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Healing from violence: 
An action research project among survivors of Gukurahundi, Zimbabwe 

Dumisani Ngwenya and Geoff Harris *

Between 1983 and 1987, an estimated 20 000 people from Matebeleland and parts of Midlands Province in Zimbabwe were killed by Zimbabwean government forces in an operation code named Gukurahundi. Since that time no official apology, justice, reparations or any form of healing process has been offered by the government which was responsible for these atrocities.

The question that this research project seeks to answer is whether the survivors of Gukurahundi can heal themselves? Using a participatory action research approach, the research sheds some light on what communities can do on their own to deal with the wounds of their members. It finds that through actions such as creating safe and empathetic spaces for storytelling, group-based healing workshops and other psychosocial approaches, it is possible for traumatised individuals and communities to attain a measure of relief from their emotional and psychological wounds.

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Introduction

Between 1983 and 1987, an estimated 20,000 people from Matebeleland and parts of Midlands Province in Zimbabwe were killed by state security agents, mostly from the Central Intelligence Organisation and a specially trained battalion of the Zimbabwean National Army, during an operation code named Gukurahundi (a Shona word meaning ‘the rain which washes away the dirt’). The main purpose was to deal with dissidents associated with the Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZPRA) and involved violence against Ndebele individuals and communities suspected of having ZPRA sympathies. The story of the violence has been documented by the Catholic Commission for Justice & Peace (2007).

Since that time no official apology or any form of healing process has been offered by the government which was responsible for these atrocities. If anything, the government has contributed to ongoing pain by on occasions actively suppressing any such attempts. As a result, individuals and communities in these areas have never been afforded opportunities to openly talk about their experiences and to seek relief for their painful memories of the past.

The question that this research seeks to answer is whether, in the absence of an apology or official healing programme, individuals and communities which were affected by Gukurahundi can heal themselves? The major themes are speaking about suffering, writing about suffering and hindrances to healing. It also reviews participants’ views about the usefulness of the research process to them. A companion article (Ngwenya and Harris 2015) examines the consequences of an unhealed past.

A comprehensive discussion of healing after violence may be found in Ngwenya (2014, chapter 4) and only a few general points will be made here. Collective healing of memories is crucial where collective traumatisation has taken place (Bar-Tal et al 2007). ‘Men, women, and children in traumatized communities must heal together, if they are to heal at all, because their lives are bound up with one another’ (Pintar 2000: 64). Healing is necessary not just for the relief of wounded communities. It is also important in the prevention of future violence which might be caused by victims taking revenge.

Even in situations where it is not possible for members of victim and perpetrator groups to reconcile or forgive each other, it is still highly desirable that those who have experienced violence and suffering be given an opportunity to heal for their own sakes so they can move on with their lives (Villa-Vicencio 2004: 202).

Healing is multidimensional and multifaceted, so holistic healing processes need to address both the causes of the pain and the resultant symptoms. The socio-political context is a vital element in the recovery process and healing should utilise the various individual, political, social and cultural responses to a traumatic situation and its aftermath (Hamber 2003: 78). In addition, people need to feel safe if healing is to occur. Where their lives are still under threat and the environment around them continues to remind them of their traumatic experiences, complete healing will be difficult to attain (Staub et al 2005: 302).

Healing can come about in a number of ways, which are not mutually exclusive: some individuals manage the healing process, from their own inner resources; some receive help from family and friends; some are helped by traditional or faith-based rituals; and some benefit from face-to-face counselling. This article focusses on another option, where traumatised individuals come together in a group to seek healing.
Research methods

For this research, a participatory action research (PAR) approach was used because it provides for both knowledge production and action. PAR meant that the participants were in charge of the research process, with the first researcher acting as a facilitator. An invitation was extended through the ZPRA Veterans Trust (ZVT) for volunteers to take part in the research, which involved no monetary reward and required long term commitment. The research involved 12 ZPRA ex-combatants, three females and nine males. Ethical clearance for the research project was granted by the Durban University of Technology’s ethics committee. The participants’ involvement was confidential and none have been identified in all reporting of the research.

Six dialogue sessions were held over an extended period, between January 2012 and May 2014. These interactive sessions, which included group discussions, argumentation and consensus meetings, were the prime tool for data collection (McTaggart 1998: 326). Dialogue typically plays a critical part in PAR because, through it, participants are able to better understand their own reality through the critical analysis of their own particular situations and problems. Participants engaged in informative, reflective and interrogative discussions concerning their experiences and actions during the sessions and were able to devise solutions or actions. The discussions were held in a mixture of isiNdebele and English which were recorded (with the permission of the group) and later transcribed to facilitate data analysis. One limitation of this way of capturing data is the loss of much of the nonverbal aspects of the conversations which usually add a critical dimension to the understanding. Having a transcribed record of the discussions was important because these could be shared with the participants, not only for their records and use but also for verification purposes. In addition a ‘Tree of Life’ workshop (see Reeler et al 2009) and a writing workshop were also held, both being actions identified by the group.

As ex-combatants, the participants were politically conscious and generally not afraid to express their views and discuss their experiences. On the whole the discussions were genuine and frank and the discussions were frequently very robust, as is evident from the many quotations reported below.

Although an inductive content analysis was used, an a priori theoretical framework and personal interests and preconceptions influenced the approach to the analysis. This carries a risk that the researcher bias might influence results and conclusions reached. In PAR, one of the ways to guard against this is to ensure that there are ‘appropriate communicative structures in place throughout the research and action which allow participants to continue to associate with and identify with the work of the collective project change’ (McTaggart 1998:225). In the final analysis, the extent to which participants identify and feel they truly own both the process and the final product is the crucial indicator of validity. The preliminary results of the research were brought to the group for verification and discussion and the final results incorporate a number of comments made at this stage of the research.

Results and discussion

1. Speaking about their suffering in a safe environment

The participants constantly expressed the need, not only to tell their stories, but also to know that they were being listened to. Engaging in discussions with other people was associated with positive outcomes such as ‘feeling healthy’, ‘feeling relieved’, ‘getting help with handling issues’ and ‘finding answers. Part of this involves realising that other people have gone through similar experiences:
... this thing still lingers and I am also part of those who need healing. At times, when we discuss like this, I always realize that ... I am not the only one affected but we are many. When you find people with similar issues and you discuss, you feel relieved.

This suggests that the sharing of the story with a community of sympathetic and empathetic listeners, who acknowledge both the pain and the reality of the experience, offers validation and comfort to the storyteller. This accords with Minow’s (1998: 67) view that ‘Coming to know that one’s suffering is not solely a private experience, best forgotten, but instead an indictment of a social cataclysm, can permit individuals to move beyond trauma, hopelessness, numbness, and preoccupation with loss and injury.’ Another participant commented that

If I can share with the group what has happened to me, myself, it lessens the severity of the problem, because a problem shared is a problem relieved, so to say. It may not go away completely, but the fact that you now all know about my problem, I feel consoled. ...It has to be known how I lost my leg, and for you people to be able to feel for me. ... By this act of telling to other people, it reduces the severity of the problem that I carry.

Responses such as these support the findings of those such as Schweitzer et al (2014) and Reeler et al (2014) that people in post war/conflict situations experience healing from telling their stories, although McKinney (2007) urges caution on the grounds that this approach have particular cultural and historical relevance and not be universally applicable. In African cultures, however, stories have been used to communicate various truths, lessons and history. While it is true that storytelling in the context of trauma and healing can be prone to exaggeration, romanticising and memory failure, it nevertheless holds great value for victims seeking relief, as Wieder (2004: 23) observed for South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

A certain amount of justice and freedom is gained when the victim’s story no longer belongs to that individual alone (Shriver 2003). As Farwell and Cole (2002: 32) have affirmed, ‘Establishing an accurate understanding of objective conditions validates all survivors, even those whose story has not been told, through individual assertions of self-worth and guiltlessness on behalf of the entire victimised community’. It is important to note that the storytelling is happening within the context of a community, as opposed to a clinical approach where therapy takes place between a practitioner and an individual. The former aims to heal an individual and the other to heal a community through healing of individuals in a group setting (Pia 2013: 483).

As suggested by Cobham et al (2012), Mullet et al (2013) and Pia (2013), repetitive storytelling is a powerful method of facilitating healing in victims of trauma. This need to tell one’s story repetitively was aptly summed up by one participant:

I think something has got to be discussed over and over, and over and over repeatedly such that then it dawns into you to say, well I can forgo, but otherwise I think that it is very difficult that we can quickly forgo things by the first encounter, or second or third, it should be a dream, a dream eventually is like a transformation, you change completely.

His sentiment resonates with an important aspect of Zimbabwean black culture: when a person dies, each person who visits the bereaved person(s) usually asks about the circumstances leading to the death. For each person who comes, the bereaved person will have to narrate what, how and when it happened. The person will keep on narrating the same story as long as there are people asking. This process, it seems, helps the bereaved individual to make the transition from denial to acceptance, and thus contributes to recovery. It also seems that, after retelling the story several times, most individuals are soon able to do so with less emotion and more clarity.
2. Writing or recording the suffering for the next generation

The use of writing for therapeutic purposes with various types of individuals and groups has been extensively discussed. These studies attest to the transformational qualities of what Van der Oord et al (2010) call ‘cognitive behavioural writing therapy’ and, although the traumatic experiences may differ, the outcome of any traumatic experience is similar.

Our participants mentioned several times throughout the dialogues the need to write down their stories and those of their communities as a way of preserving history. They wished to correct what they perceived as the distorted history of the facts about the Gukurahundi era and their role during the struggle, as it is currently explained by government. This resulted in the group deciding to write their life stories as a project. They felt that getting their stories out could contribute to their healing, as their voices would no longer be silent but would become public knowledge. One participant pointed to such stories as a legacy ‘As it is, it is now 10:45 for us. We will die. Those left behind have to know that such things once happened’.

One participant envisaged a three-phase process:

At least if a person talks about their pain, they will be able to slowly release the pain. This should be on three levels .... First of all, our team here should be able to record ... our own personal stories and tell them to the public. ... Then, on the other level, I know somebody who was a victim ... we go out to them, we record [their experiences] ... the third layer would be community engagement. Let’s suppose we identify one community, may be that place where the eight teachers were killed ... We go into that community we ask those people to re-live what they saw that time and then tell the world how they felt at that time and how they feel now and how they want other people to feel in the next or future generations.

Another focus was the need for the next generation to know the truth:

... Last time I was talking to some young people here in Bulawayo. They picked me up from ZAPU [Zimbabwe African People’s Union] offices, and when they asked me, ‘So old man, tell us, is it true that twenty thousand people died?’ No they can’t believe it; the young guys cannot believe it. It doesn’t make sense now that people were killed, for what? The new generation is now at hand. The older generations are getting fewer, and the majority generation now they don’t accept that. They don’t want to accept it.

In written or recorded form, their stories would permanently be in the public domain, in spite of the authorities’ efforts to stifle their truth. Their private stories would no longer be hidden but would be accessible to the greater public. Participants also thought that such information could be used in the future to prosecute the perpetrators, referring to the experience of other countries. Answering a question on what the end result of the process should be, one participant offered this explanation:

... our generation maybe will not see this through [but] if ... these facts could be written down, or somebody publishes a big book, ...[t]his would help the next generation. Some [perpetrators] will still be alive, even if they are 90 years old. For instance, a week ago I saw this other Nazi dragged from Argentina. So if you observe this thing it doesn’t end. Just imagine that World War II ended in 1945, but they are still hunting them down. ... [So] people should write books so that this crime doesn’t disappear ...
These sentiments seem to be tied to the desire for justice. While perhaps some of the outcomes suggested by participants may be far-fetched, the writing of the stories had a positive effect on the five participants who undertook it. As has been explained by Farwell and Cole (2002), this process allows private pain to be transformed into political dignity, as well as alleviating the human tendency to internalise blame. Furthermore, ‘establishing an accurate understanding of objective conditions validates all survivors, even those whose story has not been told, through individual assertions of self-worth and guiltlessness on behalf of the entire victimised community’ (Farwell & Cole 2002: 32).

3. Hindrances to healing

While participants acknowledged the benefits of the research in terms of setting them on the road to recovery, they also identified obstacles that made it difficult to attain a fuller healing.

Repression of the truth

The most difficult thing for the participants to accept was not being allowed by the government to talk publicly about their experiences and about Gukurahundi in general. They spoke of an ‘internalised pressure’, ‘fear factor’ and a ‘powerful police system’ as some of the explanations of this ‘conspiracy of silence’. Fear seemed to be a major factor and, indeed was mentioned over 20 times during the six dialogue sessions. One participant pointed out that

Of course what we discover is that people are afraid of going out and talk about Gukurahundi because we have been publicly threatened that [it] is a closed chapter. But within our families we keep on asking ourselves questions and get asked questions—‘But Dad, what happened?’

He also spoke about ‘the threat outside that makes us not to talk’. Another participant added that ‘The state does not want us to talk about it. The state says let’s not open old wounds now.’ These were references to newspaper articles where ZANU PF politicians have been quoted as uttering such statements (e.g. The Zimbabwe Chronicle 19 July 2011 and 22 June 2011). Such utterances, while they might not be overt threats or prohibitions, nevertheless communicate that message in no uncertain terms. Participants surmised that the reason for this suppression was that the government hoped that with the death of the primary victims, Gukurahundi would be forgotten. As Adam and Adam (2000:6) assert, ‘All nations depend on forgetting: on forging myths of unity and identity that allow a society to forget its founding crimes, its hidden injuries and divisions, its unhealed wounds.’

This inability to talk about their experiences is counterproductive for victim communities because, as we have discussed, being able to talk about such experiences in public and in an accepting and empathetic environment plays a major role in the healing process. Participants agreed that ‘instead of people forgetting about Gukurahundi, they are thinking even more about it’ and some of the pain and hurts had already been passed to the next generation (see Ngwenya and Harris 2015). As one participant pointed out,

There are certain documents, for instance, the Dumbuchena Commission and Chihambagwe Commission reports, which were commissioned by the government to study into the disturbances in Matabeleland. ... [but these] documents are under lock and key. Obviously there is information in those documents that is incriminating ... They think, if it [becomes] known to the public, it will make them worry - just to know that they did something. [In fact] ... this makes it difficult for people to forget. We will not forget because you refuse with the truth, if you came out clean and explained it was going to be better.
Related to the inability to talk was a great desire to know the reason why these things were
done to them. Participants felt strongly that knowing why, would assist in the healing process. The
desire to know involved both the planning and implementation stages of Gukurahundi.

I think we need to establish ... the reason why they launched that operation. And if we know ...
why they launched this operation, did they achieve their aim ... or part of their aim? Because if
somebody apologises, he will [need to] give us a bit of why they did it.

Hayner (2001: 157) asserts that victims are often not ready to engage in a reconciliation
process unless they know more about what happened. While they might be ready to forgive, they
need to know who to forgive and what it is they are forgiving them for.

From the participants’ statements, there appeared to be a desire to humanise the
perpetrator, to find a redeeming trait in them that could perhaps make it easier for the victim to
forgive. This focuses on individualising the guilt, not in order to excuse, but to understand. According
to Botcharova (2001: 289), when victims seek to re-humanise the perpetrator by asking ‘Why them?,
it is possible that victims might ‘recognise their own fears, shame, and hopelessness in the
perpetrators, and understand that the perpetrators’ aggressions were driven by feelings and
concerns as unbearable as their own.’ Perhaps participants might find it easier to deal with their ‘ball
of anger’ and move on if they felt the perpetrators killed or tortured under duress, although
discerning perpetrators’ motives and intentions is very difficult.

Another aspect of knowing had to do with the intentions of the whole operation. That is to
say, what really were the aims of Gukurahundi and were they accomplished?

The perpetrator did not come out in the open to say why they did this. If only the perpetrator
had come out in the open to explain the reason for their plan of action. Because the root
cause of Gukurahundi... we can’t just say they killed people without finding out the reason
why Gukurahundi was formed.

There was a strong fear among the participants that if its aims had not been fully
accomplished, then the perpetrator could use other means to fulfil their objectives. This sentiment
was prevalent throughout the dialogues - the participants frequently referred to incidents – like local
alcohol-fuelled fights between Shona and Ndebele - which they saw as indications that the
perpetrators were still working towards their aims. All of the participants agreed on this
understanding. One noted that ‘When there is violence, the parents at home feel angry and they
would say, “This was done before and it’s continuing.” ... Gukurahundi is still continuing so the
hatred is still there.’

In short, participants believe that Gukurahundi continues in other forms and that, generally,
all incidents of violence perpetrated by state security organs are interpreted within the context of a
continued pogrom. This view is encouraged by documents such as The Grand Plan, an alleged Shona
plan to dominate the Ndebele people (see Ngwenya 2014: chapter 8 and Appendix A). All this
inevitably contributes to continuing feelings of fear and insecurity.

