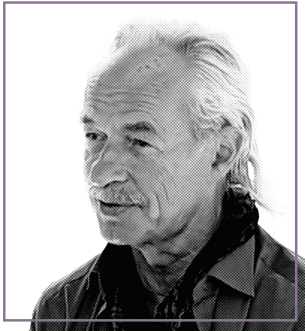


## The NEW ARCA: A vision for group work in the 21st century

### La NUEVA ARCA: Una visión del trabajo en grupo para el siglo 21



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This speech is dedicated to Federico Garcia Lorca. He was killed by other human beings for three reasons. He was killed because he had the wrong political ideas, he was killed because he was a poet, and he was killed because he was gay. This reminds me of so many people who have been killed just because of those kinds of reasons. All the time. Also, at this very moment, Federico as with all the other ones, are the reason to do this conference right now not to forget.

I want to dedicate this speech also to Dr Grete Anna Leutz. She was one of the co-founders and a former president of the IAGP. I consider her as my second mother as I really think that without her, I would not have ever been able to become the person I am. So I am deeply grateful to her.

I want to say also that I feel blessed, that I am still alive. Many people are not alive anymore although they wished and had deserved to be so. I feel connected not only by the heart, but also by the shadow with them, by the trauma we have experienced. I'm sure that all of us know and are aware of this kind of trauma. The trauma that one is going through is very painful. It will change our life. But on the other hand, there is also always a good side in it. It makes us become aware of the limitations and the precious gift that our life is meant to be. It raises consciousness that all of us are human beings with the need of other human beings to be protected and to be helped along.

I am aware that I am also here to generate hope and to help us to connect. Isn't it true that all of us who are here are compassionate and not indifferent at all? You who are here care, you care as I am caring, and this is meaningful because all of us are connected by our commitment to care, and this gives hope.

But all of us are raising hope as well by our work, the program is its expression which is simply wonderful. So this program will leave us with a touch of hope that we will transmit and transport to our groups wherever they are.

And to close this introduction, I want to say that I believe very much in the power of resonance between all of us, resonance which means mental and spiritual resonance. A resonance which is always there invisibly, and which operates in every moment connecting us by our mind and our heart. So when I came here, I found a colleague who was lost a little bit in this very beautiful venue. I helped her to get along to her room. In this very moment in my mind emerged the image of a shepherd as a reflection of my role. When I was in my workshop, two hours later, a person entered the stage, saying "now I feel like a shepherd with my shepherd dog". This coincidence is a symbol and an expression of the resonance I am talking about. I feel as if we could use the symbol of the shepherd in this conference, it could be helpful, it was a gift, it's always like a gift. And if you try to identify with this symbol it could mean to become helpful for the other giving the direction or the guidance he or she is asking for.

Now I like to focus on destructive conflicts which endanger our survival. You will know them of course, it's not a secret. What are the most destructive conflicts of our time?

First, the climate change with its consequence of hunger, misery and forced migration.

Second, the unfair exploitation of resources and nature at large.

Third war, terrorism, and collective violence with its inherit traumata.

Fourth, violent conflicts in our society between different subgroups.

Fifth, an economic system which is directly involved in the origin of the scenario.

All these conflicts endanger our survival.

First comment: lets have a look at the following image (Figure 1).

It shows two sides of the same town which are very close in this image, the area of the rich, privileged inhabitants and the slum area of the poor inhabitants. Normally they are not so close. But we have also these two sides on our planet. Now I don't want to argue against the economic system we have because I don't know any feasible alternative. But I want to raise awareness about the fact that the economic system we have produces at least "challenges".

