

Chapter 9

Conflict Prevention, Dialogue and Resilience: Exploring Links and Synergies

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1. Introduction

Resilience as a concept has been applied and discussed across a variety of disciplines such as disaster management, environmental studies and psychology (see for instance eds Paton and Johnston 2018; Pelling, 2011; Bonnano and Diminich, 2013). Surprisingly, resilience in the context of peace and conflict studies, and more specifically in the field of conflict prevention, is rarely discussed, despite the fact that the two concepts share important characteristics, and that resilience-building is often an explicit or implicit objective of conflict prevention initiatives. Resilience, albeit defined in many ways, is concerned, much like conflict prevention, with identifying vulnerabilities at individual and systemic levels, in order to strengthen local and collective capacities in face of potential natural and/or man-made crises. Unpacking the connections between the two concepts helps to understand how they not only share characteristics, but are in fact co-constructed and can nourish each other in valuable ways. As we will show, dialogue is useful for activating these links, for instance by building the capacity of communities to interact, discover strengths and vulnerabilities, as well as foster mutual understanding.

Just like resilience-based policies do not aim at erasing the risks weighting on individuals or societies, but at enhancing their preparation and capacities to react, conflict prevention does not aim at suppressing conflict. Rather, and because conflict is seen as an unavoidable part of life, conflict prevention is concerned with the escalation of conflict into physical violence. The aim of conflict prevention is therefore to preempt violent conflict by transforming it in a peaceful way (Miall, 2007). In order to do so, one of the main tasks of conflict prevention is to identify

the various vulnerabilities and fault lines that cut across groups and that can expose them to higher risks of violence escalation. Building on this mapping exercise, conflict prevention activities aim at strengthening individual and collective capacities not only to resist violence and the destruction that it brings, but also to foster dialogue, solidarity, and more equal societies in order to prevent violence from escalating in the first place.

Although the conceptual nexus between conflict prevention and resilience has not yet been much explored, examples abound at the practical level, showing how resilience-building policies can eventually play the role of violence preventers, and how conflict prevention programs often aim at enhancing the resilience of individuals, groups, and societies. In this chapter, our aim is to illustrate this deep entanglement by building on examples from Sub-Saharan Africa, especially Tanzania and Burundi. These examples illustrate, in our view, the need to better integrate resilience-thinking into peace and conflict studies, but also to raise awareness on the potential of conflict prevention initiatives to build resilience well beyond the political and military realms. As we will see, thinking about resilience in conflict prevention schemes notably leads to paying attention to income inequalities, changes in livelihoods in the context of climate change, or to the multiple intersecting factors preventing individuals and/or groups to develop their capacities to adapt to and/or recover from incremental or sudden changes.

The chapter starts with a discussion on the links between the concepts of conflict prevention, vulnerability and resilience. We notably highlight how focusing on prevention can participate in addressing the critiques and shortcomings that are often attributed to the concept of resilience, which is often accused of pushing back responsibility towards the individuals, and of neglecting and silencing the structural constraints under which individuals operate. In the second section, we dive into the concrete relations between conflict prevention and resilience at the everyday level. We notably show how the practice of conflict prevention, and more specifically structural conflict prevention, helps to address the mundane sources of inequalities between individuals and groups. In the third section, we explore how dialogue, which is a particularly valued and versatile tool for conflict prevention, can help to build both individual and collective resilience capacities, notably by increasing information sharing about important issues, as well as about solutions and good practices.

2. Exploring the Links between Conflict Prevention, Vulnerabilities and Resilience

As one of the most popular concepts used in various fields of science during the past decades, the word resilience has been associated with different meanings, depending on whether it is applied to individuals, collectivities or systems (Magis, 2010; Nelson and Stathers, 2009). These definitions display obvious differences, for instance depending on whether they are applied to children or to ecological systems. This being said, they also do exhibit striking similarities. Notably, they all emphasize the notion of adaptation during or after a shock, traumatic event or rapid change. Similarly, they all entail the idea of a capacity to recover from or accommodate changes and disturbances. And finally, they all build on the idea that resilience can be improved by addressing potential individual or collective vulnerabilities, and by fostering corresponding adaptation capabilities.

