

# Do Peace Studies Reach Out, Including Others?

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper presents various personal reflections made about Peace studies find its new challenges, which will help to understand the reality and peace research from new globalizing dimensions.

From the transnational and interdisciplinary perspective, we aim to go beyond what is established in order to open new ways to analyze and offer other benchmarks, such as equality and equity. In this sense, the text develops a convergence of different approaches to this research: sociology of peace, development, politics and culture, the Taoist epistemology, and Gandhian and Buddhist ethics.

This globalizing approach shows that the specificity of human functional diversity has been excluded, over time, in all peace theories and practices.

The reconstruction of peace needs full inclusion of functional diversity in everything related to peace. The World Declaration is just a starting point

**RESUMEN:** El artículo presenta varias reflexiones personales sobre los Estudios sobre la Paz, destacando algunos nuevos desafíos que pueden ayudar a entender la realidad y la investigación por la paz desde nuevas dimensiones globales.

Desde una perspectiva transnacional e interdisciplinaria, sostenemos que hay que ir más allá de lo establecido a fin de abrir nuevas vías de análisis y ofrecer otros puntos de referencia, como la igualdad y la equidad. En este sentido, el texto desarrolla una convergencia de diferentes enfoques a esta investigación: sociología de la paz, desarrollo, política y cultura, epistemología taoísta y éticas de Gandhi y budista. Este enfoque global muestra que la especificidad de la diversidad funcional humana ha sido excluida en todas las teorías y prácticas de la paz.

La reconstrucción de la paz precisa de la completa inclusión de la diversidad funcional en todo lo relativo a la paz. La Declaración Mundial es precisamente un punto de partida.

**KEYWORDS:** Peace studies, overcoming violence, functional diversity, World Declaration

**PALABRAS-CLAVE:** Estudios sobre la Paz, superación de la violencia, diversidad funcional, Declaración Mundial

Some personal reflections on some personal experiences: it depends on how we conceive of peace studies. Three key points:

- \*being transnational carries a message: no nation-civilization has a monopoly on peace theory and practice, including the West:
- \*being transdisciplinary carries a message: no science or group of sciences has a monopoly on peace theory and practice;
- \*bridging theory and practice carries a message: the test is in the practice, like in conflict resolution and peace building.

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The first point is problematic for those who see the West in general, and the USA in particular, as the carriers of peace theory and practice, and may lead to political problems.

The second point is problematic for those who see a social science, and international studies in particular, as the carrier of peace studies, and may lead to academic turf problems.

The third point is problematic for those with ready-made peace policies in need of re-examination, and may lead to communication problems across many divides.

There is a way of avoiding such problems: adopt a Western, not global platform, be mono-disciplinary, deliver descriptions, not prescriptions, like premises for policies already decided, with some minor variations. Stay academic, only. Safe.

And there is a way of solving communication problems: by having nothing to say. But peace studies offer something:

- \*if you want to overcome violence, identify underlying conflicts, including structural ones, and try to solve them;
- \*to identify conflicts, talk with all parties to understand their goals among the clashing goals;
- \*to solve conflicts search together with all parties for a new reality that accommodates the legitimate goals of the parties;
- \*a sustainable solution presupposes parity-symmetry, that what I want I must be willing to give to the others if they so want;
- \*the same applies to peacebuilding projects: equity, equality.

For an aging Norwegian male there are some divides to bridge.

Take gender. The points above have been there from the beginning and speak directly to the condition of women. They know that gender relations do not work without parity, and that a solid structure, patriarchy, stands in the way. Men may become skeptical, feeling delegitimized.

Take generation. We have the experience through the SABONA project (Zulu for "I see you", now in Norway, Spain and Ireland, supported by the EU Comenius program) that kids quickly understand the points about violence, conflict and peace, that "I want something badly but that bully probably does too, let me find out what, and search for a solution". A book on conflict resolution for children, [A Flying Orange Tells Its Tale](#)<sup>2</sup> (about an orange telling "two kids, one orange" stories, six languages) might be interesting also for adults. But adults are trained to punish bad behavior, not in asking why; sometimes kids teach them. And adults may become skeptical, feeling delegitimized.

