

Manual

The Governmental Learning Spiral[®] - A Method Designed for the Convivenza Foundation's Operations to Improve Learning in Governments

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1. Context

Convivenza is a Swiss non-profit Foundation. According to its mission it offers non-partisan expertise and a dialogue platform to develop and implement sustainable solutions for minority and diversity issues.¹ The Foundation operates on the basis of the Governmental Learning Spiral[®] (GLSp), a theory-based multi-stakeholder method to create depoliticized spaces that enhance innovation and learning in political environments.² The approach offers a template that allows the organization of events with the purpose of solving complex political problematic situations. The GLSp has been theoretically and conceptually developed over the last two decades and successfully applied worldwide in numerous local, national as well as international events. For details of its theoretical foundation see the book “The Black Box of Governmental Learning” (Blindenbacher and Nashat).³

The GLSp method consists of a three-phase template that structures the didactics of a comprehensive political problem-solving process. It comprises ex-ante activities such as the conceptualization and planning of the process, the execution of the process through face-to-face or virtual events such as workshops, roundtables, conferences, e-learning etc., where concrete problem solutions are developed, as well as ex-post activities, where these solutions are implemented, evaluated and a new process is relaunched, if considered needed by those involved. The template has to be operationalized each time into a process agenda that fits a given problem situation and the respective political context by a so-called Learning Broker or Learning Broker organization.

The Convivenza Foundation’s need for such a method as its operational course of action is based on past experiences that have shown that generating and disseminating knowledge on diversity issues alone is a necessary but not sufficient condition to fulfill its mission. In order to leverage its impact and relevance for practice, the Foundation adopted the GLSp as its underpinning working method to combine the development of knowhow in governance (what?) and its subsequent application (how?) in one integrated and comprehensive method (Blindenbacher and Thüerer).

The purpose of this manual is to describe the GLSp method for the Convivenza Foundation’s operations (Part A) and to illustrate its practice and exemplary application in a seminar about “Small People” organized by the Convivenza Foundation (Part B). The manual’s bibliography, as well as its theme-related further reading, are noted in Appendices A and B.

The manual is designed for self-study and serves as a detailed memory aide in order to organize GLSp processes in the framework of the Convivenza Foundation’s activities. The Foundation offers advisory services to third parties on how to apply the methodology in minority and diversity issues as well as other governance-related policy challenges. The manual is available on the Convivenza website⁴ and

¹ See <https://www.convivenza.ch/index.php?id=7>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governmental_learning_spiral

³ See <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/2474>

⁴ See <https://www.convivenza.ch>

is printed in Volume 6 of the Convivenza Book Series⁵. The theoretical foundation of the GLSp is published by the World Bank and can be downloaded for free from its opensource website⁶.

Part A - Method

The application of the GLSp requires a basic understanding of the method itself. Chapter 2 of the manual therefore describes the fundamental characteristics that represent the method's backbone. Based on this concept, a template has been derived consisting of three phases and ten stages that are presented and illustrated with pictograms in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4 a list of questions is enumerated, the answers to which ensure the consideration of each stage of the template when designing a GLSp process.

2. The Governmental Learning Spiral Fundamentals

The GLSp origins are situated in the theory of Governmental Learning, which is a comprehensive and multidisciplinary heuristic approach that conceptualizes the key dimensions of innovation and learning in complex political systems. Its rational and systematic explanation was described in the book "Federalism in a Changing World" (Blindenbacher and Watts) in 2003 for the first time and further elaborated in the World Bank Group publication "The Black Box of Governmental Learning" (Blindenbacher and Nashat) in 2010. A new update of the theory is currently underway in the OECD publication "How do Governments Learn" (Blindenbacher and Rieländer). In the theory, an understanding of the term "governmental" refers to any private and public institution, individual or individuals who are affected by or engaged in solving a particular political challenge. The expression "learning" is defined as a multi-dimensional participatory search for new insights to increase the involved actor's knowledge base about solving problematic political situations.

Each of the GLSp's features are directly derived from and founded in Governmental Learning theory. The method itself consists of a three phase template that structures the didactics of a comprehensive process designed to solve problem situations of any political nature. At the center of this process there are usually face-to-face or virtual events of a few hours up to several days, sometimes spread over a span of several months or even years. In these events, small groups from half a dozen up to over a thousand participants develop solutions to problems in an elaborated multi-stakeholder process. The term spiral refers to the fact that such events are in practice not a one stop exercise but instead a multiturn procedure where in an iterative cycle, knowledge about problem-solutions are developed and implemented until a given political challenge is considered as solved by the actors involved.

In the context of the GLSp, knowledge in politics (Viale) is considered as a viscous and permeable fabric that mirrors the multi-dimensionality and ever-changing developments in society. Its half-life is very

⁵ See <https://www.convivenza.ch/index.php?id=162>

⁶ See <https://www.convivenza.ch/index.php?id=162>

short and of a temporary nature, which makes it hard to capture and to learn about it. In order to understand its momentous relevance, knowledge in politics has to be analyzed continuously and reviewed from all societal angles, and if required, adjusted in real time to be valid and reliable in a given time and place.

Based on that understanding, the search for political problem solutions becomes a provisional procedure as well. Solutions themselves are always short-lived and need to be reviewed and adjusted continuously in order to have the expected impact regarding a given political challenge. This ongoing search, review and adaptation of political knowhow make it very fluid and complex and it's understanding often exceeds the comprehension and competence of a single person. Capturing the full range of that knowledge therefore requires the inclusion of all perspectives and the respective knowledge-holders related to the political problem. Accordingly, each perspective in its own right has equal importance, as does the respective knowledge holder, despite any hierarchical and/or institutional positions.

