

RETHINKING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: THE CONTRIBUTION OF PEACE STUDIES

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Peace building and human security have gained in the last decades an increasing attention in the area of International Development Cooperation (IDC), and are now at the core of the most recent UN elaborations for a post 2015 framework. This focus' shift is also an effect of the dramatic increase in intra-state wars and local violent conflicts following Cold War's end, as well as of the global context after the 9/11, and calls for a new role of Peace Studies in reframing the idea of international cooperation and rethinking its practices. Agencies and NGOs operate providing help both in post-conflict peace-building, and with humanitarian assistance in the midst of ongoing and resurging violence; countless human lives have been saved by international humanitarian interventions. Tensions have however arisen when linking emergency aid to longer term development processes especially for the social, economic and political implications that these interventions may have.

In exploring the relation between IDC and peace, a number of contentious issues can be raised. What contribution can the IDC bring in dealing with short and long term factors that make societies prone to conflict? How to guarantee neutrality, impartiality, and independence in a situation of violent ethnic or internecine conflict? How to be sure that the intervention does not prolong the conflict instead of reducing its duration? How to avoid that the delivered aid maintains and reinforce the very structure which is at the origin of the violence? What elements should be noted with reference to the debate concerning the 'responsibility to protect', and in wider terms, in relation to the position of the civilian population in situation of conflict? How should the issues related to emergency and humanitarian aid be linked to a wider social, political and economic context? How are these issues represented in the current discourse, and what effect have these representations on the practice of IDC?

All these questions have been raised in many occasion and have led to intense debates. It is evident that any successful intervention requires not only a critical assessment of past interventions, but also a systemic evaluation of the context in which the conflict arises, and, with reference to the conflict itself, of its causes and its development. An understanding of how different types of conflict develop and of their main characteristic is essential, as well as all the issues related to interventions in (actual or potential) conflict areas. Peace Studies and Peace Research represent an interdisciplinary field of studies that promotes the exploration of the above issues, and has developed in the last thirty years an openness to contemporary challenges arising in the post cold war period [1]. The panel proposed at the CUCS conference aimed at highlighting areas of interest where further reflection is needed, with contributions led both at practical and theoretical level.

The complexities or the inter-linkages between development and peace issues have been explored first from the point of view of their institutional implications. In his paper, *Consorti* considers development cooperation through the lenses of the Italian cooperation law too, where international development cooperation is said to be 'part of the foreign policy', mostly expressed in its economic dimensions. The international debate has however progressively highlighted the need for a wider perspective: in this, the Human Development Index represents an important achievement. However other authors, such as Maslow, Freire, Max-Neef, had already highlighted the importance of avoiding a consideration of human needs under a too narrow viewpoint: human needs need to be recognized under multiple perspectives, where the relational elements of the context play a key role. It is only by giving a chance for direct expression to peoples and communities often thought as mere objects and 'targets' of international development, that these elements may be fully acknowledged and sustainable improvement of life condition will be brought about. Peaceful coexistence is directly connected to a stronger integration between development, rights and peace. The question is how these concerns, particularly after the tragic experience of the WWII have progressively surfaced and have been embedded into institutional arrangements.

The fact of assuming the construction of a culture of peace as a key objective, implies a primary pedagogical commitment that is well reflected in the motto of UNESCO "Building peace in the mind of men and women". This perspective found an important thrust with Federico Mayor Zaragoza, Director General between 1987 and 1999: the Sevilla Statement, adopted because of his, among others', initiative in 1987 recognizes war and violence as 'cultural products' that can be opposed by an appropriate commitment in education. This debate paved the way for a renewal of UNESCO approaches and, in 1997 for the establishment of the program *Towards a Culture of Peace*, in which a positive approach to peace is substantiated in a series of key principles. The International Year of the Culture of Peace, proclaimed by the UN for the year 2000 builds on these premises, pursuing the aim of transforming these principles in binding commitments for the states. As *Consorti* remarks peace is a basic human need, to be fostered primarily through education, and IDC must assume peace-building as its own goal.

The issues raised by Bartolucci and Gallo concern the role played by development cooperation initiatives in conditions of conflict. The latter needs always to be understood as part of a much more complex system of relations and powers; international cooperation is affected by them and at the same time affects them; disregarding these complexities leads often to unintended consequences. In general terms development cooperation has an effect on the conditions in which social actors interact, often producing unintended side effects, and fostering conflicts that before the interventions were not there, or had completely different features. When looking at the issues to be considered while providing aid in situation of conflict, other elements deserve to be considered, such as the risk for aid providers of giving unintended support to one part, to the detriment of the other. The ethical message implicit in the way aid itself is administered is also important and oftentimes neglected; these may foster views of belligerence and separation rather than contributing to establish more relaxed relations among the actors on the field.

Particularly in the case of asymmetric conflicts, where a structural imbalance between the parties is part of the causes and the conditions that foster the conflict itself, the elements summarized above may produce completely unwanted effects: those of reinforcing, rather than mitigating, the structural inequalities that are among the root causes. In the case of Israeli occupation of Palestine, for example, it has been observed how the international aid system ends up supporting and confirming the status quo. International development cooperation system operates and legitimates itself through narratives, that play a role in establishing shared and 'appropriate' ways of defining needs and of acting in order to address them. According to Bartolucci and Gallo deconstructing and decoding language and discourse becomes therefore extremely important for understanding perceptions of aid and ways to improve its effectiveness, identifying real needs, as well as addressing ways of preventing escalation of conflict into violence.

De Sisto points out at the reasons that seem to play a role in prompting interventions of NGOs in the field of peacebuilding, often following the priorities dictated by the donors more than adherence to local needs and priorities. The divergence in the goals between donors, practitioners and local social actors is a matter widely debated in literature; when discussing situations related to conflict management, transformation and resolution, this divergence seems however to play a peculiar role: conflict related situations are recognized for making donors less reactive to the needs expressed by the beneficiaries, and short term activities on conflict resolution may provide a relatively comfortable area of engagement that escape the complication of a deeper understanding of local contexts.

The same tensions arise in relation to evaluation too: organizations usually fear a frank discussion about the reasons behind failures; instead, evaluation often overstates the compliance to pre-determined indicators, the importance of donors' procedures (often focused on short term output), and the possibility of generalizing the outcomes in terms of 'good practices'. All that may therefore easily lead to adopt inappropriate perspectives when critically looking at the outcomes of development interventions. Agencies trying to adhere to the 'rules of the game' of an increasingly competitive field of cooperation and conflict resolution, may easily fall into the trap of transforming the potential for peace into chances for protracted conflict, where they have found their 'ecological niche'. According to De Sisto, the only possibility available in order to improve the quality of development initiatives is to establish ground for a better understanding of the local complexities through participation that, in situation of conflict, may open room for alternative ways for conflict resolution.

The questions raised by Pallottino concern the way the interdisciplinary field of Peace Studies and Peace Research interacts with that of Development Studies. Two elements, at the turning of the Century were doomed to leave a trace on the global development scene with paradoxically contrasting effects: the 9/11, redefining the context and the priorities of International Development Cooperation in terms of security; and the Millennium Development Goals, stemming out of the Millennium Declaration and a decade of international debate on the priorities to be summarized within a globally shared agenda. These two elements changed the stage of Development Studies and Peace Studies: they contributed focusing the development agenda on the 'how' agreed-upon objectives had to be pursued; and at the same time re-defined the way peace and conflict had to be represented in the contemporary world, in terms of concerns for security.

An increasingly technocratic and facts-based approach to development issues went on somehow marginalizing the political core of the problems; and contributed pushing a somehow 'orthodox' reflection on peace and conflict towards humanitarianism, as in an 'orderly' world the conflict ends up for being conceived just as a temporary disturbance within an otherwise linear path of progress. Humanitarianism, strongly needed to save endangered lives, becomes a way of controlling the diversity: a sort of a technique for governance having a similar effect, in this regard, to traditional IDC. Development studies (and contemporary humanitarianism) are focused on the idea of a 'consensual world', where conflict is a sort of temporary disturbance; thus they do not appear to fully grasp the implication of conflict in the processes of social, economic and political transformation, and its possible violent degeneration within human societies. It is not therefore a surprise the relatively marginal position of peace related issues in the current debates on the global perspective beyond 2015, after the Millennium Development Goals' terms will come to an end. In this line, and in order to formulate a perspective that is able to respond to some of the weaknesses of the MDGs in giving a fuller account of the complexities of the social interaction, peace studies can offer insight useful to bring back into the game some missing elements.

Peace studies can contribute to future global frameworks by embracing and articulating a positive idea of peace. Peace doesn't consist merely in the conditions where violence is not there, and people is free from fear: this idea of 'negative peace', seems to be closely related to the articulation done in most of the proposals currently discussed at international level, often based on a 'peace and security' paradigm. A wider approach, focused on the features that make

social interaction conducive to a more peaceful society, has been developed by different thin tanks (such as in the case of the 'Pillars of Peace' report), but are still hardly integrated in the debate.

The reflections developed by these contributions represent only a initial move in the attempt of capturing different implications of a renewed understanding of peace and conflict, and the elements that may lead to the improvement of development cooperation practice. In addition to those, other issues should also be explored; some of them have been shortly mentioned in the debate following the presentations, and may serve as a starting point for further research.

Firstly, we should consider the actors are involved in the dynamic, and the extent to which they find room for their voice to be heard and they play 'from within' in the system of International Development Cooperation; or they play somehow independently and are therefore able to introduce some forms of renewal in that system. The independence of actors such as the NGOs is in discussion, basing on the degree of reliance on their relations with the institutions (including the degree of financial support secured through these institutions). The issue is further complicated when considering the constraints introduced by other forms of reliance, such as public support connected to media coverage of events. The role of other actors would deserve deeper understanding, such as those of decentralized cooperation, expression of local territories that develop their interests under a more 'horizontal' approach (territory with territory) rather than the perceived top-down approach of traditional development cooperation.