In addition, the existing academic literature identifies multiple sources of vulnerabilities for individuals as well as for communities (see for instance Eakin and Luers, 2006; Tschakert and Tuana, 2013). Vulnerabilities often intersect and overlap, and individuals as well as groups that lack resilience are likely to be simultaneous victims of inequality, poverty, social isolation, lack of access to power, resources, decision-making structures, social networks, and information (see for instance Tacoli et al., 2014). In parallel, studies have identified various factors fostering resilience, such as adaptability, flexibility, community self-organization and development, as well as cultural and social factors, such as the role played by family and community structures (see for instance Berkes and Ross, 2013; Chaskin, 2008).

While conflict prevention studies and resilience research admittedly belong to largely separate fields of study which have rarely come in contact with one another, it is striking to see that they bear multiple connections and are actually deeply entangled at an empirical level. Indeed, one of the main aims of conflict prevention is to identify and address vulnerabilities that lead to a conflict or to a deterioration of the situation, be these vulnerabilities located at the individual, collective, and/or structural level (Leatherman et al., 1999). Like the concept of resilience, conflict prevention has been very popular over the past decades, and has given birth to multiple and diverse local, national, and international policies. In the existing literature, a distinction is usually made

between two conflict prevention approaches. On the one hand what is called “operational” or “light” conflict prevention, which pertains to preventive diplomacy and other diplomatic tools such as negotiation, mediation, dialogue, or good offices. And, on the other hand, “structural” or “deep” conflict prevention, which focuses on the root causes of conflicts and tries to address structural issues such as under-development, inequality, or poor governance. Operational conflict prevention tends to be practiced by political actors located at state and interstate levels (see for instance George, 1999), whereas structural conflict prevention can involve a great variety of actors, from grassroots organizations to international development agencies (Ackermann, 2003, pp. 341–342; see also Barnes, 2006). Another difference between the two approaches is that operational conflict prevention is said to be more short term and implemented in times of urgency, whereas structural conflict prevention is supposed to be more long term and affect societies for longer periods of time (Leatherman et al., 1999, p. 47; Wallensteen and Möller, 2004). It is, however, important to underscore that the distinction between these two types of conflict prevention is not always so clear-cut, and that many actors on the ground creatively mix the two approaches, as we will further explore in this chapter.

In many ways, both structural and operational conflict prevention, including dialogue, provide concrete avenues for the operationalizing of the resilience concept, in the sense that they can both contribute to address vulnerabilities and foster resilience at individual and group levels. They can also help ground resilience thinking, which is often abstract, into concrete matters, especially in a context where remote technologies are increasingly used by international agencies in order to map the resilience capacities of populations (Duffield, 2013). Remote technologies, such as artificial intelligence, big data, and satellite imagery are indeed frequently used in order to measure vulnerabilities and to assess the resilience capacities of individuals and groups living in disaster zones or in areas affected by climate change. As such, these techniques tend to render more abstract the problems faced by the affected populations, notably by maintaining a physical distance between them and the relevant decision makers (Roth and Luczak-Roesch, 2020). By contrast, assessing and building resilience capacities through conflict prevention and dialogue activities, especially at the local level, puts actors in contact with one another and embeds interventions in their everyday lives. In this way, and as we will further explain below, conflict prevention and dialogue

help to give back some agency to local actors, which constitutes one of the prerequisites of resilience.

More specifically, structural conflict prevention is concerned with creating contexts, structures and relations that make violence less likely (Ramsbotham, 2011, p. 126). In order to do so, it targets particularly vulnerable communities and fosters their resilience by building their agency and capacity to respond to crises, for instance by promoting more equal societies at the economic and political levels; it thus leads to questioning and challenging existing practices and possibly also existing relations of power that lie at the roots of social, economic, and cultural inequalities. At the core of structural conflict prevention therefore lies the objective of strengthening the resilience of local communities as well as of individuals, so that they are better prepared for potential difficulties lying ahead. In Burundi, for instance, civil society organizations have built upon the knowledge gained during the multiple episodes of violent conflict that the country has experienced since its independence in order to design programs for fighting poverty and for increasing the economic resilience of the poorest households. Structural conflict prevention initiatives led by Burundian women's civil society groups include for instance microcredit projects and capacity-building programs designed to support particularly vulnerable individuals, for instance displaced families and/or former combatants. Interestingly, most of these women's groups promote a multilevel approach – from the *colline* to the transnational level – which increases not only their own capacity to weather political pressure and change, but also the resilience of the individuals and of the communities they are trying to help (Féron, 2020).

