

**HUMANITARIAN &
DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME**

HUMANITARIAN DISRUPTION: A Collaborative Approach

Can major changes in humanitarian and social action be foreseen?

BY
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HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS THINK TANK





THE DEATH OF HUMANITARIANISM?

Limits of the humanitarian action

Many authors have noted that the type of humanitarian action born in the 1970s and 80s from the *Sans-Frontières* movement has now reached its limits; not to mention the Dunantists movements which led to the creation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, or to the formation of huge so called¹ “NGOs”, such as Care, Oxfam or Save the Children (see e.g. Ryfman² or Mattei³).

Critics point to the dependence on governments for funding and policy change (Brauman⁴); a deep transformation of the international scene (Kent & al.⁵); major risks (Donini, Maxwell⁶); fragmentation; volatility or transactional costs (Picciotto⁷); lack of focus and of impact measurement (Riddell⁸); necessity to work with companies (Daccord⁹) or military forces (Kent *ibid.*); unrespect of international conventions (Pilar¹⁰); excessive size or excessive competition (Weiss¹¹); irrelevant internal governance (Lebel¹²); or more generally the inability to adapt, and evolve with the ecosystem (Kayser, Budinich¹³).

In response to these criticisms, international agencies have developed a complex system of reporting, standards and criteria. However, instead of improving the situation, some claim that compliance requirements are in fact killing innovation and leadership (Buchanan-Smith, Scriven¹⁴).

While humanitarian action is agreed globally to be a necessity in saving lives, aid delivery is often the source of intense debate. Leaders in the field are calling for a change in the way humanitarians act (Mattei¹⁵, or Kent & al.¹⁶ for a large review of the critics, as well as recommendations for change). This paper presents a new and disruptive way forward.

¹ The use of “so-called” refers to the debate surrounding their source of funds, which are often of a public/state nature and therefore indicate government involvement.

² RYFMAN Philippe, *Une histoire de l'humanitaire*, 2016 (2d ed.), La Découverte, 128 p.

³ MATTEI Jean-François, *L'humanitaire à l'épreuve de l'éthique*, 2014, Les liens qui libèrent

⁴ BRAUMAN Rony, NEUMAN Michaël, *MSF and the aid system: choosing not to choose*, 2014, CRASH/MSF

⁵ KENT Randolph, ARMSTRONG Justin, OBRECHT Alice, *The future of Non-Governmental Organisation in the humanitarian Sector*, 2013, Global transformations and their consequences Humanitarian Futures Programme, King's College London

⁶ DONINI Antonio, MAXWELL Daniel, *From face-to-face to face-to-screen: remote management, effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian action in insecure environments*, *International Review of the Red Cross* (2013), 95 (890), 383–413.

⁷ PICCIOTTO Robert, *Aid pessimism, myths and reality*, November 18 2009, published on opendemocracy.net

⁸ RIDDELL Roger C., *Does Foreign Aid Really Work? Keynote address to the Australasian Aid and International Development Workshop*, Canberra 13th February 2014

⁹ DACCORD Yves, *From coordination to collaboration: the future of humanitarian action?*, January 26 2015, ICRC Blog

¹⁰ von PILAR Ulrike, *Humanitarian Space Under Siege. Background paper prepared for the symposium “Europe and Humanitarian Aid, What future? Learning from Crisis*, Bad Neuenahr, 22 and 23 April 1999

¹¹ WEISS Thomas, *Humanitarian Business*, 2013, Polity Press, 249 p.

¹² LEBEL Olivier, *Governing NGOs associating stakeholders*, 2008, published on govngo.org.

¹³ KAYSER Olivier, BUDINICH Maria Valeria, *Scaling up business solutions to social problems, practical guide for social and corporate entrepreneurs*, 2014, Palgrave MacMillan, 225 p.

¹⁴ BUCHANAN-SMITH Margie, SCRIVEN Kim, *Leadership in Action: Leading effectively in humanitarian operations*, 2011, ALNAP study, 78 p.