A second range of issues is that focused on the mechanisms that contributes shaping the landscape of development cooperation, and more particularly of development cooperation in conflict-related situations. What peculiar features are introduced in such situations? Are the existing practices really conducive to a full understanding of conflict reasons, which in many cases is the premise for establishing a path of conflict transformation? Or, on the contrary, they tend to somehow stabilize conflict situation, and the specific 'intervention domain' associated with it?

A third set of comments are those related to the issue of complexity, and the mechanisms that often reduce the ever-changing reality to an easy-to-grasp but oversimplified representation. The pressure to urgent action, oftentimes fully justified by the course of events, represents however a strong incentive to adopt a more complex approach, often perceived as a loss of time. Recent research [2] strongly highlights the need for assuming the complexity as part of the picture, and peace studies may have more than something to say at this regard.

A fourth point worth highlighting, is about the narratives used to represent situations and priorities for intervention. It is interesting to note that the process of institutionalization and mainstreaming of new (or renewed) concepts strongly relies on the construction of a new discourse. History shows that in many cases, institutionalization and mainstreaming of new concepts has been associated with instrumental and political use of these, homogenizing and stereotyping: the case of participation is somewhat paradigmatic [3]. The construction of a new narrative on peace and conflict is however needed in order to transfer into shared arrangements elements that can help reviving what now appears a too short-sighted understanding of development cooperation.

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DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND THE “CULTURE OF PEACE” INSTITUTIONALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

From an institutional point of view international development cooperation represents a governmental tool for national foreign policy related to meet foreigners needs of an economic nature. This paradigm does not include peace-building, although peace is a basic human need. International law states “Culture of Peace” as an institutional objective, so State should run their development cooperation programs in a building positive peace framework.

From an institutional point of view, “international development cooperation” corresponds to the tools that States as such, possibly supported by other non State actors – that in this way, however, are absorbed into the institutional framework - put into place to meet needs of an economic nature. In few words, international development cooperation is primarily understood as a response to basic economic needs: food and agriculture at a first level. States also use this lever as a tool of their foreign policy. Italian law stresses hardly this issue, as art. 1 of law 49/1987 expressly states «international development cooperation is a part of national foreign policy». Giving development support, States build ties and alliances. As one of the most important example we can quote the post Second World War “Marshall Plan”.

According to this context, governmental development projects have consolidated themselves through time taking a *modus operandi* very linked with political and diplomatic goals that, more in general, “international cooperation” pursue. Several criticisms have been brought up against this element, especially starting from the 70s of the last century, and especially from popular movements that were challenging - and at the same time wanted to correct - the prevailing economic approach with which governmental institutions look at development cooperation. These criticisms cannot be exhaustively examined in this paper, but can be summarized by the idea that development cannot be limited to the response to basic economic needs [1]. In fact there are needs, not always readily appreciated from the economic point of view, which must be equally satisfied, especially according to development goals. Indeed, their implementation is in certain prevail and precede purely economic interventions. A development cooperation intervention that is limited to meet basic needs (food, health, ...) is not only addictive, but it takes away its eyes from other human needs - such as education, culture, ... - that form the basis for ensuring social and economic independence, and thus future sustainability.

In the same years (more or less the seventies of the twentieth century) similar critical insights started to make their ways into the institutional structures. Paradoxically these structures, although actors of development cooperation, somehow represented the source of inequalities that development cooperation should have fought against. In other words: those who acted, accepted the conditions that legitimized their intervention. The States of the first and second world would turn to those of the “third world” in a logic of international alliances, supported by economic cooperation activities, including those «for development». So the help offered was often presented itself as a weapon of blackmail. It is not indeed by chance if in institutional terms, international development cooperation is an integral part of the foreign policy of a State.

By acting in this institutional context, even the international organizations devoted to development cooperation constitute one of the subjects with which States act at the level of international relations. This subject can be put next to traditional diplomatic activities, and even to the use of armed force as an instrument of international relations. If we consider that the war is conceived as a way - albeit extreme - to assert the good reasons of policy, it is understood that development cooperation becomes an additional powerful tool through which States pursue their sovereign interests. It is hardly necessary to observe that the development cooperation could not have been intended to “develop” the autonomy of the people, but to create conditions useful for the “development” of national interests of donors, including creating and maintaining economic conditions which in fact do not affect the substantial differences between the State which gives and the recipient of the donation. The need for the recipient States to pay their debts back to the donors constitutes a typical example of the condition of subordination in which the institutional interventions of development cooperation operate.

This economic paradigm, that does not really seem to have made significant changes with respect to North-South relations, is hard to include among the areas forms of building positive peace: namely a peace by peaceful means. Even institutional cooperation seems to be dependent on the logics of violence that characterize international relations.

Rather different is the *bottom-up* kind of development cooperation, that comes from below and which is substantiated on the response to human needs: i.e. needs understood in a broader and more comprehensive way than just from an economic or material side. This insight is based on the idea of *human development*, which as we have just hinted at the end of the eighties, was accepted by UNDP, precisely to overcome the setting of development understood as the sole economic growth. States are no longer only classified according to their GDP, but also to the presence of additional elements that contribute to build the HDI (Human Development Index), among which promotion of human rights, peaceful coexistence, democratic participation, environmental protection and sustainable development of land resources, development of health and social services with prior attention to the most urgent problems and the most vulnerable groups, improvement of education of the population, with particular attention to basic education. This was certainly a step forward; but the above mentioned items are still macroeconomic indicators.

In any case, according to HDI World Countries were divided into four equal groups: the index is counted for 169 countries, this means that we have four groups of 42 States, with “a trick” the State that advances was allocated in the highest group. Thus, although this is a less rough economic index than previous, we are still far from a good consideration of the actual elements that allow to analyze the terms of “development-to-be” of a local community.

Despite that, we are facing a significant change in cultural terms. The adoption of the HDI demonstrates that human needs are not only economic and material, and that the development cannot simply create conditions of less discomfort, but must also be completed in more comprehensive ways, taking into account human needs in complex and articulated manners.

Looking at three authors who, from different points of view, based their analysis on human needs, help us to understand how it is possible a change of paradigm that can foster the conceptualization of international development cooperation as a peace-building factor.

The first of these is Abraham Maslow, who conceives an idea of a relational and gradual needs [2]. He resonates in psychological terms and builds the so-called “Maslow's pyramid”, that shows human needs in a more complete way: it means that the development is not the result of only basic economic support, but should also take the effort on overall promotion of the human person, which obviously needs to eat and work, but this is only the first step – effectively basic – of the stairs. Development is reached only when we arrive at the top of the stairs, where we find dreams, aspirations and emotions that ask to be answered too. There is no development without answers to human needs.

A second author we can refer to is Paulo Freire. Much could be said about his work. To remain in the field that concerns us more closely, we can remember pedagogic premises that build an itinerary of thought based on the consonance between research and action, and between theory and practice. That is the so called «praxis». In his view, the theory has positive effects only if it is transformed into a praxis of democratic liberation: and this is “development” [3]. According to him, it concerns primarily the relationship between teachers and students, but more generally relations of power. According to Freire, development is the construction of new power relations that build peace through liberation from oppression; therefore, it is not conceivable a development cooperation which does not start from similar premises and is essentially based on an orthopraxis of peace.

Finally, we can look at Manfred Max-Neef. He is a Chilean economist of European origin, which insists on the idea of human development from below. His thesis is not well known in the West, but very well known among the Andean communities, who consider his thought as a fundamental reference point. The photocopies of his work already widely circulated turned in the Andes long before they were published [4]. The Max-Neef idea of development moves from an economic perspective, but in the background remains the political theme that focus on the development of local communities. This is possible only if international aids are decided with autochthonous population, and give them the skills to build their own development, according to their goals and not to the donors one.

The attention to these three different but converging lines of thought allows us to argue for the importance of human development in the practice of international cooperation, especially if we imagine international development cooperation as a peace-building factor.

These reflections can impact also in institutional terms. At first we can mention the importance assumed by the institution of the United Nations and in particular by the adoption of the Charter, that for the first time in human history imposes the prohibition of war and of its threat in the field of international relations. So that the wars - which still exist - should be always placed in the field of “exceptions to the rule”.

The profound insight of the *need for peace* by the tragic end of the Second World War impacted on the institutional history too, starting a discussion on “Culture of Peace”. These are mostly symbolic cues, but not non-existent, which link peace-building issue to human rights protections. It is mentioned both in the Charter of the United Nations and in other documents among which crucially the founding document of UNESCO, the specialized agency of the United Nations for education, science and culture organization, which motto is “Building peace in the mind of men and women”. In fact, the latter states as a premise that “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be built”. The overall activities of this Agency must therefore be observed from this specific point of view, as it is an overarching objective.

In this context particular attention should be paid to the Sevilla Statement of 1986. That was produced at a conference of scholars (meeting in Seville in May 1986), which consecrated the scientific idea that violence, and war, are cultural products: such as they can be defeated by cultural actions. The proponents of that conference was Federico

Mayor Zaragoza, a Spanish biochemist, at that moment Director-General of UNESCO from 1987 to 1999, who gave a strong impetus to the peace policies of this organization, especially according to nonviolence as an hard item linked to peace- building policies [5]. So UNESCO started a new program where Culture of Peace and Non-Violence are as two legs. Walking forward the future is not possible if one of them lack.

In few words, Culture of Peace and Non-Violence is assumed as a complex commitment to peace-building, mediation, conflict prevention and management, peace education, education for non-violence, tolerance, acceptance, mutual respect, intercultural and interfaith dialogue and reconciliation. It is a conceptual as well as a normative (*soft-law*) framework envisaged to inspire thoughts and actions of everyone. Therefore, it requires cognitive as well as the emotional abilities to grapple with our own situation in a rapidly changing world as well as with the emerging world society. This aim does not entail mere factual knowledge, but also the broadening of our consciousness and the willingness to develop a new awareness, a new way of being in this world, a new “mental mapping” (the above mentioned change of paradigm).