A particularity of the GLSp is that these representatives of a given knowledge perspective are not only involved in generating that knowhow alone but are likewise expected to be fully engaged in its implementation into practice. Implementation in the framework of the GLSp requires interventions on all relevant societal spheres including the policy (what do we do?), the politics (how do we do it?), as well as the polity levels (what do we need to do so?) (March and Olsen). Accordingly, the making of political knowledge solutions as well as their application is inevitably considered as one comprehensive and inseparable process. What stands in the center of the course of action is no longer only the content of solving a political problem but of equal importance is how its content be developed and implemented.

The venue for such a solution process to a political problem requires the setup of a depoliticized space. In such an environment political challenges are not seen as a result of contradicting viewpoints but instead of a lack of knowledge how to solve them. The purpose of the GLSp is to develop the missing knowledge through selected participants who argue based on their professional expertise and not their official institutional or partisan views. This requires a certain mindset and consciousness among the participants: the incentive to share their personal knowhow is linked with the expectation that others will do the same. By doing so, each participant will have the opportunity to expand their knowledge horizon and the privilege of being part of a process designed to search for solutions that possibly to date do not yet exist.

A depoliticized space furthermore expects the participants to follow a set of behavioral and communicational rules that are designed to establish safety and predictability in the GLSp process as well as a sense of trust among those involved. Such rules are equal talking time (equality), respecting each other's viewpoints (reciprocity), and sharing evidence-based and verifiable statement

(transparency) (Habermas). As a general directive, participants are required to respect the Chatham House Rule⁷ by never disclosing who said what to third parties.

The GLSp is not a consensus but a convergence-oriented process. The premise for such an approach is the awareness among the actors that none of them alone knows the solution to the problem and that the missing knowledge can only be developed with the involvement of others whose knowledge is considered essential for a successful problem-solving process. In such an approach the participants perceive different viewpoints not as opposition or contradiction to their own but as an indispensable resource and a prerequisite to developing new state-of-the-art knowledge. By learning about each other's points of view they gradually align their preconceived positions towards a shared understanding of the problem itself and how it can be solved in a given time, place, and political context.

The intensive social interactions during the shared solution procedures go hand in hand with a growing commitment among the actors to be responsible for its implementation into practice. The reason for such behavior lies in the participatory nature of the process where everybody involved is equally engaged, and by doing so understands how the solution came about. The motivation for participants to accept a given convergent result also lies in the fact that solutions in politics are short-lived and will be adjusted or replaced in a new GLSp spin sooner or later.

As the term depoliticized space implies, the developed solutions in the GLSp process have no official institutional, political or legal relevance. Their legitimation is based on the rationality and technicality of arguments as well as the verifiability of the science-based and practice approved method. However, by reaching out and persuading new stakeholders and decision makers to support the transfer of the developed solutions into the established political process, political momentum may be gradually created and by doing so enhance the solution's institutional and political legitimation. If this effort to expand the support fails, the solution may need to be reviewed as well as modified or replaced subsequently in a next GLSp spin.

Finally, governmental learning does not just take place by itself; it has to be consciously initiated and carried through. The initiator of a GLSp can be a private or public person or organization directly or indirectly affected by a problematic political situation. The initiator has to be aware that the process is impartial and the results are always unknown in advance and unpredictable. As an independent and non-profit organization, the Convivenza Foundation is predestined to be the Learning Broker or a Learning Broker Organization. Its Board members have rich experience in designing and applying the method in almost any major field of politics. The foundation also offers courses about the method and consults third parties on how to apply it in their own field of action.

⁷ See: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chatham-house-rule>

3. The Governmental Learning Spiral Template

The theory of governmental learning and the logic of its related fundamental characteristics are the theoretical and conceptual backbone upon which the didactical steps of the innovation and learning process is derived. It starts with the definition of a political challenge and the conceptualization of an event designed to address that challenge, so called ex-ante activities. This is followed by the execution of an event, where a solution is developed in face-to-face or virtual activities, and thereafter its implementation as well as its evaluation, each into the given political context. Based on the evaluation it will be determined if the process was successful or needs to be repeated, so called ex-post activities.

In its latest version, that process is sequenced in a three-phase template that includes the Framing Phase, the Reflection Phase and the Projection Phase. Each phase is undercut by ten stages in all. The Framing Phase is largely performed prior to a GLSp event, the Reflection Phase shapes the event design and the Projection Phase is directed at the event’s aftermath, which includes the decision whether the process has to be repeated in order to be successful. This comprehensive and iterative procedure can be illustrated as a spiral bound together by a potentially indefinite number of spins (see Figure 1). Also, the illustration presented here implies a clear cut between each of the phases and stages. In practice, they often overlap and, in some cases, stages may take place in different phases during the same process.

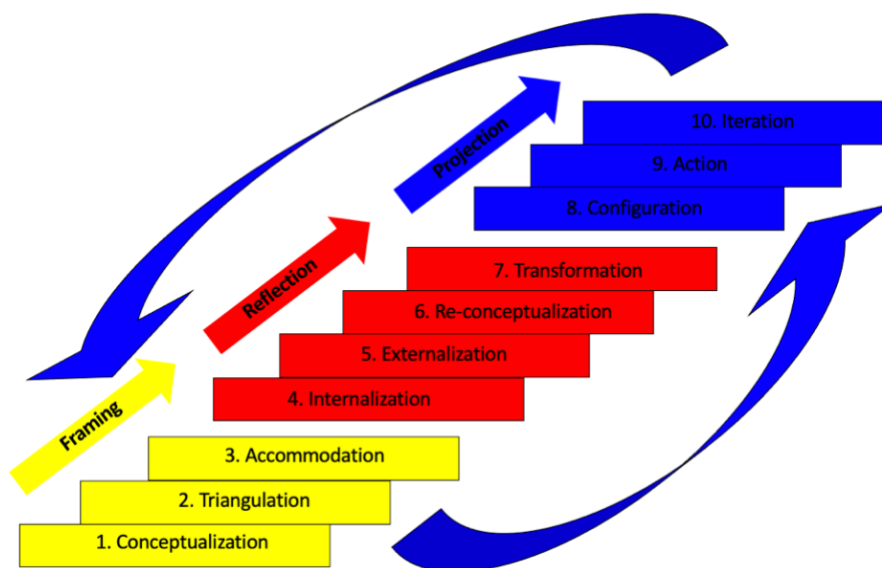


Figure 1: GLSp Template with the Framing, Reflection and Projection Phases and the corresponding ten stages

3.1 Framing Phase

The first step of the GLSp is the Framing Phase that includes the Conceptualization, Triangulation, and Accommodation Stages. They are the preparatory steps taking place prior to a governmental innovation and learning event (ex-ante activities).

