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INTRODUCTION



Introduction: alliance beyond aid

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Development aid has long been criticized. The slogan *Trade not Aid* of the 1950s was followed by critical analyses of aid mechanisms, forms of paternalism, and a lack of involvement of local populations (see Crocker 1991; Gasper 1999). Since Goulet (2006), development ethics has contributed to the analyses of relationships between the north and the global south. In line with this current of thought, in June 2018 The GREThA, a research laboratory in economics at the University of Bordeaux, and the International Development Ethics Association (IDEA) organized a joint Conference on *A World United: Alliance and Collective Action for an Ethical Development*. The main topic of *Alliance* opens new avenues for development ethics and, in particular, for development aid.

As Drydyk (2014) underlines, global ethics concerns the connections we should have to solve global issues. Global ethics should be inclusive of all voices. It does not mean, however, that all voices are equivalent. Asymmetrical power between people according to their social position, their native country, their level of education, their level of wealth, etc., is obvious. One of the great merits of the alliance concept is that it recognizes asymmetries. Starting from these, it questions the possibility of creating convergences for the benefit of the most deprived in the relationship. The alliance does not presuppose balance within the relationship. It nevertheless implies reciprocity in order to build, with time, a balanced reciprocity. A balanced reciprocity is never an equilibrium at a moment of time, nor is it the idea of an equivalent contribution, but rather it is the participation of all stakeholders in the alliance according to what all stakeholders consider appropriate. These considerations are paramount when it comes to dealing with development aid, trade agreements, or the responsibility of multinational firms.

The concept of alliance, like all concepts, is multivalent. Just think of alliances in the context of armed conflict. In order to contribute to global ethics, the concept of alliance must then take an inclusive meaning while recognizing asymmetries. The aim of the conference was to encourage thoughtful conversations about the relationships that both frustrate and facilitate development. Hence, an opportunity to consider a series of different types of alliances, occurring at all levels of development: from the individual and groups of people who ally themselves with one another to alliances between and across nation states, corporations, multinational groups, NGOs, etc. The papers selected in this issue open up some avenues for exploring central issues in development ethics and global ethics.

Nigel Dower opens this special issue by questioning the levels of alliances. At the global level an alliance means that stakeholders share a set of values in order to pursue the same

goal. Alliances of commitment to common values and principles which produce The Earth Charter and other global statements work towards a global ethic. And Dower makes a distinction between the scope of a global ethic: one which is global in context, and one which is global in its acceptance. For Dower, global ethics provides a source for ethically motivated alliances.

Starting from an ancient understanding of hospitality and guest friendship, Jonas Holst offers a philosophical interpretation of the ethical dimension of good alliances. He underlines that entering into an alliance presupposes certain ethical dispositions, among them hospitality. Hospitality is a way to welcome each component of a relationship. Beyond the first step of hospitality, the alliance must be built on trust. Trust provides a solid base upon which stakeholders need to foster an alliance. Keeping a promise is certainly a paramount criterion of trustworthiness. Consider Kant's discussion about a promise. An alliance is not a static agreement, it is a process during which allies will have to adjust to changes, prevent conflict, and solve problems. For this reason, Jonas Holst considers that friendship is the feature of a good alliance. Within an alliance, stakeholders should not pursue only their own projects, they should take into account the consequences of their projects on others, including others outside the alliance.

Laurent Parrot and Lori Keleher introduce *the Alliance Approach* as a participatory approach. They refer to psychology, cognitive, and behavioral sciences to make use of the classical therapist and patient relationship. Their approach suggests that stakeholders willing to step into an alliance should put aside the potential asymmetrical situations of power and adopt symmetric situations of power. The main aim of their paper is to highlight how an alliance approach can enhance people's agency. Even in a context of asymmetries, in particular asymmetrical power and knowledge, people benefiting from the alliance are not passive recipients of aid; they are protagonists of their own life and choices. And this may be the main difference between the alliance approach and a classical aid approach.

If the previous papers question what an alliance is or should be, the papers that follow get to the heart of the matter by raising the issues of concrete alliance building. Des Gasper analyses the process through which the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emerge. He shows firstly that the alliance around the SDGs needs an agreement to share the same goal. A point Dower's paper clearly underlined. He shows secondly that, whereas alliance is generally conceived throughout direct and personal links, this kind of alliance is built upon indirect and impersonal institutionalized relationships. Aspirational goals within a system of institutionalized relationships are the foundations of a global alliance.

Following the discussion on SDGs, Jay Drydyk brings our attention to the progressive transformations concerning accountability within the process of achieving these SDGs. Whereas the initial step of the process points out the accountability of donor states, it was frankly modified towards developing-country accountability in implementing strategies and programs. Another bifurcation was taken when civil society organizations were included in the discussions. The accountability of civil society organizations was pinpointed at the level of project-affected persons and communities. Drydyk characterizes this shift as accountability to the subjects of development. The analysis by Drydyk echoes Parrot and Keleher's paper on the need to achieve greater agency through an alliance approach.

Isaac Minde and Jamie Monson relate another case of alliance. In May 2016, Michigan State University invited 14 leaders from African research institutions to create a new partnership. The primary focus of the process was to identify best practices for partnership in the African context, including equity, transparency, mutual respect, and sustainability. The model that emerges from this initiative emphasizes principles of equity and co-creation among members. One main goal was to modify the concept of return on investment, a prominent indicator in the evaluation of research. The initiative is then a means to demonstrate that researchers can also do business differently. One crucial feature of the process is the accountability of each member of a community of allied institutions. This case of alliance, highlights, corroborating Drydyk's analysis, that accountability of stakeholders is a paramount feature of any alliance.

In their paper, Alejandra Boni, Aurora López-Fogués, Álvaro Fernández-Baldor, Gynna Millan and Sergio Belda-Miquel explore the role of Digital Grassroots Innovations within participatory smart city processes in Spain. Digital innovation relates to open hardware, open knowledge, open data, and open networks. Digital Grassroots innovations do not only solve problems that affect citizens, they also create spaces where citizens are empowered and can develop a critical and vigilant look on the actions of public and private actors. This case study illustrates perfectly the role of alliance in agency, as Parrot and Keleher have underlined. Digital grassroots innovations do not refer to the design and implementation of new processes only, they also contribute to forge citizenship and to reinforce democracy.

The final paper in this issue is the student paper awarded the Denis Goulet Memorial Prize. Matthias Kramm's 'Capability and Habit' brings Dewey's notion of habit and character into Sen's capability approach highlighting the importance of character development and sensitivity to one's environment as important additions to capability theory. It seems that good character development and sensitivity are crucial components of a 'good' or effective alliance, something that resonates with the concept of agency advocated in both papers by Parrot and Keleher and Drydyk.

We believe that the papers in this issue provide us with some rich and serious considerations about the concept of alliance, but also what it means in practice for international development. We hope that they also inspire others to continue thinking about the importance of allies and alliances for a united world.

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