**Cooperative research project: Governance and Social Action in Sudan
after the Peace Agreement of January 9, 2005: local, national and regional dimensions
sponsored by Volkswagen Foundation, Germany**

and

University of Juba

Call for Papers

"Governance and Social Action in Conflict Societies"

International Conference at the University of Juba

Juba, Sudan
July 21-24, 2008

Conflict Societies and Approaches towards Sustainable Peace

'Conflict societies' face particular problems in maintaining or establishing structures of governance that allow social groups to articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations by peaceful means[1]. Frequently peace agreements that settle a major conflict such as a civil war or recurrent violent clashes within a society, turn out to be fragile or insufficient to tackle deeply entrenched societal conflicts beyond the main conflict properly. In some cases a peace agreement may drive other marginalised social groups to take up arms in order to make their demands stronger and put pressure on the negotiating warring parties towards inclusion in agreements on power and wealth sharing[2]. Moreover, in many cases unresolved resource conflicts re-emerge as soon as the main conflict has been worked out[3].

Scholars and practitioners agree that, in order to avoid such unintended outcomes, existing and new institutions and an extended scope for social action are needed to make it possible for social groups to deal appropriately with the root causes of conflict and the complex conflict dynamics that usually have evolved over time. Tensions arising from mass return of internally displaced people and refugees to communities that are still slowly recovering from war may become entry points for

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1   According to the definition of 'governance' by UNDP - United Nations Development Programme (1997): Governance for Sustainable Human Development, Policy Paper, in: http://mirror.undp.org/magnet/policy, and UNDP (2006): Governance for the Future. Democracy and Development in the Least Developed Countries, in: http://www.undp.org/governance/docs/Policy-Pub-LDCReport.pdf.
2   For the case of Sudan, see Grawert, Elke/El-Battahani, Atta (2007): Oil-cursed: the peace process in South Sudan, in: Development and Cooperation, March: 110-113 & http://www.inwent.org/E+Z/content/archive-eng/03-2007/foc_art5.html.
3   See the contributions in Wohlmuth, Karl/Urban, Tino (eds) (2007): Reconstructing Economic Governance after Conflict in Resource-rich African Countries. Berlin: Lit Verlag.

renewed violent conflict. Involvement of the various levels of government, inclusion of all relevant actors and stakeholders that carry on the conflict or are affected by it, their participation in decision-making as well as their ownership of the implementation of decisions are crucial for successful conflict transformation that tackles direct, cultural and structural violence[4]. In sum, sustainable political solutions for societies which have experienced long-term severe conflict will consist in extended participation, fair political representation and a leadership that is accountable to society[5]. A change in state-society relations towards inclusive strategies of consultation and problem solution in informal and relations-oriented ways is expected to promote conditions that facilitate cooperation towards human security[6]. This change might build on established local ways of conflict resolution which however need to add a dimension of removing oppressive social and gender relations through non-violent social action.

For the conference in Juba, case studies which provide insight in social action and the dynamics of conflict societies in the above sense and analyse current attempts of building governance structures are invited. However, the following aspects should also be considered and included in the analysis.

The Dilemma of Simultaneous Economic and Political Transformation and the Risks of Contested Governance

Simultaneous economic and political transformation[7] adds to the particular difficulties conflict societies are facing in processes of establishing adequate governance structures. Solutions which are currently promoted by development agencies tend to apply 'technical fixes'[8] and mechanistic concepts of 'good governance'. Within a neo-institutionalist framework, attempts are made to establish rule of law, efficient and effective public sector management, accountability of public office, decentralisation, public availability of information and transparency. Aims are better service delivery, poverty reduction, prevention of corruption and an attractive environment for investors[9]. Many aid agencies also embark on measures to increase respect for human rights and democratic participation through capacity building of civil society and the judiciary[10]. In line with western liberal thought, the proponents of this approach regard civil society organisations as crucial to manage

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4   See Nhema, Alfred G. (2004): The Quest for Peace in Africa. Utrecht; Senghaas, Dieter (2001): The Civilization of Conflict: Constructive Pacifism as a Guiding Notion for Conflict Transformation, in: Austin, A. et al. op. cit.: 25-40, also in: http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/senghaas_handbook.pdf.
5   Omosa, Mary/Katumanga, M. (2004): Leadership and the Politics of Nation State in Kenya: Searching for a Vision, Balancing Interests and Navigating Realities. UNESCO Chair, University of Nairobi.
6   UNDP (1994): Human Development Report. New Dimensions of Human Security, in: http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1994/.
7   Schmitter, Philippe C. (1996): Dangers and Dilemmas of Democracy, in: Diamond, Larry/Plattner, Marc F. (eds): The Global Resurgence of Democracy. Baltimore: 76-93.
8   Armijo, Leslie Elliott/Biersteker, Thomas J./Lowenthal, Abraham F. (1995): The Problems of Simultaneous Transitions, in: Diamond / Plattner (eds), op.cit.: 226-240.
9   World Bank (2004): World Development Report: Making Services Work for Poor People. Washington D.C.
10 Commission of the European Communities (2003): Governance and Development. Brussels, in: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0615en01.pdf.

and control resources and to create social cohesion[11].

Empirical evidence shows, however, that hese approaches are hardly able to solve the complex political-economic problems of transforming conflict societies. The blueprint approach of 'good governance' and 'promoting civil society' may eclipse competing concepts and structures of governance, alternative approaches of operation, interactions between social groups and leaders, ways to create legitimacy and the existing variety of decision-making procedures. In countries where aid agencies have carried out humanitarian work, provided infrastructure and basic social services in the war zones for a long time, governance appears to be contested between powerful aid agencies and the re-emerging state authorities. This may contribute to the establishment of weak states[12].

