



Cooperative Approaches

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International Solidarity and Cooperation





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International solidarity: a necessary imperative



By DANTE MONFERRER

Decades of development aid and international cooperation have generated their share of hope and achievements as well as skepticism and disenchantment.

While our eyes are focused on the East, on the sky and its climate disruptions, and more prosaically on the prices displayed on signs at our gas stations, it is essential to reflect on the meaning and the space given to international solidarity.

We cannot talk about international solidarity without placing it in the more general context of major global issues. The world order established at the end of the last century is already breaking up, and we are witnessing the return of the blocs with their imperial legacies and their focus, perhaps obsession with power and confrontation.

At the same time, the South is turning away from the







North, stigmatizing its hypocrisy, its neo-colonial reflexes and its propensity to continue privileging its immediate interests.

"Universalism and multilateralism are seen as principles with variable geometry that the West instituted when it was dominant in the middle of the 20th century and that it now uses selectively as it pleases. The very principle of global and shared governance is the first casualty, with its absence undermining our ability to respond to our common planetary challenges. The nature, quality and truth of the relationship between the North and the South are essential and there is no doubt that this is a fundamental issue that must be properly assessed requiring deep introspection and assertive action."

As a counterpoint to an out-of-control globalization, the withdrawal of identity is manifesting itself on all continents, exacerbated by networks that are social in name only.


The history of our tired democracies teaches us that the rise of the deadly ideas of nationalism, racism, xenophobia... carries within it the seeds of tomorrow's conflicts. Individualism and the forced competition of all against all have demonstrated their limits. Turning inward on the national level, extracting ourselves from our environment, "forgetting the world", when it is more connected and interconnected than ever, has led to thinking that we do not need others and that they are a danger.

Having a broader and deeper conception of international solidarity to promote a better sharing of wealth, knowledge and power, is not only a moral imperative but first and foremost a pressing necessity.

"Africa and the planet are indeed two intertwined fronts", the challenges are global and form a coherent and interdependent whole: climate disruption, environmental degradation,

population displacement, geopolitical tensions, increasing poverty and inequalities, social instabilities, loss of meaning, conflict, insecurity, international terrorism, Our responses, increasingly dispersed, must find coherence and articulation.

Putin's war also forces us to rethink the world's balance, to look again to the South and to Africa in particular, and to rearm ourselves from a conceptual, ethical and moral point of view. Internationalism, an outdated notion, must be reworked and regain its right to exist. We must affirm loud and clear that pluralism is a strength and that national identity-based obsessions are petty, dangerous distractions in comparison to the wider social and environmental crises that loom. Faced with the various disturbances that are dragging our planet towards an uncertain future, we must give new meaning to concepts such as the

 ***The history of our tired democracies teaches us that the rise of deadly ideas of nationalism, racism, xenophobia... carries within it the seeds of tomorrow's conflicts.***

common good, sharing and exchange, cooperation...

Finally, we must think about them collectively in order to offer ourselves shared perspectives, in a true "new global deal" to be built.

"Africa is facing continuous unprecedented disruption, but also unprecedented hope. We are challenged to think and build the futures we desire for Africa and the Planet. Humanity has rarely had so many opportunities to transform our material existence in the context of this technological and digital revolution, but we have also never been so close to the threshold of planetary collapse. Through the innovations and tensions that can be seen there, Africa is an exemplary place for the intertwining of local, national, community and transnational issues - such is the scope of the continent's future. It allows us to hold humanity on an ethical horizon, to restore the confidence of an entire generation in the continent's ability to propose answers for the world, to think locally and

globally, to avoid isolating internal problems from global ones."

This sums up the ambition for this edition of Cooperative Approaches and the meaning of its various articles which, we hope, will modestly shed light on the many questions about international solidarity, development and our common future.

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Africa: the state of play



By DANTE MONFERRER

Over the course of this recent half+ postcolonial century international aid, solidarity and sustainable development goals have been stalled by the vast intertwined challenges faced by the global South generally, and across the African continent in particular.

In the North and South alike development professionals have been humbled when attempting

to decipher the immensity of problems and unrealized aspirations. Understandable is the widespread sense of despair and sluggishness around efforts to continuously resuscitate vital initiatives.

Fortunately, faint positive signals are also emerging, here and there, for those who are keen enough to look. For instance in Africa, the primary school completion rate has







increased from 46% in 2000 to 62% in 2019 while across West Africa the maternal mortality has declined substantially from 878 per 100,000 births in 2000 to 542 per 100,000 births in 2017. Infant mortality has also dropped from 91.1 per 1,000 births in 2000 to 51.7 per 1,000 births in 2019. Many similar results can be highlighted for each of the SDGs.

To those who assert this hackneyed cliché, 'the African man has not produced enough history', there is no better retort than to point out 'his' unprecedented leapfrogging with technologies. Consider the dramatic rise of mobile phones used for multiple practical applications from mobile banking to crowd sourced apps used by nomadic herders to determine where to graze their animals. Such adaptations are as common in urban areas as remote rural settings.

And then there are many people and institutions

who, on a daily basis, keep hope alive. These are inventive and resilient people, motivated young volunteers, committed NGO's and local associations, engaged donors and institutions, civil servants often dedicating a life-time of service. So many are fighting, often in silence or underrecognized, to change things for the better.

As these people persist in their dogged pursuit of a more just and sustainable Africa they must also consider the current trends and data around two critical underlying factors - that of dramatic changes in demographics and in climate. Here is a brief overview where calls for considerably more analysis, reflection and action should be heeded.

Demographic challenges

Africa had 800 million inhabitants in 2000; today there are 1.8 billion. Projections suggest that there will be 2.7 billion

people in 2050 and 4.5 billion in 2100. The continent is characterized by its youth, with 62% of its population under 24 years of age, and by a great heterogeneity of demographic conditions.

In sub-Saharan Africa, with persistent high fertility rates, the population will continue to grow even faster than on the rest of the continent in the coming decades. This region of the world, comparatively empty until the beginning of the 20th century, will have a density of 160 inhabitants/km² by the end of this century, twice the world average, and will be home to almost 40% of humanity.

While population growth outside the continent will slow or even decrease, African demographic growth will grow to an extent that it becomes a major driver of multiple global dynamics. For instance, consider that more than half of the economic progress of the next 20 years will likely be absorbed by demographic

Africa had 800 million inhabitants in 2000; today there are 1.8 billion. Projections suggest that there will be 2.7 billion people in 2050 and 4.5 billion in 2100.

growth alone, which will in turn fuel mass migration within and from the continent. This, the subject of many science fiction stories, is already coming true.

In the West, indifferent eyes turn away from the Mediterranean, a new marine cemetery, where the growing flow of desperate people is colliding. The galloping urbanization of African cities is causing an anarchic development of peripheral areas where explosive concentrations of poverty expand. The demographic effects are also felt across many arenas from politics, governance, and environment to health, culture and security. Some conclude that the slower the transition to some form of controlled fertility, the longer it will take to reduce poverty and reap benefits of a potentially productive youth demographic dividend. Between an Africa full of life and an aging Europe, a wider implication is that geopolitical balances will

hinge on management of migratory flows. This will be one of the major variables and greatest challenges of this century.

Climate and environmental implosion

Our planet's climate is in trouble, and the countries historically responsible for climate change and doped up on fossil fuels continue to dig our future into a fetid common pit. What about the poor countries and how do they survive in the face of climate disruption to which they have contributed little or nothing? Yet it is accelerating and its consequences are hitting them hard. How can they adapt when the meager levels of aid promised are so difficult to deliver?

Lacking a sufficient and proportionate response to Africa's problems, the demographic pressures will pose increasing impacts on ecosystems already severely disturbed. The degradation of an already threatened environment, combined

with climate change, will in turn continue to increasingly constrain living conditions and means of subsistence. The rise in sea levels, together with increasing urbanization, will particularly affect coastal regions adding to the pressures. All these concentrations of vulnerabilities, together with those yet to be seen, will likely accelerate massive population displacements unless people get together and really exercise some of our greatest human assets - those of innovation and creative problem solving.

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Projects are not what are needed!

The early days of 'International Development'



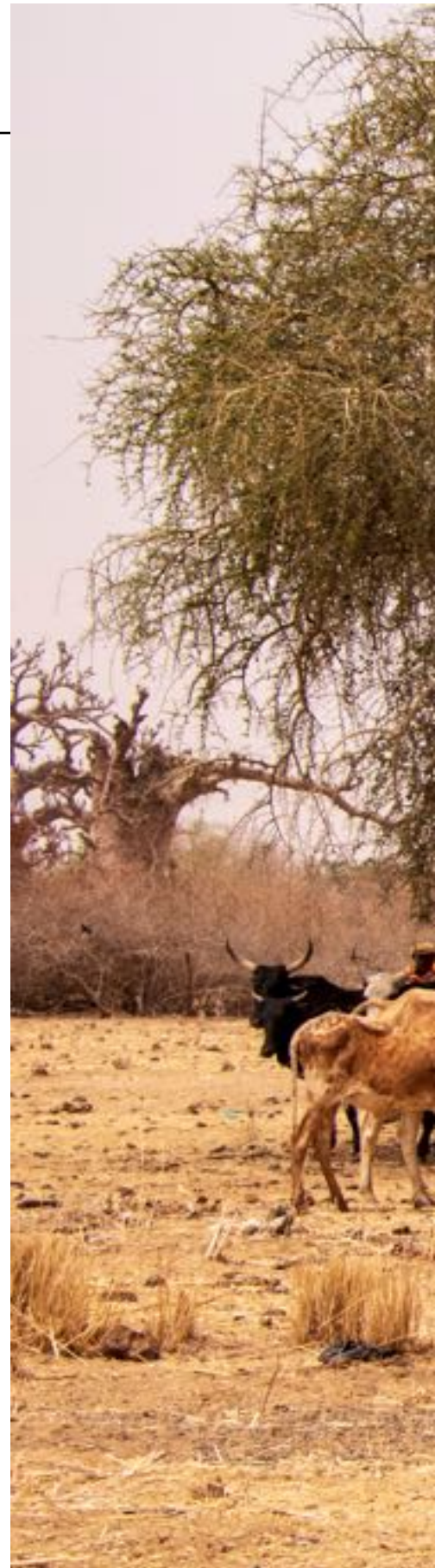
Interview with BERNARD LECOMTE by D. BENARD

Bernard Lecomte passed away last August. To all who knew him, he was a committed, innovative actor overflowing with humanity. This interview, probably the last he gave, makes the insights and gifts he offered the world all the more meaningful.

By way of introduction

In the world of international

development Bernard Lecomte was one of those border crossers, visible and at times invisible, whose testimony provides keen insight into the complex issues and multiple commitments that can mark personal trajectories in this field. The amplitude and diversity of Bernard Lecomte's career allowed him to experience many changes that reshaped the development world over the







Bernard LECOMTE

course of several decades. He was also one of its sharpest critics, but always with respect for those who undertake and struggle while aiming to improve this world.

Between 1995 and 2005 from his home in Haute-Savoie, France, Bernard Lecomte convened an annual two-day

meeting bringing together twenty development professionals, some of whom were working or had worked with German and Swiss organizations. This "Bonneville Circle", unprecedented for its duration and design for sharing experiences and

analyses, addressed topics such as the reform of formal development assistance, support for African peasant movements, and conflict management. Over the years, complicities and friendships were forged helping to shape the uncompromising climate of this interview.

The interview

Dominique Bénard (DB):

Hello Bernard, the first question I wanted to ask is how you came to work in international cooperation?

Bernard Lecomte (BL): I am a guy from Roubaix where there are families who founded diverse industries in the 19th century. My family founded a dyeing factory and my father had 10 children. I am the fourth. The first two became priests. And me, well I decided to join my father in the business even though it didn't correspond with my aspirations. I did it more out of family spirit.