Feelings of insecurity

Two types of insecurity were identified by the participants: the fear of what the state’s
repressive machinery might do currently and the fear of what did not happen during Gukurahundi.
Participants pointed out that current repression was preventing most people from engaging in
activities or rituals that might heal them, even in the relative comfort of their communities. The fear
of a ‘powerful police system’ or ‘monitoring system’ is so pervasive that it has become self-
perpetuating, and the fear of the unknown now hangs over the heads of the people. For example:

In the communities..., [it is often known where those who were killed are buried but] they are not allowed to tamper with these places... Someone might know where their uncle is buried, but they can’t even go there and perform rituals, it’s difficult. [There are practical implications as well]. For a person to get a birth certificate, he or she is supposed to have a death certificate [of the parents] but these people do not have death certificates [for those killed during Gukurahundi] because it is not said that these people died. .... So for the communities, as long such is not addressed, hurt is still there.

This inability to attend to their loved ones means that there is no closure and no moving on and no healing. Just as the sharing of stories validates the victims, being prevented from talking (actively or otherwise) means that the victims’ reality is being denied and treated as if it never happened, thereby stunting the healing process.

The second element of insecurity—the fear of what did not happen—has to do with the psychological state of the individual. Our participants, as ex-ZPRA combatants, were among the primary targets of Gukurahundi and were fortunate not to have been killed:

Suppose you were at home that time when the others were being killed, you would also have died .... this keeps wounds open and forgiveness can’t be there, because you would then begin to imagine that I would have died if I was there.

The thought of what might have been induced a sense of incredulity, terror and outrage within the participants. According to Isserman (2009: 25), there are two types of threats that feed into this insecurity: the socio-tropic threat which is ‘a generalized anxiety and sense of threat to society, the country as a whole or the regions where one lives, ... to one’s community, group, or way of life’, and the egocentric threat which is a ‘threat to oneself or one’s family’. This ‘terrifying existential crisis’ faced by the participants is as a result of the realisation of the magnitude of the intentions of the state to ‘obliterate’ not just them but everything that makes for their very existence (Zorbas 2004: 30). When these two threats combine, as with the research group, it created deep suspicions and high levels of mistrust that made it very difficult for some participants to view the perpetrators in any positive light, and to address the issue of healing in their own lives. Staub and Pearlman’s (2001: 196) comment about the necessity of security in healing is very pertinent here. According to them, ‘Traumatised people require at least a rudimentary feeling of security for healing to begin. When there is continued threat from the other, depending on circumstances, healing may be difficult or even impossible.’

Impunity

What exasperated the participants was the fact that some of the architects of Gukurahundi known to them seemed to be ‘living large’ while they struggled through life. Participants felt that status disparity was a major stumbling block in their healing process. First, they complained that when they were incorporated into the Zimbabwe National Army, there was a ceiling on promotions for ex-ZPRAs and such general ill-treatment that they had been forced to retire from the army prematurely. Second, there was the fact that it seemed that the perpetrators had been rewarded for their part in Gukurahundi. One participant pointed out that the problem was that the real perpetrators were still alive and enjoying life:
The people who could have killed me are these ones and they are still eating sadza (pap) today. Yet there is nothing that has been done to them today. Thirty years on, let’s say 28 years on, these people have been promoted in their ranks. I know for instance that D was promoted major general only last month...But [I was there when he ordered the brutal killing of a civilian (ex-ZPRA) nurse] and ... and today it’s still a log piercing in me.

These statements reveal a person struggling with the issue of impunity, which evidently was preventing his recovery. Participants wanted the perpetrators to be brought to justice one way or another because ‘We know these people and we see them and they are driving cars. They are enjoying their lives whilst we are hurting, we have scars inside us. Every day we see these people enjoying their lives whilst we are hurting.’

Participants also felt that another obstacle to healing was the fact that their lives are still dominated by the perpetrators

This life is not normal—living with my perpetrator, my perpetrator in charge of almost all of my life. The perpetrator is in charge and I am an underdog. It’s like a person steps on you and you say, ‘Please may I remove my foot from under yours [laughter from others]?’ ... it cannot continue like this... It’s not fair.... At the end of the day there must be a cut off, come to an end. It’s a fake life I am living. I am living a fake life. It’s not me.

The participants’ sentiments and experience accords with Pintar’s (2000) assertion that, as long as perpetrators continue to prosper or retain power as a result of their crimes, the prospects for healing are diminished, for individuals and communities.

Lack of apology

While it was perfectly clear to the participants that no apology was ever likely to come from the perpetrators of Gukurahundi, they nevertheless indicated their desire for it. This was actually a central theme of this research—how to find alternative approaches to healing in the absence of an official apology from the perpetrator. In a conflict an apology is always desirable as it enhances the possibility of the offended party’s healing and restoration of the broken relationship. As Lazare (2004: 1) has postulated, ‘Apologies have the power to heal humiliations and grudges, remove the desire for vengeance, and generate forgiveness on the part of the offended parties’. The following conversation between two participants supports this contention:

A: Are you suggesting that they should show a sign of contrition?

B: Yah, that little sign.

A: It will soften people’s hearts?

B: Maybe, but [not the] hard core [of victims], not all. We can say a percentage, let’s say 45 percent.

In their opinion, had there been an apology, this would have addressed the needs of a significant number of victims. Other representative statements included ‘We can’t forgive them without their apology,’ and ‘People can forgive their hurts but without official apology it is going to be difficult to talk about this lightly.’

They were however also keenly aware of what Tatt (2014) calls an ‘apology with impunity’. This is an insincere apology extracted under pressure while the perpetrator continues unrepentant.
In desiring an apology, they were not under any illusion about the sort of apology that could come from the perpetrators:

... I really don’t see what kind of an apology it would be. You come and stand in front of me and say, ‘I apologise, really for what I did, bla, bla.’ Then it’s over— life goes on ... Then the next thing, the following day you are abusing other people, but you say you have just come from apologising elsewhere.

Tatt (2014: 1013) sees an apology as an integral aspect of reconciliation, which, if performed authentically, can induce forgiveness and reconciliation between an injured party and the offender. The key is how genuine and sincere the apology is perceived to be by the injured party. Feeling as they did, participants would have been sceptical of any apology that would have been offered at this point.

An important ingredient in an apology is that a perpetrator needs to assume the blame for the offense committed. According to Newman and Kraynak (2013), an apology can elicit empathy from the victim if the transgressor acknowledges personal responsibility for the wrong done and includes the thoughts and feelings that led to the transgression. For instance, saying, ‘I was under pressure,’ is quite different from saying, ‘I was thoughtless and irresponsible.’ One deflects blame to circumstances and the other reflects the assumption of responsibility and acknowledges guilt or remorse. The latter is more likely to elicit the type of response referred to by Tatt. Participants identified this as one of the things that may have redeemed President Mugabe had he been bold enough to accept responsibility for Gukurahundi:

... there was at one stage a record in the newspapers where the head of state admitted that ‘It was a moment of madness.’ He just fell short of accepting the entire blame because, as the head of state, he would have signed into action all these activities. The deployment of the army could not go out without his consent. After all he is the key author of The Year of the People’s Storm [a book written in 1979 setting out the envisaged plan of action for the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)] in 1979. He should have come out clearly to say, ‘I was responsible for a moment of madness.’ If he had come out like that people would think that, ‘He is a gentleman,’ because he admits. If he refuses, [so will] all the young men who did some dirty work in the field.

The strong desire for an apology and the realisation that none would be forthcoming is a dilemma for the participants. In the end, they grudgingly accepted that they had to ‘continue living normally without an apology’. It was difficult to say whether this was resigned acceptance of their fate or a positive pragmatism—a determination to make the best of the situation.

4. Did healing take place?

In the words of four of the participants,

I think I feel healthy when we discuss about Gukurahundi. I feel healed discussing these things about Gukurahundi. If I am here comfortable, I feel I am with comrades who talk like me and have problems like me and I am happy.

If I think of these things, there are a lot of things that come to my mind and when I am here I think I am in the right place because a problem shared is a problem half solved in a way. So in this group, I believe there is a common ground and all of us have got the same problem that
we are sharing and we are trying to help each other to recover from it... I think that as I am also participating in this programme, maybe my mind will change and I will think differently.

I believe that it will help me to develop some ideas on how we can come up with solutions individually to cope with Gukurahundi.

I am happy that we are discussing such issues because I still believe that I will find a way that will help me to forgive as we keep talking together.

During the last dialogue session, when the overall impact of the research was being evaluated, participants reiterated their belief that they had benefitted from the process, although they found certain aspects of the research more beneficial than others. Participants also indicated that they felt they had been fully involved in the process and felt their opinions had been respected. And, of course, the reason they had kept attending was because they felt the process had been useful to them.

Participants also viewed the process as something that would positively influence the ways they carried out their own peacebuilding activities in the communities they work with. One thought that the research ‘can equip us also to have the ideas and strategies of resolving the conflicts that exist among the people and particularly on healing the trauma that we find interned in people’s feelings right now within the communities.’ Another commented:

What I like and what makes me part of this discussion is that, as part of our work, we as ZVT, is that when we go out and try to talk to people on the issue of reconciliation, you can’t go far before people start talking about Gukurahundi and asking, ‘How can you come and tell us about forgiveness when we were killed so much?’... I hope that I will get help during these discussions that will help me and give me answers to give to people.

The participants quickly became their own little community, an outcome assisted by their membership of ZVT:

It’s ground breaking now in the sense that, we are now a community and, collectively and individually, we have had our own experiences of Gukurahundi, directly and indirectly. It is quite a benefit to our community here, and of course those we represent externally, to come up with reasoned approaches to these discussions ... they will equip and arm ourselves of the general understanding of issues of Gukurahundi, particularly where there is an absence of an official apology.

Another way to assess the validity of the research is to evaluate the extent to which it has been able to bring about meaningful change to the participants and their communities. In doing so, it is prudent to bear in mind the advice of Koch and Kralik’s (2006) that change processes can occur slowly; hence, the impact of engaging with a process can resonate long after a researcher has left the field.

As mentioned earlier, the six dialogue sessions were supplemented with a Tree of Life workshop which for most participants, resulted in significant personal transformation. Change in attitudes, from a desire for vengeance and clinging to a victimhood mentality towards a positive engagement with their hurts in an effort to ‘move on’ with their lives, were reported.

In terms of recording history, while the participants’ stated desires in wanting to write their stories were to ‘record what really transpired’ and to pass it on to the next generation, the potential therapeutic benefits of this act cannot be ignored, since recovery requires an examination of the
truth. What this exercise did was to break the state-imposed silence and bring dignity to the experiences of the participants. Not much in-depth analysis of the writing process was done, due to the fact that the stories had not been finalised at the close of the research but putting their experiences on paper was in itself a liberating experience and a source of comfort and pride. Two participants commented as follows:

You know that writing workshop? It encouraged me a lot, but there is one thing that I learnt from Phathisa [the facilitator]: we are all mortal. ... he is as mortal as other people, but he is not going to die like us because he will remain forever, because he has got something written about him. It taught and encouraged me that at least I also need to write something ...

I believe the whole research process was healing to me and the writing exercise added to it. Since I wrote this thing, I had to write it twice because the young lady I asked to type it for me lost all the five exercise books I had written, so I had to rewrite another five books. For me, if I offload something from my mind, I think I get healed because all of it is removed from my mind and I feel as if the heavy burden I was carrying is gone.

The value of writing as a method to promote healing and wellbeing has been accepted by most helping professionals e.g. Connolly et al (2004) and Lengelle and Meijers (2009). One participant also mentioned the interest the writing exercise had aroused in his children who were now keen to read about their parent’s experiences. However, as with speaking, the correct procedure and environment are essential if the writing exercise is to be cathartic.

5. Conclusion

This article has reported a participatory action research project aimed at helping people heal from violence in the absence of apology or justice. The main finding is that speaking and writing about experiences of violence in an appropriate environment did help participants in their journey of healing. The research also identified hindrances to healing, some of which lie outside the power of individuals and communities to change.

The research sheds light on what communities can do on their own to deal with their hurts. It also identifies conditions that would make such healing sustainable and hindrances which prevent it taking place. It finds that, through a broadly-based array of actions, including creating safe and empathetic spaces for storytelling and writing, group-based healing workshops and other psychosocial approaches, it is possible for traumatised communities to attain a measure of relief from their emotional and psychological wounds.

Gukurahundi, it should be noted, is only one example of the violence which has wracked the country since its independence in 1980. Other notable examples include Operation Murambastvina (‘Drive out the rubbish’), under which hundreds of thousands of people were forcibly removed from slum areas and re-located; the eviction of some 5000 white farmers and tens of thousands of their workers from their farms; and election violence in 2002 and 2008 involving ZANU-PF and Movement for Democratic Change supporters and their communities. There is, accordingly, a great need for the healing of Zimbabweans at the individual and community levels.
References


Enhancing local ownership of the reintegration of ex-combatants in Kivu, the Democratic Republic of Congo

Mulanda Juma *

It is widely accepted that local ownership is critical to the effectiveness of reintegration of ex-combatants and therefore to human security promotion. However, there is a huge gap between the international use of the term, the concept in the policy debate and its actual implementation in the field. This article attempts to fill this gap. It reports on the fieldwork carried out in 2011 with the aim of investigating the nature and extent of local ownership of interventions for reintegrating ex-combatants in Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo. The article analyses major activities of local actors, a number of limitations of local ownership of reintegration interventions in Kivu and proposes numerous recommendations. Among them, the need to carry out and implement the recommendations of context analysis; to generate local resources; to build local capacity to use locally available resources for sustainability of reintegration interventions; and to provide ongoing support and follow-up.

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Introduction

It is widely accepted that local ownership is a key factor in the reintegration of ex-combatants in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) framework (De Coning, 2008; Edmonds, Mills & McNamee, 2009). De Coning (2008, p. 21) maintains that “there is a wide recognition that externally driven post-conflict peace-building processes are unsustainable.” Similarly, writing about “DDR and Local Ownership in the Great Lakes”, Edmonds et al (2009, p. 50) argue that local ownership is critical to the effectiveness of DDR. In its report, the 2009 Cartagena conference on reintegration, concurred that “local ownership is critical if DDR is to make a meaningful and sustainable contribution to peace” (CIDDR, 2009, p. 74).

There is, however, a huge gap between the concept in the policy debate and its actual implementation in the field. “While the principle of local ownership has rapidly found its way into the policy documents of international organisations and into donor principles, little thought has gone into how to ensure local buy-in and sustainability and how to transfer authority in the wake of a conflict” (Hansen, 2002, p. 39).

Based on doctoral research fieldwork carried out in Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), this article seeks to better understand this gap with a view to enhancing future reintegration efforts.

Context

The DRC’s war is considered to be the “Africa’s First World War” (Duma, van Laar & Klem, 2008). This was due to the involvement of many African countries and international mining companies since 1996. More than four peace agreements were signed in most African regions to end the war. Each one of them made reference to DDR of ex-combatants, including those from neighbouring countries (Rwanda and Uganda) in order to promote human security.

The DDR process started in 2005 at the same time as the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration, Repatriation and Resettlement (DDRRR) of foreign combatants from Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi (Schroeder, 2005). The latter received more attention than the national DDR. According to Boshoff (2004), in 2005 there were up to 330,000 combatants on Congolese soil. By 2008, a number of 186,468 combatants went through DDR process. According to Amnesty International (2008), by 2004, over 40,000 child soldiers were estimated to be serving with government armed forces and non-state armed groups in the DRC. It is estimated that 11,000 more had self-demobilised (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008). Over fifty percent of the annual budget of this programme was funded by donors, including the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (MDRP). The World Bank provided leadership and closed down in 2008, yet more than half of the combatants were not yet reintegrated. The Congolese government failed to continue with the reintegration programme once the MDRP closed down. Recent attempts to revive the DDR programme have also been faced with many challenges, including shortage of funding and skills beside political conundrum.

1 Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) was incorporated for the first time into the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions in 1989.

2 Peace agreements seeking to end the armed conflict in the DRC were signed in Sirte, Libya, 1999; Lusaka, Zambia, 1999; Sun-City, South Africa, 2002, Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania, 2004; Nairobi, Kenya, 2006, and Goma, DRC, 2009, among other places. This means peace agreements were signed in North Africa, Southern Africa, East Africa and Central Africa regions.
The issue of reintegration has been discussed by an array of authors and researchers over the last decade in the DRC. Many of the studies are based on literature review, such as the study by Edmonds et al (2009), Meek and Malan (2004) and Schroeder (2005). Few fieldwork-based studies have been carried out on reintegration in the country but superficially examined some aspects of local ownership (Bouta, 2005; Speckter, 2008; Zeebroek, Paes, Berghezan & Guesnet, 2010; Risch & Hoebeke, 2010; Rouw & Willems, 2010; Gillhespy & Hayman, 2011). They examined a number of issues critical to local ownership including gender, communication between local and external actors and the effectiveness of reintegration approaches. Edmonds et al (2009) conclude that local ownership has been a failure in the country, for example because stakeholders did not give due regard and funding to the reform of the security sector.

