



UPDATE FROM PEACE ENGINEERS IN UKRAINE 17TH OCTOBER 2022

NVC and war at crossroads

One picture (visible at the bottom of this post) shows Ukrainian soldiers preparing to defend their local community against Russian invaders. They practice connecting with and expressing their feelings (blue cards on the picture) and needs (yellow cards). The guy in the middle facilitating this empathy meeting is one of our Peace Engineers, let's call him Maksym. He is also the commander of these soldiers.

We (my wife Olena Hantsyak-Kaskiv and I) talked with Maksym on phone in early March. We talked about fear of dying from the Russian artillery. We talked about fighting and killing from the wish to preserve life vs fighting and killing from hate and revenge. A conversation of long pauses and deep breathing, only few words.

He told about his sessions with his guys and how it strengthens their caring mutual supportive fellowship through self-empathy and mutual understanding.

"You were right Carl! It works like a miracle for the guys!" he shouted excitedly to us over the phone. We told Maxim how much we celebrate knowing him and valuing his being on this planet, and said goodbye. Just really hoping he would survive what was coming his way,

Paradise is a theme I like talking with participants about in trainings. Mostly for social workers, police, and relatives of Ukrainian soldiers in captivity, and Peace Engineers also. For them, paradise is being with their families and friends in nature under the sun, in an atmosphere of harmony, love. Experiencing fulfillment, compassion, and purpose in life, feeling free and safe to be themselves and to love the world. Many participants tell me that they actually have more needs satisfied after the beginning of the war than before. A stronger sense of purpose and meaning in life, a powerful experience of being valuable, and being supportive of other people. Some say that, somehow, this war comes as a cleansing of society, uniting people, making priorities straight, reminding us what is really important in life. The need card "Life" is often chosen as a theme for the conversation.

Today we are working in the Peace Engineer house. The office is full of activity and huge piles of various equipment such as fire extinguishers, advanced first aid kits, and equipment for cars. In the training room, Peace Engineers are trained in life-saving first aid and how to conduct themselves in case of fire, traffic accidents, shelling, shooting, and chemical-nuclear attacks (the other pictures). What do you do when the person next to you hit by an explosion is massively bleeding so that she will not die in 3 minutes? We all wish to know this and much more. Theory, practice, feedback, repeat. Being so close to war requires another skillset in order to live, function, and make a contribution.

On the left of my desk, I have boxes with car tire reparation kits next to boxes with Geiger counters. To the right are handwritten notes from a sleepless hour this night followed by the sound of explosions in central Kyiv in early morning. Notes of scary honesty, names of the people, and their actions that I hold accountable for my suffering. It is shameful to admit, as a CT in my 10th year, that I still blame others for my feeling bad and thus make them responsible for my well-being. This process is liberating to me, and, I guess, forever ongoing; to reclaim and build my self-responsibility. Feedback informs me that it supports people around me (- my wife) with more emotional safety and freedom to be themselves, and it empowers me to make better choices to satisfy my unmet needs.

We are preparing Peace Engineers to travel to areas previously occupied by Russia in order to provide critical urgently needed psycho-emotional support to individuals as well as families and local

communities. They tell us countless stories about how they in all spheres of social life use NVC to support people to find inner clarity, calmness, and peaceful solutions to conflicts. Peace Engineer interventions support families, soldiers, and civilians to function better together. All restoring and strengthening social fabrics. They will also bring some basic humanitarian aid to those in need.

We step over large piles of warm blankets that are going to one of the temporary shelter villages for people with homes destroyed by war. Winter is coming, and it is going to get cold. Some days we are without internet and electricity for 6 hours a day, expecting it to get much worse.

A friend came home after 6 months on the frontline as a paramedic working the frontline. On the frontlines, Ukrainian and Russian soldiers are in very severe fighting, with the suffocating stench of death from the many dead soldiers. He told us about the shame soldiers feel when they cannot save the life of another person, the shame of doing mistakes, and the shame of not having enough resources, wits, and power to more effectively fight back the Russians.

We talked about the life-enriching value of shame as a valuable indicator of when our values and needs are not met, and how finding the living needs behind has the potential to empower us to mourn and to restore, reconcile and repair.

For men who grew up without love, shame becomes a life-threatening toxic that they shoot away from them. The recoil becomes a sense of invulnerable infallible superiority from which severe violence sprouts. I understand it takes unconditional love to process shame safely and evolves from it.

