

## **Chapter 9**

### **Peacebuilding, Hegemony and Integrated Social Development: the UNDP in Travnik**

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#### **Introduction**

This chapter is based on a case study of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Integrated Resettlement Project implemented in the Central Bosnian town of Travnik from April 1997 to the present. It is not a detached, outsider analysis, nor could it be as the authors are, respectively, the former Project Manager and a Consultant to the project on Participatory Evaluation. Instead, the chapter explores the ways in which the project was explicitly designed and implemented as a particular kind of approach to post-conflict regeneration which could be of wider interest.

The chapter begins with a brief definition of peacebuilding, in line with much of the thinking developed elsewhere in this volume but, also, seeking to understand social processes through linking concepts of peacebuilding, hegemony and social development. The introductory section also notes how this definition has been applied in practice, in post-Yugoslav countries, in two projects which are, in many ways, precursors of the Travnik scheme. A longer second section presents a case study of the Travnik project, addressing elements which are innovative in terms of agency interventions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. A tentative final section seeks to discuss the wider relevance of the scheme, in terms of the broad concerns of this book and also in terms of debates within UNDP.

#### **Defining peacebuilding**

In our work, we have sought explicitly to link in new ways the three elements of peacebuilding, hegemony and integrated social development. Above all, we are concerned not to see peacebuilding as a discrete project component, nor to develop simply an inventory approach to peacebuilding, in which projects consist of a mixture of the same, familiar, elements with ever decreasing thought about why they are there.

Hegemony, derived from Gramsci's work, refers to the forms of consent which develop within a society between dominant groups and wider social forces. It suggests the need to understand conflict and post-conflict societies as highly complex structures rather than as, simply, places where war-mongering 'hard-liners' have ensured the acquiescence of the population. The possibility of challenging a particular hegemony, through the development of counter-hegemony, is a crucial aspect of peacebuilding. It refers to an understanding of the spaces for manoeuvre rather than an assumption that all has to be changed fundamentally.

Integrated social development is a concept which UNDP, for example, has used and sought to implement over a long period of time, combining good governance, physical reconstruction, and economic and social development. The argument that human needs should be met in a way which provides for the well-being of the entire population, with particular concern for the most vulnerable, necessitates a concern with social justice at local, national, regional and global levels. In a sense, integrated social development involves an attempt to combine diverse elements to maximise social well-being. Seeking to avoid situations where some groups benefit at the expense of others means that the concept could also be termed integrative social development. Johann Galtung's notion of 'structural violence,' itself highly influential in the formulations of Boutros Boutros Ghali's *An Agenda for Peace*<sup>1</sup> which first gave prominence to peacebuilding within the UN, remains a clear formulation of the link between peacebuilding and social development.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter, and in our work generally, then, we suggest that *peacebuilding is a strategy, based on an analysis of hegemonic forces, the goal of which is integrated and integrative social development in a post-conflict society*. Without integrated social development, peacebuilding remains a somewhat empty concept, unlikely in itself to be of wider interest within a community. Integrated social development, without peacebuilding, is simply a technical intervention which can, itself, contribute to structures which generate conflict. The analysis of hegemonic forces helps to determine a strategy and a process through which a project will operate, and to understand its impact. The case study of the Travnik project seeks to demonstrate the value of this definition in a specific instance.

### **Antecedents of the Travnik project**

Two initiatives within the mass of peacebuilding projects in post-Yugoslav countries need to be noted as precursors of the UNDP Travnik Project, and as pioneering attempts to involve part of the UN structures in grassroots peacebuilding. The first initiative was a Volunteer Social Reconstruction Project in Pakrac, a divided town in the Western Slavonia region of Croatia with one part of the town under Croat control and the other part in the area controlled by Serbs (the self-styled Republic of Serbian Krajina). The project, which began in 1993, involved collaboration between the Anti-War Campaign, Croatia (ARK) and the United Nations Department of Development Support and Management Services (UNDDSMS, now UNDESA), based in Vienna.

Essentially the Project, led by two Croatians and a Dutch peace activist, used the model of an international work camp in which foreign volunteers spent short periods in Pakrac, undertaking a range of tasks including physical reconstruction. Over time, some of the international volunteers made longer-term commitments, initiating a range of social development and social reconstruction activities including: community visits to elderly and isolated people, a youth programme, children's activities, women's groups, an e-mail project with schools and a radio programme. The pioneering nature of the project attracted the interest of many experienced commentators, with Larry Minear noting that 'in its

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<sup>1</sup> Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace: preventive diplomacy, peace making and peace keeping*, New York: UN Dept. of Public Information, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Johan Galtung, 'Violence, War and the Aftermath'. Mimeo: War-torn Societies Project, 1995.

own make-up, the project ha[d] modelled the kind of community which ha[d] proven elusive in Pakrac itself.<sup>3</sup>

Those involved in the project during and immediately after the military actions of May 1995, which in a few days returned the whole of Western Slavonia to Croatian control and led to the exodus of most of the Serbian population, acted as important conduits of information and, perhaps, even guarantors of human rights, in a very difficult situation.<sup>4</sup> Whilst the project struggled on for a period, with ever decreasing funding, the recognition that the peacebuilding aims of the project had been overtaken by military action finally led to its closure in 1996. The long-term legacy of the project is actually more in terms of the trajectories of its founders, its core group of long-term volunteers, and its supporters, who have continued to be active, often working together, in a range of peacebuilding initiatives in the region.