Methodology

The enquiry for this study was carried out in Kivu region in eastern DRC for six months from August to October 2010 and October to December 2011 and in six reintegration intervention sites as part of my doctoral research at Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna, Italy. A qualitative research design was adopted. Ethnographic fieldwork was employed using a range of methods of data collection such as: in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation.

Participants in the study (See table 1) were male and female former combatants, civilians in reintegration intervention sites, local leaders: church and traditional leaders. Other respondents came from the government and international organisations. Key informants were drawn from the above categories and had an experience ranging from 3 to 12 years on reintegration of ex-combatants. Respondents were purposively selected based on one or more of the following criteria: (i) being a former combatant or a child associated with an armed group; (ii) being a member of the host community with direct involvement in the reintegration of ex-combatants; and (iii) having no less than 2 years of experience working in the reintegration of ex-combatants.

Methodologically this article adds values to the existing knowledge for various reasons: (i) it is one of the few ethnographic-based studies carried out in North Kivu and South Kivu focusing on local ownership; and (ii) involving local, national and international respondents at the same time.

Table 1: Participants in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ex-combatants</th>
<th>Community members</th>
<th>Workers of government</th>
<th>Workers of international NGOs</th>
<th>Total of participants (Males and females)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key informants</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-key informants</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pseudonyms are used in this article to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. As for the local organizations, permission was granted to use their names. Data analysis was conducted using the method of Thematic Qualitative Analysis. I attempted to guard against personal bias by conducting a verification of findings by informants. A total of 21 participants including key informants participated in the verification and validation sessions.

Results

The meaning of local ownership

The concept of “local ownership” is an old one. A recent emphasis on it is associated with the failure of international economic reform policies at the end of the cold war. The centrality of local ownership in peace-building and development cannot be over-emphasised. The critical role of local ownership for peace-building has long been recognised to be among the central principles by policy makers, as evidenced by key policy documents on peace-building. The OECD, for example, recognises that strengthening partners’ ownership represents a shift of power in the aid relationship, while underlining the need for mutual accountability:

The Paris Declaration is based on the recognition that development will be successful and sustained, and aid fully effective, only where the partner country takes the lead in determining the goals and priorities of its own development, and sets the agenda for how they are to be achieved (OECD, 2009, p. 33).

This is because the concept of local ownership “has broad applicability to development and post-conflict peace-building” (Nathan, 2007, p. 4). Today, for example, “local ownership sits at the core of multi-stakeholder partnerships methods of developing and implementing peace-building measures, and is frequently regarded as key to a successful disarmament program” (Tholens and Strazzari, 2010, p. 61). Edmonds, Mills and McNamee argue that it is widely accepted that local ownership is critical to the effectiveness of DDR (2009). Consequently, when local ownership increases there is more likelihood that human security will also improve because locals have an opportunity to own their future.

Against this backdrop, a major distinction between an externally driven process and a locally driven one has emerged to explain the meaning of local ownership.

For an externally driven process, Boughton and Mourmouras (as cited in Bendix & Stanley, 2008) argue that gratitude and obedience constitute ownership. As such for there to be ownership, local actors need not to have been involved in the reform programmes or to be the initiators (Chesterman, 2007). They are required to appreciate the benefits of and accept responsibility for policies and programmes from outside. This approach is defined “top-down” rather than “bottom-up”. This means the knowledge about what works is not generated from the field but from other settings. This is true for the current DDR interventions led by external actors, as Amangu from Baraka in Fizi puts it: “Certain projects are planned according to external partners’ needs and not according to beneficiaries’ needs. As a result, some kits distributed by local actors are not adapted to the needs of beneficiaries”. It also implies outside stakeholders take the lead and disregard the principle of subsidiary, since they have the know-how and resources. This enforces the position where the actors, means and ends of interventions are seen as non-negotiable. According to Chambers (1997, p. 75), this model explains that the upper rejects discordant feedback [...] and seeks to transfer his reality. He wants it to be his reality that counts.”
This understanding of local ownership is partly in contrast with the views from the field. In the field, the most important part is not whether the intervention is initiated by local or external actors but rather how locals own the action and are empowered to help themselves, for example to generate local resources, while external actors are still present and how they continue providing services effectively following the exit of external actors. Thus, programmes should involve locals at least from the needs assessment stage and should result in self-help. Additionally, actors should ensure that means put in place are equal to desired ends to ensure sustainability and continuity. This can only be made possible through a process that ensures participation and empowerment of local actors. As some respondents put it:

In our understanding, local ownership means ownership of the action by local people at the end of a project and the support of external actors. In other words, the sustainability of the action or initiative by empowered communities to multiply the gains of the project to other beneficiaries, who in their turn own the action for their self-help (Mushagalusa from Bukavu).

In community reintegration process, it [local ownership] means the community takes care of ex-combatants and helps them to take care of themselves through income generating activities in a community approach” (Laurent from Bukavu).

Local ownership means building someone’s capacity or supporting someone in order to take care of oneself (Community member in Uvira).

In the opinion of local participants, the process should be led by local actors. Tambwe from Goma shared the view that “[local ownership] means leaving the responsibility of most acts and actions aiming at reintegration to the community.” In most post-conflict societies, and Kivu in particular, it is practically impossible for local communities to own policies and programmes which do not contain their input. They cannot also own interventions where they did not play a significant role in their implementation. The failure by the Congolese government to provide leadership to the reintegration programme could serve as an example.

For an internally driven process, Nathan (2007) posits that local ownership “entails donor support for programmes and projects initiated by local actors rather than local support for donor programmes and projects.” Taking this argument a step further, Narten (2009) posits that local ownership is an outcome of a process of gradual transfer of responsibilities to communities, including the whole cycle of project management. In the context of DDR, Kilroy (2008) explains that there must be participation to ensure that voices of communities are heard early on in the assessment and planning, implementation and evaluation processes. This allows locals to have an influence on the outcome. This understanding of local ownership presents three main types of interactions: (i) participation and/or joint decision-making and program implementation; (ii) capacity development; and (iii) subsidiarity or the transfer of international responsibilities to local actors. The aim is the pursuit of development agendas through empowering beneficiaries for collective decision-making and action (Groovaerts, Gasser, & Inbal, 2006). Considering this aim, the OECD-DAC (as cited in Bendix & Stanley, 2008, p. 37) maintains that local ownership means “to orient assistance to supporting local stakeholders as they move down the path of reform, rather than leading them down it... it is important that solutions to problems are developed locally and appropriate to the context they are implemented in.”
This understanding of local ownership is to a greater extent similar to the meaning from the field in Kivu. The starting point of local ownership is participation of local actors at the level of identification of needs, challenges and local opportunities for reintegration from the perspectives of local actors as espoused by Narten (2009) and Kilroy (2008) but also the meaning of local ownership from local perspectives and not the planning phase. This must be done through a context analysis in which local actors play a critical role in providing their perspectives on all these important aspects. Thus context analysis should be taken more seriously. At times, external actors carry out context analysis as a prescription but they do not take the findings into account. Often this is where the failure of understanding local ownership starts. For example, respondents in one focus group in Chambucha in Walikale unanimously agreed: “Outside organizations come here to exploit us. They come here with everything planned in advance. They don’t consider our opinion. When they come you are happy but they leave incomplete projects.” A group member illustrated: “Some of them came here to find out about our problems and asked us recommendations but they never implemented our recommendations.” Mutatalwa, a traditional chief of Bunyakiri, suggested that local ownership is “an approach that involves local structures in the reintegration of former combatants.”

As an outcome, local ownership should continue up to the follow-up phase, which is a phase that demonstrates the sustainability of interventions. This is where empowered local external actors are able to build the capacity of others. This means, the reintegration interventions are locally owned if they offer an opportunity for empowering local stakeholders in the process and lead to subsidiarity and self-help, and ultimately to continuity. As Risch and Hoebeke (2010, p. 205) maintain, “ownership with the corresponding responsibility to manage the programme increases the sustainability aspect of the initiative and reduces the risk of collapse of the structure after the exit of an international organisation.” Tambwe shared the following definition of local ownership:

“Empowered stakeholders must be able in turn to empower other members of the community and former combatants to be self-reliant and to continue with interventions beyond the involvement of external partners. While most responsibility should be borne by the local community, it is essential to have ongoing support from outside.”

Examples of local interventions

If DDR is to become more effective and sustainable, due regard should be paid to the efforts of local actors in the intervention. Local efforts to reintegrate ex-combatants are self-help ways of assisting ex-combatants to become civilians again, rejoin families and communities, find livelihoods and helping host communities to recover in the aftermath of armed conflicts. This is in a way an expression of efforts to locally own the process.

There are two forms of demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants in Kivu: formal and informal, in which local actors participate. The International Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) defines the reintegration as:

the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open timeframe, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general
development of a country and a national responsibility, and often necessitates long-term external assistance (IAWG-DDR, 2006, p. 10).

The IDDRS distinguishes between reintegration and reinsertion. The latter is defined as:

Assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilisation, but prior to the long-term process of reintegration, as a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families, which may include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, medical services, short-term education, training and employment (IAWG-DDR, 2006, p. 10).

In Kivu, reintegration and reinsertion are used interchangeably. In day-to-day language, reinsertion is the common word for both reintegration and reinsertion. The national DDR framework of the National Commission for Demobilisation and Reinsertion (CONADER) does not help make the distinction. In the framework, reinsertion is separated from demobilisation and is joined together with reintegration in theory and practice. Rouw and Willems (2010) foresaw this in the DRC. They saw a lack of clarity over what reinsertion and reintegration really entail which poses a problem for effectiveness of reintegration efforts.

Formal reintegration in Kivu happens through government and external actors’ organised transitional camps. Through this programme, combatants are generally given cash to enable them to start a new life after demobilisation. They are also provided with civic education to enhance their social reintegration and kits for income generation. The provision of services has its limitations: in many cases, combatants have to travel with their own means to join those camps. At times helpful information is not provided to allow beneficiaries to access services. For example, Lusambya from Baraka in Fizi complained that:

I sent 20 ex-child soldiers to Murabazi Camp in Bukavu. 17 were from Katogota and 3 from Lubarika. There were promises that they will receive help. In Bukavu they did not receive help. Children were sent to another Centre in Uvira at 128 km from Bukavu. They were told they would receive their kits there but children arrived there when the project had ended and did not receive the kits.

Because these children did not receive support, they became “Maibobo” (a common derogatory street kids and those exposed to abuse).

The informal demobilization and reintegration efforts focus more on Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups (CAAFAGs) than adult combatants. Informal demobilization means ex-combatants take the option of not going through the official channel; meaning through demobilisation camps and do not receive incentives associated with the official programmes targeting ex-combatants. The reasons for auto-demobilisation and reintegration include protection of identity by combatants, personal and family security, the distance to demobilisation centres, the length of the process and in some cases loss of trust in the process due to unfulfilled promises of service delivery in the formal demobilization programmes.

In the last decade about 10,000 child soldiers have self-demobilised without really being reintegrated. Despite their numbers, the substantial means available for DDR and the fact that child soldiers’ reintegration is a human rights issue, the question of how to reintegrate them has been left out of the national DDR framework. The sole support for these children often comes from already poor communities and local actors.
Nono from Sange in Uvira, gave the following reasons for lack of support for them:

The government support to these children does not simply exist. Often the response is that ‘the problem of these children is so complex, their number is small compared to adult combatants going through DDR process and they do not represent a threat to peace and security.

Many local actors are involved in the reintegration efforts, mainly religious organisations, local community members, traditional leaders, ex-combatants’ associations and local associations. Major roles played by local actors are acceptance of ex-combatants and reconciliation; family reunification; building local structures; medical and psychosocial assistance; educational assistance; skills training and job creation. Though local actors play a significant role, their contribution is not taken into account in the overall DDR framework (Gillhespy & Hayman, 2011). Acknowledging and giving a meaning to such a contribution will go a long way to enhancing local participation and empowerment, and therefore local ownership.

(Re)acceptance and reconciliation

Acceptance of ex-combatants in local communities is a critical issue. As Humphreys and Weinstein (2003) observed in Sierra Leone, depending on their perception of how they will be received in their communities, ex-combatants decided whether to return home or go elsewhere. As such, acceptance of those associated with armed groups is not always a given. In Kivu, facilitating this process is considered to be one of the major contributions of local communities. Zuberi, a policy officer in Goma, said that “local actors are the first ones to accept ex-combatants and help them to be accepted by the community members.” Many other respondents emphasised the point by saying that:

They [communities] accepted to live together with us regardless of our mentality (Ex-combatant in Uvira).

Communities accepted them [ex-combatants] and taught them some self-help skills. (Muheto from Goma).

Local communities’ unique contribution is that they are close to demobilised combatants, they live with them (Community member in Fizi).

An example comes from the Assistance aux Enfants Orphelins (AEO), a local organisation based in Bukavu with activities in various territories including Fizi, Kabare, Shabunda and Walungu in South Kivu. One of the AEO groups works for the reintegration of children associated with armed groups and children from displaced families, and returnees in various locations in South Kivu. The organisation provides assistance in food and non-food items. Other major activities include reunification of unaccompanied children with their families and/or host families. With funds from the Social Funds of the Congolese government, AEO built a community market in ‘amba-Makobola in Fizi. Ex-combatants were among people recruited to build the market and found an opportunity to work with other civilians including the village Chief Juma Lubambo M’sambya III. This example of subsidiarity not only empowered AEO but also promoted acceptance of ex-combatants and created room for reconciliation between ex-combatants and members of the community.
Local efforts to facilitate the acceptance of ex-combatants, especially the self-demobilised ones, are taking place generally without the support from either the government or the international actors. Acceptance being a critical step in the reintegration, needs to be facilitated more effectively. Little knowledge and resources about how to facilitate the process leaves local actors in weak position to ensure that necessary tools for facilitating acceptance, such as reconciliation forums, are in place in most places where they are needed.

(Re)building local infrastructure and governance systems

Elements of local ownership include the building and strengthening of community governance system in the aftermath of conflicts. The Bureau Œcuménique d’Appui au Développement (BOAD) is an organization that offers an example of doing this in North and South Kivu. As part of its humanitarian assistance and food security programme for ex-combatants, their families, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and host families in Walikale, Lubero and Kibasi, BOAD provides materials for agricultural work; construction of water supply systems and carries out democratisation and good governance projects that build and strengthen local administration. The organisation conducts civic education programmes that benefit members of targeted communities including ex-combatants in North Kivu. These activities are done in partnership with local organisations such as Groupes d’Appui aux Initiatives Collectives in Walikale. Running programmes jointly with beneficiaries helps to build the capacity and to empower them. Thus BOAD offers a good example of coaching beneficiaries, which is also critical to local ownership. A similar example comes from Liberia where a Community Based Recovery (CBR) program was initiated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which aimed at consolidating peace and stimulating governance at the local levels. The CBR program managed to restore existing community-level governance structures by implementing 'District Development Committees' strategy. This enabled locals to identify community projects and played a significant role in creating job opportunities for ex-combatants and host communities. Such kinds of initiatives can hardly be found in Kivu. If they were mainstreamed in all host communities, locals would be more empowered.

Education and skills training

Education and skills training is considered as an important factor in ensuring local participation and ownership. Relevant capacity building initiatives are rare in Kivu. Local actors attempt to fill the gap by providing skills training opportunities to ex-combatants and host communities. The Eglise du Christ au Congo (ECC) works in North and South Kivu and is one of the major humanitarian organisations that provide such services. ECC intervenes in three major areas: humanitarian assistance, protection and rehabilitation. Its work has benefited not only Congolese combatants but also combatants of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Through mobilization campaigns and training of ex-combatants, military personnel, police officers and civilians, ECC has been able to promote good relations among various groups of beneficiaries. So far, ECC has managed to re-train 21886 soldiers and ex-combatants for example in community development as a result, some security personnel, ex-combatants and civilians work together in construction of markets. ECC also builds school infrastructure in order to build local capacity. Over ten schools have been rehabilitated in Kivu. Ex-child soldiers are among the beneficiaries of such rehabilitation through the child education programme where they receive school fees. Like ECC, the Démarches pour une Interaction entre les Organisations à la Base et les Autres Sources de Savoir (DIOBASS) also builds local capacity through training and works in both North and South Kivu since 1996. DIOBASS conducts training in business development. According to Papa from Walikale, this training is provided because “returnees including ex-combatants do not only need beans, but also
assistance to enable them to resume their work.” To ensure the use of skills, local development committees (LDC) are formed. This offers numerous potential benefits. Firstly, the training builds the capacity of ex-combatants and therefore empowers them. Secondly, the LCD and the jobs it generates allow the development of positive relationships, for example between local chiefs and demobilised combatants, through bridge building and joint participation.