Yes, dear friend, we are here with you, living ourselves into your stories of pain. Meeting him was like a bobble of beautiful human connection, with some shared tears, in harmony, with warmth, love, and compassion.

All people will come home from these frontlines with severe psychological damage, he said, as he showed us pictures of 100+ ways that soldiers die on the front on his smartphone. He told us that it is our participatory love and compassion and care that provides support for him and his brothers in arms.

In civil life, they live in loneliness being surrounded by people far away from the front that hasn't seen what they have, and who rather doesn't want to know. I guess there's no real cure here to fix his anxiety and nightmares. We can just unconditionally open our hearts to his stories and pain, and in that space, he may feel safer and dare to embrace and bring light to his inner emotional darkness and from there nurture hopes and dreams for his own inner peace?

I can now understand why some soldiers repeatedly exposed to death and danger sleep best in the trenches at the front because only there they are safe and freed from being prey for horror nightmares. It turns things upside down, doesn't it?

People we know who predicted this war also predict that NATO countries eventually will be dragged into it as well. I follow Putin and the Russian minister of foreign affairs, Lavrov, on youtube. I begin to realize that their speeches to a large extent are aimed at audiences in South and Central America, Africa, and Asia. Countries that see the western world as self-centred exploiters of the world's natural and human resources. With dirty hands, the western world is befriending, cooperating, and supporting some dictatorships and authoritarian regimes when it shows economic benefits. Biden said that he wants to find a ramp for Russia and Putin to exit this war and that he believes Putin basically is a rational man who made a gigantic misjudgement by believing that he could take Ukraine.

That thinking stimulates a bit of hope for peace in me. The increased supply of military equipment from the western world also gives me relief because fewer Ukrainian women and children will be raped by drunk Russian soldiers, and fewer people will die from torture, missile attacks, random shooting, and artillery bombardments.

NVC as I learned it from Marshall can work miracles for me in supporting peace. No amendments or adjusting or modernizing is needed for me, just Marshall's way. The inconvenient truth is that the major obstacle for me to live in paradise, together with people around me, is the extent to which I myself manage to live NVC. It is inconvenient because it would be easier for me to blame a faulty NVC methodology for my unmet needs rather than look inside myself and confront the dark corners of my soul for shame, blaming, and judgments. Paradise seems to be an inner state that can emerge spontaneously in me when I manage to abandon my knowledge of judging good from evil and its manifestation through criticism, labeling, and judgment. The war here, with all it brings me, slaps my face with that reality every day.

We talked with Maksym about this a couple of weeks ago. Together we mourned our limits and celebrated our capabilities. And, quietly, we celebrated him still alive, while tearing for tens of thousands of Ukrainians that already died, and for those who are going to die.

A thousand thanks to all of you that supported Kirsten's GoFundMe campaign back in the spring! The funds are spent strictly on life-saving and life-supporting humanitarian issues. They have helped several people to evacuate through immense danger from Russian-controlled areas, and continue to provide urgently needed clothes and food, and medicine for people in desperate needs.

It would support my sense of connection to hear what comes alive for you reading this post, please share.

With care, Carl Plesner







With hope and love,

Kirsten Kristensen
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Carl Plesner
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<https://livkom.dk/worldpeace/peace-makers-in-ukraine/>



Reports from five Peace Makers in Ukraine published 7. July 2022:

[Link to PDF](#)



Reports from Peace Maker in Ukraine published 5. July 2022:

Eugene received support from our fundraising. Your contribution supported him to survive and help others while he was in Berdyansk, and your funding paid for his evacuation out of the Russian occupied area and out of Russia. With gratitude we share his report below here:

Being in occupied Berdyansk for three months, it was very difficult to leave. On the second day of the war, the main exit road from the city was blocked by hundreds of Russian tanks and the city was blocked. A few more days later, it was captured by the military, and two dozen soldiers with a dozen military vehicles were already standing under my house. Over time, the situation escalated. In the city, with a frequency of a couple and up to seven days, there was not any connection, leaving people in informational isolation. Food problems started.

Refugees from Mariupol entered the city, they were the first in line and went further to the regional center. After a while, about 24 checkpoints were established on this road to Zaporozhye, which let through / fired at cars. People at their own risk began to leave little by little. Transport firms took mainly women, not wanting to put themselves at risk by taking out men. They received special attention. One way or another, the front line was settled: the road was mined, and along its length there were artillery shells where people died. Thanks to the help of Karl and Olena, my mother and I found a carrier through the Crimea and Russia to safely get to Poland. After contacting the carrier, the conditions sounded realistic, which we decided on. We had 4 days of travel along the route: Berdyansk - 15 checkpoints of the Russian Federation - Chongar filtration camp - Crimea (Simferopol) - RF (Krasnodar, Voronezh, Moscow) - Ubylinka filtration camp - Latvia - Lithuania - Poland (Warsaw).

