



# Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs

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QCEA has just published its latest environmental fact sheet. It focuses on the consequences of domestic photovoltaic application. Photovoltaics (PV) are solar panels that convert sunlight directly into electricity. It is definitely worth everyone looking into the possibility of installing a PV panel as soon as possible. Of course at the same time you should look into other domestic renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar thermal, but without dismissing PV. Here we set out why PV makes sense, both ecologically and economically.

QCEA's paper looks at three of the common criticisms of PV. Firstly, that the embedded energy in PV is so much that it is hardly worth making them. Secondly, that the metals that are used in their construction are rare and/or dangerous. Finally, that they do not make economic sense. Let's look first at the amount of energy it takes to construct a panel:

Energy payback times are the amount of time it takes for a panel to produce as much electricity as it takes to manufacture the panel. This is done through a life-cycle assessment. Estimates vary vastly, but there is a broad agreement that suggests if you live in the south of Spain, a normal c-SI based PV panel (which is what you will nearly always get offered for a domestic installation) will have a payback time of 1-3 years. If you live in the north of England it will have a payback time of 2-4 years. A normal PV panel will be guaranteed for about 25 years. We can therefore see that PV makes a lot more energy than it takes to build it. It also has the advantage of being emission free once built.

Secondly the rare and dangerous metals' argument. If you are looking to get a PV panel installed on your house, it will almost certainly be a c-SI panel. These are made up of silicon. Silicon is the second most abundant element in the earth's crust (after oxygen). Equally it is safe to use in manufacturing. The main issues in terms of rare and/or dangerous metals are in PV panels not used for domestic application. Unless you were considering investing in solar farms or thin-film research you do not need to worry about the arguments around cadmium and tellurium (for more information see QCEA's briefing paper).



The one issue, however, that puts most people off PV is the price. It is one of the more expensive ways of producing renewable energy. Governments around Europe are, however, offering various economic incentives, the most significant of which are feed-in tariffs. A feed-in tariff is a set price paid for the electricity produced by renewable energy; this is funded by the government. In the UK, it is a particularly good time to consider purchasing a PV panel as the old low carbon building grant is still available and you can get the highest rate guaranteed for the feed-in tariffs (that will otherwise decrease year on year). Despite this, you can still only expect to get your money back within approximately 12 years (see QCEA's briefing paper for more details).

It is apparent that now is the time to be considering purchasing a PV panel because of the impending ecological crisis. PV will offer you an independence and reliability in your energy supply. It has been shown that domestic PV panels make ecological sense. Installing a PV panel also offers a cash incentive in most European countries. The economic situation is better in some Member States than others. It is no surprise to see that where the feed-in tariffs are set the highest (Germany), the take up of the technology is the highest. Germany continues to be the champion of this emerging technology within Europe. It is a lesson that the rest of Europe could learn from.

*Steve Hynd*



## The Muscular Dove - EU Conflict Prevention in Practice

On 8 and 9 October, a workshop on *'Dialogue and Mediation and European Union Tools to Address and Prevent Conflict'* took place; this was part of a series of workshops/policy seminars organized by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, the Swedish-based Folke Bernadotte Academy, the Madariaga College of Europe Foundation and the Swedish Presidency of the EU.

This was different from dozens of other such events I have attended during the last seven years in Brussels. And one of the main differences was the keynote introduction by Chris Spies, a conflict transformation expert from South Africa. And it was not so much what he said - much of that could have been said by other speakers - but the way he said it.

***"Conflict is driven by emotion as much as by other factors. The most important drivers are hope, fear and humiliation."***

Chris started by telling us a story and then went on to discuss mediation and peacebuilding in terms of the transformation needed in each participant rather than just as a political question. He talked of the many different actors in any conflict, the perpetrators, the instigators, the victims, the onlookers and those who look the other way. He spoke of the different approaches that can be taken to transforming conflicts, approaches based on power, on rights or on needs. And he emphasized the human element of conflict, the fact that, in the end, the people who participate, in whatever role, are all human beings and therefore equal. He emphasized the need to tell stories - the stories of what was done to us; of what we did; and of what we failed to do. It is only by telling these stories to each other (and by listening to what others have to say) that we can begin to transform the conflict. And it has to be the people involved in the conflict who reach this level of understanding, not outsiders - however important the role of outsiders might be. He also highlighted that conflict is driven by emotion as much as by other factors and that the three most important drivers are hope, fear and humiliation.

Based on this deeply thoughtful opening of the conference, both speakers and participants were challenged to talk on a different level to each other; we had less of the predictable and more of the common ground. There were some key agreements:

- Mediation and dialogue are important parts of conflict transformation and have to happen at all stages of any conflict
- Conflict transformation is a long-term endeavour and quick fixes do not work
- All parties to a conflict must be involved in the dialogue or mediation process
- There is no substitute for local ownership.

Jeremy Lester, Head of Unit for the Horn of Africa in the European Commission's Directorate General for Development, reflected on some of the dialogue he is involved in; he suggested that dialogue which is based on messages such as 'you ought to', 'you must', 'why haven't you' and based on externally imposed targets do not assist listening and therefore fail only too often. He concluded that listening is the most important part of dialogue and that for people to listen they must be heard.

Much of the discussion focused on the role of the EU. The EU is already an important player in conflicts in third countries; it has Delegations, Special Representatives, Civilian and Military Crisis Management Missions and a range of other instruments for intervention.

It was clear that mediation and dialogue were part of this palette of tools but that the question of how the EU should use these tools, whether it should have its own experts to act as facilitators and mediators or whether it should support professional mediators, are open questions and that the answers may range widely in different contexts.