In the Conceptualization Stage, the political challenge to be solved has to be defined and the related knowledge frame to be determined (see Figure 2). This is done under the guidance of the Learning Broker or Learning Broker Organization who furthermore facilitates the entire forthcoming GLSp process. This selected knowledge frame can be an illustrative best practice example or an analysis or evaluation of a case study that is related content-wise to a similar problematic situation. The frame serves as a reflection surface only and is not supposed to be suggestive or directly transferable to the political challenge at stake. Its purpose is to launch the GLSp process by raising the participants' curiosity and to serve as inspiration in the search for alternative solutions.

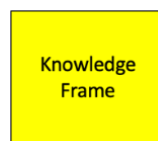


Figure 2: Knowledge frame for raising curiosity and serving as inspiration

In the Triangulation Stage (see Figure 3), firstly, the existing perspectives linked to the knowledge frame are systematically collected (content triangulation) and secondly, for each chosen perspective the most qualified knowledge holder gets selected (expert triangulation). This is done based only on the individual's expertise, regardless of hierarchical positions or political views. Thirdly, additional key stakeholders are identified who are considered as essential decision makers in the related political context (stakeholder triangulation).

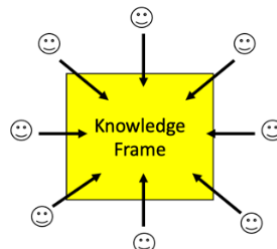


Figure 3: Content, expert and stakeholder triangulation

In the Accommodation Stage, the depoliticized space is set up (see Figure 4). This includes all content and organizational preparations necessary to secure a disruption free execution of the event proceedings. Among them is drafting a factsheet that includes the description of the problem situation and the knowledge frame as well as a list with the perspectives and respective experts and stakeholders. This information, along with event design, which is based on the different steps of the Reflection Phase (see Chapter 3.2.), is sent to the participants.

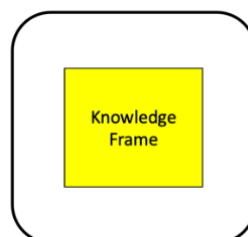


Figure 4: Setting up a depoliticized space

3.2 Reflection Phase

The four stages in the Reflection Phase are the core of the GLSp proceedings and shape the didactical steps of a face-to-face or virtual event. They include the Internalization, Externalization, Re-conceptualization and the Transformation Stages (event activities).

In the Internalization Stage, the participants reflect their own perspective in the light of the knowledge frame (see Figure 5). The purpose of this exercise is to give the participants the opportunity to validate their own viewpoints toward the problem solution in the light of the knowledge frame in real time and to rationalize the disparities or overlaps between their individual perspectives and the given knowledge frame.



Figure 5: Self-reflection in the light of the knowledge frame

In the Externalization Stage, the participants share these self-reflections with their peers and listen to the other participants' statements. By doing so they notice to what extent their viewpoint is part (or not) of the Knowledge Frame and to what extent they are isolated or part of one or more majority group's position (see Figure 6). With this exercise, the participants also obtain an impression of the broadness and diversity of the existing spectrum of different standpoints.

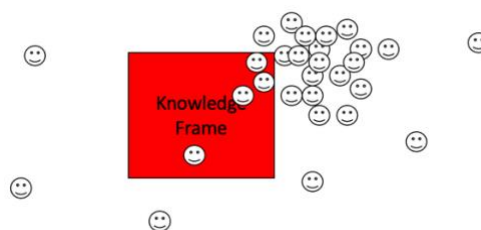


Figure 6: Group-reflection in the light of the knowledge frame

In the Re-conceptualization Stage the shared self-reflections are converged around one or more clusters of viewpoints and reviewed to the extent they are in or outside the existing knowledge frame (see Figure 7). Depending upon this real-time review, the original frame is readjusted accordingly. In case some self-reflections do not fit the given cluster, the cluster itself may be reviewed again and extended content-wise so it includes these viewpoints as well (see →). If this is not possible, they are labeled as an exception that are not considered for the actual problem-solving process in the given time and place but may be relevant later on.

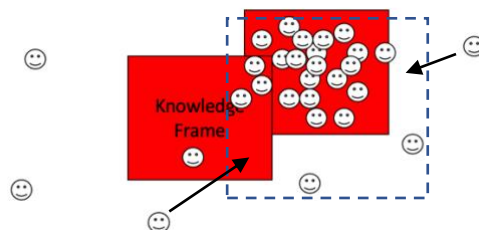


Figure 7: Clustering viewpoints and readjusting of the knowledge frame

In the Transformation Stage the revised knowledge frame, which is the basis of a new real-time updated and comprehensive understanding of how the given political challenge could be solved, has to be transformed into concrete actions and related plans that can be implemented by each participant in their own field of practice (see Figure 8). These action plans consider interventions on the policy, on the politics, and at the polities level. After having been developed, the different action plans have to be reviewed regarding synergies and overlaps, as well as sequenced into an implementation timeline.



