DIALOGUE IN ODESSA, UKRAINE

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS
BASED ON A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS
WITH LOCAL DIALOGUE ACTORS,
CARRIED OUT IN ODESSA IN 2015.

cpm Center for
Peace Mediation
EUROPA-UNIVERSITÄT VIADRINA

SUMMARY

Against the backdrop of simmering tensions in Odessa, Ukraine, that mirrored the crisis within the country since 2014, the Center for Peace Mediation at European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder) carried out a series of interviews with local dialogue actors.[1] The aim of the interview series was to explore the reasons for the difficulties that inter-group dialogue efforts in Odessa faced in 2015. The analysis of the interviews brings a number of insights to the fore that may prove relevant for adequate responses to the continuing challenges faced in dialogue facilitation and support in Odessa or other parts of Ukraine.

The first part of the study provides a condensed summary of the findings on (1) the crisis / conflict, (2) dialogue activities, (3) labels and actors, and (3) the actors' motivation and mentality, each time complemented with the author's hypotheses highlighting specific aspects of the findings. Based on the findings and hypotheses, the second part provides suggestions for designing and conducting dialogue activities in Odessa, Ukraine. The third part gives a short overview on the context and research design of the study, followed by its aims and recipients as well as its limitations to consider.

KEY FINDINGS

CRISIS / CONFLICT

- Different perceptions of the situation, but shared understanding of causes for tensions and obstacles to change.
- Changing narratives on the responsibility for the tragedy of May 2nd 2014[2] mirror a growing divide.
- Perceived decline in tensions results in hardened positions.

DIALOGUE ACTIVITIES

- Knowledge and assessment of existing dialogue activities in Odessa varies widely.
- Unclear and unrealistic expectations regarding the potential results of dialogue have created frustration in view of the format as such.
- Fear of exposing oneself in public and a ban of "hot topics" from the public sphere hamper meaningful exchange in dialogue settings.
- There is considerable skepticism regarding the suitability of bottom-up dialogue approaches for the current conflict situation.

LABELS AND ACTORS

- Binary division into "pro-" and "anti-Maidan" does not mirror the existing spectrum of political positions.
- Increasing imbalance of political affiliations in public representation fuels tensions.
- Despite growing political engagement in civil society many retain deep distrust towards any political activities.

MOTIVATION AND MENTALITY

- Motivations to engage on behalf of public matters are manifold, including political, social, personal, economic and religious intentions.
- Levels of motivation change in response to various factors.
- The younger generation is ready and expected to take over responsibility.

---

1 All of these actors were in one way or another involved in dialogue activities, as (potential) participants, facilitators, organizers or supporters. They are professional facilitators/moderators/mediators, volunteers, opinion leaders, public figures, or social/political activists (See Part III: About this Study).
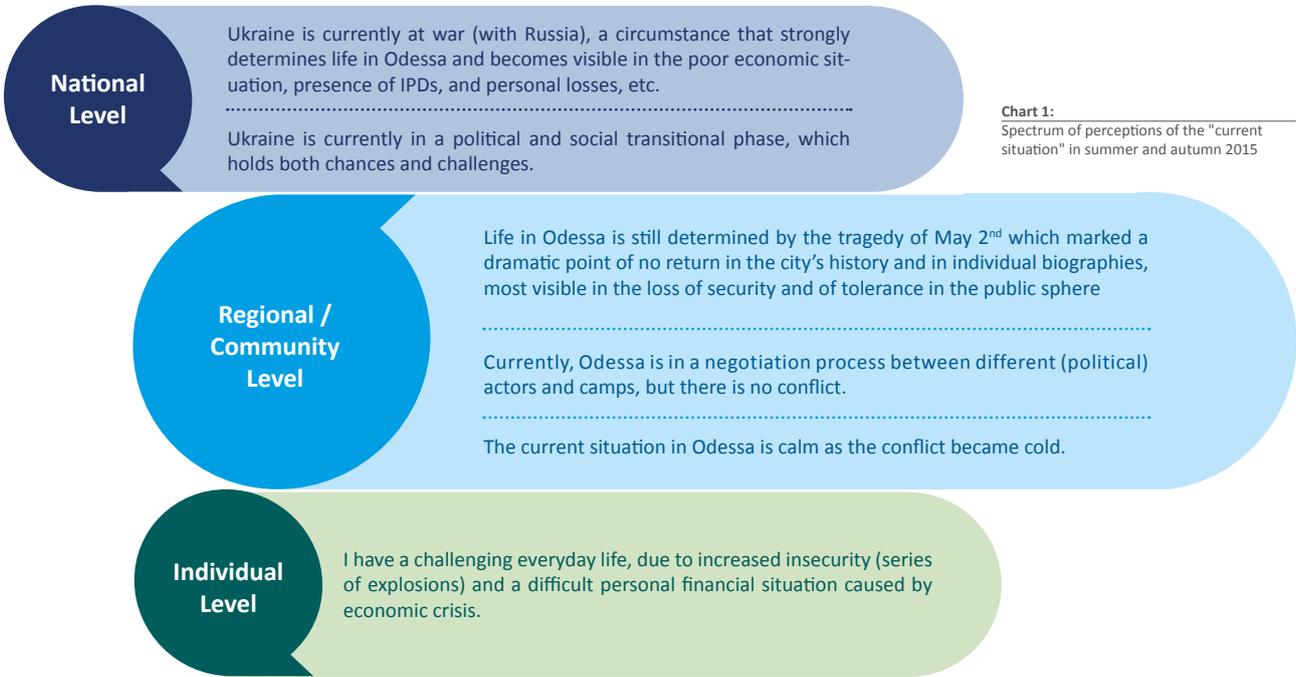
2 On May 2nd 2014, a political demonstration turned into a violent confrontation at the House of the Trade Unions in the city center of Odessa, Ukraine. Six pro-Maidan and 42 anti-Maidan protesters were killed; over 200 people were injured.