Operational conflict prevention offers a complementary approach to structural conflict prevention by addressing the most immediate causes for divisions and conflict, for instance by promoting dialogue and exchange between societal, economic or cultural actors with divergent interests. One of its main aims is to improve access to information for all concerned individuals or groups. It can also provide decision-makers with crucial data on the situation faced by local groups, on their vulnerabilities as well as on their adaptation capacities. In that sense, operational conflict prevention targets one of the main obstacles to individual and group resilience, that is vulnerabilities deriving from a differentiated access to core information and to power structures. As we will further explore in the last section of this chapter, dialogue as a specific tool of operational conflict prevention is particularly efficient for opening spaces

through which resilience strategies can be elaborated and implemented. Through the exchange of information that dialogue allows, vulnerabilities and capacities for resilience can be identified, and options for building trust between various groups and/or individuals can be explored. For instance, in the previously mentioned Burundian example, civil society organizations and in particular women's groups have been supporting dialogue between the various conflict actors at all societal levels. In particular, they have organized local dialogue platforms complementing official dialogue processes at the national level, thus ensuring a sustained and multileveled exchange of information between all concerned groups, and a better identification of strategies for building resilience at the local and national levels (Féron, 2017).

More generally, because it is concerned with the broader structures that can inhibit adaptation, as well as with what strengthen individuals and/or communities, conflict prevention also helps to promote a more encompassing approach to resilience. In other words, conflict prevention puts the focus on the conditions that render groups and societies vulnerable, instead of drawing attention to the individuals' responsibility for ensuring their own security – an aspect of resilience thinking that has attracted a lot of criticism over the past decade (see for instance Joseph, 2013). By shedding light on the collective dimension of both vulnerabilities and adaptation capacities, conflict prevention thus counters resilience approaches that neglect the multiple constraints under which individuals operate. In that sense, conflict prevention promotes an understanding of vulnerabilities and of resilience that is tightly related to intersectional thinking (see also Féron, this volume). Since conflicts are always understood to be multicausal and multifaceted, the focus is never only put on a single vulnerability factor, but rather on the multiplicity of causes that can explain the eruption of violence. Conflict prevention approaches, through tools such as early warning systems, also pay attention to complex causality, to the co-construction of conflict causes, and to how various conflict dimensions interact with one another (Halkia et al., 2020). At the empirical level, this inclusive and intersectional approach to conflict prevention is defended by many local actors, for instance by the previously mentioned Burundian civil society organizations, and especially by Burundian women's groups, which tend to involve all individuals, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, culture, region of origin, age or gender, and of their war experience – thus including former combatants as well as repatriated individuals, widows, single mothers, IDPs, and so on (Féron, 2020).

While we have so far emphasized how a conflict prevention approach can help to develop the resilience of both individuals and communities, it is worth underscoring the fact that, conversely, the concept of resilience can assist in designing more targeted conflict prevention policies. As previously mentioned, since the end of the Cold War conflict prevention has been a victim of its own popularity, which has led to a dilution of its meaning as well as of its policy value (Ackermann, 2003). Conflict prevention has become an umbrella term that includes not only genuine preventive actions undertaken before the eruption of massive forms of violence, but also policies implemented later during the conflict cycle, relating for instance to conflict containment or even to violence management. In that sense, a conflict prevention approach relying closely on the concept of resilience can be of great use to policy makers, as it helps to shift the focus back to the core objective of conflict prevention, that is to identify individual and collective vulnerabilities, but also strengths and adaptation capacities, in order to foster resistance to conflict and violence (see START Network, 2018).

In the next two sections we will explore in more details the practical relations between conflict prevention and resilience, notably by highlighting how the practice of conflict prevention, and more specifically structural conflict prevention, is particularly efficient in tackling sources of inequalities between individuals and groups. In the last section, we will analyse how dialogue as a specific tool for operational conflict prevention helps to build resilience capacities at the interpersonal and collective levels.