One of the authors (Perice) a long term volunteer with the project, went on to initiate a similar volunteer peacebuilding project in Gornji Vakuf in Central Bosnia and then to manage the Travnik project for UNDP. Beginning in Summer 1995, the Gornji Vakuf project was a UNDDSMS initiative, working in a divided town with an invisible ceasefire line separating the Croatian-controlled side (renamed Uskoplje) from the Bosniak-controlled side. The components of the project, the involvement of international volunteers, physical and social reconstruction and community development initiatives, and so on, have been an explicit carry over from the Pakrac project. However, the Gornji Vakuf project was much less 'an experiment in living' and much more an attempt to professionalise service delivery aspects of the programme.

The project emphasised reconciliation and peacebuilding through physical reconstruction and social and community development, already beginning to conceptualise this as an integrated approach. It was explicitly concerned with negotiations with formal political leaders, not as a courtesy but as a crucial part of its peacebuilding work. In addition, it supported a range of informal community leaders who had alternative visions about the future of the town, thereby 'undercutting the dominant political culture of polarisation and division'.<sup>5</sup> The project pioneered an explicit promotion of local civil society groups, not as artificial project creations, but explicitly responding to the wishes of alternative community leaders in a town where municipal structures were not functioning. Moreover, the perceived success of the approach led to the development of the Travnik project.

## **The Travnik project**

### *The Central Bosnia Canton*

Travnik is located in, and is the county town of, the Central Bosnian Canton. Central Bosnia was devastated by two wars: between Serbs and Croat/Bosniak forces from 1992 to 1995; and between

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<sup>3</sup> Larry Minear, 'Reconciliation Across Borders: an experiment in Croatia', mimeo: Local Capacities for Peace Project, 1995, p.17.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Stubbs, *Social Reconstruction and Social Development in Croatia and Slovenia: the role of the NGO sector*, ISPRU Occasional Paper no. 7, University of Leeds, 1996, ch.3.

<sup>5</sup> David Shorr, 'Report on Search for Common Ground Assessment Mission', unpublished ms, 1996.

Croat and Bosniak forces from 1993 to 1994. Levels of destruction in the Canton are immense, even by Bosnian standards. According to the International Management Group, almost 59 per cent of the housing stock was damaged beyond habitation. Massive damage was caused to the water and power supplies. Social and other infrastructure assets – schools, health centres, roads, and so on – were also devastated. The Canton estimates the cost of a first phase of reconstruction, to support a limited returns process, at approximately US\$50 million.

Central Bosnia was one of the most ethnically mixed areas of the country prior to the outbreak of the war, with significant populations of the three main ethnic groups as well as a significant Roma population and those who declared themselves as Yugoslav. During the wars, almost the entire Serb population left the Canton, mostly to Republika Srpska, to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, or to countries outside the region. Significant numbers of the other nationalities left as refugees. A specific feature of the situation is that some 80,000 displaced persons were internally displaced within the Canton itself – both Croats from Bosniak areas, and Bosniaks from Croat areas.

The Croat-Bosniak fighting left nine of the eleven municipalities physically divided between the opposing armies. The Washington Agreement of March 1994 established the Muslim-Croat Federation including Central Bosnia Canton as a Canton under a special administrative regime. The physical and social reconstruction of Central Bosnia has long been considered absolutely vital to the survival of the Federation, and in that sense to the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a whole. However, the Washington Agreement has never been fully implemented: areas administered under the flag of Croat controlled Herceg-Bosna duplicate all public services and maintain separate political and economic institutions. The Canton remains weak, starved of funds by its paymasters in Sarajevo and Mostar, and unable to wrest political control from the municipalities.

#### *Origins of the project*

In Autumn 1996, the EU approached UNDP in Bosnia-Herzegovina asking whether it had ideas about facilitating the speedy repatriation of refugees from member states of the Union. A proposal, drafted by one of us (Peirce), was submitted to Brussels in October 1996 and received a positive response, informally, towards the end of the year. Contracts were signed in April 1997. The nature of the project developed from many different considerations. First, it was made clear that the EU was beginning to realise that there was a need to complement housing with infrastructure repairs, as people were reluctant to return home without power or water supplies. Second, this would be the first collaboration between the EU and UNDP in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and would require some UNDP cost sharing. Hence, a project was proposed which utilised EU funds of some US\$4.7 million to fund a physical reconstruction programme, and UNDP funds of some US\$800,000 to fund a range of so-called 'software' initiatives aimed at creating a social environment conducive to the returns process. These initiatives included a Legal Advice and Information Centre for returnees and the wider community; a civil society development sub-project to include grants and training; provision of agricultural micro-credits; and the establishment of a Participatory Evaluation Unit within the project to serve as a programming tool. The parallel EU and UNDP projects were both envisaged for eighteen months duration. Central Bosnia was proposed as the target area to capitalise on previous knowledge from the Gornji Vakuf project. In addition, attention was focused on the returns process for Croats and Bosniaks, and relations between these two groups specifically; empowering the Canton authorities

and furthering the Federation.

