organizations that are active in more than 40 countries, and in close collaboration with similar NGOs and civil society initiatives.

IFOR has several working areas focused on education and training for nonviolence, conscientious objection, climate change, disarmament, interfaith cooperation, gender

violence and youth empowerment. In addition, it has three international programs: a school to train young people committed to social change in methods of nonviolent action; a program to provide accompaniment to human rights defenders and civil society actors, mainly in Colombia and Palestine; and Women Peacemakers, an initiative to promote a gender perspective in nonviolent peacebuilding and support the empowerment of women peace activists. Thanks to the success of this latter program, Women Peacemakers is currently an independent organization, but maintains strong ties to IFOR.

Their website has a section that contains news about the organization and about issues related to its activity. It also has a section that compiles resources of their own and of other organizations, such as publications, reports, documentaries and computer games.

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TRIBUNA

An end that is possible, necessary and inevitable

Jordi Armadans

Director of FundiPau and member of the ICAN Campaign

Both here at home and around the world we experienced an intense 2017, full of shocking and relevant news. Perhaps because of this and because of the low profile peace issues always seem to have, especially when they are of a positive nature, the fact that 2017 has been a very important year for the long and difficult – but inevitable – task of building and consolidating peace has gone unnoticed. When one day in the near future we achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, we will look back and identify a key year: 2017.

On 10 December 2017, exactly twenty years after the American activist Jody Williams received the Nobel Peace Prize for the campaign to ban landmines, two other women, Beatrice Fihn from Sweden, and the survivor (*hibakusha*) of the bombing of Hiroshima, Setsuko Thurlow, received the Nobel Peace Prize for the campaign to abolish nuclear weapons.

ICAN: an old aspiration; a young campaign

Achievements do not just happen. The struggle against nuclear weapons is a long-standing one; a very long-standing struggle. As a result of the terrible explosions of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, scientists, intellectuals, citizens and activists came forth and demanded that the world put an end to the suicidal madness of nuclear arms development.

Nevertheless, it took the end of the Cold War, a new international context, a new cycle of social mobilization and organizational and communicative experience accumulated by the campaigns against landmines and cluster bombs to work on a new approach. This new approach consisted of a new and young campaign (ICAN), launched in 2007; confirmed evidence – concern for the humanitarian disaster that an explosion of a nuclear weapon would cause today – and a well-defined strategy: to achieve a treaty based on the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

“ When one day in the near future we achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, we will look back and identify a key year: 2017 ”

If the first obligation of any government is to protect their citizenry and promote their well-being, it is absolutely unwarranted to maintain the arsenal of nuclear weapons. In effect, states should work to abolish these weapons for good. And, incidentally, save the 100 thousand million dollars that are wasted every year just on the maintenance of existing arsenals.

This was understood by the United Nations when, after World War II and the traumatic experiences of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, it established the elimination of nuclear weapons as one of its priorities. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968 seemed to point very timidly towards this goal. But almost fifty years have gone by and it has been demonstrated that the NPT has consolidated – and legitimized – the privileged status of the nuclear powers. The nuclear powers, invoking the NPT, have been up in arms whenever another country wanted to obtain nuclear weapons. But they have forgotten about the NPT when it came to advancing towards their own nuclear disarmament.

An unacceptable impact: that of nuclear weapons

Because it happened and it is well documented, the world knows the tragic humanitarian impact of the nuclear bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But the world,

or at least many people, ignore that today we have almost 15,000 nuclear weapons and that several nuclear powers (both official and unofficial) are working to modernize and expand their arsenals. And fortunately, because it hasn't been attempted, the world ignores the terrible devastation that the use of a nuclear weapon would involve today, let alone a nuclear war. The nuclear weapons of today obviously have a much higher capacity for destruction than the nuclear weapons we know. That is why numerous humanitarian organizations warn that we would not be able to cope with the serious impacts the explosion (intentional or accidental) of a nuclear weapon would entail.