I earned my engineering degree in Lille, was active in the JEC¹ and then in "Économie et Humanisme²" because I had been inspired

 *I am a guy from Roubaix where there are families who founded diverse industries in the 19th century.*

when meeting Father Lebret³ at a conference in 1947 in Lille.. I working as an engineer in Roubaix for six years but then the textile industry completely collapsed and I was laid off. At that moment I asked Lebret if I could come and do an internship in Calluire, where there was a research center for Economics and Humanitarianism. I stayed for several months and conducted surveys with various poor populations. One day Father Lebret came by and, seeing that I was available, said, "Come on, I'll take you to Senegal". Why Senegal? Because it was 1958 and in preparation for African independence, he had been chosen as economic advisor for the first Senegalese 'pre-government'.

So he basically packed me in

his luggage and had me join a research office called the Cooperative for Industrial Studies and Land Management (CINAM) where I became the number two. We started to investigate, with a whole team, the situation of Senegal and its evolving standard of living, behaviors, etc.. This experience showed that I was capable of leading research investigations which I did for 18 months. I was thirty years old and at the end of the first mass I attended there during Christmas of 1958, I met my wife to-be Renée. She knew one of my friends, who introduced us by pronouncing, "*I present to you Renée Dupont*". That moment completely changed my life because until then I had not considered getting married at all.

Renee and I married in Senegal, without our

parents, and we were determined to maintain that line of work and lifestyle. That line was to help, in the most global sense of the word, these populations, these governments that we perceived as novices in nation state governance. We would often ask ourselves what we might do so that the government knows their population better, better understands the problems that need to be solved, and that they make good choices.

In this process I became a planner. I learned to plan with Lebret. It turned out that I wasn't a complete idiot in this and so I continued with the CINAM. We gained another contract in Madagascar in 62-63 and then very quickly I became responsible for the wider cooperative so was able

1 - The Young Christian Students, YCS, is a youth and popular education movement that exists throughout the world.

2 - *Économie et Humanisme* is a French association, of Catholic origin, founded in 1941 by Louis-Joseph Lebret, which developed a concept of human economy. From Lyon, it has conducted studies on development, social policies and practices, employment, international cooperation and solidarity. It has also been active in publishing, training and facilitating debates (Wikipedia).

3 - Louis-Joseph Lebret, born on June 26, 1897 in Minihic sur Rance and died on July 20, 1966 in Paris, was a French economist and Dominican priest. In 1942, he created *Économie et Humanisme*, a center for research and action in economics and a large number of associations for economic and social development throughout the world, including Irfed, the International Institute for Research and Training in Education and Development, in Paris.



to move back to Paris and from there lead many short missions in Africa over the course of many years.

Later we moved back to Senegal for two years, with two children, and there I began to have my first contacts in rural settings. I didn't know it at all, I had done some surveys but I hadn't made any direct connections with a farmer, or anything of that nature. And it was in the rural areas where we started to manage what was called at the time 'aid projects'. What was an aid project? We would say, 'I have decided to help you, would you like to tell me what your needs are'? We would then send a team to transform these aspirations into a 'project'. It was often defined by a document of about 20 pages in which we described in advance the goals we were pursuing and how we were going to achieve them. We also addressed who was going to manage and organize

it. It was a bit rigid and partially fixed from the outside which characterized the first big difficulty with the aid project concept.

DB: Wasn't your focus primarily on analyzing needs rather than taking into account people's resources?

BL: No, not at all, we were very attentive to mobilizing the resources of the populations. The difficulty was not that we only wanted to satisfy the needs, but that the person who brought the aid also brought the way to manage it. It was the outsiders' money that became the center and that power shift was the first great difficulty of the aid process. The money and the means that you bring are not immediately transferred. As long as the action is considered an aid project, it is the one who helps who is responsible and ensures that it works. Yet as I was saying, this was a fundamental flaw right

from the very beginning since the beneficiary should have been considered primary including assuming such responsibilities.

So as I analyzed this, I suffered from the contradictions and yet as I led a team that worked in several countries, we had quite a few learning experiences over the course of ten years. At that time, I realized that this work dynamic had to be documented so I wrote a first book called '*The Limits of Aid by Projects*'. I sincerely believe that this was the first book that provided an in depth critique of the aid system and its structure. Yet it didn't prevent me from obtaining contracts. In fact it didn't change things much at all.

DB - Were there any echoes from others who thought the same way as you?

BL - Well, not in the Franco-French milieu. In Madagascar in May 1962, we were working with

As long as the action is considered an aid project, it is the one who helps who is responsible and ensures that it works... this was a fundamental flaw right from the beginning.

three European comrades: Italian, German and Dutch, so we were an agricultural engineer, a rural engineer, an industrial engineer and me a researcher. I was indispensable because I was the only one who spoke French well and who could manage with the local partners. Why was this? Because it was the beginning of the European Community. My main concern was to find projects and we did. We established 65 projects in 18 months. We went to the regions, we looked, and we identified the needs. We said we should do this, we could do that, etc.

BF: And you were getting funding?

BL: We had everything we wanted! That was the beginning, you know, in 1962. So that was the height of doing what I learned to refuse to do later. I had to go all the way through that process in order to reach a



Women in rural areas were often invited to participate in these early 'aid projects'

conclusion to do it differently. So then in 1964-65, in Senegal, I was asked to help understand how a population could organize itself around progress.

Thus began a period called "*rural animation*". This consisted of going to villages to identify people who wanted to move forward, to change a little and see how we could organize a small nucleus of innovation from within. This interested me much more than 'the projects'. And then, little by little, I was hired by the Senegalese government

which allowed me to become increasingly closer to this process.

There, the difficulty was not the relationship between the one who has the money and the one who receives it, the difficulty was how to make sure that your initiative does not obstruct the initiative of others. On the contrary, that it be fruitful, you see? It is not at all that obvious.

In time I got tired of running the research office so I resigned and I went to enroll in the Center for Social Studies



Vegetable growing in the Sahel. Collective Argos

of West Africa, the CESAO⁴, in Bobo Dioulasso. There, we spent three years where the exercise for me was to get to know the peasants. It was an absolutely wonderful place because there were farmers from all over the world. It was a very interesting time. Renée was also interested, she was in charge of the overall program and we were able to transform CESAO, whose mission

was to train managers. We called them development agents.

Yet it was one of our greatest illusions; to believe that we could send agents trained in development into villages and think that it would work. Development is something that is internal to the person, internal to the group so the term "development agent", implicitly an outside force, is therefore a false

construct. So instead we had to introduce the CESAO to a vision of training farmers directly, not as agents of development, but as co-developers.

From the start I was very lucky. It was my first day of work, and Gabriel Seni, a Burkinabé farmer, was there, and he was almost illiterate.. That evening he came to the house and started to talk about himself. The guy had been impacted by the fact that I was listening earlier that day so he had come to tell his life story. He and I became close friends and though unfortunately he passed away soon after, he taught me that for a rural community to change it takes time. In his case he said it took 7 years to get people to recognize that they could do something different. And then it took another 7 years to get into action

4 - CESAO (Centre d'Etudes et d'Expérimentations Economiques et Sociales de l'Afrique de l'Ouest - Association Internationale) based in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina-Faso. CESAO offers to local communities, NGOs / development associations, technical services of the State, training means and sessions as well as strategic reflections on research-action, decentralization and good governance, development of entrepreneurship, strengthening of civil society, management of development projects (design, elaboration, execution and evaluation), advocacy and lobbying...

■ **Development is something that is internal to the person, internal to the group so the term "development agent", implicitly an outside force, is therefore a false construct.**

and that's how he put it. You also needed to assure that the government Regional Commander would also be positioned to do something. All that takes a long time compared to the mere two or three years that a classic project cycle was supposed to take.

So from then on my job there was... well, to help, there were things being done... and the international aid people had a lot of confidence in me because I had, several times, evaluated their projects. So I was known.

DB: Did the international aid people trust you, did they put funding at your disposal?

BL: More and more. From then on, there were several initiatives from two remarkable sources. First, in Burkina Faso, a guy

named Bernard Lédéa OUEDRAOGO who was a trainer in the administration and also trained farmers. There was a special program in Burkina Faso that allowed farmers to get by in French in three years - they closed it afterwards because so many would then leave with their new language skills for Europe. In any event he organized a follow-up for these people to help them become farmers again. These were called the 'Naam groups'⁵. So I, at the same time, co-financed the Naam Groups for years. We focused on very serious, solid actions, eh! For periods of 10 or 15 years! The approach had developed a lot...

DB: How did it work since it was not a project?

BL: No, no. It was a 'fund'. We called it '*unrestricted advance funding*'. So in a

sense it was an anti-project!

DB: And was this French or European funding?

BL: There was no French funding at all. I had no influence in France, never. Though I was lucky enough to get funding from the Germans and the Italians because I published this book that questioned project-based cooperation which was immediately translated into German and Italian. So I became a man who was respected and followed in Germany and Italy and only then more widely in Europe.

DB: When you say that the French were not interested in you, did you analyze why? Was it because the French cooperation system had a basic objective of influencing the politics of the countries or simply due to their anchoring in old habits?

5 - The National Federation of Naam Groups (FNGN - <http://fngnbf.org/>) is based in Ouahigouya, the capital of the Yatenga Province in northern Burkina Faso. The founder, Bernard Lédéa OUEDRAOGO, learning from the failure of the organization of farmers' cooperatives, took the initiative to found the organization of the rural world on the basis of the "kombi-naam" or traditional youth grouping. The objective of the "kombi-naam" was the social integration of young people through work and celebration. It taught the fundamental values of equality, justice and democracy. In the Naam group, this structure was extended to all members of the village community with the objective of initiating an endogenous development process based on the empowerment of individuals and communities. The motto of the FNGN is "Develop without damaging".

BL: You can say that... To come back to the Naam groups, it was immediately widely known at the European level that it was a success. Finally the farmers got organized, produced, sold products together, etc. As I was, indirectly, the main financier of the first 20 years, it allowed me to say 'We can do this elsewhere again...' so I met with the CESAO which organized a seminar for reflecting on how to advance this idea of saying, 'so we have trained the farmers now they must organize themselves'. I took part in the animation of this seminar and I was immediately impressed by the value of a man named Lédéa. We worked on the strategy. I would go to his house, we became friends and I became President of the Association '6 S' or 'Se

Servir de la Saison Sèche au Sahel en Savane' (Using the Dry Season in the Savannah). Essentially this means the farmers have only one working season, yet they should have two. This initiative is also what made me known as an innovator.

One day, I received a letter which read, "Mr. President of Economie et Humanisme, I stumbled upon a book of your association at the Dominican Center in Dakar... That's what I live for! I said to myself, it's not possible..."

During all that time, since I had to feed my family, I was a consultant and wasn't always available so I asked Lédéa and my friend Abdoulaye Diop from Senegal to go see him. To go see this guy who lived



Mamadou Cissokho

400 km from Dakar. They couldn't find him, but the next time we had a meeting in Senegal, we had a General Assembly of 6S every year, we all met and that's how the peasant movement was born. So this guy, Lédéa, who had resigned from his first job as a teacher, who was more intelligent, more strategic, it was he who started the Naams Groups. Naams was

6 - Mamadou Cissokho (born in 1946), a great friend of Bernard Lecomte, is an emblematic figure of the African peasant movement. A Senegalese activist and educator of agricultural associations, he was notably president of the National Council for Consultation and Cooperation of Rural People (CNCR). In 1974, Mamadou Cissokho, a young teacher, became a farmer in a family farm that he created in Bamba Thialène (Senegal) and put himself at the service of the rural environment to which he decided to belong. He contributed to the creation and animation of various associations, including the Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations of Senegal (FONGS) in 1976, and the National Council for Consultation and Cooperation of Rural People (CNCR) in 1993. He was then one of the initiators of the Network of Peasant Organizations of West Africa (ROPPA), founded in 2000. He is one of the facilitators of the creation of PAFFO (Pan African Farmers Forum) created in October 2010, in Malawi. Click on this link to view a video of Mamadou Cissokho and Bernard Lecomte on the partnership: <https://youtu.be/RCL9i6fKACs>

 *I told them, 'No, you're annoying me! It's not projects that are needed! They can't do projects, they're on the edge of survival...'*

a Mossi culture concept. In the process Mamadou Cissokho⁶ insisted that all these different groups agree to cooperate together for such and such a reason including so as to become a force at the national level.