3. Addressing Inequalities, and Developing Everyday Agency and Resilience

One of the main characteristics of structural conflict prevention is that it tries to address individual and collective sources of vulnerability such as inequalities, poverty, and social isolation, as well as a lack of access to power, resources or decision-making structures. Many structural conflict prevention initiatives implement these objectives through large-scale development programs, often funded by international actors such as the United Nations development agencies, or by the European Union. But although the broad scale of these programs cannot be denied, it is important to recognize that in practice they are implemented by an extremely diverse range of actors (see for instance Gore, 2013; Richey

and Ponte, 2014), and that a large number of these choose to focus on the micro and local level, especially when their explicit objective is the prevention of conflict re-emergence (see for instance Fearon, Humphreys and Weinstein, 2009). Such a focus on specific contexts is all the more important that literature has now well established that the nature of vulnerabilities, as well as the capacities for resilience, are always context-dependent (see for instance Cohen et al., 2016). In that sense, one of the prerequisites for ensuring the effectiveness of conflict prevention measures is that they have to be specifically tailored to the characteristics of the situation at hand. Among the tools that have been recently designed in order to ensure context-specificity, the Interpeace Framework for Assessing Resilience (FAR) developed in Liberia is worth mentioning, as one of its main objectives is to find conflict prevention and resilience strategies that are endogenous to the country (Platform for Dialogue and Peace (PDP), 2015).

But beyond the national level, implementing conflict prevention initiatives at the local and micro level is particularly interesting from a resilience perspective, because it enables a focus on local ownership and agency. In particular, conflict prevention can be instrumental in building the resilience of local communities by designing locally adapted interventions: in Burundi for instance, organizations like Dushirehamwe (*Let's reconcile* in Kirundi) have developed a large array of local programs in order to prevent local conflicts and build capacities for conflict prevention and dialogue at the local level¹. Many civil society organizations involved in conflict prevention activities in the Great Lakes region of Africa have similarly designed micro and community-level approaches. This allows them to implement targeted programs and create local spaces where small groups of people can articulate and convey their grievances, support one another, and hopefully find solutions together to the problems they face. Such strategies constitute an asset not only for fighting vulnerabilities and enhancing the resilience of local communities, but also for the civil society organizations themselves, as it allows them to operate away from the constraints and pressure of national politics (Féron, 2020). In that sense local approaches to conflict prevention can foster and strengthen the resilience of targeted individuals and groups, but also of the involved civil society organizations, and therefore of the public sphere.

¹ For an overview of Dushirehamwe's work, see: <https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/organisations/dushirehamwe/?location=burundi&theme>

Structural conflict prevention also tends to focus on the development of everyday and mundane practices and skills, thereby participating in ensuring resilience at the very practical level. Here again, the development of skills and techniques, which themselves help to build agency and foster resilience, has to be adapted to the local context and needs. In other words, conflict prevention strategies need to be tailor-made and flexible, depending not only on the specific threats faced by each local community, but also on their usual livelihoods and mundane practices, and on available resources. In Tanzania, for instance, the Pastoral Women's Council, a Tanzanian organization working to empower Maasai women and girls, has developed tailored approaches fostering the resilience of local communities, depending on their livelihoods². In areas where communities depend on cattle breeding, they have supported the crossbreeding of cattle in order to improve the health of cows. They also address gender inequality through economic empowerment, for instance through 'revolving livestock exchange'³, a scheme for exchanging livestock between members of the Women's Solidarity group Bomas. The Pastoral Women's Council also participates in a sustainable mining initiative spearheaded by the IIED (the International Institute for Environment and Development), also taking into account the broader frame of Sustainable Development Goals⁴.

In this perspective, conflict prevention is most efficient when it focuses on those specific fields of activity where resilience is needed. This is particularly the case in development programs enhancing local practices such as cattle herding, crop-resilience, and other mundane practices helping local populations to adapt to climate change. But it is also true of key economic sectors that employ a large number of people. In Tanzania for instance, artisanal as well as large-scale mining employs millions in the country (Mutagwaba et al., 2018). Large-scale and in particular artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) are drivers of conflict and tensions, in terms of gender-based and inter-communal violence, inequality, climate change adaptation and health issues. Structural constraints and a lack of equal access to resources specifically

² See their website: <http://www.pastoralwomenscouncil.org>

³ See <http://www.pastoralwomenscouncil.org/economic.html>

⁴ See for instance: <https://www.iied.org/using-dialogue-extract-sustainable-solutions-for-artisanal-small-scale-mining>

feed these dynamics. In collaboration with local partners, the IIED has implemented multi-stakeholder conflict prevention programs since 2014, in an attempt to address these issues (Weldegiorgis and Buxton, 2017). These conflict prevention programs have been designed to bring together relevant stakeholders in the mining sector as well as government representatives, in order to identify challenges and solutions for improving mining practices in ASM.