¹⁵ MATTEI Jean-François, *Renouveler la pensée humanitaire par une approche éthique*, in *Revue Internationale Stratégique* (2015), 98, 129-137

¹⁶ KENT Randolph, BENNETT Christina, DONINI Antonio, MAXWELL Daniel, *Planning From the Future. Is the Humanitarian System Fit for Purpose?*, 2016, Planning from the Future final report, 73 p.

Humanitarians versus development

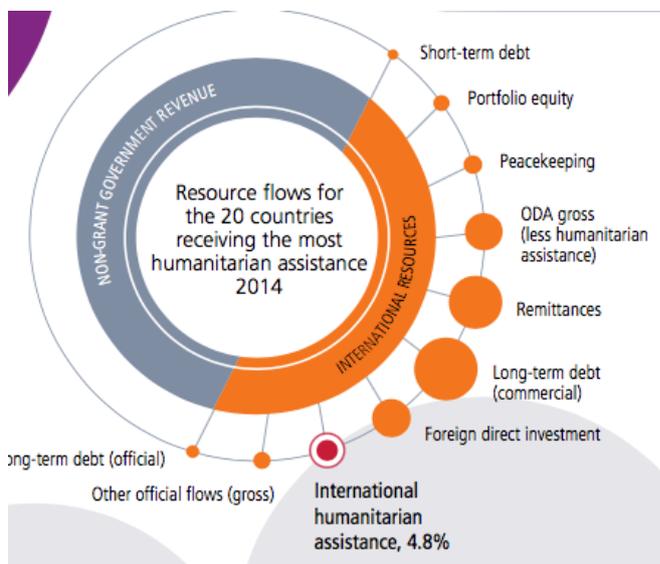
Short-term humanitarian action such as responding to emergency or crisis situations is often described in opposition to long-term development aid, which is aimed at creating conditions for a country to take control of its own destiny. Recently, however, scholars have argued for a mix of the two approaches, or indeed have called for the removal of this distinction (Riddell *ibid.*). The leading consensus is in favour of linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) into a logical and sustainable path towards progress.

For the “short-termists”, long-term action is seen as colonialist (Brauman¹⁷), or in more simple arguments as distinct from crisis response and should therefore be treated separately. For those advocating the “mixed approach” (Mattei *ibid*), the short-term approach alone is likely to create a dependence on fish, without teaching populations *how* to fish. The key theme within these debates is about “empowerment” - giving local populations the ability to decide and shape their own futures, which would reduce or entirely eradicate the need for future aid.



THE IRRAWADDY | Wednesday, January 16, 2008

Indeed, in this paper, we will be treating humanitarian action and long term development work as one –as a continuum, echoing the LRRD approach.



International aid inefficiency

“We often have such a poor understanding of what [populations] need, and how their society is organised, that our clumsy attempts to help on our terms do more harm than good. [...] And when we fail, we continue, because our interests are now at stake – it is our aid industry, staffed largely by our professionals, and generating kudos and votes for our

politicians – and because, after all, we must do something” (Angus Deaton, The Great Escape)

The Global Humanitarian Assistance report 2016 cites that in 2015, 28 billion

¹⁷ BRAUMAN Rony, Mission civilisatrice, ingénierie humanitaire, in Le Monde Diplomatique, Septembre 2005

US Dollars were spent on humanitarian assistance. Although this may seem like a huge amount (and it is an increase of 40% over the two last years), a small portion of the funding is received by a few countries (4.8% for the top 20 countries, see figure), or in other terms about a third of the so-called ODA – Official Development Assistance (12% of international flows). Amongst all of these streams, only 0.4% goes directly to local or national NGOs, which represents only \$1 dollar out of every \$250 spent!

International aid system is unnecessarily complicated: initiating from countries national budgets, funds flow to international donors, to pool funds, to international NGOs, to specialized NGOs, to local NGOs, to local actors, and, finally, to beneficiaries (although it is hopefully rare that all of them act simultaneously). Is it, as some countries claim (notably France¹⁸), time to be more efficient together, through multilateral action? Is it, as some international donors claim, that the creation of specialized funds allows for the transfer of control to actors closer to the field, who are better able to understand local needs? Is it, as it is commonly heard amongst IASC¹⁹'s NGOs, that local NGOs “would not be able to report properly” (or even, “are not reliable”, meaning corrupted)? Or is it, as Angus Deaton says, that the whole system is defending its existence through the endless production of reports²⁰?