Figure 8: Transformation of new knowledge frame into action plans by each participant

3.3 Projection Phase

The three stages of the Projection Phase are the follow-up steps after the innovation and learning event has taken place and before a new spin of the GLSp may be launched. They include the Configuration, Action and Iteration Stages (ex-post activities).

The new knowledge frame and the derived action plans are considered as open source and have to be made available to the participants and a wider audience of interested individuals or groups (see Figure 9). In the Configuration Stage, the new knowledge and the action plans are documented and disseminated through a feedback loop mechanism to everybody interested in the process results. Depending on the feedback, the action plans are updated accordingly to make them as relevant and timely as possible. By involving a broader audience and, potentially, additional stakeholders to engage in the implementation procedures, a political momentum gets created and by doing so the formal and legal legitimization of the planned actions increases.

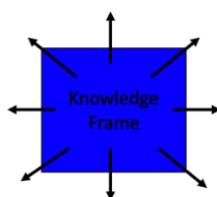


Figure 9: Dissemination of updated knowledge frame

In the Action Stage, the planned actions are implemented on the policy, politics and polities level by the participants and by other relevant individuals and organizations that may be involved (see Figure 10). These implementation procedures are monitored and evaluated regarding their output, outcome and impact in relation to the given problem solution. During these implementation procedures, the participants are encouraged to stay in touch and to learn from each other's experiences.

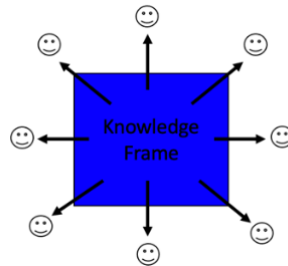


Figure 10: Implementation of activity plans by participants

In the Iteration Stage, the results of the monitoring and evaluation are continuously reviewed by the participants regarding their contribution to the expected solution of the political challenge. If they are not satisfactory, a next spin of the GLSp is launched to redirect, complement or replace the actions accordingly. (See Figure 11) The new knowledge frame of the Re-Conceptualization Stage of the first spin, complemented with the findings generated in the Action Stage, serves in the second spin as the knowledge frame of the forthcoming Conceptualization Stage.

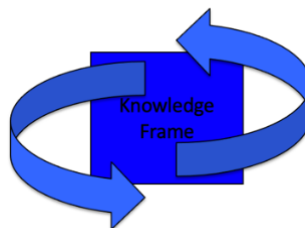


Figure 11: Launch of a next GLSp spin

4. Phase Related Questions

The template is a guideline to follow when conducting an entire GLSp process. The following list of questions is a practical memory aide to ensure that each of the three methodological phases and the related ten stages are considered in such a procedure. Each of them alone might not be essential to ensure the success of the approach. However, by answering each question, none of the stages gets unintentionally overlooked or forgotten when applying a GLSp process.

4.1 Framing Phase Related Questions

- What is the political problem situation? (Conceptualization Stage)
- Who is the Learning Broker or Learning Broker Organization? (Conceptualization Stage)
- What is the knowledge frame related to the political challenge? (Conceptualization Stage)

- What are the knowledge frame-related perspectives? (Triangulation Stage)
- Who are the knowledge holders in regard to each perspective? (Triangulation Stage)
- Which additional stakeholders are to be involved in order to create political momentum?
(Triangulation Stage)
- Is the event agenda drafted according to the Reflection Phase and have the participants been briefed about it? (Accommodation Stage)
- Has the factsheet been drafted and does it include the description of the problem situation, the knowledge frame and the list of perspectives and respective experts and stakeholders?
(Accommodation Stage)
- Has the factsheet been made available to the participants? (Accommodation Stage)
- Has the event venue been set up according to the requirements of a depoliticized space?
(Accommodation Stage)

4.2 Reflection Phase Related Questions

- Is each participant being encouraged to self-reflect their perspective in response to the knowledge frame? (Internalization Stage)
- Are the participants being encouraged to share their reflections with the other actors?
(Externalization Stage)
- Are the participants being encouraged to update and readjust the knowledge frame accordingly? (Re-conceptualization Stage)
- Are the participants being encouraged to converge their self-reflections around one or more clusters they can agree upon? (Re-conceptualization Stage)
- Is the opportunity to be considered later on being given to the participants whose self-reflections do not fit the new knowledge frame? (Re-conceptualization Stage)
- Are the participants being encouraged to transform the re-conceptualized knowledge frame into action plans that consider interventions on the policy, politics and the polities level?
(Transformation Stage)
- Are the participants being encouraged to review the action plans regarding synergies and overlaps as well as to sequence their implementation into a timeline? (Transformation Stage)

4.3 Projection Phase Related Questions

- Are the new knowledge frame and the derived problem-solving actions being disseminated to the participants and other interested individuals or organizations? (Configuration Stage)
- Are the participants being encouraged to implement the action plans? (Action Stage)
- Are the participants being encouraged to stay in touch and to learn from each other's experiences? (Action Stage)
- Is the implementation of the plans being evaluated regarding their output, outcome and impact? (Action Stage)
- Are the evaluation results being continuously reviewed and, depending on the results, are decisions being made about the launch of a new GLSp spin? (Iteration Stage)
- Are all preparations in place for a next spiral spin and beyond? (Iteration Stage)

Part B – Practice

The GLSp theory-related method shapes the didactics of the political innovation and learning process. Each of the ten template stages has to be operationalized in order to fit the given problem situation. Accordingly, for each political challenge a new and customized design has to be developed. The operationalization of the template is the main responsibility of a so-called Learning Broker or Learning Broker Organization, as described in part 5. To illustrate the application of the template into a concrete innovation and learning process, the design of the Convivenza Foundation's seminar about "Small Peoples" will be described in part 6, followed by a set of practical recommendations (part 7) and frequently asked questions (part 8) to be considered when organizing such a process.

