Shifting Paradigms – Exploring the Reasons for Staff Care and 'The Duty of Care' in International Peace and Conflict Work

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Peace and conflict workers, peace educators and other humanitarian, aid and social workers are engaged in responsible and challenging contexts.[1] There are a lot of reasons, why they should be accompanied, supported and counseled during their work - regardless of whether they are local or international staff, working in peace education, in the field of social justice, human rights or peacebuilding. The work of conflict workers and peace educators consists in fostering a culture of peace, which is closely connected to a culture of care.

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[1] In this article, peace and conflict work is used as an umbrella term for peacebuilding, conflict transformation, peace education and other areas related to the concepts of peace and conflict. The people working in this field are referred to as peace and conflict workers or staff, not experts, mediators or else, because it shall describe a lot of different roles and activities. Humanitarian and aid work as related 'international fields' and education work, social work and community work as related 'national fields' of activity have a lot of overlaps and similarities with peace and conflict work and can be taken into consideration in this discussion, although the article focuses on international peace and conflict work.

Organizations assume their duty of care for their staff by providing staff care[2]. But this can be approached in different ways and different paradigms underlie it. Staff care activities are often financed and implemented because of risks that are seen in the work contexts. 'Working on conflict' while 'working in conflict' is seen as the big challenge of these activities. The discussion about the duty of care for staff focusses on physical security and now also on mental health. This leads to instruments of crisis intervention and, at best, on prevention of risks, and this way of reasoning is very powerful.

At the same time, it is possible to discuss staff care in terms of potentials and of learning that can be strengthened thereby. To elicit peace and encourage conflict transformation the professionals themselves, their constitution and their relationships with themselves, with others and with the world are relevant for staying healthy as well as for doing a good job. In this way, staff care activities can aim on education and development of the employees themselves as well as the organizations.

This article argues that there are two paradigms that underlie the reasons for staff care and introduces them, after explaining what is meant by staff care in the context of international peace and conflict work. Both paradigms will be presented and their consequences for staff care implementation in the field of international cooperation will be discussed. Subsequently, the various reasons can be classified and analyzed in a grid of staff care reasons to make the relations visible and discussable for the context of peace pedagogy as well as for other fields.

Staff Care as 'Duty of Care'

A lot of international organizations, working in the fields of international cooperation – humanitarian and aid work or in peacebuilding and conflict transformation – have recognized the issue of staff care and affirm that they have a 'duty of care' – a responsibility to care for their staff (Porter & Emmens, 2016; UNHCR, 2013). They accept that the individuals are not solely accountable for their self-care but that the employing organization must do something for the well-being of their staff. But what does this mean in concrete terms?

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[2] "Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for humanitarian staff, is often referred to as staff welfare, care, or well-being." (UNHCR, 2013, p.9.) In the context of this article the term 'staff care' is used mainly for psychosocial support for staff, although the questions of physical safety, security and well-being are as important and can be discussed in a similar way.

Staff care can include all services, which an organization offers before, during and after the assignment. Elements and instruments of staff care can be very different, according to the cultural context, the field of work, the organizational structures and a lot of different influencing factors. There is not the one and only concept of staff care, but organizations have to develop and implement their own approach to it. Nevertheless, some basic elements will be described in the following.

At the beginning, the process of selection and assessment can be seen a relevant part of staff care since the person must have the capabilities to handle the job and cope with the situation. All measures of training, preparation and orientation for the selected staff before the new assignment starts, are part of staff care. Different ways of support from the organization – technical, informational, organizational and psychosocial – help the staff at all stages.

During the mission, the interconnection with colleagues is very important – both in the formal way of intervision[3], mentoring, peer counseling or team meetings, symposiums and conferences and in the informal way of communication and networking with others. Moreover, support formats with external professionals, like counseling, supervision, and coaching, are important psychosocial staff care instruments that can be used at all times of assignment. Specialist advice, further trainings and support by ombudspersons are other instruments that are relevant on the job.

After a person has concluded an assignment, debriefings, returnee seminars and integration offers are part of staff care services. Most of the staff care services are used for prevention as well as for intervention, only crisis management strategies and rest and recreation are exercised just after a critical incident happened. Instruments that focus on physical wellbeing, safety and security are just as much a part of staff care as measures that focus mostly on the psychosocial wellbeing.