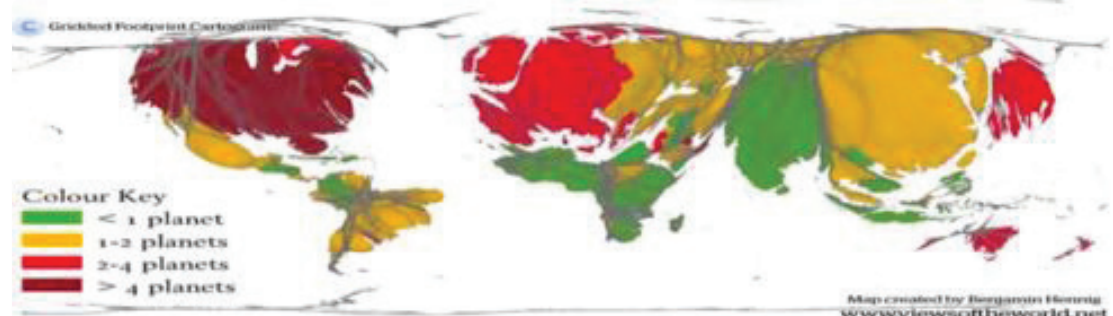


There's a scarcity of resources but at the same

time this economic system is built on the idea to make each time more surplus value by growing each time more. This conflict is inherent to our economic system and it is very serious. Because our limits cannot be extended it is true that we cannot overcome this conflict unless we change or adopt our economic system.

If we are gobbling up our resources at an unsustainable rate the consequences for us and future generations are really alarming. I just want to give you an example which seems hard to believe it is sand. When you go to a beach – and here in Pescara we have got a very lovely beach, it could happen in the near future that you can hardly find any sand anymore. Because they extract so much sand for the cement/construction industry that we need now laws to protect even the sand. So the loss of resources which are not easily replaceable at all are another threat.

And if we look on the global map of our ecological footprint (Figure 2) we discover that there are continents like Africa



where the percentage of extraction of resources and consumption in relationship with their population is still in an ecological balance meanwhile other regions like North America, Europe or Japan have already a consumption rate which would require four planets of the size of our earth if it were the same amount worldwide.

Second comment: our economic system has no ethical base. If I just follow the golden rule of our economics, I might do whatever I like to do if there's a profit in the end. But what is the consequence for the people involved or affected by my business? This concern is not applied in a general sense to our economic practices. And it is not a consideration which is highly estimated. The underlying philosophy targets towards an unbridled pursuit of self-interests, like me first, like America first or who or whatever is first. Of course we can choose to pretend to be the first. But we have to be aware that we are responsible not only for us, our country but also for the whole human mankind like Moreno said.

So this kind of self-interest shapes and obscures the fact that we all belong together.

The same is true for the way how finance and monetary systems are organized. Again it does not matter who really needs what. The interest to produce profit is stronger than any social or ethical consideration. So in the end, may I say that we need to define the boundaries for growth, we need an ethical base and an impartial financial system which is respecting the interest of all. This is like a dream of course, but it's good to spell it out at least sometimes.

Now, the biggest threat for our survival and I think we are all aware of it is climate change. Here I like to mention only that it is a threat reaffirmed by many, many institutions and governments in the meantime including for example the World Economic Forum which declares the climate change as the major threat for our survival. This is true for several reasons. First of all, climate change decreases the nutritious value of food and it impacts directly on the food production. There's a prediction that 80% of the harvest is already lost in the war zones in Africa, which are the zones with most hunger (Figure 3).



And the loss of 80% of their harvest is directly due to the climate change. If you consider just for a moment that those people want to survive, what will they do? They will start to go to war or they will try to run away to have a safer life, not to die from hunger while a lot of them are already starving. So they will try to reach Europe, coming from wherever they are inside of Africa, because they want to survive.