5. The Learning Broker and the Learning Broker Organization

The entire GLSp content and design related process is overseen and carried through by a Learning Broker or Learning Broker Organization. The broker or its respective organization leads and advises all involved actors throughout the GLSp process and facilitates the innovation and learning event. The broker understands all aspects of the GLSp method and has an extensive kit of participatory tools that may be considered in the event (Steyaert and Lisoir). The broker has to be impartial regarding the content and affiliation in relation to solving the given political problem. It is a methodological necessity that the broker receives an honorarium from the initiator of the GLSp, in order to make him or her financially independent of any stakeholders involved. This financial compensation has to be

contractually agreed upon by all parties before the launch of the process. The broker is, in particular, in charge of the following tasks centered on the three template phases:

5.1 Framing Phase Related Tasks

- In accordance with the initiator, the broker clarifies the political problem situation and administers all organizational, financial and legal issues related to a first spin of the GLSp process.
- In collaboration with the initiator as well as experts in the political problem related field, the broker determines the knowledge frame and the respective content perspectives.
- For each of the chosen perspectives, the broker selects, with the support of the initiator and other experts in the field, the most experienced knowledge holders. They are compiled in a list by name, perspective, and organizational affiliation.
- The broker is responsible for the participants' invitation and personal briefing.
- Based on the problem situation, the broker plans the didactical steps of the innovation and learning event along the four stages of the Reflection Phase and drafts the agenda, which is composed of adequate participatory instruments.
- The broker drafts a factsheet that includes the description of the problem situation, the knowledge frame, the event agenda as well as the list of the perspectives and the knowledge holders.
- The facilitation of the GLSp event requires the broker to establish a trustworthy environment that includes a transparent distribution of all event-related documents to everybody involved.
- The broker is responsible for setting up a support team that is at their disposal and that secures the participants' comfort, including travel, food and accommodation as well as setting up a functionally and physically safe event venue.

5.2 Reflection Phase Related Tasks

- The broker facilitates and has the overall responsibility for the execution of the event proceedings following the given agenda.
- The broker is only allowed to alter the agenda during the event if there is a justifiable reason content-wise, and if the adjustment is supported by all those involved.

- During the event, the broker assures compliance with the communication and behavioral rules including equality, reciprocity, and transparency as well as the Chatham House Rule.
- If participants do not comply, the broker is required to intervene and if necessary, exclude unreliable participants from the process. It is important that any lost perspective be replaced by another expert.
- If the broker's authority or capability to facilitate the process is seriously questioned by the participants, they may be replaced too in order to keep the process moving.

5.3 Projection Phase Related Tasks

- The broker is responsible for collecting all documents produced in the process, distributing them to the participants and making them available to other interested individuals or organizations.
- During the implementation of the action plans, the broker assists the participants by doing the above, coordinates their activities and assures the communication among them.
- The broker supports the participants in setting up a monitoring and evaluation concept that allows measurement of the output, outcome and impact of the different activities.
- Depending on the evaluation results as well as the participants' and the initiators' willingness to launch a next spin of the GLSp, the broker's engagement may be extended and they will prepare the knowledge frame for the upcoming spin.

6. Process Application

The design of a GLSp process depends on the problem situation as well as the political context. The use of the GLSp template has to be newly operationalized in each case and transformed into a didactical process accordingly. To give an example of what such an application looks like in practice, a concrete innovation and learning process organized by the Convivenza Foundation is presented as an illustration. The process is about "Small Peoples without their own State", an initiative of the Foundation organized from 2020 to 2021. The description of the process is structured along the ten GLSp template stages.

6.1 Process Initiation - Framing Phase

Context - Conceptualization

Small Peoples endeavour, often under adverse circumstances, to preserve their ancestral customs. They do not demand sovereignty and are usually loyal to the state in which they live. However, they claim adapted forms of autonomy for the cultivation of their language and culture, as well as genuine participation in all areas concerning them. Twenty-five years ago, the “Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe (CoE)” and the “European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages of the CoE”⁸ were adopted to protect these minority rights. However, to date, it appears that the conditions of Small Peoples’ lives and institutions have not improved as expected and it is unclear what needs to be changed to enhance the impact of the convention in the future (problem situation).

In 2015 the Convivenza Foundation organized a seminar with 40 participants representing a selection of representatives of Small Peoples in Scuol, Canton of Grisons, Switzerland.⁹ The purpose of this first innovation and learning event was to identify the benefits that the Convention and similar international instruments have provided. Its results were summarized in the Scuol Declarations¹⁰ for good governance adopted by the participants (first spiral spin).

Five years later, and even more so under the effects of the Corona pandemic, there is a strong belief that the improvement of Small Peoples’ lives and institutions are limited and could be further improved with targeted interventions. To clarify that question the Convivenza Foundation launched a survey under the lead of EURAC Research¹¹ to measure the impact of the Convention and to collect recommendations to improve the Small Peoples’ lives in 2020. The survey included a sample of 25 respondents of non-governmental organizations and state officials representing Small Peoples in Europe and Eurasia.

The survey results (knowledge frame)¹² formed the basis of a follow-up seminar initiated by the Foundation and carried through under the auspices of the Council of Europe and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (Initiators). The event was facilitated by the members of the Convivenza Foundation (Learning Broker). The goals of the seminar were, firstly, by reflecting upon the survey results and the participants’ experiences, to search for practical actions and related implementation plans to improve Small Peoples’ lives and institutions along the three seminar themes of “Autonomy, Participation, and Collective Rights”, “Education, Official Use of Language, and Media”, and “Awareness of Rights and Protection” and secondly, to update the Scuol Declarations accordingly.