Discovering the Paradigms

Starting this exploration, it is necessary to recall what can be understood as a paradigm. In reference to Kuhn (1967), a paradigm can manifest in different ways. It can define the items of interest, what is observed and checked - and what is not. Moreover, a paradigm affects the

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[3] Intervision is a specific format of collegial counselling primarily in psychosocial professions. Coequal employees search together for solutions to a specific problem. One colleague brings in a topic, the others support him*her in finding a solution or in better understanding the problem.

type of questions that are asked in relation to a topic, which questions should be examined and the way how to ask these questions. Besides it has influence on how to interpret the results of the scientific investigation.

Related to international staff care this means to analyze: a) what kind of issues are observed and discussed in the context of staff care? What is being talked about? And b) what kind of questions are asked and how are they asked, especially according to the relevance of the topic? How is staff care discussed?

Paradigm 1: Focus on Exposures and Risks

When people think about humanitarian or aid work or peace and conflict workers, they think about risks and exposures. They often work in areas with wars or physically violent conflicts going on and a lot of structural and cultural violence around them, like inequality and poverty and neocolonial power relations. They are confronted with natural and man-made disasters and the destructions that people can do to one another. Difficult working conditions, a high workload and a lack of personal life or close relationships can be standard.

International and local staff are exposed to some factors in a different way, but most of the exposures are relevant to all of them. The exposures can be systematized in different ways. They can be divided in situational, organizational, work-related and personal factors. Or they can be seen as parts of concepts like resilience or vulnerability.

With the concept of vulnerability[4], an important differentiation can be made. The exposure to these factors and the sensitivity, with which a person is affected by them, result in a potential impact (Adger, 2006). This potential impact is influenced by the adaptive capacity, consisting of the possibilities to cope or to avoid.

Sensitivity means, that because of different characteristics and living conditions the same exposing factor has different impacts on people. At the same time the adaptive capacity is important to understand the real influence of these exposures. People have other coping strategies and other options to avoid a risk because of their privileges. All this has to be taken into account in the field of mental health and psychosocial support as well as in

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[4] This type of vulnerability concept is more widely used in environmental science and climate change research (for an overview of this discussions see Adger, 2006). The psychological concept of vulnerability often sees it as the opposite of resilience and does not differentiate between exposure, sensitivity and adaptation.

staff care. With this concept, the impact of the exposures is contextualized, which helps to understand the relation between exposures and risks. Becker & Weyermann summarize the connections as follows:

> "Maintaining the psychosocial stability of staff is an institutional responsibility. Aid workers in conflict areas are in danger. Exposure to continuous pressure and confrontation with suffering and helplessness can eventually make people ill." (Becker & Weyermann 2006, p. 52)

In international staff care discussions, predominantly the risks are discussed and they are a main trigger to address the topic of (psychosocial) staff care (Antares Foundation, 2012; Lauffer & Hamacher, 2016; IASC, 2007; Merkelbach, 2017; Porter & Emmens, 2016; The Sphere Project, 2011; UNHCR, 2013; WHO, 2011; ZIF, 2015)[5]. When people are exposed to these factors, are affected by them and cannot avoid or adapt to them, they can face several risks.

Stress, fatigue and burnout as well as mental illness, posttraumatic stress disorder and vicarious traumatization can be psychosocial consequences. People can become cynical and lose their belief in the meaningfulness of the work or life in general – just to mention some examples of risks. All in all, stress is the concept, which most organizations refer to. This can even be seen in the title of some international staff care publications: e.g. "Managing stress in humanitarian workers" (Antares Foundation, 2012); "Stress im Einsatz" (ZIF, 2015).

Consequences: Prevention and Crisis Intervention

Of course, these risks are serious threats for the well-being of international aid or peace and conflict workers. Therefore, prevention is an important topic and studies and staff care concepts often argue with the prevention of these risks. For example, the Antares Foundation created a whole cycle of staff care, that helps organizations to create own staff care policies and based their work on the stress-argument:

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[5] These examples of international staff care handbooks, studies or guidelines on the field of (mental) health and (psychosocial) support for international aid or humanitarian workers are all primarily concerned with the concepts of risks and stress. The article does not want to go into a detailed analysis and evaluation of this handbooks but rather discuss the topic at a more fundamental level.