Other more contrarian authors (Moyo²¹, Deaton²²) point to the corrupting effect of international aid, and denounce the pouring of hundreds of millions of dollars to local governments (that are widely unpopular) that put their politicians' interests above their own population's. These authors argue for a stop to international aid. However, their approach, based on many African countries, may not necessarily be true for all region, and is not proven in Asia.

SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATIONS

“The Third Industrial Revolution is the last stage of the great industrial saga and the first stage of the emerging collaborative era rolled together. [...] If the industrial era emphasized the values of discipline and hard work, the top-down flow of authority, the importance of financial capital, the workings of the marketplace, and private property relations, the collaborative era is about creative play, peer-to-peer interactivity, social capital, participation in open commons, and access to global networks.” (Jeremy Rifkin, *The Third Industrial Revolution*²³).

¹⁸ [L'aide multilatérale de la France](#), on French Ministry of Foreign Affairs website

¹⁹ Inter-Agencies Standing Committees

²⁰ NGOs suffer through hundreds of audits per year, whereas companies usually face only one audit. A large part of organizations is dedicated to producing reports. To what end?

²¹ MOYO Dambisa, [Dead Aid. Why aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa](#), 2009, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 209 p.

²² DEATON Angus, [The Great Escape : Health, Wealth, and the Origins of Inequality](#), 2013, Princeton University Press, 369 p.

²³ RIFKIN Jeremy, [The third industrial revolution: how lateral power is transforming energy, the economy, and the world](#), 2011, Palgrave MacMillan, 303 p.

Y and Z generations

The leading trend for the so-called Y Generation (25-35 years)²⁴ - also known as Millennials, born with the internet -, is to work in a very different way than previous generations. Their relationship with authority and their expectations are different. They attach a higher value to respect than to money, to common interest than to growth. They like to work for more than one employer or project at the same time, and they often prefer short term contracts rather than life long employment. Millennials place an emphasis on producing meaningful work, finding a creative outlet, and have high social consciousness (Huyler & al.²⁵). The following generation, sometimes called Z, amplifies this movement.

A deep wave, not just a trend

This is not just a new fashion, a new trend. It will not fade, it will not pass, and it will transform our societies. In a “liquid society” (Bauman²⁶), entrenched in individualism, it is the natural tendency. It is not limited to the Western world since the same phenomenon also exists in Asia²⁷ or in Africa.

Therefore, we have the choice of either going with the wave and adapting to it, or being crushed.

Transforming communities

The digital revolution, combined with increased migration and the incredible growth of large cities, are deeply transforming the notion of community. While villages or tribes are still in line with the traditional idea of the community, new communities are appearing, either by neighbourhood, or on line²⁸. Even new applications are being developed locally for locals, creating new communities. The best example is Agro-Hub, a new app developed in Buea, heart of the so-called “Silicon Mountain” in Cameroon, which creates an online community for local farmers to help them find customers and information.

The rise of the civil society

Civil society is now evident in most countries, though prohibited in some. This situation (see Eberly²⁹, US biased), is presented by many as the result of the end of the Cold War. Civil society, composed of diverse movements, is now active everywhere. It acts as a “rhizome” (following the concept of Deleuze and Guattari³⁰), “ceaselessly established connections between semiotic

²⁴ See [Wikipedia Millennials](#)

²⁵ Huyler, Debaro; Pierre, Yselande; Ding, Wei; Norelus, Adly. [Millennials in the Workplace: Positioning Companies for Future Success](#), on digitalcommons.fiu.edu

²⁶ BAUMAN Zygmunt, [Liquid Times: living in an age of uncertainty](#), 2000, Polity Press, 123 p.

²⁷ In some cases, even stronger, such as in Japan, in some cases slightly different and maybe somewhat stronger, as in China, where the one-child policy has created a different generation.