PART I: KEY FINDINGS

1. CRISIS / CONFLICT

1.1. Different perceptions of the situation, but shared understanding of causes for tensions and obstacles to change: When actors in Odessa were asked about their perception of the "current situation" in Odessa and Ukraine in summer and autumn 2015, the responses were quite different and contradictory. The following chart provides an overview of the spectrum of answers:

National Level

Ukraine is currently at war (with Russia), a circumstance that strongly determines life in Odessa and becomes visible in the poor economic situation, presence of IPDs, and personal losses, etc.

Ukraine is currently in a political and social transitional phase, which holds both chances and challenges.

Chart 1:
Spectrum of perceptions of the "current situation" in summer and autumn 2015

Regional / Community Level

Life in Odessa is still determined by the tragedy of May 2nd which marked a dramatic point of no return in the city's history and in individual biographies, most visible in the loss of security and of tolerance in the public sphere

Currently, Odessa is in a negotiation process between different (political) actors and camps, but there is no conflict.

The current situation in Odessa is calm as the conflict became cold.

Individual Level

I have a challenging everyday life, due to increased insecurity (series of explosions) and a difficult personal financial situation caused by economic crisis.

The different perceptions ranging from "war" to "transitional phase" to "cold conflict" and "challenging everyday life" demonstrate how difficult it is to define the most suitable approach to address "current" needs in a city involved in a national crisis and international conflict (see also 1.3. Perceived decline in tensions). However, when interviewees were asked more specifically about issues causing visible tensions in Odessa, the following were mentioned or affirmed by nearly everyone: **(1)** competing values and worldviews would be the main point of contention in Odessa – expressed in debate over whether a democratic way of life (the individual is above the state) is superior to an authoritarian way of life (the state is above the individual) or vice versa – resulting in (sometimes violent) confrontation among various groups; **(2)** unequal opportunities to state one's (political) view in public; **(3)** differences in dealing with and remembering the events of May 2nd between actors affected by the events and others; as well as **(4)** opposing perceptions of and concepts of dealing with IDPs in Odessa.

Despite of having/supporting different values and political views, all interviewees shared similar assumptions and concerns regarding obstacles to change and conflict resolution. Most of these obstacles are structural in nature and only indirectly connected to immediate (political) tensions in Odessa:

Corruption

Corruption was described as paralyzing the individual and the whole system, including civil society: so-called pocket civil organizations financed by oligarchs would be used to influence public opinion. Corruption being present in all private and public spheres, many people do not believe that political decision-making and managing conflicts in the political sphere works without bribery. This conviction results in a general public avoidance of political matters.

Mentality

Especially the older generation was described as having two attitudes that block change and conflict resolution: a "bend-over mentality", meaning not reacting to governmental wrongdoings, and a "waiting-and-blaming mentality", which shifts all responsibility to the government.

Economic Situation

Politicians would use the economic crisis to manipulate and split society. It was argued that people with a better economic situation would be more resistant towards (political) manipulation while being willing and able (in terms of time and resources) to engage in dialogue.

Injustice

In general, the state system was described as unjust, with laws applied unequally in favor of state officials. It was repeatedly argued that societal tensions remained high due to the dysfunctional legal system, especially given that perpetrators of May 2nd have not yet been brought to justice.

Mass Media

In Odessa, oligarchs, certain clans and/or political parties owning TV companies (ca. 80% of them support the current political course) would use mass media to promote their own interests and agendas. Newspapers supporting opposition views would be restricted or closed. All this would result in manipulation and loss of freedom of speech. As a result, people would neither step up in public nor aim to change anything.

Violence

The increased level of violence, committed by both the state (e.g. the police) and groups within society, limits the willingness to take part in public political or societal and/or dialogue events.

Chart 2: Spectrum of obstacles to change and conflict resolution

1.2. Changing narratives on the responsibility for the tragedy of May 2nd 2014 mirror the growing division: The events of May 2nd were first described as being in complete contradiction with Odessa's mentality and ethics in dealing with conflict: The use of (armed) force against people had always been unacceptable. The majority of interviewees perceived this day as a joint tragedy and turning point in Odessa's history. This is probably why – immediately after the events – a shared narrative emerged across all actor groups in Odessa, according to which external forces had triggered the confrontation and could be held solely responsible for the tragedy. However, as time went by and the Group of the 2nd May (a consortium of journalists from all political factions and experts) investigated the events (while very few court hearings of potential perpetrators took place), the shared narrative disappeared. Actors started to blame the respective other group, resulting in threats and attempted murder on both sides. By November 2015, representatives supporting the current government criticized the categorization into victims and perpetrators. Even though the overall situation in the city cooled off, tensions were still high regarding May 2nd, which was no longer perceived as a jointly experienced tragedy but as the major event that split the city into opposing groups.

