

The Role of Development Aid in Conflict Transformation – Facilitating Empowerment Processes and Community Building

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks into the theoretical assumptions and expectations as well as into the practical experiences of empowerment-approaches within development aid with special regard to their potential for conflict transformation. We build upon the recent discourse in development policy whether or not and how development co-operation could contribute to crisis prevention and conflict transformation. The paper introduces different definitions of empowerment approaches in community development. Elaborating the nexus between participation, empowerment and conflict transformation, the authors critically discuss the potentials of common participatory approaches within community building to avoid doing harm as well as contributing to conflict transformation on local level. The argument is, that the project environment especially if it is in a conflict area, has to be seen as a complex system – where the macro conflict is interrelated with the village communities and where different interest groups are competing for scarce resources. Focussing on empowerment processes in community building in complex emergencies development agencies have to act as political players consciously searching for spaces of action. The paper critically discusses possible spaces of action, as well as constraints and dilemmas/ambivalences. Contributing to conflict transformation the defined objective of any empowerment process would be to contribute towards a development of local communities – promoting inclusive citizenship.

I. Introduction

This paper aims at looking into the theoretical assumptions and expectations as well as into the practical experiences of empowerment-approaches within development aid with special regard to their potential for conflict transformation. We build upon the recent discourse in development policy whether or not and how development co-operation could contribute to crisis prevention and conflict transformation. In the recent debate on conflict transformation and the role of development aid, there are three inter-related aspects of which are highlighted in the recent debate:

- The “do-no-harm” approach (Anderson 1999, Anderson 2000) focuses mainly on the question how to avoid doing more harm than good, looking into the often unintended negative impacts of development aid, which rather aggravate conflict than contribute to its resolution. The do-no-harm approach builds upon the experiences of a comprehensive field study, conducted by the American NGO “Collaborative for Development Action” (CDA) in 13 conflict regions in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America.
- Building upon the experiences of the “do-no-harm” project the “local capacities for peace” approach (Anderson 1999, Heinrich 1999) searches for potential entry points for conflict transformation through development aid, and stresses, that the external donor agencies should focus on supporting ‘local capacities for peace’, since peace cannot be asserted from outside but must be achieved from within a society (Heinrich 1999).
- The discourse on “peace and conflict impact assessment” (Bush 1998, Ross & Rothman 1999) stresses the need for a sound analysis of the conflict context and develops methodology for the assessment and evaluation of peace and conflict impact, developing a framework for peace building (For an overview see Mark Hoffman in this volume).

This article will especially look into the practice of traditional relief and development projects working in complex emergencies in the field of community development. Elaborating the nexus between conflict transformation on the one hand, and participatory and empowerment approaches on the other, the authors critically discuss the potentials of common empowerment approaches within community building to avoid doing harm as well as contributing to conflict transformation on local level. It is empirically based on participatory research and on experiences of bi- and multilateral development co-operation actors in the war-torn areas of Sri Lanka.

Chapter II and III will look into the recent developments of the conflict transformation discourse with special regard to the conclusions which can be drawn from this discourse on the role of development aid in complex emergencies. Chapter IV and V introduce common participatory and empowerment approaches within community development, looking into their theoretical objectives and their practical implementation. Chapter VI critically discusses possible spaces of action, as well as constraints, dilemmas and ambivalences for the facilitation of empowerment processes through development aid within complex emergencies. We conclude with an outlook on the potentials, constraints and ambivalence of empowerment approaches and demand a more political role of development aid in complex emergencies in promoting community building through empowerment and recognition towards a more inclusive citizenship.

II. Track III: Conflict Transformation and the Role of Development Aid

In the discussion on conflict interventions there are three leading discourses, which focus on different levels and practices. Each discourse builds upon different theoretical discussions, different understandings of conflict as such and recommends different strategies.

- The first discourse on *conflict settlement* refers to all outcome-oriented strategies for reaching an agreement between the conflict parties which enables them to end an armed conflict, without necessarily addressing the underlying conflict causes (Reimann in this volume, Miall/Ramsbotham, Woodhouse 1999). The area of practice- track 1- is mainly reserved for the official and formal activities of diplomatic and governmental actors – therefore it is not of major relevance for this article which focuses on the level of intervention of development aid.
- The *conflict resolution* discourse refers to all process-oriented activities that aim to address the underlying causes of direct, cultural and structural violence. The area of practice – track 2 - refers to all non-official and non-coercive activities by other non-governmental parties (Reimann in this volume). Actors of track 2 practices are international and local conflict resolution NGOs, focussing on “citizens diplomacy” and “civil mediation” for example through problem-solving workshops, supported by academic institutions and civil society groups focussing on conflict analysis.
- The third discourse on *conflict transformation* refers to outcome-, process- and structure-oriented long-term peace building efforts, which aim to truly overcome revealed forms of direct, cultural and structural violence, transforming unjust social relationships and promoting conditions that create cooperative relationships. Track 3 actors, which are local grassroots organisations, as well as local and international development agencies and NGOs deal with those who are most affected by the effects of violent conflict. They are engaged in grassroots training, capacity building and empowerment, trauma work, human rights and development work, and humanitarian assistance (Reimann in this volume, Miall/Ramsbotham, Woodhouse 1999).

It is important to see the interrelatedness of the three discourses and their intervention strategies. To build domestic peace constituencies or “strategic alliances” between the different local, national and international actors it will be necessary that practitioners link activities on all three levels, understanding the three track strategies as integrative and complementary (Reimann 2001, p.16).

The third discourse on conflict transformation is most suitable for the context of development aid in complex emergencies. Looking into the role development aid aims to play and into the proposed interventions which are considered to contribute to conflict transformation, the DAC Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development co-operation (OECD 1997) give a good insight: First of all one has to distinguish different phases and dynamics of conflict, which make different kind of interventions necessary. DAC subdivides into four interrelated phases: a.) situation of submerged tensions, b.) situations of rising tensions, c.) eruption phases of open confrontation and violent conflict, d.) fragile transitional and post-conflict situations.

However, the ground situation is far more complex – often there is a fast change from one stage to the other and many countries are characterised by both peace and conflict simultaneously. Therefore it seems more adequate to speak of different conflict contexts or settings, as stages imply rather stable situations following each other consecutively and according to a predictable logic. Under these conditions donor agencies need to be equipped with instruments to observe the indicators for increase of tension and need to be flexible to adjust to changing situations.

Different conflict contexts or settings

In Sri Lanka development intervention can take place in the war-torn areas in the Northeast, where the situation on the ground is different from one division to the other: there are *uncleared* areas which are under the control of the “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam” (LTTE), *cleared* areas under the control of the Sri Lankan army, or *semi-uncleared* areas (border-areas) where fights are ongoing, especially in the nights. The situation can change within short time from rising tension to violent conflict. In other parts of the country development interventions take place in areas which can be defined as pre-conflict settings (situation of submerged tensions), like for example the Estate Sector, with a potential escalation of the identity and labour conflict between Tamil estate workers and Sinhalese plantation management. In the south of the country, development projects intervene in a post-conflict area. The root causes for the violent insurrections by the radical left wing party JVP, however, which was smashed down by the government forces have not been resolved yet.

As the conflict settings are of a dynamic nature, the different types of interventions – emergency relief, rehabilitation, and development operations are often carried out simultaneously. Recognising this the concept of development oriented emergency aid, linking relief with medium- and long-term development efforts was introduced by many donor agencies. With regard to the conflict transformation impact, there is generally a tendency to take a more holistic approach towards mainstreaming peace building within the traditional mandates of humanitarian assistance, poverty alleviation and sustainable development (see Hoffman in this volume).

