

Time Travel event, How the troubles (conflict) came to our town/ village, and how it changed us, summer 1972

Goal

- Examine the Time Travel method as a reconciliation tool when dealing with the conflict in and about Northern Ireland, also as a method for other topics
- Create an understanding of various perspectives of the conflict and how to contribute to the peace process

Facts

The conflict/the troubles

1972 is early in the conflict, the year of the greatest number of deaths and violence including Bloody Sunday and Bloody Friday.

Scenario, The troubles (conflict) coming to our village, Ballymagaw, 1972

In two day's time there will be a family fair day in the middle of our village. The planning for the fair day has been going on for quite a while. The chairperson of the committee has called for a meeting tonight to sort out the last details of the program.

Everybody is looking forward to the fair, with relaxing and fun activities. The committee is a cross-community group. In these days, when the tension has increased, the plan is to have a friendly and fun day for the whole community.

In the last few years there has been some incidents and even bombings in order parts of Northern Ireland, but this village has so far been spared. "And, we want to keep it that way", people say. There is a friendly atmosphere in the village, and has been for decades. And the summer fair is a regular event to keep the village together. "Nothing is allowed to change that".

But at the same time everyone can feel more tension in the village. Previously nobody talked about who is a catholic or who is a protestant. But now you can't be sure who is listening to what you say. With the increase in violence and tension people are being careful about what they say. Also people do not want to cause offence and start a row so conversation about the violence and politics is kept to those you know and trust. You have to be more careful with your words and what you do.

Anyway, the people of the committee are gathering in the community hall. Everything is under control and the meeting is just about to start.

Roles

Residents in the community from various sectors, young and old

Chairperson – principal of the local Catholic school

Presbyterian Minister, (Secretary) of the group.

Loyalist and republican supporters, members of security forces, members of paramilitary organizations (loyalist or republican), peace activist, potential emigrant etc

RUC officer, wife

Chair of the local Chamber of Trade made up of local businesses from both communities.

Bank Manager (Treasurer) recently appointed manager of the local Bank of Ireland which has a cross community customer base

Members of the two local bands in the community Ballymagaw Accordion Band and St Paul's Accordion Band from the two communities. (The bands will perform at the event and have agreed to play tunes that are seen as non-partisan.)

Messenger

Everybody keep their age and sex, and describe their character in a few sentences

Key Questions

“We and the other”

- How will we keep the community together? What are the tools and approaches? What is our relation and communication to “the other”? How far can we go in understanding and respect?
- How do we react to conflict/ killings? Shock? Anger at “them”? Join the paramilitaries and take action? Join the police/ security forces? Demand Government action? Set up a peace group? Continue with cross-community activities? Leave the area? Other?

Activities

- Make signs for the fair
- Make bunting and festive decorations (without red, white and blue or green, white and orange colours next to each other)
- Set up chairs and tables for the meeting
- Lay the table for coffee and biscuits/cake
- Practice songs (which do not have any political connections), plan for the fair
- Table games, chess, (card games)

Committee meeting

Time Plan

13.30 Set up the site

15.00 Welcome, introduction, dress up
Scenario, characters

15.20 Initiation, (song/prayer)

Activities start, preparations for the meeting, songs (30 min)

Messenger (two persons shot in the local pub)

Meeting, resolution (25 min)

16.20 Ending ceremony of the Time Travel event

- 16.20 Reflection exercises, today (coffee, tea)
The Time Travel method; Comparing the situation today, what can we do? Visions of the future
- 17.20 Short summaries
- 17.30 End
Coffee, tea
- 18.00 Time Travel, Story-telling and Bridging Ages in Ireland in the future:
Issues on the conflict, other issues, organization?
- 19.00 End

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Diversity Challenges, Will Glendinning

Advisory and Management group of the Time Travel project

County Museum Dundalk, Brian Walsh

Kalmar läns museum/ Bridging Ages, Ebbe Westergren

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Appendix

Characters

Background by Diversity Challenges, Will Glendinning

Introduction

The purpose is to examine the Time Travel Method to see how it can be best used as a reconciliation tool when dealing with the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. It may also be developed for use in any applied history setting which has no connection to conflict. Diversity Challenges is a peace building charity which works with adults and the proposals are designed for that client group. Others may wish to work with children and may wish to adapt the scenarios proposals for those clients.

Principles and background

The following has been taken from the Bridging Ages Web page <http://www.bridgingages.com/about/the-time-travel-method/> with adaptations for development of the method in Ireland and as a reconciliation tool for learning about the conflict and developing healing.