As stated by the former UNESCO Director-General, “Peace is more than the absence of war, it is living together with our differences – of sex, race, language, religion or culture – while furthering universal respect for justice and human rights on which such coexistence depends”. Therefore, peace should never be taken for granted. It is an on-going process, a long-term goal, which requires constant engineering, vigilance and active participation by all individuals. It is a choice to be made on each situation, an everyday life decision. The culture of peace continuously brings new challenges prompting us to reconsider the fundamental principles of humanity by highlighting what binds cultures and societies to each other and from within. Since what unites us is deeper than what separates us, there is a true ethic of living together that is taking shape in the culture of peace and non-violence process.

With a view to achieve the following expectations: a) fundamental principles of peace universally shared to be appropriated by different cultures, thanks to a genuine dialogue and mainstreamed into public policies; b) tension between universality and particularism, cultural identities and citizenship in a globalized world analyzed and a better understood; c) everyday peace to be conceived as an everyday living experience, not only in periods of conflict, but also in ordinary times.

These institutional tensions have led UNESCO to adopt in 1997 a program called *Towards a Culture of Peace Programme*. It is now difficult to find online the original documents, that the UNESCO itself, in its own dossier of information CAB-99/Ws/4) summarizes as follows:

- the notion of “Culture of Peace” means that peace is much more than the mere “absence of war”. Peace is a set of values, attitudes and behaviours that promote peaceful conflict management and the demand for mutual understanding.
- Peace is the only way to live together. The term “Culture of Peace” presumes that peace is a way of doing, being, living that can be taught, developed and implemented.
- “Culture of peace” is “Peace in Action”. A long-term process that requires a transformation of both the institutional practices of as well as the individual patterns of behaviour.
- Finally, to survive and get involved with these values, a “Culture of peace” requires non-violence, tolerance, solidarity.
- The idea of peace as a consensus is sometimes misinterpreted as absence of conflict, or as a process of social approval. In contrast, to achieve mutual understanding we must admit the differences, such as sex, race, language, religion, culture. The question of mutual understanding requires the recognition of diversity.
- The coexistence of diversity cultivates values of peace, which includes, respect for others, tolerance, solidarity and openness to non-violence.

These points of view - now institutionalized - have produced, among other things, the UN Resolution 5215 of 1997, which proclaimed 2000 the “International Year of the Culture of Peace”; UN Resolution 5325 of 1998, which declared the “International Decade for the Promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010)” (united to other useful documents, simply on-line available).

The UNESCO has further expanded its work in this area by proposing the idea that peace is the fruit of peace , as stated in The New Programme of Action on Culture of Peace and Non-violence, which “implies two essential approaches: a) to rethink the dividends of cultural diversity, as benefits of a continuous exchange between cultures; b) to promote the principle of learning to live together, the challenging Art of Unity-in-Diversity conducive to a lasting conviviality pursuing these three Main Goals: i) to develop a new political, conceptual and programmatic approach *in favour* of a strong commitment by States and civil society to nurture “everyday peace” involving women and youth (i.e. through ICTs and social media); ii) to improve the world’s global understanding and deconstruct preconceived ideas by placing emphasis on the future as a humanistic aspiration (i.e. by establishing guidelines for a global curriculum on shared values); iii) To promote a global movement in favour of the ideals and practice of a culture of peace and non-violence with emphasis on youth civic engagement and democratic participation (i.e. by creating “hubs of peace”). Looking at the complete Programme of Action of the Intersectoral Platform for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence (including the Platform’s objectives, strategy and modalities, expected results and partners), we can find some fundamental resources, a selected bibliography and a presentation of its Main areas of Action and Flagship activities.

Taken all together, these Resolutions and activities propose a proactive dimension of the culture of peace as an institutional commitment of the States, which should improve their institutional and governmental efforts for the international development cooperation looking at “Culture of Peace” as a key. That is quite different from the above mentioned economic approach. Peace is a basic human need; international development cooperation must assume peace-building as its own goal, and according to this issue, international development cooperation could become a formidable peace-building tool.

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DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION, PEACE STUDIES AND ASYMMETRIC CONFLICTS

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ABSTRACT

The connection between economic development and peace has been widely studied. It is commonly held that, at least over the long-term, development cooperation and international aid can contribute to alleviate the root causes of conflicts and help to develop institutions capable of managing and resolving disputes in a peaceful way. Although it is true that in many intrastate violent conflicts improving the economic situation may provide incentives in avoiding violence, and also may strengthen institutions capable of curbing violence and managing the conflict, this is not always the case. Actually, international aid becomes part of the context in which it is provided, and, hence, its impact is hardly completely neutral and there might be cases in which it reinforces or prolongs the conflict. This is, for instance, the case of structurally asymmetric conflicts, where the same structure of the relations among the parts is at the root of the conflict. In cases of this type economic growth per se does not change the pattern of unbalanced power relations. Moreover, an intervention which pretends to be impartial and neutral may in effect result in reinforcing the status quo and hence the unbalance of power among the parts. Tenets of Peace Studies can provide international aid agencies and NGO's with the analytical tools which are needed to understand the conflict situation in which they operate and to devise more effective and appropriate interventions. The role of language and discourse in shaping the image aid workers have of the context in which they operate, and, henceforth, in structuring the type of intervention will also be discussed.

INTRODUCTION

A social or political conflict, whether it is a non violent or a violent one, is always a complex system, where complexity stems from many different and sometimes unrelated elements. There are the parties involved, most often much more than two, with an intricate web of relations connecting them. Correspondingly quite often the objectives are multiple and diverse, some even hidden, not defined once and for all, and evolving over time. Moreover, each conflict does not arise in a vacuum, but in a context, local, regional, or international, a context that may be changing over time with often unforeseen effects on the conflict's structure and parties [1]. "When international assistance is given [...], it becomes a part of that context and thus also of the conflict [and hence it is rarely completely neutral. It may either exacerbate and prolong the conflict or strengthen the people's capacity to find peaceful paths to conflict solution:] in some ways it worsens the conflict, and in others it supports disengagement. But in all cases aid given during conflict cannot remain separate from that conflict" [2]. Not only the intervention is not neutral and changes the situation in the field, but the type of conflict shapes the intervention itself, the way it is conceived and designed and the way the aid workers behave. Actually, the intervention is shaped more by the way the conflict is perceived, or even better by the image of the conflict we have, than by the conflict itself. Interestingly, the actual conflict and its image may be quite far one from the other. In part this is unavoidable since there is no way to know the reality independent of our mental models and our culture. From this point of view the language and discourse play a fundamental role, a role which is discussed in the last part of the paper.

Clearly the effects of international cooperation and development aid on conflicts differ depending on the type of conflict and on the context. In the following, three different cases are discussed: i) the case in which there is the potential for social, political or economic conflict; ii) the case of internecine or civil war; iii) the case of asymmetric conflicts.

In all these cases we seek to show that disregarding the systemic complexity of the reality in which we operate may often lead to unintended consequences.

NONVIOLENT SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMICAL CONFLICTS

Conflict is a polysemic term which is used to define completely different realities. In many cases conflict plays a positive role since it is through conflict that society changes and that development occurs. Also in cases like these the positive effects of cooperation and aid are not assured. In fact, cooperation and external aid may foster changes in the direction of a more peaceful and just society, but they may also lead to the outbreak of a latent conflict and in some

cases also to the onset of a violent confrontation. Two real life examples are provided next.

One of the authors, in occasion of a meeting with representatives of popular movements in a large town in North East Brazil, has been reported a case which in some sense can be considered as paradigmatic. In that town, a strong popular movement (*movimento dos moradores*) had arisen among the inhabitants of a large *favela*, with the objective to obtain official recognition from the municipality. The struggle had been quite successful: the *favela* had been recognised as a regular neighbourhood, obtaining a connection to water, sewage and transportation systems, street pavements and schools. Still, being a very poor neighbourhood, the *movimento dos moradores* was very active trying to further improve the life conditions of the inhabitants. In occasion of a visit to the neighbourhood, the representative of a medium size Italian NGO was impressed by the results obtained and by the large number of problems which still remained to be addressed. Thinking of setting up a cooperation project he asked which were the most urgent needs they had. As response he got a list of items for a total amount correspondent to about today's 15,000 euros, an amount considered too small for a project to be presented to a national or international funding agency. Thus, the NGO set up a project for the equivalent of over 350,000 euros. Although what arrived there, due to the NGO overhead, was only about half of that amount, it was enough to nurture conflicts. Different groups within the larger *movimento* started quarrelling on how to allocate the unexpected money, or, better, to claim larger shares of it. It appears that the Italian NGO involved had completely disregarded the inherent complexity of the situation, by which there was not a unique actor, the *movimento*, but many sub-actors, with different objectives and/or priorities, connected by a complex web of relations. This case is also an example of the common held wrong belief that 'more' (350,000 euros), if not better, is at least not worse than 'less' (15,000 euros).

Sometimes it may happen that in situations of strong social conflict development aid has the unwanted and unforeseen effect to strengthen the conflict itself, eventually leading it to the onset of violence. A case of this type has been studied by Pallottino [3] with reference to the Ethiopian Southern Lowlands. The Ethiopian Southern Lowlands are inhabited by several pastoral ethnic groups, the Borana/Oromo, cattle breeders, and different smaller Somali ethnic groups breeding mainly camels. The area is affected by a deep crisis which can be explained by focusing on different interrelated aspects: a crisis of the traditional production systems; an ecological crisis due to the interaction between human activities and a fragile environment; a social and political crisis with weakening effects on the traditional self-help and welfare mechanisms.

As it too often happens, the way a situation is described has a 'normative' value in shaping the interventions. In this case the dominant narrative was that at the root of the crisis were the nomadism itself. Pastoralist "nomads are poor and politically unstable, and that is the effect of their nomadism, which in turn is the consequence of the harsh environmental conditions in which they live. The demographic growth rate will lead to an excessive pressure on the available resources, with a further deterioration of the living conditions, an escalation of the conflicts and a growing depletion of the environment." The same definition of the problem contains the solution: "an intensification of the production systems, which implies a process of progressive sedentarization" [3]. And indeed sedentarization has been largely the goal of both the central government (with also the aim of exercising a stricter control on the population) and the international aid and cooperation actors. As result of this policy not only the living conditions of the population has steadily deteriorated, but also the overall level of conflict has been increasing. In addition, some of the international aid and cooperation workers have played the role of objective accomplices of the government's effort to tighten the control over the population.