Fifteen checkpoints before entering the Crimea passed quickly. Further checkpoint Chongar passed 6 hours. The women were let through in two hours. The men were sent for interrogation. Three hours of waiting next to 50-60 other men under a mesh awning. There are combined chairs, as from the assembly hall. There was also water. They call in random order according to the passport, which was previously confiscated. During interrogation, they ask for a mobile phone and look at it: they read correspondence and look at data on military topics. They ask questions about the war and about themselves: who, what, for what, where, with whom, relatives, relationships, etc. My communication went well and the phone was not taken away for data recovery, which is practiced if something is not to your liking. The guy who was traveling with me from Berdyansk went through a complete procedure with hacking the phone and restoring all correspondence, chats, programs and all kinds of data with his passing beating. As a result, they were released on the same day, already closer to the night. Going through the checkpoint was scary.

The road through Russia passed quietly and calmly, without events. Having reached the Ubylinka checkpoint at 9 am, the tests began again. We passed the checkpoint for 13 hours. There were 60-70 people standing at the gates of the post, who were not allowed to enter the very territory of the checkpoint. People stood and looked into the bars in front. It was very cold, the temperature in Russia was about 15 degrees lower than at home. I put on two pants, I had on a T-shirt, a warm sweater, a wind jacket, a warm jacket and it was still cold! It rained for six hours, under which we all stood. People were nervous because of the queue,

tension was felt. Each incoming group of people was kept for 2-3 hours, after which they let the next ones into the territory. The rest stood in the open air and rain. In the middle of the day, Russian volunteers arrived, gave tea and pastries, which cheered me up. In their eyes, I did not see sadness from what was happening, on the contrary. As if they were glad to be needed and help people who are running away from a bad life. We weren't happy.

When it was our turn to pass at the checkpoint, it was already 20 pm. We filled out the documents from where and where we are going, who is by specialty. Then wait 3 hours. Then the border guards came and started calling people, letting them pass in the direction of the Latvian checkpoint. Some were summoned separately for interrogation. It was me and a former serviceman from Mariupol. During the interrogation, they asked to strip to the waist - looking for tattoos, they asked again about the war, about the attitude to what is happening and Russia, served, no, relatives in Russia, why I leave, where I was before and why, whom I know from AZOV and other military. He began to put pressure, reproaching, devaluing and expressing his opinion about the war, the EU and Ukraine. After 15 minutes of this, they let me go, they did not give me my passport. The aftertaste was bitter. After the whole group had already passed, they gave me a passport and let me through. Close to 23:00 I passed the Latvian checkpoint and got to the bus that went to Poland. There was no strength. Having reached Poland, we settled in a refugee camp.

After such an adventure, now my mother and I are safe and feel calm and joyful, in contrast to the state in the occupation. Now we in Ireland are adapting to a new environment, trying to switch from survival to a calm and peaceful life. Now it is possible for us, thanks to the help of Olena and Karl, for which many thanks from our family!



How to stay in contact with us and the work by Peace Makers

We have created 2 ways for you to stay in contact with us:

1. If you like to make comments or questions you can use this form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc4HhjqddDbGPrW8gLUKkTpMvqe8Px5BQYS2OUL74tfQMBiXQ/viewform>

and read our replies and answers in this spreadsheet: :

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1EzHsq-c-DPdWAnkb-oSKt-kb785bHqCzjJvwPymaL3g/edit#gid=27969711>

2. If you like to receive emails with updates about our work you can use this form and register your email address:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd3NQwlu77Tj72pl6lvzfaviYspYwxF4p6ugZK0zJCRBHGdPw/viewform>



4 reports from Peace Makers in Ukraine published 29. March 2022:

Here below you can find four accounts of Peace Makers and their very diverse experiences in Ukraine. The reports are up to two weeks old.

A Peace Maker working in conflict zone in Donetsk area in east Ukraine:

The gas station was overcrowded and with long lines of cars and trucks on both sides waiting to tank their vehicles. Some civilians evacuating from their homes and wanting to get away from the war zone got into a heated discussion with some military men going toward the war zone. In a matter of a few minutes their aggression was very high. They could not agree who would get to refuel their cars first, and with how much (there were limitations because of so many cars and so little fuel available. I went to talk with them and told them that now everyone would have the opportunity to express their position, and then after that we would find a solution. They calmed down, expressed their positions, and less than 30 minutes later everyone had refueled and was on their way again.

