Broadening the discussion: Reflections and reactions

Corinna Hauswedell

I hope and believe that the Belfast Seminar on Monitoring and the resulting collection of papers will help to explore promising approaches of combining both academic and political aspects of monitoring and dealing with change in diverse societies.

When I was asked to contribute an international perspective, having contributed that perspective to the launches of the first and second Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report (NIPMR) in 2012 and 2013, I initially considered bringing this time a purely German perspective, as one example of a diverse society. That could have meant sharing some of the many ramifications of East and West Germans trying to cohabit without the wall from the Cold War- now removed for 24 years, and in addition, Germany's struggle to come to terms with having become a central European country of immigration – actually by denying the implications of this fact for more than two decades on the part of most German politicians.

Then again, I did not find all of that really close enough to my own domain or expertise, so I accepted my initial brief. You might say that the mainstream of German peace and conflict research has not yet adopted those areas exhaustively enough into their own issues of concern. Which, as a matter of fact, brings me already to **my first set of questions** for discussion:

I. Do we use the same denominators of *diversity* and *sharing* in violent and non-violent settings? Ranking the indicators?

We tend to understand diversity and sharing in societies as, most notably, being a matter or result of conflict, and even more of violent conflict, and respectively a requirement rather of post-conflict peacebuilding than of conflict prevention. But is that so?

What do, for instance, school children in Sweden, Germany, France or the US who shoot their classmates or adopt racist forms of harassment have in common with a young gang member in Rio dealing drugs, or with a Belfast youth who is caught in the paramilitary structures of his or hers families history, or again

with barely demobilized, but traumatized adolescent soldiers in so called post-conflict environments of many West African countries, in Afghanistan or the Balkans?

There may be common denominators of division and sharing, no matter whether a society is or has been riven by violent conflict, or it experiences comparatively safe and democratic conditions. However, accuracy and differentiation are required if we want to address the possibility of valuable comparison.

* What do we mean when we, like in the Shared Societies Project, try to define 'stability' as one of the core goals? Does stability necessarily lead to a higher degree of sharing? What if for example, a power-sharing model on the surface does provide a certain degree of stability but fails to provide in-depth equality and cohesion?

* How does the NIPMR's indicator number one, 'sense of security', relate to and play into the other three indicators, 'equality', 'political progress' and 'cohesion'? Do we need to identify any kind of ranking, hierarchy, priority or sequencing between these indicators?

My own background with respect to these issues is among other things shaped by the annual German Peace Report *Friedensgutachten* of which I have been a co-editor and author for more than ten years. Our approach is more tailored around qualitative than around quantitative terms of monitoring, and more often focused on the international aspects of peace and security, power balances and democracy between states rather than within societies, although we do include in-country studies alongside selected focal points of reference. Our overall goal is to monitor the role and involvement of the EU's and, in particular, Gemany's foreign policies, and promote critical recommendations vis-à-vis policymaking in Berlin and Brussels.

This year, the main focus of the report was on *New wars, new armament and new arms markets* – i.e. the build up of a new 'hardware'-driven security setting in the international arena and the underlying varied economic and political factors and interests. A second chapter dealt with peace processes, selecting the Balkans, Columbia and Sudan/ South Sudan as examples of roads of success and failure. Also, we cast an analytical spotlight on the deeply divided society of war-torn Syria, discussing critically the various forms of possible intervention.[1]

Against this background let me raise my **second set of questions** for our discussion:

II. Can we identify areas of politics which serve the international as well as the domestic levels of diversity and sharing?

International and domestic expressions of diversity intertwine: the global need for shared approaches on the one hand, and the asymmetries and inequalities mirrored within our societies, on the other.

- How can the need for both immediate terms of safety and sustainable human security approaches be matched? Is tackling the root causes of social disparities between regions and within countries a prerequisite for sustainable peace?

- How do new hardware aspects of security, such as the build-up of high-tech weaponry (such as drones, cyberwar etc.) and the privatisation of security relate to the software aspects, such as enemy images reflected in the mindsets, attitudes and perceptions of people?

I am suggesting that we try to identify those overarching areas of politics which link international and domestic conditions of diversity, and where pragmatic approaches towards security can be best met with the normative appeal for sharing:

A crucial issue, in my opinion, is **immigration**, which we should not leave to the destructive discourse of right wing populism. Learning to accept migration and immigration as an almost natural process and response to changing environments (incidentally, throughout history) would help to also understand and acknowledge that diversity in most local contexts is rather a growing norm than the exception any more. Discussing mutual benefits for both ends of a migration context and including the moral responsibilities of those whose lives are economically better off could trigger a new perspective even for those who, at this point, feel comfortably furnished in the 'Fortress of Europe'. The 'Frontex' system of the EU is born out of a security concept which is set up against neighbouring states and societies – in all senses the opposite of a sharing approach.

That brings me to my **third set of questions**:

III. Monitoring for whom? Addressing those in need and those in charge

In my opinion, we don't want this to be a mere academic effort of developing indicators and parameters in order to monitor societal change. And I guess that others more occupied with the detail of social science methodologies will bring up questions like the validity, credibility and evaluation of data etc. also in relation to attitude surveys, opinion polls etc.

From my own experience of peace reporting in Germany, I am concerned with the fact that we still have a long way to go to bridge the gaps that are still existing between what has been cooked in the various kitchens of civil societies including scholars, and the preparedness and capability to digest it in the sphere of policy making.

- Which new forums of dialogue can we think of when it comes to promoting fruitful and productive strategies based on lessons learned on both levels: the realms of political decision making and the grass root levels of those struggling with diversity and sharing on the grounds?

I strongly believe, and I think I have said this on the occasions of the NIPMR launchings before, that in the frameworks of the EU, the Northern Irish example and the NIPMR in particular, has a unique role to play – and Paul and his colleagues have already done an excellent job of opening up roads for communication about this. But we do have to think of exploring more:

- How can we incorporate monitoring diversity and peace building, and comparative learning, more firmly on the institutional level of the relevant EU programmes, and also between the civil society structures of the countries at stake?

Many questions and I think I will leave them open for further reflections.

Notes

[1] For more information on the *Friedensgutachten 2013*, please visit: http://www.friedensgutachten.de/index.php/id-2013-277.html; for quantitative measuring see also BICC's Global Militarization Index: http://www.bicc.de/program-areas/project/project/global-militarization-index-gmi-43