Violent ethnic conflicts and civil wars

In the contemporary world, which according to some analysts can be defined by the term *neo-medievalism* [4], there are many cases of cooperation operating in areas characterized by violent ethnical conflicts or civil wars. This is, for instance, the focus of the *Local Capacities for Peace (LCP)* Project, launched in 1994 to answer the question: "How may aid be provided in conflict settings in ways that, rather than feeding into and exacerbating the conflict, help local people disengage from the violence that surrounds them and begin to develop alternative systems for addressing the problems that underlie the conflict?"¹. Working with agencies providing aid in conflict situations, the *LCP* Project has tried to understand the ways through which aid interacts with conflict, singling out two main interaction media: *resource transfer* and *implicit ethical messages*.

Resource Transfer

International aid always involves the transfer of resources of some kind, whether hard (money, food, instrumental goods, medicinals, ...) or soft (training, capacity building, ...). Experience shows that outside resources introduced into a resource-scarce environment, where people are in conflict with each other, become a part of the conflict: people in conflict will attempt to control and use them to support their side and to weaken the other. The types of resource transfers and their effects are many and diverse. A quite frequent case (*allocation effects*) is when warriors stole aid goods or exact a kind of fee in goods or money to allow the delivery of the goods. Such goods are then used to support the war effort either directly, using them, or indirectly, selling them in order to raise money to buy weapons. In these cases the final effect is to prolong the conflict. Another relevant and frequent effect (*market effect*) is the distortion in

¹ www.donoharm.info, accessed July 2013.

the market for goods and labour caused by the aid itself and also by the way the aid agencies operate, with the risk of enriching war-related activities and people, so further reinforcing the war economy. In some cases there are also so called *distribution effects*: depending on the groups which are the target of the aid, and on their position with respect to the conflict, aid can either reinforce and exacerbate the conflict or help reducing the conflict level. Aid agencies are well aware of the risk that aid may be used directly for war activities, but sometimes they disregard the *substitution effects* by which, for instance, aid is substituted for resources that would have been used to meet civilian needs, and, hence, can now be used in support of war. Similarly, the fact that aid agencies assume responsibility for civilian survival in a conflict area allows the warring parties to concentrate their efforts on warfare. All these are cases in which the aid, via substitution, ends breeding the conflict. Finally there are the so called *legitimization effects*, by which, legitimizing some people at detriment of others, aids can support either those people that pursue war, or those that try to move towards peace.

Implicit Ethical Message

As observed by the LCP Project, while carrying the explicit message of caring for the needy, aid does also transfer some implicit messages. The aid workers are often unaware of that, but their behaviour cannot avoid delivering messages. When, and this is a quite frequent case, aid agencies hire armed guards to protect their activities, they deliver the implicit message that security and safety derive from weapons. At the same time, they legitimate the armed people that provide security, and who may be linked to one or the other of the conflicting parties. Here, the message is that arms mean power. It is not rare the case that the behaviour of aid agencies and NGO on the field be characterized by mistrust, competition and rivalries rather than by reciprocal cooperation. That delivers the idea that we do not have to respect or work with people we do not like, and that competition is an option not less acceptable than cooperation. There are cases in which aid workers use the goods and support systems provided as aid to people who suffer for their own pleasures and purposes. This is, for instance, the case when they take the vehicle to the mountains for a weekend holiday even though petrol is scarce. The message here is that if one has control over resources, he/she is allowed to use them for personal benefit without being accountable to anybody. When the aid agencies' plans in case of danger call for the evacuation of expatriate staff but not for the care of local staff, the message is that some lives are more valuable than other. When field-based aid staff disclaim responsibility for the impacts of their aid programmes, blaming others, the headquarters, the donors, or the local warlords, then the message received is that individuals in complex circumstances do not have to take responsibility for what they do or how they do it. When aid workers, nervous about conflict and worried for their own safety, approach every situation with suspicions and belligerence, or with an attitude of dehumanization of one side in a war, the message they deliver is one which risks to reinforce the modes and moods of warfare rather than helping to find an even-handed way to respond to those on all sides who seek and want peace.²

ASYMMETRIC CONFLICTS

A case which deserves to be treated separately is the case of structurally asymmetric conflicts, that is of those conflicts whose "root causes [...] lie in the structure of relationship within which the parties operate" [5]. Conflicts of this type are, for instance, the Palestinian conflict, the West Sahara one, and the land conflicts which can be found in Developing Countries. Unless the very structure which is at the root of the conflict is not transformed, no stable peaceful solution can be reached, and what too often happens is that international aid, not addressing this point, ends up strengthening this structure, and hence making the conflict more difficult to end. While cooperation interventions which maintain the *status quo* in a symmetric conflict may do no harm, in a structurally asymmetric conflict they end always supporting the stronger part and hence taking a side in spite of the declared neutrality.

An interesting example is provided by the Palestinian agriculture. In spite of it being traditionally the most important sector in the Palestinian economy, agriculture is of little interest to international cooperation and aid. This sector is "largely neglected by donors, also mainly because it touched upon the issues of land and water use" [6]. In fact, much agricultural land falls within area C, the area (about 60% of the West Bank) under full Israeli control, which is the object of a creeping annexation process [7]. Any relevant project in agriculture would not be in accordance with Israeli territorial and strategic resource considerations and hence international aid agencies choose to avoid this sector for their projects. In contrast, it appears to be much easier to mobilize resources in the area of water and sanitation. According to Le More, this sector attracted roughly 10% of the total donor disbursement to West Bank and Gaza between 1994 and mid-1999. The interest for the water sector stems from the widespread recognition that it is a sector of critical economic and social importance, mainly considering that Palestinian water resources are extremely limited. The point which is too often disregarded is that, under the Oslo agreements, 82% of the West Bank ground water resources are allocated to Israel. Thus, although it is true that by international standards the region's water resources are limited and quite depleted, the real issue is that they are over-exploited by the Israelis, who consume much more water than the Palestinian, in particular for agricultural purposes. "While in Gaza and West Bank per capita water consumption is respectively around 60 and 80 litres per day, daily per capita water consumption reaches about 235 litres

² For a discussion on all these issues we refer to M. B. Anderson [2].

in Israel, and 400 litres in Israeli settlements” [6]. The problem is that international aid agencies avoid addressing or denouncing this situation out of concern that Israel will put more obstacles to their activity in the PoT (Palestinian occupied Territories) than those they already encounter. “Donors have been generally unwilling to challenge even the most unreasonable Israeli restrictions and obstacles, which have delayed the implementation of many crucial water projects. Rather, international donors chose to deal with the growing restrictions, by diverting significant funds from water supply and sanitation development to short-term projects, such as repairing damage caused by Israeli military attacks, or providing tankered water (at several times the cost) and other humanitarian relief to the Palestinian population” [8].

Again the final result is not only that the status quo is unchallenged, but in fact it is strengthened. Different, but with significant similarities, it is what happens with the international aid to the Sahrawi people. Like in Palestine, the aid provided by donors appears to be a substitute for direct action in the direction of the conflict solution, direct action which would create problems with the Morocco government. The focus on Humanitarian aid has created a situation of strong dependency, and most likely has contributed to the conflict chronicization, stabilizing the status quo.³

Discourse and language

To analyse language and discourse is crucially important when devising, planning and/or implementing a development cooperation's intervention, especially in crisis situations. In fact, to analyse language and the ways in which certain situations, events, people are represented by different people in different genres (e.g. media or governmental speeches) can help to understand structural relations of power, to generate a public and intellectual space for critique, to speak and write of the subaltern voices and unsaid stories that have historically been silenced, as well as to break certain mechanisms of escalation and prevent degeneration into overt violence.

In situations of development cooperation's operations taking place in violent contexts, to focus on language and discourse can also help in devising more sustainable interventions for the benefit of the highest number of people and in decreasing the level of conflictuality among factions. For what concerns development cooperation's projects in post-conflict transitions, the main long term goal of development cooperation is to assist recipient countries in building legitimate and effective political, economic and legal institutions. However, often during peace processes, violence actually increases. At the same time, development cooperation agencies can unintentionally put in place interventions that are actually more divisive than unifying. Thus, in the context of development cooperation, discourse and language acquire a relevant importance, an importance that is nevertheless only rarely acknowledged. In the field, development cooperation's agencies and aid-workers often enter in dynamics they fail to fully grasp and sometimes unintentionally end up reproducing asymmetries of power or even they create or exacerbate tensions among the local population. In this context, the way in which the context of intervention of development projects is framed is crucial. As we already mentioned before, referring to the case of the Ethiopian Southern Lowlands, the representation of the situation and the explanation given as the cause of the crisis – nomadism – had the effect of planning and implementing projects aimed at the promotion of sedentarization, with the unforeseen and unintended consequence that the conflict actually escalated.

In other cases, development cooperation projects may unintentionally legitimise some people and some actions, while at the same time de-legitimising others. The case of children distance adoptions is paradigmatic of that. By choosing one child to be helped among many in situations of deprivation and representing him/her as the poorest among poor, may have the result of communities becoming more divisive and prone to violent conflicts. This has happened for instance in the Northern province of Burkina-Faso, Namantenga, where previously peaceful villages quickly became overtly violent for the inequality in the distribution of aid. The non-verbal language is similarly important to focus on. For instance, if an organisation in order to bring aid implicitly accepts the terms of war by negotiating passage with warring parties or it hires guards to protect the delivery, it can give the idea of bestowing legitimacy on warriors (we need arms to bring aid) and that international staff has a higher value (because it deserves to be escorted) than local people. These can reinforce animosity locally. In a different context in Morocco, development projects oriented to women promotion, although extremely important and necessary, have in some cases, unintentionally, ended up for further disempowering women. In fact, for the fact that they were represented as powerless, and in need of help in order to raise international aid, they felt both ‘used’ and deprived of any agency, with the result that often their situation was actually worst than before.