1.3. Perceived decline in tensions results in hardened positions: Despite the on-going conflict in the east, the explosions in 2015 and the growing division between different groups, the conflict in Odessa turned cold in autumn 2015. Back in August, the events of May 2nd 2014 were an omnipresent and emotionally charged topic and upcoming elections in October seemed to increase tensions between different actors. But by November, interviews contained fewer references to tensions; the situation in Odessa was described as rather calm. Notable was an increased level of frustration among political actors and social activists. The decline of tensions was either explained as (1) the result of exhaustion or (2) Odessa's "tradition of cold conflict in which nobody is quarreling, but they still consider the other as their enemy" (Interview 15). Others stated that continuous restrictions and sanctions aimed at opponents silenced the conflict. Altogether, the perceived decline in tension did not seem to go along with an increased willingness to participate in dialogue; rather, positions seemed to have hardened.

2. DIALOGUE ACTIVITIES

2.1. Knowledge and assessment of existing dialogue activities in Odessa varies widely: Some of the interviewees were informed about the wide variety of inter-group dialogue events that took place in Odessa in 2014 and 2015, offering a spectrum of formats and aims, addressing diverse participant groups and hosted by different local and international actors (see chart 1). Their broad understanding of dialogue[3] includes events that explicitly focused on and were called dialogue (such as the facilitated meetings offered by the Odessa Group of Mediation) as well as events that entailed dialogue as one element (such as an moderated exchange of views on contested issues on the occasion of an exhibition).

However, when asked about the hosts of dialogue activities in Odessa, most interviewees mentioned only international organizations (like the OSCE). Whereas general knowledge of local dialogue actors and their competencies seemed rather low, international dialogue actors seemed to enjoy strong visibility and a good reputation in Odessa; they are perceived as non-politicized dialogue facilitators, witnesses and observers of events as well as valued for taking responsibility.

Host Organisations, e.g.

- Odessa administration
- internahonal organizations (like OSCE)
- local groups / initiatives (like Odessa Group of Mediation, Mothers of 2nd May, Group of 2nd May)
- local political parties and groups (like Opposition Block)
- individual members of civil society

Dialogue Events Odessa

Adressed Participants, e.g.

- actors with competing political views
- actors affected by the events of the 2nd of May
- IDPs
- elderly people

Formats, e.g.

- single events
- regular meetings
- round table(s)
- TV marathons

Aim / Topics, e.g.

- minimize violent confron-tations (especially before political events like the local elections or the memorial day of the 2nd of May)
- enable exchange between supporters of different (poli-tical) opinions
- encourage the determination of facts regarding the events of the 2nd of May
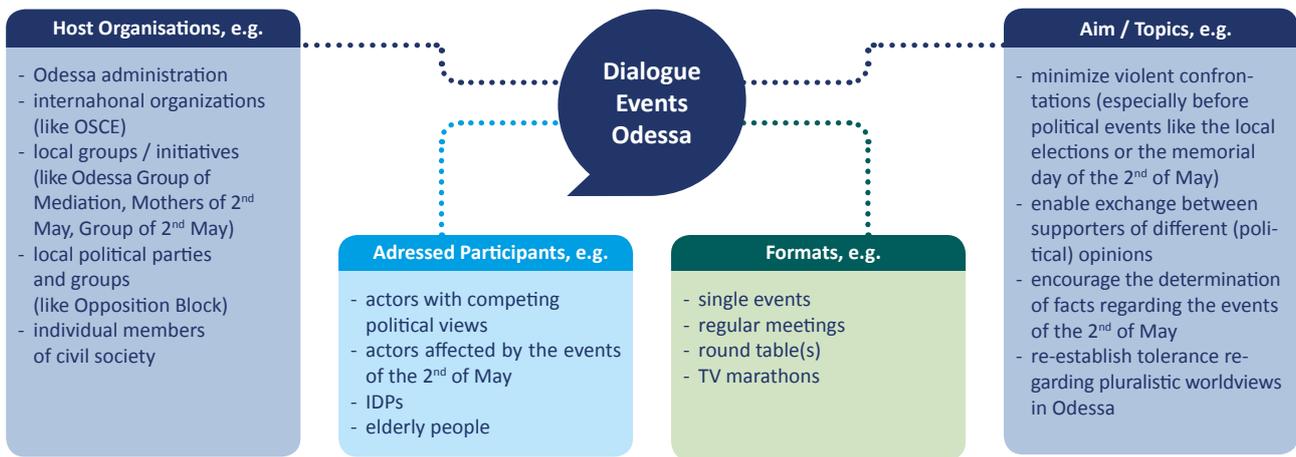- re-establish tolerance re-garding pluralistic worldviews in Odessa