The five principles of the Time travel method are

1. The use of local sites and stories
2. Always several perspectives/alternatives, most often from a bottom up perspective
3. Key questions, contemporary issues connected to the past
4. Working together several partners
5. A reflective dialogues in the Time Travel event.

Time Travel method is both a **process** and an **event**:

The **Time Travel process** is a way to gather people in the community in a study group or learners on a certain topic/subject. You work together for some weeks or sometimes even a year or two on the topic/issue you have decided. This process, often more important than the event itself, includes several steps. 7 steps:

- 1/Goal, Select a Topic, Site.
- 2/Research together.
- 3/Landscape.
- 4/Training.
- 5/Education (in school or community).
- 6/Time Travel event.
- 7/Evaluation

The Time Travel event is a role-play taking part a couple of hours at the local historic site. Before the event you write a scenario, a fictional story from the site, based on facts. It is always a local site, a special event and a certain year.

The Key Questions you discuss during the event are issues of today and in the past

Ethics

Diversity Challenges operates on Ethical Principles based on

- Beneficence
- Dignity
- Justice

These are critical when you are working on dealing with conflict. We need to recognise that the conflict in and about Northern Ireland is recent it is the the living memory of anyone aged 20 or over. There are many who have been traumatised by the conflict who have physical or mental injuries, who have been bereaved having lost relatives, friends, neighbours. The conflict is current it has not been resolved. It is being acted out in other forms the violence is reduced but not absent.

Therefore care must be taken in the devising if any work that it recognises these issues. For example the possible re-traumatising of participants by bringing them back to actual events or memory being used to help reinforce division and distrust. There is a duty of on all who work on dealing with the a contested and contentious past to all participants to try to do good- Beneficence, to treat people with Dignity and Justice.

While in Time Travels in other countries and with less contentious scenarios it may be usual to use actual sites and events this would raise ethical issues. If we were to identify an actual event then we need the consent of those involved. Diversity Challenges uses informed consent in its storytelling. The same principle needs to apply with Time Travel.

Thus the scenarios we propose are based on actual events or number of events and will be based on factual events but the characters will not directly relate to any person. Thus we will not use specific events or the names of actual people.

Use of the Method

This is a new method to Ireland. It has been used in other countries as a means to assist dialogue about contentious issues to learn from the past to help with a more peaceful today. The scenario below is an example to explore the method. To see what works and what does not work and adapt amend as a result.

It is hoped that CR practitioners and storytellers/gatherers will find the method useful and will want to work with groups communities and develop 'Time Travels' to suit them. This will require a work, trust, research.

Scenario

How the troubles (conflict) came to our town/village community and how it changed us

- Date 1972 (early on in the conflict the year of the greatest number of deaths and violence including Bloody Sunday and Bloody Friday)
- The community can be single identity nationalist or unionist or mixed.
- A local community meeting for example it could be a community group, church group, GAA club, Orange Lodge. With a general discussion or agenda. There is activity setting up the room for the meeting, greeting each other general conversation, making tea.

- The meeting begins with a regular agenda
- Person enters the room distressed with the news that there has been a shooting/bomb, two local people from this community have been killed.
- Those killed are known personally by some of those in the room
- What is the reaction to the news?

Shock

Anger at what “they” have done

Talk of the victims - their innocence and their families

- How are we as a community going to respond?
 - plan to leave the area or the country -safety
 - join paramilitaries to get back at the perpetrators
 - take action against those from the other side who have done this to us
 - set up a peace group
 - demand Government action
 - apply to join the police/ security forces
 - wring our hands and say there is nothing we can do
 - other

Any of these options can be explored. They are starting points for discussion

For the scenario will need some key players who stimulate discussion. These can be varied and could include the following examples of "characters" for example someone who:

- is already in or on fringes of paramilitary organisation loyalist or republican
- supports Loyalist/republican viewpoints
- is a member of police/army or with relative in police or army
- has good connections across the divide
- is without connections across divide and is suspicious fearful of the “other”
- is without connections across divide and history of hurt to family from the “other”
- wants to protect family by keeping head down Safety of person and family
- wants to get out away from the danger either to somewhere that is seen as ‘safe’ or to emigrate.

Questions:

1. Is discussion about difficult issues possible?
2. What is our relationship with the “other”?
3. What lines of communication are there with the “other”?
4. What is the nature of the conflict?
5. What is the situation today? Is it any better? What are relations in the room today? Can we now have the difficult conversations? How and why is this?
6. What can we do today to improve relations listen to different stories?
7. What can we do to try to understand the difficult past?