At the practical level, ways to put at the forefront the usually marginalised attention to language and discourse could include the following:

- to focus more on the study of the context and on the narratives around it;
- to do surveys and interviews about the perceptions of the situation and the adequacy of the planned intervention, and to involve many stakeholders as to have proper representation of the views of the entire community;
- to devise common spaces in which people can share their opinions and feelings about the interventions, as ways of building dialogue for common interests, starting with the right of life.

³ A discussion on the effects of Humanitarian aids to the Sahrawi people can be found in <http://www.globalaffairs.es/en/humanitarian-aid-for-the-sahrawi-people-the-impact-and-limitations-of-aid-policies-for-refugees/>.

CONCLUSIONS

It is widely assumed, even in the academic literature on the topic, that development cooperation and internal aid are designed to help putting into place those conditions necessary to sustainable development and positive peace. These interventions are also largely assumed to help managing and resolving crisis situations in peaceful ways. However, despite the good intentions, this not always happens in the field.

As we have shown in the paper, development cooperation's projects are part of the context in which it is provided, and, hence, their impact is hardly completely neutral and there might be cases in which it reinforces or prolongs the conflict. In particular, in the case of structurally asymmetric conflicts, where the same structure of the relations among the parts is at the root of the conflict, an intervention which pretends to be impartial and neutral may in effect result in reinforcing the status quo and hence the unbalance of power among the parts. Finally, it has also been stressed that, in the contest of development cooperation, decoding language and discourse becomes extremely important for understanding perceptions of aid and ways to improve its effectiveness, to identify real needs, as well as to address ways of preventing escalation into violence. As such, to deconstruct commonsensical and 'natural' representations of events, people and situations goes in the direction of building more peaceful social interactions and societies or, in other words, a more sustainable peace.

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WHY DOES INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION NEED THE CONTRIBUTION OF PEACE STUDIES? AND WHY IS PEACE RESEARCH CURRENTLY SO MARGINAL IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION?

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ABSTRACT

Peace and human security have strongly emerged as a global concern in the last years, as the post-cold war scenario made large scale confrontation between superpowers less likely. The dream of a peaceful world after 1989 animated the debate around the efforts towards the identification of a shared global development perspective. However after the 9/11, an increasingly complex scenario, where the International Development Cooperation (IDC) was confronted with new challenges and with fragmented and asymmetric conflicts, was hardly taken into account: the development rhetoric went on stressing the need for clearly identifiable outcomes in terms of global development objectives, just as if an established global consensus could be considered an uncontested element of the world order. Humanitarian circles followed the same path, interpreting the response to conflicts in terms of objectively identifiable needs that had to be urgently responded to only thanks to the establishment of a zone of humanitarian sovereignty. Peace studies and peace research, as redefined in the last decade of the 20th Century, look at the factors that make societies prone to conflict, in the attempt of developing a positive approach to the prevention of war, terrorism and violation of human rights. Their approach need to be more transformative than linear, and more careful to the quality of processes than to the quantity of outcomes; in this context, the micro-politics of social change is not seen as the constraining factor that hampers or slows down the reaching of stated objectives, but precisely as the area where a mediation between different and sometimes conflicting interests has to be found. While, following the same lines, many theorists and practitioners would support the idea that a more negotiated approach to social change is needed in order to radically reform IDC, there are reasons why the international community seems to be less receptive to these instances.

INTRODUCTION

It is sort of a paradox that a stronger concern for peace and security emerged in the public debate after the 9/11, just as the Millennium Declaration adopted by the General Assembly of the UN, and the subsequent elaboration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), boosted a new hope for a poverty-free world. The event that redefined the notion of peace and conflict in the contemporary world will be remembered along with the largest convergence on global development: 9/11 and MDGs have attracted most of the attention of decision makers during the first decade of the new millennium, characterizing the perception of a global perspective at all levels, and competing for the resources made available within IDC system. The question about the vision for a better planet for all is however an open question today, perhaps more than what it used to be at the beginning of the century. After a decade in which the most impressive economic and social crisis since the end of WWII has ravaged the planet, the international community at the eve of 2015 (the stated deadline for the MDGs) is left with an empty space in terms of shared global perspectives, and with the need for establishing a consensus about the direction to be taken in the next few years. The 'fear of the vacuum' [1] [2] can be a powerful incentive in adopting a short-sighted compromise; or the opportunity for taking into account the contradictions of the contemporary world and to elaborate a creative solution.

Neglected and marginalised by the time MDGs were initially elaborated [3], issues related to peace and conflict are today on stage more than ever. If until 1989 conflict could be understood and somehow minimised as an unavoidable effect of the confrontation between the West and the East, and after that the last decade of the XX century it could still be seen as a consequence of the fall of the wall, the Twin Towers made crystal clear that a new era of conflict was uprising. Nor the post cold war scenario ended up in a decrease of conflict at global level, as it was the hope of many: as Themner and Wallenstein [4] confirm, with the exception of the rise in the mid-nineties (mostly due to the conflicts related to the dissolution of Soviet Union), the number of conflicts in the World remained constant in the last 15 years, even slightly increasing for what the 'minor' conflicts are concerned. Some observers [5] find the situation of the world of today worst than 20 years ago, as the constant rise of the share of the humanitarian aid on the total of the

international aid seem to witness¹.

It is not the ambition of this paper to analyze the key elements of the conflicts and the tensions that feature the world of today. Given the increasingly acknowledged nexus between peace and development, the objective that we will pursue is rather that of highlighting the importance of cross-cutting fields of research such as development and peace studies in reflecting the specific challenges of today's world. These two areas of study have developed quite independently; yet, they look at contiguous and partially overlapping areas of concern. It can therefore be assumed that they could contribute to better understand contemporary world, by introducing explanatory frameworks and by proposing renewed normative paradigms, helping to clarify the implications of global efforts in leading and directing social, economic and politic transformations.

In spite of potential complementarities however, development studies and peace studies, seem to evolve on the base of rather different and possibly irreconcilable perspectives. The relation between the two fields of study is bound to their capacity of progressively integrating new concerns, while escaping from the constraint of an increasingly 'theory binding' practice.

THOUGHTS ON DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

During the seventies and the eighties the contradictions in international cooperation systems seemed to lead to a deep rethinking of development concepts. This rethinking was parallel to important changes in the international economy as well as in the geo-political situation: the renewed instability in the international monetary and financial system, the oil crisis, the debt crisis were some of the elements that led to long period of uncontested economic orthodoxy, which translated in the era of structural adjustment. The human and the social costs of this approach led to some degree of rethinking, while the need for a more holistic approach to development was paving the way for the introduction of new concepts such as "participation" or "multi-faceted poverty" into the mainstream approach. Human development approach based on the seminal contribution of Amartya Sen contributed a great deal to a more complete understanding of what the idea of development would entail; the debate about global public goods raised new concerns that needed to be tackled at supra-national level along with a new consciousness about the limits of the earth's resources. The iron curtain contributed reminding that alternative pathways to development could be (more or less successfully) undertaken, and a lively critical debate explored and highlighted different views on the patterns societies could assume, even though a relatively uncontested neo-liberal orthodoxy dominated the 'official' development system.

A certain visible disenchantment about the effectiveness of IDC, and about contradictions and tensions arising in the theoretical debate of DS was counterbalanced by the events of 1989, which fostered a wave of enthusiasm for a renewed global engagement; the debate seemed then much concentrated on "what to do", through the big thematic summits that took place all along the decade. The net effect was to considerably boost the hopes for a global perspective on development, while loading an increased amount of responsibilities on the shoulders of the IDC system, although without really tackling the issue of how the additional costs would be covered. The whole process found a synthesis with the Millennium Declaration, in the year 2000, with what appears a sort of technocratic summary distilled into the elaboration of the Millennium Development Goals. In the last decade of the Century, critical voices were still able to highlight paradoxes and contradictions at theoretical level [6], but not really to grow into a critical mass for alternative. In a world where no real and radical alternative seemed possible, all the thoughts seemed to converge towards a globally shared perspective, where also otherwise alternative and potentially subversive visions find their place, and alternative development had become "... less distinct conventional development discourse and practice, since alternatives have been absorbed into mainstream development" [7]. In such a situation, there is no incentive in reflecting "around" the frameworks, which are assumed as given and unchallenged; the reflection takes place "within" frameworks. The outcome is an increasing attitude of Development Studies (DS) of being functional to IDC system (or rather to a wider 'policy related' world): how to implement policies; how to elaborate better policies towards shared objectives; or how to root new (or partially new) elements into the frameworks that serve as base for policy elaboration: as some scholars have noted [8], the horizon of DS seems increasingly functional to policy, perhaps at the expense of some general look at the issues raised.

The close link between the theoretical reflection and the practice on which this reflection is based and to which it is supposed to contribute, opens another problem, as research on development issues is increasingly linked to institutions directly involved in development, or mandated by them. As Leach and Mearns ([9]:31) remark, "...all knowledge is conditional, in the sense that it reflects the institutional context in which it is produced." Under this point of view, it is unavoidable that knowledge legitimises practice rather than orientating it, with an active engagement of development actors "... devot[ing] their energies to maintaining coherent representations regardless of events" ([10]:2). In practical terms, it is not matter of postulating the impossibility of independent research, but to seriously address the issues raised by mandates, research priorities, clearances, networks, paradigms, networks. But if the above issues are not raised, a call for 'more theory in the practice' may unexpectedly result into a more 'practice-constrained' theory, and particularly so in the case of research in situation of (potential or actual) conflict were the social networks and the access to information are more segmented than usual.

¹ Although this increase can be interpreted also in a different way, as it will be noted later.