Chart 3:
Spectrum of dialogue events
in Odessa in 2015

Also remarkable is the diverging assessment of dialogue events: Nearly half of the interviewees felt that there were enough dialogue opportunities for those who are interest-ed while emphasizing the success of such meetings (like the OSCE meeting before May 2nd 2015, that presumably managed to minimize violence). A slight majority disa-greed, criticizing either the lack of inter-group dialogue platforms in Odessa or claiming that the dialogue format as such would be insufficient as it failed to bring together relevant actors from inside and outside Odessa, create a safe space, and bring up concrete, conflict- relevant issues ("only dialogue about dialogue") and/or produce imple-mentable outcomes.

2.2. Unclear and unrealistic expectations regarding the potential results of dialogue have created frustration re-garding dialogue itself: The majority of interview partners expected dialogue events to produce "deals", meaning the creation of a sound agreement or binding obligations between participants. This implies that dialogue partici-pants are expected to have some form of decision-making authority, that the result of the talks needs to be trans-lated into some sort of agreement and that monitor-ing measures (e.g. presence of neutral observers) must accompany the process. This assumption of the raison d'être of dialogue is in line with the local conflict culture as described by the interviewees: "In Odessa region there is such a mentality, that we can have a deal even if we have different opinions; it's normal for Odessa people: We are making deals" (Interview 15). This demonstrates that people in Odessa appreciate formats enabling them to reach agreements and place less emphasis on mutu-al understanding or improvement of relationships when

dealing with different opinions. In order to reach a "deal" – especially in tense conflict situations and when a lot is at stake – measures like negotiation and mediation are trusted and perceived as more suitable than facilitative approaches like dialogue. Nevertheless, three out of 19 in-terviewees stated that dialogue serves to create empathy and tolerance while stressing the importance of an open but neutrally monitored exchange between people with different opinions in Odessa.

Either way, (single) dialogue events seem to have been at-tached to unclear and unrealistic expectations that turned into frustration among participants. All this underscores the need to clarify the concept of dialogue and seek ways to tailor dialogue formats to the local conflict culture (e.g. by complementing dialogue with mediation elements or processes).

2.3. Fear of public exposure and banning of "hot topics" from the public sphere are key obstacles to meaningful exchange: With a few exceptions, in Odessa one can no-tice caution when it comes to expressing one's (political) opinion in public as people are afraid of facing negative consequences (like losing their job or being physically threatened). When explicitly asked about the willingness to participate in dialogue events on current political mat-ters, almost all interviewees expressed security concerns, making their participation in an event strongly depend-ent on other participants and the surrounding conditions (e.g. security guarantees). Even though this caution or fear seems to have decreased since the uprising on Kiev Maidan in 2013 and the events of May 2nd 2014 in Odessa, there is still a tendency to avoid or ban "hot topics" (like the ongoing war in East Ukraine, the situation of internally

displaced persons, etc.) from the public sphere, including informal settings and the workplace. Roughly 1/3 of the interviewees mentioned that they ensured positive experiences by avoiding hot topics as this would allow them to gain or keep contact with people who hold different opinions. As a result, unfiltered, explicit (political) exchange would only take place in the so-called "kitchen format", described as a not-outcome-oriented exchange of (political) opinions and ideas among like-minded people within a safe space. However, indicating the changing attitude, it was repeatedly stressed that talks in the "kitchen format" were useless as they would not have any impact on the conflict resolution process and/or create needed change in Odessa and Ukraine in general: "If the only participants are moderate people with whom one can find a common language, one will not change anything as the [others] have to be on board" (Interview 4).

However, according to the interviewees, participants should be selected based on (a) their willingness to search for a "real" reduction of tensions, (b) their standing in society and (c) their level of influence on other people/groups.

This reveals the dilemma that dialogue endeavors currently face: On one hand, offering inter-group dialogue on hot topics may scare away potential participants, especially when the host/facilitator does not possess the necessary resources to guarantee security. On the other hand, when dialogue events only consider uncontested matters or only bring together like-minded actors, these events are perceived as incapable of bringing real change or as useless duplications of the kitchen-format.

2.4. Skepticism regarding the suitability of bottom-up dialogue approaches for the current conflict situation: While considering dialogue an important and valuable instrument in general, the majority of interviewees questioned the suitability of dialogue as a means to meet the demands of the current conflict situation in Odessa and in Ukraine in general. Many interviewees were skeptical as to whether the timing was "right" for dialogue (in the sense of creating mutual understanding) as this quote demonstrates: "Dialogue is rehabilitation. This has to be the next stage. Now we are at the stage of surgery. But we are already starting to talk about rehabilitation, although we do not have a shared objective for rehabilitation yet" (Interview 10). On the local, regional and national levels, people

were described as not yet ready for dialogue as they were still trying to get into a more favorable position "to win" in the long run. Moreover it was argued that fruitful dialogue would require a few challenging preconditions: an end to the war in the East of Ukraine, a restoration of justice (mostly in regard to the events of the 2ⁿᵈ of May), the implementation of reforms and a better economic situation. The skepticism seems to be further fueled by the overall assumption that inter-community dialogue in the regions of Ukraine cannot change anything as long as there is no change of the situation on the international level of the conflict (mostly referring to the inter-state conflict between Ukraine and Russia): "[T]he only thing we [people in Odessa] can do is to calm down the small disputes between the parties but we cannot suppress a big conflict" (Interview 4). This quote highlights a perceived or actual lack of participation in and influence on the conflict resolution process on the highest political level, which is understood as the "actual" one, displaying a fatal disconnect between dialogue activities on Track 3 and Track 1.