### *Why Travnik?*

The original project proposal specifies Central Bosnia Canton as the target area for intervention. The choice of concentrating all resources in Travnik municipality was made only in the Spring of 1997, after much additional research in the area. There were a number of reasons for this. First, a pilot project for the return of Croats had been completed by UNHCR without major incident. Second, Travnik had been a transit centre during the war for refugees leaving the country. This meant that there were more refugees to return to Travnik than to other municipalities. Third, as the capital of the Canton, minority return to Travnik would have disproportionately significant symbolic effects. Fourth, Travnik had a quite specific political significance in terms of Croat-Bosniak peacebuilding and, particularly, in relation to the strategy of the ruling Croat party, the HDZ.

This last point requires some careful explanation. As already noted, the Washington Agreements halted the war but were not fully implemented. The political administration of the Croatian para-state of Herceg-Bosna remains a reality. In this sense, the politics of hegemony of central Bosnia are largely concerned with the definition and protection of an ethnically homogenous, contiguous land mass under HDZ control. The land mass stretches up to, and has as its border, parts of Travnik municipality, taking in the area known as Nova Bila. Many Croats, displaced from other areas of the municipality, took refuge in Nova Bila. However, most of the municipality, including many previously predominantly Croat villages, remains under Bosniak control. The HDZ response has been to demonise the Travnik authorities with a fierce propaganda campaign (amplified in the Croatian media in both Bosnia and Croatia), designed to discourage potential returnees. Just as Serb returns to the Federation undermine the legitimacy, or *raison d'être*, of Republika Srpska, so Croat returns to areas outside of Herceg-Bosna control undermines the political, social and financial hegemony of that part of the HDZ known as the 'Herzegovina lobby', whose power base is in Herzegovina in the South West of Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as in the Croatian diaspora and in sections of the ruling elite in Zagreb.

Culturally, there are a number of Croatian identities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, not only Herzegovinan. Indeed, the argument that the Croat-Bosniak war in Bosnia-Herzegovina traded the interests of Croats in Central Bosnia for those in Herzegovina is a persuasive one.<sup>6</sup> Specifically, Central Bosnia has a very proud and separate tradition. One of the key prisms through which this difference can be seen is the Franciscan Church. Central Bosnian Franciscans argue openly for a Bosnian Catholic identity not the Croatian nationalist identity beloved of those who make up the Herzegovinan wing of the Church. Historically, Travnik is at the heart of this Central Bosnian Croat identity, with one of the oldest and largest Franciscan monasteries in Bosnia in the village of Guca Gora. Returning Croats to Guca Gora became one of the key internal targets for the project.

### *The project design*

The central idea of the project was to build houses for displaced persons occupying the homes of refugees, thus freeing accommodation and bringing refugee returnees back to Travnik. Many of these

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<sup>6</sup> Laura Silber and Alan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, London: Penguin, 1995.

are Croats whose houses were occupied by internally displaced Bosniaks from the villages. These displaced persons would have their houses rebuilt in the villages, thus establishing a chain or a two-for-one solution to the problem of reconstruction and return. Hence, most Croats would return to Travnik town where the security situation was better than in the villages. These returnees would bring more open attitudes with them and help to recreate some of Travnik's multi-ethnic composition.

The political environment would, it was argued, be further improved by the relocation of displaced persons to the villages, since the presence of people from a rural background in the urban centres had been an inhibiting factor politically. Moreover, the methodology avoided raising social tensions between refugee returnees and the resident and internally displaced population since the latter would be seen to be benefiting directly, also. Finally, such a scheme would not compromise the need of the elected authorities in Travnik, drawn from the ruling Bosniak SDA (Party of Democratic Action), to be seen as prioritising the needs of internally displaced Bosniaks.

#### *Co-operation with the municipality*

Axiomatic to the project was the assumption that most international agencies working on reconstruction and return suffered from bad relations or lack of co-operation with local authorities. This derived primarily from a lack of consultation over project design and implementation. In particular, agencies were imposing their own criteria for beneficiary selection which reflected broader international concerns, but which paid little regard to local social and political priorities. A case in point was the UNHCR pilot projects for ethnic minority return which failed to recognise that it is electoral suicide for the mayor of any municipality to agree to reconstruction programmes targeted solely at minorities, whilst the majority population remains displaced and in poverty. The fact that the agency programme may be ethnically balanced across Bosnia-Herzegovina as a whole does nothing for the electability of a local mayor in a country where politics, as already noted above, is extremely localised.