So from there we launched 6S nationally in Senegal and into 6S Mali. Then he participated in the creation of FONGS, the Federation of NGOs of Senegal. All this with money I found essentially from Europe, Italy and Germany. For them, it was complicated since I was a man of aid, rotten with money. They said, "*Bernard, he always finds the money!*" and then, on top of that, I would say, "*But I'm not the one who's going to decide how to use it!*"

It was a powerful concept that again went against the projects mentality. We had unallocated funds in advance when I was at

CESAO. There was a great drought across the Sahel between 1976 and 1977 which really made people suffer. People from the cooperation, former friends from the Swiss Cooperation, were coming in saying, "*Bernard, give us projects*"... I laughed... You see? I was in the middle of what I thought of as 'anti-project maturation', I told them, "*No, you're annoying me! It's not projects that are needed! They can't do projects, they're on the edge of survival. Their needs can't be covered by projects, it's much more complicated, much richer..!*"

And then I met a Swiss man who was responsible for evaluation at the SDC⁷ in Bern. He saw how much I had to get involved and he believed in it, so it was from him that I received my first non-earmarked fund in advance. Of course I had to account for it properly

from an accounting point of view. And that helped people. Why? Because there was a grouping. This group is very nice, but it's not going to change things on its own. So we tried to associate them with other groups, by saying, "*So you must meet with other groups and we will give you a small amount of money for your group agreement and you will decide together what you do...!*"

This method was absolutely the opposite of the project method. Instead we insisted that we give you money, be reasonable and serious enough with it, and decide together what to do with it. It was millions of Swiss francs! We had the confidence of 3 or 4 executives within the Swiss Cooperation who I had known in the field, who were interested, and who fought to make it work. For them I was someone who

7 - The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is the international cooperation agency of the Swiss Confederation. Located in Bern and attached to the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, this organization is responsible for humanitarian aid and development cooperation activities with countries in the South and East.

invented something.

So we were in operation from 1973 to 1993. That's when ROPPA⁸ was founded. So why ROPPA? Well, because it was a strategic idea suggesting that each of the Sahelian countries with its own farmers could form a brotherhood among themselves capable of influencing governments and ECOWAS⁹. Well, that is what happened. We had a great leader, Mamadou Cissokho, who founded ROPPA in 2000. I followed him, I listened, he was the one who invented things. The first time I realized that it was innovative was in Mali. We had founded the 6S some time before. We went to Mali to observe the first zone. In 6S, we called them "zones", places people could organize themselves, set up actions and gradually federate. There was this one zone where people always wanted to talk about the Six

S. I said to them, 'It's not the Six S that is interesting, it's you', they answered, "*But sir, you don't realize, you are the first guy who tells us that money, the aid money, it's your money!*" That said it was complicated because people had to understand that the money they were receiving was not for immediate food needs, it was rather for investment...

DB: Apart from the Swiss Cooperation, did you influence other corporations?

BL: I had a lot of influence in Italy. But in Italy, it's a little different because in Italy one day I met this guy. He called me and said, "I work at CESAIO, I would like to bring you to Rome to facilitate a working group with about ten Italian non-governmental organizations, more or less of Christian origin, who want to work in rural areas."

So, I became a trainer of Italian NGOs. I did this three years in a row for periods of three weeks. I trained a good hundred Italian NGO leaders to think a bit like I did. That's how I had a certain influence.

In Germany, it was different. In Germany, I caught the attention of a guy, Martin Harder, who became a second Bernard Lecomte in Germany. He managed to mobilize flexible funds from the German cooperation.

DB: What were the obstacles that prevented this development strategy based on farmers' groups from spreading?

BL: Leaving the initiative to the farmers goes against the thinking of the directive people in government, those who think they know what to do. They would say, "*We know, it is not the farmers who are going against these concepts. It is*

8 - The mission of the Network of Peasant and Producer Organizations of West Africa (ROPPA - <https://roppa-afrique.org/>) is to "promote the development of family farms and peasant agriculture while mastering the policies related to the liberalization of national economies and the globalization of trade".

9 - The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a West African intergovernmental organization created on May 28, 1975. This structure is intended to coordinate the actions of West African countries.

Leaving the initiative to the farmers goes against the thinking of the directive people in government, those who think they know what to do.

only possible with accomplices'. Well I didn't find any support in France, but I did in Italy and then mainly in Switzerland. The Swiss, for me, were the wonder, the nugget! A small, flexible cooperation. With the Swiss, we can innovate; that's it!

DB: I notice two things here. On the one hand, Switzerland is a country that does not have power politics and on the other hand, it is a country that has a tradition of cooperative action.

BL: Yes, and respect for people's actions... For me, Switzerland is a wonderful environment. When I went to Bern, I was as happy as a king!

DB: Whereas France has a power driven policy and deep interests in Africa along with a tradition of centralization and 'top-down management', as the Anglo-

Saxons say.

BL: Of course, if you want people to have initiative, you should not go to the French Ministry of Cooperation. In France, nobody ever asked me to intervene, with the exception of Bernard Dumont. At a certain point, my friend Martin Harder told me, '*Bernard, what you are doing, you must extend it!*' So he pushed for the creation of a group of consultants. He organized the "*Bonneville Group*" which for several years pursued the goal of increasing the number of people who could do consultation outside of the guideline procedures. If you want people to have initiative, you can't decide for them. But it is extremely difficult for an administration to admit that and to organize itself around that principle. So we worked a lot in this direction for several years. Two sociologist friends, Loic Barbedette and Denis



Bernard LECOMTE

Pesche, told me, Bernard, your way of doing things must be published because you are the only one I know who has managed to cross the borders of the public administrations of Europe and Africa and the NGOs.

So they wrote a text called, 'A Kaleidoscopic of Memories Around Development Aid' : <https://journals.openedition.org/anthropodev/1847>

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10 - Bernard had settled, with his wife Renée, in Bonneville in Haute-Savoie. Renée founded, with her son Benoît, the Groupe de Réalisations et d'Accompagnement pour le Développement (GRAD), a small NGO whose aim was to "carry the word of the peasants". GRAD is still active: <https://www.grad-s.org/>

TASSAGHT and international solidarity

🚫 Interview with Mr. Abdoul Aziz Ag Alway by Larry Childs

Larry Childs (LC): Since its official founding nearly 35 years ago, TASSAGHT, as a national NGO in Mali, has collaborated with donors and technical assistance partners, nationally and on 5 continents. How did you manage to build trust with so many national and international partners? If you would, also describe the key practices and organizational values that have been helpful.

Abdoul Aziz Ag Alway (AA): Indeed TASSAGHT, since its creation as an association in 1985, which became a registered Malian NGO in 1988, has built solid relationships first at the level with local populations, but also with public administration, private sector actors, community based organizations, international NGO's and agencies of the United Nations.







Mr. Abdoul Aziz Ag Alway, TASSAGHT
National Coordinator

Thanks to these relationships, TASSAGHT has become firmly established and enjoys a high level of credibility and trust among its partners who rely on the experience and expertise it has developed. The durability of the relationships with the international partners of TASSAGHT in particular is maintained by the respect of the commitments we make and results we have achieved together over a period of decades. Other factors that motivate international partners to build and maintain lasting relationships

are our deep knowledge of the socio-economic realities within the intervention zones, the strong reputation TASSAGHT sustains in Mali, and its long track record of achievements despite unrelenting, challenging conditions.

Currently, TASSAGHT's credibility and efficiency are boosted by diversifying its areas of intervention and the technical, linguistic and ethnic plurality of its human resources notably a diverse all-Malian staff.

TASSAGHT's intervention covers several areas of activity, focused on the north and center of the country, with initiatives implemented by its permanent staff, technicians and local contractual specialists from within its zones of intervention. This is all supported by technical and financial partners, and in close collaboration with the Malian state, especially through its decentralized

technical services and local authorities. Other community based organizations and local and national private providers also play a role.

LC: How has TASSAGHT developed its expertise and reputation for effectiveness in conflict zones? How do you see the balance between civil society interventions such as yours and those of governments, the United Nations and/or regional security forces (West Africa)?

AA: TASSAGHT's expertise and effectiveness at operating within conflict zones are the result of several years of intense activities which are supported by building capacity of our human resources. TASSAGHT has adopted a real policy of retaining its staff, especially the most competent, in order to perpetuate its approach and to enhance its impacts. This includes expertise in the field of conflict management which includes basic promotion of living together

TASSAGHT's expertise and effectiveness at operating within conflict zones are the result of several years of intense activities which are supported by building capacity of our human resources.

and social cohesion as a cross-cutting concept. We have also attended to staff succession planning over the years. This ensures a steady stream of committed and well-qualified personnel who can sustain the organization into the future..

At TASSAGHT, we believe that the balance between civil society interventions such as ours and those of governments, the United Nations and/or regional security forces (West Africa) must be preserved. Indeed, as much as civil society needs the support of these actors, these actors must recognize our legitimacy, perpetuity, and the critical stabilizing role we play in supporting local development actions. This includes the occasional advocacy required when unfavorable policies impact our operations.

LC: On that last point I have had the impression that TASSAGHT has been



Women project planning meeting

effective in its advocacy, whether for beneficiary communities or its own operations, due to the trust built among local authorities along with the considerable political acumen and sensitivity of its leadership. Otherwise I don't believe TASSAGHT could have sustained the extreme disruption and hardships that have characterized northern Mali since its founding.

Now onto the next question: One could say that hope for

a sustainable economy in West African nations depends on better collaborative management of pastures/grazing lands to prevent environmental degradation, protect food supplies (especially protein), improved collaboration between herders and farmers, and reduced jihadist conflict and crime. In this context, which initiatives have TASSAGHT, and others, found most effective for managing Sahelian rangelands and resolving long-standing tensions



between herders and farmers?

AA: It is obvious that in order to stimulate and promote sustainable positive changes, good governance of natural resources, including grazing lands, is key. The involvement and empowerment of civil society organizations remains the most effective and sustainable approach to environmental protection.

In terms of pasture management, TASSAGHT and the Réseau Billital Maroobé Network (RBM/ West African Herders Network), with the support of their partners, promote concrete actions of information, protection, restoration and awareness-raising, directly carried out by pastoral organizations, particularly in the Sahel. These actions make it possible to prevent conflicts between natural resource users by establishing and enforcing management rules set up

by local officials and resource personnel.

It should be noted that the economy in the Sahel is based on and grounded by the agriculture and livestock sectors. Therefore, it seems difficult to find a job outside of these two sectors, which are deeply rooted in the traditions of the various ethnic groups. The weakness of this economy also contributes greatly to its instability as reflected by the increase in the level of crime (robberies) and poverty among the communities engaged in these sectors.

The development of better economic opportunities and prospects seems to be essential to reduce these fractures that lead to the exacerbation of these destabilizing tensions within the population, in Mali as well as in the Sahelian sub-region.

LC: I will note here that TASSAGHT is a co-founder of RBM which now spans 10 West African countries

and engages all central governments in better managing herder/ agriculturalist relations. In that sense international solidarity importantly extends well beyond north-south to the growing of regional international cooperation and trade relations. To conclude, would you like to add anything further on the theme of international solidarity?

AA: The current situation in Mali is inexorably increasing the precariousness of local producers: herders, farmers, merchants... Indeed, since 2012 Mali has been facing a complex crisis where inter and intra-community conflicts have combined. There is a continuous implantation of violent extremist groups with competition for the governance of territories and access to resources. The conflict is developing with an increasing regional dimension due to porous borders, the presence of cross-border groups and networks, and

The current situation in Mali is inexorably increasing the precariousness of local producers: herders, farmers, merchants... Indeed, since 2012 Mali has been facing a complex crisis where inter and intra-community conflicts have combined.

the organization of states in West Africa. This situation is felt most acutely in northern and central Mali.

The weak presence of the Malian state in many areas of northern and central Mali is a central issue in the conflict. Some radical groups within the northern regions of Ansongo, Gao, Bourem, and central Mali accurately proclaim that their areas have been historically marginalized by the centralized power in Bamako. This perception is said to be the genesis of several conflicts in the north, the more recent of which in 2012, can be considered a starting point for the current condition of severe insecurity.