“ If the first obligation of any government is to protect their citizenry and promote their well-being, it is absolutely unwarranted to maintain the arsenal of nuclear weapons ”

We are not just talking about many deaths, but also of radioactive contamination, of the negative impacts on the environment (increasing the climate threats that we are already dealing with today) and agriculture (which would aggravate the situation of world poverty and malnutrition).

The determination of nuclear powers to maintain, above anything else, the absurd privilege of being able to destroy life jeopardizes the health and survival of our planet. That is why citizens, the scientific community, many countries, the ICAN campaign, the International Red Cross, Mayors for Peace, etc. could not remain indifferent. That is why, over the last ten years, they have mobilized in protest actions, analysis sessions, scientific reports, awareness-raising activities, advocacy campaigns and diplomatic forums warning about the serious humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and, as a result, demanding their prohibition.

Making progress when it does not seem possible

The campaign against nuclear weapons is one of the difficult ones. Obtaining the prohibition of landmines and cluster bombs was very difficult: overcoming social inertias and economic interests, and transforming reasons of state. But it is true that they were weapons that were not essential in the defense policies of the countries that had them. Obtaining a ban on nuclear weapons, the most cruel and indiscriminate weapons that exist, is a much bigger challenge. Much resistance has had to be overcome. Nevertheless, in July 2017, 122 countries approved the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and in September it opened for signature and ratification (today there are 56 signatory countries and five ratifications). We estimate that by the end of 2018 the Treaty will have enough ratifications (fifty) to enter into force.

“ It is the first serious step that allows us to envisage a world without nuclear weapons and one that confuses and troubles the nuclear powers ”

Admittedly, the nuclear powers are missing. Does that make the agreement reached unfeasible or insignificant? Absolutely not. It is the first serious step that allows us to envisage a world without nuclear weapons. And it is the first step, determined and courageous, that confuses and troubles the nuclear powers. Whenever they did not want to move forward, they would veto and prevent any progress. But they have not known how nor have they been able to avoid the birth of this Treaty. For the first time in the history of nuclear weapons, hope and reason have trumped fear and inertia.

Also, here at home, we have been able to confirm that even the most difficult things can be changed. Of all the campaigns of disarmament and arms control promoted from Catalonia and Spain, this one seemed the most difficult: the one with the least impact, the least support and the least interest. Nevertheless, and in spite of the current political situation, the scientific community, citizens, the Barcelona City Council, the Parliament of Catalonia, and the Spanish Congress have called on Spain to follow the

road to nuclear disarmament. At the moment, the Spanish Government – like all other NATO countries and nuclear powers – has refused to join the wave of change. But today they are alone. And it is necessary for citizens to send them a message, loud and clear: a safe world is incompatible with the irresponsibility of maintaining an arsenal of destruction such as the arsenal of nuclear weapons.

Because, as the director of ICAN Beatrice Fihn said in Oslo in December: “The end is inevitable. But will that end be the end of nuclear weapons or the end of us? We must choose one.”

Photography : International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

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TRIBUNA

Science: a tool for peacebuilding

Pere Brunet

Professor Emeritus of Computer Science at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya

Today, in an unequal world with extreme needs, science has become indispensable in the work for peace and for everything needed to care for all people, present and future. Because, as economist Herman Daly says, what we need now is a radical ethical and ecological approach, which leads us to a great challenge: this century, if we want to survive as a species, we will have to make strong growth in the level of global human development compatible with a reduction of resources in rich countries. It is not an easy task, but it is what any ecological balance approach entails. Fortunately, science and technology provide us, and can continue to provide us, with resources to eradicate hunger and poverty, improve healthcare, end energy injustice and achieve the rest of the UN sustainable development goals. Tools to improve water use efficiency, distributed green energy systems, new means to tackle diseases and solutions for many other problems. Of course it can be argued that science is behind all the great advances in weapons and other war supplies, but the fact is that many tools derived from science and technology are dual use. Drones, for example, can save lives in mountain rescues and also kill people from a distance. We have learned to make wonderful tools, but we alone are responsible for their use. We have, and will continue to have, very powerful tools to build peace; we just need to decide to use them in the pursuit of goals that are ethical, that promote peace and care for people, and not for destruction. Because only we are responsible for these tools.