According to the interviewees, trust in the usefulness of inter-community dialogue could be built by introducing dialogue in a more personal/informal, protected and non-politicized environment. On the basis of success stories from other countries or from the inter-personal sphere, the potential of dialogue may also become apparent for the public sphere.

3. LABELS AND ACTORS

3.1. Binary division into "pro-" and "anti-Maidan" does not mirror the existing spectrum of political positions: Most interviewees emphasized that the division into pro-Maidan and anti-Maidan throughout Ukraine had been artificially imposed upon them for strategic reasons, either by the past or current government or the international community. Other binary labels like "pro-Russian" vs. "pro-Ukrainian" or "pro-Europe" were rarely used, as a primarily geographic reference would not point out the core difference between the competing (political) positions. Instead, people referred to "proauthoritarian"/"anti-authoritarian" government supporters: "there is no ethnic conflict; it's about values; (however) not all Ukrainians share these democratic values, just as not all Russians share authoritarian values" (Interview 13). Notably, the "pro-authoritarian"/"anti-authoritarian" dichotomy does

not seem to simply reproduce the "anti-Maidan"/"pro-Maidan" logic as, for instance, some movements of far-right "Maidan" supporters tend to have also "pro-authoritarian" views. In general, interviewees were very cautious about applying simplistic labels, especially binary distinctions, and described their own political position with specific, self-chosen labels or terms (see chart 2).

From the fact that almost every interviewee used a different label to describe his or her own position, one can conclude that 1) the choice of label is personal, individualistic and possibly context/situation related and 2) the range of labels reflects a high diversity of (political) positions.

At the same time, it seems that labels are not necessarily connected to a fixed political agenda, as some were used interchangeably. Against this background, it becomes even clearer that the division into "pro-Maidan" and "anti-Maidan" is too narrow and sketches an unrealistic picture of the situation on the ground. Hence, it seems important to not only change the wording but to start addressing the groups in a more differentiated manner that leaves the binary logic behind.

Chart 4:
Spectrum of self-proclaimed (political) labels

3.2. Increasing imbalance of political affiliations in public representation fuels tensions: Despite the fact that all sides (however they are addressed) are represented by significant numbers of people in Odessa (no exact ratio known), it was repeatedly stressed that only one side, the supporters of the current government, would be represented in the public sphere and thus be able to influence the political processes in Odessa. This imbalance or even marginalization would be visible in (1) the positions stated in public debates, (2) group affiliations

of participants in dialogue, (3) coverage within Ukrainian media, (4) public perception of winners and losers of the crisis, and (5) restrictions and sanctions. Actors supporting the current government explained this circumstance by stating that opposition groups in Odessa would suffer from a lack of leaders, in particular intellectual leaders, as well as a steady loss of supporters, resulting in the inability to state their position or to influence the processes in Odessa. Countering this, it was argued that the strong representation of Odessa auto-Maidan would result from the authorities' support and a deliberate suppression of any oppositional actors. Regardless of whether this is true, the perceived increasing imbalance could be a driving factor for further conflict escalation. In fact, tensions among supporters of competing political groups in Odessa were growing, leading to frequent violent attacks in 2015.

3.3. Despite growing political engagement in civil society many retain deep distrust in political formats: Even though many actors seemed to be politically motivated at the time of the interview, few stated that they had been interested or active in politics or public matters before the events of November 2013 in Kiev. This may be explained by a widespread distrust in political leaders and institutions and a resulting political apathy in civil society: Many (former) political figures in Odessa and in Ukraine in general are perceived as neither credible nor trustworthy, due to corruption and a political culture that places self-interests over official duties and political processes. Against this background it is not surprising that actors prefer non-political leaders (like intellectual authorities) to create societal change and tackle conflicts in public matters. What strengthens this tendency is that political opinion leaders were thought to be very unlikely to publicly change their opinion or make considerable concessions in a dialogue format, since followers would immediately suspect that he/she had "sold" him/herself. The Maidan movement and/or the events of May 2nd 2014 in Odessa reduced the overall political apathy a bit, as a number of actors started to feel more powerful and translated their aims into some sort of political agenda. The majority, however, did not turn their political position into direct political action. Hence it is important to design dialogue events in such a way that makes them appealing to politically and non-politically active people alike.