⁸ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities>

⁹ <https://www.convivenza.ch/index.php?id=weiterbildung>

¹⁰ <https://www.convivenza.ch/uploads/media/Declaration.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.eurac.edu/de/pages/default.aspx>

¹² https://www.convivenza.ch/uploads/media/Evaluation_Survey_02.pdf

Content and Knowledge Holder - Triangulation

Within the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the CoE and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages of the CoE, the focus of the GLSp process was directed at the Small Peoples across the European and Eurasian region. The chosen content triangulation was twofold: first, a comprehensive representation of all major autochthonous people in the region, and second, a selection of delegates representing the three major societal perspectives including civil society organizations, as well as members of the political authorities, and media representatives. Based on these criteria, 30 individuals were invited to participate in the seminar, each representing one of the ten chosen Small Peoples, including the Rhaeto-Romans, the Ladins, the Sorbs, the Sami, the Crimean Tatars, the Meskhetian Turks, the Aromanians, the Bretons, and the West and North Frisians.

Seminar Preparation – Accommodation

To link the follow-up seminar with the first event held in 2015, the Convivenza Foundation again chose the Swiss Canton of Grisons as the conference venue. By doing so it allowed the participants a first-hand insight into the Romansh-speaking region, a people living in the southeast of Switzerland. The intention of this measure was to establish a sense of familiarity among the participants by bringing them together in a cultural environment that mirrors their own in many ways.

To avoid language controversies, English was chosen as quasi-neutral seminar language. To make the event results available to a wider audience the participants were encouraged to translate the seminar results into their native language. By disseminating the outcomes in the respective languages and idioms, the participants brought the seminar results to the attention of their regions in a targeted manner and by doing so enhanced the implementation of the developed actions in their given political context.

Thanks to broad private and public based sponsoring it was possible to ensure independent financing of the seminar and subsequently to hire an employee who was in charge of all administration and logistical issues. Regarding the individual expenditures, the participants were asked to cover their own expenses as far as possible. By doing so they underlined their commitment to participate. In cases where this was not possible, the invitees were given the opportunity to request financial support from the Foundation.

Thanks to all these ex-ante activities, it was possible to finalize the seminar-related preparations such as drafting a factsheet, summarizing the survey results and the Scuol Declarations, compiling a list with the knowledge holders, designing the event agenda, as well as the administrative and logistical tasks. The seminar itself lasted two and a half days and was divided into five agenda parts.

6.2 Seminar Agenda – Reflection Phase

Day 1

- Afternoon Introduction to the concept and the seminar themes:
- Autonomy, Participation, and Collective Rights
 - Education, Official Use of Language and Media
 - Awareness of Rights and Protection

Part A: From Inspiration to Reflection (Internalization)

Presentations about the:

- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages of the CoE
- School Declarations, and
- Survey Results

Based on the seminar documents and the presentations, each participant selected, for each of the three seminar themes, the most important and urgent issue to improve their Small Peoples' lives and institutions.

Day 2

Morning **Part B: From Reflection to Issue Clusters (Externalization)**

- The participants presented a statement about their selected issue for each theme and pooled them in issue clusters.
- The participants selected for each theme the most important and urgent issue cluster in a poll.

Afternoon **Part C: From Issue Clusters to Practical Actions (Re-conceptualization)**

- The participants committed to one issue cluster and re-conceptualized it into a concrete action that contributes towards improving Small Peoples' lives and institutions.
- The participants presented their actions and learned from each other's experiences.

Day 3

Morning **Part D: From Practical Actions to Implementation Plans (Transformation)**

- The participants selected the most important and urgent action for their respective Small People and transformed it into an implementation plan considering policy, politics, and politics levels, and determined who is doing what and when and who else needs to be included.
- The participants presented and reviewed their implementation plans.

Conclusions

- Based on the implementation plans, the participants reviewed and updated the Scuol Declarations, setting out how to improve Small Peoples' lives and institutions.
 - The participants set up a network to collaborate among themselves, the initiator and the Learning Broker.
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6.3 Follow-up - Projection Phase

Configuration Stage

The implementation plans, as well as the updated Scuol Declarations, were retained in a document and together with the action plans, sent to the participants. Additionally, they were published in Volume 6 of the Convivenza Publication Series. Along with this dissemination effort, the participants translated the documents along with a personal testimonial about their seminar experience into their native language to make it available to their community. A special summary of the seminar results was further sent to the national authorities from where the Small Peoples' representatives originated as well as to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Council of Europe.

Action Stage

After the end of the seminar, the participants started to implement their actions according to their plans with the support of additional selected stakeholders. They were assisted by the Convivenza Foundation in their evaluation and coordination efforts among themselves as well as by additional experts on minority and diversity issues from the Foundation's network. All these ex-post developments and evaluation dates were recorded and shared among the participants for their information and in view of the Iteration Stage.

Iteration Stage

Based on the Convivenza Foundation's recordings about the implementation of the actions, the participants and other involved stakeholders were being continuously encouraged to review the impact of the applied actions and to assess to what extent they contributed to improving the Small Peoples' lives and institutions. If this had not been the case, they may have decided, in accordance with the Foundation (Learning Broker) and the Initiators of the process, to launch a third follow-up seminar where the actions were analyzed, updated and if required, replaced.

7. Implementation Recommendations

When carrying through a GLSp process, the following practical recommendations serve as a checklist for the Learning Broker/the Learning Broker Organization to ensure the consideration of the method's key features. The high emphasis on these organizational and logistical types of measures lies in the fact that they have a direct impact on the participants' well-being and therefore indirectly contribute to the success of the process. Since the participants' expertise is the root of any potential results, it is particularly important that they experience a safe and inspiring learning environment. The recommendations are presented and ordered following the three GLSp phases.