The country's security capacity to extend across the entire national territory is truly limited. The presence of the state appears to be weak, often insignificant, over much of the north of the country and now even the center.



Mr. Ag Alwaly with RBM leaders in Accra, Ghana

As a result, regalian authorities, governance liken to those of monarchs, are now largely exercised by the armed groups that signed the 2015 Algiers Agreements including actors such as the GAT (Armed Terrorist Groups).

All of this illustrates the indispensable nature and need for international solidarity, without which Mali risks digressing such that smaller and smaller service levels are provided in the face of

mounting needs with galloping poverty caused by the security and political crises.

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Free Trade in West Africa

Increasing Integration of the Pastoralist Herding Sector and NGOs for Improved Regional Economic Development and Security.

To the memory of Calestous Juma and Abou Ag Assabit¹

 By LARRY CHILDS

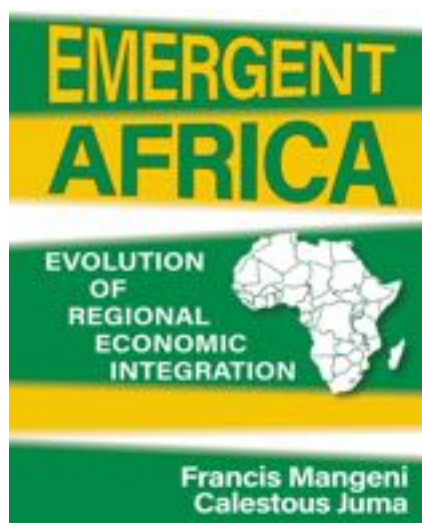
In their 2019 book, *Emergent Africa: Evolution of Regional Economic Integration* (Headline Books, WV; 2019), Calestous Juma, the late Harvard Kennedy School of Government/Kenyan scientist and economist, and Francis Mangeni, Director of Trade, Customs and Monetary Affairs at the Common Market for Eastern & Southern Africa, delve into the history, complex

dynamics and benefits of regional economic integration in Africa through trade.

In the book, the authors place most attention on the role of governments and multilateral institutions in establishing, maintaining and refining free trade agreements (FTAs) across the continent including the developing African Continental Trade







Agreement.

They cite the effectiveness of an 'experimental learning' approach in which institutions test theories on the ground, pause to reflect, identify set-backs as well as successes, then make timely adaptations. The authors assert that the most effective changes are those that are more tempered versus heavily reactive. Their examination considers

policies and structures that help state and multinational institutions as well as local actors, from commune level to micro-enterprises, find a healthy balance between competition and collaboration.

They also demonstrate how African free trade zones have helped to shift focus from extractive industries exporting raw materials to other continents, to internal consumption as is the case within other economic communities around the globe.

Juma and Mangeni also offer an extensive analysis of regional trade policies, and their associated practices and impacts across the continent over the past 60 years. It is their premise that by gaining a more nuanced

understanding of historic trade practices and associated successes and failures, leaders can better grasp and apply resulting lessons to make increasingly mutually-beneficial regional trade policies for the future. After all, better informed decision-making should result in improved design, implementation and support for adaptive trade policies and socio-economic development.

This book is particularly timely since insular protectionist trade practices proliferate outside of Africa today making a stronger collective understanding about free trade in this region that much more vital. Resistance in West Africa to this protectionist trend is even more essential than in more affluent regions given

1 - Professor Calestous Juma was an internationally-recognized authority and leader in the application of science, technology, and innovation to sustainable development. His original work focused on analyzing the co-evolution of technological innovation and institutional change in socio-economic systems. He directed programs that advanced science, technology, and innovation policy research (especially biotechnology), provided high-level science and technology advice, and promoted the conservation of biological diversity. He was Professor of the Practice of International Development at Harvard University Kennedy School of Government and also Faculty Chair of the Innovation for Economic Development Executive Program and Director of the Science, Technology, and Globalization Project. Prof. Juma directed the School's Agricultural Innovation in Africa and Health Innovation Policy in Africa projects. HIS VISION FOR AFRICA: Calestous knew that all human development ultimately takes place on the ground, in communities. As such his work on policies and investment frameworks fostered practical benefits across Africa and beyond, but he ran out of time to assure the innovations were fully integrated by his Kenyan hometown. After he passed the [Calestous Juma Legacy Foundation](#) was founded to further his vision while supporting this community.

Cross-border trade and migration tensions today are among the region's more prominent threats to economic security.

the razor-thin economic margin holding many West African countries from collapse. In fact, cross-border trade and migration tensions today are among the region's more prominent threats to economic security.

Further aggravating such conflicts and the negative impacts are policies in pastoral zones too readily changed or militarized sometimes based just upon small provocations. Yet there is ample evidence that measured responses are more effective.

NGO's and cross border transhumance: Implications for pastoralists

Building on Mangeni and Juma's insights on free trade in West Africa, this paper explores the role of the non-governmental organization (NGO) sector where more attention is needed as NGOs are central to the healthy function of regional economies across West



Professor Calestous Juma. Photo Martha Stewart

Africa. NGOs are also heavily impacted by policies made at the highest levels of government within which they are obliged to operate.

As examples this paper explores the role of two West African NGOs which serve as implementing entities supporting ever-evolving cross border pastoralist herding and

associated trade agreements, regulations, infrastructure and practices. Specifically it considers how pastoralist herding (transhumance)² continues to serve as a sustainable economic practice especially when well-integrated within the wider economies. It can also facilitate productive social cohesion within and across peoples and regions.

Although governments are

2 - Pastoralist herder or transhumance is distinct from and not to be confounded with economies associated with ranch and factory-based herding.



Abou Ag Assabit, co-founder of Tassaght

responsible for setting the conditions within which herding-related enterprises operate, effective policy development is not exclusively government driven. Rather, as the authors suggest, the success of an 'experimental approach' derives from engaging multiple stakeholders in an action/reflection/decision-making

cycle of exchange and learning. This implies widespread stakeholder participation at the local levels, including with NGOs, which in turn influence higher state-level actors and decision makers.

Juma and Mangeni suggest that the NGO influences have been broader and more important than is commonly assumed. An immediate example is the impact of the regional herding network, Réseau Bilital Marobi (RBM)³ which operates across 11 nations in West Africa with main offices in Niamey, Niger. It is supported by the European Union and prominently partners with national governments in the region, the UN and

national as well as international NGOs. Leading NGO partners are the Dutch SNV⁴ and the Mali-based Tassaght⁵, a founding member of RBM.

The innovative STAMP⁶ program (Sustainable Technology Adaptation for Mali's Pastoralists) is a powerful example of pastoralists leveraging new technologies to better coordinate herding practices, manage range land and improve commercial activities within and also across national borders. STAMP was developed by SNV and implemented on the ground in partnership with Tassaght, RBM and other national Malian NGOs. STAMP uses satellite technology and cellular

3 - <http://www.marooobe.com/>

4 - <https://snv.org/fr/projet/stamp-miser-sur-le-succes>; <https://snv.org/update/reflecting-results-and-getting-ready-scale-stamp-project-technical-paper>

5 - The co-founder of Tassaght, Abou Ag Assabit was born and raised in the rural Gourma south of the norther city of Gao, Mali. Following his university studies in Bamako he became a prominent leader in the Tuareg community and in 1985 co-founded the Malian NGO Tassaght (www.tassaght.org) with other recent university graduates. For 35 years he dedicated his life to the service mission of Tassaght, growing the organization to reach diverse communities across many regions of the country. Despite enormous obstacles Tassaght has become the largest national NGO in the country. Abou was also sought after internationally and across Africa for speaking engagement at development forums. In West Africa he is widely recognized for co-founding the West Africa Herder Network RBM with operations in 11 countries. Abou passed away due to a long term illness in June 2019 and will be remembered for his wisdom, high integrity, political savvy, cultural competence and ability to make everyone he encountered feel valued.

6 - <https://snv.org/update/reflecting-results-and-getting-ready-scale-stamp-project-technical-paper>

STAMP uses satellite technology and cellular phones to crowd source information about pasture, water and other on-the-ground conditions providing herders with critical real time data.

phones to crowd source information about pasture, water and other on-the-ground conditions providing herders with critical real time data. This data is then used to inform decision-making on why, where and when to move herds.

Next I will highlight some of the free trade associated practices and lessons as presented by the authors which, if better understood by NGOs like SNV, RBM and Tassaght, could bolster their project-specific goals as well as national and regional development goals. The points are selected and explored for their relevance to the operations of NGOs supporting cross-border activities. These include access to pasture and transit towards markets for commerce as well as less

tangible benefits such as social cohesion and cultural survival. There is also the looming concern of public safety and national security due to multiple sources and expressions of violent conflict that severely disrupt economic activities including cross-border migration and trade. It is these far reaching impacts of violent conflict that make deeper exploration of NGO-related trade impacts that much more necessary, opportune and urgent.

There are many reasons for exploring an NGO-focused consideration of the authors' free trade analysis through a pastoralist lens. To name a few:

- Growing recognition that many country-level development and security challenges may be better addressed by

coordinated, regional-level responses

- African NGOs, with their international partners, serve an even stronger and more influential complement to government and private enterprise by helping to facilitate regional trade and other beneficial regional exchange activities such as conferences, trainings, and security agreements
- Identifying and sharing cross-border activity strategies to increase the mission-related impact of these NGOs
- Supporting development-focused and peace-building versus military responses to conflict (e.g., the progress announced by Ghana in 2019⁷)

It is also to suggest that NGO experiences, if better

7 - At the RBM coordinated conference in Accra Ghana October, 2019 '6th edition of High Level Regional Meeting for Peaceful Cross-Border Transhumance between Sahel and Coast Countries', the Ghanaian Minister of Agriculture following 2017 conflicts involving pastoralists destroying farmers crops and cattle consequently shot from military helicopters, announced that border conflict between agriculturalists and pastoralist was his domain not that of the Ministry of Defense. Subsequently his department, to maintain this critical economic activity, worked with local authorities, NGO's and communities to establish guidelines such as transhumant corridors to eliminate crop damage. On the other hand in December 2019 the government of Benin simply closed their borders to transhumant crossing due to crop damage the previous year. The consequent impact on the economy and livelihood of herders is therefore seriously at risk in 2020 and negotiations to resolve the closing are underway.

understood could contribute more to the authors' 'experimental learning' paradigm for continuous improvement of regional free trade policies and on-the-ground practices. The improvement is urgently needed given the widespread destabilizing impacts of severe economic challenges from un/under-employment, violent conflicts, environmental degradation, and the recent COVID-19 pandemic. It is therefore sensible to conclude that cross border trade with better facilitated human mobility, migration and transhumance will foster (rather than destabilize) environmental protections, security, sustainable peace and more prosperity across the region.

Lessons for Cross-Border Free Trade

Juma and Mangeni describe exploitive paradigms governing pre-Independence trade policies. The lessons resulting from such examinations help inform which historic policies

and practices should be sustained, changed or abandoned. It also provides a baseline from which to innovate and leverage emerging technologies and social structures.

Understanding and overturning colonial trade paradigms:

- During colonial and post-colonial independence periods, cross-nation relationships were generally characterized as adversarial, imbalanced in power, designed for exploitation, and extremely low in trust. All this friction was inherently inefficient, costly, eroded cultural cohesion, and was fundamentally unsustainable.
- Free trade agreements, when accompanied by associated infrastructure supports, have flipped the exploitive colonial paradigm. Free trade spurs more equitable and collaborative relationships along with market integration across nations. The FTAs have had a net positive impact on economic development

and the authors have drawn on solid data to prove it.

- These economic gains tend to be several times greater than when the exploitive or protectionist trade policies with tariffs had been in place.

Trade as an equity enterprise that also builds peace and mitigates violence:

- Improved economic conditions and employment opportunities resulting from free trade tend to channel human activity towards pro-social and economically productive endeavors. Conversely, degrading conditions with unemployment often lead young men, in particular, to destructive expressions of dissent. These range from criminal endeavors to joining violent separatist movements, civilian militias or jihadist groups.
- While dissent in the form of civic debate is desirable and necessary to democratic governance, violent dissent in the forms

Pastoralist herding continues to serve as a very important economic sector strongly rooted in the socio-cultural fabric of Western African countries.

mentioned above are generally negatively destabilizing.