Primary Motivation	Ratio	Aims	Areas of Engagement
Political	6 / 19	Gain political influence; increase constitutional legality; solve political issues; fight demonization of opponents; improve conditions for future generation; fight for justice, patriotism or societal optimism	Providing legal assistance to voters; solving social and monetary problems; protecting social standards; coordinating political events; providing informational material; endeavoring to build up civil society
Social	5 / 19	Help people and do something good / useful despite or irrespective of own political views	Providing first aid (supporting IDPs, soldiers or veterans with food, shelter and medical supplies); providing psychological support, mostly for relatives of victims, persons held in custody, soldiers/ex-combatants or IDPs; organizing public events/festivals in Odessa; (re-) integration programs; teaching, including IT or English courses; fundraising
Personal	5 / 19	Do something interesting/fulfilling; Do something relevant that improves one's own children's prospects	
Economic	3 / 19	Get (subsequently to voluntary engagement) a well-paid job and/or an influential public position; gain prestige	
Religious	3 / 19	Follow religious values that demand helping others	

Chart 5: Spectrum of motivations for political and social engagement

4. MOTIVATION AND MENTALITY

4.1. The motivations to engage on behalf of public matters are manifold: After the Kiev Maidan protests in 2013, the outbreak of the war in the eastern parts of Ukraine in 2014 and the violent events of May 2nd 2014 in Odessa, engagement on behalf of public matters increased drastically. Analysis of the underlying motivations for this engagement revealed that they are manifold and complex; however they still can be grouped in five areas of primary motivation (see chart 3). Identifying a primary motivation is key, as one can assume that this source of motivation needs to be satisfied somehow if the actor is to continue his engagement.

Every primary motivation seemed to be accompanied by other motives, showing that actors have a set of mixed purposes, each following different logics, e.g. the wish to do something good for the community is combined with the desire for self-fulfillment through establishing one's own project. Moreover, motivations seem to shift over time: For instance, some actors whose prime motivation was political eventually became motivated primarily socially.

4.2. Levels of motivation change in response to various factors: Even though the political motivation to engage in public matters was comparably high in 2015, disappointments after the local elections in October 2015 and slow reform processes led to a decrease of political motivation. In addition, the level of commitment to social engagement was stated to be higher than before; some actors even

gave up their profession to work full time as a social volunteer. However, rising frustration and exhaustion soon decreased their level of motivation, too. What can be expected about the other sources of motivation? Unlike political or social motivation, religious motivation can be seen as more resilient in general as it is typically deeply rooted in a person's identity and often becomes even stronger in times of crisis, disappointment and frustration. Hence, actors who are primarily motivated religiously might keep up their engagement. As actors who are primarily motivated personally also have strong intrinsic triggers, their level of motivation also can be expected to remain unchanged. Being motivated primarily economically bears potential benefits and risks for a person's eagerness and sustainability of social services in general: If these actors succeed in turning their social engagement into a profitable job, it allows them to allocate all their resources and time to social services. Taken out of the unpaid voluntary niche, political and social engagement could open a new market sector and gain societal standing. Risks include inter alia that the social engagement is only used as a springboard toward better opportunities.

4.3. Younger generation is ready and expected to take over responsibility: In Odessa (and probably in Ukraine in general) there seems to be a gap in mentality between the older and younger generation. The former was described as still having a "waiting-and-blaming" mentality whereas the latter would take over responsibility to create

change by themselves. This "mentality shift" began with the events of Maidan and May 2nd, when people started to feel or develop more political influence and/or to be willing to take on more responsibility. However, it seems that this phenomenon is limited to the social sphere, where there is now more room for engagement and social activities that yield concrete results. The overall level of engagement in Odessa and Ukraine was described as still rather low (only 5-7% active people), resulting in a weak civil society. The hopes for (political) change and conflict resolution are thus placed in the younger generation, increasing both its de facto influence and the expectations directed at this generation.

PART II: SUGGESTIONS

1. BRING TOGETHER ACTORS WITH DIFFERENT POLITICAL POSITIONS

1.1. Open up dialogue activities to a greater audience: Many actors in Odessa either (1) lack an interest in politics, (2) are afraid to express their political views or discuss conflict specific issues in public and/or (3) generally mistrust political processes. However, there is a great interest in discussing public matters with (moderate) actors from all social spheres. Hence, by offering dialogue in non-political contexts, the threshold for participation will be lower as actors are more interested, and willing – while being less afraid – to take part. Besides outreach to active members of the civil society, a focus on intellectual leaders might be conducive, as they are more likely to be accepted by all sides and are generally perceived as necessary participants for dialogue.

1.2. Increase security at dialogue events: Many actors are afraid to participate in dialogue activities because they fear verbal or physical threats from other participants. Hence, it is necessary to increase the de facto and perceived level of security during meetings by, for example, having enough facilitators observing the talks and break times. It might a helpful to follow social media and use it as a kind of "tension monitor" before planning a dialogue event. This will allow assessing how much security is needed and whether one-on-one dialogue is suitable in terms of participants and timing.