7.1 Framing Phase Related Recommendations

- Before the GLSp process starts make sure that the contractual agreement between the Initiator and the Learning Broker is clarified for all parties and signed.
- In practice it is advisable to appoint two people who are responsible for the Learning Broker's tasks.
- As a rule of thumb: do nothing without a plausible or explainable reason throughout the process.
- Invite the participants strategically: start with the highest-ranking participants and let the following invitees know that the former accepted the invitation.
- When drafting the list of participants, do not use any academic or other type of titles. The list should preferably start with the perspective, the name and the affiliated organization as well as the contact coordinates.
- Brief the highest-ranking participants personally about the process first and let them know that they were selected based on their expertise and not their hierarchical or political position.
- Let them know that they will be treated like everybody else but that they are expected to set an example for others by following the broker's communication and behavioral rules. By doing so they give the broker the authority to demand the same from the other participants.
- Try to brief as many participants individually as possible. This task can be shared with others involved in the process organization.
- When designing the agenda make sure that the event time is used as efficiently as possible. There should be no spare time without work, even during the breaks or lunchtime.
- As a memory aid for the broker, it is advisable to draft a script where every content and organizational step of the event is noted. It is advisable to follow the script and drift away only if the situation necessitates it.
- Prior to the event it is advisable to give the participants a task to prepare a few days ahead. This task should always be easy to perform such as setting priorities and/or explaining the point of view regarding a given subject matter.
- The key goal of the preparation is to ensure that the participants feel fully informed and comfortable about any content or logistical aspects of the forthcoming event. The success of the process depends upon their subjective wellbeing alone

- ☑ When preparing the event location, set up a seating order that avoids, as far as possible, participants who know each other sitting together. Furthermore, avoid empty chairs by assuring that there is always one chair fewer than needed, but at the same time always keep sufficient chairs in reserve.

7.2 Reflection Phase Related Recommendations

- ☑ When the participants arrive at the event venue make sure that they are individually welcomed by the broker or another assigned person involved in the process organization.
- ☑ The broker should always be present and be the first entering and the last leaving the room.
- ☑ To protect privacy and for data protection reasons, do not take pictures of the participants without asking their explicit permission.
- ☑ When leaving the room, any left-over notes should always be collected and if nobody asks for them back by the end of the event, destroy them.
- ☑ At the beginning of the event, the participants have to be reminded about the goal and structure of the event as well as the communication and behavioral rules.
- ☑ The broker is expected always to intervene if these rules are not followed.
- ☑ The importance of the participants' physical presence in the event room has to be explained explicitly: If they are not there, their content perspective is missing, which potentially distorts the process results.
- ☑ Everybody has to be treated the same way, as if they were the highest-ranking person in the room.
- ☑ The process is knowledge based and therefore neutral towards culture, religion, gender, etc. Having said this, it is important to assure a balanced and diverse representation of participants as much as the content triangulation allows.
- ☑ The broker controls the time restraints and is the only one allowed to shorten or stretch the time units.
- ☑ The participants should never be silent for too long: the goal is to have as many contributions as possible in a given time period.
- ☑ Since every participant has their own proficient language, it is important to remind the participants to avoid professional terms and acronyms.
- ☑ The goal of the exchange is to develop innovative knowledge. For that purpose, it is important to guide the participants in a way in which they only share thoughts that may be expected to be unknown to others and may contribute to thus far unknown problem solutions. Accordingly, it is important to prevent them repeating their well-known and official positions, already known by most of the participants.
- ☑ To avoid these repetitions, it is advisable to ask so called "forward directed" questions such as inviting the participants' opinions about a topic related to but not identical to the problem situation (i.e., knowledge frame). By doing so, the participants are forced to share their position about something they have not so far known and are prevented from repeating their usual narratives.

- ☑ If such open questions are going to be asked, it is advisable to prepare one or two participants beforehand to answer them. By doing so, no time is lost until the first person decides to respond in the plenary.
- ☑ Questions and answers for clarification should always be encouraged. However, statements made should never be discussed controversially. Everything said in the process is by nature considered as right from a given perspective and a given time and place. However, if factual mistakes are presumed to have been made, the broker may be expected to verify and if necessary, correct them.

7.3 Projection Phase Related Recommendations

- ☑ Thank the participants for their active participation in a personal message and send them any promised follow-up documents right after the event.
- ☑ Get the participants' feedback about the event with some closed and open-ended questions a few days later.
- ☑ Try to stay in touch with a few selected participants and stakeholders with whom you were able to build up a personal relationship to get an informal sense of the implementation process and the related evaluation results.
- ☑ Be alert to step in whenever problems in the implementation process arise or if a next spiral spin is requested by the participants.

8. Frequently Asked Questions

- For what purpose is the GLSp designed?
The GLSp bridges the development and transformation of knowledge to action with the goal of solving problems in the political context. Wherever there are political blocks, challenges or gridlocks, the method enhances the creation of problem-solving know-how as well as its practical implementation in the most efficient and sustainable manner. It can be used for any type of political problem at any level of society inside a democratic political system.
- What are the origins of the GLSp and how has it since developed?
The application of a GLSp forerunner dates from an action-learning project conducted at the Department of Social Services of the City of Zurich between 1990 and 1992. Based on these experiences, today's method was developed over time and first applied in a learning event held in Berne under the auspices of the Swiss Federal Office of Personnel in 1998 and on the international level at the Second International Conference of Federalism in 2002. Since then, the GLSp has become a key tool in numerous multinational organizations such as the World Bank and the OECD as well as local and national private and public institutions all over the world.