How do we regard them, these refugees? There are politicians who say we have to build a wall, we have to build a fence. This is for myself and I hope for ourselves completely outrageous. I tell this with all my anger and I'm very angry. Especially considering that Europe, the US and other highly developed industrial regions of this world are directly involved in the origin of the climate change. So it is us who increases the hunger and us who forces the migration and it is also us who deny our responsibility? And to make everything even worse we have to consider

that other refugees right now from Ukraine - and this is not directed against Ukrainians, but our politics - will always be welcome. And the same politicians will say: ethically spoken we cannot deny anybody from Ukraine to come. But what does this mean? Do we have second-class, third-class people? What does this mean on an ethical level? Really, I mean all of us must be engaged in ethics. Does ethics prescribe any kind of class? First class, second-class, third-class ethics for people? No. This is not ethical, but it is our reality.

Another big threat for our survival is the loss of biodiversity. The World Economic Forum is not really a neutral institution being interested after all in the wellbeing of our economic system, but they normally have the best numbers on this subject. They say that biodiversity loss is about the third most dangerous threat to the survival on this planet and our society. We have already lost 75% of the plants genetics diversity, and we are going to lose each time more. Why?, because we are doing in many regions of this world monocultures. Why? because the demand especially of the so-called western side of the world is very high on some kinds of food. Let's see for example cattle and meat. What does it mean? If everybody in this world were eating meat, like the western world is eating meat, we would need three planets more only to plant the soy and other plants necessary to feed the cattle. So all these monocultures in this world with the subjacent deforestation are the consequence of the demand of richer countries. Because we are so hungry to eat meat, we need monocultures which are destroying biodiversity. And biodiversity is the prerequisite of a fairly well way to survive. Not only diversity in food but also socially. We need diversity for survival.

To complement the picture a lot of this food already produced is going to be lost. There's an estimation that about 1/3 of all the food produced is being lost today. This is another side effect of a mass production of a special type of food (monocultures) and the inability to deposit it accordingly contrasting with the fact that malnutrition and hunger are one of the biggest miseries in this very moment on earth. There are about 2 1/2 billion people suffering from fame (Figure 4).



But as if all that were not enough it is in addition true that due to gender-based inequities hunger and malnutrition represents a much harder burden for women and children. If you consider that during a disaster, there is a 14 times higher risk for women to die only because they are more fragile. The same is true for children. 80% of people displaced by climate changes are women or children. So, this is again a piece to consider to see the whole picture of today's who shall survive scenario.

In the end we have to look at mass migration in terms of and being triggered by violent conflicts and after all by hunger.

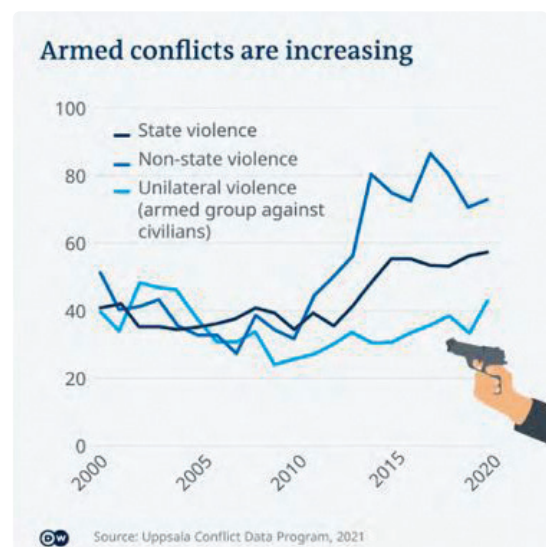
Here you can see a global hunger map (Figure 5)



and you can see these alarming rates where hunger and violence are closely connected. On the other hand it is interesting to acknowledge that during the period of the last 100 years, we actually have less wars each time. But there are other types of armed conflicts which are each time more important (Figure 6).



Due to this circumstance the peace index in 2016 is red, which means alarming. Green is good, so only some regions are good and don't have so many armed conflicts. But regions affected by violence are normally not exposed to terrorism. Terrorism is a phenomenon where numbers are really dropping for years although we always talk about terrorists and terrorism. What is really much more striking is the death toll produced by armed conflicts and homicides which is nearly 5 times higher than those numbers produced by terrorists (Figure 7).