²⁸ With 350 millions of people connected to Internet (28% access rate), 500 millions of cell phone users, and 150 millions of Facebook accounts (more than in Brazil or Indonesia, and ¾ of the number in India), Africa is now fully concerned with digital communities.

²⁹ EBERLY Don, [The Rise of Global Civil Society. Building Communities and Nations from the Bottom Up](#), 2008, Encounter Books, 335 p.

³⁰ DELEUZE Gilles, GUATTARI Félix, [a thousands plateaus](#), 1987, University of Minnesota Press, 615 p.

chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. [...] A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo.” In a rhizome, any point can be connected to any other; the rhizome has no center, and its multiplicity cannot be reduced to one system; it can be broken but it will start up again; finally, it cannot be reproduced identically elsewhere.

COLLABORATION IS THE KEY

Collaborative approaches

The “wave”, as defined by Rifkin, is collaborative (horizontal, reciprocal, sharing knowledge and resources and using commons). Here are some examples of collaborative approaches:

- citizens using a web platform to inform the city of Boston on holes appearing in their street, thus reducing the needs for surveillance teams, and allowing faster interventions;
- elderly people giving a hand to youngsters on their projects (from handiwork to business planning) through an internet platform (the same could apply to Singa – see below- which puts local citizens in touch with migrants);
- knowledge sharing, as in *Wikipedia* or even as on a university campus, but also on horizontal spreading of knowledge, without external intervention;
- crowdfunding techniques, working together to finance a new project - cultural, social, business, etc.
- sharing of production resources, as in *fablabs* or cooperatives;

Working collaboratively is the basis of humanity and therefore an age-old, innate aspect of being human. The digital revolution and cultural changes have emphasized (or restored) this identity of humanity, creating what Rifkin calls “The Third Industrial Revolution” (*ibid.*).

It is now common to speak of the “collaborative economy”, or “sharing economy”; sometimes wrongly presented as the “uberization” (in fact for many specialists of collaborative economy, Uber is not part of it (Bauwens³¹ or Godelnik³²)), although, our approach here is somewhat more restrictive (and not economy oriented).

Collaborative economy

One of the main characteristics of the collaborative economy is its lack of production or decision centres. Using “commons”, shared resources managed by communities, implies disintermediated processes enabled by Internet and social networks.

According to [ouishare](#), (Fillipova³³), collaborative economy includes:

³¹ BAUWENS Michel, [Uber should be regulated like rest of economy](#), on euractiv.com, July 12th 2016

³² GODELNIK Raz, [Why Uber is not part of the sharing economy](#), on TriplePundit, December 12th 2014

³³ FILLIPOVA Diana & al., [Ouishare, Société collaborative, la fin des hiérarchies](#), 2015, Rue de l'échiquier

- Collaborative consumption (eg Airbnb, Blablacar, Uberpop...) – although we have seen that there is a lack of consensus for including these examples in the collaborative economy -, based on peer to peer relationship, one producing a good or a service needed by the other. This is at first disintermediation, with suppression of traditional distribution places.
- Collaborative production, be it pertaining to the production or use of knowledge include *Wikipedia*, *Openstreetmap*, open source softwares, as well as MOOC – Massive Online Open Courses, which disrupt traditional education. Collective intelligence, or goods production, with *fablabs* or makerspaces, co-working spaces or sharing supply chain, replicate the structure of ancient workshops, with the added value of scaling potential relationships.
- Collaborative finance (crowdfunding) allows for access to large-scale financing which was previously inaccessible through traditional banking. Local and crypto currencies are also part of collaborative finance movement.

Four pillars founding collaborative projects

We here consider as « collaborative projects », projects that respect four pillars:

- Horizontality (Borel & al.³⁴): based on a peer to peer approach, collaborative projects are opposed to hierarchical organisations. They rely on the willingness of humans to cooperate.
- Reciprocity (Botsman, Rogers³⁵): based on trust, you expect from your peer to exchange something with you beyond monetary exchanges, and you are willing to do the same.
- Sharing (Bauwens³⁶): goods or knowledge (“resources”) that are used for the exchange are shared, and so are possible profits incoming from them³⁷. *Fablabs* are good examples of such sharing principle.
- Commons, or collective management of the resources: based on the commons theory (Orstöm³⁸), shared resources shall be collectively managed, if commonly used. At least, some sort of agreement on the common usage shall exist, to protect the resources against waste.

