



Editorial

Dear EFRJ members and friends

The 11th International Conference of the European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ) which took place on Sardinia, Italy might already seem a distant memory. 348 participants from 42 countries across the globe came together in the beautiful town of Sassari and there was grateful recognition of the opportunity to meet in person again after the challenging years we have been through. The theme of this year's conference was 'Justice beyond borders: restorative connections through space and language' and there were a whole range of plenaries, workshops, field trips and social events which supported the metaphors of borders, boundaries and frontiers that inspired and challenged participants throughout the three day event.

The membership of the EFRJ also took the opportunity at the Annual General Meeting to elect three new Board members: Claudia Christen-Schneider, Antonio Buonatesta, and Jorge Olléro Peran. Patrizia Patrizi and Brunilda Pali were also re-elected as Board members. The Committees of the EFRJ were able to meet and discuss the work for the year ahead. The work of the different Committees is essential not only for the EFRJ but also for the restorative justice movement in general. They live and strive through voluntary commitment. Members responded to the call to become a member of one of the committees that was open until 30th September 2022. We'll inform you about the composition of the committees once the review process is completed.

Unfortunately, we the guest-editors of this issue were both unable to attend the conference in person. That was a real disappointment for us both, but putting together this issue gave us a chance to capture some of the conference's spirit and a glimpse into the plethora of topics discussed. We would like to invite all of you who were present in Sassari to reflect back on your special moments and insights, and let yourselves be transported back while reading through the articles. We would like to dedicate this issue especially to those, of you, though, who — like us — couldn't attend. It is our aim to let you share some of the feeling of community, energy and motivation in retrospect. We have really enjoyed being able to read the reflections and articles of those that were present. It has provided rich and sometimes challenging material that we are happy to present to you in

this issue.

In the first article, Anna Acconcia, an Italian lawyer, family mediator and PhD student, gives an overview of the conference's plenaries and recalls her personal insights. She shares that coming from the law, she had — for a long time — seen punishment as the only response to conflict. The conference illustrated the potential of restorative justice in various fields to offer alternative responses to conflict. She describes her participation as a 'revolution inside me,' encouraging her to reflect on the vision of the society she wants to live in — and therefore the values she wants to nurture. Witnessing the plenary with both victims and perpetrators of violent extremism in Italy, Basque Country and Northern Ireland as well as other testimonials of participants in restorative dialogue convinced her that stories of the past can be changed and new pathways into the future opened up, even if it seems unlikely.

Lucy Jaffé and Sula Blankenberg from the UK organisation 'Why me?' reflect on their experiences at the conference, including the workshop they presented: 'Exploring restorative justice across language and culture,' and the pre-conference training they participated in led by Dominic Barter. This is shared as an interview between Lucy and Sula and they highlight what a great opportunity the conference provided 'to learn from each other, to collaborate globally and to motivate each other to campaign for change.' They were struck by the lived experience voices, and also how the conference 'really emphasised the importance of international collaboration —

especially in regard to policy.’

The next two articles by Christian Gade and Tim Chapman form a whole, discussing the relationship between restorative justice and punishment. Based on his presentation in Sassari, Christian claims that it might be time to move away from defining restorative justice in opposition to retribution and from contrasting it as something radically different from punishment. He argues that the restorative movement could benefit from ‘marketing’ its ideas as a specific, more constructive form of punishment. Tim draws a different idea of restorative justice as a value-based dialogical process. Since personal experiences by those affected are in the centre, outcomes emerge based on their needs and interests. His reply includes a number of questions to start a dialogue with Christian — but he also invites all readers to engage in the exchange.

Catherine Gregoire shares her experiences of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in which she argues that this arena can provide a continued ‘Space for restorative justice exploration.’ Based on the findings of her university and independent research, she saw the EFRJ conference as an opportunity to also explore a concept she had come across during her thesis research: narrative ownership. Through this she sought to understand how restorative justice can provide a lens to analyse victims’ participation before international justice bodies that goes beyond legal standards and goes hand-in-hand with these processes. She explores a conceptualisation of restorative justice that she states is ‘compatible, realistic, and thus helpful to the procedural frameworks of international criminal courts and tribunals.’