In the DAC Guidelines the role of development aid in complex emergencies is defined as follows:

Development co-operation efforts should strive for an environment of structural stability as a basis for sustainable development. An environment of structural stability is one in which there are dynamic and representative social and political structures capable of managing change and resolving disputes without resort of violence. (...) over the long term, it can contribute to alleviating the root causes of conflict and help to develop institutions capable of managing and resolving disputes in a peaceful manner. (DAC OCED 1997, p. 9).

Development interventions are therefore focussing on improving the general economic and social climate in partner countries, supporting measures to improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of the state as well as the emergence of a strong civil society. The promotion of democratic structural stability as a base for sustainable development is envisaged by introducing participatory and empowerment approaches into the project work. The aim is to

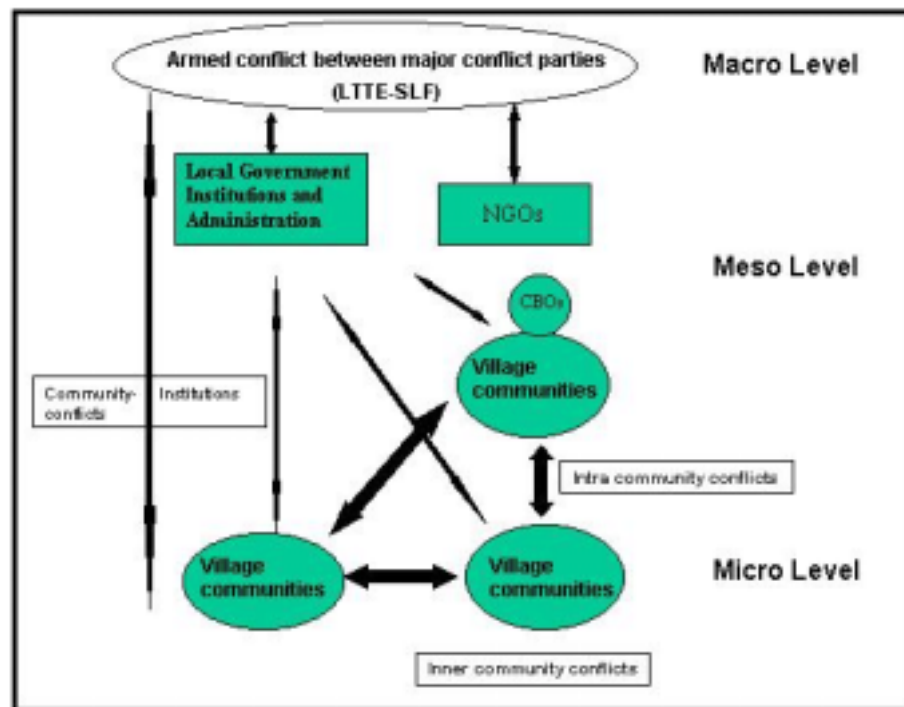
integrate various societal groups – especially those who are marginalised and those who form a stronghold against violence - like women and youth – into the decision making processes of local development planning and negotiation processes. Development interventions are also aiming to develop institutions and mechanisms needed to facilitate the accommodation of competing interests within society, and the peaceful management of socio-political disputes (OECD 1997, p. 18).

Promoting democratization is seen as complex, gradual, and participatory process whereby citizens, civil society, and the state create a set of norms, values, and institutions to mediate their relationship in a predictable, representative and fair manner (OECD 1997, p. 38).

This makes it necessary for development aid to work on different levels, like the community level with its community-based organisations and the meso-level of local government institutions and NGOs, considering the macro dimension of the conflict context for the overall strategy of intervention. While participation in the mainstream society is promoted, NGOs, Community-Based Organisation (CBO) and local government institutions are supported to become more capable and responsive to their constituencies.

Graph 1 shows the different conflict dimension of development interventions, stressing the interrelationship of the macro-conflict and village communities.

Graph 1: The Interrelationship of the Macro-Conflict and Village Communities



The DAC Guidelines stress the necessity to support peace building and reconciliation at the community level over a long-term, and parallel to the efforts to strengthen the peace building elements of good governance on the regional institutional level (OECD 1997, p. 52).

Before we will look into participatory and empowerment approaches commonly used for community building and their implementation, we discuss the theoretical underpinnings of conflict transformation in more detail and analyse whether the “logic of (local) empowerment” is concurrent with the logic of development agencies.

III. The “Logic of (local) empowerment” and the Logic of Development Agencies

Conflict Transformation is generally seen as a shift from the “logic of management” predominant in the conflict settlement and conflict resolution discourse to a “logic of (local) empowerment”. We would like to have a deeper look into this change, its theoretical assumptions and its implications for the role of development aid in complex emergencies. We also ask, in how far the logic of (local) empowerment is concurrent with the logic of development agencies.

The Logic of Management

A useful framework for conflict intervention is provided by Rothman & Friedman (2001), which distinguish between different *frames* of conflict: resource conflicts, interest conflict and identity conflicts. The distinction follows the logic of the three different conflict discourses introduced above (conflict settlement, conflict resolution, conflict transformation). Rothman & Friedman do not say that there are three different types of conflicts, they rather stress, that each conflict has dimensions of all three frames. It rather depends on how one understands and looks at conflicts.

- The *frame of resource conflict* sees conflicts as struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources. Conflict is perceived as rather negative, as a threat and disease. It is a natural outcome of competition among individuals and groups over material goods, economic benefits, property and power. Within this frame the alternative to violence is the settling of the conflict through negotiation process or bargaining, until the resources have been redistributed to mutual satisfaction. The outcome is a win, lose or compromise situation. Problematic is that within the resource frame the underlying causes remain unaddressed and deeper problems are ignored until they may explode.
- The *interest frame of conflict* turns away from competitive resource framing. Although conflicts may appear like demands for resources, bargaining positions are simply concrete expressions of interests, which one can define as “needs, desires, and fears” (Ury, Fisher 1981). The *alternative dispute resolution* school of thought developed a process of interest-based bargaining, which focuses upon articulating what each party is really seeking and upon employing creative methods for maximising the degree to which the interests of both sides can be satisfied. The interest frame provides a more optimistic view of conflict. Engaging in conflict may help the conflicting parties to clarify their own interests and perceptions and understand those of the other side. The main critique in regard to the interest frame is, that although it seems to be more successful to find agreements, interest-based conflict resolution can obscure the underlying nature of conflict. Conflict resolution focuses on changing individual and collective action strategies but leaves the underlying values and norms unchanged (see conflict resolution).

The two resource frames (conflict settlement discourse) and the interest frame (conflict resolution discourse) both work with a ‘logic of conflict management’. Resolving of conflicts is viewed as unrealistic. The focus is therefore on managing and containing them, trying to find constructive ways to bring opponents together, aiming to reach a compromise or win-win situation in which violence may be laid aside (see Miall in this volume). The conflict resolution discourse focuses on re-framing positions and on identifying win-win-situations, still trying to manage the conflicts in this way. The ‘logic of conflict management’ is a more pragmatic way to deal with conflicts, not necessarily looking for the root causes of the conflict and the underlying values, norms and fears of conflict parties.

