"Monitoring Change in Diverse Societies"
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Broadening the discussion: reflections and reactions

First of all, many thanks go to Paul and Clem for setting this up and inviting me to the seminar which, I hope and believe, will help to explore promising approaches of combining both, academic and political aspects of monitoring and dealing with change in diverse societies.

When Paul Nolan ask me to contribute here with a broadening kick off, again after having me here for the launches of the Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report (NIPMR) I and II in 2012 and 2013 with an international perspective, I initially considered to bring this time a purely German perspective as one of the in-country examples for diverse societies. That could have meant sharing with you some of the many ramifications of East and West Germans trying to cohabit without the Cold-War- wall now for 24 years, and in addition, Germany's struggling of comimg 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 side of most German politicians.

Then again, all of that I did not find really close enough to my own domain or expertise – you might say that the mainstream of German peace and conflict research has not yet adopted these 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 our discussion here in the coming two days:

I. 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 kids in Sweden, Germany, France or the US who shoot their classmates or go for racist forms of harrassment have in common with a young gang member in Rio

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dealing drugs, or with a Belfast kid 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 driven by violent conflict, or experiences comparatively safe and democratic conditions. However, accuracy and differentiation are required if we want to address cases 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 NI PMR's indicator number one „ sense of security" relate to and play into the other three indicators being „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 this seminar's perspective is among other things shaped by the annual German Peace Report *'Friedensgutachten'* which I have been a co-editor and author of for more than ten years now. Our approach is more tailored around qualitative than around quantitative terms of monitoring, and more often around the international aspects of peace and security, power balances and democracy between states than within societies, although we do include in-country studies along 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 processees, picking the Balkans, Columbia and Sudan as examples for roads of success and failure. Also, we casted an analytical spotlight on the deeply divided society of war torn Syria, discussing critically the various forms of possible interventions.[2]

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[2]   For more information on the *Friedensgutachten 2013*, please visit:

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

II. Identifying 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 needs 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 one, in my oppinion, being the **issue of 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 (by the way, throughout history) would help to also understand and acknowledge that diversity in most local contexts is rather a growing norm than the exception anymore. Discussing mutual benefits for both ends of an migration context and including the moral responsibilities of those who's 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 means the opposite of a sharing approach.

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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

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 here in the room more occupied with the rubs 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 ways to go to bridge the gaps that are still existing between what has been cooked in the various kitchens of civil societies including the scholars, and the preparedness and capability in the sphere of policy making to digest it.

> * Which new forums of dialogue can we think of when it comes to promoting fruitful and productive lessons learned strategies 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 PMR in particaular, has a unique role to play – and Paul, you and your colleagues have done already 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. I think I will leave it with that for now, and thank you all very much for your attention.