The numbers might change now due to the war in Ukraine but until very recently especially women and girls were in danger because female homicide is a big topic, for example in Spain and in Italy as well but especially in Central America and Latin American,

Now all these conflicts raise of course anxieties, existential anxieties. And these anxieties favour:

- Autocratic leadership
- Processes of social fragmentation with a rupture of social networks and the loss of the feeling to belong to the same community, which means for example in the United States that kind of fragmentation addresses the whole nation, there is a real split. This rupture of social networks and of the whole society is a very painful consequence.
- Corrosion of the culture of solidarity which means there is a corrosion of moral standards. I mean somebody can lie and we may know that he is lying. But nothing happens. It is just a part of the business. Trump or whoever can lie, and we all know that it is a fake, but who cares? Who cares? I care but still they can lie and moral standards are going down.

- So due to the increase of violence and the related anxieties, collective traumata are activated, for example racism. It is often enough a shadow topic, not an official talking topic because those who are living in the shadow are often the victims of the racism system. As this collective trauma is activated it becomes much more visible and those who usually have no words are speaking out much louder now.

And last but not least even the recent pandemic can be understood as a consequence of these dangerous developments because zoonotic diseases are increasing in number due to the loss of natural spaces which separates human beings and animals.

In the end and considering this danger for our survival, what is the vision of the founders of IAGP? Of course, it reminds me immediately of a famous book written by Moreno: "Who shall survive?". So we have to take into account that this is not the first time that the whole of human mankind is exposed to such a risk because this book was written in 1933. Both men and co-founders, Moreno and Foulkes, were deeply shaped on a personal level by their experiences during WW1. Foulkes fought two years on the frontline, meanwhile Moreno as a young doctor was taking care of refugees near Vienna. And both were shaped again by their experience of WW2 and its consequences. The huge impact of their activity which was brought into our field on a global level was only possible after WW2. It is hard to say but sometimes crises and disaster are necessary to prepare the next step of the development of professional tools.

Before I address the role of JL Moreno and SH Foulkes and their legacy, I want to cite another co-founder of IAGP, the highly appreciated Zerka Moreno. She wrote to me fifteen years ago about the visionary value of the book of her husband: "Who shall survive": "it was not only predictive, but also an ethical and moral question". This is the point I want to raise with my conference. Because it is not only about who shall survive but also about why and how? Who shall survive is indeed a very existential question. When I visited her and in response to that aspect, she always mentioned to me the topic of an "ethical anger" connected with the unbearable injustice involved in this question. And I was completely surprised when I read that the Dalai Lama only one year ago was addressing the same ethical anger. In his book he is calling this type of anger the compassionate anger. He is saying that we have to complement our kindness by this specific kind of anger. And as one of the leaders who are teaching kindness of the heart it is remarkable that he is claiming as well that it is hardly possible to practice kindness alone without compassionate anger

which responds to indignation because there are so many aspects, so many facts which are really unfair.

Coming back to the vision of the founders of IAGP, it is based on the importance of groups and group work for our survival. They envision the human being as capable to cocreate the missing parts of this creation together. They were idealistic but at the same time very much influenced by their experience during both world wars which led both to a very similar humanitarian position. I like to remember all of us that IAGP is the reason that we are here. It was founded especially with the idea of a mission to come together in groups and to work together not only but also to avoid further mass destruction. We are here because we are not only group analysts or psychodramatists, but we are all here to work and to study together to improve living conditions for all.

Personally, I think it is more interesting to focus on those aspects they share than on their differences. One aspect is the interpersonal model of human evolution, which means that we need others to develop, we cannot develop ourselves alone, and we are deeply shaped by this fact. We are all social beings; we cannot deny this fact even if we feel sometimes different. This is the evolutionary basis for all of us.