The project deliberately chose therefore to work in partnership with the municipality of Travnik in the design and implementation of reconstruction activities. The municipality was subcontracted to provide technical documentation of all houses for reconstruction; to subcontract local companies to top up the labour of beneficiaries (this was primarily a self-help programme); to provide primary level monitoring of the reconstruction process; and to issue technical acceptance of houses completed.

Most importantly, beneficiary selection – albeit according to the criteria agreed between the municipality, UNDP and the EU – was to remain the responsibility of the municipality. The initial work of the Department of Refugees and Social Welfare in this field proved disappointing, and a clear problem of capacity emerged. Handling an estimated 25,000 cases, the Department consisted of just the Departmental Head and two secretaries, without a vehicle or computer. The Department was entirely reliant on presidents of local communities – *Mjesne Zajednice* (MZs) – for information regarding whose houses were destroyed and whose should be prioritised for reconstruction. Such information was rarely accurate and often corrupt. The project approach was to build the capacity of the Department to do the job better. UNDP provided resources – staff, equipment, vehicles – and technical assistance through a Sarajevo-based NGO, the Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues (IBHI).

It was considered important to leave beneficiary selection with local government because where to build and for whom provides the core of political debate. The project management felt that as long

as there were no changes to the criteria set for beneficiary selection, then within those criteria the municipality should be able to prioritise as it saw fit. This put responsibility for decisions back where it belonged, within the local administration. Clearly the pattern of villages chosen for reconstruction was politically inspired: in the beginning, villages in the Karaula area were preferred because of the high number of displaced persons from the area in Travnik town. Key Croat villages along a Bosniak military re-supply route to the east of the town were completely avoided. As confidence in the project was established, however, and the political situation improved, beneficiary selection became increasingly depoliticised.

Hence, the key philosophy behind project implementation has been simply to recognise the importance and impact of the project in the municipality, and to act accordingly. Whilst international agencies and NGOs may be right to eschew political involvement, they need to engage in political analysis framed in terms of hegemonic structures, and to recognise that there is nothing politically neutral about arriving in a small, devastated town with a budget three times that of the local government. The reconstruction of 520 houses, which the project aimed for (and will attain in the time allowed), involves some 2,200 internally displaced persons returning to their homes within the municipality, and some 2,000 refugee returnees. Such population movement plays havoc with enrolment lists for schools and makes planning the reconstruction of the health system awkward at best. UNDP became the second largest employer in the municipality, and provided a major economic stimulus through the local procurement of materials.

#### *The politics of the SDA in Travnik*

Hand in hand with this, the project was explicitly concerned to understand, and work with, the complex political realities of the ruling Bosniak-controlled SDA in Travnik. A recent analysis of returns to Jajce and Travnik, from the independent, influential analysts of the International Crisis Group (ICG), not only virtually ignored the UNDP Travnik project, by far the largest such reconstruction and return programme in the region, but also repeated certain broad political statements which are no more than half truths.<sup>7</sup> One of these is that the replacement of the war-time mayor of the town (who had organised the swift implementation of the UNHCR pilot project for minority Croat returns), by his Deputy, represented a hardening of attitudes by the SDA in Travnik.

The change occurred just as the project began to consult with the local authorities and both politicians were present at the first meeting with UNDP. The role of the new mayor has been badly misunderstood by most agencies and commentators. He clearly represented the technocratic wing of the SDA which at the time was subservient to hard-line members and to the president of the Travnik SDA Executive Committee. He was obstructionist when he was instructed to be so. By understanding the pressures and limits of his power, the project was able to avoid placing him in a position in which he would have to block and prevaricate. Essentially the approach was to give him and his fellow technocrats more power and control over the project, and to allow them to take the credit for it. This represented something of a gamble, but one that could not be avoided if the project was to succeed.

The split that emerged in the SDA in Travnik over the next few months was noticeably a city

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<sup>7</sup> International Crisis Group, 'A Tale of Two Cities: the return of displaced persons to Jajce and Travnik', Sarajevo: ICG, 3 June 1998.

versus country split, and as much about personalities as about policies, but paradoxically encompassing two very different visions of the future and of Bosnia. One vision was technocratic and urban, secular, multi-ethnic and European; the other was based less on vision than on the gut instinct of the villager. One aspect of the war which has been seriously underestimated is the affect of internal displacement on the political process. Most displaced persons come from villages which were mono-ethnic, and targeted by others for that reason. Their houses, livelihoods and support networks have been destroyed. In the alien environment of the town they have become a political constituency which cannot be ignored, and politically active in their own right. At the beginning of 1997, of the 21 de-facto municipalities of Central Bosnia Canton, 18 were run by mayors who were themselves displaced from villages rather than originally from the towns. Many more displaced persons have been appointed to positions of considerable power running municipal departments. Indeed in Travnik, the split within the SDA came to a head at one point over the appointment of department heads and counterparts for international organisations.