- This employment/security dynamic is a reflexive loop whereby one bolsters or erodes the other. The desired outcome is naturally to increase sustainable development that is well integrated across multiple sectors.

Implications for pastoralist herding in West Africa today:

- Pastoralist herding (i.e., transhumance), as a traditional subsistence practice, continues to span national borders generating many animal products desirable for cross-border trade. It often involved and still involves transport of other trade goods as well as some human migration from and between countries. There is also considerable migration associated with transhumance towards North Africa, the Middle East and Europe.
- In the present day, pastoralist herding continues to serve as a



Reconciliation dialogue

very important economic sector strongly rooted in the socio-cultural fabric of West African countries. It is especially important to those situated in the Sahel where the natural environment often favors pastoralist herding practices over agriculture or ranch herding. Contrary to popular urban myth, there is no evidence that transhumance is a 'dated practice' pursued by people nostalgic for an earlier time. It is still highly adaptive.

- From the colonial era to the present pastoralists have been marginalized by governments favoring sedentary peoples/ agriculturalists. The latter have enjoyed disproportionate national political representation, access to higher education, agricultural subsidies and more. As a result, pastoralist herder needs have been insufficiently considered and peoples lacking political representation are often unfairly

marginalized. Consequences of exclusion include their having less proportional representation in government, less voice in policy decisions, lower allocation of development and humanitarian aid resources, and diminished access to emerging technologies. They are also often more vulnerable to impacts of environmental degradation and climate change, notably to drought conditions which are increasingly frequent and widespread.

- Increased attention to the pastoral economy and pastoralists' needs, including the well-structured movement of people with their herds across international borders and regions within countries, improves economic opportunities, relationships with agriculturalists, and increases a sense of equity which benefits everyone.
- A significant benefit of equity and inclusion is



Herders using STAMP

increased employment, notable among young men who may otherwise stray towards violence as a means to restore their dignity and economic power.

Free trade opens avenues to applied technologies by NGOs

Advances in communications technology have been recently applied in Mali and across its borders to inform transhumant herder analysis of geographic and social conditions. This has had important positive impacts

on internal as well as cross border pastoralists transhumance. Real-time information about environmental conditions is used by herders as they search for productive pasture. Cell phones, satellite imaging and crowd sourcing have been integrated through the Sustainable Technology Adaptation for Mali's Pastoralists (STAMP) partnership, allowing herders to share real-time information about available pasture, veterinary services, and conflict conditions. The timely data then informs their decision-making and

STAMP is an example of where herders are able to positively leverage existing free trade policies and regulations between countries to their benefit.

conserves time-by eliminating reliance on word of mouth and overland scouting forays which can require a few days of advance travel.

The result is significantly improved rangeland management, diminished environmental degradation, and more harmonious interface between pastoralist and agricultural communities. The project has resulted in improved herd health and herders' economic status as animals are guided more directly to the best available pasture conditions. Without free trade and porous borders many benefits from the initiative would be more limited and conflict increased.

STAMP is an example of where herders are able to positively leverage existing free trade policies and regulations between countries to their benefit. In this instance governments

are following rather than leading the private and non-profit sectors in the innovation, adaptation and promotion of on the ground trade practices within and across borders.

These advances are also designed to improve communication, coordination and collaboration between herders and agriculturalists. This social feature is especially timely and important given increasingly strained herder/ agriculturalist relationships from the effects of environmental degradation and drought which diminishes available productive land. Conflict around land ownership, stewardship and access have historic roots but are now aggravated by diminished available land for all these subsistence-based practices.

An essential facilitating feature is the role of NGOs as partners with herders in

program design. Together they pursue adaptation of new technologies, facilitate community dialog around required behavioral changes, and ultimately strategies for increasingly widespread use of the technologies and associated social supports.

African NGOs, notably Association Tassaght in Mali and RBM regionally, have assumed a central role in facilitating herders' initial willingness to explore alternative herding strategies, pilot innovations, reflect on effectiveness of the new approaches, and make adaptations. They also support herders in achieving increasing competence with the technologies and compatible integration of its uses within an evolving social fabric. A central feature is the effective blending of traditional herding practices (in the nomadic pastoralism context) with newer technologies⁸. An important behavioral outcome is their

8 - This is an example of another technological leap frog which Juma researched and supported (in his other publications) as African countries skipped over fully built telecommunications wire infrastructure in favor of cellular <https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-12-22/calestous-juma-advocate-leapfrog-technology-dead-64>



demonstrated willingness to engage in highly adaptive social change verses exclusive adherence to traditional technologies.

A hope and related opportunity that may emerge is that such highly adaptive capacities can be applied to other, less technical, social challenges and opportunities.

Juma and Mangeni explain how shared and collaborative agreements in the colonial/post-colonial paradigms would have been equated with one parties' loss of sovereignty or power and therefore quickly dismissed. Yet in the free trade context the STAMP project's processes are often experienced and embraced as more synergistic. The evident economic and social benefits then spark support and expansion. Such win-win scenarios and the associated synergy

is complex and challenging to enact. It requires extensive cross-sector collaboration involving governments, multinational institutions, the private sector and NGOs. NGOs often take on the role not only of project implementation on the ground but mediating engagement of local herder and agriculturalist populations with local and national government actors.

Regarding such conflict RBM has been particularly active helping to negotiate cross border transhumance between Sahelian and coastal countries by hosting several regional conferences⁹ annually along with direct negotiations. In the case of hostilities arising in 2017 from damaged crops in Ghana by herders crossing over from Burkina, RBM helped de-escalate what had become a military

involved conflict to one of negotiated solutions. Designated corridors for animals were established to avoid crops and national media helped to heighten Ghanaian understanding¹⁰ of the mutually beneficial economics in such arrangements. This involved over-coming historic prejudices and beliefs that pastoralism is a dated practice sensibly replaced by fenced in ranching.

Free trade agreement impacts on NGO programming

Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) have had a significant impact on the success of the programs of STAMP, RBM and Tassaght. Improved efficiencies result from FTAs translate to a lower cost of doing business which in turn leads to increased competitiveness and overall

9 - <https://www.maroobe.com/>

10 - <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/african-studies-review/article/cooperation-and-coexistence-between-farmers-and-herders-in-the-midst-of-violent-farmerherder-conflicts-in-ghana/16A94FD119CAECC178B12F5A3721A5A3>

Satellite and cell phones technologies grease the wheels making for efficient herd relocation towards available pasture.

improved economies. Access to nutritious food with improving nutrition often result from more stable economies thereby diminishing food insecurity which is a powerfully destabilizing force nationally and regionally. In addition, increased employment opportunities discourage young men in particular from less productive and less life-affirming enterprises such as banditry, militia membership and jihadist involvement.

Free Trade Agreements include efficient border crossing policies such as visa relaxation and quick check-point protocols ('time is money'). These practices require trust and also build trust the more they are enacted and are understood as effective. FTAs and some associated structural and communication protocols also apply within national



Photo Tassaght

boarders to help ease internal pastoralist herder mobility across check points and regions. STAMP effectiveness¹¹ relies not only on cross border mobility but on effective communication and travel among participants within and across national-level communes.

Excessive rural flight to cities is still a scourge to counter since it draws young people from rural endeavors, erodes traditional trades,

diminishes local food production, and over-populates cities. The consequences include a rise in unemployment, crime and vulnerability to political destabilizing violence. Productive balance is achieved when rural economies are strong and people want to remain in those areas. Free Trade effectively enhances rural economies.

Another benefit is that FTAs fight the malaise of corruption since policies are

11 - Thanks to mobile phones, this information is literally at their fingertips. Adoum is one of 21,000 pastoralists who use the Garbal mobile phone service to find where the best conditions are to move their herd. Garbal, a service privately operated by telecom company Orange Mali, was established by the Sustainable Technology Adaptation for Mali's Pastoralists (STAMP) project in November of 2017. It aims to improve the resilience of pastoralists to climate change through the access and use of geo-satellite data. <https://www.scidev.net/global/technology/feature/herders-avoid-violence-and-drought-with-satellites.html>



more broadly communicated across borders, better understood, and multiple cross-state actors understand the nuances and can insist on transparency. Furthermore, reliable income discourages corruption as officials become increasingly certain that a regular paycheck will arrive. This also counters Afro-pessimism¹² (a mentality that 'we hardly expect that anything good will come out of Africa'), a long-standing self-defeating mindset that Juma and Mangeni identify as a still widespread impediment across the continent.

From land-locked to land-linked

Juma and Mangeni affirm that past patterns are not necessarily a predictor of the future and that a break from this mentality requires a paradigm shift. One towards 'the adjacent possible' in which the future becomes more evenly distributed.

Catalytic institutions must

foster not only change but technical competence and motivation to succeed. Quasi-public entities such as the RBM are important for their network and coalition fostering features. They can in turn be supported by local and national NGOs like Tassaght which possess extensive cultural competence, political savvy and high integrity. These characteristics motivate and build confidence among their many partners and peoples on the ground whose entrepreneurship is a defining feature of their herding enterprises.

Satellite and cell phone technologies grease the wheels making for efficient herd relocation towards available pasture. Importantly, crowd-sourced data helps herders communicate with other herders and agriculturalists, resulting in fewer overlapping and competing land use interests in a given moment. The efficiencies lead to increased

economic gains in part due to the stability achieved in diminishing conflict potential and avoiding movement to areas where conflict may be underway.

Environmental impacts

FTAs are also key to improving natural resource management. Such agreements help integrate contiguous ecological zones which are not delineated by national borders. In fact, their colonial era formations were generally politically or even arbitrarily assigned thereby dismissing natural features of the landscape or tribal political designations.

STAMP has been attributed to improved management of grazing lands and thereby diminished over-grazing, vulnerability to desertification and intensifying climate

12 - Afro-pessimism is a critical framework that describes the ongoing effects of racism, colonialism, and historical processes of enslavement including the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and their impact on structural conditions as well as personal, subjective, and lived experience and embodied reality. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afro-pessimism>.

change effects such as drought. Pastoralist herding, when well-coordinated, is scientifically demonstrated to improve rather than erode soil health, productive pastures and even elevate carbon sequestration.

Conclusion

Juma and Mangeni's extensive documentation and analysis of evolving regional free trade policies and supportive best practices provides convincing evidence that cross-border transhumance by herders in West Africa must be encouraged and facilitated as an essential dimension of regional free trade. As governments, NGOs and private enterprises at all levels collaborate to ensure such mobility everyone benefits. Positive outcomes are many, starting with improved economies, sustainably managed common lands, climate change resilience and a better nourished populace with sufficient animal

protein. Other social benefits are higher employment and diminished conflict arising from land use disputes, costly bureaucratic delays and violent rebellious activities of the marginalized and unemployed.

Reseau Bilital Marobi and Tassaght are regional and national NGOs, respectively, that demonstrate how initiatives with grassroots origins can inform, enhance and leverage high-level free trade policies. They achieve this by deftly collaborating with their multiple partners - from governments, international NGOs, UN and bi-lateral aid agencies to the pastoralist herders and communities on the ground. In the process they help governments and the governed further flip authoritarian, exploitive colonial paradigms and current day corruption from which so many African countries are still shaking free. Such

structures and achievements also combat Afro-pessimism.

All these links and impacts suggest that improved integration of pastoralism into national economies, Sahelian and coastal, is probably far more important to regional economic and political stability than is widely understood.

Emergent Africa: Evolution of Regional Economic Integration, is authentically African and grassroots in its origins and an extremely well-researched resource which, if more broadly read and its lessons adapted, could significantly advance social and economic development targets in West Africa and across the continent.

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US and European NGOs

Contrasting approaches to Humanitarian Aid, Development and International Solidarity

 Interview with SAM WORTHINGTON, by LARRY CHILDS

For over 16 years, Sam Worthington served as President & CEO of InterAction (2006-2022), the nation's largest U.S. alliance of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) focused on people around the world. At InterAction, Mr. Worthington strengthened the impact and collective voice of the U.S. NGO sector and led its engagement on a wide range of policy and programs with the highest levels of the United Nations - including

as a principal on the U.N. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) - multilateral institutions, governments, philanthropies, the private sector, and civil society. In 2015, he was a resident policy fellow at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center, Italy.