More generally, structural conflict prevention matters for everyday resilience because it aims to address the underlying structures and inequalities of power that increase the vulnerability of specific individuals and/or groups, and that may be invisible from an external or international perspective. In particular, conflict prevention can help to challenge existing structures of power, by pushing for changes in institutions allocating resources, in the governmental as well as in the corporate and private sectors. Going back to the previously mentioned example of artisanal mining in Tanzania, several initiatives have been taken in order to fight against gender inequality in the industry, and to improve the resilience of women working in this sector, by local organizations such as the above mentioned Pastoral Women's Council. African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC) estimates that women constitute about 30 % of people working in artisanal mining in Tanzania (AMDC, 2017), but this does not mean that their voices and specific vulnerabilities are taken into account. Gender inequalities are fueled both by women's lack of access to resources, as well as by the specific roles that women tend to occupy in artisanal mining, making them 'invisible' in mining processes (IGF, 2018, p. 1). By shedding light on women's predicament, these local and international initiatives contribute not only to inscribe this issue on the national policy agenda, but also to develop the agency of the concerned groups. At a more general level, structural conflict prevention initiatives can be particularly well-suited for addressing invisible but influential structures of power that impede individual and collective resilience. In particular, women's vulnerabilities in specific economic fields are often related to broader patterns of gender discrimination and to patriarchal structures and traditions. In Burundi for instance, one of the main objectives of Burundian women's groups is to transform patriarchal structures by building women's capacities, by fighting for gender quotas, by trying to promote alternative gender roles and models, and so on. This kind of work can be implemented both at the local level, but also at the level of national political institutions, where organizations

like the Forum National des Femmes (*Women's National Forum*)⁵ or the CAFOB (in French: Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines du Burundi, *Collective of Women's Associations and NGOs of Burundi*)⁶ promote changes through actively lobbying politicians and decision-makers.

Structural conflict prevention can also be particularly effective for taking into account the intersectional dimension of individual and collective vulnerabilities, and therefore resilience. In the previously mentioned example of womens' groups in Burundi for instance, many organizations use a combination of objectives in order to reach their goals, like combining efforts for resolving conflicts with initiatives in order to improve the individuals' financial autonomy, or with campaigns in order to fight against gender-based violence. Following the Burundian proverb, "A hungry stomach has no ears", these organizations build their interventions on a multifactorial and intersectional strategy, trying to address vulnerabilities and foster resilience in several areas at the same time (International Alert, 2006, p. 270). Such intersectional approaches are particularly effective for targeting disaffected and/or unemployed youth, namely through micro projects whose aim is to create solidarity across ethnic, gender, regional or generational differences (APFB, 2018). Just like conflict is always multifaceted and multidimensional, resilience has to be built across a combination of factors, like support for entrepreneurship combined with confidence building across estranged ethnic groups (AFRABU, 2019).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that structural conflict prevention also ensures conflict and disaster 'preparedness' and resilience – in relation to natural disasters, but also to man-made crises. In particular, one of the main aims of international organizations over the past two decades has been to reinforce societal and individual capacities to face the impact of climate change, and to mitigate the conflicts that arise as a consequence. In the Lake Chad region for instance, recent research has shown that although the lake is not shrinking, contrary to popular belief, local populations have been deeply affected by changes in weather patterns, leading to years of human rights violations, multiple conflicts and deep poverty. In order to support more resilient livelihoods, and to break the cycle

⁵ See <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/es/countries/africa/burundi/2013/le-forum-national-des-femmes>

⁶ See their website: <http://www.cafobburundi.org>

of violence, alternative climate-smart agricultural approaches are being gradually developed (Vivekananda et al., 2019, p. 75). In another Sub-Saharan African region, the Horn of Africa, organizations such as the International Federation of the Red Cross have been trying to build the resilience of people living in arid areas by empowering them to irrigate, and by training them in modern farming techniques, in vital non-rainfed practices, as well as in disaster risk reduction (IFRC, 2011, p. 7). All of these initiatives illustrate the deep synergy existing between structural prevention approaches and policy interventions designed to improve individual and collective resilience. In the next section, we will further investigate how dialogue, as a tool for conflict prevention, can play a significant and complementary role in enhancing capacities that are vital for ensuring resilience.