If the major issue for the displaced is the politics of return, the major issue for the technocrats is economic redevelopment. The technocrats were attracted to the project for a number of reasons, over and above the fact that they saw clearly the opportunity to remove the displaced from the town and thus deal with a major political threat. They also saw it as a significant concentration of resources by UNDP, a major player for the long-term, they liked the integrated nature of the project, and were open to hints about other components which might be added later. More generally, they understood the economics of return and, in particular, the fiscal stimulus which repatriation of refugees would bring.

Once up and running, the project had considerable political leverage given the resources it was bringing to the area and the job it was doing. By returning displaced persons to the villages and by forging an alliance between the technocrats and key business interests, the project contributed towards the political marginalisation of the so-called 'hard-liners', overwhelmingly displaced persons themselves. After a bitter internal power struggle in March 1998, the technocrats gained effective control of Travnik municipality with the support of the SDA in Sarajevo. The former mayor was appointed head of the SDA Executive Council, which was always where the real power lay.

The changes induced Croat-administered Nova Bila to formally wind itself up and integrate into the municipality. Croats were given important departments to head up, including reconstruction and return, finance and the president of the municipal assembly, and forced the resignation of the mayor. The ICG report fails to understand the complexities of the hegemonic struggles noted above. Suggesting that, with the appointment of a new mayor, 'the receptivity of the new leadership to minority return is still to be demonstrated',<sup>8</sup> this failure to understand the triumph of the technocrats, and their engagement with the UNDP project, is compounded.

#### *Human capital and the mobilisation of alternative community leaders*

Another crucial element of the peacebuilding nature of the project was the attempt to mobilise alternative community leaders, primarily through a civil society grants sub-project. This differed from many other schemes of local civil society development in Bosnia-Herzegovina, through its emphasis on traditional associations of citizens, sports and leisure associations, rather than the creation of

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.12.

artificial local NGOs.<sup>9</sup> The attempt to build 'social capital', and thus greater democratisation, in the medium and longer-term, is an important part of the Travnik project, addressing the wider social fabric beyond immediate questions of reconstruction and return. In addition, just as in Gornji Vakuf, the Travnik project played host to one of the Miramida series of trainings for emerging activists, run by the Centre for Peace Studies, a Zagreb-based local NGO, itself with antecedents in Volunteer Project, Pakrac. This brought together twenty alternative community leaders in Travnik, and allowed for networking with other activists and a space to think through their public position and capacity to act. Implicit in this was the support they would receive from UNDP. In itself, however, the civil society grants programme was not, at all, about creating an oppositional force within the locality but was much more concerned with widening opportunities for participation.

A crucial role has also been played by the core staff team of the project. The reconstruction staff were recruited deliberately from outside Travnik because of a fear that there would be too much pressure placed on local engineers. They were chosen as much for their social and political attitudes as for their engineering skills, and quickly came to share the philosophy and political strategy of the project. They chose the remainder of the reconstruction staff to fit in with the sense of mission that they themselves had developed in regard to the work they were doing. Most of the non-reconstruction staff are from Travnik, many of them known to the project manager from his time in Gornji Vakuf. They are all well known in the community for their liberal views. Like the reconstruction team, they have been drawn from different national groups and have developed, for the same reasons, a real stake in ensuring the success of the project.

Overall, as with the Pakrac and Gornji Vakuf projects, one of the strengths of the Travnik project has been a blurring of the differences between local and international staff, and between the project and community. The normal relations between provider and beneficiaries, as well as a hierarchical project structure, were dispensed with in favour of the creation of a team which crossed boundaries of staff, counterpart, beneficiary, and a team spirit which fostered a sense of local ownership and control. Office staff hijacked Tito's famous slogan from 1945 for use by the project: '*Nema odmora dok traje obnova*' (no holidays until the reconstruction is complete).

#### *Interaction with the community*

The strategy of immersion in the local community and of creating two-way channels for dialogue with the project arose for two main reasons. First, this approach was perceived to have been successful in Gornji Vakuf but under-utilised. It was considered a requirement in a project with such huge resources like Travnik – humanitarian work is no excuse for foreign organisations to arrive in an area unannounced to spend the equivalent of three years' budget for the local government. Second, there was donor insistence on visibility which the project turned from a chore, into a peacebuilding tool. An international volunteer was hired to act as Press and Information Officer. In addition to the regular press conferences, at which all aspects of the project were discussed, the project management gave a series of television and radio interviews. A fifteen minute video was shown on EuroNews, aimed at refugees in Germany, and a one-hour documentary was made for domestic consumption by TV

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<sup>9</sup> Ulla Engberg and Paul Stubbs, *Social Capital and Integrated Development*, GASPP and Plymouth International Paper No.11, (forthcoming).

Travnik. Leaflets in regard to the activities and approach of the project were produced and distributed around the town.