**Income generating activities**

At the heart of reintegration is income generating activities. Work enables ex-combatants and their families not only to gain livelihood but also respect in their host communities. Filimoni from Bunyakiri said that “peace is giving jobs to the people.” Furaha, a female ex-combatant from Sange in Uvira added that “work can change the image of demobilised combatants”. These views are shared by Specht (2003) who concur that providing jobs to ex-combatants means more than giving them an opportunity to gain livelihoods. It is true that jobs also have social, cultural, political and psychological attributes. Job creation is met with many challenges. For example, the failure rate of businesses set up by ex-combatants is estimated to be between 60 and 80 per cent (Speckter, 2008, p. 21). This does not help strengthen their capacity to help themselves. The CBR in Liberia enabled locals to identify community projects and played a significant role in creating job opportunities for ex-combatants and host communities. Such kinds of initiatives can hardly be found in Kivu. If they were mainstreamed in all host communities, locals would be more empowered.

The organisation Solidarité Pour La Femme Contre la Pauvreté (SOLIFEM) offers a good example of creation of a local structure, which ensures job creation where participation and empowerment of ex-combatants and host communities is more effective. Led by Safi, a woman from Bukavu, this local organisation is of great importance in income generation for communities and ex-combatants. With an effective collaboration between SOLIFEM and its funding partner, the German-Congolese cooperation agency, its maximal approach benefits ex-combatants, host families, displaced persons and returnees. The organisation has improved green pastures for livestock and the distributed of seeds, goats and cattle in areas where international organisations are not present. Training has taken place for ensuring the project’s follow-up and sustainability. The aim is to develop activities into self-help cooperatives, which is critical to local ownership. Because areas are landlocked, the organisation has built a new road of 14 km long about 70 km from Bukavu. Safi made an important observation linked to flexibility that comes with local ownership. She explained the difference between local and international organisations in reaching out to those out of town by saying that:

Humanitarians [as internal organisations are locally known], prefer the same areas where other humanitarians are operating. It is important to explore areas that have no humanitarians instead of giving to the same beneficiaries.

This view was supported by Nikuze from an international organisation in Goma who said that:

In such places [rural areas], the challenge is that it is very difficult for international organisations to reach there directly. However, local groups have access to those people and can reach those places.

Currently, the organisation is supporting the education of ex-child soldiers and ex-female combatants. This is against a situation in some other contexts where:
Demobilised women are not taken care of in this village of Katogota. For example there are 30 demobilised women combatants in addition to combatants’ wives here but only two of them attended the training provided to ex-combatants [Community member in Uvira].

The inclusion of women in the process makes local ownership more effective.

*Medical and psychological assistance*

The need for medical and psychological assistance is often very high in post-conflict contexts. Mushagalusa from Bukavu explains that:

They [ex-combatants] need psychosocial support in order to disarm their spirits for their effective socialisation. After the very difficult situation they went through, it is important to bring back their humanity so as to prepare them to live with others in the community.

Local ownership cannot be guaranteed in such situations without addressing the issue. Thus, local actors provide medical assistance and infrastructure. For example, ECC in Kivu works in the rehabilitation of hospitals. In Uvira 230 households comprised of ex-combatants received its medical assistance in June 2010. AEO also provides medicines to clinics in Mwenga. As for psychological support, it is often provided through what is famously known as “nyumba ya maombi” (prayer home). This may also be justified by the fact that there is limited knowledge in professional trauma healing yet the demand for psychosocial support is very high. Another justification is that external and local approaches are reinforcing each other in this area. The little support provided by local actors contributes to general well-being of individuals; body, mind and soul and contribute to local ownership because beneficiaries who recover participate in various ways in responding to the needs of families and communities.

*Hindrances to local ownership*

Limitations to local ownership in the process of reintegration are many. First, lack of shared vision. Locals rarely share the same vision with external partners. While some local actors seek to work in the reintegration process to seek economic incentives, majority of them seek to have peace for development to take off. At the same time, some external actors seek to achieve the objectives set for their projects which may not necessarily aim to achieve sustainable economic and social reintegration and therefore peace. The result is failure of many interventions because there is no belief in the process. For example:

In a seed multiplication project run by a local organisation with the support from an outside organisation, the project involved growing cassava and rearing goats. Families of demobilised combatants were involved. Over the time, beneficiaries were receiving a small honorarium, which motivated them. At the end of the season and project, the outside organisation left, however, beneficiaries did not continue the agricultural activities; they abandoned it. Mushagalusa from Bukavu.

For this reason, Kilroy (2008, p. 3) maintains that “another essential element, although less tangible, is the sense of ownership among stakeholders, and their belief in the process.”

Second, failure to mobilise local resources. In Kivu, like other post-conflict contexts, resources to ensure more participation of local actors in the reintegration of ex-combatants can be found.
Among others, traditional leadership, though weakened by war, still exist. Additionally, people have the knowledge of traditional mechanisms of conflict management, resolution and transformation such as Barzas\(^3\) and Lübunga\(^4\) and traditional mechanisms of trauma healing, such as the use of the river\(^5\) and sources of income generation, which is critical to local ownership. Local actors generally fail to tap into locally existing resources and making use of local opportunities. Among other major reasons, the high level of dependency on foreign aid does not often help local actors to think locally to generate resources. Additionally, external actors do not often assist local actors to find local resources to fund projects.

Third, capacity in critical areas is very limited and often lacking. Such areas include planning, financial management, monitoring of projects and psychosocial care.

Fourth, lack of effective collaboration between local actors and external actors. Local actors have little, if any power, to change a donor’s agenda in the reintegration interventions. Poor communication between actors is a major stumbling block (Bouta, 2005). This does not help communities to feel that reintegration process is theirs but rather it is imposed on them. Hence Tambwe said that “communities should feel that the reintegration programme is also their business.” Similar views came from other reintegration interventions as well. A lesson learned from the collaboration between the Oxfam Novib and the Conseil Regional des Organisations Non Gouvermentales de Development au Maniema (CRONGD) is not adopted by many external actors. Oxfam Novib and CRONGD started a pilot project of the Social Cohesion to sensitize combatants for a voluntary disarmament in Maniema province in the DRC. The project included two major phases. The first phase concerned the implementation of socioeconomic activities, such as socioeconomic rehabilitation and improvement of barzas, aimed at restoring social cohesion and confidence at community level. The subsequent phase aimed at a voluntary disarmament. The two partners provided development activities including agricultural assistance and the rehabilitation of infrastructure, two schools and a health centre. According to CRONGD-Oxfam (as cited in Verkoren, Willems, Kleingeld & Rouw, 2010, p. 19), “the barzas played a central role in conflict resolution and in reintegrating perpetrators and victims, which helped in the implementation of the program.” This form of collaboration not only can help foster local ownership but also acceptance and increase the level of support to the reintegration process from all relevant stakeholders. It also serves as a reconciliation enhancing mechanism.

Fifth, inadaptability of some services is a general problem in Kivu. There cannot be local ownership once services provided by both local and external actors are not adapted to the needs of beneficiaries. Uvin (2004, p. 123) posits that “processes can build on, strengthen, neglect, or undermine local capacities, local networks, local knowledge and way of generating it.” Tambwe illustrated that beneficiaries are “…attending seminars and workshops under themes proposed by donors.” At times, the skills provided do not match local opportunities. One case in point is a rural village where people have no electricity and no computer to fix but are trained in how to fix

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\(^3\) Large community meetings traditionally practiced in the Kivu for community conflict mediation and resolution.

\(^4\) Lübunga is a participatory process that addresses their issues of justice, human rights abuses, sexual violence and other forms of dispute in larger community gathering. The process is guided by principles of unconditional acceptance, tolerance, respect, human dignity, compassion, hospitality and stewardship.

\(^5\) Women and girls in rural areas often go to the river where they often spend a long time sharing their inner family stories on every aspect of life, much longer than they do in most homes and other settings. Since every story needs a listener, this is where, in many cases, women and girls find good listeners for their joyful and painful stories.
computers. Although such training seems important, it is irrelevant in this particular context. Other examples are:

We have seen for example pastoralists combatants being demobilised and trained in fishing techniques and repairing bicycles instead of teaching them animal husbandry techniques, which would have been beneficial to them (Laurent from Bukavu).

Fishermen were trained in carpentry, plumbing and computer skills rather than training them in fishing and providing them with necessary equipment for fishing (Community member in Fizi).

Among other reasons for inadaptability of the services is that external actors implement blue prints from outside. Also, where context analysis is done, recommendations are not necessarily taken into account in planning and implementation. Regarding local actors, Rouw and Willems (2010), explains that this can be partly explained by the fact that many local organisations are often sub-contractors at the end of the aid supply chain. Acting against the principle of subsidiarity, external organizations prefer giving tenders to foreign organizations because they have the know-how at the expense of local actors (Speckter, 2008). Sixth, lack of ongoing support and follow-up is one of the major challenges. “Follow-up” is a “buzz word” in the reintegration process because of its critical importance in ensuring the sustainability of interventions. The experience from Sierra Leone shows that the lack of follow-up limited the success of reintegration efforts (Solomon & Ginifer, 2008). In a similar vein, Rouw and Willems (2010) posit that the lack of follow-up is considered a significant reason for continuing insecurity. Kasereka from Goma said “… often there is no field visit and accompaniment”. Amani from Goma added that there is “insufficiency of follow-up and technical support. The lack of budget for such kind of support is a major problem. Additionally, both local and external stakeholders are still locked in emergency situation and pay lip service to sustainability of their interventions. Kasereka from Goma illustrated that, “the emergency character of projects focusing on socio-economic reintegration does not make efforts more effective and sustainable.” This also reveals that outside donors do not invest as much resources as required to build strong and committed local partners as observed in numerous reintegration interventions in Africa (Bouta, 2005; Solomon & Ginifer, 2008). Under such conditions, it is thus difficult to prove that “DDR is a movement from external to national ownership” (Muggah & Steeken, 2010, p. 3).

Strategies for Improving Local Ownership

Numerous strategies can be used to address the limitations of local ownership in Kivu in order to improve reintegration efforts. Most of them require increasing collaboration between local and external actors and the level of participation and empowerment of local actors in Kivu and recognition of the inherent relationship between local ownership and human security. The following strategies are critical.

First, given the multitudes of local actors involved in the reintegration intervention, it is critical to start by identifying the relevant ones. Once they are identified, a regional congress of local actors should be organised.

The objective is not only that a better and more relevant programme is developed; it also aims to engender a higher level of ‘ownership’ of it by community, building of capacity among actors in the country, and greater sustainability of the programme’s outputs (Kilroy, 2008, p. 2).
The experience from Kosovo could serve as a good lesson. According to O’Neill (2002), the arrival of an increasingly coordinated international peace-building community meant that local stakeholders began to emerge from the rubble. Out of the congress, a common vision for the reintegration effort should be developed. This is the beginning of ensuring a match between policy and practice, because, as Bouta (2005) observed, there remains a gap between how to deal with issues on paper and how to deal with them in practice. Also critical is an agreement over a working definition of local ownership that would help ensure high level of local participation, empowerment, and sustainability of efforts, and appreciation of local contributions. Additionally, a broader reintegration plan should be jointly drawn and a review of the working relationship between local and external actors should take place to guide the collaboration over the process.

Second, Subsequent to the regional congress, context analysis of reintegration intervention sites should be carried out jointly. Context analysis is not only important for planning and providing services, it also offers numerous opportunities between local and external actors to create awareness on existing issues and locally available means and structures to deal with them. As observed in Kosovo, “the lack of an overall assessment of the economic context… has resulted in negative implications for the planning and implementation of the process” (Barakat & Özerdem, 2005, p. 34). The joint analysis would provide an opportunity for starting to building relationships between external and local actors. Effective partnerships between local and outside stakeholders can strengthen the effectiveness of local reintegration interventions in the short term and create synergies which promote sustainable community development (Speckter, 2008). It will also be a starting point for reconciling local and external approaches and to deal with sources of power, such as communication, decision-making and resources in a partnership in order to improve interventions.

Third, relevant skills should be provided. Instead of training fishermen in how to operate computers, they should be taught how to fish more effectively. Ducci (1998) argues that employment promotion along with skills training are among the effective means of reintegration. Skills ranging from leadership, project management, financial management, monitoring to the ability to make decisions should be considered as critical. Additionally, income generating skills should be given according to contexts in the areas of agriculture, fishing and general maintenance. Although training does not create jobs directly, it can overcome constraints on the supply side of labour. Tambwe said that “in my opinion, there is the need to integrate an aspect of capacity building for local actors.” Because local actors are contributing significantly to the reintegration of ex-combatants, their input should be acknowledged rather than being undermined (Gillhespy & Hayman, 2011). Lessons can be learned from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) which developed the community-focused reintegration and implemented it in Burundi, DRC and Liberia. The USAID provided leadership training and vocational training given the fact that one of the most pressing problems in post-conflict societies is the shortage of skills in order to involve locals in the re-building of communal life. The trainings were generally followed by support for community projects and local trainers of trainers emerged out of the process.

Finally, because the programme does not end with the exit of external actors, follow-up and on-going support is critical. For this to be effective, there should be a plan in place for such activities which allows external actors to continue providing technical advice. As Neema from Bunyakiri emphasised:
It is important that actors become close to beneficiaries. Meaning, it is essential for outside organisations to carry out follow-up in order to ensure that activities are implemented in an effective manner.

Conclusion

This article examined the nature and extent of local ownership of reintegration interventions. It presented an analysis of the importance of context analysis, maximization of local resources and enhancing collaboration between local and external actors to improve local ownership.

Major activities of local actors in the reintegration process were analysed. The important contribution in psychosocial and economic terms should be given due regards and be considered as a critical input in the overall reintegration process. Numerous limitations to the local ownership, such as failure to mobilise local resources, were analysed and recommendations were provided. For local ownership to be improved in the reintegration process, it is important that the empowerment of local actors is guaranteed. This includes taking into account the meaning of local ownership from local perspectives, sharing the same vision, carrying out context analysis and appropriate capacity building. Moreover, level of participation of local actors should be increased. Additionally, there must be follow-up and ongoing support by external actors.

References


Women’s positions in customary conflict resolution institutions:
The case of Ethiopia

Mehari Yimulaw Gebregeorgis *

The objective of the study was to uncover women’s representation in the customary conflict resolution mechanisms of Ethiopia vis-à-vis the country’s aspiration of achieving the women’s rights stipulated in its Constitution. To this end, data were collected through document study and consulting informants selected through purposive sampling. The Customary Conflict Resolution Mechanisms’ (CCRM’s) discourse was analysed through Inductive Thematic Analysis (ITA). The findings show that the customary conflict resolution roles of women in Ethiopia put them in a marginal position in participation in general and in decision-making in particular. Women in CCRM’s are confined to activities such as mobilising, supporting, facilitating and serving as wound healing compensation. Finally, it is suggested how the gap should be addressed through joint efforts of all stakeholders in the sector.

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Introduction

According to World Population Review (2014), Ethiopia is the home of 96.5 million people. Of these, 49.976% are women. It is also known for having multi-ethnic and multi-cultural communities: there are more than 80 ethnic groups. As a result of its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character, Ethiopia is a home of many customary conflict resolution mechanisms. In fact, Donovan and Getachew (2003), claim the existence of more than 60 types of conflict resolution mechanism in the country. Though many scholars have come up with different definitions of customary law, this study adopts Allot’s definition quoted in Ayalew (2012:17):

It is unwritten and the rules can be traced to the people and have been handed down to succeeding generations. The law consists of different bodies of rules that may be invoked in different contexts. These rules are based on conceptions of morality and depend for their effectiveness on the approval and consent of the people. The law has evolved in response to the pressures put upon the people by their environment. It reflects their way of life and their adjustment to life in the particular society and environment.

When a conflict escalates into violence, all parts of communities in the conflict could be affected but women may face more problems attributed to biological, psychological and social causes. “...women often experience violence, forced pregnancy, abduction and sexual abuse and slavery. Their bodies deliberately infected with HIV/AIDS or carrying a child conceived in rape” (Embet 2005: 73). In the pastoral communities of Ethiopia, for example in Karrayu, women are raided just like livestock and camels (Asnake 2011).