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO SOCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION?

Why is it relevant? (Berlingen³⁹)

Firstly, collaborative approaches are based on relationships. They reinforce populations’ resilience, are based on grass-roots innovation to fulfil unmatched needs and enable disruptive

³⁴ BOREL Simon, MASSE David, DEMAILLY Damien, L'économie collaborative, entre utopie et big business, ESPRIT, juillet 2015 9-18

³⁵ BOTSMAN Rachel, ROGERS Roo, What's mine is yours. How collaborative consumption is changing the way we live, 2011, Harper Collins, 280 p.

³⁶ BAUWENS Michel, Sauver le Monde, vers une économie post-capitaliste avec le peer-to-peer, 2015, Les liens qui libèrent

³⁷ On this basis, Uber does not qualify as collaborative

³⁸ ORSTRÖM Elinor, Governing the Commons, 1990, Cambridge Press, 295 p.

³⁹ BERLINGEN Flore, Défense et illustration de l'économie collaborative, Revue Humanitaire, 41 | 2015, 46-51

answers, and are structurally horizontal, allowing for self-dissemination. Being created locally limits the dependence on external funds; funds are recycled inside communities (even if they originally come from outside the community through cash transfers or microfinance). Collaborative approaches thus require less financing than traditional approaches, which pour funds to communities. They even allow revenue generation, although they do not guarantee fair share of revenues. Thus, collaborative approaches are sustainable, opened toward change of practices, in a very different way to emergency responses. Finally, they do not stigmatise affected populations, since they are directly part of the process, as contributor (see for example <http://singa.fr>).

Answers to critics?

The table below explains how collaborative approaches address the criticisms of the humanitarian system:

<i>Critic to the humanitarian system</i>	<i>Collaborative approach</i>
Dependence to government funding and policy	Self-sustainable. Recycles funds
Lack of adaptation to changes of international situation	A new approach, born with a new context, to accommodate it (instead of trying to fit old systems into new contexts)
Major risks force humanitarian to remote management	Structurally local, and self-managed
Fragmentation (aid spread over many countries) and volatility of aid	Less dependence on international aid
Transaction costs	Structurally frugal, lean
Lack of focus and of impact measurement	Structurally focused. However, no impact measurement
Necessity to work with companies or military forces	Probably same. With a local approach. However, independence is less important for collaborative approach
Unrespect of international conventions targeting humanitarians	Local actors are permanently at risk. They are neither “rich” targets nor emblematic
Excessive size or excessive competition	Structurally small
Irrelevant internal governance	Self-governed
Inability to adapt	Structurally adapted
Compliance criteria killing innovation and leadership	Structurally innovative. Lesser dependence on compliance criteria

What for transformed communities?

Digital transformation is creating new communities, either fully on line, or whose creation is enabled by digital technologies. For example, [singa](#) (for refugees and local citizens) or [agro-hub](#) (for farmers and transformers) allow people with common interest to establish a relation. In the case of singa, the purpose is truly social. In the case of agro-hub, it participates to the development of Cameroon. It is clear in these two examples that they are horizontal, resilient, self-sustainable, independent of international financing, frugal and innovative. Indeed, they are the best examples of collaborative projects, premise and promises of 21st century solutions.

Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development with collaborative approaches?

In the very first hours after a crisis hits, the first responders are locals. Even there, innovative collaborative approaches are playing a more important role (see [Digital humanitarians](#) and Meier⁴⁰); an example is Twitter, which is being used to call for help or other social media which allows responders to assess which areas have the highest needs.

Rehabilitation is the major field for collaborative approaches, since it involves greatly local population. Furthermore, disaster preparedness is very much community oriented, and therefore opened to collaborative approaches. Article 4 (a Cambodian project) is an example of a collaborative approach for sex workers reinsertion, based on the common knowledge of former sex workers, helping willing ones to find ways to reinsert.

