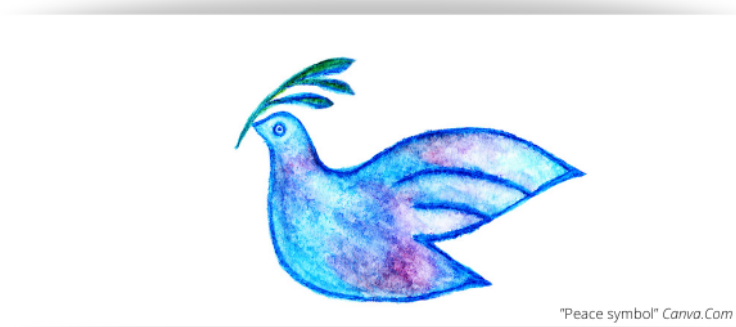


# Kluwer Mediation Blog

## A leaf of peace (Interview with a Young Mediator)

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This post is written by Tudor Mureșan and Constantin Adi Gavrilă. It is about the transformations of a young mediator while interiorising restorative justice and mediation principles as a student at the Conflict Analysis and Management International Master Program organised by the College of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babeș-Bolyai University.

**Adi:** Tudor, thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed about your recent experience with mediation. Would you please introduce yourself briefly?

**Tudor:** My pleasure, Adi. I understand that this conversation should represent in writing the first baby steps of a future mediator, my first baby steps. By way of introduction, my name is Tudor, and I am a young mediator from Romania. My purpose here is to underline, if possible, the experiences that led me to the path of mediation and why I chose to pursue it. I have a college background in Contemporary History, so I mainly studied perhaps the most conflictual century from our History, the 20th one after Christ. I did this both because I enjoyed reading about our past and because one of my oldest wishes is to pursue diplomacy; therefore, I considered History quite relevant. One thing led to another, and I graduated with a Bachelor degree and entered two Master programmes. One in History and one in Conflict Management –for the same purpose. The latter one was how I bumped into the field of mediation.

**Adi:** At that time, did you have any knowledge about mediation, restorative justice principles or the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution?

**Tudor:** I used the expression “I bumped into the field of mediation” because my knowledge about it was minuscule, almost non-existent. It might surprise many readers that I use such strong

language, but it did shock me. I knew about the concept of mediating but only by vaguely associating it with diplomacy. I knew some states or international actors mediated conflicts of other such entities, but nothing more. Such as this, I was literally shocked. Romania does not have an established culture for modern or professional mediation. However, dialogue-based processes are present among traditional conflict management means. We do not use it very much, especially at the level of individuals. Mostly we try to avoid entering major conflicts because going through the Kafkaian experience of a Romanian judicial trial is quite exhausting – both mentally and financially.

**Adi:** *How would you describe your first encounter with the new paradigm based on collaborative thinking, empathic listening and so on?*

**Tudor:** When one of my professors started talking about this field, it seemed like something a door-to-door salesman or a shady advertisement on the WEB would try to sell me. Solving conflicts by helping the parties solve them themselves and potentially keeping their relationship friendly is quite the 180 degrees turn from how a court trial ends. However, after going through both theory and role-play practice, I've started to see how this approach, how this entire field of expertise could help in the "mediation room" with one's clients and in everyday life. It was quite spectacular to understand that words, how they are said and why, if they are said, can come and create a true bridge of communication. As mediators, I say this because we should verbally articulate both the verbal and non-verbal communication that happens in the mediation room.

**Adi:** *It looks like you understood the mediation virtues and what a mediator can do to add value to a certain situation. Was this understanding enough for you to be able to master this skill?*

**Tudor:** To become better at this, I understood that I needed more than any `self-help` books or personal development papers could give me. I needed to learn more about the human mind, about how empathy works and how I should grow my emotional intelligence step by step; I needed to study more History and about contemporary cultures; most of all I needed to learn to listen properly to those that are around me and try to understand why they say (or not say) certain things; I needed to understand, well, our species. Of course, this learning would never stop; I knew that we, humans, never stop changing and growing. I was fine with that because I was finally able to find a way to help others in my own way. It felt like I was on a meaningful path, and it felt well worth the effort.

**Adi:** *But what motivated the effort on pursuing the path. It should have been obvious by then that this learning (or unlearning) is not as easy to do as it is to understand.*

**Tudor:** Why would I endeavour to take this kind of assignment, this sometimes Sisyphic job of trying to help people understand themselves and their peers better? To be honest, it's quite hard to say. There are a plethora of reasons, and I would be a liar to call myself a selfless being. I am not. And I am perfectly aware that some conflicts are unsolvable, at least by me and that I have a LOT to learn. But I think it has to do with what my first Mentor in mediation told me once. He told me – and of course, my colleagues – that we all have a different image about mediation and life in general and that we should think about it. After quite a long while of pondering on this, I found online a short article about Picasso's passion for the dove of peace, which gave me an idea of representation. I do not and will not ever believe that peace comes from just some negotiation at a table and a "contract" that formalises its outcome. I believe that the conflicts in History, in the present, small and large, can only be solved if all relevant interests are met. The thing is that those

interests have multiple origins. And this is what the dove carries. It does not carry a leaf of an Olive tree, but a branch and a branch holds multiple leaves on it. I see mediation as one of those leaves; hence the peace shall be obtained only when mediation is accompanied in an enabling environment. Such a favourable context can be determined by factors such as the parties' wish to understand each other, meet each other's interests, implement what they've agreed upon, and so on. Long story short, this is how my perception of mediation changed and how I think about it now.

**Adi:** *What's next for you, Tudor. What do you want to do with this?*

**Tudor:** Well, my plans are concrete and vague, but I'll try to summarise them. In the days that are to come, I would love to gain more experience as a mediator in all the fields where mediation exists family, business, intercultural, etc. This is how I see myself "earning my bread" in the foreseeable future cause it fulfils both my professional and personal goals. I refer as foreseeable to the next five years or so. I should not forget to tell you that I want to finish my PhD paper and get my degree in these years because it is something I have wished for a long time. It could be related to mediation, as it is about diplomacy, conflict prevention and other such subjects. Nevertheless, in the long run, I would be thrilled to use my experience as a mediator finally, but also as a historian, to enter either the diplomatic corps of my country or a similar international institution such as the U.N. Who knows what the future holds. Still, I will try to take on any opportunity concerning this.

**Adi:** *What would you say now to all the students about the value of studying conflict, conflict management and mediation?*

Tudor: Well, I talked to one such student once, and I still have a similar opinion to the one I gave her. What I told her from my experience is that on the one hand, studying conflict and conflict management is a very complex business. It involves the need for practice just as much as the one for theory cause just reading about a conflict, any conflict, and the analysis of professionals is not the same as participating in or at least witnessing one. There are always factors that a book, documentary, Newsreel or article just miss. Therefore, in mediation, if we are to enter this field, it's very important to corroborate the theory with some role-plays and then to shadow a real mediator in a real mediation to see how the job is done; that is because the role plays are just that, acting and they have their downsides. But that's how we grow, step by step, role-play by role-play, shadowing by shadowing and eventually mediation by mediation.

**Adi:** *Thank you very much, Tudor. And good luck!*

**Tudor:** Thank you very much as well, Adi! It was a pleasure.

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