However, how CCRMs at intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic levels position women is an area not yet sufficiently explored (Molyneux 2002). “Most conflict assessment frameworks either neglect or include only cursory treatment of gender issues” (Anderlini 2006 :i). The concern of the study was therefore to uncover women’s representations in the CCRMs of Ethiopia vis-à-vis the country’s aspiration of achieving the women’s rights stipulated in its Constitution.

Methodology

Qualitative research methodology was employed in order to access and assess Ethiopian communities’ lived experience of how women are positioned in CCRMs. To uncover ways in which women are positioned in the different CCRMs of Ethiopian communities, data were collected by two methods: document study and consulting informants. Different studies on Ethiopian CCRMs and culture, books, and resources from electronic media on Ethiopian communities were extensively researched. International, regional and national policy documents in connection with women’s representations in CCRMs and their collective and individual rights were other sources of data accessed and assessed. In the second type of data, five informants were consulted for three times on average. They were people who are either native or who know the culture of the community well (e.g. people who have studied the respective communities’ culture in general and CCRMs in particular).

To understand how Ethiopian communities actually think, feel and act on positioning women in the CCRMs, the study employed an Inductive Thematic Analysis of the CCRMs’ discourse. Inductive
Thematic Analysis could explore the use of language in the free flow of discourse on CCRMs, considering language as part of major social processes and activities. The analysis was made iteratively. It was begun as data were being collected. This earlier interaction (description, interpretation and explanation) with the data helped the researcher to gradually refine his focus. Instead of employing the researcher’s predefined measures and hypotheses, the actual expressions in the data were captured. Through the process of discovery (conceptualisation, coding and categorisation), the study could establish representative categories from the data.

Analysis

Women as preachers of peace and unity

In Ethiopian traditional communities, women make an immense contribution to peace-building and unity. They preach the value of peaceful co-existence and unity. According to my informants, women are the first teachers of their children. As primary caretakers for children, they have more frequent contact with them than men. As a part of responsible upbringing, women socialise the children. They teach them about their respective communities’ ethos and values using folk tales that have simple and clear messages. After dinner, women in the rural areas use stories, riddles, sayings and proverbs to indoctrinate decency, trustworthiness, and solidarity which they expect to be demonstrated in their children’s socio-economic interactions. Through this steady training and socialisation, Ethiopian women instil a culture of peace and unity in the young generation. For instance, Ethiopian-Somali women instruct their children to be peaceful and united by saying: “God gives us peace (Ilaa ray nabad hana siiy); be united and act together (Garab iyo gaashaanba waa midkaliya) and if you aren’t united, you will be easily defeated (Hadaad kaalatagtiin cadawga ayaa idinka quulasanoya) (Bamlaku, et al 2010: 92–93).

Women from the same community are also able to “persuade their husbands, sons, brothers and fathers to stop fighting and settle their cases through negotiation”. The say: “males will die and not be born on the battlefield (Dagaal wiilbaa ku dhinte ee wiilbaa ku dhinta)” They also use the following sayings to praise peace and condemn enmity: “Conflict never ends and there isn’t success and prosperity through it (Guul lagama gaaro daqaal sokeeye); You can’t achieve your goal through conflict instead of peace (Nabad waxaad ku wayday daqaal kuma helaysid) (Bamlaku, et al 2010:92-94). Hence, they are taken as emblems of peace that create a bond of mutual understanding and cooperation among disputants.

Likewise, women in the Garri and Boran pastoralist communities teach their children and advise their husbands about the value of peaceful coexistence (Getachew 2003). Tigrayan women “teach about the value of peace, how to make peace possible, and the effect of conflict on the youth” (Abraha 2012:44).

Women have also developed techniques to avert the escalation of conflict into violence. For example, in south Ethiopia, “when women come to know that men from different ethnic groups are prepared to fight, they untie their waist bands and tie them together into long strips and hold the ends to make a line. As soon as men see that line they retreat to their respective regions” (Embet 2005:121).

1 Letena (38 years old; Amhara and grown up in Amhara region; interviewed on 04/06/2014), Kelemework (45 years old; researcher in the CCRMs of Afar region; interviewed on 26/05/2014) and Tsegay (46 years old; Tigrayan and grown up in Tigray region; interviewed on 20/05/2014): my informants on the Amhara, Afar and Tigray communities respectively.
Women as instigators of retaliation, mobilisers and supporters of combatants

When women believe that it is inevitable to take revenge, their social role can change from preachers of peace and stability to instigators of retaliation in conflict situations. According to Asnake (2011); CHF International (2006); Abraha (2012) and Glowacki and Gönc (2013), initiating retaliation is one of the roles of women in Afar and Karrayu Oromo, the Ethiopian-Somali region, Tigray and southern Ethiopia respectively. The instigation is done by agitating about the necessity of taking revenge to uphold the dignity and benefits of the victim’s side.

In doing so, women compose “poems in the nature of social commentaries, praising the brave and chiding the cowardly” (Ayalew 2012:38). For instance, in the 1940s the following Tigrigna poem was composed to encourage the youngsters to join a rebel movement that was led by a person named Blatta(chief) Hailmariam Reda. “Join the handsome Blatta, If not, when do you show your courage? (Aytkeydindo mis blatta kuhulye Mi`as diyyu sireka zire’aye)” (Fesseha 2011:82). While praising the one who was already in the combat, the poem urged others to follow in his footsteps and show their heroism.

In the same way, “in the Dillo administrative area of southern Ethiopia … one of the traditions … is for females to sing songs encouraging men to go to war” (Glowacki and Gönc 2013: 32). The Ethiopian-Somali region women press reluctant men to join combats by saying: “We don’t have brothers to revenge our enemies who killed our sons (Malihin walaalo nooga aar guda cadawgii dilay wiilashayada); men, give your guns to us and do our jobs like milking cows and others (Rogu waxay noo dhiibaan goryohooda, ayaguna shqadayada ayay qabraansida lisida lo’ada)” (Bamlaku, et al 2010:.93-4). In Nyangatom and Dassanech, pastoral communities in southern Ethiopia, “females and elders may also encourage raids by teasing or mocking individuals to participate in conflict, especially if there has been an unavenged raid against their group” (Glowacki and Gönc 2013:.28). My informants2 also said that nagging through murmuring in the house (silent protest) is another common manifestation of how women urge retaliation, especially if the victim is the woman’s relative.

Conflict is prevalent between the adjacent agro-pastoralist Wajert (Tigray) and pastoralist Afar groups in the course of sharing the scarce resources on the border of the regions. When conflict escalates into violence, one of the duties of women is mobilising men to join the fight. Women do the mobilisation disseminating detailed information about the violence. Abraha (2012:43) witnesses that “It is here that the visible role of women is detected. They pass information by wailing or crying and calling at the specific conflict site and explaining its level (people died, wounded, etc.”) Likewise, my informants of Tigray and Amhara communities reported that be it inter-clan or intra-clan conflict, mobilising people to violent conflict by wailing is mainly women’s duty. Findings on the Karrayu Oromo and Afar’s conflicts are also in line with this. “During confrontations, they disseminate war news to other men of their group usually through crying” (Asnake 2011:39). Likewise, in the 2008 Konso-Derash conflict, women “assisted them (men) by exchanging information” (Yidnekachew 2012:276).

2 Letena (interviewed on 04/07/2014), Kelemework (interviewed on 25/06/2014) and Gezach 36 years old; born and grown in Tigray (interviewed on 20/06/2014): my informants on the Amhara, Afar and Tigray communities respectively
As a matter of fact, both my informants’ responses and findings of other studies demonstrate that women take part in violent conflicts mainly by being motivators, logistics suppliers and caregivers of their fighters. According to the same informants, the role of women in encouraging their men to join the conflict and its effectiveness is clearly depicted by the saying “a messenger of woman does not fear death (Set yelakechw mot ayferam). In the Ethiopian-Somali region, women “praise men who join the war without hesitation …” (Bamlaku, et al 2010: 93-4). Likewise, in the Dassanech, women offer beads to men joining combat as a means of honouring their participation (Glowack and Gönc 2013). Women in Konso and Derashed, southern Ethiopia, were also observed while encouraging their husbands and brothers who participated in the 2008’s conflict between the ethnic groups (Yidnekachew 2012:276). In Karrayu Oromo, women offer “logistics like water, milk and other necessary provisions during war time” (Asnake 2011:39). Fetching and serving food and water to their group and providing care to injured fighters are also the duties of the Wajerat and Afar women during communal conflicts (Abraha 2012).

Women as receptacles of abuse and neglect

Mothers are responsible for training their daughters in life skills at puberty so that they will be ready for marriages that satisfy familial and communal requirements. Above all, the training is supposed to make the girls polite, tolerant and submissive, characteristics which are collectively considered as means of making marriages stable and peaceful. Young women are taught to develop endurance of the challenges related to marriage and to be obedient to their husbands. In this regard, one of the interviewees of Tigist, cited in Ayalew says “Since earlier times … we grew up listening and being told how marriage is difficult and that we have to be able to endure all the unpleasant circumstances” (Ayalew 2012:.34).My informants report that the rural Amhara and Tigray communities may be compelled to allow their girls to be married to men who have raped them for fear that there may be no-one else who would marry the victim of the rape. The same informants further witness that as they are active participants in the formation of marriages, the extended families of the spouses, elders and husbands have the lion’s share in decisions of marital disputes. Married women’s success or failure in conforming to the communal requirements has an extended implication for the pride and dignity of the family in general and the mother who gave the training in particular. Hence, parents, with the support of the extended families, try their best to gain the approval of the community at the expense of the treatment their daughters experience in their marriages. They strongly discourage divorce.

This customary practice is more prevalent among the Gurages. If, after exerting all efforts, divorce is inevitable, it is mandatory to have the consent of the husband, extended family and elders. In this regard one of Tigist’s (2011:96) research participants says:

In Gurage Kitcha [customary law], divorce is not an easy thing to do. Without including the couple’s families and without looking into the case deeply, it is impossible to permit divorce easily. … she can only be divorced by her husband, and only when the elders believe that the situation can indeed lead to divorce. Otherwise, they [elders] would refuse to issue divorce decisions, and would rather insist to make them stay in matrimony.

3 Almaz 47 years old; lived in Amharic speaking community for more than 20 years (interviewed on 04/07/2014) Kelemework (interviewed on 26/05/2014) and Tsegay (interviewed on 20/05/2014): my informants on the Amhara, Afar and Tigray communities respectively.

4 Letena (interviewed on 14/06/2014) and Tsegay (interviewed on 15/05/2014): my informants on the Amhara and Tigray communities respectively.
Unless a woman gets her husband’s blessing and he gives his consent to the end of their marriage, the community believe that she is still married. Hence, according to the customary law of the Gurages, no other man is allowed to marry her.

Women are expected to be obedient to the decisions of elders on other socio-economic matters as well. For example, the case given below from Tihut and Satterfield’s (2010:170) study shows how the research participant was forced to obey the demands of her community. Regardless of the unfairness of the decision of the Shimagles (elders who settle disputes), she was ordered to accept it for the sake of communal harmony:

As soon as my husband died, my neighbour rearranged the border and planted trees on my land…. I went to the PA [Peasants’ Association] but they told me to settle the problem with the Shimgelina. Finally, the issue was resolved by the Shimageles but I had to give up some of the area as a compromise for peaceful resolution. I was advised not to go against the decision of the Shimageles.

**Women as negotiators and local peacemakers**

Despite their role in enduring abuse, Ethiopian women have certain customary mechanisms of negotiating with and combating men who abuse their rights. An example worth mentioning in this regard is the “Siiqee” institution. Siiqee is a sisterhood solidarity institution of Oromo women. It is a “weapon by which Oromo women fought for their rights” (Dejene 2002: 42–3).

The Siiqee ritual can be organised in different ways for different purposes. One use of Siiqee is as an instrument of negotiation for settling the concerns of Oromo women. Through the negotiation, the offender is corrected and the wound of the victim is healed. To do this, the ritual can be a kind of strike when women are mobilised to leave their homes, children and resources and travel to a big tree called “qilxxu” and assemble there until their problems are addressed through the negotiation of elder men and women (Kuwee, 1997).

The other version of negotiation under the Siiqee umbrella is when women themselves stage the ceremony in order to influence the offender and make him accept his mistake. In the extract below, an informant in Ayalew’s (2012:45) narrates how she and her fellow local women staged the Siiqee institution themselves in response to her neighbour’s harassment of women in general and herself in particular:

Two years ago one of my male neighbours, insulted me sexually saying: ‘all women are like old empty milk containers (koonka), but above all you are the worst’. I found this insult to be so serious that I brought it up before our women elders. They discussed the case and concluded that it was necessary to call for ateete. All the women in my neighbourhood went to the man’s house with our sticks (Siqqee). We confronted him with what he had done. The man refused to admit his offence and to settle the case. … All the women in our neighbourhood gathered outside his house regularly for more than two months. Outside his house we were chanting songs dominated by sexual insults … in order for him to accept his wrongdoings. He refused this, and we ended up cursing him. After a few weeks we saw him coming to the clinic with a serious skin infection on his face. He also lost five of his cattle, they were hit by lightning. All this happened in accordance with our curse.

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5 Ateete is a group of local women who can stage Siiqee (Ayalew, 2012).
The above extract illustrates how the women tried through their institution to negotiate and how it unfortunately had a negative result, due to the offender’s refusal to accept the offer of negotiation.

Oromo women can also use this institution as a means of directly combating men who abuse their individual and/or collective rights. For example, Siiqee can be arranged in order to take revenge on an offender:

A group of women ambush the offender in the bush or on the road, bind him, insult him verbally using obscene language... Pinch him, and whip him with leafy branches or knotted strips of cloth. In extreme cases, they may force him to crawl over thorny or rocky ground while they whip him... They demand livestock sacrifice as the price to cease their attack... Other men rarely intervene (Kelly 1992:187).

According to my informants, customary practices of the Amhara and Tigray communities also allow women to argue against and negotiate with their opponents in their respective traditional courts.

Embet (2005:121) argues that “the role of women in peace making at community/village level is also highly prominent. In many communities in Ethiopia, it is elderly women who usually settle disputes and reconcile individuals or groups when they get into conflicts”. However, other findings in this regard show that women’s reconciliation role is either confined to minor disputes that occur at the family level or among women of the same locality, or totally non-existent. In the Ethiopian-Somali region, a woman is responsible for resolving familial disputes provided that she is the first wife in the polygamous marriage of the community (Bamlaku, et al 2010). My informants also witness that settling disputes which may occur in their local self-help institution named “iddir” and other women’s affairs in their locality is also their job under normal conditions.

Otherwise, most Ethiopian communities regard women as incapable and hence inferior to men in CCRMs. In fact, the inferiority outlook varies from community to community. The Gurage’s tradition alienates women from the CCRMs. Their voices are either ignored or presented through men who represent them (Tigist 2011). The Afar and Tigray people do not allow women to be members of their CCRMs named “Mablo” and “Gereb” respectively (Yayneshet and Kelemework 2004; Abraha 2012). In Amhara regional state, women’s inferiority is inculcated through proverbs such as: “The wisdom of a woman and the lights of stars do not take you far” (Tihut and Satterfield 2010:162). Likewise, Oromo’s tradition undermines women’s ability in CCRMs saying: “women make a good dish, but not a good speech” (Beerti qoonqoo tolchiti malee dubbii hintolchitu) (Jeylan 2004:.23). Moreover, communities use legends about women’s incompetence in CCRMs and public administration to exclude them from any socio-political activities.

Women as peace envoys and wound-healing compensation

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6 Letena (interviewed on 04/06/2014) and Tsegay (interviewed on 20/05/2014): my informants on the Amhara and Tigray communities respectively.
7 Almaz (interviewed on 05/06/2014), Kelemework (interviewed on 26/05/2014) and Gezach (interviewed on 21/06/2014): my informants on the Amhara, Afar and Tigray communities respectively.
8 See Dejene 2009, p. 24 for the Oromo’s legend on women, for example.
In the CCRMs of Ethiopia, women’s role as facilitators of negotiation and ritual is quite evident. In Oromo, negotiations of disputes between clans are initiated and opened through the efforts of women. Holding their Siiqqee (ritual stick) and “Caaccuu”9, women urge negotiation between the disputing clans. As a tradition, any clan in Oromo has the cultural responsibility to respect and accept women’s pleas to settle conflict through negotiation. (Aberra 1998).

According to Dejen (2009:25) in Guji and Borona Oromo:

the party first interested in peace sends a “lichoo”, a female peace envoy, to the “hayyu”, judge, of the opponent group. While traveling in the territory of the enemy, the custom confers respect to a “lichoo” and protects her from any harm. Even if the adversary is on a war campaign, the group returns back at the sight of a “lichoo”. ... In general, the “lichoo” prepares grounds for major peace talk between two adversary groups, including fixing the venue for the meeting and reporting the process to their respective “hayyus”.