The Logic of (Local) Empowerment

As a third frame Rothman & Friedman introduce the identity frame (conflict transformation discourse). This can be understood as a shift away from the ‘logic of conflict management’ towards a ‘logic of (local) empowerment’:

- The *identity conflict frame* emerged largely from attempts to deal with intractable ethnic conflict and alternative approaches to the static power-politics model of international

diplomacy (Rothman & Friedman 2001, p.590). Conflict is seen as stemming from needs, desires, concerns, and fears. The most intractable conflicts are really about the articulation and confrontation of individual and collective identities. Conflicts are rooted in threats to or the frustration of deeply rooted human needs such as dignity, recognition, safety, control, purpose, and efficacy (Azar 1990, Burton 1990). Within the identity frame conflicts are not viewed primarily as problems to be resolved, or even managed. The contention is, that conflicts offer opportunities for growth, adaptation and learning (Lederach 1995). Conflicts can lead all parties to clarify for themselves their needs, values, and what causes them dissatisfaction and satisfaction (Baruch Bush & Folger 1995). Conflict engagement therefore means reflexive dialogue, in which parties to the conflict speak about their needs and values in the presence of their adversaries, before any kind of negotiation can succeed. Through the *recognition* of others' articulation and assertion of self, conflict provides the opportunity for mutual transformation and *empowerment* (Baruch Bush & Folger 1994). From the perspective of identity frame, the goal of intervention is not just to reach agreements or solutions. Rather, the process of engaging conflict is seen as an opportunity for challenging the status quo (including the parties themselves) building on local capacities for peace (Rothman & Friedman 2001, p. 592).

The "logic of (local) empowerment" puts the emphasis on bottom up strategies aiming to support or even generate local struggles for social justice and hence for radical, structural change. Conflict transformation builds upon the theoretical framework of non-violent action, seeing conflict as a non-violent struggle for social justice. Non-violent struggle, like demonstrations, strikes, non-cooperation or non-violence training are forms of manifestation of people's power aiming at social and structural change. Protracted violent conflicts in the conflict transformation discourse are therefore perceived as the result of unequal and suppressive social and political structures. "Dealing effectively with it (violent conflict), therefore, will call for the *empowerment and recognition* of marginalised groups in the form of non-violent struggle. Only in this way will it be possible to deal with issues of immediate concern at the local level, or to put the appropriate pressure on track I (and track 2) actors, to end the violence and enter into good-faith negotiations"(Reimann 2001, p. 15). Track III strategies put the civilian population, which was so far widely left out, and their potential for non-violence (struggle) at the centre-stage. In this regard the local population, being recognised as local capacities for peace plays a key role for the peace-building process.

The convincing potential of the conflict transformation approach is its outcome-, process and change-orientation. Conflict transformation aims to achieve a settlement on substantive issues raised by the needs and fears of the conflict parties (*outcome*), which has two implications:

- First, *process orientation*, emphasising the need to change mutually negative conflict attitudes and values among parties in order to increase cooperation and communication between them.
- Second, the *change-orientation*, stressing the political imperative to create a new infrastructure for empowerment and recognition of underprivileged groups, thus fostering and enabling social justice (see Reimann 2001)

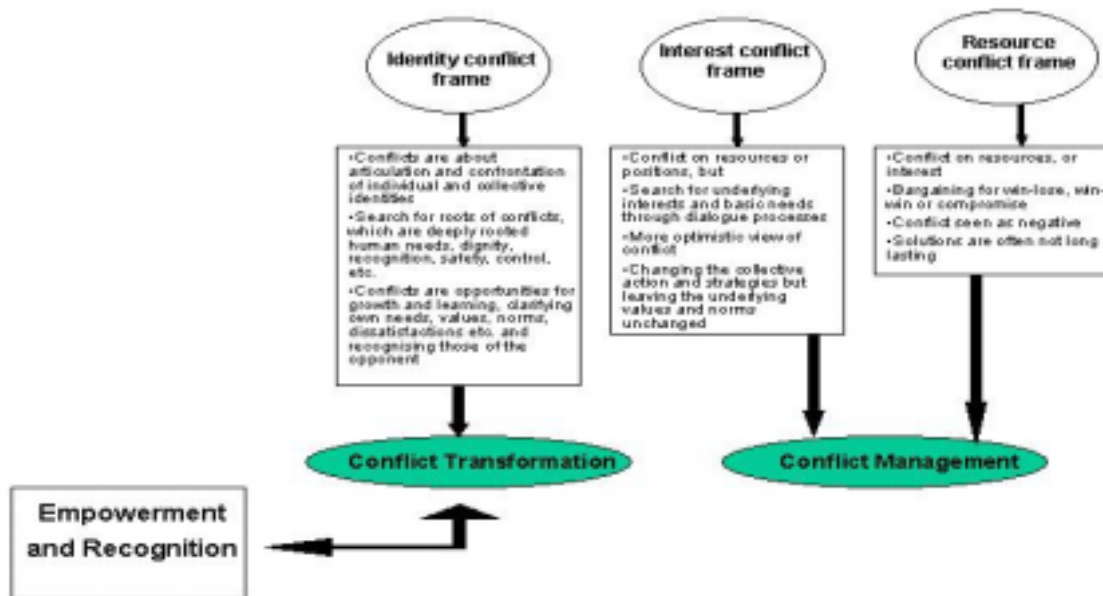
Conflict transformation with its "logic of (local) empowerment" can be seen as open-ended, long-term, multi-track and dynamic process, which significantly widens the scope of actors involved. The satisfaction of basic needs on the personal and relational levels will not be sufficient, rather practitioners must work to achieve equal access to resources and assemble the infrastructure that will make it possible to address structural inequalities with the aim of longer-term social reconstruction and reconciliation (Reimann 2001, p.18).

Rothman & Friedman stress that the resource and interest frames of conflict continue to dominate the thinking of practitioners and many researchers, which limits new thinking and the development of innovative approaches (Rothman & Friedman 2001, p. 593). Strategies

of conflict avoidance or reductionism are often favoured, instead of actively working with the underlying causes of conflicts, going down to norms, values, concerns, and fears. The identity frame of conflict suggests for conflict interventions that it is necessary to create opportunities and spaces for communication and dialogue and facilitate processes of mutual recognition and empowerment.

Graph 2 shows the nexus between the conflict frames and strategies towards empowerment. While empowerment and recognition are means and ends of conflict transformation, conflict management is not necessarily focussing on empowerment of conflict parties.

Graph 2: Empowerment and Recognition in the light of different Conflict Frames and Discourses



The Logic of Development Agencies

The DAC Guidelines for Conflict, Peace and Development ascribe the role of development aid towards facilitating participatory and empowerment processes. In the concept paper of German Technical Co-operation the major strategies for conflict prevention and conflict management is a) promotion of structural stability and b) promotion of conflict transforming competences of groups and institutions (GTZ 2001). The latter calls for participatory processes which stimulate empowerment of certain groups or capacity building for institutions. Development oriented emergency aid interventions are usually equipped with participatory and empowerment approaches, like Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) or social mobilisation, which will be elaborated in the next chapter.