Of course, collaborative approaches may not be fully relevant for the building of roads, but are key to participative economic growth, as shown with Agro-Hub. Other examples like U-Shahid (a Kenyan platform to monitor election fraud, based on the collaboration of many citizens; this platform has been widely used to monitor Egyptian elections in 2012) show that collaborative approaches play a major role in creating the conditions required for development.

Scaling up?

“With adequate social opportunities, individuals can effectively shape their own destiny and help each other. They need not be seen primarily as passive recipients of the benefits of cunning development programs.” (Amartya Sen⁴¹ in *Development as Freedom*).

To scale up projects, obstacles should be removed (Kayser, Budinich *ibid.*). Depending on the path towards growth, challenges vary.

Traditionally, businesses aim to scale. This is not true for collaborative approaches which are based on dedicated communities.

Alternatively, innovators may replicate their ideas. This is the path chosen by Singa, trying to create communities in new countries (Morocco, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Quebec). Horizontal diffusion is at the heart of collaborative approaches. The key here is “disappropriation” (also known as the “let go” syndrome).

Finally, scaling up via influence is probably the most natural path for collaborative projects. Instead of trying to replicate a project, open sourcing will make it available for all.

⁴⁰ MEIER Patrick, [Digital humanitarians](#), 2015, CRC Press, 233 p.

⁴¹ SEN Amartya, [Development as Freedom](#), 1999, Oxford University Press, 357 p.

Examples

There are many collaborative projects in the field of social action. However, they are not easily found in a database review. Here are some that have been identified:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Domain</i>
Horizontal learning	Knowledge sharing on how to grow vegetables at school to feed children	Lesotho (2005)	Horizontal spread	Development
Agro-Hub	Platform to connect farmers and customers (bulk buyers or processors)	Cameroon (2009)	Platform	Development
U-Shahid	Elections surveillance, through citizens' collaborative approaches, with the help of a network of volunteers	Egypt (2012)	Two level collaborative approach	Human rights
Humanitarian aid	Egyptian citizen-based organization of a convoy to send humanitarian aid to Libyan population	Egypt, Libya (2013)	Citizens organisation	Humanitarian
Theatre at school	Horizontal spread of techniques using theatre at school to fight against domestic violence	Egypt	Horizontal spread	Human rights
Micromappers	Collaborative resources to analyse maps during crisis	World	Collaborative web	Humanitarian
Singa	Platform to connect migrants and local citizens	France (ext)	Platform	Social
Entourage	Social network to create citizens' communities to help homeless	France	Social network	Social
Article 4	Knowledge common to help prostitutes to reinsert	Cambodia (2010-2012)	Knowledge common	Social
RefugeesWork	Helps newcomers build their digital skills, connect with community and find freelance work	Germany	Platform	Jobs for refugees

It is interesting to note that some of the examples are not new. Citizens movements for the sending of humanitarian aid to neighbours have increased since a long time – historical examples that come to mind are French aid sent to Spain during the civil war in the late 1930's, or in the 80's to Poland. However, the digital revolution is transforming and leveraging these classical approaches.

Strikingly, the list above lacks sufficient projects in the field of emergencies (wars and disasters – be they natural, industrial, or indeed political⁴²) (although Egyptian aid for Libya and Micromappers are in this area). Is it because emergencies do not allow for collaborative approaches, or is this a case of lack of evidence?

⁴² We use here “political crisis” to target natural disaster becoming major crisis by lack of proper political measures to prepare population resilience

UNDER RESEARCH

To understand how collaborative approaches will transform humanitarian and social approaches, a research project was launched at the end of 2016⁴³, with a network of observers using collaborative approach. The present paper is an introduction to the research project, named PROXIMUS.

Observers network

PROXIMUS targets collaborative projects through a network of observers. Observers are linked to the civil society of their country. They are willing to mention at least one (but possibly many more) collaborative projects from their neighbourhood (in a wide sense), and to put researchers in touch with the project holders. The idea is to create a community of people interested in collaborative projects in social, humanitarian and development sectors.