The article of Christina de Angelis is mainly based on the discussions during the pre-conference training ‘Principles, language and systems in building and crossing the borders of restorative practice’ led by

Dominic Barter and her long-standing exchange and experience with him and his work. Christina focuses on the idea of support and the importance of building and sustaining one’s own system of support as facilitator/mediator. She also reflects on the role of self-care that she deems essential for being able to facilitate/mediate in a restorative way.

The issue concludes with the speech by the Italian Minister of Justice, Marta Cartabia, held during the opening session of the conference. She summarises the latest developments in national, European and international policies all strengthening the role of restorative justice in dealing with criminal matters. She also shares her personal story of how restorative justice became her idea of justice while witnessing an encounter of victims of and people responsible for political terror in Italy in the 1970s and 1980s. Her speech closes with a glimpse on pressing issues that need to be addressed, for example, raising accessibility and awareness of restorative justice in all European countries.

We hope that those of you who were in Sassari as well as those who missed it will enjoy this colourful selection of topics! We’d be pleased to know that this issue helps sustain some of the restorative spirit and enhance the spirit of those lived experiences that you shared in Italy this summer!

With very best wishes,

Kim Magiera

PhD student, University of Kiel
Researcher, Ulm University Medical Center
magiera@paedagogik.uni-kiel.de

Dr Nicola Preston

Deputy Head of Education
Faculty of Health Education and Society
University of Northampton
nicola.preston2@northampton.ac.uk

Relationships create possibilities (Tim Chapman, 2022)

From June 23rd to 25th June 2022, the European Forum for Restorative Justice’s [11th International Conference](#) entitled ‘Justice beyond borders: restorative connections through space and language’ took place in Sassari, Italy.

The conference themes were space and time, language and narrative, with the aim of understanding together how a restorative approach can contribute to lower suffering and fewer injustices being experienced by people. The programme was very rich and consisted of five plenaries and a wide variety of workshops including presentations, panels, dialogues, training and testimonials by different professionals in the field of restorative justice.

I am Anna Acconcia, a family lawyer at the Milan Bar Association and a family mediator. My interest in mediation was born from a simple but undeniable fact: the legal gap in the resolution of a couple's conflict. The family mediator is a professional figure (so external, impartial and equidistant from the couple) who can help the family reorganise in the aftermath of separation or divorce through a voluntary, consensual, dialogic and confidential process. Starting from my knowledge of this study area, my research project focuses on new crime prevention strategies with a particular regard to responsive management systems and restorative models contributing to the complex questions of the causes and the possible responses to the crime. I took part in this conference to broaden my horizons about the potential of restorative justice.

'Relationships create possibilities' is a quote from the opening speech of Tim Chapman (Chair of the EFRJ). It sounds like a hymn in my mind. It is the motto of a community of people who, in various fields, believe in the possibility of offering alternative responses to conflicts. It tells us about the endless possibilities coming from the encounters of people: if we work together to take responsibility for our actions, to make reparative commitments and to have confidence in the future, we make it possible to re-write our history.

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Restorative justice is an ambitious paradigm, but it exerts its strongest fascination precisely in its disarming power: the courage to overcome the logic of hostile retaliation and the attempt to keep together what is normally kept separated (offender and victim). It is an iridescent response, capable of adapting to various areas of living in society, without losing its identity and its cardinal principles. In my opinion, this is a great and revolutionary novelty. However, we must be cautious not to transform restorative justice into the justice of one of the parties (for example of the victim, often left discouraged by traditional justice), but we must remember that restorative justice is an approach that benefits all the stakeholders involved and never sides just with one party (with the consequent risk of transforming it into a dangerous and disguised form of retribution).