The elaboration that took place along the 1990s, ended up pushing issues related to rights and political representation in a rather marginal position with respect to the new MDG framework [11], while the latter developed a much stronger focus on a sort of global welfare standard. But in the ambition of accommodating rather factual objectives within a wider definition of “how” human societies should evolve regardless of their diversities, MDGs had - for the first time in the era of development, and as the logical conclusion of a much longer process – established the ground for a great perspective, somehow a-cultural and non-ethnocentric in nature, in the sense discussed by Latour [12]. The identification of common benchmarks and indicators play a crucial role in establishing “what” the reality is, and how it has to be looked at, the uncontested existence of “facts” being the key assumption on which the modernity is built. This takes place just at the time that the 9/11 was disclosing the breaking up of the fundamental unity within which the world relations and interactions (including conflicts and wars) had been accommodated until then. Under this perspective, MDGs may be seen as the perfect product of the contemporary development theory; that finds its birth precisely at the time that the “modern” understanding of the world falls apart: because of the contradictions entailed within its own way of explaining (or not explaining) social facts; but even more because of the emergence of a new radical juxtaposition (real or perceived) between different “worlds”; not a juxtapositions between allegedly alternative civilisations, but in the breaking up of a no more uncontested unity.

THOUGHTS ON PEACE STUDIES AND PEACE RESEARCH

Peace Studies and Peace Research (PSPR) in the last decade of the 20th century enjoyed some kind of revamping [13] as, after the downfall of the fear for a nuclear confrontation, new elements were included in their agenda: the conditions under which a peaceful coexistence within the human societies could be pursued became a key focus to look at for a world free from violence of any sort. This transformation was consistent with a renewed (although not uncontested)² understanding of “positive peace”, which was tackling the challenges of a deeply transformed world, where conflict had to be considered as somehow part of the global game. If tensions are unavoidable, much less unavoidable are their consequences in terms of violence and open conflict: it is on the different ways these tensions can evolve, as well as on the pre-conditions of the processes leading to a more peaceful coexistence, that the concerns of a renewed agenda of PSPR were raised.

Definitions of PSRS based on the notions of violence and conflict play a key role in defining the boundaries of this interdisciplinary field. Still, the issue of how these notions are connected to peace needs still needs to be clarified, in the seek for a better definition of what, in the contemporary world, would be needed for a reflection on “positive peace”. Among the concepts that would probably need to be discussed, there are meanings of conflict and violence under a perspective that do not only encompasses the physical dimension: although physical violence and open violent conflict is and should continue being a main concern in PSPR, the notion of structural [14] and cultural [15] violence introduced by Johan Galtung may help accounting for the situations where oppression doesn't follow (only) the path of direct physical violence; in the same context the contribution of Pierre Bourdieu about symbolic violence [16] may bring additional arguments to the perspective of widening up the scope of PRPS, connecting the idea of violence to a general theory about society.

The process of going beyond physical violence, and opening to a wider notion of positive peace, is not without obstacles. It is however an important step in connecting PSPR to a wider understanding of the social transformation processes. Positive peace, more than any other “development related” notion, is associated to the recognition of the subjectivity of the other, and to the processes needed for establishing the rules needed to manage the disagreement and the conflict, other than the oppression or the simple principle of authority. Within this perspective, frameworks are not given but have to be discussed; different stakeholders are not called to “participate” in a play that someone else has written; rather, different interests should be recognised, included, mediated. Such a position would open important areas of reflection on the way different systems of knowledge, power and value interact, and would accept the existence of discontinuities within and across communities and societies. Under this viewpoint, processes of social, economic, political transformation would not be forced into a teleologically consensual perspective [17]; on the contrary it would open a wide range of possibilities in managing differences and disagreements, and establishing the ground for a “pluriverse” [18] world (as opposed to a “globalised” one).

In such a perspective, the tension between the heterogeneity of the human societies and the need for a degree of universality stemming out of the shared belonging to humankind is not easily resolved; not as easily as it may happen with a set of traditional development objectives, which are assumed to be equally relevant for every woman and man on the earth. As a consequence, the heterogeneous representations of human societies and their transformation processes require to be made operational through a relatively complex translation, while the “welfarisation” of the objectives, well represented by the MDG process, assumes that the disagreement in the human societies is simply linked to the identification of the means through which common objectives are pursued. But, as Monni and Spaventa show well [19] the apparent neutrality of the indicators of the progress towards such kind of objectives hides an option for a pre-determined model of society, an interpretative paradigm that sets in technical terms what, on the contrary, should be the object of politically conscious choices.

² See Bartolucci [13] for a summary of the debates about “negative” and “positive” peace.

CONFLICT, DEVELOPMENT, PEACE

The fact that development and peace are strictly related is a widely shared opinion. No doubt that the countries in conflict are also those where the development objectives seem to be furthest to be reached and that, as also acknowledged by the UN, violence and fragility have become the largest obstacle to the MDGs [20]. However, if the connection is ascertained, much less clear is the direction of the causal link: in “what” peace is a precondition for development, as it is assumed by some [21]? Or, the other way round, it is development that has to be considered as a precondition for peace? The question that we should be tackling now therefore is: how does the current development mainstream relate to the issues of conflict and peace?

One common approach to this issue is that distilled into the claim “development that brings peace”: development, the possibility for a better life would necessarily decrease the conflict within and between societies. This approach evokes a wonderful landscape of pacific coexistence in the “land of plenty”. Two question, often unanswered in the world of development, deserve some discussion. Firstly, is the idea of “peace” so much shared across the different societies? It is not, as empiric culture-aware analysis highlights: peace can entail ‘respect and inclusion’; but also “control”, or “expansion” and also some degree of “oppression” for different minority social groups involved in a specific development arena [22]. If the notion of pacific coexistence needs to be at least negotiated, will the practice of development contribute to this negotiation or propose its own interpretation of what the notion of peace entails?

There is however a second issue that deserves to be raised when observing development processes taking place in practice: can this “land of plenty”, where the satisfaction of all the needs of all the needy, be pursued within a perspective where the situation of specific individuals will be improved without ever worsening the situation of anyone else? It is not the case: we may supply fresh water to a village, in order to improve health situation, just to realise that making available that precious resource in a context where the availability of water is regulated though complicated and refined social institutions, makes the level of conflict to increase afterwards; or we may support the claims of poor fishermen communities in a specific trait of a river, just to see a steep increase of conflict with the neighbouring country’s community, relying on the same fishing resources³. It is not only matter of confining this kind of outcomes as “need for better planning” (as it could be certainly argued from within development system). It is important to develop methodologies for “conflict sensitive” approaches [23], but we should be ready to recognize that any development intervention producing benefits for someone, is bound to redefine social stakes, to modify power, to produce (intended or unintended) “victims”.

The claim “development brings peace” looks more problematic than usually thought. But another issue needs to be raised: that of “humanitarianism”. Humanitarianism and development have contradictory relations, as on one side they consider themselves as strictly related, on the other side they claim to be anchored to very different perspectives: immediately saving human lives, and ensuring a shared long term development for all in the second case. How to connect emergency relief, rehabilitation and development? How to move from a case where the identification of the needs has to be fast, neutral and technical, to a case where the only thing that matters is what comes out from the negotiation among the social actors? The connection what may appear to be as different phases of intervention has taken various forms: the ‘continuum’ between emergency relief, rehabilitation and development; then the “contiguuum”; than again more recently the approach Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD). These are all conceptual constructions that do not seem to completely solve what at the end seems to be a radical alternative: is the “need” objectively (and urgently) identified though “expert knowledge”? Or is the expressed “need” nothing but the dynamic and temporary outcome of the interaction of the social actors, and more specifically of those whose voice can be expressed and heard in the process? Practitioners from humanitarian and development fields also often claim and reinforce the differences between the two groups, as if the two worlds were really somehow alternative.

But are they? According to Mark Duffield [8] there is not really a difference between humanitarianism and development: the latter is the natural other side of the coin, as part of an emerging system of global governance. According to this author, it was during the latter part of the 1980s that humanitarianism claimed its position as a universal right, above politics that “...caused wars and famines and, at the same time, created delays and bureaucratic difficulties that hampered the relief of suffering. ... Placing humanitarianism above politics, as a right in itself, became a compelling critique of the inhumanity of the rigidities of the Cold War and of its suffocating political etiquette. For this reason, apart from saving lives, a neutral humanitarianism appeared radical and progressive; at the same time, it had widespread public support.” [8: 77] The merging of humanitarianism and developmentalism took place during the first half of the 1990s, with the new institutional arrangements that allowed aid agencies to work in situations of ongoing conflict and to support civilians in war zones. The limited success of the operations led under this perspective brought about a major shift: from simple ‘saving lives’ to conflict resolution and post-war reconstruction. As Duffield puts it, “[i]nstead of revolving around humanitarian assistance per se, the new humanitarianism has invested developmental tools and initiatives with ameliorative, harmonising and transformational powers that, it is hoped, will reduce violent conflict and prevent its recurrence.” [8: 11] It is there that humanitarianism succeeds in expanding its perspective (and way of knowing the social facts) to development world, with a real project of “social engineering” that, after all is perfectly consistent with a view of a “harmonic development”: nothing different from introducing the “applied tool”

³ Both examples are drawn for the author’s experience : the first case summarizes the outcome of the evaluation of a water development project in the South of Ethiopia, where the author was involved; the second is a case from Guinea.

needed to bring this harmony in a world of disorderly transformation. The same kind of transition may be viewed in the recent success of Disaster Risk Reduction methods and approaches, aimed at building ‘resilient’ societies. But “resilient” to what kind of events? If the answer is “all of them”, then this approach is supposed to encompass elements to face earthquakes, floods, but also wars, conflicts, just as if the political choice of a society could be limited to a technical optimum, needed to make societies “resilient”; but insofar this technical optimum on preparedness touches “any” possible adverse event, it soon becomes an all encompassing prescription on how the society should be.

Of course, it is not matter of denying the importance of the way societies react to external shocks (as it was not matter of doubting about the importance of offering appropriate humanitarian assistance at needs). The point, in this context, is rather to show what kind of operational devices are generated within the development world in order to deal with the disorder brought in by conflict and violence, establishing a system of humanitarian governance [24] that has been observed in action in many areas of the planet. Interesting to say in all these debates, conflict appears as something of substantially “a-historical”: either the traditional “development industry” is assumed to bring peace regardless from the roots of the conflict itself; or in the humanitarianism and related development lines, the urgency of “saving lives” leaves very little room beyond anecdotic recognition of the root causes.