Take nation, civilization. A little NATO country, obedient to a USA with well above 240 interventions in other countries, supplying USA with sophisticated arms and political legitimacy. Going beyond, trying to understand the Soviet bloc point of view, led to secret police surveillance. Going beyond the West to other civilizations, in search of peace, to Gandhi's India, Japan, to buddhist tetralemma thinking (as opposed to dualism), to daoist yin/yang thinking (as opposed to Aristotle-Descartes) led to accusations of being "esoteric, mystic".

That these bridging efforts were well received on the other side goes without saying, with fascinating dialogues. And that made the political and cultural West even more skeptical, feeling delegitimized, that they may have lost out on something. There is much at stake, a narrow vs a broad world view.

How to engage Western military-political-cultural elites?

Not problematic: the entrance ticket is not deep analysis, nor accurate forecasts, but promising remedies. Problems are more easily admitted when solutions seem to be at hand; a tunnel needs a little hole letting in some light to be understood. That test passed, questions about analysis and forecasts abound, be well prepared. This has happened hundreds of times "at high levels". Be helpful-constructive, not moralizing-critical. Peace education and peace journalism will help in the longer run.

Some Western cultural elites may react like buddhist-daoist elites when exposed to Western science: Interesting! More!! For others there is a bridge back to the West: the hidden West. Why so much Thucydides with his positivist-pessimist "the thing that has been is that which shall be"<sup>2</sup>, and not also Xenophon who said "—the only conquests that last are when men willingly submit to those who are better than themselves. The only way really to conquer a country is through generosity". Why so much Hobbes-Clausewitz and so little Kant? Why Machiavelli advising *The Prince* to be strong and punitive when there is also Erasmus on raising a Christian prince? Why so much Augustine-Aquinas on just war and so little on the Jesuit *sagrado experimento* in Paraguay? Let peaceful West inform belligerent West.

The model: medical science; transdisciplinary explorations of theory, transnational practice, available to all. Problems were more theological than political-academic, but it took time. Not an unmitigated success, but very useful; sometimes dogmatic, school medicine. Peace studies offers conflict hygiene, simple rules like washing hands, brushing teeth; hopefully not becoming dogmatic. And no doubt in need of ongoing dialogues with everybody touched by the efforts—like good doctors try to do.

Following these considerations, it is interesting to apply and extend these lines of thought to all areas, both global and interpersonal. In particular, the priority is to develop one area of research unknown to Peace Studies: The specific case of the functional diversity as a human reality.

Functionally diverse women and men suffer over time from multiple forms of discrimination or violence. Hence the importance of interdisciplinarity. In order to achieve peace, it is of great interest to enrich discourse with the greatest possible diversity of disciplines, which, must come together harmoniously to achieve the desired goal: denature the human condition as it is interpreted historically, to rebuild it again.

Although the specific circumstance of functional diversity may seem an isolated reality, it is not so. Practice shows that it is, conversely, one of the main consequences of major international conflicts.

Equity and equality are two basic pillars of peacebuilding. A functional diverse human being, needs the development of all the possible strategies to transform socio-political and cultural reality to achieve full inclusion and to be able to enjoy and exercise citizenship. Bringing together theory and practice in issues of peace, becomes essential. United Nations has had the need to create a specific convention to protect human rights of this social group.

It is therefore time to work in a way that theory and practice coincide in a balanced match. In Spain, a global initiative in favour of full inclusion of this group of people is born through a "(specific) World Declaration Contribution of functionally diverse people to a Culture of Peace." This can be a good starting point for a change in Peace Studies.

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### Notes

1. Illustrated by Andreas Galtung, andreas@galtung.com; Oslo: Kagge, 2003, English edition Oslo: Kolofon, 2007.
2. The title of the Thucydides chapter in Edith Hamilton, The Greek Way, New York NY: Norton, 1930, 1942, pp. 183-203, followed by a chapter on Xenophon, pp. 204-226, quote p. 214.