He currently serves on the executive board of the Global Executive Leadership Initiative at the U.N.; Vice Chair of Forus, a global alliance of NGO platforms; sits on Brown





University's Advisory Board at the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies; and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

LC - Sam, you've just retired as CEO of InterAction and a distinguished career as a global leader in the humanitarian aid and development sectors, in the US and globally. Given your experience and perspective, I have some questions about international solidarity. First, how might you characterize some of the differences between the American and European approaches to foreign assistance?

SW - Perhaps a way to start is to emphasize that I am giving a perspective from that of US NGOs - so not that of the US government or US public, but that of US NGOs working internationally.

One of the things that I think distinguishes our sector a bit from the Europeans is the size of the US market which is huge. There are 1.5 million nonprofits in the US, so many that people tend to get drawn inward preferring that their dollars serve their local



Sam Worthington

US communities. This is in part because it's roughly the same size as the entire European market. This issue generates conversations and many are convinced even more US international funding should be redirected towards US needs. These voices also advocate for fewer international projects that are primarily solidarity efforts versus for meeting US

strategic interests. So size and international interest are a couple clear differences.

LC - We'll go into differences in more detail later but first, if you would, speak to the notion of umbrella organizations like InterAction and how they function around

We wanted to make sure that there was a position for Haitian NGOs at the conference despite the Haitian government having objected to their participation.

international solidarity?

I've been involved in active solidarity efforts with similar umbrella organizations around the world. First, I served on the board of CIVICUS and I had been on the board of FORUS, an umbrella organization bringing together Francophone and Lusophone Latin American and other umbrella organizations and we've been engaged in solidarity with them for well over a decade. I'll give an example of the type of solidarity that has been effective and how it advances.

A first point to emphasize is that a lot is grounded by personal relationships and relationships of trust. So, when Haiti was devastated by the earthquake in 2010, two very important instances of solidarity occurred. It began with our member organizations raising over \$500 million for Haiti. Based on this outpouring of public support we were invited to a donor conference by the then UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and President

Clinton who was the special envoy. The US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton and other luminaries were also to attend. As a major donor we were also invited to make a presentation, as were the European NGOs represented by the French. However in preparation and in collaboration with the French, we agreed we would not give presentations nor attend the Donor Conference as civil society unless Haitian NGOs were also invited. We wanted to make sure that there was a position for Haitian NGOs at the conference despite the Haitian government having objected to their participation. We were the leading advocates on this point with the US State Department pushing on our side. Eventually there was an agreement to our terms.

Then for the presentations we had been allocated three minutes each (US, Europeans, Haitians) to speak in front of the UN General Assembly introducing our respective positions. Yet, instead of

doing three separate three minute speeches, we collaborated around one nine minute speech with a cohesive narrative. It started with me, then to the Haitians, and Europe with the French at the end. It was also delivered in two languages, English and French. To me this is an example of solidarity between the US, Haitian and French (European) civil societies and their consequent influence on government actors and UN procedures.

There was another example around the Haitian earthquake when we were trying to create one NGO umbrella group within Haiti. This was needed as there was conflict between already established groups in Haiti, which were culturally more Francophone in their operations, and several large US NGOs which were just showing up. Eventually, I called the head of CONCORD, the umbrella organization of France. We've known each other for many, many years, long before I arrived at



InterAction, and we decided to ask that all NGOs at the executive level affirm that we're all going to be at one table - that we're all going to be included and there aren't going to be two groups within Haiti. It was through this sort of solidarity that we forced an agreement in-country which worked.

So these are examples of when we have stood by each other. It was also interesting that all forums were held in three languages, in English and French and Spanish with interpreters so there would be no single dominant language in the mix. On representation the chair was from Burkina Faso, I was vice-chair from the US and the Treasurer was from France with another vice chair from Cambodia.

These governance structures have been built internationally and are solidarity structures with their main function to defend civic voice and the space for civic organizations to exist.

There are some notable differences in our approaches. Europeans tend to use more of a declaration on human rights approach while the US NGOs tend to be a little more pragmatic, but we are all still rooted in human rights. Another is that US NGOs tend to be larger, which sometimes means they tend to push people around a bit more. But there's a concept at least at the policy level of mutual solidarity which is pretty well established.

LC - Great examples. Thank you! Next could you respond to the same question but regarding differences between Americans and Europeans in terms of public perceptions on international solidarity?

SW - There are a lot of different 'American publics' in the mix, but the vast majority cares primarily about the US, needs within the US and tend to be inwardly centered. They're not focused as much on giving internationally, so our members are largely funded



by a very small subset of the American public, just 4%. This is a small but influential minority which embraces a notion of international solidarity with annual giving that has reached as high as \$12 billion. That is then amplified, because foundations give a bigger percentage of their budgets internationally, maybe 20%. Combined these contributions make the US the most generous private donor in the world.

One of the risks to international solidarity is when people say they give to charities but are just '*more localized*' in their giving. Practically this means, '*Well, I just give domestically*', which I think is a widespread mentality in the US that harms international solidarity. So one of the counter arguments we offer is agreeing that, yes, local needs must be involved here but for our own development we also need

... Yes, local needs must be involved here but for our own development we also need international solidarity and engagement on a civic level.

international solidarity and engagement on a civic level. You could give through Oxfam or Habitat for Humanity or World Wildlife Fund, or some other way. Just understand that international engagement is critical to functioning civil societies in the US and globally.

In Europe, there's less private giving, in a sense, because governments tend to assume these roles to a much larger extent proportionally than in the US. That doesn't mean that Europeans aren't generous in this way. The private giving they do contribute is much more internationally focused in part because they don't need to give so as to prop up the local healthcare system or other local needs which are largely taken on by the government. That said, though a much higher percentage of the European populations' private giving is global, it's still a smaller amount than the US.

LC - Sam, that's really interesting. Do you think those structural differences



Sam Worthington with displaced people after the earthquake in Haiti in 2010

combined with Europeans paying more taxes than in the US, thereby receiving more government services, influences how they perceive and engage with a wider world? I'm interested in ways these structures may impact how they behave towards people in other countries.

SW - Historically there have been very strong global solidarity movements, particularly coming out of the UK. Live Aid started early on, and was very strong, resulting in not just direct private money raised in that moment, but more guaranteed government

money allocated to humanitarian causes over time.

There have been movements in Europe, particularly in Anglo Saxon Europe, to move laws forward requiring a minimum percentage of GDP going to foreign assistance. On the continent though they have been a little less interested so such efforts have gotten a little bit tied up. This is due to colonial legacies in Europe that are different than in the US. These countries focus more on their colonial past, and the population does so as well. And the efforts tend



to be focused more than we do in the US on getting governments to give money as a percentage of the budget. Even if the US government gives the largest amount in the world, it's still a smaller percentage of the overall budget.

I'd say there's three things at play here:

1. In continental Europe they are more centered on colonial history;
2. In Europe, they are more driven by broad campaigns that involve large percentages of the populations and a focus on government resources that are engaged.
3. Lastly, I'd say that from a European perspective, they're much less organized, and coordinated.

So their coordinating bodies tend to be relatively weak, and tend to rely more on individual NGOs. So while they have sort of powerful individual NGOs, those NGOs, in general, still tend to be much smaller than in the US where we have much

larger NGOs operating within much stronger coordinating bodies as related to the government interface and our civil society coordinating bodies.

Also in the US there's less of a colonial related legacy with focus on those historic bonds. Consider francophone Africa's ties to France. Also at the nation state level there is a thematic orientation or overlay in the US that is different from Europe where Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) or human rights tend to be the primary focus. In the US, there's a dominant overlay of security and US power that influences things a lot. And at least for a certain portion of the US population they're looking at not just helping the world as individuals in humanitarian settings, but also how aid influences stability in the world. US citizens sort of expect the government to do something, to be a global leader on that.

LC - Wow, that's really interesting - and big distinctions actually. Continuing to look at European/American distinctions, what are your thoughts on the old paradigm of affluent northern donor countries conducting charity - one that may be ceding to more of a partnering mentality? Also, another aspect is this growing sense of a north obligated to compensate southern countries with reparations for Colonial or Imperialism era abuses. And more recently concerns are increasingly centered for some on climate change compensation. So I'm wondering about these shifts. What role do you see NGOs playing in the articulation and actions around these evolving paradigms?

SW - You know, it's a good question. I think one thing to recognize, at least in the US context, there is really a universality of poverty. Most international NGOs in the US are actively involved in poverty reduction efforts in the US as well. So it's not

In the US, again where a colonial legacy doesn't resonate that much, diversity, equity and inclusion with issues on race are at the forefront.



Photo by Dipayan Bhar

just a North helping South. It's organizations helping people who are in poverty in the north and in the south. And they've sort of globalized their identity and work in that sense. With this global experience they're learning many lessons such as how what they were doing in Haiti may be applied to the Midwest south side of Chicago in the US or in Bangladesh on microfinance. And so there's a little bit of blurring where the old frame of North and South is no longer accurate. There's inequality everywhere which is a major shifting and reframing.

In the US, again where a colonial legacy doesn't resonate that much, diversity, equity and inclusion with issues on race are at the forefront. So humanitarian aid in other countries is often seen through the lens of inequities that have existed because of behaviors associated with race in the US context. And that then often translates as a sense of obligation and appeal for partnering internationally around these themes. There's a big difference in the type of resources and the outcomes that come along with the application of those resources.

Consider these examples. For resources that come from the American public, the NGOs tend to be very locally oriented. They tend to, you know, cultivate a strong role for local leadership and those resources go to supporting local NGOs. For resources that have come from big foundations like Gates, or the US government there is rhetoric about shifting towards more local power. Yet there are a lot of requirements such that if you're getting money from the US government, the primary entity to whom those resources are accountable is the American taxpayer, not the local recipient in Africa, or Asia or wherever. So there is this tension between the giver of money and being accountable to them, and the accountability to local populations as intended beneficiaries. That tension plays out and has interfered with effectiveness a bit. Though over the years NGOs have shifted to become more and more locally focused and accountable,



What the US government has done in response over a 15-20 year period is actually shift most of its money out of the NGO sector, to contractors who just do what they say. So a dynamic here is that NGOs now make up only 15% of US foreign assistance. What's interesting is all the debate is about the NGOs, changing their behavior, while the other 85%, which is the big government contractors, escape this scrutiny. A further complication is that on the ground there's a little bit of blurring around who's an NGO and who's not an NGO. Again, in terms of behaviors towards and responses from local populations, there's a big difference between being a

contractor getting government money delivering things and being an NGO.

LC - Fascinating, thank you. Let's Move on. I've been thinking about the rise of extremism, both from the right and the left, and sort of growing propensity towards simplified binary thinking and resulting violence. Recently I was reminded when George Bush famously said about the war on terror, 'You're either with us or against us'. That seemed so outrageous to me at the time. It was such a false and oversimplified binary way of looking at the world - and even more outrageous his administration advanced policies forcing others to comply. Now, after a couple

decades this mentality seems to have globalized and even internalized on all levels of society. So my question is what do you think the NGO sector has done and should do to help mitigate this dangerous trend?

SW - So there's some good news which I'll speak to first and then I'll get to the bad. The good news is that:

1. We've been negotiating with the US Treasury Department on the rules pertaining to NGOs and the War on Terror. It's been 10 years but we finally convinced the government to change their position entirely such that NGOs, particularly in humanitarian settings, have an exemption to work where terror organizations operate. We can now work along-side or with these bad actors as long as meeting basic needs and saving lives is our focus. Previously this was not permitted and a lot of suffering and loss of life was the consequence. Not only is this now widely embraced US government policy, but they have subsequently

pushed it up to the UN Security Council where a mid December, 2022 vote resulted in 14 supporting and one abstention.

Removing this condition from the UN Security Council framework was something largely pushed by US NGOs and not without opposition as France was initially reluctant to get on board but there's now a broadly embraced positive sense that we've successfully challenged and reversed one of the very negative humanitarian impacts of the war on terror worldwide. This has also fostered space for solidarity between civil society and NGOs operating outside of that framework, particularly in environments like Somalia, where one may run into al Shabaab, or whatever. So in such settings you need a different frame - one that is humanitarian, not exclusively military.