Science allows us to invent systems that place people at the center of our objectives, but the scientific attitude to life can also be a very powerful tool for peacebuilding. This is what I would like to comment on in the following paragraphs, by sharing a few personal thoughts on these issues.

A year and a half ago, surgeon and writer Atul Gawande began his commencement address at the California Institute of Technology by telling graduates that “if this place has done its job, you’re all scientists now.” He was speaking to a heterogeneous group of technologists, historians, philologists and graduates in various humanistic careers. To everyone’s surprise, he explained that science is not a career, but a commitment to a systematic way of thinking, an allegiance to a way of explaining the universe through testing and factual observation.

“ We have, and will continue to have, very powerful tools for peacebuilding; we just need to decide to use them in the pursuit of goals that are ethical and that promote care for people, not for destruction ”

First of all, science is a vaccine against vanity. It makes us aware that everything, including ourselves, is limited, and it tells us that infinite yearning is a myth. Experiments and measurement and quantification constantly remind us about the limits. Einstein said that humans are nothing more than beings limited in space and time, and the philosopher Javier Gomá explains that the acceptance of the consubstantial limitation to our finitude is what makes us predisposed to take on the ethical and civic limits that end up modeling our self vis-à-vis others. Because a large part of violence and wars is based on approaches that speak of power, greed, and an illusory absence of limits, while the awareness of the limitation itself is incompatible with the desire to accumulate, through violence and the waging of war. We are part of nature and we know that nature and the Earth are limited. Science helps us understand that we must limit our instinctive desire for power and that we must care for this great limited ecosystem that includes all the people in the world. And these limits and constraints that we discover with science can help us build peace.

Secondly, the scientific attitude involves questioning all truths and dogmas and accepting only objective facts as evidence. A good scientist doubts what even he or she proposes. The critical thinking of science is a good detector and destroyer of parallel and alternative truths and of the danger of myths that the physicist Carlo Rovelli outlines in his “seven brief lessons of physics.” In doubting everything, science is very similar to philosophy and, although they use different methods, both try to turn assertions around. Given an assertion like “terrorism is scary and we must therefore protect ourselves,” perhaps what is true is that [we believe] we have to defend ourselves [to maintain our level of wealth] and this ends up promoting terrorism that scares us. Science helps us demonstrate that the second assertion involves a cause-effect relationship, not the first one, and thus helps demystify the phenomenon of fear. Because science is a shield against fallacies, self-interested lies, and false “truths,” and a way to uncover the interests that these hide – interests that often promote violence and want to move us away from peace.

“ Science is a shield against falsehoods, self-interested lies and false “truths” ”

Thirdly, scientific ethics, with a global and inclusive vision based on the evidence that all humans are limited and ephemeral biological aggregates that are part of nature, explains that the goals always come before the tools and that everyone has the same rights and the same dignity. Science is universal and egalitarian. I have seen groups of scientists from countries in conflict collaborating on research projects and publishing the results in an open and accessible way for everyone. That is why, from the perspective of biological equality and equal rights for all people, the scientific attitude distrusts solutions aimed at a few and always asks for what and for whom the proposed solutions are. Are they to solve (current and future) global human needs or to favor hidden interests that result in major benefits for just a handful of people? Are they tools for power and accumulation or tools for global justice and peace?

Finally, we know that science can help us decide more objectively, based on evidence, data and probability. What is the probability that what we read in the newspaper or find on the Internet and on social networking sites is false? What is the probability that what we hear in commercial ads is true? What is the probability that what we hear on a particular TV channel is a supposedly alternative truth? What is the probability that I will be the victim of a terrorist attack this year and what is the probability that I will suffer an accident or a heart attack? Science can provide us with quantified answers to all these questions. But, even if we do not have time to make an accurate estimate, the scientific attitude involves asking questions, thinking about what the answers and probabilities might be, searching for evidence (for example, contrasting with other sources and especially ensuring their reliability), and, finally, making a decision, which will then surely be based on ethical and peace principles.