Banner at the entrance of one of the conference venues

Reflections about restorative justice in the plenary produced a little-big revolution inside me: new viewpoints and food for thought came from the comparison with other participants' personal and professional experiences. It changed the perspective about possible answers to crime: where only punishment existed, today there is room for something different and new. It all depends, in my opinion, on what kind of society we wish to develop and nurture. Restorative justice, in fact, constitutes a prototype of cultural inversion that reacts to crime with a project rather than with retaliation, aiming to revamp the adherence to the violated precept.

During the conference days in Sassari I was lucky enough to deepen my understanding of the values behind restorative justice: truth, solidarity, responsibility, respect for human dignity, listening, faith, voluntariness, active participation, restorative dialogue and, of course, justice.

Thanks to the international 'restorative community' that made me feel very welcome and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to learn and discuss with them.

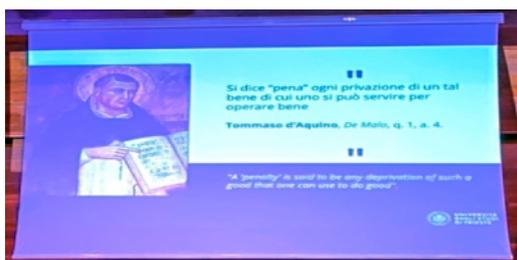
I do not do the good that I want, but the evil that I do not want

Letter to the Romans, chapter 7, verse 19

In my opinion, establishing restorative thinking from an ethical and moral point of view is an essential action even after experiencing restorative practices and their positive effects. In fact, a solid theoretical foundation protects from misunderstandings about its authentic meaning and avoids superficial and dangerous exploitation.

... understanding how and why we do harmful actions is fundamental to restore our confidence, open up to the future and lead our inner struggle against wrong behaviour.

I very much appreciated the first plenary session by Prof. G. Grandi who, quoting from the great philosophers of the past, pushed the audience to reflect on the relationship between man and ‘evil,’ concluding that everyone in everyday life experiences ‘evil.’ Therefore, understanding how and why we do harmful actions is fundamental to restoring our confidence, opening up to the future and leading our inner struggle against wrong behaviour. Restorative justice is capable of speaking to people who are disappointed by their own actions and to people who are disappointed by the actions of others.



One of the slides presented by Giovanni Grandi

Never again.

Quote from one of the witnesses of the Encounter of the Encounters

The Encounter of the Encounters who took part in the third plenary is an informal group of participants in restorative dialogues from Italy, the Basque Country and Northern Ireland. All witnesses of the harmful effects of political violence, they shared their experience of being part of restorative programmes in their own countries of origin. On the one side are the victims and on the other the violent extremist leaders, meeting for years on a voluntary basis and in an open, confidential and free environment. These people, who faced awful events and their painful consequences, found the encounter as a place able to host their first hand experiences through victim-offender mediation and community circles.

They accepted the courageous challenge of transforming borders into bridges to be crossed in order to travel the road of the encounters.

Their experience reminded me the values restorative justice is inspired by and results which can be, even if not easily, achieved.

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- Restorative justice invites us to a place of ‘meeting,’ metaphorical and real at the same time, where those who participate freely decide to carry out an uncomfortable operation: to deal with their actions and, perhaps, to abandon the harmful complicity with their own ideas, to look at and listen to those who, until a moment before, did not even consider themselves as human.
- Restorative justice invites us to listen, an active listening, capable of triggering a process of rapprochement between the parties and establishing a wording accepted by both.
- Restorative justice brings together, in the land of encounters, those who we are normally used to conceive as separate and distant.
- Restorative justice hosts that pain in need of answers, which makes similar the accountable and the victims, in an unarmed suffering.
- Restorative justice is a tool to overcome the ‘dictatorship of the past:’ talking about one’s mistakes by detaching oneself from conformity with the group to which one belongs, to overcome hatred and dehumanisation.

It struck me deeply that people with those stories, those pasts, those pains were able to look at each other, talk about their experiences, ideas, mistakes, hardships and differences peacefully in the same physical space.

At the foot of the world everything can crumble or flourish.