My informant10 also affirms that Afar women in the middle Awash region take the initiative to visit the opponent group to propose reconciliation.

In Oromo, women are believed to be pure, humble and as a result close to the Creator. Due to this, homicide reconciliation ceremony in the absence of them is unthinkable (Dejene 2002). My informants11 report that women in Amhara and Tigray are involved in the preparation of food and drink for a joint feast of disputants to indicate that the dispute is eventually settled. Yayneshet and Kelemework (2004) also witness the existence of the same practice in Afar region.

Most Ethiopian communities use the exchange of women as an inter-group Conflict Resolution Mechanism (CRM). In this regard, one of Asnake’s (2011 :.39) informants from Karrayu Oromo reveals that:

When the exchange of a woman as a mechanism of inter-group conflict resolution becomes successful, they have a positive effect in conflict resolution and peace. Karrayu Oromo for instance, have also a tradition of providing their women to their “enemy” groups for the sake of peace and tolerance.

The practice of giving women as wives to men of disputing groups in order to halt further conflict “is widely prevalent in both Amhara and Tigrai culture”( Embet 2005:121).

Marriage takes place between a man from the victim’s side and a selected beautiful girl presented as a gift from the offender’s side. The communities do this with the aim of healing the wounds of the victims and bolstering the agreement reached in the reconciliation through integration. This belief is well articulated in an Ethiopian-Somali proverb which says: “Only a woman can bring two separate clans together (Bamlaku, et al 2010: 95).

What is more, Ethiopian-Somali women seem convinced that they are the real peacemakers through their own self-sacrifice. “Women practice the “herein” tradition, which means unmarried

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9 Ritual object worn on the right wrist of Oromo women to symbolise female’s fertility and fullness ( Bartels 1983).
10 Kelemework (interviewed on 26/05/2014), my informant on the Afar community.
11 Letena (interviewed on 04/06/2014) and Tsegay (interviewed on 20/05/2014): my informants on the Amhara and Tigray communities respectively.
women visit the enemy clan without the permission of their parents. The enemy clan welcomes them and will arrange a marriage with them” (Bamlaku et al 2010: 95). Cognisant of this fact, Elster (1989), argues that unifying different clans and cementing their relationship through marriage is one of the crucial contributions of Somali women.

In peace-restoring processes, women have a central role. In many Ethiopian communities, they serve as compensations that heal wounds. However, they are not treated as equal as men when they become victims of conflicts. They do not get the same amount of compensation as men. In the Ethiopian-Somali community, “It is stated in the Ugaz’s constitution that for killing a man it will be 100 camels and for killing a woman 50 camels” (Bamlaku et al 2010:105). In the Gurage community, “In cases where women are victims of violence of any kind, they are awarded compensation (usually in the form of cattle), which is half in number relative to that of a male victim” (Ayalew 2012:10). Likewise, in Afar, “the blood wealth for a deceased woman is said to be half that of a man while male children are equally treated with adults as far as compensation is concerned” (Kelemework 2011:.45).

Discussion

In response to global policy instruments which call on states to prevent and eradicate discrimination against women, Ethiopia has endorsed the UN’s Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), 2006). In Article 1 of the Convention, discrimination against women is expounded as “… any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex, which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital statuses on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” (United Nations 1979). Under Article 2 (b) and (h) sections of the same document, the convention explicitly calls states to “adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women and modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women”.

As a country that ratified CEDAW, Ethiopia’s 1995 Constitution and other policy documents give due recognition to gender equity and women’s rights. It has incorporated non-discriminatory clauses into its Constitution and made reforms in family and property relations. Article 25 of the Republic’s Constitution guarantees women and men equal protection of the law without distinction of any kind such as race, nation, nationality, colour, sex, language, religion, political or social origin, property, birth or other status. Article 35 of the Constitution is devoted to the rights of women. Article 35(1) says “women shall, in the enjoyment of rights and protections provided for by this Constitution, have equal right with men.” In the same Article, sub-article 4 urges the state to “enforce the right of women to eliminate the influences of harmful customs.” The sub-article further declares that “Laws, customs and practices that oppress or cause bodily or mental harm to women are prohibited”. The family law of the country also proclaims equal distribution of inheritances to women and men (FDRE 2000). Moreover, the government has designed a women’s policy. Among the objectives of the policy is the following:

[To] Facilitate conditions conducive to the speeding up of equality between men and women so that women can participate in the political, social, and economic life of their country on equal terms with men, ensuring that their right to own property as well as their other human
rights are respected and that they are not excluded from the enjoyment of the fruits of their
labour or from performing public functions and being decision makers... (FDRE 2006).

The government has also established Women’s Affairs Offices at different levels in order to
implement the constitutional rights of women and the subsequent policy and programmes on
women.

On the other hand, the CCRMs that have been used from time immemorial are still effective.
For they are known for offering restorative justice, being accessible with low transaction costs, and
native to the culture, rural communities in Ethiopia prefer the CCRMs to modern justices systems
(Tihut and Satterfield 2010; Dejene, 2002).

As a result of the merits stated above, the CCRMs in the country solve the majority of rural
communities’ disputes. For instance, CHF International (2006) witnesses that about 90% of conflicts
in the Ethiopia-Somali regional state are resolved through CCRMs. Cognisant of this scenario, the
Constitution granted communities the right to use customary law. Article 34(5) says: “This
Constitution shall not preclude the adjudication of disputes relating to the personal and family laws
in accordance with religious or customary laws, with the consent of the parties to the dispute”.

This means the Constitution has given recognition to both women’s rights and the CCRMs of
the communities. In this present study shows that Ethiopian women play different roles at
different stages and situations of CCRMs.

Despite their involvement in conflicts at permissible levels and being victims of most of the
violent conflicts, the findings revealed that women are highly marginalised in participation and
decision-making in the conservative and patriarchal CCRM process, which unfortunately makes them
victims of its aftermaths as well. In most Ethiopian communities, participation of women in the
peaceful conflict resolution processes is either non-existent or highly limited to minor and local
disputes that do not deserve men’s attention. Leave alone participating women in peaceful conflict
resolution processes as mediators, some communities do not allow them to present their appeals to
the customary courts. Women are not consulted even on matters that directly affect their lives. For
example, if women have to be presented as wound-healing compensation, the decision comes from
the elders and leaders of the community. Women are receptacles of abuse and neglect; they are
usually considered as half the value of men in terms of apportioning compensation. These
representations are against women’s rights enshrined in the Constitution under Article 35, primarily
sections 1, 2 and 4, which underscore women’s rights and protection, women’s equal rights with
their male counterparts in marriage, and the prevention and eradication of harmful customs and
practices.

This means the Constitution’s aspiration to simultaneously realise women’s rights and make
the CCRMs functional could not work. Along with this, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) (2007)
witnesses that Ethiopia’s reforms on its legal framework to address discrimination against women
couldn’t bring the intended impact. From the outset, going to CCRMs with consent did not work for
“there are various social and economic factors that push women litigants to submit to customary
and religious courts (Meaza 2007:108). Ethiopian women “typically have lower levels of education;
less access, ownership and control of productive assets... and different social networks than men,
leading to lower economic productivity and income generation and weaker bargaining positions ...”
(Jones, et al 2010 :viii). After entering into CCRMs, women face discrimination. Patriarchal
disproportions of power, biased cultural norms and economic disparities serve to repudiate women’s rights and perpetuate discrimination.

If the social, cultural, economic and political problems of women should be addressed, their involvement in conflict resolution institutions especially in the CCRMs, which serve the majority of the rural population, should be brought to the level that makes them equal with their male counterparts in participation and the decision-making processes. The more women participate in the CCRMs, the better their problems are listened and ultimately, solutions are sought. This implies the necessity of tackling the issue of women’s discrimination with more adequate political commitment, visibility and resources.

If the de facto discrimination of women in Ethiopia is to be addressed and they are to gain the position they deserve in the community, due attention should be given to the existing reform implementation measures, such as legal awareness campaigns; capacity enhancement programmes for customary as well as modern law enforcement personnel and women’s empowerment. There should be a mechanism in place for consistent capacity building of the stakeholders as well as dissemination of information that develops stakeholders’ awareness of constitutional provisions and statutory laws that protect women against discrimination. Training should be given to community leaders and elders who work on peace-making and peace-building processes in such a way that at least CCRMs will be more sensitive to the globally accepted principles of women’s rights and involve women in the customary conflict resolution processes.

The internal efforts within CCRMs to harmonise themselves with women’s rights under the Constitution and other policy documents must be strongly encouraged so that the customary institutions will transform themselves gradually in terms of their degree of discrimination against women. Through this, change could come from inside the CCRMs. Moreover, CCRMs can be transformed into the desired status in terms of mitigating discrimination against women by accepting the institutions into the state machinery, as was tried in the Ethiopian-Somali regional state by placing “guurti” (elders) on the government payroll (CHF International 2006).

All in all, if women’s social, economic and political rights are to be respected, they should be empowered to be part of the decision-making processes of CCRMs. No matter whether a conflict is initiated by an individual or by a group, in a customary conflict resolution context, a dispute is settled successfully if all sections of the community, including women, have meaningful participation (Glowacki and Gönc 2013).

References


http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/ethiopia-population/.
The first focus of this paper is the ‘Triple role’ Europe/EU and Turkey play to the ‘creation’ of one another’s collective group identity. Their triple role can be expressed in this formula: ‘us/other + other’ (Sitki: 2009). Both groups are kept apart by their mutually shared myths and symbols. Their collective group myths and symbols have remained in the background as ‘visible + silent’ (Sitki: 2009) and unnoticed by each group. To date, none of their collective group myths and symbols has ever been on any international agenda discussion between these two groups. Their common ‘triple role’ heritage as manifested in these myths and symbols continue to remain silent and unacknowledged thus perpetuating the unnecessary mutual misunderstanding between them. There has been no attempt to understand either group’s ‘other’ but to assume that their mutual misunderstandings are based on economic, social or political – always ignoring the cultural myths and symbols. The second focus of this paper is the concept of peace and exploring the concept of branding peace. To be able to do this task, whose cultural myths and symbols would you use to brand it with? Would peace be branded as polycultural or multicultural? If peace is to be branded would it not be multicultural to include all the cultural identity of all the people of the world? This paper analyses three themes for peace to manifest: branding; polyculture; multiculture; and applies all three to the relationship of Europe/EU and Turkey. International organisations like the United Nations, UNESCO or even EU have external identity/logos based on Greco-Roman myths and symbols. This adoption makes them polycultural and exclusive to the remaining multitudes of cultures they are also to represent. That is, the internal identity of these multitudes of cultures remains ‘not visible + silent’ (Sitki: 2009). The concept of polyculture is upheld, supported and silently reinforced in our language.

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"A man knocked on a door. “Who is there?” asked God.
“Me,” replied the man. “Go away then,” said God.
The man left and wandered in the arid desert until he realised his error and returned to the door.
He knocked again. “Who’s there?” asked God.
“There is no room for two” (Freke 1998:54).

Introduction

This paper is about the relationship of Europe/EU and Turkey and how they can achieve ‘unified in diversity’ peace together. In polyculture there are no interactions between the dominant monoculture and the multitudes of cultures below it. This is the Europe/EU and Turkey relationship at present. Their interaction within this polycultural field reinforces them as one another’s ‘us/other + other’ (Sitki 2009) or in other words their ‘triple role’ (Sitki 2009). This chasm is reinforced by their collective group myths and symbols, and upheld by their own languages. There are no cultures that are impervious or porous to the influences of other cultures and in one or another come under the domination of another culture. This is called, polyculture. Europe/EU’s banal myths and symbols falls into two distinct categories. First category is their official four (myths) symbols that are openly acknowledged. Second category is their remaining myths and symbols which have yet to receive any acknowledgement of their existence in Europe/EU’s collective group unconsciousness. From this point this paper examines how the concept of peace – if it were to be branded – as it manifests visibly and tangibly within polyculture and multiculture. The second crux of this paper is its exploration of the concept of peace within polycultural, then a multicultural setting. It is important to stress here that this paper is neutral over Turkey’s EU membership. This paper focuses on how the collective group identities of Europe, EU and Turkey can utilise their myths and symbols to reach a better understanding of each other. Europe/EU written as singular pronoun is a ‘composite word formula’ (Sitki 2009), and means that they share one identity – Greco-Roman culture that is their dominant monoculture. Europe is the internal engine that drives the EU; EU in turn acts as the external reinforcer or brand of Europe; or perhaps the EU is driven by Europe. In the spirit of breaking down the silent structures in our language that reinforces/upholds our inherited perceptions about our ‘others’ all non-Anglicized pronouns/nouns will be written in their original language spelling to promote a better understanding between our ‘other’.

Myths and symbols

If our ‘nationalism’ is our external coat of our identity and culture is its undercoat, then myths and symbols are its flesh and blood. Myth comes from the Greek word ‘Muthos’ meaning a fable or story to explain the ambiguity and contradiction of the unexplainable through various culturally understood metaphors (Hamilton 1940; Puhvel, 1987). Myths are fluid notions changing shape to fit the teller’s purpose, situation or the underlying dogma. Myths usually start out as oral stories of long ago depicting a pantheon of gods who possessed super-natural powers over their mortal subjects. Myths are in an essence a starting point for any group or tribe’s history and culture, giving them a sense of identity or a way to explain the unexplainable events, such as the creation of the human race, as well as to be able to understand the whims of the harvesting seasons, to behave within a code of social structure and to understand and to give explanation to good and evil deeds as they occur. Myths reflect the culture they sprang from and are particular to that society, as an agrarian tribe will have different myths and tales from a hunter and gatherer’s myths and tales.
Myths themselves can be seen as a representation of religious, philosophical or psychological beliefs that are particular to a group, describing their tribal perceptions of themselves and of outsiders. Symbols are the tangible aspect of these myths and they give visibility to an invisible idea or a set of beliefs. Symbols are unique to a particular group and their geographical surroundings. Myths are defined by Lucian Boia as an ‘imaginary constructing’ (which means neither ‘real’ nor ‘unreal’, but disposed according to the rules of the imagination), ‘having the purpose of showing the essence of the cosmic and social phenomena, strongly linked with the fundamental values of the community and with the purpose of ensuring the cohesion of the former’ (Boia 1997:8). Myths create the concept of a collective group identity and their sense difference from their perceived ‘others’.

Collective group myths create ‘nations’ by giving their adherers a context and legitimacy for their ‘created’ identity. (Smith 2001:33). Smith argues that ‘nationalism is much more than a political ideology; it is also a form of culture and “religion” (Smith 2001:33). Smith believes that nationalism is another word for religion that is characterised by symbols and myths. Similarly, the ‘...national symbols only serve to express, represent and reinforce the boundary definition of the nation, and to unite the members inside through a common imagery of shared memories, myths and values’ (Smith 2001:8). Myths fill in the background to any idea by giving it tangible symbols that the preceptors can identify, relate to and ultimately obey. A myth as a concept is an idea that, once it has created a sense of belonging, can be used by the creator to manipulate a group of people. In this way, myth is no different from three types of modern propaganda and it is still created to serve a purpose, to achieve a sense of unity of a particular group of people or to defend an idea against another. Eric Hobsbawn (1990) writes that nations’ elites re-interpret myths for the mass population to gain more support and to limit any dissenting perspective to this interpretation. Symbols are the tangible element to the creation, maintenance and reinforcement of any myth – in both its forms as ideology and narration. There are three sets of myths: in polyculture; in multicultural; and in blending of polyculture into multicultural to create a third identity with its new set of myths and symbols.

Polyculture

The concept of polyculture, to give it its proper context, is a borrowed term from agriculture. Clifford Geertz (1963) defines the concept of polyculture in agriculture as:

...swiddens in low-density areas ....were not only polycultural but in addition were structurally similar to the natural forest ecosystem in [that] they exhibited a high species diversity... basically in tune with the natural ecosystem... The portion of the garden which comes close to mimicking the structure and diversity of the rainforest, and hence is truly polycultural (italics added).

In this agricultural context, there are multitudes of plants planted in a field, with the ‘farmer’ as the external control. Uzo M Igbozurike defines polyculture as:

intercropping, inter-planting, mixed cropping, or multiple cropping...and is the phenomenon in which two or more, and usually very many more agricultural crops are grown at the same time on a pilot land. Polyculture involves simultaneity of agricultural operations...

Raymond Hames expands on the ‘polyculture’ definition as the:
...type of planting arrangement whereby a variety of cultigens are systematically interplanted in a garden so as to *mimic* the structure and *diversity* of the natural ecosystem (italics added).