The other aspect is that for both of them the group is the ideal agent to produce a change. Why? Because the group displays the most authentic, the very best setting, to reproduce something similar to the natural social network outside. It really gives us insights into the basis of our lives, so each group in this way is a kind of proxy, for those networks outside in the real world. But it is a proxy where we can study in freedom its conditions and because of that it can become so powerful. Beyond this great advantage groups are also nurtured by our universal connectivity. Even if we don't feel it, even if we don't see it, there is a connection beyond the personal. This universal connectivity is working always. And it explains the impact of processes of resonance with others on our life. Wherever we are we are always connected. This is something basic and in a way at the same time for me at least simply magic. It explains as well the importance of sociometry, and similar interventions to organize our connectivity for the best outcome of groups.

Another consequence is the ethical implication of this concept. If we are all connected, if we are really one, then we are all responsible. We cannot say I am only responsible for myself. I am not and never alone. I am not detached from the other, I'm one with the other so I have to take care of the other as well. This is the important message of the founders which we should consider seriously. For Moreno, Foulkes and other pioneers of a real group approach in therapy the "noble" expression of belonging to the same "creation" / the same universal matrix and its resonance in our mind as a part of this

“living system” - beyond all differences of culture, race or gender – is humanity. Thus, humanity is at the center of our trans-cultural connectivity.

To be aware of this connectivity means to be aware of “being a part of the whole” (Ubuntu) and our responsibility for being in this world. The famous phrase of Moreno: “a truly therapeutic procedure cannot have any other objective than the whole of mankind” – is based on this idea because this “universal matrix” implies a process of inter-dependency for all living beings.

I like to highlight at the same time the values they shared as both were emphasizing the meaning of compassion and solidarity for our life. If we are compassionate, it is a great way to be a human being. Compassion means to feel with passion with the other, not to leave the other alone. To make an attempt to act and help. I am grateful to Richard Beck, our still current president who is always emphasizing this aspect. The we-ness. We are not alone, we are co-responsible, we can help each other, and this is also Monica’s Zurettis, understanding when she talks about “social immunization”. If we practice our we-ness, we can make ourselves immunize against the possible corruption of egoism, because compassion makes us hesitate to do harm or leave the other alone.

To go further on, I like to mention also four colleagues. Moreno and Foulkes were for sure pioneers and co-founders, but they were not alone. There were many important and indispensable colleagues as well, so I just want to mention four of them because they have been not only for myself very important persons.

One is Pierre Weil, he was even awarded with peace prize of the United Nations, and he is the founder of the peace university in Brazil. He told profound stories to stimulate the practice of peace. So allow me to tell one of them. “One day there was a fire in the woods and all the animals were trying to escape. Only a little bird stayed throwing with his little peacock drops of water into the fire. A fox stopped by and said, “what are you doing? Are you crazy”. But the little bird only said “No, I am not crazy, I’m only doing my part”. If all of us could do only our part, if all of us could do our part, this could be already enough to do an important step, just doing our part.

The second person I like to mention is Agosto Boal. He came from Brazil being exiled in Paris because he could not stay indifferent when the military violence hit his country. He was the founder of the theatre of the oppressed. A lot of us are engaged for the sake of people who are living, let's say under very restricted economic and other undignifying conditions. So did he, being a very creative colleague generating hope and giving a voice to thousands.

The third person I would like to mention is Juan Campos whom I got to know. I would say thanks to God. He was an impressive, wonderful colleague. I will always remember him saying “when you listen, you have to listen with your heart. Don’t forget” This is so important indeed. And his very early teaching to use the internet to reach out and to connect with others had a visionary transcendence.

The last colleague I like to mention here is Felix de Mendelssohn. Again being engaged in many activities of IAGP he made an unforgettable remark that the differences between us, others as well as cultures can become a “tyranny”. Sure we have to acknowledge differences and it might take many attempts to overcome them as they can really hurt. But it is nearly impossible at all if differences become a proper tyranny absorbing all our energy. Apart from that Felix was also a promoter of the significance of dreams applying them to many areas such as questions of organizational development.