1.3. Introduce new dialogue formats with different aims and outcomes: Since many actors stopped attending dialogue events because they were tired of "just talking", it is important to offer different formats that translate into concrete plans for action (e.g. workshops on specific issues like how to integrate IDPs in Odessa). Moreover, given that most people are active in social life in one way or another, introduce dialogue as a method to enhance cooperation, coordination, information exchange or finding mutual arrangements within the field of political and social (volunteer) services in Odessa or other branches, such as local business. Moreover, when aiming to address and bring together opinion leaders try to use online dialogue platforms as the threshold is lower and (physical) security is not an issue. However, when offering online dialogue, make sure debates are adequately moderated. All this will increase trust in the method of dialogue and may later enable the use of dialogue for rehabilitation and reconciliation in real life exchange.

1.4. Re-activate common values before entering dialogue: As the tense situation is perceived as a result of competing values, it is necessary to re-activate commonly shared social and societal values (namely Odessa's non-violent conflict culture respecting different opinions) in order to bring together actors with opposing views. Actors primarily motivated socially or religiously may advance fruitful dialogue among opposing actors as their engagement is based on and shaped by a code of conduct (doing good for the community). Most actors, either due to their primary political motivation (to change political structures) or primarily social or personal motivation (to serve the common good), are aiming to improve life for coming generations. Aside from being a connecting theme among actors (mostly parents), the motivation to discuss issues relating to the "future of Odessa" (or Ukraine in general) is high. This motivation can be met best through innovative, future-oriented workshops.

1.5. Link events to established local and international (dialogue) initiatives, organizations or actors and use social media: As some local and international (dialogue) organizations or actors already enjoy good reputations and/or trust (e.g. OSCE or the Odessa Group of Mediation), it seems promising to link planned events to these organizations. Building on the established trust in these actors, people may be more willing to participate and be more open to stating their opinion (also in front of people whom

they do not know). Moreover, bring together actors by merging different dialogue initiatives offered in Odessa. As many actors use social media as a source of information, use the Internet (e.g. Facebook) to announce planned dialogue activities. To increase the willingness and trust of potential participants, provide sufficient information about the people/institutions behind a dialogue event, as well as its purpose and goal.

2. MEET THE ACTORS' MOTIVATIONS AND MENTALITY

2.1. Include more social components while strengthening personal recognition and self-fulfillment:
Taking into account that actors are motivated by mixed motives, it is necessary to make dialogue a social event by adding more informal parts (drinks and/or buffets) to the official dialogue session. On the one hand, this will enable actors to strengthen their contact with people in whom or in whose other networks they are interested (e.g. because of their shared fields of engagement). Moreover, when dialogue is framed as a social event, actors may feel that their (social) engagement is recognized and rewarded. When actors voluntarily allocate a lot of or all their time and resources to social or political engagement, they might have a need for recognition and other personal benefits as reward. One way could be to enable these actors (e.g. through mini grants or operational support) to implement or continue their own (dialogue) initiatives. In any case it is key to encourage and support local dialogue projects, as this also will encourage other local actors to take responsibility.

2.2. Address the (post) Maidan mentality and the younger generation specifically: Whether they support the Maidan movement or not, a considerable number of actors feels willing and able to influence – in one way or another – current developments in Odessa or Ukraine. These people might "only" need some support to find or institutionalize the right forum/format to bring about societal change. As the younger generations are more orientated towards self-organized change, they should be particularly supported, e.g. by identifying their specific (potential) contributions to societal processes while strengthening their knowledge and their ability to organize multiparty actions.

3. ADDRESS RELEVANT ISSUES

3.1. Events of May 2nd 2014: These events were perceived as a root cause for on-going tensions and overshadowed/hindered on-going (reconciliation) processes. Addressing them might reveal another way to overcome the widespread feeling of injustice (due to the lack of legal prosecution after the events of May 2nd). Jointly speaking about (primary or secondary) trauma caused by the events of May 2nd can support individual healing processes as well as contribute to rehabilitation and reconciliation between the affected communities in Odessa. Strongly linked to the events of the May 2nd is also the perceived or de facto loss of security in the public sphere. As this perception is shared among all actors in Odessa, the matter of security must remain on the agenda of dialogue activities in a practical (security staff) as well as in an emotional (trauma, trust building) and political sense (freedom of speech).

3.2. Corruption, public matters and infrastructural issues: Dialogue cannot stop the system of corruption (thus it is necessary to show the limits of the dialogue method in this regard) but it can challenge corruption by (1) jointly discussing how corruption paralyses even people with good intentions; (2) searching for ways to regain action and/or widen the scope of action; and (3) developing concrete ideas for an incremental systemic change to be explored and started in joint activities. When discussing corruption, it is key to create awareness for the dilemma of trying not to take part instead of blaming who is taking part: How can I stay out of a corrupt system in which I have to live? As corruption is such a key issue in Odessa, dialogue organizations should be transparent about their funding sources and what their donors expect them to do, particularly when events are backed by domestic or international political, business or other donor organizations. When allocating funds to local dialogue and dialogue actors, make sure that the selection processes are fully transparent and monitored according to the usual funding standards.

Infrastructural issues like better pavement and transportation facilities are also promising topics for dialogue, as they are relevant for a majority of people in Odessa and explore representation of different (political) positions on non-political topics. Experience shows that actors in Odessa are willing to postpone all political disagreements for the sake of reaching agreement on public matters.