Polyculture enables all these species to interact equally with each other without one species dominating the others. These multitudes of species in this polycultural field have their own set of myths. Then through their interaction/interbreeding with one another have another set of myths that is only common to their interaction. There are two interpretations of this agricultural practice as applied to another discipline. Roger Hewitt (1992) and Vijay Prasad (2002) each take this agricultural term to mean different things. Roger Hewitt defines polyculture as:

> What we have here is not a ‘multiculture’ as it is represented in multiculturalism, not a pluralist order of discrete patches of culture, all somehow, ‘equally valid’ within the polity, but – to form a Greek/Roman Creole – a polyculture, or at any rate a collection of cultural entities that are not (a) discrete and complete in themselves; (b) that are not in any sense ‘intrinsically’ ‘equal’; and (c) are active together and hence bound up with change.

Hewitt’s definition provides no interaction between the multitudes of cultures and the dominant mono-culture above them. It is a one-way, top-down interaction. The multitudes of cultures interact with each other only, without ever interacting with their dominant monoculture – or they with them.

Vijay Prashad’s definition focuses on the amelioration of anti-racism and ethnicity by proposing that polyculture is ‘dynamic’ as opposed to the ‘static perspective of the ‘multiculturalist perspective of history’. Polyculturalism is a ‘...provisional concept grounded in antiracism rather than in diversity. Polyculturalism is a ferocious engagement with the political world of culture, a painful embrace of the skin and all its contradictions by including the cultures of the:

> Afro-American (including African American-Asian American) political economic and cultural interaction. ...polyculturalism as an antiracist framework.

The culture of the collective group which dominates these various groups is still left out in both these definitions. Prashad writes that there is a:

> ...need for conceptual parameters for polyculturalism that will guide its further development and resist incorporation into existing ideologies and models.

Prashad gives the example of the Portuguese shop-keepers, who represent the dominant mono-culture in this polycultural setting. The Portuguese shop-keeper’s interactions with the East Indians and the Caribbeans are commercial: they make and supply ‘Hussein’s tomb’ for their festival:

> the procession would leave the plantation, join with those other states, march along a route *that included the grog shops of the Portuguese...and then end back at their respective plantations* (italics added).

These shop-keepers do not culturally interact with the East Indians or with the Caribbeans who actively see this festival as part of their collective identity. These Portuguese traders are not ‘assimilated’ nor ‘acculturalised’ back into the cultures of the other two, but remain as their outsider in keeping with their ‘farmer’ role Prashad fails to specify how the interaction within polyculturalism
will or can manifest in an external identity symbols for any of these collective groups interacting within these concepts.

**Polyculture of Europe/EU and Türkey**

This paper proposes and will demonstrate how Europe/EU is not a multicultural society. Europe/EU is in a polycultural phrase with a dominant monoculture over the multitudes of cultures below it. For Europe/EU to achieve multiculturalism, it must absorb the identity of multitudes of cultures of all its partners (present and future), and the identity of its ‘others’. This internal absorption would be reflected in their external myths and symbols. Europe/EU’s dominant monoculture is Greco-Roman as reflected and reinforced by its internal and external myths and symbols.

Europe/EU’s four official (myths and) symbols will be called: ‘visible + not silent’ (Sitki 2009). Its remaining myths and symbols are: ‘not visible + silent’ (Sitki 2009). The first group is openly acknowledged; the second group exists in Europe/EU’s ‘cultural unconsciousness’ and have yet to receive acknowledgement, as the first group. Europe/EU play a ‘Triple role’ to each other, as expressed in this formula ‘us/other + other’ (Sitki 2009). This ‘triple role’ is drawn from, using this formula:

Asu/Islam/Saracens/Selçuks/Osmans/Türkey

and can be explained in the following exchange between two groups:

• Us: François I of France united with Sultan Süleyman to defeat Francois’ enemy Charles V Hapsburg in 1543

• Us/Other: same as above alliance; both remain different from each other

• Other: both remain different; there is no alliance: Sultan Mehmet II’s Conquest of Constantinople 1453 adopting Kayser-i-Rum/Ceasar of Rome title based on his military conquest.

Türkiye’s ‘us/other’ roles continue to remain silent – while their third role as ‘other’ receives attention. To explain this further, Michael Billig’s (1995) concept of ‘banal’ has been divided into two sections to demonstrate that an ideology/narration can manifest in two distinctively different forms within our ‘banal’ daily life:

• ‘Visible + not silent’ the concept is made up of Europe/EU’s four official symbols, as they make up their recently ‘created’ ‘invented’ (Hobsbawm 1992: 1-2).

• ‘Not visible + silent’ are the remaining symbols of Europe/EU. Their presence in the ‘collective unconsciousness’ lacks ‘open’ acknowledgement.

**‘Visible + not silent’: Europe/EU’s official four symbols**

These are Europe/EU’s (myths) and symbols that are openly acknowledged as part of their internal collective group identity. They reinforce its dominant mono-cultural or ‘farmer’ role over its ‘others’.
1 EU Flag

In 1983 Council of Europe adopted their ‘flag’ (Figure 1) to validate the ‘...existence of the Community needs to be brought to the public attention’. A multicultural ‘our’ flag may be to adopt Rem Koolhaas’ Bar-code flag (Figure 2) to ‘represent Europe’s diversity and unity’ as Prodi, EU President wanted.

![Figure 1. EU Flag](image1.jpg)  ![Figure 2. Rem Koolhaas’ Bar-code flag](image2.jpg)

2 EU Day 9th May

The month of May has connotations of agriculture, creation, growth, continuation and growth. The May-pole festival is celebrated and the ‘Greek and Roman spring rites of Attis, slain consort of Earth Mother, Cybele’. Cybele’s myth joins East with West. Her myth originated in Phrygia, Anatolia in 5th century BC, and spread to Greece, then on to Rome in 204 BC. Cybele’s myth is a ‘Cyclical-word formula’ (Sitki 2009). This formula expresses Europe/EU and Türkiye’s inter-dependant and inter-connected relationship of as expressed thus:

Asu / Islam / Selçuk / Osman Empire / Republic of Türkiye + Ereb / Christianity / Europe / European Union

3 EU Anthem or European Hymn

In 1985 EU Anthem was adopted to reflect its existing member’s collective group identity. There are no ‘official’ lyrics, and its music is Beethoven’s Symphony #9 accompanying R Schiller’s poem, ‘Ode to Joy’ based on ‘Elysian Fields’ (Greco- Roman).

4 EU Motto ‘United in Diversity’

The EU’s Motto, ‘United in Diversity’ was first mentioned in Article I-8, in the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in 2004. This Treaty aims to display a collective unity that is ‘working together for peace and prosperity, and that the many different cultures, traditions and languages in Europe are a positive asset for the continent’. Its Motto is based on St Paul’s Epistle in Ephesus that there should be ‘One body unity and diversity within the Church’ Ephesus or Efes in Türk, is in Asia Minor.

‘Invisible + silent’: Europe/EU’s unacknowledged myths and symbols

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The following (selected) five myths and symbols of Europe/EU silently exist in their ‘collective unconsciousness’ and ‘visibly + not silently’ remain unacknowledged by Europe/EU.

1 The myth of Europa

![Figure 3.](image)

Europa was born in Asia Minor (Asu/east/Anatolia/Turkey). Her myth ‘unites’ three continents in Ancient and Modern world. She spent her adult life in Ancient Greece and gave her name to mass of continent called Europe (Ereb/west/Europe/EU). Her myth is a ‘cyclical word formula’ (Sitki 2009) as she shares her identity/being with two seemingly different identity groups.

2 The Euro

![Figure 4.](image)

The Euro’s glyph is the Greek letter Epsilon, and is a direct reference to the cradle of European civilization. The glyph or ‘E’, as the first letter of the pronoun Europe, is crossed by two parallel lines to ‘certify’ the stability of the Euro.² The Greek Euro: ‘unifies’ Europe’s name with the Hellenic Republic/Greece as ‘the cradle of European civilization... Robert Kalina designed the Euro Banknotes featuring two important symbols of thoroughfare: windows/doorways and bridges. The symbolism of the bridge is to represent fluid communication between EU members – or between ‘North and South ... [to] work together, [and for] east and west [to]... grow together’.³ Coins and notes in modern day currency are the easiest and the fastest way to circulate the ‘banal’ iconography of any ‘nationality’ (Billig 1995). Raento writes that ‘the most common images on money are people’ (2004:937) for the ‘country specific’ (936) side of the Euro. Most of Euro’s images are of men, with few exceptions of female images of Europa (for Greece), Marianne (for France) and Queen Beatrix (for Netherlands), and invoke feelings of solidarity, longevity and above all, an individual cultural identity within a collective group. As a natural progression to Türkiye’s EU membership, will mean the circulation of an iconic image of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on the Euro – as part of the pantheon of other European hero/leader/king images.

³ The European Anthem from this site [www.peter-diem.at](http://www.peter-diem.at)
Currencies are important in creating and reinforcing new national identities and drawing the demarcation lines between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The Euro is EU’s attempts to create its own symbols to accurately represent its own kind of ‘banal nationality’ and to create a ‘common European home’ (Raento 2004:932) is a:

...politically charged construction which continues to emphasize western and northern Europe’s predominantly Christian, White, and Indo-European majority cultures’ (Raento 2004:937).

This Christian and Greco-Roman imagery is further reinforced on Greece’s 2 Euro with:

Europa’s name written in the image in Greek letters, and the coin’s name and the value of the currency repeated on the national side. Hellenic Republic, written in Greek alphabet, is engraved on the edge. The whole portrays Greece as the cradle of European civilisation and a culturally unique, historically significant part of the supranational identity... (Raento 2004:950).

The images of hero/king/father figure/leaders on national currencies do ‘...constantly re-establish and reassert their alliance to a particular identity’ (Unwin and Hewitt 2001:1026). To confirm its lack of internal hero/leader/king figure there is no human imagery on the Euro. Instead there are inanimate imagery of windows, gateways, partly in view and the rest understood of the 12 golden stars, bridges and church window panes (Unwin and Hewitt 2001:1026) illustrative of the ‘role played by Christianity in shaping the national identities of these states in the past’ (Unwin and Hewitt 2001: 1020). Alexander Lamfalussy observed that ‘the difficulty with people is that people usually belong to a country’ (Pointon 1998:252) but if there is not one ‘country’ for EU members to identify with, how do they show their support for this ‘country’?

3 Europe/EU’s Greco-Roman culture

The EU’s identity was officially ‘created’ at the European Community summit in 1973 when there was a need to create ‘...a sense of identity ...to invent the concept as a means by which to induce new [identities to the] Community’ (Strath 2000:385). It was necessary to create this ‘sense of identity’ to ‘suppress differences’ of Europe’s ‘widely different [identity] origins’ (Strath 2000:388). This ‘created’ identity needs an opposition or an ‘other’ that reflects Europe/EU’s changed identity needs. Smith writes that identities are ‘forged through the opposition to the identities of significant others, as the history of paired conflict so often demonstrates’ (Smith 1992:75). Bo Strath writes that collective identity of Europe is a

...continuous discourse on unification, and as such is basically a political project. Europe is charged with various meanings synchronically as well as diachronically. This discourse has had the demarcation of the other in terms of “Us” and “Them” as an important point of departure. This demarcation has also been part of the political project, and therefore it has varied over time as well as at specific points in time. After the Second World War, the two key concepts in this European discourse have been, first, integration, and then when integration had lost its power to mobilise, identity (Strath 2000:420).

When the former Chairman of Christian Social Union, Edmund Stoiber, remarked that ‘Türkiye is not European and does not belong in Europe’ (Stoiber 2006) he might have been echoing ‘the idea of the
superiority of European civilisation functioning as a demarcation of the Other...’ (Strath 2000:407). Samir Amin explains how Europe/west’s Greek-Roman identity has been ‘created’ by subsuming its Norse myths to add ‘Hellenism to Europe arbitrarily’ and for ‘Christianity...annexed to Europe, as the principal factor in the maintenance of European cultural unity...’ after Pope Leo III crowned King Charles in 800 AD. This act of annexing sowed the seeds of Europe/EU’s polycultural superimposition.

To demonstrate Amin’s point, the external logos of various international organisations will be visually analysed. These international organisation’s logos are yet to become ‘multicultural’ by displaying the diversity of the multitudes of global cultures they represent. The United Nation’s logo (Figure 5) is an azimuthal projection of the ‘world map’ depicting the area of concern to the United Nations in achieving its main purpose, peace and security⁴ and is surrounded by two olive branches. Deconstructing the symbolism of these olive branches reveals two silent messages: as part of Europe/EU’s Greco-Roman heritage that an olive branch is considered a symbol of peace, and is consistent with its Christian heritage, that the olive is ‘...the symbol of peace’. In the Old Testament, the subsiding of the Flood was demonstrated to Noah by the return of a dove bearing an olive leaf in its beak (Genesis 8:11)’ (Bullfinch 1997:770). Olive, as the symbol of peace can be extended to perhaps around the Mediterranean nations; but what about rest of the world in which its symbolism does not have any meaning? Next is UNESCO logo (Figure 6) drawn to symbolise a Greek temple or the Parthenon with its Doric columns, silently re-affirms Greece as the cradle of all learning.

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⁴ www.un.org/depts/dhl/maplib/flag.htm
Europe/EU’s ‘Europe/EU’s ‘Welcome to the Culture website’ (Figure 8)\(^5\) has three items which appear to be ‘visually’ connected to each another. These three items are (Sitki 2009):

Twelve Stars + Three broken Ionic/Doric/Corinthian (styled) columns + (and the word) Culture

Europe/EU’s collective identity is defined by the dictum that it ‘...must ...form a federation or a European entity that would make them into a common economic unit’.\(^6\) Their internal myths and symbols are made up of Christianity + Greek + Roman myths and symbols omitting its Islam + internal others + external others’ ‘diversity’ characteristics. Once deconstructed these Twelve Stars signify Europe/EU’s Christian religion defined internal identity.\(^7\) The broken (Ionic) columns as adopted by the EU’s as their ‘cultural’ logo represents their Greco-Roman cultural ‘homogeneous’ culture. The ‘silent + not missing’ message of the Twelve Stars signifies Christianity as Europe/EU’s ‘personal’ or internal identity (Berger 1984:128). The Greek Ionian columns form its ‘occupational’ or middle identity (Berger 1984:128). The word ‘culture’ combines the Twelve Stars + Greek Ionic columns to form Europe/EU’s external or ‘national’ identity (Berger 1984:128). These three form the trinity of ‘unity’ without any ‘diversity’ that is ‘visible + not silent’ (Sitki:2009)

Europe/EU’s ‘diversity’ is divided into two groups within ‘us/others + others’ (Sitki:2009). The first group of ‘us/others’ is made up of Türkey as Europe’s ally, then as its ally/enemy simultaneously, and thirdly, remaining different from them, as expressed in this formula:

Asu/Islam/Saracens/Selçuks/Osmans/Türkey

The remaining ‘others’ are any non-Europeans (from former colonies/different faiths/ethnic origins) who live in Europe/EU were born in and may or may not hold European or EU citizenships. In 2007, Europe/EU as ‘a continent open to culture’\(^8\) launched ‘The New EU Culture Programme (2007–2013) to promote ‘unity of diversity through mobility – ‘Crossing Borders – Connecting Cultures’\(^9\). What are the meanings of these two phrases on EU’s web-site: ‘common heritage’ and ‘common European cultural heritage’? Their immediate meanings are not clear on reading. Do we assume that Europe/EU has a ‘unified’ ‘common heritage’? Whose ‘common heritage’ is it? Does all of Europe share in this ‘common European cultural heritage’? Then, how are these two assumed questions to be ‘united’ in our minds? We are ‘silently’ asked to share in the development of a common ‘cultural heritage’ as EU defines it:

The Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common heritage to the fore’ (Article 167 of the Treaty on the functioning of the EU).