The Sub-regional Context

A further important aspect to be considered in the conference papers is the sub-regional and international dimension conflict societies are part of. The sub-regional context consists more often than not of more conflict societies and conflict parties that have allies in neighbouring countries. International interests and increasingly, economic interests of global players lead to an even higher complexity of conflicts. Consequently, the relevant sub-regional and international stakeholders should be involved and issues to be addressed in peace negotiations. Attempts of building sub-regional governance have hardly been made so far, more common have been interventions by international peace-keeping forces, however with limited success.

The proposed international conference intends to look into the (re-) establishment of governance structures in conflict societies and social action from the highly differentiated perspective indicated above.

Proposed Issues for Conference Papers

Questions that could be addressed are, for example:

- How do economic aspects, such as the long-term implications of structural adjustment programmes, neo-liberal economic policies, or long-term intervention of aid agencies impact on governance and social action in conflict societies?

- How is the political economy related to governance and social action in conflict societies?

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11 Diamond, Larry J. (1994): Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation, in: Journal of Democracy, Vol. 5 No. 3: 4-17.

12 Riehl, Volker (2001): Who is Ruling in South Sudan? The Role of NGOs in Rebuilding Socio-political Order. Uppsala; Grawert, Elke (2007): The Aid Business in South Sudan after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, in: Bass, Hans-Heinrich et al. (eds): Economic Systems in a Changing World Economy. Berlin / London / New Brunswick: Lit Verlag : 387-402.

- Which effects do sub-regional political economies and international strategic interests have on governance and social action in particular country cases?

- Which impact do entrenched resource conflicts, the proliferation of arms and in general, 'markets of violence'[13] have on governance and social action?

- How are internally displaced people and refugees re-integrated in conflict societies? Which governance structures are formed in order to organise this process and settle newly emerging conflicts between local and returning groups?

And on the other hand,

- how do currently existing governance patterns and social action impact on the main economically driven conflicts in a given society?

The conference papers are also expected to contribute constructively to the academic discourse on state decay and societal erosion. Related questions to be addressed are the following:

- How are state-society relations being transformed in the framework of existing and new local and sub-regional governance structures in societies that have been caught up or that have taken part in violent conflicts for a long time?

- Which attempts are being made to tackle the root causes of conflict – in institutional terms as well as in terms of changing social, gender and power relations? How are mechanisms included that deal with underlying conflicts about resources such as land, water, oil, etc.?

- Which actors are involved and which activities are related to building governance, creating legitimacy of rule, re-establishing old and forming new institutions that guide and shape state-society relations? Which alternative activities can be identified that undermine or demolish governance structures?

- How are civil societies in conflict societies characterised, and which dynamics are shaping these civil societies? Which factors inform, trigger and guide social action of various civil society groups? Which roles do they have in governance? Which activities do civil societies undertake in conflict societies?

- Which links exist or emerge between the local and national levels of governance and social action? Which political dynamics do local, regional, national, sub-regional and international actors create in conflict societies?

These questions are not exhaustive, papers may address other aspects and analyse governance and social action in conflict societies also from different perspectives than those suggested here.

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13 Elwert, Georg (1997): Gewaltmärkte. Beobachtungen zur Zweckrationalität der Gewalt, in: Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie, Special Issue No. 37. Opladen: 86-101.

Juba University as a Conference Site

Sudan is an example of a conflict society which is currently dealing with nearly all the difficulties mentioned above. South Sudan in particular is still recovering from the long civil war that was raging in large parts of its territory. Juba, the capital of South Sudan, is the centre of re-building governance in this devastated area. The local society, the Government of South Sudan and numerous aid agencies are coping with huge social, economic and political challenges.

The University of Juba is in the process of being re-located from Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, to its original site in Juba. Sudanese scholars welcome opportunities for academic exchange after long years of isolation. During the conference that will be hosted by the University of Juba, academics from other parts of the world will have a unique opportunity to learn from Sudan and vice versa. The local interested public, civil society groups, government officials and staff of aid agencies will be invited to participate in this conference so that a dialogue between academics and practitioners can take place.

Formal requirements

Abstracts of not more than 200 words should be sent to the project coordinator Dr Elke Grawert (grawert@uni-bremen.de) **before March 31, 2008.**

The selected presenters will receive an invitation letter by mid-April, 2008, which they may use for official requirements (visa, leave, etc.). They have to raise funds on their own to cover travel expenditure. We can only assist in finding sponsors.

The preliminary programme will be distributed by e-mail in mid-April, 2008, too.

The presenters should send the **complete papers** of about 15 pages length (font 12, Times Roman, 1.5 line spacing) by e-mail to the coordinator **before June 30, 2008.**

The University of Juba will offer free accommodation for a number of participants in the university guesthouses so that the cost of staying in Juba can be kept low for those who cannot afford hotel expenses.

Any inquiries by e-mail to:

Dr Elke Grawert, University of Bremen, Germany **e-mail:** grawert@uni-bremen.de

The Cooperative Research Project "Governance and Social Action in Sudan after the Peace Agreement of January 9, 2005: local, national and regional dimensions"

This project includes partners from the Universities of Juba and Khartoum, Ahfad University for Women, Omdurman, University of Addis Ababa, University of Nairobi, Moi University, Eldoret and the University of Bremen. Thirteen researchers are doing their Masters and PhD studies in Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya on the basis of scholarships by the Volkswagen Foundation. Scholars from the above universities supervise the research work and conduct own researches. The Juba Conference will conclude the first phase of the project, which had started in September 2005. It is

meant to provide an opportunity for a broader public to discuss the research results produced by the project participants as well as presenters from other research contexts in comparative perspective.