It seems that the requirements of the conflict transformation strategy can be met by development aid, or is the rhetoric of development policy different from the implementation? We will argue, that the logic of development agencies, especially bi-lateral donors – is rather fitting to the logic of conflict management than to the logic of (local) empowerment. Under the pressure of budget allocation and fund disbursement schedules, donor agencies tend to be rather outcome than process and change oriented. Empowerment is often understood in an instrumental manner, integrating people into the implementation of projects, without granting them essential decision-making power in important questions like budget allocation. Furthermore conflicts on community or intra-community level, which are disturbing the implementation of projects are mainly seen as obstacles or delaying factors, which have to be removed as fast as possible. Trying to find an acceptable compromise between competing groups through conflict management will therefore much rather meet the logic of development agencies than the logic of a long-term facilitation of difficult empowerment and recognition processes, that would search for underlying roots of conflicts bringing up values, norms and fears of the groups involved. As an in-depth impact evaluation of projects is often not carried out, it is not difficult for the donor agencies to follow a simple implementation path without really caring for a sustainable impact of the projects.

Project management and staff are often caught in a process of analysing the local problems and immediately thinking of their solution, without spending too much time on talking to the local population and listening to their opinion. There is a danger, that donor agencies rather impose solutions instead of creating spaces for local capacity building and decision making.

In the worst cases donor agencies internally function in a very hierarchical and undemocratic manner, where the local field-staff is not integrated in important decision-making processes. Therefore, it is rather questionable whether these agencies can stimulate democratic processes and empowerment of groups when they have not incorporated more democratic rules into their own internal procedures.

At this point we will have a closer look into the theoretical conception and practical implementation of common participatory and empowerment approaches of development aid, to be able to critically analyse the potentials and obstacles for contributing to conflict transformation.

IV. Empowerment in the Light of Different Discourses

What does *empowerment* mean in the development oriented discourse? What definitions are commonly used and more importantly, how are empowerment processes operationalised into practical action? We will once again have a look into how empowerment is defined in the conflict transformation (mediation) discourse and compare it with the development aid discourse. Can development co-operation learn from the understanding of empowerment in the mediation discourse for its own activities and actions in complex political emergencies?

Within the **conflict transformation discourse** the root causes of violent conflicts are based on the assumption of unsatisfied human needs as well as the unequal and suppressive social and political structures which lead to dissatisfaction of marginalised groups. Empowerment would therefore address the unequal power relations aiming to change them towards social justice.

Baruch Bush & Folger (1994) define empowerment within the transformative conflict mediation discourse as follows: a party is empowered by gaining new awareness and understanding of (1) its goals (including underlying values, norms, fears), (2) its options, (3) its skills, (4) its resources, and (5) its decision-making, and is able to utilise these new insights in mediation and negotiation. Empowerment is thus a process of supported self-reflection for improved action. It is not reduced to the current mediation cause, but empowers the party also for future negotiations and conflict settlement. In transformative mediation, the complementary element to empowerment is recognition. In conflicts, parties are often focusing on self-protection and are defensive. They are unable to look beyond their own interest. Parties achieve recognition in mediation when they expand their perspective to include an appreciation for another's situation.

The interesting aspect of the conflict transformation definition of empowerment is its interrelatedness with recognition, which implies a process of dialogue and active listening to the opponent. The recognition of interests, needs, fears and values of an opponent is a process, which helps to clarify the own interests, needs and values, which leads to empowerment through recognition. Being recognised on the other hand contributes to the feeling of being valued which is often the first step to be ready to search for a compromise. Within the development oriented empowerment discourse, this aspect of recognition is often missing.

Within the **development oriented discourse**, the general underlying assumption of the empowerment approaches is, that the major reason for poverty is the oppression or exploitation of the poorest through the more powerful, that means the power-relations are forming one important explanation pattern for development or its lack. The term *empowerment* originates from the social movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Prominent examples are the black-power movement in the United States and the movement of emancipation of Paulo Freire in Latin America. During the third World Conference on Women 1985 in Nairobi, the Womens' Network DAWN introduced the term into the development and women politics related discourse (Sen & Grown 1988). DAWN's *empowerment*-definition scrutinises the relation between power and development within the existing development paradigm. DAWN formulated a critic on the existing power relations between gender, race, class, nations - blaming control and power based on discrimination and suppression of individuals and groups. Empowerment is understood as a vision and a process of individual autonomy and transformation of society towards just and equal relations. The strategy of the empowerment process is that the suppressed develop their power to change the society. It is an individual process of awareness building as well as a collective process of the suppressed groups, which aims to lead to social transformation.

This empowerment definition bears a revolutionary potential, as it is not accepting existing power structures, but rather promotes substantial change. Those NGOs, which originated from social movements, have formed this understanding of *empowerment* processes in development. Their work is political, focusing on awareness creation under the most vulnerable groups as well as public demonstrations and campaigns for the rights of the suppressed. Nowadays, the term empowerment has become fashionable within the development discourse and is meanwhile a constituent part of all rhetoric of bi- and multilateral donor agencies, but often depleted of all its revolutionary substance and limited to an instrumentalist dimension, viz. a means to improve sustainability of project impacts and to reduce project costs.

All in all, the term *empowerment* remains vague. The question is, how the empowerment approach is put into practice within development aid. At first sight it seems that empowerment is often understood as similar to capacity building of marginalised groups. We suggest to distinguish clearly between empowerment on the one hand, and *capacity building* on the other. Capacity building refers to knowledge transfer to individuals or groups in order to *enable* them to carry out certain activities. Capacity building includes awareness raising, training and other human resource development. Capacity building is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for empowerment. Empowerment takes place in a context, viz. the local social system. Empowerment means to increase the relative power and ability of disadvantaged groups in their socio-political environment. Empowerment strategies should therefore address both the individuals and groups to be empowered as well as strategic groups, which dominate and determine the governance structure and institutional arrangements. Empowerment of vulnerable, disadvantaged groups will thus be an outcome of both, the capacity building of the disadvantaged, and a reform of oppressing rules and practices.

The concept of *recognition* in mediation and alternative dispute resolution is essential for empowerment strategies in community development. Intra- and inter-community resource allocation and dispute resolution go beyond simply solving the 'issue', but requires that all parties involved are recognised as negotiating partners. This requires a neutral and skilled person who facilitates the process of recognition. Furthermore the development discourse has largely emphasised that empowerment is a process in a complex system which society is, thus it is not sufficient to strengthen individuals or groups without encouraging the development of conducive institutional arrangements and governance structures.

In the following some participatory development approaches currently applied in development co-operation are critically assessed with regard to their potential for empowering disadvantaged groups in less developed countries. Chapter 6 will then discuss the implementation side, looking into potentials and constraints of participatory development approaches to contribute to conflict transformation.

Participation and Empowerment Approaches within Community Development

The terms 'participation' and 'empowerment' have become a central idea or even an orthodoxy in mainstream development co-operation. All major bilateral and multilateral development agencies have adopted the rhetoric of participation and empowerment. The danger is that the term 'participation' is reduced to a slogan or label to receive donor funds. It is therefore essential to look into what is actually meant with participation and empowerment in the context of community development.

Robert Chambers (1995: 30), one leading scholar of participatory approaches, identifies three ways in which 'participation' is used in development co-operation:

- (1) as a cosmetic label to make whatever is proposed appear good, mainly to satisfy donor agencies;
- (2) as a co-opting practice for mobilising labour and reduce costs. Communities contribute 'their' labour in 'our' project.
- (3) to describe an *empowerment* process which enables local people to analyse their own situation, to take command, to gain confidence and to make own decisions.