Within the UNDP office, a local NGO, the Centre for Civic Co-operation, was subcontracted to provide legal advice and information to returnee beneficiaries of the project and to the wider community. Seventy per cent of the queries were related to property rights; the remainder concerned access to government-run health, education, or social welfare services; employment rights; or problems with getting utilities re-connected. Apart from producing a series of leaflets, the Centre offered personal interviews, providing as much a counselling service as practical information and free legal advice. Beneficiaries were also able to meet with staff to discuss other issues, for instance how to access micro-credit from other agencies, or to check dates for material deliveries to their houses under reconstruction. The project tried to maintain an open face to the community at all times, from a highly visible location in the centre of town, again unlike the experience of local people with other large international agencies.

Linked to the Advice and Information Centre, the project established a unit of international volunteers and local staff established for the purpose of Monitoring and Participatory Evaluation. Monitoring consists of two elements: checks as to whether beneficiaries are fulfilling their contractual obligations, specifically moving out of temporary accommodation into their reconstructed homes according to the agreed time frame; and informal social mapping of other needs. Participatory evaluation has been considered essential both as a programming tool and as a model for participation itself; the idea of asking people what they want and how it can best be achieved is a prerequisite for achieving democratic accountability. The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit conducted hundreds of interviews with beneficiaries and with those who did not meet reconstruction criteria; with civil society groups to whom grants were awarded and with those who received nothing; with politicians and with alternative community leaders. Apart from the invaluable information and data gathered, the visible nature of the work earned a very different image for UNDP within the community, of an international organisation wanting to listen.

The corollary of wanting to listen to what people want, is wanting to deliver it when you know what they want. All of the major conclusions of the first participatory evaluation were acted upon in amendments to project methodology, or included in a proposal for a second tranche of EU funding. From the start of the project, the reconstruction methodology and standard were deliberately intended to be the best of any agency at work in the country. Costs per unit were kept within budget by maximising beneficiary input into the physical reconstruction, through: use of national UN volunteers as skilled workers, funded from a separate budget; fierce negotiations with labour contractors; and Bosnia-wide competitive bidding for materials. Construction supervisors were employed to visit each work site twice a day, and to check the quality of all building materials delivered. The size and regularity of contract awards gave UNDP considerable leverage over labour and material sub-contractors alike. Each house took an average of six weeks to reconstruct. Over one hundred and fifty would be under reconstruction at any one time. Whole villages were reconstructed in parallel, thus reducing operational constraints whilst increasing security and social life for returnees.

#### *Status and future prospects for the project*

In the highly competitive world of international agency involvement in reconstruction and return in

Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Travnik project has been widely regarded as one of the few successes. In late July 1998, the project was ahead of schedule: some 450 of 520 houses have been completed; over 1,800 refugees were in process of returning to their original homes from Germany and elsewhere in the EU; nearly 2,000 internally displaced persons within Travnik municipality had had their houses reconstructed. Gradually, the proportion of returnees from the minority Croat community had increased so that, by the end of the project, about 50 percent of the total beneficiaries (refugee returnees and direct displaced beneficiaries) will be Croat.

## **Post-conflict regeneration: the agency context**

### *Core components of integrated peacebuilding*

Whilst simply replicating the Travnik model on a wider scale would be problematic, there are a number of features of the approach which, we suggest, can be generalised in terms of understanding of post-conflict regeneration. We note five crucial aspects which, in different ways, are pertinent to all attempts to develop a peacebuilding strategy the goal of which is integrated social development.

#### *(1) A political economy of conflict and post-conflict societies*

The need to understand the structural context of the conflict and of the post-conflict environment is immensely important. Whilst both relativistic conflict resolution theories and some structuralist approaches tend, in different ways, to emphasise similarities between conflicts all over the globe, we reassert the need for a complex, historically informed, political economy approach to each conflict. One-dimensional explanations, in terms of revival of ethnic rivalries; the death of a strong leader; severe economic recession; and such like, are unconvincing explanations unless put together in a nuanced framework.

Clearly, conflict itself, and post-conflict regeneration, creates winners and losers and this must also be addressed in any analysis as part of a political economy of internal war.<sup>10</sup> It is rare to see 'such basic questions as widespread criminalisation of the economy and international criminal networks, competition for the control over resources and trading routes... economic survival strategies, [the] role and impact of the booming informal sector, (or) widespread corruption', being analysed, much less addressed specifically in post-conflict peacebuilding projects.<sup>11</sup> However, these issues are crucial determinants of whether such programmes will have any success or, simply, have multifarious unintended negative consequences.

#### *(2) Informal political processes*

It is clearly inadequate to understand the politics of post-conflict societies only in formal, party-based, terms. The importance of historical connections and animosities between different personalities

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<sup>10</sup> Giles Carbonnier, *Conflict, Postwar Rebuilding and the Economy: a critical review of the literature*, War Torn Societies Project Occasional Paper, no. 2, Geneva: UNRISD, 1998, p.16.

