Pál Tóth - Workshop Description

What (Not) to Say?
Conversational Taboos, Hidden Conflicts, and Empowered Communities

Across cultures and communities, there are things we avoid saying — not out of politeness alone, but often due to deep social codes, unspoken tensions, or fear of rupture. These conversational taboos and hidden conflicts are not just private dilemmas: they shape public life, group cohesion, and even the possibilities for collective change.

This workshop explores how the things we do *not* say influence the relationships we *do* build. It offers a space to reflect, share experiences, and learn strategies to navigate silence, tension, and vulnerability within different communities — whether familial, cultural, generational, or faith-based.

Specific objectives:

- To identify and reflect on personal and communal taboos in dialogue.
- To explore the impact of unspoken conflicts on trust, participation, and cohesion.
- To understand how silence can be both protective and limiting.
- To experiment with tools for fostering open, transformative communication.
- To imagine ways in which our communities could become "spaces of trust" where authentic dialogue is possible.

The workshop consists of **five interactive sessions**:

1. **Naming the Silence** – Personal experiences of conversational taboos; cultural and social patterns of avoidance.
2. **What Lies Beneath** – Recognizing hidden tensions and their emotional, historical, or systemic roots.
3. **From Fear to Freedom** – Intrapersonal communication, growth mindset, and reclaiming the power to speak.
4. **Practicing Trust** – Tools and exercises for dialoguing across difference with care and honesty.
5. **Empowered Together** – Collective insights and pathways for transforming communities into spaces of shared responsibility and dialogue.

Each session combines storytelling, critical reflection, group dialogue, and creative exercises. We will draw on principles from conflict transformation, and lived community experience.

This is a space for courage, connection, and small acts of transformation.

Suggested literature:

W.B. Pearce – S.W. Littlejohn, *Moral Conflict. When Social Worlds Collide*. SAGE, 1997
E. M. Uslaner, *The Moral Foundations of Trust*. CUP, 2002
T. Dotson, *Technically Together. Reconstructing Community in a Networked World*. The MIT Press, 2017