2. Another positive is we've learned a lot about disinformation and how to manage it in the US context.

Whereas three or four years ago there was not as much discussion, now it is a common conversation within NGO's. This was not all because of our efforts at InterAction, but again, we were one of many pushing for greater understanding and provision of tools to counter disinformation within the US context.

3. I guess the third positive thing would be that we've been able to maintain bipartisan support for US foreign assistance around the SDGs in particular. This support includes lots of Republicans who are quite conservative. This bipartisan approach has been achieved not by a focus on things that divide but by taking cultural wars out of that debate which we achieved even during the Trump administration. They would routinely cut the budget massively in Congress only to put it back in areas supporting broad international development and humanitarian aid efforts.

Those are the positive elements. On the negative side,

we're seeing:

1. A rise of authoritarianism, authoritarian approaches, and populism around the world which is closing civic space. They're actively fighting against the NGO and civic sector. That's happened here in the US during the Trump administration, and it's happening in other countries which is a reminder that it could happen here again. This is an important lesson learned!
2. A geopolitical element is Europe versus Russia, with China, forcefully pushing an authoritarian frame. Their notion that this is the best way to advance human rights in society is dangerous and that there is pretty active pushback with the US engaging with Africa and others in the mix. But it is tough, a tough bit there.
3. The very idea of extremism has become more mainstream. So views that would have once been considered very extreme have been more broadly embraced. In my mind this

looks like small little groups that were formally sort of not public, are now mainstreamed. And they've been mainstreamed by the aid of political individuals like President Trump. Given the extent of polarization in the US there's always a risk that someone like that will be reelected, placing the US more in line with the Putins of this world than normal western values. So there's a war going on in the US over some of these values. The NGOs have tended to try to bridge the middle a bit. While there are of course, social movement NGOs and NGOs very much tied to the left, we've adopted a position that will actually be stronger because there are lots of conservatives who are not extremists who want functioning societies that are more, not less democratic. So we've tried to align ourselves with some of these democratic values that are both conservative and progressive because we think those were there, and have the sense that these values have to emerge



Sam Worthington with displaced people after the earthquake in Haiti in 2010

locally. There is also a strong belief that the Convention on Human Rights is not a Western document, rather universal, And that these rights need to be affirmed in every single culture in the world.

LC - Nice, and that's something, that's something that seems to be bridging the left and the right a bit in this country,

SW - Bridges left and right within our US NGO community are promising. I'm seeing it less in Europe though which tends to polarize a bit more, like in Italy where the NGO sector is just to the left. So we've learned

that if we split in two, and become just left and just right, we'd have a problem. We really need to occupy the middle. While that keeps both sides a little bit unhappy, the left because we don't get into reproductive rights and abortion politics and the right because we support family planning and empowerment of different populations. So taking the middle isn't always necessarily a popular position to take, but it's been one that's held at least the political ground with Congress and recent administrations. It gave us more credibility and clout than if we were more ideologically based.



The NGO sector have and I believe will continue to assume a critical role in advancing international solidarity and forestalling crises.

LC - Well, that's encouraging. Do you think, given elevated pressures by progressives in the US that this kind of bridging stance will continue?

SW - Yeah, there was some debate on staff levels about the abortion ruling, with the thinking, let's jump to that one side and, you know, let's make sure we can get rid of the faith based groups, and so forth. But it was the Oxfam's, Save the Children and Cares who said, No. We actually want this space to be a space where everyone's welcome. And so they held it together and I see that approach continuing pretty strongly.

I also think that this persuasion in terms of changing rules on terror, was one of the biggest advocacy successes we had, even though it took 10 years to basically agree to the idea that it's not just a you're with us or against us attitude on the war on terror. But rather, in certain settings, the main frame is humanitarian which we also refer to as social justice. Very often those directly involved with the wars say, let them have their space to do this, because this is a positive thing we all uphold.

LC - Right? Yeah, that's brilliant. I recall an instance when Tassaght in Mali benefited from that principle. Al Qaeda in the Mahegreb held the northern city of Gao for a year, I believe the only major city they ever actually reigned over, yet our guys convinced them that continued provision of humanitarian aid was in their interest.

SW - You know, without that it basically would mean you couldn't touch anything at all. Now, NGOs in the US are allowed to function in those complex environments whether controlled by al Qaeda, Al Shabaab or, others like Boko Haram. They have to make sure they talk to the US government and get approvals and so forth. But it's not sort of one or the other. It's fine as long as it's going to organizations that are in essence trying to rebuild society and help people.

LC - This helps prevent absolute chaos or famine as is the case in Haiti right now since there is no authority, not even a terrorism faction to negotiate with.

SW - Exactly. Despite this current tragedy umbrella organizations in civil society and the NGO sector have and I believe will continue to assume a critical role in advancing international solidarity and forestalling crises.

Sam Worthington's Bio

For over 16 years, Sam Worthington served as President & CEO of InterAction (2006-2022), the nation's largest U.S. alliance of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) focused on people around the world.

At InterAction, Mr. Worthington strengthened the impact and collective voice of the U.S. NGO sector and led its engagement on a wide range of policy and programs with the highest levels of the United Nations - including as a principal on the U.N. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) - multilateral institutions, governments, philanthropies, the private sector, and civil society. In 2015, he was a resident policy fellow at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center, Italy.

He is currently Vice Chair of the Van Leer Foundation which funds programs promoting early childhood development. He serves on the executive board of the Global Executive Leadership Initiative at the U.N.; Vice Chair of Forus, a global alliance of NGO platforms; sits on Brown University's Advisory Board at the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies; and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Mr. Worthington lives in Bethesda, Maryland, with his wife, Renée, and has three grown children scattered around the country with their partners.

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The European Union's international partnership

 Interview with Paola Cervo, by Dante Monferrer and Dominique Bénard

Paola Cervo is currently coordinating a Europe-Africa cooperation program at Enabel, the Belgian development agency. In recent years, Paola has collaborated with several public institutions, international organizations, NGOs and start-ups to implement complex development initiatives that achieve lasting impact. Her passion and expertise are varied ranging from

organizational development, innovation, and education to skills development, equity work, and women's empowerment.

Paola Cervo (PC): The European Union is the world's largest donor of development aid, when considering collectively European institutions and the Member States. The European Union's development cooperation





policy aims to support partner countries around the world mainly for the eradication of poverty and achieving the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This policy is part of what is referred to as 'official development assistance' (ODA).

Since January 1, 2021, the Union's development assistance has been deployed through the widespread cooperation and use of the international cooperation instrument "NDCI - Europe in the World" which will run through 2027. Up until 2020, several instruments were used and each addressing different components of cooperation, but as of 2021, everything has been grouped into this single instrument addressing all aspects of international cooperation. The total budget is 79.5 billion euros for the period 2021-2027. This sum is divided by different geographic areas and priorities: Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia-Pacific, and the



Paola Cervo during an international meeting (second from left)

Americas and Caribbean yet Africa is the main priority.

There is also a whole section dedicated to the climate program and for the first time, it is possible to conduct a rapid response, that is, the rapid deployment of resources for crisis management, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In addition, the instrument identifies fairly specific targets to ensure that a number of priorities are not overlooked. For example, at

least 20% of funds must be used for actions in support of human development, such as education, empowerment of populations, gender, etc. versus all physical infrastructure.

A priority is climate change, environment and sustainable energy. In this area, the EU has positioned itself as a leader in controlling climate change, maintaining biodiversity and sustainable energy. Another priority is the development of infrastructure, from

 *Across all these priorities, the emphasis is on young people as essential actors of change and on the fight against inequalities within and between countries.*

electricity to digital technology, and specifically in the context of cooperation with Africa, because digital technology has become a very powerful means for the economic and social development in a large number of countries.

On human development, gender equality and social inclusion are important. In this area we find support for the health systems, education policies, social protection, the fight against social inequalities. Another priority is migration and specifically the protection of migrants and refugees, with an internal policy objective concerning the management of migration in Europe.

Then there is governance, the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Finally, a last priority is sustainable economic development and job creation.

These are the main areas around which all international cooperation activities are structured and

in which the funds we mentioned earlier are invested.

Across all these priorities, the emphasis is on young people as essential actors of change and on the fight against inequalities within and between countries.

Most of the European Union's development funding is invested in bilateral cooperation, i.e. cooperation between the EU and a specific country. The EU institutions as well as the Member States elaborate with a partner country a cooperation plan for the next 7 years covering the priority areas I have just mentioned, taking into account the specific needs of the country while articulating with the action of other international donors in the country. The priorities selected may thus differ greatly from one country to another.

In addition to bilateral cooperation, which is the most important part of policy and investment, many activities are carried out at the regional or continental

level, for example cooperation with the African Union.

Some funds are earmarked for thematic programs such as the one for civil society organizations to support their work for good governance or to support disadvantaged people.

These programs are mainly formulated and managed at the national level within the framework of bilateral cooperation depending on the country specific context.

What is interesting to note here is that this involves direct support to civil society organizations and not always through the state as intermediary. This gives greater freedom and flexibility to contribute to issues where space for civil society is already limited or to contribute to the work of civil society organizations even if it is against government policy.

Since the Covid crisis, the EU and EU member states have increasingly been working in a dynamic called "Team Europe". This is the idea of



Map of the European Union

better coordinating the capacities of the EU and member states to engage in international cooperation both in terms of policymaking and the use of resources to maximize the impact that Europe can have. This is a fairly important development that is evident in a wide range of activities.

Another evolution that deserves to be emphasized is the fact that the department of the European Union that is in charge of this policy is no longer called the

Department for Development Cooperation but the Department for International Partnerships. This means that the European Union is willing to change its approach and narrative: it is no longer just a matter of helping the least developed countries but of entering into a partnership of equals between Europe and the various partner countries. This is a fairly significant change, which also means that the definition of policies

and the use of European resources are increasingly attentive to investments and private sector actors.

It is a question of creating the conditions for the European private sector to work with the private and public sectors of partner countries to achieve development objectives, but also obviously to create added value. This is a rather radical and important change that obviously has an impact on the use of resources. More and more, in addition to traditional cooperation instruments such as grants or direct funding to actors, we are seeing the use of tools such as loans and the structuring of complex investments between European institutions, development banks, private sector partners and local partners. This evolution responds to the need to integrate development aid with other resources in order to achieve the MDGs; it also shows the European Union's concern that it be on an equal footing with partner countries by favoring a partnership

... We can also see this very clearly on the issue of migration, where the objective of protecting European borders most often takes precedence over humanitarian objectives or support for persecuted people.

perspective rather than a dependency perspective.

Another evolution that is becoming more and more apparent is that development cooperation policy is more and more strongly anchored in all European policies and therefore in the priorities that Europe gives itself as a continental space.

As a result, cooperation policy is becoming an instrument for responding to internal political objectives, for example climate change or the use of energy resources. The important thing is not to think about how we spend our resources, but to have a clear vision of our political objectives at the level of Europe in general and to determine how our resources can help us to achieve these objectives from a global point of view. So this implies an integrated vision of the different policies.