It should be however clear how problematic could be to derive peace building concerns directly from humanitarianism: the shared concern of ‘saving lives’ conceals important differences. Humanitarianism-related peacebuilding is bound to confine outside of its concerns all the elements related to the deeper roots of the conflict, and will operate with as if no political implications could be drawn from the assumed “neutrality” of humanitarian interventions. While the position of those who observe the conflict uniquely from the viewpoint of the victims is necessary, the point to be raised in whether a look on the whole situation where the humanitarian intervention takes place, may help avoiding those adverse effects on longer term peace prospects that have been documented by many observers [25]. Again, this kind of counter-effects are confined within “failures of planning and implementation”: no one doubts that that they could be minimized through a more careful analysis of the reality; the contradictions rooted in the assumptions behind the whole humanitarian / developmental framework are more often dismissed without much scrutiny.

PEACE AND CONFLICT IN THE POST-2015 DEBATE

Said in short, DS and IDC do not appear to have fully taken into account the issues related to conflict and violence. And to understand what possibilities are there for a new perspective about peace and conflict to be included in the debate, we should refer once again to the MDGs and post-MDGs processes, that represent the common ground for the elaboration of a vision for the future at global level. As Brück [3] reminds, none of the MDG actually refers to peace and security, yet no conflict-affected country has achieved MDGs. In the debate about future prospects, while recognizing the limitations of MDG in responding to issues related to peace and conflict, the latter appear in some cases just as a “sub-topic” of security related concern, or somewhere between sort of “preconditions” for the MDGs themselves to be attained [20], and an objective as such. The world leaders seems in search of a globally shared perspective: which is not as such something negative, as far as the pursuing of this homogeneity does not blur the diversities within a rhetoric that risks to be nowadays far less convincing than what it could have been thirteen years ago [26]. A “new narrative” for development is invoked. But no one dares leaving the old one aside.

Some attempts have been led for innovating the way issues related to peace and conflict may contribute to the formation of a global framework. In this wake, a more substantial contribution has been brought in by the initiative about the Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSG), that has aggregated the consensus of a more than forty countries around the Dili Declaration [34]. Saferworld [27] tries to summarize elements arising from the different pieces of policy analysis looking at peace and peacebuilding as a primary focus (including the already mentioned PSG framework), finding a number of elements on which all these peacebuilding frameworks agree. The elements that are widely recognized as being conducive to a peaceful society, are summarized as it follows:

- All social groups have access to decent livelihoods
- All states are able to manage revenues and perform core functions effectively and accountably
- All social groups can participate in the decisions that affect society
- All social groups have equal access to justice
- All social groups have access to fair, accountable social service delivery
- All social groups feel secure
- The international community is effectively addressing the external stresses that lead to conflict

In the perspective emerging from this kind of a synthesis there is a strong concern for equity: an issue unanimously recognised as absent from the MDGs perspective. Equity concerns are evoked with expressions that seem to recall dimensions of mediation, political participation, inclusion. A point that could be raised is about the theoretical implication of using a relatively undefined notion of ‘social group’ as primary holder of the rights here above mentioned (at the place of the individuals). Still one could doubt that the issues put forward by Saferworld could be expressed in terms of “objectives”. But in the current global debate , it looks like as if something could not be considered

“important” if it is not expressed in terms of an objective.

In the attempt of shading some light on the conditions within a society that are more often associated with a peaceful coexistence, mention should be done of the recent “Pillars of Peace Report” [28]. The report tries to isolate the positive factors which sustain and reinforce peaceful societies, basing on a complex statistical work, that ends up building an eight-part taxonomy which consists of:

- a well-functioning government;
- a sound business environment;
- an equitable distribution of resources;
- an acceptance of the rights of others;
- good relations with neighbours;
- free flow of information;
- a high level of human capital; and
- low levels of corruption.

Most of the issues highlighted would deserve some level of further clarification, which to some extent the report does; and clearly enough some of the concepts involved are sufficiently fuzzy to generate discussion. The merit of this taxonomy is the fact of being somehow de-linked from immediate policy objectives. The Pillars are based on existing data-sets, which may stimulate a reflection on what kind of data would be needed to refine further the analytical framework.

CONCLUSIONS

Let us now to summarize some elements to answer to the questions asked at the beginning of this paper. Why IDC needs the contribution of the PSPR? And why will this contribution be so difficult to accept? Some of the issues summarized above have tried to draw the attention on the fact that the marginal position of peace and conflict concerns may not be only because of the absence of a lobbying platform in the international *fora* that are reviewing the issue [29]. If we consider the four areas where Brück [3] recognises important knowledge gaps that PSPR should contribute addressing⁴, we see many issues that development studies have analysed in deep, both in technical and in institutional terms. In at least some of these areas there is perhaps room for the two interdisciplinary domains to learn cooperating. However there are some aspects that PSPR seem more prepared to look at than DS, for the simple reason that, in a way that can be more or less functional to the identification of policy option (and PSPR claim to a certain extent a sort of “militant” approach [13]), the object of PSPR is rather the whole society; while in IDC (and often in DS) the focus tends to be those externally induced transformation processes, sublimated into the intervention itself (be it defined in terms of projects, or programmes or policies), and more so as the DS develops in connection with IDC or policy systems.

Seen from the viewpoint of DS, the issue is to be more fully aware of the political implications of any initiative of IDC, and to try to de-link research efforts from the immediate needs of the latter while tightly keeping under observation the way policy an project induced changes interact with the social, economic, political environment. Or in other words, to be practical, to keep some degree of freedom when conducting research, in order to be able to keep an eye on the context, widening the scope of development research into the area of relevance, and relation to the context, as some scholars have tried to suggest [30]. PSPR may be more able to look at the whole picture of the social transformation, somehow re-composing the hiatus between IDC objectives described in narrow term and wider stakes that risk to remain in the shadow. This is what would be needed in order to avoid the “Maghreb/MDG paradox” : those countries that were considered excellent MDGs performers just immediately before seen the starting of the so called “Arab springs”. This attention to the context, beyond those aspects that are deemed functional for ‘development’ to take place, is based on the capacity of having a look on the whole, without losing key details because of the narrow focus we are constrained on, and recognizing what Zupi [2] calls the “complexity of the whole”. This requires the acknowledgement that the change is not “simple” in the sense of the “impact chain”: the inherent complexity of the change is something that requires a different thought on society, change, and also planning.

Looking at the interrelations between peace, conflict and social change, a specific contribution of PSPR can therefore be the conception of “conflict”, and an approach capable to address the need of transforming tensions and disputes within and between communities in something different than the violent confrontation: conflict not as something “temporarily perturbing” the landscape, but as something that requires understanding of its deeper roots, and its incorporation as an issue at stake. Introducing the “parties” and their different and perhaps irreconcilable stakes into the game would lead then towards a more profound transformation: a sort of “post-humanitarian consensus” precisely about the fact that consensus may not be there, at least at the beginning, and that it could possibly be built only if the areas of disagreement are explored, the rights are recognised, and the right mediation is found. Even if DS are based on

⁴ The drivers of insecurity, conflicts and fragility; trends in security, conflict and peace; the consequences of violent conflict and insecurity; interventions and institutions for security and peace.

the idea of a sort of mechanistic transformation, it is perhaps possible to introduce into it an element of constructivism, to say it with a post-modern conceptualization [12]: no more Needs to be addressed through and appropriately Optimal Technique identified by rationalist modernisers, but social priorities need to be negotiated by those that Latour calls “diplomats”. It is the same difference William Easterly [31] finds between planners and seekers, perhaps losing a bit of the “relational” element that the idea of “diplomat” embeds. This rather abstract idea could be expressed in much more practical terms: promoting for example “mediation and inclusion”, and going beyond mainstream participation, often conceived as a sort of token to be paid within completely predetermined policy frameworks; avoiding the “technical optimum trap”, and perhaps using the knowledge more in terms of highlighting the trade-offs every choice is bound to imply; allowing for the time needed for the processes to develop [32], instead of being constrained by the tight schedule of outputs and objectives.

IDC is in a deep crisis, which sometimes is expressed as a “resource crisis”, but that it is more a “representation crisis” [33]: it is the way through which IDC looks at the world that is not any more able to describe the reality. The “non self consciousness” about the reasons of this crisis, pushes most of the efforts of IDC industry towards operational performance rather than towards a better understanding of the world. Development scholars could raise the question of how useful is to remain so closely (and predominantly) linked to policy oriented approaches⁵. In one sense this closeness “justifies” the very same existence of DS, but paying a price in terms of institutional embeddedness of any knowledge produced. It is somehow a complete reframing of the way IDC understands the transformation of the societies, and its role within it. What is needed is a bit of “self-reflectivity” that DS, described in a bit too clear-cut manner in the previous paragraphs, have from time to time generated: so far not enough, perhaps, to radically transform attitudes of theorists and practitioners.

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DONORS' CONDITIONALITY IN CONFLICT SCENARIOS: THE DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRANT AID AGENCIES AND BENEFICIARIES

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ABSTRACT

Macrae [1: 170] states that external aid ability in conflict management/resolution is highly compromised because aid “remains an instrument of foreign policy, and therefore must conform to the analysis and priorities of individual donor governments, and multilateral organizations that play a political role, such as the United Nations”. This paper intends to show current reality of relationships between donors and beneficiaries - with a focus on the NGO sector, specific to conflict resolution efforts. It will briefly explore aspects of the relationships that can be improved in situations when a gap exists, as well as methods for addressing this imbalance in a way that is meaningful to peace work.

DONORS' CONDITIONALITY: OVERVIEW

Some years ago, I wanted to acquire some significant experience abroad, so I found myself on a plane to Ethiopia excited by the idea of working for a prominent international NGO in the field of human rights protection. It did not matter that it was an unpaid internship. What I did not know yet on that plane, nor did I expect, was that I was going to be considered, at my first work experience, the human rights expert of that NGO branch in Addis Ababa. Until that point in time, the organization had run only development programmes on agriculture and when I joined their team, it did not have human rights advisers on board. The reason for enlargement of its focus was very practical; the NGO worried about the lack of funding in the sector of its specialization and planned to direct some of its programmes towards better financed areas of development.