“ The scientific attitude involves asking questions, seeking evidence and making a decision based on ethical and peace principles ”

Of course science is not the only discipline that offers us resources to constantly separate what is real from the myths and fallacies we are told, to detect what can be harmful to many people and to future generations, and, ultimately, to build peace. There are many creative disciplines that help to think critically, such as philosophy, literature, art and others. Everything is complementary and everything helps. In fact, philosopher Emilio Lledó explains the evolution of the idea of well-being for the Greeks and shows how they went from a concept based on “well-having” (having power, objects, slaves) to that of “well-being,” based on values such as balance, wisdom and joy. This road to well-being is the gateway to the world of ethics based on the dignity of all people, which we have been searching for for over two thousand years. But science is a very important factor on this road to peace because it also provides us with effective tools to access energy and water, to cure diseases, to feed everyone and much more. As the painter Antonio López once said: “Things are going to get serious. We should listen more to

scientists than to bankers. So it must be for the sake of everyone.”

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INTERVIEW

Interview with Simona Levi, activist and founder of Xnet

Roser Fortuny

International Catalan Institute for Peace

Simona Levi, activist and founder of Xnet

Simona Levi, born in Italy and a resident of Barcelona, is a playwright, theater director, activist, cultural manager, multidisciplinary artist, researcher and teacher. As an activist, she has worked in the field of free culture, digital democracy, the strategic use of digital tools for organization and collective action, the fight against corruption and the renewal of democracy. Through her work in the Xnet project, dedicated to the promotion of digital rights and online democracy, Levi is one of the most authoritative voices in this field in Catalonia.

The concept of e-democracy or digital democracy is becoming more and more popular. How can digital tools help strengthen participatory democracy?

Technology allows us to take a big step forward towards real democracy because it facilitates a disintermediation between citizens and their institutions. Citizens have always needed the political party as intermediary to be represented in the architecture of governance. With the Internet, the word of our representatives is not the only thing we have because we can watch them on video while they address Parliament, and they can post what they have done or are going to do... In short, we can watch them more closely. Representatives are important; the idea is not to get rid of them, but their role ended up becoming authoritarian because we weren't able to monitor their work. Now disintermediation is transformed into collaboration between citizens and their representatives; it is no longer an act of faith.

In recent years we have seen several cases where social networks have become a tool that have allowed the calls for citizen mobilization to reach more people. But apart from an increase in quantity, has the quality of participation also increased?

There have been two different phenomena. On the one hand, disintermediation has allowed the leadership of struggles to become more widely distributed. We have seen how many marginalized groups or groups that could not organize due to logistical issues have had the possibility to become visible and create a space for themselves. Democracy increases because it becomes more diverse. On the other hand, when there is a process of disintermediation, we are changing the status quo and the monopolies of intermediaries, such as political parties and unions. These actors make themselves out to be the representatives of all struggles and send the mobilized people home. After a moment of large-scale action and social transformation, such as with the 15-M Movement, the map moves but others are quickly created for us. The most passive part of public opinion is taken in and draws attention away from the groups that are really active to focus again on the intermediaries. When the use of technology for democracy is flawed, a large part of the responsibility lies with these intermediaries, in the form of new parties or old “updated” parties, that seek to take over the space of governance and organization for the struggle created by social movements. While the Internet allows for much healthier forms of participation than before, the infantilized use of it by political parties turns it into a *fake*, a simulation, in order to hide forms of distributed leadership that could be used to configure a new democracy with the *demos* at its heart.

“ With the use of technology, the leadership of struggles has become more widely distributed. Many marginalized groups or groups that could not be organized due to logistical issues have been able to become visible ”

Is there a risk that traditional methods will become obsolete?