It is clear that, often, this desire to put forward the needs of Europe as a continent - as we are

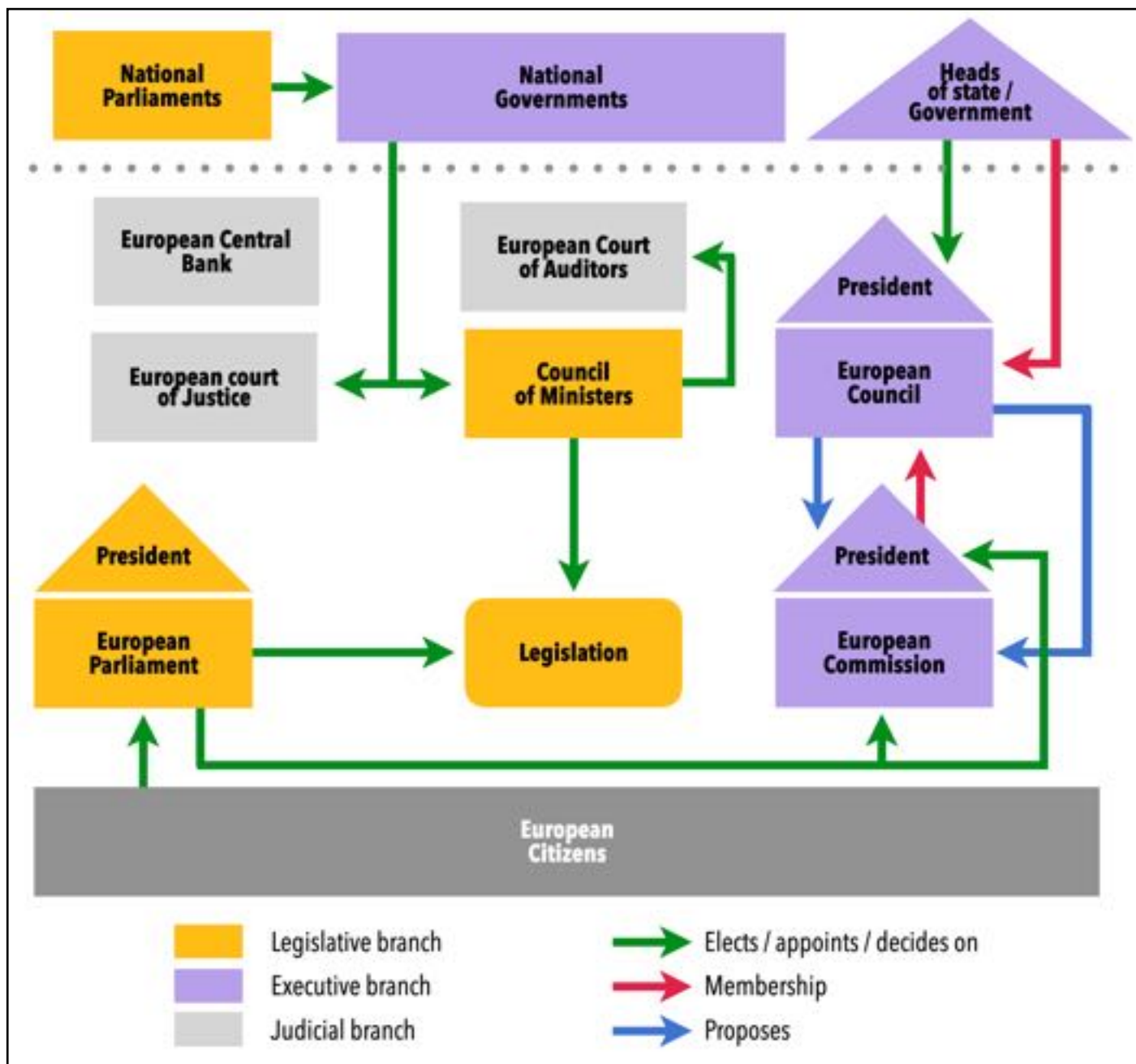
currently seeing in the context of the debates on the energy crisis - takes precedence over other criteria in determining the European Union's political decisions on development cooperation. We can also see this very clearly on the issue of migration, where the objective of protecting European borders most often takes precedence over humanitarian objectives or support for persecuted people. All of this is obviously impacted by political developments in the different European countries which push towards the use of European resources to respond to internal priorities rather than the priorities of partner countries.

DB: Does the European Parliament play a role in determining the European Union's partnership policies?

PC: Absolutely! As a general rule, the European Parliament is one of the three institutions, together with the European Commission and the

European Council, which has a decision-making power - we say co-decision - on the European budget. And so, everything is decided upstream, when the multiannual plan for the use of financial resources is prepared. And then there is the definition of the annual plan. After that, there is work done on a daily basis, with the different committees of the European Parliament, notably with the Committee on Development or the Committee on Foreign Affairs, which interact with the different services of the European Commission to ensure that the recommendations of the Parliament are taken into account in the formulation of programs and their implementation. Thus, the Parliament can give opinions when a new program is formulated, it can ask the European Commission to report on what is done within certain programs, and it participates in the evaluation of impacts.

So there is a whole interaction between the European Commission,



European Institutions

which is the executive body, the European Parliament and of course the European Council. A structured working method - known as "comitology" ¹ - which is

put in place with clearly defined stages allowing the Parliament and the Council to have their say in the determination, implementation, adaptation

and evaluation of European policies.

DB: We observe in the evolution of cooperation policies, at least at the

■ *We have an instrument called « road maps for civil society ». It is a tool that the European offices use to map the actors of civil society, their resources and their needs...*

French level, that more and more cooperation projects are determined not by analysis of the needs and resources of local actors but by calls for tender with predetermined objectives. Civil society organizations are therefore obliged to follow these calls for tender in order to have access to funding. Do we also observe this evolution in European cooperation or is there a little more attending to voices from the field?

PC: To answer this question, I will go back a bit to clarify how we work. First of all, there is a definition of policies at national or regional level. Let's take for example: "the support of civil society in Burkina". The identification of needs is done upstream when it is decided that this is a priority that the European Union wants to take Burkina into account. At this point, the European Union Office in Burkina, with the European partners, initiates an exchange with the Government, obviously, but also with a whole range of actors, including

representatives of civil society, to proceed with an analysis of needs and determine how to meet these needs through a European program. For example, as far as civil society is concerned, we have an instrument at the national level called « road maps for civil society ». It is a tool that the European Union offices use to map the actors of civil society, their resources and their needs, which is regularly updated, and which helps them to formulate their cooperation program.

The call for tender is another tool that allows the implementation of programs defined with local actors. The identification of needs is not done at the level of the call for tender, it is done well before. The call for tenders takes place when we have decided, with the local actors, what we are going to do with this program. We have the macro-priorities, we have the needs, we have the budget, let's say 104 million euros, now we have to spend this money. With the

call for tender, we identify on the basis of objective criteria the civil society actors with whom the EU will sign a financing agreement and who will intervene in the realization of specific projects.

In principle, if everything goes well in this process, the needs of local civil society will have been taken into account. It is true that once the call for tenders is published, the field actors, the NGOs, must respond to this call for tenders to be eligible and be selected to receive funding. It is a very competitive process because the needs are enormous compared to the funding that is available. Therefore, a high level of capacity is required even at the level of writing the project that responds to the call for tender. And of course, there are certain priorities established by Europe. On the one hand, we take into account the needs of the field, but on the other hand we need to respond to internal policies.

DB: A few years ago I observed something very interesting, in Madagascar, where I intervened to help youth organizations to elaborate a program aiming to facilitate the social and professional integration of young people. The European Cooperation Office in Madagascar made funds available to civil society organizations so that they could study their needs and build a program. Is this something that is widespread?

PC: Yes, it is widespread because it fits in with the objective of strengthening civil society. We are not only trying to strengthen the capacity to act but also to identify needs, to coordinate - this is a very important aspect, because in some countries civil society is not yet very coordinated and therefore there is a lot of waste of resources, or the impact of civil society advocacy actions is lost or is very weak due to lack of coordination. There are a lot of small entities that

don't have enough resources to "have a seat at the table" when it comes to negotiations or consultations for new policies, for example.

The European Union is also putting in place tools to help civil society organizations gain access to funding, which we know is very competitive, in order to create a virtuous circle: strengthening small local civil society organizations so that they have access to greater resources and not just supporting the large NGOs, which are often international. This desire to support local actors is also extended to local authorities - municipalities, communes - which are often very active in the provision of basic services, rural development activities, and are perceived as privileged actors by European cooperation.

DM: I would like to ask a more general question: for some time now, there has been a certain rejection of the West in a number of countries... I am thinking of

all the coups d'état that have taken place in a series of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, in Burkina, Mali and Guinea, and then the increasingly strong criticism, particularly on the part of the younger generation, of the values held by the West. Not long ago, I was reading an article in a Senegalese magazine on the conditionalities of aid, for example concerning gender equality, and the criticisms were strongly expressed in the following way: "They want to impose on us values that are not ours... When will the West decide to remove its knee from our neck! Do you feel these tensions exist at the level of the European Union and is there any reflection on this subject?"

PC: Yes, absolutely! That's why we can talk about a change of narrative. It's about cooperating in a partnership that is not necessarily based on shared values. The values and objectives of both partners are considered equally, on the same level. This is an important change in narrative. So, does this

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The 42nd session of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, which brings together parliamentarians from African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and European parliamentarians, was held from 29 October to 2 November 2022 in Maputo, Mozambique.

change already translate into a different approach to cooperation? I don't think so, it will take time. When the EU engages in a partnership with country X, it is important for the EU that this partnership be invested in the values that the EU proposes, i.e. gender equality, respect for human rights, among others.

However, the EU does not intervene as a block. There

are teams on the ground who know the local context well and who adapt the approaches to the local context. If we take, for example, a country like Uganda, where there are significant tensions on the issue of the rights of LGBTQIA people who have experienced repression due to discriminatory policies still in force. Obviously the European Union has a totally different

position, but this does not prevent it from engaging Uganda on a wide portfolio of activities. There is a sensitivity, but also tools to moderate, nuance and adapt the general narrative and values approach to the context. This allows us to continue to work in Uganda and support organizations that advocate for human rights and work with LGBTQIA activists. While there may be no alignment

at the level of values, it is not a question of imposing values. Such sensitivity is especially important as a new pan-Africanism is returning in waves. It is a movement of continental pride.

DM: It's exactly like the support we note in some countries of the global South towards Russia on the issue of Ukraine: The question is not so much about their support for Russia but opposition to the West. It's about their saying, "*We can also disagree with you!*"

PC: Yes, and also you have to look at the different positions with a multidimensional lens because now the impact of the war in Ukraine on Africa is manifesting through a food crisis. So it is obvious that the positions of African countries will necessarily be different from those of European countries because the problem they experience is different. In this debate, there are several facets and to answer the question asked earlier,

the European Union is very aware of the problem and is responding in a rather proactive way, not at the general political level, but in a pragmatic way at the national and local levels by adapting to context.

Of course, there are extreme cases, at the moment, for example, in Ethiopia, European cooperation is interrupted. Only the humanitarian aspect remains active, but there is no longer any development cooperation. Everything has been blocked. The European Union has put forward two or three key criteria, at the political level, so as to resume development cooperation.

In this case, there is obviously a factor of conditionality of aid. But this requires a level that is not easy to reach. Indeed, for the European Union to decide to interrupt cooperation with a country requires on the one hand an in-depth political analysis that provides proof of the seriousness of the situation

in the country and also tries through these means to change the situation, and on the other, if nothing changes, a joint decision of the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament.

DB: If we compare the action of the European Union in the field of development cooperation with the action of some Member States, such as France, for example, could we say that the policy of the European Union is less inclined towards seeking a policy of domination and power?

PB : This is a very difficult question. Even if I sound pessimistic, I would say no, because European policy is made by the Member States and in the definition of European cooperation policy, countries like France have a very important voice. The European Union cannot be considered as a separate entity, European policy is defined by the Member States, it responds to the decisions of the European Council. On the other hand,

The European Commission, as an institution, is perhaps sometimes perceived as a more neutral actor than the member states. It suffers less from the historical legacy of relations between countries such as France, Germany and the partner countries.

to be a little more positive, the European Commission, as an institution, is perhaps sometimes perceived as a more neutral actor than the member states. It suffers less from the historical legacy of relations between countries such as France, Germany and the partner countries.

Sometimes it can play a more neutral, collaborative role as an intermediary. Moreover, many things are played out at the level of the people who are on the ground and who have more or less a sense of listening and cooperation and who also have more or less latitude to do so.

But at the level of policymaking in general, there is not much difference. In Mali, or in the Sahel in general, there is a strategy that seeks to maximize the presence on the ground of a country like France and also of the European Union. There is a concerted effort that is made in agreement with the member countries. The European Commission, as

an institution, will not take a position in disagreement with a member state.

Moreover, in most cases, the European Union offices in the countries are "understaffed". So even if there is a will and effort to collaborate, there will be limits in terms of capacity, resources and time to interact with all the actors involved.

DB - Thank you Paola and best wishes for your continued involvement.

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