This is not an isolated case. Referring to the NGO world in particular, Aall [2: 379] points out that: *Managing commitment in the face of financial uncertainty adds to the complexity of establishing effective partnerships among official and nonofficial third party intervention in a conflict situation.*

Funding and the lack thereof, undoubtedly affects long-term commitment in conflict areas, and not only; more and more often, the lack of funds especially for the NGO sector, is likely to slant grant applications' proposal “towards what they think the funding source is looking for” [3: 112]. The field of conflict management, conflict transformation and resolution and peacebuilding are the areas an increasing number of organizations, governmental as well as non-governmental, are looking at [4]. For Ropers [5] this is particularly noticeable in long-term post-conflict reconstruction phases, where a large number of NGOs are at work and a marketplace situation develops with a demand and supply of conflict-management services.

Because of the economic situation, the market is less oriented to the needs in conflict areas (however defined) but more on the interests and the assessment of the Western donors. This has the consequences that activities get primarily promoted that abide by the rules of the donors for distribution. This may mean short-term education in conflict resolution, which can be evaluated easily by the number of trained multipliers [5: 525].

Moreover, an extraordinary amount of staff time goes to keeping projects funded; as a result, the time and capacity of these actors to actually perform the necessary services are greatly diminished [3]. At the same time, the attitude of changing focus for survival, particularly common among medium-small organizations especially in the Global South, accounts for a further reduction of aid potential and, even worse, it increases the risks of unintended outcomes [6: 5]. As very clearly expressed by Galama and Van Tongeren [6: 30]: *Local agencies engaged in competition for funding may be drawn into attempting actions which seem unlikely to succeed based on their own understanding of the situation, both because they want the funding and because they hope the donor may know something they don't know.*

Similarly, many scholars note that a significant difference exists between the perceived goals of donors, practitioners and target communities when it comes to the evaluation of a project [7; 8; 9; 5]. On the one hand, donors' evaluation agenda is generally based on the establishment of predetermined and verifiable indicators of change. Diamond and McDonald [3:111] assert that: *The rigidity of bureaucratic structures makes flexibility and innovation difficult. In addition, bureaucracies prefer tradition and are not eager to change... The world is changing, however, so foundations are finding themselves bound by old priorities and procedures that do not necessarily make sense given the current global scene. Although many are now reconstructing their programmes and reexamining trends and priorities, that process can take so long that they are always a little out of date and behind the curve.*

Funders are also usually looking for an efficient, timely, coherent, sustainable and quick outcome, “a measurable result within a specific time frame and a tangible, durable product” [3: 112]. Finally, the inevitable culture bias and

worldview of the funders are bound to have an effect on their funding priorities [3]. From the other side, stakeholders involved in the activities may consider the quantitative measures of the initiative's success used by the funders as secondary to other more immediate needs - such as essential service delivery, and assistance to refugees and displaced people [5]. Similarly, many scholars note that donors' evaluation agenda is generally based on the establishment of predetermined and verifiable indicators of change [7] [8] [9] [5].

The following brief paragraphs and their at times overlapping contents, aim to show how issues and problems are inextricably tied together. They also represent an attempt to establish better relationships between aid actors in conflict situations and thus improve their ability to deliver meaningful results.

OPENNESS TO LESSONS LEARNED AND WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW MISTAKES TO HAPPEN

There is often apprehensiveness on the part of beneficiaries about possible negative consequences of reporting on unsuccessful or less successful interventions. With fierce competition for scarce resources, an honest discussion of a disappointing outcome can have serious unwanted consequences for the community the programme aims at helping [6]. Learning from failures is just as important as learning from successes. The development of good practices can then become a learning tool in conflict resolution interventions.

Lesson learned and best practices

Although both terms “*lessons learned*” and “*best practices*” are often used within the international field of conflict resolution, the definition of these terms has not been often debated. It is therefore fundamental to ask what constitutes a lesson or best practice. There are different levels of lessons learned or best practice, some specific to the context and project, some more generalizable and applicable to a variety of situations and contexts. According to Church and Shouldice [10: 44-45]: *To date there is no transferability requirement that determines the evolution of a practice to the level of “lesson”. It would also appear that there are varying evidential requirements for stating that something is a best practice or lesson, which creates further confusion about the terms.*

Closely linked to this point and to the need to address the issue of whether new terms have to be developed in addition to refining the use of current terms, is the argument below, related to modalities for evaluation of projects.

CONCERN WITH METHODS OF PROJECTS EVALUATION

Donors should be more concerned with how projects are evaluated, especially those involving “soft processes” of dialogue or conflict resolution. There are different interpretations of what should be considered success because of the lack of clear agreement on time frame and criteria [11]. Time is only one basis for comparison. The benefits of conflict resolution processes may take many years to come to fruition [3]. Hence, quantitative evaluating tools appear to be inefficient. The number of people trained for instance, does not necessarily imply a change in attitude in all of them, as many factors influence conflict dynamics and their softening. Rather, there is a need for rich longitudinal datasets that follow individuals over time and hence permit monitoring of cumulative dynamics and efficiency of measures used to alleviate it. This paper suggests that further research is needed to develop focused, cost-effective sets of agenda for research, data collection and evaluation.

Diamond and McDonald [3] maintains that some sectors do not have an internal culture or a history of evaluating their own activities; others might be exploring the use of more creative evaluation modes where the evaluation process itself is part of the intervention. Still others are making use of both qualitative and quantitative methods to demonstrate effectiveness. For Jeong [11], points of reference for success can be found in commonly accepted goals and objectives. Criteria for evaluating a success can therefore be formulated according to maximal and minimal approaches to peacebuilding. Maximal approaches are oriented towards the achievement of positive peace: a peace filled with positive content such as restoration of relationships, social justice, creation of social systems that serve the needs of the whole population and constructive conflict resolution. On the contrary, negative approaches to peacebuilding simply refer to the absence of direct use of force, although all the tensions that break out in an open conflict may still exist. It becomes clear that the measurement of achievement of maximal goals requires a longer time frame.

Moreover, it is to be noticed that peace is not only unlikely to be achieved in a linear time frame but cannot be reached with a single area focus.

FOSTERING DIALOGUE AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Both parties, donors and beneficiaries, should be able to sit down together and discuss what goes well and what goes wrong or badly wrong in a funding practice; what some practices facilitate and what impedes the collaboration needed for creating a network of effective actions. Lack of both communication and fair confrontation, strengthen the position of donors, whose understanding of the dynamics of conflict and interventions could remain incomplete and,

from the donor's side, correct. There seems to be no evidence to suggest that conditionality is generating effective incentives for faster implementation of reforms. On the contrary, it is undermining the quality of dialogue, generating unnecessarily high transaction costs and diverting attention away from the fundamental issues. In fact, conditionality has led to a dialogue that is "superficial" and "confrontational", weakening the potential for more strategic and constructive dialogue that would be an indication of a more genuine partnership.

PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO LOCAL NEEDS

It is fundamental to collaborate more genuinely with the people locked in conflict. In the end, locals must be the protagonists of their history. A growing number of scholars agree that local actors are an indispensable ingredient in a viable and sustainable peace process. If efforts to prevent, resolve and transform violent conflict are to be effective in the long term, they must be based on the strong participation of local civil society groups committed to building peace [11] [12: 13]. No societal transformation can occur if local actors are not interested in the peace process or if they do not pro-actively participate in it; only if the peace process belongs to the people will their willingness to make it work be greater [14].

The concept of local participation is also the basic premise of "track-two" diplomacy: the expertise for dealing successfully with conflict and peace-making does not rest merely with governments but also with citizens, from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of skills, who have something to offer and can make a difference [3]. As originally conceived by Joe Montville, the terms "track two" or "citizen" diplomacy refer to unofficial contacts between people—usually ordinary citizens— which can later pave the way for official diplomacy, the so called "first track" or "track one" [15].

Cockell [13: 23] suggests that "successful peacebuilding evolves from indigenous societal resources", meaning local institutions and actors, a belief found also in Galtung and LeBaron. The former [16] affirms that peace is not a condition that endures if the protagonists of the conflict are not proactively engaged in its sustainability, while the latter [17: 275] maintains that "all attempts to address conflict need to fit the people and the context involved... Conflicts evolve and shift over time; at the centre remain relationships". Lederach [18] stresses the fact that relationships are at the heart of conflict transformation; they form the context in which violence happens and also generate the energy that enables people to transcend violence. Lisa Schirch [19], in her case studies, describes ways in which communal acts among members of conflicting groups (e.g. eating a meal, dancing, fishing, and looking at a photograph) were central to transforming parties' understanding of themselves, their "enemies", and their conflict.

This is one of the main frustrations and tensions, as locals often feel impelled to make their particular wisdom heard by the decision makers. Deeper analysis of the socio-political-cultural context in which the intervention operates, information about the needs of the people on the ground and new ideas for its resolution, may not be heard by those who make decisions and thus do get transmitted into viable policies [3].

PROMOTING EXPERTISE IN THE FIELD

Funding-driven projects generate unprepared aid staff and initiatives that fail to produce the hoped-for outcomes. The more beneficiaries and their funders are concerned about their own status and the status of their organizations, the less likely they are to be effective. Reality shows that it is not unusual that their understanding of the situation is partial or wrong, especially when funding is the driving force for the intervention [20]. Training of NGO staff involved in the project is fundamental although sometimes lacking. More time and financial resources should be used to address this fundamental aspect.

CONCLUSION

This short paper intended to show that in the field of conflict resolution, that is quickly becoming competitive rather than co-operative, organizations have a major chance to transform the potential for peace in protracted conflict. Limited funding and the desire to survive can convert agricultural organizations into human rights agencies. Aid staff with insufficient skills in the field of work they are assigned to, and who lack in-depth analyses of cultural and social understanding of peace and conflict are the unwanted results. Paying attention to all of the aforementioned issues can contribute to bring changes in priorities in donors' policies – if and when needed – and to guarantee a more accurate correspondence of aid efforts to the need of local actors. More often than not, it seems that the aid system uses a top-down approach, where the donors assumes a control function, whilst NGO beneficiaries became donor-driven and, to certain extent, distant from the people they claim to represent.

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