<sup>11</sup> But see Francois Jean and JeanChristophe Rufin (eds), *Economie de Guerres Civiles*, Paris: Hachette, 1996.

clearly plays a role. The labelling of politicians as 'hard' or 'soft' line is, also, clearly inadequate in terms of working with different politicians on peacebuilding. Indeed, the idea that power is increasingly privatised in post-communist, post-adjustment and post-conflict states is an important one, suggesting that dependence on the boss, or key personalities in the community can, later, become dependence on the warlord.<sup>12</sup> The fact that contemporary post-conflict political projects are less concerned with the transition to liberal democracy than 'the emergence of multiple and overlapping sovereignties in the context of weak central authority',<sup>13</sup> needs to be addressed in project formulation. Only through an understanding of hegemony can one address the possibility of challenging 'neo feudalism'.

### *(3) The impact of international agencies*

International agencies are never neutral in their interventions in post-conflict societies, however much they try to be. Understanding this impact, in terms of employment, salary structures, ideologies and so on, is vital. However, there is a danger of overstating the power of such agencies. Complex interactions occur between international and local actors in which meanings are changed and practices are never implemented in a straightforward way. Understanding these processes, and building them into project designs, is a crucial peacebuilding tool.

There is, certainly, increasing attention within the development literature given to the idea that international agencies can inadvertently fuel conflict. Mary Anderson's notion that agencies should try to 'do no harm'<sup>14</sup> has tended, actually, to lead to a reassertion of the value of developmental work rather than a fundamental reconsideration of how agencies should operate. Indeed, Mark Duffield has argued that agencies tend to operate on a natural disaster model which conceives of conflict as external to a social system.<sup>15</sup> We extend this argument to suggest that international agency interventions are rarely conceived as also structural components of a changing social system.

### *(4) Promoting peace capital*

Human and social capital can be a vital source of 'peace capital'<sup>16</sup> through the rebuilding of trust in post-conflict societies, through the role of staff employed by or linked to specific projects, and through the identification of alternative community leaders. This is much more complex than a crude understanding of 'civil society' or 'community participation' as good things *per se*. The embracing of the concept of civil society within development projects is, also, beginning to be subjected to critical scrutiny in the literature. Too often equating civil society with NGOs, the concept has come to be understood as 'the embodiment of favourable behavioural and attitudinal sentiments',<sup>17</sup> leading to an over emphasis on social processes rather than outcomes. Increasingly, then, 'good' civil society is

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<sup>12</sup> Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996; Mark Duffield, *Post-Modern Conflict: Warlords, Post-Adjustment States and Private Protection*, Life and Peace Institute Occasional Paper, Uppsala: LPI, 1998.

<sup>13</sup> Duffield (n.12 above), p.9.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Anderson, *Do No Harm: supporting local capacities for peace through aid*, CDA, 1996.

<sup>15</sup> Duffield, 'Global Security and Social Policy in Zones of Instability', paper presented to GASPP Seminar on Global Governance and Social Policy, Kellekoski, Finland, May 1998.

<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Goodhand, and David Hulme, *NGOs and Peacebuilding in Complex Political Emergencies: an introduction*, IDPM working paper, University of Manchester, 1997

counterposed to the 'bad' state and has been presented as the main agent of post-conflict regeneration. In contrast, the argument presented here is that new forms of relationships between state and civil society are far more likely to contribute to sustainable peacebuilding and post-conflict regeneration.

#### *(5) The role of local institutions*

The need to work with, whilst also transforming, local institutions, rather than setting up alternative structures, or simply seeking to dictate terms and conditions, is a core component of a peacebuilding approach. A concern with governance has to be, itself, empowering of local agencies to allow for the possibility that they can succeed and for democratic scrutiny of their failures. Judith Tendler has questioned many of the dominant assumptions of the development world, in which many different forces share a concern that government has become too powerful and that many of its activities would be better carried out by a range of private agencies including NGOs. Her studies of reform in Brazil point out the complex inter-relationship between central and local government and civil society and stress the important role of an active central government, and public servants, over and above the development fixation with 'decentralisation and participation'.<sup>18</sup> Rather than swinging the pendulum back to earlier aid models of uncritical support for centralised infrastructure programmes, Tendler's approach would lead to a renewed focus on what should be the outcomes of good governance rather than on which agencies are best able to carry them out, and on the linkages between tiers of government, public administration, and civic groups.

Adapting Vivienne Jabri's dictum by replacing 'war' with 'peacebuilding', then, it is axiomatic to the approach here that 'peacebuilding is human action, a product of human decisions made within the context of structured social relations'.<sup>19</sup> This, therefore seeks to understand projects as consisting of both processes and structures, and of a wider range of outcomes, than is often understood both within crude conflict resolution or technicist developmental approaches. Combining an understanding of 'agency, structure, history and power'<sup>20</sup> is easier to state than to do, but it does suggest a key role for social science approaches and concepts in the development of peacebuilding projects.