We would like to distinguish two schools of thoughts: Some consider participation as a means, i.e. as an instrument to improve project sustainability. The hypothesis is that through involvement of the target groups in their own development activities and through their contribution to project costs, people will take 'ownership' and thus sustain the development process or maintain constructed assets. Others argue that participation should be an end in itself, i.e. that the processes of participation should lead to an increase in decision-making power on local level. Empowerment, and not the physical project outcomes would then be the major objective of participatory approaches. Caroline Moser is pointing to this difference between participation as means for an increase of efficiency and cost sharing and participation as end in itself towards empowerment:

"Where participation is a means, it generally becomes a form of mobilisation to get things done. This can equally be state-directed, top-down mobilisation, sometimes enforced, to achieve specific objectives, or bottom-up "voluntary" community-based mobilisation to obtain a large share of resources. Where participation is identified as an end in itself, the objective is not a fixed, quantified development goal, but a process, the outcome of which is an increasingly "meaningful" participation in the development process"(Moser 1993:101).

Besides the distinction of participation as a means and participation as an end in itself, the question is, how the approach is put into practice. One important question is: Who participates at which activities in which manner and why? Participation can take various forms. The following typology ranks different levels of intensity of participation [Box 1]:

Levels of intensity in the participation continuum

- (1) Passive participation as recipients (relief)
 - (2) Extractive participation through information giving (e.g. in surveys)
 - (3) Participation by consultation (getting informed about ongoing or planned activities)
 - (4) Participation for material incentives (providing resources in return for incentives)
 - (5) Functional participation (forming groups to meet predetermined objectives)
 - (6) Interactive participation (joint analysis with external support for collective action)
 - (7) Self-mobilisation (initiatives are taken independent of external institutions)
- (adapted from Pretty et al. 1995).

Community development projects often attempt to achieve empowerment through a combination of input and process: on the one hand, the project provides incentives, material and funds for local collective action. On the other hand, local institutions and organisations are strengthened through capacity building of staff. In practice, empowerment in community development is largely understood and refined to participation of target groups in planning and implementing donor-funded village projects.

Furthermore, facilitating joint planning and decision-making as well as local management of project implementation aims at stimulating a process of social learning. Community development makes use of a variety of instruments. We will focus on two concepts which are commonly propagated in the South Asian context and which are partly seen as complementary, partly as antagonistic: Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) [Box 3] and 'Social Mobilisation' [Box 2]. The advocates of the social mobilisation approach often attack the PRA concept of following a 'social engineering' approach focusing on tools rather than long-term processes. They claim that empowerment of disadvantaged groups would demand a long-term approach rather than a one-week village workshop. PRA scholars would emphasise that a PRA village workshop is only one step in a long-term process of engagement involving negotiation, bargaining, dialogue and conflict resolution (Shah & Shah 1995) and a necessary, but not a sufficient instrument for *empowerment* of vulnerable groups.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) can be understood as "philosophy of development planning" or "family of approaches", that enable people to express and analyse the realities of their lives and conditions, to plan themselves what action to take, and to monitor and evaluate the results'. The identification of development problems and basic needs in a certain area and the planning of projects would usually start with a Workshop within the respective location. A PRA-team, of several members and one moderator would facilitate a process of joint analysis and learning, using different 'tools', like flow diagrams, village transect walk etc. to support the construction of a more comprehensive picture of the complexity and diversity of village life. The local population should always be the owner of the process, analysing their own reality and planning their own priority projects. PRA especially tries to incorporate all social groups (women, youth, village leaders etc.), especially those which are often marginalised or neglected. The outcome of the PRA is not only the formulated development plan in the form of priority projects, but rather the process of joint learning, which is supposed to enhance the local population to take over the responsibility for the development process of own village/environment.

Understood like this, PRA would be a suitable approach to stimulate an empowerment process on local level. In reality it is often used in a mechanical way, applying PRA-tools in the village to collect information without putting much effort on the stimulation of a process where villagers are actively taking part and are granted decision-making power for the follow-up. PRA-tools are also often borrowed by researchers, to collect data and information from the local level, without mirroring back any results to the villagers. That is why in many rural areas villagers get suspicious as soon as they see a PRA-team entering their village – they are not willing any more to spend days on applying tools without getting anything out of it (Korf 2000a).

Participatory rural appraisal (PRA)

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is commonly referred to as a 'family of approaches, methods and behaviours' that enable people to express and analyse the realities of their lives and conditions, to plan themselves what action to take, and to monitor and evaluate the results'. The term is confusing and utilised under a variety of synonyms, such as Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), Participatory Needs Assessment (PNA) etc. The key elements of PRA are the methods used, and the behaviour and attitudes of those who facilitate it.

Methods:

PRA employs methods to enable people to express and share information, and to stimulate discussion and analysis. Visual techniques enhance creativity, cross-checking information and encourage exchange of views. Using a combination of PRA 'tools' supports the construction of a more comprehensive picture of the complexity and diversity of village life. Common tools are:

- *Mapping*
- *flow diagrams*
- *seasonal calendars*
- *matrices and grids*
- *village transect walk*

The tools are applied during group discussions and semi-structured interviews.

Facilitation:

Facilitators support the local population to do the analysis, investigation, and finally planning on their own. Information is shared between villagers and outsiders (planners, field workers) and among villagers themselves. PRA is often carried out in the form of village workshops: external facilitators join villagers for a few days to jointly carry out 'a PRA'.

Behaviour and attitudes:

The change in attitudes and roles of external facilitators and project planners is even more important than the methods. Chambers talks about 'handing over the stick' from outsiders to insiders, i.e. the villagers themselves. PRA facilitators should act as convenors and catalysts, but without dominating the process. They must show respect, take time, be open and self-critical. They need to gain confidence that local people are capable of carrying out their own analysis.

(adapted from various sources, viz. Institute for Development Studies 1995, Chambers 1994a; Chambers 1995; Chambers & Guijt 1995).

Social Mobilisation is built on the empowerment philosophy with its underlying assumption that the major reason for poverty is the oppression or exploitation of the poorest through the more powerful. Overcoming poverty would therefore require a process of empowerment of the marginalised, enabling them to demand and 'fight' for their needs. The approach is mainly used by NGOs, who focus on awareness creation under the most vulnerable groups as well as public demonstrations and campaigns for the rights of the suppressed. Furthermore the term is meant for strengthening local organisational capacities, human resources and civic institutions which would in turn augment the coping mechanism of conflict affected communities, and lead the way towards participatory development (Sachithanandam 1996, p. 867). A Social Mobiliser, either a person employed by the NGO or a selected village representative act as a facilitator (catalyst) stimulating group formation for collective actions. In the South Asian context social mobilisation has become a fashion and is

nowadays used by government institutions, bilateral donor agencies as well as NGOs. It is used with different meanings, but often in a more a-political and practical manner, mobilising people for group formation to get projects implemented in a more efficient manner without spending too much time on awareness creating and self-organisation.

Social Mobilisation

Social Mobilisation is a process of empowerment of vulnerable groups (e.g. the poorest, women, youth, lower castes, ethnic groups, war-affected, refugees etc.) and combines

- (a) awareness creation*
- (b) self-organisation and*
- (c) action.*

to improve the social and economic conditions of marginalized poor people. People form small groups and are made aware of their potential and the resources available to them, e.g. existing governmental, non-governmental and private services. Social mobilisation has therefore two dimensions, viz.:

- (1) changing the individual, psychological self-perception of vulnerable groups*
- (2) changing the social and economic conditions of the situation of exclusion and marginalisation.*

Social mobilisation is a long-term process: *Many NGO's in the South promote empowerment through trained village volunteers ('change agents', 'social mobilisers') who live and work in their village or area of origin. Other organisations have trained staff, which is working as facilitator or social mobiliser on community level. These volunteers or social mobilisers should encourage poor villagers to form saving & credit groups as the main cell for further development. Social mobilisation focuses on a group-based approach. The small groups shall develop into larger groups with more formal structures (community-based organisations), thus strengthening local self-help capacities for collective action and for bargaining with service providers (government departments, NGOs, private businesses).*

Social mobilisation works basically with conscientisation: *the poor shall be brought in a position to analyse why they are poor, which frame conditions are triggering their poverty, and to identify possible solutions how they can escape out of the poverty trap by their own means.*

In the discourse of conflict transformation and protracted conflicts, social mobilisation involves another dimension when it comes to human rights for minority groups. Marginalized groups (e.g. ethnic groups, women, low castes) are made aware of their rights to recognise and develop their identity, and consequently participate actively in the political process.