4. Dialogue and Resilience

As an important component of conflict prevention, dialogue facilitates the assessment and development of resilience in multiple ways. Dialogic approaches operate at different levels from grassroots and mid-level to high-level dialogue. A multitude of tools are available for facilitating and promoting dialogue, which at the high-level includes top-down official diplomacy, national consultations, or conferences. Dialogue can also be conducted through more unofficial channels more commonly used in mid-level and grassroots levels of dialogue. This includes problem-solving workshops, cross-sectional dialogues, community organized dialogues or inter-religious mediation (see Rieker and Thune, 2017, p. 4). Although these tools are vital parts of operational conflict prevention, it's important to underscore that they contribute to structural conflict prevention too. For instance, where official diplomacy generally tackles more immediate issues of conflict rather than addressing root causes, cross-sectional and community-led dialogues can contribute to structural conflict prevention through addressing divisions in society and discover structural vulnerabilities with the potential for future conflict. Interestingly, these various types of official and non-official dialogue are complementary to one another, and help to build resilience from a variety of perspectives, as we have previously illustrated with the example of the Burundian women's groups supporting dialogue between various conflict actors at all societal levels (Féron, 2017).

As we have seen, dialogue is one of the main tools of operational conflict prevention, which deals with the immediate prospects for violence. The idea behind promoting dialogue is to forestall a degradation of the situation by repairing or building relations between different social groups or institutional, political, or cultural actors. Dialogic approaches vary, depending among other things on whether the process of dialogue is in itself an end, or whether the outcomes or solutions produced through dialogue are more important. In general, official diplomacy works to solve specific issues and therefore focus on the latter, while unofficial channels tend to focus on the process itself, in order to build and improve relationships. Regarding unofficial dialogue, Saunders (2003, p. 87) notes that “always the moderators and participants are searching for the dynamics of the relationship that cause the problems and must be changed before the problems can be resolved”. Similarly, Bohm (2004, p. 32) argues that dialogue provides a space for “opening up judgements and assumptions” and developing “shared meanings”. In this sense, the practice of dialogue itself is the primary goal, through its ability to create mutual understandings between parties.

Where dialogue in operational conflict prevention deals with immediate prospects for violence, dialogue as a tool for structural conflict prevention works to address the root causes of conflict and the structural vulnerabilities that can fuel conflict and impede resilience. As a tool for the transformation of relationships, a ‘learning, not talking’ mode of interaction (Ramsbotham, 2011, p. 374ff), dialogue can help to address and discover vulnerabilities at the societal level. Apart from addressing vulnerabilities, dialogue is also concerned with finding strengths within societies. In Liberia, the Interpeace Framework for Assessing Resilience (FAR) used community-based dialogue to find local societal strengths, and to determine endogenous factors for resilience (PDP, 2015). FAR has been seeking to identify ‘assets, resources and capacities’ that are embedded within society through an inclusive consultation process with local communities (PDP, 2015, p. 5). In this context, dialogue can contribute to identifying resilience strategies and assessing the existing capacity for resilience in societies. This adds to conflict prevention at an operational level, for instance by putting the stress on the existing strategies used by local and regional actors to manage conflict. FAR has further contributed to structural conflict prevention by highlighting existing structures and institutions that can promote social cohesion and enhance peace (PDP,

2015, p. 13). The stress put on existing capacities can shift the focus from vulnerability to a more empowering process that facilitates the ownership by local communities. At the same time, it can be argued that focusing on finding societal strengths pushes the responsibility of resilience back onto the individual, and that such an approach therefore should not stand alone. While efforts to determine capacity for resilience at the local level are valuable, they run the risk of glossing over and/or ignoring the structural constraints that inhibit these capacities.