It is essential to promote cooperation and cultural exchanges in order to respect and promote the diversity of cultures and languages in Europe and improve knowledge among European citizens of European cultures other than their own, while at the same time heightening their awareness of the common European cultural heritage they share. Promoting cultural and linguistic cooperation and diversity thus helps to make European citizenship a tangible reality

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\(^6\) [www.historiasiglo20.org/europe/monnet.htm](http://www.historiasiglo20.org/europe/monnet.htm)

\(^7\) The Book of Revelations 12:V1

\(^8\) [www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/09_01_05_constitution.pdf](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/09_01_05_constitution.pdf)


One answer may be found under the heading of ‘Uniting Europe step by step’. In the introduction of Union’s founding principles states that:

...a Constitution for Europe is preceded by a Preamble which recalls, ...Europe’s cultural, religious and humanist inheritance, and invokes the desire of the peoples of Europe to transcend their ancient divisions in order to forge a common destiny, while remaining proud of their national identities and history.¹⁰

This ‘culture programme’ is aimed at encouraging border integration but without clearly defining where these borders are or whose borders they are. Europe/EU’s ‘common heritage’ is stated, but is not defined as it makes up their ‘founding principles of the Union’. What does the phrase ‘ancient divisions’ mean? Does it refer to the religious/race/cultural segregations that took place in Europe internally in response to their ‘us/other+ others’? How and who decides these ‘divisions’? How can Europe/EU ‘unify’ with its ‘diverse’ factors’ if their ‘common culture’ and ‘common heritage’ has not been clearly defined? Certainly, there are no definitions given in the Preamble of the Constitution. Instead, it assumes that we would imagine the whereabouts of Europe/EU’s borders. But these borders are vague and fluid as Europe/EU’s perception of them, as their perception of who their ‘us/other + other’s’ are vague and fluid. By comparison the Constitution of the Republic of Türkey’s preamble clearly states and defines what their ‘common heritage’ and ‘culture’ are in its Article III:

III. Integrity of the State, Official Language, Flag, National Anthem, and Capital.

Article 3. The Turkish state, with its territory and nation, is an indivisible entity. Its language is Turkish.

Its flag, the form of which is prescribed by the relevant law, is composed of a white crescent and star on a red background.

Its national anthem is the "Independence March”.

Its capital is Ankara.¹¹

4 Charlemagne - the Father of Europe

King Charles or as he came to be known as Charlemagne or Carolus Magnus in French or Carlus Magnus in Latin, or Karl der Grosse in German, or El Gran Carlemany in Andorream. Charles had been on his Frankish throne for 27 years when Pope Leo III was elected as the next Pope after Hadrian I in 795. There was an uneasy relationship between Charles and Pope Leo. The recently appointed Pope Leo’s ‘reign [started with] disturbances and disorders in Rome, always an unruly city, culminating in an attack on the person of the pope in 799 by a band of conspirators. They accused Leo of adultery and perjury and attempted to tear out his tongue and eyes’ (Easton and Wieruszowski 1961:41).

¹⁰ www.europa.eu/scadplus/constitution/objectives_en.htm
Pope Leo needed military protection and was willing to overlook his predecessor’s complaint letters to win King Charles’ support. Charles, in turn needed the support of a religious figure to fulfil the ‘...spiritual over-lordship of Christendom, as a useful assistant in temporal matters...’ (Easton and Wieruszowski 1961:40-41). Charles’ crowning by Pope Leo in 800 AD signified the shift in political and religious power away from the Eastern/Greek Orthodox church to Church in Rome. From here on, the city of Constantinople and the East Roman Empire shifted to become part of Charles'/Rome’s perceived ‘others’. Pope Leo refused to recognise Empress Irene’s reign as Empress of Constantinople, whose reign was a continuation of ‘...Roman Emperors who ruled both East and West’ (Easton and Wieruszowski 1961:43).

Pope Leo’s crowning act assured that he would have ‘...no other ruler in the West as his equal’ (Easton and Wieruszowski 1961:43). Charles’ own disapproval of ‘iconoclasm of the Byzantine emperors or of the excessive respect for icons favoured by the papacy and the Empress Irene of Constantinople’ is one of the first symbolic reinforcements of Europe’s ‘others’ (Easton and Wieruszowski 1961:34). Charles’ crowning is a combination of Musurillo’s four symbols: artificial, event, verbal, and gesture (Musurillo 1993:319):

- Event symbolism: Charles becoming Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire
- Gesture symbolism: Pope Leo III’s act of crowning Charles
- Event symbolism: St Peter’s Church in Rome ‘silently + visibly’ confirms
- Rome as the centre of Christianity
- Event/artificial symbolism: Charles’ Frankish Kingdom will be synonymous with Greco-Roman collective myths and symbols.
- Verbal symbolism: The cries of the ‘Roman people’ in the Church wishing “life and victory to Charles Augustus, crowned by God, great and pacific emperor of the Romans” (Einhard, Readings No 8 D to 8H, in Easton and Wieruszowski 1961:42)
- Artificial symbolism: Charles’ crowning superficially merges Christian ideology with politics, giving it military might.

5 ‘Open Borders’ and Europe/EU’s changing concept of its ‘others’

The definition of this ‘motto’ is fluid and changes, as Europe/EU’s perceptions of who their ‘us/other + others’ happen to be. Professor Rodriguez-Salgado argues this ever role changing of Europe/EU’s ‘other’ is necessary because each of these ‘others’ fulfils a different role:

Why is Europe so difficult to define? Why is European identity so elusive there is a talk of inventing one?’ He then proposes that it was around the eighteenth century that Europe came into being as a separate entity from ‘Christendom’ as a sobriquet for a geographic area. In other words the collective identity of Europe was based on religion – Christianity - and their ‘other’ was the Osman Empire as defined by its religion - Islam (Rodriguez-Salgado 12.5.2005)

The Osman Empire or ‘the Türk’ (Neumann 1999:39 ff) has always played the triple role of ‘us/other + other’ to the collective group identity of Europe. Francois I of France sought the assistance of Sultan Süleyman I in 1543 to defeat his enemy, Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor or Charles I of Spain. This ‘alliance between France and the Porte against the Habsburgs, which had always been vague on land, became a reality at sea’ and led to signing a treaty to attack Italian states (Neumann 1999:48; Goodwin, 1998:127; Torrenblanca 2005:3). Sultan Süleyman I ‘the Lawgiver’, had a reputation as a mighty warrior that ‘was so splendid and magnanimous, that twenty years
after his death the English begged his successors for ‘a fleet to help them tackle the Spanish Armada’ (Goodwin 1998: 82). In turn, the Osman Sultan dismissed his ‘European Christian contemporary rulers as ‘inferior’ to him (Neumann 1999: 48). All European positive perceptions disappeared when Sultan Mehmet II conquered Constantinople on May 29 1453. His conquest of the city was seen as a sub-human achievement, akin to him being a ‘beast’. Henceforth, the Türks were called ‘barbarian’ (Schwoebel 1967:4). The Battle of Leplanto became the clarion call of Europe’s ‘other’ as the Osmans became their “enemy within” (Risse 2003:4).

Rainer Hülse confirms that “othering” ‘and identity-construction go hand in hand’ (Hülse 1999:2). The concept of ‘others’ can also “…forge contacts and pragmatic cooperation’ usually in time of ‘need for association and safety’ (Rodriguez-Salgado 2005:5). Wintle argues that the concept of ‘others’ is necessary to confirm our own perception of ‘us’. He writes that identity construction is a political process. “We” utterances must be treated as partial statements of claims rather than as description of a reality. It is always necessary to ask who is promoting which particular collective identity and why, and who is resisting it’ and that ‘identities are constructed according to the social, cultural and geo-political environment, and are subject to change over time and from place to place. Identities are not self-evident, and not given, they are man-made and constructed (Wintle 2005:1).

Neumann continues on the same point by writing that

[the] basic problems in Europe’s present day relations with non-European states [is that the] European identity is tied to the existence of an ‘other’. This other will be constitutive of Europe, and so European representations of that other will necessarily be marked by that fact. [by]…exposing the existence of an ‘other’ may remove an unnecessary obstacle to [a] working relationship between European and non-European societies (Neumann 1999:41).

A possible solution to overcoming the existence of your ‘other’ is to adopt their internal collective myths and symbols as part of your own. Torrenblanca, writes that our ‘identities are acquired whereas values are chosen…the borders of Europe have been and are variable’ (Torrenblancaxxxiii). EU is presently experiencing difficulty to ‘define or specify the content of the concept of European identity….that such a definition is impossible’ (Strath 2000:405). The present borders of Europe and EU are ‘politically’ ‘imagined’ (Anderson 1991:6). Angela Merkel, in her speech to the Bundestag on 11 May 2006, argued that

An entity that does not have borders cannot act coherently and with adequate structures. We must be aware of this and must therefore set out these borders (in Torrenblanca 2006: 5).

Torrenblanca writes that Merkel must be ‘…mistaken, because it is perfectly possible (and desirable) for the EU not to define its borders nor to establish limits, leaving each generation to explore and manage those limits’ (Torrenblanca 67/2006:5). The European boundaries are perceived as ‘fuzzy’ resulting in ‘boundedness as a crucial ingredient for the “realness” of a community in people’s lives’ (Risse 2002: 19). In 1949 the boundaries of Europe were not an issue when the Council of Europe, as the ‘guardian of European values and principles, admitted Türkey as a full member in August 1949 only few months after the Treaty of London had been signed. The Council decided that Türkey was a ‘European country’ and that the Turkish constitution ‘contained the

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12 See also www.realinstitutoelcano.org/analisis/679/Torreblanca 679.pdf
necessary guarantees [...] to respect human rights, pluralistic democracy and the rule of law’ (Ahtisaari et al 2004).

A nation’s borders must be physically drawn and are not based on ethnic or ‘political vocation’ considerations (Torrenblanca 199/2004:2). If a nation continues to ‘imagine’ its borders, then it can also ‘imagine’ that they are under threat from the ‘membership of the small Balkan states as well as by a large State such as Turkey’ (Torrenblanca 67/2006:5). EU borders and its enlargement process are inextricably tied to its sense of external identity. Kurpas and Schonlau write that

[the] impact of [another] enlargement on EU institutions emphasises that in no event has there been an institutional collapse. The European Commission, in particular, has absorbed the increase in the number of its members to 25 relatively well, and the same can be said of the incorporation of new members in the European Parliament. The European Council has more grey areas, but there is a significant nuance: its legislative functioning has not been impeded by enlargement nor by the rules of the Nice treaty, although this does occur with its functioning as an executive or decision-making inter-governmental forum (Kurpas and Schonlau 7/2/2006).

As the EU’s external identity is yet to be decided on or ‘created’, its endeavours to ‘enlarge’, poses great challenges to its internal identity, irrespective of Turkey’s membership. Will the EU’s final identity be able to include the myths that have defined Turkey be readily accepted as part of EU’s internal identity? Turkey has maintained that it meets the criteria in the Treaty of European Union, in that its

values are common to the Member states in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.

Torrenblanca, notes that this is despite what is written in the ‘Article I-58’ that

the Union shall be open to all European states which respect the values referred to in Article I-2, and that are committed to promoting them together.

EU’s collective myths and symbols presently reflect their perceived ‘others’. It is possible that Turkey’s membership ‘may definitively divide Europe into two…’ but this is ‘an exception to the rule’ (Torrenblanca 2004). The same internal division may also affect Turkey by forcing them to overcome their ‘cultural cringe’ of wanting to become ‘western’ and ‘modern’ that only means, European. The third option is the unification of Europe/EU with its ‘east/Islamic’ part of its collective group identity.

Multiculture

A simple definition of multiculturalism is the inclusion of the ‘population variation and cultural variation’ and the practice of ‘assimilation and acculturation’. Uzo Igbozurike expands further that different plants can co-exist in one location. In a ‘multicultural’ society, there would be:

...a transformation of culture rather than a loss of one’s “own” culture, traditions, and identity or a strict adjustment to “other” cultural identities. The outcome is a decline of national cultures that were formerly considered relatively homogeneous (Dijkstra 2001:60).
In this ideal society that is ‘multicultural’ the culture of the ‘farmer’ as the dominant monoculture is included/blended into the multitudes of cultures below it. There is no dominant mono-culture in this mixture. Europe/EU can achieve multiculturalism by acknowledging their ‘us/other + other’s’ contribution to their identity which still remains ‘invisible + silent’.

‘Our’ EU Building

Placing a statute of Europe/EU’s diversity members’ hero/king/leader’s outside Charlemagne Building/EU Council of Minister’s Building would be ‘visible + not silent’ acknowledgement of Europe/EU’s ‘us/other + other’s’ collective group heroes. It would ‘unite’ two diverse Father Figures together as their children would be ‘united in their diversity’.

‘Our’ Postage Stamps and ‘our’ Euro

Europe/EU has not printed its own set of postage stamps to confirm their internal collective group identity. There are no sets of postage stamps that promote or celebrate their collective hero/leader/king’s life-time achievements. Bolivia has printed commemorative stamps to celebrate EU’s 50th anniversary. For Europe/EU’s multiculturalism to manifest as per its ‘united in diversity’ motto, it needs to have a visual element of its acceptance of its ‘others’. This acceptance may look like this on their postage stamp: an image of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk next to Charlemagne.
The same principles would apply to ‘Our’ Euro.

Branding national myths and symbols for: Europe/EU and Turkey for Peace

This section discusses how Europe/EU and Turkey can be branded to achieve a ‘unified in diversity’ peace together. Branding does not have to be for economic or political gain. It can also be used for social and cultural purposes for the greater inclusion/gain of many. The existing ‘branding’ matrices are about political and economic gain, using a nation’s social/cultural factors for attainment of ‘better-shelf life’ within international community. This paper suggests that Europe/EU and Turkey can brand their myths and symbols together to break down their mutual misunderstandings to achieve peace. Their branding exercise will be for the sole purpose of promoting their mutually shared identity heritage, as one another’s ‘us/other + other’. Into this blend will be added Europe/EU’s homogeneous culture created from their ‘Christianity + Greek + Roman unified with ‘Islam + internal others + external others’ myths and symbols.
How to brand Europe/EU with Türkiye

The crucial question is if Europe/EU and Türkiye are to be branded – should their branding be polycultural or multicultural? The second crux is if Europe/EU’s Greco-Roman internal identity be willing to blend into the multitudes of its other’s cultures? If so, this major shift would open the way for Europe/EU’s cultural identity to achieve three things: it would separate Europe from EU; it would enable EU to have its own internal identity separate from Mother Europa; it would return Greece’s own internal identity back to itself. Then have it blend into the multitudes of European cultures as an individual culture on its own. In sum, this action would force Europe/EU to move from being a polycultural to becoming a multicultural society. From here, Europe and EU would each have their own set of collective group myths and symbols that reflects their multicultural heritage that is ‘united’ in ‘diversity’.

How to get the ‘diversity’ of Europe/EU and Türkiye to ‘unite’ to achieve peace?

Building on their shared past Europe/EU’s and Türkiye’s relationship can be explained and be branded using the ‘Cyclical-word formula’ (Sitki 2009). Their common similarities mean that they need one another to exist. Their ‘triple role’ can be demonstrated as thus:

- east/east + west/east
- Europa (east) + Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (east)
- Europa (west) + Europa (eastern roots/collective identity from east)
- Europa/Europe/EU + Osman Empire/Türkey/Atatürk

From here, the blending of Europe/EU’s culture into the culture of its ‘us/others + others’ can be explained using these two images. Roland Barthes’ image of the (unnamed) ‘Negro’ (Figure 18) is ‘son of the French Empire’ even though he is ethnically (and possibly religion wise) different from the ethnic French. His image signifies that he ‘visibly + silently’ upholds the French Empire; his skin colour is accepted (Silent + visual). Negro’s presence is polycultural + not multicultural because visually, we know the French Empire (as the dominant monoculture) has been superimposed upon him – but not blended into his culture. He accepts this cultural superimposition ‘silently’.

Figure 18.  
Figure 19.
The footballer Mesut Özil’s (Figure 19) name is written with umlaut signifies that he is German’s + Osman/Türkish Empire’s son but he belongs to neither of these Empires. His inner identity is Islam. He displays this when he is allowed to, and openly recites the Koran while his fellow footballers sing the German Anthem before the beginning of matches. His recital shows that he belongs to the third group as he navigates between the identities of two Empires. His freedom (and choice) to recite the Koran is ‘polycultural + (nearly) multicultural’. It shows (nearly) the emergence of a third collective group identity that is the synthesis/blending of two cultures. Özil’s recitations blends top-down German dominant monoculture into one of the multitudes of cultures below it. His recent receipt of ‘Bambi Award’ for his efforts to ‘integrate into the German society’ supports his efforts to be his own identity while belonging to neither of the Empires.

Conclusion

In this paper Europe/EU’s collective myths and symbols were analysed and found to be polycultural rather than multicultural, and exclusive to its internal and external ‘us/others + others’ (Sitki:2009). An analysis of these myths and symbols has demonstrated that Europe/EU and Turkey face mutual misunderstandings that are reinforced by symbolic representations of identity. However, it is possible for Europe/EU and Turkey to build on their ‘triple role’ to enjoy multicultural peace and understanding between them. For Europe/EU to become an ‘open and diverse’ multicultural society, their internal identity myths and symbols would have to include their external myths and symbols. This internal absorption, then reflecting it externally, also applies to various international organisations which have Greco-Roman internal identities, such as the UN agencies discussed above. In their present state, these too remain polycultural and not multicultural. So to draw a conclusion and to tie both themes of this paper together, we may ask: if peace were to be branded, wouldn’t it have to be multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual, and multireligious?

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