A Peace Maker working in bomb shelters in Luhansk area:

From the field diary of the Understanding Engineer in Luhansk region: "Working at this time, I understand that one Understanding Engineer can help people, especially those who are hiding in bomb shelters.

Now people do not stop coming to me. I conduct empathic sessions, listen to people with their fears and illnesses and support them to recover from panic attacks, to think rationally, to live, to go to sleep with some level of safety and peace..

The day before yesterday in the shelter I conducted such a complex mediation with a very high level of tension that one person was very close to becoming physically violent. There, people went against one woman because she protected her children. Thank God, everything worked out! Everyone found a common language. We solved everything with the help of mediation, with the help of the Engineering of Understanding.

A Peace Maker volunteering at a central train station with many thousands of refugees passing through every day:

A service person at the train station called for me: *"I have a problem in the men's room. I don't know who to turn to. The psychologists said it was not their task. In the toilet, a big strong man poured water into the sink, washed his underwear there, splashed water, spread out his clothes and did not leave the toilet. I understand everything, I feel sorry for him. But people complain, it's not convenient for them, he spreads dirt there, it's unsanitary. I can't get him out of there. I start talking to him, and he gets nervous and aggressive and I'm afraid that he may become violent, because he is clearly not emotionally stable. If I call the police now, they will beat him up and drive him out. I don't want that either, therefore I am coming to you as a Peace Maker."*

These are the questions we Peace Makers can easily solve. I talked with the service man, then I talked with the man washing his clothes. And together we agreed on how to solve the situation peacefully and safely to everyone's satisfaction. This is definitely the work of neither psychologists nor the police.

A Peace Maker now living under Russian occupation:

Russian troops have already arrived. The columns surrounded the city, stood there for several days. Part of them went to Mariupol, and part of them to us. We were occupied right away, tanks came to the town center, soldiers occupied all the main buildings: the police station, the city council and the district council buildings. And now the troops of the Russian Federation, as I understand it, are building up their presence here. It's sad, people are gloomy. We don't have gas, we only have electricity.

Communication is jammed and in some areas it is, in some it is not. Everything is chaotic and incomprehensible. It's creepy to see the guys with Kalashnikov assault rifles, in helmets, overtaking the police station. Trucks and armored personnel carriers are constantly being transported to the police station. They either carry weapons, or they have some kind of warehouses. Something dark is happening. The city is in a frenzy. There's almost no more bread, 20-30 bread are brought to the store, and the queue is 40 people. You can stand in line for up to 3 hours to buy bread. This is absurd. I never thought that one could stand in line for an hour to buy bread. Also, people are fighting there: "Give me two! One in hand!" There are no products at all in the shops, the shelves are all empty. There is no cat food.

Completely empty shelves.

Protest demonstrations against the Russian soldiers are held, or rather, they were held at 12 o'clock every day. In the beginning, I was also present, and then they kidnapped a deputy of the regional council, the former secretary of the city council, and one more person along with him. Now they kidnapped the man who organized these rallies and three people with him. It's not safe to live here. They walk and patrol with weapons.

The city lives as best it can, I also live as best I can. At home it is 10 degrees celsius (*50 degrees fahrenheit*). There is no heat. I am in a sweater, a T-shirt, a bathrobe, a jacket, two pants, two socks. And cold. In the evening it feels like I'm breathing cold air. That's how we live.

Of course, there is no work, no income, prices are two, three, four times higher than normal. So far, they haven't touched us much, they haven't bombed us, like in Mariupol close by. In general, the situation is cloudy and gloomy. In general, I'm fine: I'm not kidnapped, no one shoots in our city, our sirens are turned off.



Update Monday 29th March 2022 sent via GoFundMe

Dear Contributors!

We are extremely grateful for your contributions to Peace Makers and their humanitarian work!

Your money is already activated for the benefit of Peace Makers and their immediate surroundings.

For the coming months these money will provide a stable safe foundation to address the most urgent humanitarian needs for our Peace Makers.

Please see this google doc about the experiences and work of Peace Makers:

<https://bit.ly/PeaceMakersUkraine>

In that same document you find ways for you to stay in contact with us and the Peace Makers in Ukraine.