While the concepts of operational and structural conflict prevention are theoretically separated, they are in reality often deeply intertwined. This is particularly clear when looking at dialogue processes and their contributions to conflict prevention and resilience building. Often, processes aimed at preventing an escalation of a conflicting situation, for instance through community-based dialogue, can end up contributing to structural conflict prevention through its capacity building properties. Dialogue is efficient in that it constitutes a seemingly harmless and unobtrusive approach, but holds the capacity to deeply transform relationships, find common ground or develop solutions to conflicting issues. Saunders (2009, p. 377) argues that sustained dialogue over time ‘offers a deepening spiral of opportunities to probe, analyze and even transform relationships in fundamental ways’. As such, dialogue can facilitate deep changes in society as well, and increase the resilience of both individuals and groups. However,, it’s also important to remember that dialogue processes can be challenging, especially in environments where deep societal divisions or escalating violence make it hard to get parties to interact with each other (Rieker and Thune, 2017, p. 2). Especially in situations of direct violence, facilitating dialogue can be extremely difficult (Haider and Rohwerder, 2014, p. 53). This only highlights the importance of dialogue as a conflict prevention and resilience building measure, where abilities to transform relationships can be developed prior to the eruption of violence.

As a sort of spillover effect of operational conflict prevention, dialogue builds capacity to enhance relationships in general and can help with the diagnosis of structural causes of conflict as well. First, dialogue processes can make local contexts and relations more resilient, through enhancing the capacity of communities to interact and develop trust and mutual understanding. Dialogue is indeed a tool which, when properly used, can help bridging and discovering new ideas. Saunders (2009, p. 378), writes that ‘dialogue is a probing, absorbing and engaging mode

of interaction'. It is not necessarily because it strives to tackle specific issues or propose solutions, but through its capacity building properties that dialogue facilitates resilience, in particular for vulnerable groups. In Tanzania for instance, youth radicalisation is a growing concern that has been attributed to high youth unemployment rates and socio-economic inequalities (United Nations Development Programme, 2017, p. 1; Search for Common Ground (SFCG), 2018, p. 2). In an attempt to prevent violence in the 2020 General Elections in Tanzania, the youth organization Voyohede conducted 'Youth Peace Making Dialogue' sessions, educating youths on how to maintain peace both before, during, and after the elections (Nachambu, 2020). Attempts to counter youth radicalisation at the local level have also been undertaken by The Global Peace Foundation (GPF) Tanzania, through their *Vijana na Amani* (Youth and Peace) campaign. GPF conducts youth empowerment workshops on the prevention of extremism, as well as education on moral leadership and entrepreneurship with the goal of 'raising peace ambassadors' (Yakawich, 2017). Similarly, the Pamoja Youth Initiative in Zanzibar developed the 'Daraja Forum' to connect young people and train them in using dialogue to advocate for a youth agenda⁷. Efforts to counter youth radicalisation have also included the development of so-called 'Peace Clubs' across the country, bringing together children and youth from different backgrounds for joint activities, ethics education programs, and workshops (Ethics Education for Children, 2016). Countering extremism and radicalisation contributes to conflict prevention at the local level, but it simultaneously fosters resilience through addressing (and transforming) the specific vulnerabilities of youth in Tanzania. While the above mentioned youth-to-youth dialogue processes work at a local, interpersonal, and intercommunal level, efforts to address the structural constraints affecting youth vulnerability in Tanzania have been undertaken as well, for instance through Centre for Youth Dialogue (CYD) in Zanzibar. In 2017–2018 CYD facilitated dialogue between governmental institutions and youth communities, in order to draw attention to the specific challenges faced by youth as well as enhancing collaboration and good relationships (CYD, n.d.), thereby addressing issues for structural conflict prevention as well.

⁷ See their website: <http://www.pamoja.or.tz/whatWeDo.html>

In addition, dialogue can be used as a tool for incorporating intersectionality into resilience as well. If intersectionality is a way to ‘unpack’ resilience, or to nuance analyses of adaptability and resilience in communities, dialogue is a useful means to that end. Dialogue can indeed empower and create ownership for all sections of society. In Burundi for instance, organizations like Femmes de Foi⁸ (*Women of Faith*, a women’s group including Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim participants) foster inclusivity and resilience through intersectional dialogue between various societal and religious groups. A focus on intersectionality can also facilitate finding common ground through dialogue, by drawing attention to aspects that participants have in common (such as gender, education/profession, generation, or societal position).