3.3. **Trauma and frustration:** As many actors take their motivation for engagement from traumatic experiences, they may need psychological support. Hence, (re-)activate links to local psychologists and trauma experts. Aside from providing individual psychological support, dialogue actors can provide secure spaces for sharing personal experiences (e.g. when discussing the events of May 2nd) and offer coaching/supervision to find constructive ways to handle endogenous and exogenous sources of emotional stress and exhaustion. Given the always-limited resources, consider pragmatic ways to provide such services.

Furthermore, the majority of actors has experienced and/or still feels some sort of deep frustration about the on-going war in eastern Ukraine, the lack of legal prosecution after the events of May 2nd, the slow reform process in Ukraine, the local election process in Odessa or their own unfulfilled social or political efforts leading to the impression that nothing is changing or changeable at all. Hence it is necessary to provide a platform for discussing this immense level of frustration – which at a second glance has multiple sources with various options for change – and to turn the feeling of helplessness into (renewed) action.

PART III: ABOUT THIS STUDY

1. CONTEXT AND DESIGN OF RESEARCH

The study summarizes the results of an interview series with local actors involved in dialogue in Odessa, Ukraine, conducted in August and November 2015 by the Center for Peace Mediation at European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany.

(1) Context: The interviews were carried out as part of the project The Common House – Supporting and Broadening Dialogue Processes in Odessa that was realized in Odessa, Ukraine, in 2014 and 2015 by a German project consortium consisting of CSSP – Berlin Center for Integrative Mediation, inmedio – Institut für mediation. beratung. entwicklung and Center for Peace Mediation (CPM) at European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder). In the course of this project, a core group of Ukrainian civil society actors was established – formerly The Common House, now Civil Initiative Space for Dialogue – to engage in facilitating, organizing, supporting and/or promoting dialogue in Odessa. Key aims of the project were to strengthen

the practical capacities of these actors and the synergies among them and to reach out to dialogue actors with connections to other political camps. The German Federal Foreign Office funded the project.

(2) Focus: The interviews focused on exploring (a) the experiences as well as challenges and needs identified in view of dialogue/mediation activities in Odessa; (b) the self-proclaimed political affiliations of the interviewees; (c) the interviewees' motivations to engage in political and social activities related to the current crisis/conflict and (d) the issues considered relevant to the current crisis/conflict in Odessa, Ukraine.

(3) Method: The series comprised a total of 19 interviews conducted in Russian/ Ukrainian/ English. All of them were audio recorded.[4] The study followed a qualitative approach using single, semi-structured interviews to collect data and qualitative content analysis to analyze them. The interviews had an action research component as they aimed at stimulating reflection on existing ways of thinking and acting and preliminary findings were discussed with the interviewees and other local actors in order to test them. The interview data were systematically analyzed as well as greatly condensed in order to filter out the information that seemed relevant for dialog facilitators and supporters while trying to stay as close as possible to the original wording.

(4) Interview partners: The actors interviewed were (a) participants in dialogue activities, (b) dialogue facilitators, organizers or supporters, (c) opinion leaders or public figures in Odessa or (d) social or political activists/volunteers. The latter two groups were assumed to be potential future participants, facilitators, organizers or supporters or dialogue. The criteria for the selection of interviewees (sampling) were: greatest heterogeneity in professional background (see chart below); age (25-65 years); gender (11 men/8 women); and political view (9 "pro-Maidan"/8 "anti-Maidan"/2 either-or). There was an assumption that the 19 interviewees represented a cross section of Odessa's residents (of 19, five came from the social sector; four from the political sector; four from the field of public relations; three from the local administration; two from the business world and one other).

2. AIMS AND RECIPIENT GROUPS

The study aims at providing scientific support to dialogue efforts in Ukraine, with a) an analysis of the specific contextual conditions for dialogue in Odessa that allows tailoring dialogue activities to these conditions (e.g. to approach and build trustful relations with "hard to reach" participants); b) an information base that indicates potential re-entry points (e.g. issues, motivations, formats) for addressing tensions in Odessa and, where transferable, in Ukraine in general.

The main recipient groups are (1) the German project consortium (see above); (2) the group of Ukrainian dialogue actors organized in the Civil Initiative Space for Dialogue and other Ukrainian dialogue and mediation actors; (3) the German Federal Foreign Office and other international dialogue actors involved in peace processes in Ukraine.

3. LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

When working with the findings and suggestions of this study, please consider

(1) the selective choice of interview partners: Even if the study covers a most heterogenic group in terms of professional background, age, gender and political opinion, the only actors who participated in this research were those who were open to interviews with a foreign researcher and to the topic of dialogue/mediation;

(2) the untested regional transferability of findings: The study highlights relevant aspects of dialogue with a regional focus on Odessa. In some aspects, key findings may be transferable to other regions of Ukraine and to some extent even to other post-Soviet countries, however the extent of transferability needs to be examined by future practice and research. In any case, the characteristic features of Odessa's mentality and the implications of the events of May 2nd 2014 in Odessa must be considered when thinking about transfers to other contexts.