So far, your contributions have supported evacuations, supporting people with medicine, fuel, new clothes, and other life essentials. We will continue to provide this support over the next months.

We will keep updating this google doc until we submit the final financial report in around 16 month's time from now.

We had concerns that GoFundMe would close our campaign, and they did. But, thankfully, your contributions have safely arrived with us in our bank account, and weeks ago money started to arrive with Peace Makers in Ukraine. They are extremely grateful for this support!

You can make further contributions here directly to our bank account:

<https://bit.ly/DonationPeaceMakersUkraine>

Any and all contributions are highly appreciated

With gratitude,
Kirsten Kristensen



Update Friday 11th March 2022

Since the beginning of the campaign, we still have not received a GoFundMe allowance to transfer your contributions to our designated account in LIVKOM from where we can transfer them via our Ukrainian partner NGO organization to the Peacemakers working on the ground.

I have already started to send money to Ukraine, in the belief that your donations would arrive from GoFundMe any moment.

Having this situation, we have checked GoFundMe more carefully on Trustpilot and learned that many GoFundMe campaigns are actually rejected by GoFundMe and the money returned to the donors.

At this moment, the Peacemakers in Ukraine are desperate for urgent help and support. Your contribution gives a little light of hope in the darkness that someone cares about them, acknowledges their work and wishes them to be able to stay alive and support people around them as Peacemakers and crisis specialists.

Here's a Peacemakers report from East Ukraine (Donetsk region), March 7th, 2022:

"I behave like a rock in our community here in our bomb shelter. I never realized that one Peacemaker can support so many people. Our shelter has 249 people, mostly women, elderly citizens and children. These days after shelling we've got cut from power and water supply. We have food left for another 2.5 days or so.

Outside on the ground the shelling leaves no chance for escape. Everyone looks at me, and I cannot allow myself to tremble and disintegrate... Yesterday I gathered the children from that shelter and held games with them. There were several groups working in parallel. The children for some time got back to a normal life, laughing, clapping each other, that gave a space for their parents to have rest and some peace. By evening I was already tired.

There is a very high level of tension, fear and anxiety in the group, I use all my effort to help people stay calm and emotionally stable. Unfortunately, children and adults began to get sick. I have not very good experience in situations where children get sick en masse.

I ordered medicines for the Red Cross today, I hope they will bring them. Tomorrow I will gather all the children to make drawings for their parents about a dear memory they have. It will keep them busy thinking about something more positive than the shelling outside..."

Therefore we ask you, we urge you:

IF GoFundMe returns your donation, will you instead be willing to transfer your money directly to our bank account in Denmark:

**Funding for Ukraine - Do you want to contribute to Peace Makers' work in Ukraine?
You can transfer directly to our bank account:**

Account Name: LIVKOM - Fundraising for Ukraine
Account Address: Kobbelvænget 24, 7100 Vejle, Denmark

To our bank account 9860-0000618411 in our bank:
Bank Name: Folkesparekassen
Bank Address: Dalumvej 54 B, 5250 Odense SV, Denmark

IBAN-Kontonummer: DK8798600000618411

BIC-kode / SWIFT: FOSPK21

If you want to pay by credit card please try using WISE.com

For every day, your donation becomes more and more valuable and important.

Our campaign has been officially approved by Danish authorities regulating and controlling the legitimacy of crowdfunding campaigns.

With hope and love,

Kirsten Kristensen
email: kirsten@livets-sprog.dk



Message to all Contributors on GoFundMe 11. March 2022:

Dear contributor to the Peacemakers' work in Ukraine!

I am in touch with the Peacemakers and here you can read updates from a Peacemakers' work and updates about their conditions and work in the war zones in Ukraine:

<https://bit.ly/PeaceMakersUkraine>

This information is urgent. First of all, thank you for supporting this campaign, I am touched to tears seeing all this support, and knowing how incredibly important and lifesaving your support will be for Peacemakers in Ukraine.

It's difficult to overestimate how Peacemakers are feeling stronger being supported and empowered by your contribution that is received by them as a high acknowledgement of their hard and risky work amongst communities in different parts of Ukraine to save humanity in this shocking inhumane war.

With great concern we have found that GoFundMe may consider closing our campaign of gathering money to Peacemakers in Ukraine via our charity partner NGO in Ukraine and refund your donation back to you.

Please read more details here about what to do if this happens in the google document mentioned earlier: <https://bit.ly/PeaceMakersUkraine>

We will update the document regularly.

with gratitude
Kirsten Kristensen
email: kirsten@livets-sprog.dk