Dominic Barter

Dominic Barter, speaker at the fourth plenary, shared with participants how restorative justice can operate in a social community torn apart by conflict. The normal and common approach toward conflict is nurturing the fear of it rather than coping with and then overcoming it.



Figure 1: Participants of the plenary: Witnesses of restorative encounters in cases of political violence



Dominic Barter presenting at the conference

Dominic suggested that in his case studies (among many) with residents in gang-controlled shantytown favelas in Rio de Janeiro the moral imperative that comes from fear led to an extreme outcome of killings. To kill seems to be the only way to be heard and understood. The speaker tells us how restorative circles, introduced in the favelas of Rio to encourage communication, have created relationships and increased social cohesion, generated trust and fostered an environment based on legality and non-violence.

... they reinforced the idea that society has a great responsibility and co-responsibility toward injustices and inequalities that often trigger violence ...

These reflections impressed me a lot because they reinforced the idea that society has a great responsibility and co-responsibility for injustices and inequalities that often trigger violence, but at the same time how much the community can play a virtuous role for preventive purposes.

Ut Unum Sint (That they may be one) is a cooperative located in Nuoro which hosts inmates who have access to alternative measures or prison granted privileges, welcoming the families of prisoners who arrive in the city to visit their convicted family members.

A few years ago, the cooperative started a project called ‘Tying the threads in restorative justice between offenders — victims — community.’ This project involves some prisoners (and sometimes their families), some victims and a group of students that have embarked on a path of reparative dialogues.

In the lush and shady garden of the Ut Unum Sint cooperative I met interesting people, I listened to their stories, I recognised their immense pain, but also their desire to share experiences with someone willing to listen. I felt the burden of wrong choices, made on purpose or suffered. I felt disbelief in their faces, but also great confidence.

I was thrilled when they flew a small balloon, hand-made by some of them together, which symbolised, I think, their desire to be free again. I saw great hope in this small gesture.



View of Ut Unum Sint, visited as part of a conference field trip

In the afternoon, the protagonists were the perpetrators, the victims and the students that have been following the path of restorative justice for some years, with the support of Don Pietro and his team.

It was a strong field experience and I am thankful for the trust I received. I do not wish to add anything else for confidentiality purposes.



Balloon let fly at the cooperative by participants of a dialogue project

Participating in the conference taught me, as Minister Marta Cartabia argued in her opening speech, that restorative justice is a tool to build a more just

and peaceful society and that goes even beyond criminal justice.

I will not forget the eyes and words of the Israeli Robi Damelin and the Palestinian Laila Alsheikh, exemplary mothers, united by common mourning for the loss of their children. Every day they find the strength to fight and try to stop the spiral of Israeli-Palestinian violence through their messages of peace in the name of the love for their children, the same love that united them and that is the ingredient to overcome hatred and accept pain.

... it is possible to respond to conflict in a different way, above all by avoiding stereotypes and generalisations.

I treasure this experience and I come back home with the will to carry out the teachings the conference offered me both from a professional and personal point of view. I'd like to follow the suggestions that have been given to me and try to be a witness to this message: it is possible to respond to conflict in a different way, above all by avoiding stereotypes and generalisations.

And also, I am even more motivated to give my scientific contribution with my research, hoping to participate to many other EFRJ events.

I want to conclude paraphrasing Tim Chapman's final words: each encounter is an opportunity to recognise our shared humanity beyond our experiences, even if the match can be unlikely (reparative justice puts together people that traditional justice pulls apart) and the dialogue can be difficult. All of these aspects made this conference an unforgettable life experience.

Anna Acconcia PhD student
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Milan
anna.acconcia@unicatt.it

Exploring Restorative Justice across language and culture: reflections on the EFRJ's International Conference

Why me?'s Lucy Jaffé and Sula Blankenberg reflect on their experiences at the European Forum for Restorative Justice's 11th International Conference, the workshop they presented: 'Exploring restorative justice across language and culture,' and lastly the pre-conference training led by