- How do we know that the GLSp works?
There is an inductive and a deductive way to demonstrate the GLSp's impact: first, to date there have been over 170 events held in nearly 100 countries worldwide with several thousand participants. The event's level one (outputs) and level two evaluations (outcomes) resulted in an overall 90 percent approval rating (good or very good). These quantitative results are complemented by numerous testimonials about the long-term impact of the learning, which was given in writing one or more years after the respective events took place. Second, the GLSp is based on a heuristic theory that is compiled from 35 theoretical concepts, each of them individually scientifically verified. Accordingly, it can be assumed that the application of these concepts works in the GLSp process as well.
- What are the political problems the GLSp has been applied to so far?
The typical topics dealt in GLSp processes to date include, listed alphabetically: accountability and corruption challenges, budgeting and taxation, environment questions and climate change, federalism and decentralization, human rights and human security, mining and natural resources, poverty reduction and social security, public sector reform, spatial development and transportation, as well as well-being and public health.
- Is the GLSp only for governments?
The GLSp was designed for any type of institution or private citizen who is affected by, or has a particular interest in, a given governance or political problem situation. Accordingly, any private or public entity in a democratic state, including civil society and multinational organizations, businesses as well as local, subnational or national governments with their legislative, executive, judicial and administrative branches can launch or be part of a GLSp process.
- What makes the GLSp different from other political problem-solving processes?
The key distinction is that in the GLSp, those who develop a problem solution are also the ones who are responsible for its implementation. Merging the two activities into one comprehensive process diminishes the risk that identifying a solution and its implementation may be detached from one another and as a consequence, the priorities may end up developing a solution but neglecting its feasibility.
- What role do cultural, religious and gender issues play in the GLSp process?
In the content and stakeholder triangulation, they are ignored on purpose, since knowledge in politics is considered independent of gender, religion or culture. Accordingly, knowledge holders should be solely chosen based on their expertise representing a given knowledge perspective. However, on an informal level, it is strongly advised to consider such distinctions in the selection process whenever the content-related criteria allow it.

- Why do participants follow the instructions of the Learning Broker?
Prior to an event, the highest-ranking participants are personally briefed about their exemplary role in the GLSp process. By following the rules given by the Learning Broker, it can be expected that out of courtesy others will follow the example too. If they do not it is a matter of fairness and respect towards the ones following the rules that the broker intervenes and enforces equal compliance by all participants.
- Why are all knowledge perspectives equally important?
The content triangulation assures that all relevant perspectives are considered in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the given problem situation. If one perspective is missed, the knowledge base upon which a problem solution is developed is incomplete. Regardless of the perceived importance of a given view point, the subsequent problem solution thus risks being inaccurate.
- Why does the GLSp work even in cases where participants refuse to talk to one another?
In the GLSp an objection to communicate with each other does not hinder the advancement of the process. The reason for this is the didactical proceedings which foresee, at least at the beginning, only direct interactions between the Learning Broker and the participants. The communication among the actors themselves is reduced to listening to each other. In practice, these non-verbal interactions however sooner or later lead first to informal talks, mostly during breaks, and progress to more formal interactions. This exchange is usually further enhanced by the type of forward-oriented questions where the dialog is not about dividing the subject from the past but towards the search for new and joint solutions.
- Why do people participate at all in a GLSp process?
Because they cannot afford not to do so. The GLSp process is a unique opportunity for everybody involved to hear firsthand knowledge regarding a given political challenge they are concerned about and they want to be involved in the solution process. To be excluded from this process implies not being among the problem solvers and with that, lacking first-hand state-of-the-art knowledge. Furthermore, thanks to the protected environment and the given communication rules, participants endure minimal risk of losing face or authority vis-à-vis their peers.
- Why do participants stay connected after each GLSp spin?
In the intense GLSp process, participants experience a common destiny. In this safe space they are allowed to think the unthinkable and are encouraged to try out ideas which they could never express in an everyday work setting. Once they have experienced such familiarity, it lies in human nature that they wish to continue sharing experiences and learning from each other's problem-solving efforts. It is therefore no surprise that a side product of the GLSp is the building of a resilient and, over time, growing innovation and learning network.

- Why doesn't everybody use the GLSp, since it is so successful?
Although there have been numerous successful applications and the renowned German Development Institute describes it as »One of the most compelling approaches to integrate learning in policy-making...»¹³ there are definitely some risks to consider: first of all, the results of a GLSp process are open and unpredictable. Since politicians, in particular, do not like uncertainty, they are rather hesitant to initiate such an approach, although once launched, they tend to be very keen to participate. And secondly, the GLSp is a very work-consuming endeavor, which requires a very high standard of organizational skills, and once set in motion can take several learning spins over a rather long period of time. This may scare off initiators who are keen to get results sooner rather than later.

9. Concluding Remarks

Innovation and learning in politics do not just happen: in order to take place, learning has to be carefully initiated and orchestrated. The GLSp provides a template for the Convivenza Foundation's operations to achieve its mission to enhance peaceful coexistence of majority and minority communities, both in Switzerland and abroad. With this manual, the Foundation owns a brand about organizing interventions in a theory based and reliable manner. It is furthermore in a position to consult third parties about the method itself and how to apply it in other political fields of action.

In many ways, the application of the GLSp is a very technical procedure and it is important to know its theoretical foundations to understand why what has to be done when. This understanding allows one to answer many questions that may emerge in a GLSp process which are not directly addressed in the manual. Hence, the GLSp is not just another method or cookbook on how to deal with political problems but rather a fundamental shift in how such challenges may be defined and processed accordingly. Many of the methodological interventions are therefore often paradoxical and contra-intuitive and cannot be easily anticipated.

Finally, since knowledge in politics is subject to ongoing changes, the GLSp itself has to be reviewed and adapted as well. As one of the principal organizations applying the GLSp, the Convivenza Foundation systematically evaluates and analyzes the method's output (quantitative), outcome (qualitative) and impact (sustainability). The results will be published on its website and in its latest publications and it is therefore recommended to consult these media outlets to learn about the method's latest updates.

¹³ See: https://www.die-gdi.de/uploads/media/DP_28.2014.pdf

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