Creating spaces for divided communities to address challenges is an important component of dialogue, and one that can contribute to developing their collective capacity for resilience. For instance, in efforts to foster community dialogue in South Kordofan (Sudan) in 2010, the United Nations Development Programme and the Joint Programme for Conflict Prevention and Peace Building invited leaders of conflicting communities to jointly identify divisive issues and prioritize the necessary interventions (Buescher, 2013, p. 14). In this case, dialogue was used to address and determine vulnerabilities, which is one of the first steps in a resilience methodology. Additionally, resilience is highly dependent on context, and often entails different things for different local communities (see Féron, this volume). Through the joint dialogue organized in South Kordofan, vulnerabilities as well as interventions were agreed upon by members of the conflicting communities themselves, thereby facilitating contextuality through dialogue. In addition, the concerned local groups gained ownership in the process of ‘analyzing’ conflict issues, as well as capacity to map out conflict issues in the future (Agency for Peacebuilding (AfP), 2019, p. 19).

In a long term perspective, dialogue also paves the way for building resilient relationships that last beyond the solution or transformation of immediate issues. For instance, since 2011, Search for Common Ground has been heading a series of projects in Tanzania in collaboration with the Acacia mining company focusing on improving relations between the

⁸ See for instance <http://www.peaceau.org/fr/article/le-bureau-de-liaison-de-l-union-africaine-pour-le-burundi-et-la-region-des-grands-lacs-appuie-le-reseau-des-femmes-de-foi-du-burundi-pour-le-dialogue-la-paix-et-la-reconciliation>

company and the local community through the creation of dialogue platforms (Milnes, 2019, p. 14). The project discovered that the community dialogue and collaboration platforms focused around mining issues and shared interests increased each community's capacity for peaceful conflict resolution, thereby contributing to resilience through an enhanced capacity to manage conflict (Milnes, 2019, p. 40). Apart from highlighting the usefulness of dialogue as a tool for building resilience, the project outcomes additionally serve as a useful example of the capacity of dialogue to contribute to both structural and operational conflict prevention.

Finally, creative approaches to dialogue processes are important for the development of resilience as well, as they can facilitate the management of challenging issues in societies. In Tanzania, Search for Common Ground has also created inclusive dialogue platforms to involve young people for instance through the development of participatory media campaigns (Afp, 2019, p. 25). The organization has also addressed mining issues by using participatory theatre to discuss challenges and build community-level dialogue. As a tool for preventing future violence in post-conflict contexts, the use of participatory theatre has proven successful as well, for instance in Kenya where it provided a space for members of violence-affected communities to address the roots of conflict and imagine alternative solutions to violence (Baú, 2018). It is a process of acting out alternative realities, while at the same time making participants active stakeholders in this reimagination (SFCCG, n.d., pp. 4–5). In that sense, the use of creative and unconventional spaces for dialogue can have a positive effect on the process of developing mutual understanding or discussing difficult issues, which are important factors for promoting resilience.

5. Conclusions

Through this contribution, we have tried to show, on the basis of empirical examples, how resilience and conflict prevention are largely co-constructed, and how conflict prevention and dialogue ensure a focus on the local and mundane aspects of individual and collective resilience. In that sense, thinking about resilience within a conflict prevention frame helps grounding and embedding interventions into the everyday lives of concerned individuals and groups. The benefits of jointly conceptualizing conflict prevention and resilience are countless, and can give rise to initiatives, for instance dialogue forums, which return agency to local

actors. In addition, understanding resilience within the frame of conflict prevention, and especially structural conflict prevention, highlights the multiple and intersecting structural constraints that inhibit capacities for resilience.

What this overview has also underscored, is that thinking jointly about conflict prevention and resilience produces unintended mutual benefits: conflict prevention indeed helps to operationalise the concept of resilience by countering the tendency to measure it through a set of quantitative indicators that entail an epistemological distance vis-à-vis the concerned populations. On the other hand, resilience can be seen as a way to further conceptualize and strengthen the conflict prevention field. Conflict prevention's results are indeed notoriously difficult to 'measure': as scholars of conflict prevention sometimes remark, when conflict prevention is successful, 'nothing happens' – or rather, 'nothing' seems to happen. Resilience-thinking helps to unpack this 'nothing' and highlight the small changes, for instance in terms of capacity-building, that lie behind the capacity of individuals and of societies to avoid falling into the violence trap. In that sense, thinking jointly about conflict prevention, dialogue and resilience can provide a way forward for the field of conflict prevention, which, as we have seen, has sometimes been victim of its own popularity.

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