Technology alone cannot resolve governance because the human factor is always the most important factor of all. Nor can we leave it in the hands of intermediaries because their ontological concern is not losing power. The worst thing that can happen is to believe that technology is a panacea that solves problems with algorithms. Technology must be used to distribute leadership and put people in the center. This process *would* make certain formats as we understand them today obsolete. For instance, up to now elections have been the only way people could have an impact on their institutions. With a change in the model, however, voting could become just another feature, instead of the only one.

Does the future lie in moving towards a system in which citizens can directly intervene in the legislative process? Are we ready for this leap?

We are seeing that all institutions, even those that sincerely make an effort in this regard, treat the participation of civil society with paternalism. As an activist and citizen without any specific training, I have been making amendments to laws for a long time now; that is, I do the work that members of parliament do. I do it because I want to, not because it is intended for me to do it. When they tell us we can “participate,” it is never really to participate in drafting legislation; it is in a very generic way that has no effect, as if we were making a wish list. We are not asked to exercise the same responsibility or the same capacities that members of parliament should have. In civil society there are people with training in certain areas, or that have competence as an affected party, who could transform these competences into laws, but who do not have the channels to do so. The channels exist, but, once again, it is not a problem of technology; it is a problem of the protocols established by parties, institutions and governments. They never ask us to amend; they ask us to participate, almost playfully, as one does with young children.

What are the main challenges we face to achieve effective digital democracy?

The architecture of democracy – a chamber of representatives, institutions, a division of powers, etc. – is fine, but we have to rethink how we fill it. With regard to technology, there are four mechanisms derived from the decentralized structure model of the Internet that can be put into practice combined and in a completely analogous manner.

In the first place, there is transparency, which must be absolute for institutions and with strict privacy safeguards for people. Transparency is crucial because if we do not have the information we cannot decide or make proposals. Secondly, a wikilegislation must be created allowing any bill of law to be amended by the citizenry in the same way that it is done in parliaments and with the same responsibility. We should not confuse participation with freedom of expression. The third mechanism is the real right to vote. At present, we can choose from a limited catalog of parties once every four years, but only our representatives have the real right to vote. We delegate our right to them, but if a party does not respect their program, a space should be created where the citizenry could vote to withdraw the delegation of this right from those representatives. Finally, the fourth mechanism is referendums. Often parties and governments think of them as the only purely democratic tool, but it is important to bear in mind that they always develop a polarizing dynamic between yes and no. In the new model, a referendum would only be used in cases where amendments are not possible, such as international treaties, and only after other options have been exhausted. In this way, we do not build a democracy around polarization; instead, we work collectively to resolve dissensions.

“ In digital culture, confrontation makes no sense in itself; it is a culture that is deeply democratic, distributed, non-discriminatory and nonviolent ”

What role does nonviolence play in cyberactivism?

Contrary to their bad reputation, online practices and those of hackers are very peaceful. In digital culture the idea that the union is sacred and can never be challenged does not exist. When there is a conflict in a programming community, a natural separation occurs between the part that wants to go one way and the one that wants to go another. This separation is considered sacred because divergences are seen as a positive phenomenon. The same objective can be achieved with different methodologies, so separation implies that there will be more widely distributed and diverse ways to

achieve it. Therefore, in digital culture, confrontation in itself makes no sense; it is a culture that is deeply democratic, distributed, non-discriminatory and nonviolent.

One of the forms of Internet-based activism is hacktivism. Can your strategies lead to a violation of rights?

Those who work the hardest to protect certain rights in the digital age, such as the privacy of individuals, are precisely the hacktivists. The hacktivist sector is the only one that is providing civil society with tools to protect their privacy and right to the inviolability of communications. The violations we are seeing with mass surveillance or the curtailment of freedom in the digital world comes from institutions; as always, it is civil society that provides solutions to defend rights.

What has been the evolution of the different strategies of cyberactivism?