Methodology

From the list of collaborative projects mentioned by the observers, a sub-set will be analysed through academic partnerships. On a questionnaire basis, we will try to determine what the success and failure factors are for collaborative projects, as well as refine typology and needs. This aims at creating a knowledge base, useful for all.

Focus

PROXIMUS is focused on social and humanitarian action and development projects involving and empowering people. However, collaborative projects which are not dedicated to or originating in disadvantaged populations, will be excluded. In the health field, this might include some truly collaborative projects, if they respect the four pillars mentioned above. Human rights-based projects may well participate in creating the conditions for development.

The distinction between social projects (usually targeting a disadvantaged populations inside the country) and humanitarian projects (dedicated to targeting such populations internationally), may cease to be relevant as soon as humanitarian action will be taken over by local actors, thus transforming humanitarian projects into social welfare projects.

Typology

It is possible to mention 4 domains in which collaborative approaches are especially relevant for social action:

- Creation of social links; as this is the very core of collaborative approaches, any project aimed at disadvantaged populations, is creating social links, especially across borders to targeted populations, is of primary importance; SINGA is the best example.

⁴³ with the collaboration of IRIS (Institut des Relations Internationales et Stratégiques, Paris)

- Work practices, in line with cooperative organisations; collaborative approaches offer new sources of revenues, and help recycling funds in the communities, reducing needs of external support.
- New giving practices, especially crowdfunding and microfinance which have widely proven to be efficient; crowdfunding is a new form of fundraising which can take the form of peer to peer loans (see kiva.org or babyloan.org) investments (such as kickstarter.com in cultural goods), or social action gifts (see for example donadora.mx in Mexico).
- Education and knowledge transmission, MOOC, collaborative education are key to knowledge access worldwide as travel and accommodation costs are removed (only the internet is required).

Concerning operational typology, based on the few examples mentioned above, it seems already possible to differentiate at least two major cases:

- Horizontal diffusion, the sharing of knowledge without any interference in the process of 'spreading of the word' (examples are in Egypt or South Africa, Reeler⁴⁴).
- Platforms; the usual digital tool for collaborative approaches; examples show cases of social links creation across communities, such as Singa or Refugeeswork. Also, truly collaborative approaches often involve many citizens and the support of a smaller team of volunteers (U-Shahid).

PROSPECTIVE

Possible outcomes

Self-governed organization

Can we think of a horizontal, self-governed organization (holacratic organization, see Laloux⁴⁵)? A new kind of NGO, not relying on fundraising but on willingness; an organization without administration, but full of social links and knowledge exchange; without headquarters and proximity to the field; without conflicts of power and fully driven by the aim of helping on another. This would be an organization solely composed of field staff, acting in the best interests of their neighbors, as well as in their own interests of pursuing a life full of sense.

This is not a dream; it does exist in many sectors, such as home service in the Netherlands (Buurtzorg), or even in manufacturing (FAVI), schools, hospitals... It will exist in social action (and maybe it already does).

Platform

Alternatively, or as a first step, we can think of a platform that creates a knowledge commons on collaborative approaches in the social field, which could act as a crowdfunding platform that interacts with and builds on existing media.

⁴⁴ REELER Doug, [Horizontal Learning. Engaging freedom's possibilities](#), 2005, from CDRA Annual report, 40 p.

⁴⁵ LALOUX Frédéric, [Reinventing organizations](#), 2014, Nelson Parker, 360 p.

CONCLUSION

This new approach aims to be more efficient and better focused on the needs and solutions but may not be favored by existing organizations, who could see it as a threat. We hope that they will see it as an opportunity, and adapt themselves to the 21st century. It is true that it might change employment at headquarters, which may then be redeployed for local, social projects in vicinity of the headquarters, but it will at the same time create employment locally, among the disadvantaged populations, thus reaching the self-proclaimed target of existing organizations.

International aid will no longer be needed locally – it might be an utopia -, may be redeployed – and not reduced - for global improvement research projects or for social projects in northern countries. ■

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