### **Comparative advantage reconsidered: INGOs, UNDP and peacebuilding**

A more contentious set of questions concerns which international agencies and structures are best placed to undertake the kind of peacebuilding work outlined here. In a sense, international NGOs have colonised the 'peacebuilding' space without ever really demonstrating that they have a genuine comparative advantage in this area. Already active in complex political emergencies through the provision of emergency relief, many agencies have simply added 'peacebuilding' to their list of post-conflict priorities. They have increasingly acted as conduits through which donors reach local NGOs

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<sup>17</sup> Duffield (n.15 above), p.12

<sup>18</sup> Judith Tendler, *Good Government in the Tropics*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, p.144

<sup>19</sup> Vivienne Jabri, *Discourses on Violence*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996.

<sup>20</sup> Goodhand and Hulme (n.16 above), p.12.

and civil groups which, in terms of *An Agenda for Peace* and other documents, are crucial in grassroots peacebuilding. INGOs usually claim comparative advantage in terms of being 'innovators and experimenters', although even this claim has been questioned by those who point out that emergency aid delivery, costly, pre-packaged and technically replicable everywhere, often fuels conflict and, certainly, demonstrates that INGOs are less innovative than 'conflict entrepreneurs'.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, the argument that 'few NGOs have an articulated "theory of conflict" which helps inform their analysis and responses to war affected communities',<sup>22</sup> suggests that we should look more closely at the possible comparative advantage that UN agencies, particularly UNDP, could bring to this work. Indeed, few analyses have actually discussed the concept of 'comparative advantage' in terms of a wide range of different agencies. It is certainly true that the UN agencies have lost much of their hegemony in relief and development and are, increasingly, competing for the same donors as are the larger INGOs. However, whilst recognising the importance of Duffield's concern with the effects of 'projectisation',<sup>23</sup> lamenting the fact that development increasingly consists of a series of disconnected, discontinuous, technical, projects rather than holistic theorised practices, we argue that not all 'projects', nor the agencies proposing them, are equally problematic.

In fact UNDP's administrator, James Gustave Speth, has used the notion of comparative advantage with regard to UNDP's work.<sup>24</sup> One aspect of this is particularly important. In the development phase, UNDP certainly can mobilise more resources, and can outline plans and visions for a much longer time period, than can even the largest INGOs. If peacebuilding is to be part of integrated social development, then the relative size of resources available, and the long-term nature of involvement, whilst not guaranteeing success, are certainly necessary prerequisites. Whilst UNDP in Bosnia-Herzegovina competes for EU funding with the larger INGOs, UNDP remains able to utilise significant core resources and bilateral donations for innovative approaches – some US\$350,000 for the Gornji Vakuf project, and US\$800,000 in the first phase of the Travnik project for the 'social component', for example. Total funding for the first eighteen months of the Travnik project was some US\$5.5m, whereas the largest INGOs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, such as CARE International and CRS, still involved in a large number of reconstruction projects and in winterisation programmes, account for no more than double this for their entire Bosnian operations. Moreover, whilst many INGOs are reducing their involvement considerably and cannot commit themselves to more than one year, if that, at a time, UNDP has the opportunity to outline a strategic vision for Bosnia-Herzegovina over a much longer timescale.

Other aspects of Speth's case are less convincing but do raise crucial issues for peacebuilding as integrated social development. The importance of accumulating knowledge and combining insights from other complex situations with a specific understanding of the Bosnian case, are of immense importance. However, few agencies seem to manage this balancing act successfully. Moreover, the vast array of policy development initiatives from UNDP's central offices are, rarely, directly relevant in field conditions. This can, in fact, produce a vacuum in which technocratic solutions to development

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.21

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.26.

<sup>23</sup> Duffield (n.15 above).

<sup>24</sup> James Gustave Speth, 'Why the UN?', <http://www.undp.org/undp/news/whyun.htm> 1998

problems are able to gain in importance. Similarly, whilst decentralised offices can add to flexibility, in the worst case they can add another layer of bureaucracy and become an obstacle to real locally based developments. The prosaic reality is that UNDP field work is predicated upon good management; senior management able to transfer skills and experience between countries and regions; project managers able to think strategically and with a good knowledge of the local situation; country office staff with the will and the mentality to provide appropriate and timely support to the projects. If any of these are absent, then the advantage of decentralised offices is reduced considerably.

Whilst the disjunction between the policy prescriptions of UNICEF and UNDP and their practices on the ground is apparent increasingly, the possibility of influencing policy at all levels, from the local through the national to the global, remains.<sup>25</sup> If peacebuilding is to be more prominent on the UN's agenda, then, it is as one part of wider social development that offers the best opportunity. In reality, the future for peacebuilding and integrated social development lies in combining the work of diverse agencies and, above all, rejecting a crude inventory approach to peacebuilding as a series of discrete projects and understanding, ever more clearly, the complexities of hegemonic post conflict political economies.

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<sup>25</sup> See Bob Deacon, Michelle Hulse and Paul Stubbs, *Global Social Policy*, London: Sage, 1997.