The Internet is a very new tool and, at the same time, one of daily use for almost everyone. It is used with more or less technical expertise, in actions ranging from social struggles with tools like Twitter or Facebook, which were designed as a space for leisure, to the creation of self-protection software and of spaces for sharing information that runs counter to the official establishment line. There is one layer that is accessible to everyone and a more technological layer that allows us to continue using and defending the Internet for the people, instead of leaving it in the hands of the usual powers that be.

“ It is important to internalize that the image and narrative of online violence also contribute to stain a struggle that aims to be peaceful ”

In comparison to classical activism, do ICT-based activism strategies have a greater influence on the citizenry? Do they have the same credibility?

Unfortunately, the influence is not greater since the powers that be are appropriating the digital world. With regard to credibility, they are trying to sell us the idea that fake news and bots are created by ordinary people. It is the same strategy used with corruption: “people are corrupt.” But it is ministers, political parties or big corporations that are corrupt, just as fake news is created by the mass media and political parties that hire companies that use social networks to spread propaganda. Technopolitics has not overcome the propaganda of the system; instead, it is the propaganda that is appropriating the spaces of freedom of technopolitics.

How does cyberactivism affect the so-called post-truth era?

We have to be very careful because the discourse of hatred, fake news and Internet criminalization is exactly what the institutions want in order to regain the power they have lost because of social networks. The criminal code is already working on harassment, threats and slander, but blaming all of this on the tool is akin to promoting the prohibition of the freedom of expression and publication. Fake news spreads because there are businesses behind it. No individual, even if he or she is an influencer, has the ability to massively spread false information, unlike the establishment and the mass media.

Catalonia has a long tradition of nonviolent activism and of promoting peace. What is the importance of digital activism in the “procés” (Catalan sovereignty movement)?

Catalonia has proven to be an incredible example of nonviolence. Even the most hostile media have had to admit that, despite provocations and infiltrators, people have internalized the importance of nonviolence. On the Internet we have also seen the same violent provocations that have been experienced in the street, so it is important to internalize that the image and narrative of violence contribute to stain a peaceful struggle. On the other hand, the only space available to break the information blockade sustained by Catalonia has been social networking sites. And disinformation and propaganda have become more visible. In this regard, there is still a lot of work to be done and not much time to do it before it is too late.

Photography: Simona Levi, activist and founder of Xnet

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SOBRE L'ICIP

News, activities and publications about the ICIP

ICIP

International Catalan Institute for Peace

2017 ICIP Peace in Progress Award Ceremony

Catalan activist Arcadi Oliveres will receive the 2017 ICIP Peace in Progress Award at a ceremony that will take place at the Parliament of Catalonia on April 17. Oliveres is an activist with tireless dedication and commitment in the promotion of peace, social justice, human rights and disarmament, from a universal perspective.

Linked since his young years to the scouting movement, the Christian movement Pax Christi and to the Víctor Seix Institute for Polemology, he received his first influences towards pacifist thought from Frederic Roda and Joan Botam. During the period of the Francoist dictatorship, his commitment to democracy led him to join the *Assemblea de Catalunya* ('Assembly of Catalonia'). In 1982, he joined *Justícia i Pau* ('Justice and Peace'), organization he ends up presiding and from where he boosts the first campaign for 0.7% of development aid for Third World countries. Oliveres has participated in campaigns of the anti-NATO movement, against arms trade, in favour of conscientious objection against compulsory military service and tax resistance, against the external debts of poor countries and against war.

Arcadi Oliveres has become a person of influence and a reference in the education of young people, thanks to his enormous quality as speaker and communicator, demonstrated in countless talks and outreach conferences all over the territory.

Last publications

- Los niños y la conflictividad global, by Kim Huynh, Bina D'Costa and Katrina Lee-Koo.

Published by ICIP and Edicions Bellaterra (in Spanish).

- La violencia sexual en Colombia, mujeres víctimas y constructoras de paz. Informe elaborat per l'investigador Néstor Calbet en el marc d'un projecte de recerca de l'Institut de Drets Humans de Catalunya (IDHC) amb el finançament de l'ICIP.

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