Project Example: The Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee (IFSP) of German Development Co-operation (GTZ)

The Integrated Food Security Programme Trincomalee (IFSP) is working in the Eastern part of Sri Lanka, and follows a dual project intervention strategy: while community projects provide assets which benefit the whole community (and often benefit the middle-class and elite more than the vulnerable), the project also implements poverty projects for vulnerable groups only (Bauer et al 1999). The project thus offers something to the leaders while at the same time bargaining space for specific support to the poorest or disadvantaged households and individuals within the community. The project tries to be as transparent as possible involving village leaders and the whole community in the identification of

vulnerable groups. Since selection always implies that some are left out, this is a very delicate task. The project's strategy is to involve village leaders in the whole process and also to appeal to their social responsibility for the poor. The project therefore co-operates on the one hand with existing community-based organisations, which are largely elite-dominated as well as with informal action groups, which involve vulnerable groups.

The project follows a pragmatic approach in empowerment. This *purposive social mobilisation* approach (Bigdon and Engel 2000) regards community mobilisation as centre-piece for the project cycle of village activities, starting with the identification of needs up to planning and implementation of action. Communities are strengthened 'on the job', i.e. project implementation and community mobilisation should go hand in hand as a step-wise local capacity building process (Korf 2000b). This approach, however, abandons more ambitious concepts of empowering the disadvantaged *against* the existing establishment.

In the context of development aid, there is often a mixture of both approaches. Social Mobilisation is meant as the project approach for getting people involved in planning and implementation and taking over ownership for the development process of their village, by using PRA-tools for the analysis and project-identification. The Social Mobiliser, often project staff facilitate group discussion to identify priority projects, to identify certain vulnerable groups and to identify group leaders, which are often trained by the Social Mobiliser in leadership or management skills to carry out their duties. The formulated objective is still empowerment of the people – the difficulty in the practical implementation is thus that often the Social Mobilisers are getting the 'heroes on the ground' by organising too much on their own, instead of leaving the ownership to the target groups, just supporting them in their efforts. With regard to the outcome of the project this might be more efficient, but does undermine any meaningful process of local empowerment. Like mentioned above the reasons for a stronger outcome than process orientations are lying in the 'management logic' of development agencies but sometimes also in the difficulties faced within the project context:

- (1) Dense fund disbursement schedules urge projects to act under time pressure and to present visible and quantifiable results within a short period. This time pressure can be counterproductive for inducing self-help processes on local level. The impact of 'empowerment' processes is difficult to measure in quantitative terms. How can a project then demonstrate or 'prove' its success?
- (2) Initiating processes of empowerment and societal learning processes within a community demands high facilitating, communication and negotiation skills. Many development agencies face difficulties in recruiting suitable personnel with both the knowledge and abilities, and at the same time, attitudes and behaviours conducive for encouraging local self-initiative.
- (3) Development agencies often allocate a lot of effort on participatory appraisals (in particular using PRA methods), while they are much less clear about what should happen afterwards. When it comes to implementing projects, they face administrative and capacity constraints and often cannot follow-up the processes they once started in the communities. In many countries, villagers feel 'over-assessed' by agencies while very few activities are implemented afterwards. Enthusiasm during intensive appraisal processes can then easily deteriorate into frustration, which is detrimental to empowerment.

In development cooperation, another challenge for participatory development concepts is going to scale, viz. achieving a mass impact. Many projects have reached significant results and successes in small 'project islands' of selected villages or communities. This has been achieved through very intensive interventions. The question is, how such an approach can sensibly be applied to a large number of villages, and possibly be integrated into the normal procedures of government departments. In this regard participatory development concepts

face the following constraint (Bauer and Hoffmann 1997; Blackburn and Holland 1998; Chambers 1994c):

Government procedures are rigid in budgeting and timing of projects. Participatory processes and empowerment are, however, unpredictable and sometimes very slow. They can hardly be pressed into formalised procedures without seriously harming the development of self-reliant processes of institution building and collective action.

Regardless of these constraints, there are still many arguments, why the effort for participatory approaches is essential to stimulate local development, not only for efficiency and cost-cutting reasons, but rather to overcome dependency and to stimulate self-help and empowerment processes among marginalised groups. Especially in situations of complex emergencies empowerment processes and recognition are the only way aiming at supporting the democratisation towards a more inclusive, plural and tolerant society, which is able to resolve their conflicts with non-violent means, as it is stressed by the DAC Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development:

'Participation strengthens civil society and the economy by empowering individuals, communities, and organisations to negotiate with institutions and bureaucracies, thus allowing civil society to influence public policy and to provide a check on the power of government. Participation also aids in dealing with conflicting interests in a peaceful manner. It follows that the creation of a climate and the capacity for constructive interaction between civil society and government is a critical component for long-term peace building' (OECD 1997, p. 39).

Chapter 5 will therefore look into the 'spaces for action' of development aid to facilitate empowerment processes within complex emergencies.

V. 'Spaces for action' for the Facilitation of Empowerment Processes through Development Aid within Complex Emergencies

The major question of this chapter is to scrutinise in how far development agencies can act as political actors and intervene in complex emergencies and contribute towards empowerment of certain groups and development of local communities – promoting inclusive citizenship. In how far are there 'spaces for action' within a context of complex emergency?

The objective of the development intervention is clearly on structural change - transforming unjust social relationships- and promotion of conditions that create cooperative relationships. Within the more traditional mandates of humanitarian assistance, poverty alleviation and sustainable development, these underpinnings make it necessary for any development intervention:

- To first identify the unjust social relationships (who is marginalised or discriminated in the local context, how, why and by whom?). Within a situation of complex emergency it is especially important to draw these conclusions from a sound analysis of the conflict context with special regard to its micro and macro dimensions as well as on the basis of a needs assessment of marginalised groups. As the ground situation can change very quickly there is a need for continuous monitoring of the local context.
- Secondly, there is the need to formulate a strategy how to support the transformation of unjust structures. In this regard it would be useful to make the own normative assumptions of what would be a just structure transparent to be able to act in an accountable and transparent manner which is the basis for cooperative relationships with local partners.

- Thirdly, there is a need to develop a strategy to promote conditions that create cooperative relationships, especially amongst members of the conflicting parties but also generally on any level of project intervention, e.g. community level.

