

*Conflict Encounter Language*

Multi-ethnic Youth Projects in  
Sri Lanka and South Africa

*Stephanie Schell-Faucon*

## *Theatre of the People – Sri Lanka*

Mobile theatre with multi ethnic cast  
travelling through Sri Lanka

## *Wilderness Trail – South Africa*

Wilderness trails with rivaling militarised &  
criminalised youth of the same township

# What makes them special?

- Home grown initiatives for a specific cultural and conflict context
- Holistic EXPERIENCE: heart, soul, brain & body
- Broad understanding of ENCOUNTER on various levels (with self, other, nature, communities)
- The ENCOUNTER experience is shared / brought back into the community
- Moving beyond the safe space created with and for the youth – youth understand themselves as 'agents for peace' in and beyond their communities
- Living example that transformation and peaceful co-existence is possible

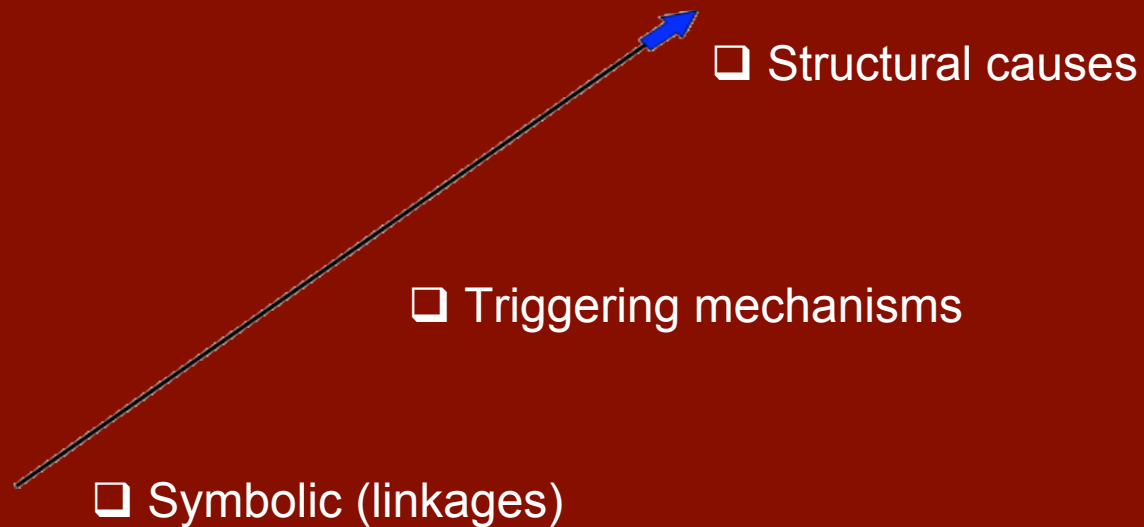
# Many critical questions

- Experiential learning reduces complexity:  
How to strengthen self esteem/identity  
while coping also with complexity of  
conflict?
- Individusalisation and de-politisation of  
conflict and structural violence?
- Ethnic harmony as a goal in ongoing war?

# Multiple youth & youth encounters

- The examples show how youth encounters can be done with very different youth groups and can lead from awareness raising to joint action
- More questions to be probed into particular potential of different sub-groups in different stages of the conflict
  - Militant or militarised and criminalised youth
  - Children/pupils/students from all over the country
  - Young people of one geographical area
  - Youth engaged in peace building
  - 'Youngsters' of political and economic elite

# Level of contribution to conflict transformation?



Can youth encounters have impact beyond symbolic level?  
How would they have to be designed?  
Is the potential linked to different conflict phases?

# Level of contribution to conflict transformation?

**DIRECT VIOLENCE (Behavior)**  
(physical & psychological)

visible

invisible

**CULTURAL DIMENSIONS  
OF VIOLENCE (Attitudes)**

**STRUCTURAL DIMENSIONS  
OF VIOLENCE (structures)**

# Cultural context & design of encounter

- Do values of collectivist or individualist settings dominate? Does this impact on concepts of conflict, social transformation and healing?
- What learning culture have participants/large parts of society been exposed to?
- Role, respect and space for decision making of youth in their specific culture and community? What respect is expected from them towards the elder?
- Which traditional forms of conflict transformation exist? Do youth experience them as a resource or a hinderance?

# Language of power - power of language

- How much power is exerted through language policies and their implementation? Who speaks the language of power and social promotion? Who learns whose language?
- What language barriers might exist if all participants speak the same language? How used are participants to reflect and express feelings in cognitive approaches? Who will be/feel 'silenced'?
- Learning the other language and