Before I am going to finish this conference, I want to tell you a story of a man I have met. I am living nearby a refugee center where many refugees from all over Switzerland are brought to while the majority of them have no papers and no solution at hand. I was offering a group regularly for them. It was a group with very special conditions because they always needed to make the translation between them because it is impossible to talk so many different languages yourself. I did the group normally in Spanish or in English because these are the most common languages.

The man who is the protagonist of my story was a person from Rwanda, his name might be Kanuago. He had been severely tortured in his later years, but he could only survive by chance as a child with big scars on his face and the unbearable image to see all the members of his family killed in front of his eyes (Figure 8).



He survived by a blessing as he used to say. Thanks to the help of the United Nations refugee program he was finally able to immigrate as a young man to the United States. After some years the Trump government changed the immigration policy, and he was forced to leave the United States. Before he could be deported, he developed a paranoid psychosis because he had so much fear. After many months he ended up at the refugee center in Switzerland. After listening to his story, I asked his permission to tell another story which had come to my mind.

The story is the following. Once I met a woman in a group. She was suffering from a nightmare. She dreamt that she was locked in a completely dark room together with her four children and many other people. From time to time evil villains entered the room and chose people to be killed. Although she was resisting very much in the end all her four children were carried away from her and were killed. Everything was dark, no hope anymore. As a Jungian (conjunction of opposites) I asked her if she could not see any light at all. Suddenly she told me that she could still see a small glimpse of light in the eyes of her youngest child. She was very moved and said with tears: So it is true: not everything can be destroyed. Even if we cannot do anything there is something indestructible which will remain. She was overwhelmed and started to cry. And in my group, Kanuago and others were deeply moved as well because this truth is universal.

Before leaving I want to share briefly with you three other aspects which are important to me. First about Thich Nhat Hanh. He often talked about Avaloktesvara, the Buddha of Deep Listening. This Buddha started to listen first to his pain, then to the pain of the others, then to the pain of all. The pain first broke the eyes of Avaloktesvara, so he became nine eyes, the pain then broke the arms of Avaloktesvara, so he became 1001 arms. With his teaching he wanted to help us to be aware of our limits and the impact of listening to the pain. I want to add that even if we are not the Buddha of Deep Listening, we are able to build on our connectivity, so we will have more

eyes and more arms to listen carefully to the pain without getting lost or overwhelmed. Still then suffering for us is inevitable. But it does not mean to fail. Our pain might be the clue to grow. The myth of the wounded healer tells enough. Each time we suffer is a hammering on our bowl. And each hammering makes the sound of our bowl more beautiful.

Second I want to talk briefly about the project of the ARCA (see: [www.arcapsychodrama.org](http://www.arcapsychodrama.org)). We call this project ARCA because we might consider our planet as an ARCA (Hebrew: container), and us and all the living beings there, not only human beings but also animals as the passengers. So if we consider the ARCA as the container for all living beings we might be ready to begin to do our part, because the word ARCA means also beginning (Greek). So maybe it is true that we can imagine that we are really one on this planet sailing with our ARCA. We are always responsible for the survival of all. This is the message. And our organization, IAGP, has been created and might be the best place to start.

Third and to finish, I would like to cite a poem by Zerka Moreno. It says: "whatever the spiritual life might be... to the life of the body eternity is denied. Death shows up in many ways. Though we are born alone and alone we will be dying. In between there is time we share with others. This is the wonder in the life. To share." I hope we can all be a part of this sharing; to make the wonder come true also for us.

So if we leave now, what could be our commitment? Not sure because it is personal. But concerning IAGP it could mean a commitment, which includes the dreams from the girl in Palestine as well as those from the girl in Israel. A commitment which respects the basic rights from the girl in Africa as well as those from the girl in Peru... A commitment which respects the basic rights from the girl in Ukraine as well as those from the girl in Russia... and from the girl in Afghanistan. A commitment which includes the dreams from the old women, as well as those from the young child." Take care. Goodbye.