The violent macro conflict within a situation of complex emergency has specific dimensions that development projects have no or rather very limited influence upon, e.g. the presence of armed personnel, battles on ground level or the security situation. A project has to work within this given frame, and its activities are hampered by the war context. On the other hand aid agencies affect the context as well. Klem introduces a framework for the analysis of “do-no-harm”, which distinguishes between the influence or impact of donor agencies on the *agency* and *structural component* of war (Klem, 2001). With the *agency component* Klem means the agents of war that can be held responsible for it (agency), like LTTE, the Government, the Armed Forces etc. Without intending to do so, donor agencies with their interventions might strengthen the social-cultural, economic or political position of one or the other warring parties (agency) in Sri Lanka. On the other hand both the root causes and the dynamic causes of the war have a *structural component*, like for example the relations between different ethnic communities on local level, which are a crucial factor of the process of war and peace. With their interventions and resource distribution, donor agencies can have a positive or negative impact on these structures, widening or tightening the scope for peaceful relationships on local level. The following box illustrates some possible negative impacts of project interventions on the structural relations:

Negative impacts of project interventions on the structural relations: Examples from the Northeast of Sri Lanka

- *In the Northeast of Sri Lanka development intervention on community level might stimulate conflicts between ethnic groups living in the same village (e.g. Tamils and Muslims), through selecting only one group as target group of their support.*
- *Project interventions might create attacks of the LTTE on Sinhalese farmer settlements, when resources are channelled mainly in Sinhalese areas.*
- *Project interventions might create conflicts on household level when women groups start income-generating activities, which were pre-dominantly activities of men.*

Project interventions are furthermore often confronted with community based conflicts, which have their roots in the specific security or war situation, like for example conflicts between village inhabitants and inhabitants of a refugee camp, living closed to the village. In the first stage all these social conflict are often non-violent, but with a potential for violent escalation. They need to be addressed by the project, through promotion of conditions that create spaces for dialogue, cooperative relationships and mechanisms for non-violent conflict-management. Often these conflicts are perceived and treated as pure conflicts on resources while the aspects of identity and recognition is neglected.

We will now look into the scope of action and spaces for manoeuvre donor agencies have in facilitating empowerment processes within complex emergencies, without negatively impacting on the agency and structural components of the violent conflict.

The key question for development agencies is how to deliver support services and advice, and how to interact with the actors in the local conflict arena in order to do no harm (Anderson 1999), or even in order to contribute to conflict transformation on a local scale. Are empowerment processes within community development suitable to contribute to conflict transformation and thereby strengthen ‘local capacities for peace’? One underlying hypothesis of the local capacities for peace approach is that a society in conflict has to re-learn non-violent conflict mitigation mechanisms and to re-establish related institutional

arrangements. Participatory approaches to community development could support such processes by rebuilding local groups and institutions for self-help.

Facilitating participatory and empowerment processes on community level in complex emergencies, relief and development oriented donor agencies

- encourage the creation of platforms for discussions (e.g. during the PRA-workshop)
- promote the initiation or strengthening of community based organisations
- facilitate the creation of democratic procedures (e.g. through forming committee for CBO-Management)
- promote the integration of certain interest groups within the village development process (e.g. through the encouragement of women's groups, youth groups etc.)

Considering the impact of experiencing a protracted war has had on the people, it becomes clear that introducing participatory and empowerment approaches will not be an easy task. People in conflict areas are often deprived from any decision-making, which affects their daily lives. Especially refugees and internally displaced persons depend on relief for a long period. They are reduced to passive recipients of welfare. In many cases, this has created a 'dependency syndrome'. People can exercise only very limited decision-making power concerning their own lives. Refugee camps often set strict rules. Humanitarian agencies provide relief only under certain conditions. Warlords and those who hold the monopoly of violence impose their decisions and regime on the population. Re-integrating people into development processes on the local level can be an entry point to re-establish institutional arrangements of civil society and people's participation at the community level.

Sachithanandam describes how peoples participation was encouraged within a microcredit and savings project and democratic procedures where integrated into the newly founded community based saving organizations. An elected executive committee was made responsible for the decisions concerning financial matters, projects and beneficiaries. In the procedures of the committee, different democratic mechanisms, such as regular feed-back mechanism, supervision and rotating leadership had to be developed step by step, which helped to overcome intra organizational conflicts. Women were encouraged to actively participate in the committee. The building of a community based saving organization, with adequate checks and balances on power relations of the various functional bodies, and elected committees helped that the participation of members increased tremendously and a sense of ownership developed amongst the members of the organization (Sachithanandam, 1996, p. 206). Still the process of awareness raising requires enormous material and human resources over a long period of time, and the outcomes are often not sustainable, due to changing ground conditions, e.g. security situations, which might force people to leave their homes from today to tomorrow. It is therefore questionable whether such efforts are worthwhile or are rather an exercise which resembles that of building sand castles. Some authors would argue that it is still of use, as people have learned to build up their own community based democratic institutions - with a committed leadership, which has learned some managerial skills and knowledge of community and governance structures – which they can rebuild after the tense situations have calmed down.

There are other example, which are rather pointing to the unintended impacts of local empowerment processes and institutional building on community level. Klem describes a saving project of the Dutch NGO 'ZOA', working in 'uncleared' (LTTE-controlled) area of Trincomalee District. While the project intended to empower the most vulnerable war affected poor through a saving and revolving fund component, it later on discovered the influence and power of the LTTE on the initiated village saving organization. Funds were used for other development projects which had not been identified by the saving committees, but were rather imposed by the LTTE. The participatory decision making process of the saving groups were vanished through imposed decisions of the LTTE. The facilitating donor agency, is seeing itself in the dilemma of indirectly strengthening the LTTE (agency) while aiming at facilitating empowerment of local groups and structures. The alternative – breaking off the

saving component – is also no solution as it would leave the war-affected groups dis-empowered and vulnerable.

Another example of Klem is that the threats of armed groups, like army or LTTE, have often more influence on the social structures between communities than any project intervention can have. One example from a refugee camp in Trincomalee showed that camp inhabitants were supported by local communities when they demonstrated at the army camp to get the dead bodies of their relatives released, which had been shot by the army, suspected to be LTTE. The army reacted with threatening the local population, that every young man who would be seen on the street after 6.00 p.m. would be shot. As a result of this threat the local community was not any more willing to support the refugee camp inhabitants - the social relations between these two groups deteriorated and hostilities occurred after the village community faced trouble with the army, for which they blamed the refugee inhabitants. The question arises whether empowerment processes are possible in situations of threat and in situation of hierarchical and authoritarian power structures. The local population which is supposed to get empowered will rather feel dis-empowered and the scope for maneuvers tightens. In an environment of violence, empowerment processes of local population might look like playing with the fire. Goodhand & Lewer (1999) observed in the war-torn area of Sri Lanka that local leaders, social entrepreneurs, are intimidated by violence and the inherent risks of being killed or injured. They are therefore careful to expose themselves as local leaders and to become too noticeable, since such an exposure might make them more vulnerable to militant groups. Conflict parties will be carefully observing who initiates which processes in their particular sphere of influence.

Experience from war-torn Sri Lanka shows that development agencies have to be careful to balance the interests of the different parties to the conflict while still following their own objectives, such as poverty alleviation, food security or self-help promotion. This often involves a bargaining process with those groups who possess the means of power and monopoly of violence in certain areas. Nevertheless, agencies should also be clear where there is their line of exiting: How far are they ready to compromise? At what point are they doing more harm than good, through stabilising specific groups in power? It has to be carefully considered which groups are supported and which are left out. In the particular environments of complex political emergencies, it might be necessary to drop a needs oriented approach (supporting the poorest regardless of ethnicity) instead of a more ethnically balanced approach (Bauer, Bigdon and Korf 2000).