***"The EU needs to understand that its role can never be to do the peacemaking: that has to come from within the conflict parties."***

What did become clear is the need for the EU (and other international actors) to understand that their role can never be to do the peacemaking: that has to come from within the conflict parties. The understanding of what is a solution in different contexts must come from those directly involved. But it is equally important to ensure that the needs of all communities, of women, of minorities, of different groups are taken into account and that international intervention of any kind does not have a bias towards one group over another. Peace cannot be built by leaning on the weak to accept a solution that does not respect their needs.



Speakers from Kenya and Ghana described the peacebuilding process in their countries and how they are working; a key point made was the need for people with convening power (sometimes religious leaders, sometimes well-known personalities) to be ready to step up and call people to the table. Whether and in what circumstances, EU actors would be able to have that convening power was left open. The peace architecture, though, has to be in place for any peace process to work quickly and effectively. The 20+ years of building up a national peace network in Kenya helped to contain the post-election conflict which broke out in late 2007/early 2008.

There is a connection, too, between conflict transformation and justice; we were called to ensure that justice - especially in the face of genocide and war crimes - is not sacrificed on the altar of a quick fix peace agree-

ment. Justice is important: to acknowledge the harm done; to recognise that what was done was wrong; and, maybe most importantly, to re-establish the basis of our common humanity.

Does the EU have a 'unique selling point' in all of this? The EU, itself a peace project born out of deep and violent conflicts, can show that there is a way to resolve conflicts and find a way of positive co-existence without violence. That is quite a lever; but it requires the EU to ensure that its approach in the world is seen as different to the usual intervention - is seen as based on non-military approaches - that's not soft, that's not woolly; it is hard work: the EU could thus brand itself as a 'muscular dove'.

*Martina Weitsch*

## Water - the Stuff of Life or the Source of Conflict?

Two books have come across my desk recently: 'The Atlas of Water - Mapping the World's Most Critical Resource' published by Earthscan in 2009 and 'Who Owns the Water?' published by Lars Müller Publishers in 2006. Both are beautifully illustrated and incredibly full of factual information. Both point to the inequalities in access to water and to sanitation and the inequalities in terms of water use. Both also clearly set out the issues we face as water becomes scarcer, as more water is being used for domestic, agricultural, and industrial purposes. Both paint a grim picture.

They talk about the different price levels for water. One example in the Atlas of Water shows clearly how in Accra in Ghana those with access to the most convenient and cleanest water pay least for each litre they consume. This is a typical picture.

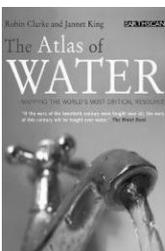
'Who Owns the Water?' includes a section on the water issues which drive the Middle East conflict. This is full of information not generally spoken of and explains clearly that water is at least one of the obstacles to a lasting peace, for example:

The route of the barrier\*, which sometimes extends deeply into Palestinian territory, runs along boundaries which Israeli hydrologists had already earmarked in 'maps of water interests' as zones of strategic importance to Israel in the mid-1990s, before any intifada.

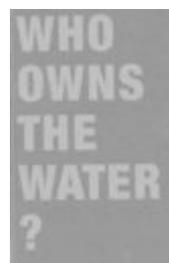
\*the Wall built by Israel ostensibly for security reasons

Both books are highly recommended to anyone who wants to learn more about this important factor in conflict, in climate change, in development, in global inequality. There is much food for thought; there is much impetus for change - political change, life-style changes and of perceptions. And the beautiful maps (in the Atlas) and pictures in the other book are an added bonus.

*Martina Weitsch*



Maggie Black and Jannet King:  
*The Atlas of Water - Mapping the World's Most Critical Resource*  
Earthscan 2009  
ISBN 978-1-84407-827-1



Christian Rentsch:  
*Who Owns the Water?*  
Lars Müller Publishers 2006  
ISBN 978-3-03778-018-3 (English)  
ISBN 978-3-03778-015-2 (German)



## QCEA's 30th Birthday Celebrations



In 1979 a few Friends from Brussels Meeting, with Quakers from several European countries, founded the Quaker Council for European Affairs.

Today eleven countries and several European Quaker organizations are represented on the Council, which in October reached its 30th birthday.

QCEA represented a recognition that the Quaker tradition of "speaking truth to power" had to adapt as some powers exercised by national governments shifted to the European institutions, creating a new target for the expression of Quaker principles. QCEA was established with two paid representatives and two or three volunteer interns in Brussels, home of most of the EEC's institutions. However, QCEA also targets the Council of Europe, in Strasbourg, which focuses mainly on human rights and good governance. This inclusive approach enables EEC/EU non-members like Norway and Switzerland to play their part in its activities.

QCEA concentrates on advocacy and channelling information concerning peace, human rights and the just sharing of the world's resources, urging those with power and authority to pursue policies that reflect Quaker testimonies and values. Over the years, different concerns have predominated: in earlier times, conscientious objection to military service was a burning issue, and when the EEC/EU was negotiating agreements with the African/Caribbean/Pacific group

of ex-colonies, development was crucial. Today, an equitable, sustainable energy policy is a clear priority and QCEA is heavily engaged in this topic.

On 23rd and 24th October, the Council held its regular six-monthly meeting in Brussels, but in addition to normal business, this was also an occasion to celebrate thirty years of achievement and many former employees, including permanent Brussels representatives and programme assistants (interns), as well as Council members, from QCEA's earliest days to the present, participated. There were naturally speeches about the Council's work but by Saturday evening there was also a party spirit and local Quakers served a festive dinner to Council members, staff and guests.

The October Council meeting decided that EU policy towards Israel and Palestine needs serious reorientation in order to contribute to peace in this region. This question will loom large in QCEA's fourth decade. Looking at Europe's management of its own affairs, as well as its role in the wider world, there is no doubt that there is ample work for QCEA's next thirty years.

*Richard Condon  
Clerk of QCEA*

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