Considering the dilemmas project interventions have to face working in complex emergencies, Klem (2001) recommends an “*educated pragmatism*”. *Basically, this means taking a feasible position on a case to case basis (pragmatic), while taking the relevance and complexity of the issues into account (educated)*. The important aspect is, that donor agencies are aware of the dilemmas and are carefully deciding where to take a compromise or where to stick to their formulated core values.

Due to the unpredictable nature of the conflict situation projects need to have a flexible, Sachithanandam would call it “unstructured approach”, which allows them to respond to different immediate needs of the target groups under changing conditions (Sachithanandam, 1996, p. 206). This again might be difficult to combine with the management logic of donor agencies, which makes flexible handling rather difficult.

The ultimate aim of community development should be to strengthen institutional arrangements for bargaining and negotiating appropriate and inclusive solutions for collective action, which also provide opportunities for vulnerable groups to voice their interests. Furthermore, it is essential to assess which institutions are strengthened by interventions at the expense of other institutions. Building new structures of community-based organisation can weaken other institutions on village level, such as traditional authorities or official institutions of local governance. It is essential to look into their role within the conflict set-up.

Are they potential capacities for peace? Could they be reformed to be more inclusive, e.g. offering space for disadvantaged groups as well?

An important aspect of introducing participatory and empowerment approaches within development aid is the role of the facilitators or social mobilisers. To support empowerment processes, a facilitator sometimes needs to act as a mediator mitigating between different interest groups in the village. This necessitates to balance inequalities in capabilities of communicating and negotiating in public forums, and to support vulnerable groups to defend their cause, while trying to keep a neutral, and commonly accepted role. It is essential that a community facilitator gains the trust and acceptance of the different stakeholders in the village. In complex political emergencies, all domestic staff members will have some sort of link to one side or the other in the conflict, be it due to their affiliation to one ethnic group or social class, or to certain political parties. In nepotistic regimes and many civil wars, conflict parties or powerful stakeholders interfere in community processes and have their own representatives and interests on local level. Facilitators therefore have limited power or just fear to challenge those actors in the bargain with specific contacts to 'political patrons' or warlords. The conflict management skills required from the facilitators are often underestimated and need to be build up through regular training and supervision.

Having discussed some aspects of the nexus between participation, empowerment and conflict transformation as well as conceptual and practical problems of the participatory and empowerment approaches within community development, we start a preliminary attempt to assess potentials and limitations of these approaches with regard to their role in conflict transformation and local capacity for peace building. It is clear that this assessment cannot claim to be comprehensive, nor would we like it to be utilised as a blueprint for fieldwork. The points considered in the following table are mainly based on experiences of development co-operation in the war zone of Sri Lanka and reflect the particular contextual factors of this complex political emergency.

Participatory and Empowerment Approaches with Regard to their Impact on Local Conflict Transformation.

Potentials	Constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participatory methods support transparency in decision-making on community level. ▪ Participatory village workshops (PRA) can provide platforms where different strategic and social groups can voice their positions. Thus community development can support local bargaining and negotiation processes. ▪ Participation can contribute to (re-) establish local institutional arrangements and social capital as an asset for building 'local capacities of peace'. ▪ Participatory processes establish a culture of 'talking' as opposed to a culture of violence or patronage. ▪ Empowerment processes can strengthen vulnerable groups and create a common identity as a basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bargaining processes for project resources or recognition on community level carry the inherent danger of stimulating new conflicts or of increasing conflict potentials (do-harm) ▪ Local (field) staff and community facilitators can be part of the problem: as part of the societal system, they are biased (or are perceived by others of being so) towards social, ethnic or political groups and movements. ▪ Transparency in negotiation processes is not easy to promote in all cultural settings. Authoritarian or hierarchical systems can discourage communicative processes. Interference in cultural traditions, on the other hand, can easily be perceived as 'colonial' imposition of westernised ideas. ▪ In many countries, patronage systems provide social security to vulnerable people: poor depend on support from the

<p>for voicing own interests and needs (advocacy).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community development through participatory processes can create or (re-) establish links between different levels of the governance system (poor and rich, service providers and communities, different administrative levels). ▪ Social Mobilisers, being agency staff, can act as external observers. This can contribute to stabilise ground conditions on community level and reduce the incidence of human rights violations in protracted conflicts. 	<p>local leaders in times of distress. Empowerment could loosen these bonds without providing proper alternatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do losers of bargaining react? Those who feel that they did not get enough of the share can threaten to instrumentalise one of the conflict parties or political patrons. ▪ Vested interests of conflict entrepreneurs might counteract initiatives for collective action and empowerment. Conflict parties in a civil war might not be interested in having 'empowered' villagers or impose decisions on the village groups, which undermine their autonomy.
<p>Ambivalence</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment of some can lead to 'disempowerment' of others (gender, class, ethnicity, caste). Who is then loser and who is winner of donor interventions? • Power asymmetries within donor agencies (expatriate versus local staff) are rather counter productive to induce and sustain local empowerment processes. • Participation can support conflict solving, but can also induce new conflicts or worsen existing tension. • Technical co-operation agencies often regard themselves as apolitical service institutions. They might be careful to follow a participatory approach, which involves them too much in local and regional power struggles, since this might exceed their (political) mandate. ▪ Every actor in a socio-political system is to some extent partial. Development agencies often work through counterpart institutions: to which party in a conflict are they affiliated (e.g. government being perceived as 'enemy' by certain groups)? Do certain social or ethnic groups dominate an organisation? By choosing some and omitting others, they might 'coding' good and bad among the local institutions (Schlichte 2000). 	

VI. Conclusion: Empowerment Facilitators - Development Agencies as Political Actors in Complex Emergencies

In this article we discussed in how far development agencies as political actors can intervene in complex emergencies and contribute towards empowerment of certain groups and development of local communities – promoting inclusive citizenship.

We have discussed the theoretical underpinnings of common participatory and empowerment approaches within development projects and raised the questions whether the management logic of donor agencies is fitting together with the 'logic of (local) empowerment' stressed by the conflict transformation discourse. The practical implementation of the participatory and empowerment approaches – like PRA or social mobilisation – show the often instrumental understanding of these originally emancipatory approaches. Empowerment is often reduced to integrating people into the planning and implementation of donor projects.

Within complex emergencies the scope for participatory and empowerment approaches has to be carefully scrutinised. We illustrated potentials and constraints, success-stories, 'doing-harm-stories' and common dilemmas of donor interventions within complex emergencies.

Having especially these dilemmas in mind, we still found it necessary to stress how important it is for donor agencies which are focussing on conflict transformation to consciously promote empowerment processes and the rebuilding of local democratic institutions, through a strategy of 'educated pragmatism'.

Democratisation enables the population to articulate its needs and interests and to protect the rights and interests of marginalised groups, and the most vulnerable. (...) Donor assistance in this area should be used as part of a wider promotion of just and sustainable development, providing vulnerable and disadvantaged groups with knowledge about their human and legal rights, as well as the rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship (OECD 1997, p. 30, 40)

Empowerment approaches of donor interventions should incorporate much more aspects of recognition to support the development of an inclusive citizenship. Processes of recognition have to be facilitated beyond the borders of the village community. Donor projects need to find ways to link the project interventions on local level with the meso-level of local government institutions and NGOs, considering the macro dimension of the conflict context for the overall strategy of intervention. Facilitating dialogue forums and promoting co-operative networks on regional level could stimulate processes of empowerment and recognition, which, in turn, are an entry point for the transformation of some causes of the macro conflict.

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