"Good staff care and psychosocial care have proven to be an important asset in stress management and the prevention and treatment of traumatic and post-traumatic stress." (Antares Foundation, 2012, p. 5)

Risks seem to be the most important reasons for funding and implementing staff care instruments. Recognizing that not all risks can be avoided by prevention measures, the organizations establish crisis intervention measures as well. This paradigm that concentrates on exposures, risks, stresses and strains has different consequences. One consequence is that the staff care measures predominantly address cases of emergency and necessity. Some measures are designed only for emergency and will be put into practice if an emergency case appears. If a person has a problem s*he shall ask for support and the services are offered on demand, if it is 'really serious'.

Related to this, some measures are only financed when they proof their efficiency. It can be a purely economic decision to fund some prevention measures when it is shown that this is cheaper than the lack of workforce by sick leaves or terminations. Another point is that mainly certain staff care measures are on the agenda: Stress management trainings, psychological first aid, emergency plans, (critical incident stress) debriefings and self-care seminars are examples of activities that are related to this perspective. Psychological staff care services are most common, when following this paradigm.

Moreover, most of these staff care measures focus on self-care and on promoting the individual initiative to care about the own well-being. It is likely that the focus on international professionals and the insufficient involvement of local professionals may also be related to this paradigm together with the adjacent processes like economic imperatives.

To sum up, one can say that the underlying paradigm influences the perspective with which we look on staff care and has effects on the way staff care is funded, designed, implemented and used.

Paradigm 2: Focus on Potentials and Education

Yet a different perspective on staff care, based on another paradigm, is possible as well. From the perspective of peace pedagogy, the potentials and resources come to the fore. Building a culture of peace, embedding staff

care in ways of peace logic[6] and connecting inner and outer peace work are the aims that this paradigm is concentrating on. The essence of this paradigm can be "defined by openness and accountability, self-reflection and vulnerability, mutual respect, dignity, and the proactive engagement of the other" (Lederach, 2005, p. 42)[7].

Discourses about education and learning, about using the experiences, that are made in the field and about opportunities and capacities for (self-)reflection are signs for this. How can the resources of a person be conserved, enhanced and strengthened? How can staff care help people to do a good job and contribute constructively to peacebuilding? How can it sustain the well-being of staff and how can personal, organizational and social development can go hand in hand? How can a culture of peace be fostered?

> "The purpose of staff care is to create a healthy and productive workforce; to create wellbeing among staff and improve the quality of their work." (Porter&Emmens, 2009, p.10)

These are the questions and arguments that take center stage with this paradigm. According to this perspective, staff care services are essential part of professional work. It is necessary to reflect on your own work, on the way you are doing it and on the circumstances around you. While using staff care services as spaces of reflection, you can gain insights and a new perspective and you can get new ideas and are able to adapt your behavior. Tony Jenkins describes this attitude and aims for transformative peace pedagogy:

> "Transformative peace pedagogy fosters the development of a self-reflective praxis and nurtures a holistic, inclusive relationship between the inner (personal) and outer (political, action oriented) dimensions of peacebuilding." (Jenkins, 2016, p. 1)

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[6] The German peace researcher Hanne-Margret Birckenbach distinguishes between security logic and peace logic (Birckenbach 2014). Security logic describes the phenomena of securitization and the logic behind the politics of security and use of violence. Peace logic tries to promote conflict transformation by peaceful and nonviolent means and defines the principles behind politics of peace.

[7] Lederach (2005) presents the two paradigms of fear and of love and discusses them as different directions in which social change can move. They show many parallels with the paradigms of risk and of potentials which are referred to in this article.

Following this paradigm, staff care can be understood as a part of transformative peace pedagogy as it is following the same aims and principles and tries to encourage a dialogical, non-indoctrinating process of counseling, accompanying and supporting staff.

Consequences: Reflective Learning and Further Development

When we argue with learning, development and professionalization, it has effects on staff care. The consequences refer to the circumstances and resources and to the way, how staff care services are designed and implemented.

At first, staff care services are intended for 'ordinary times', as well as for emergencies. That means that people do not need to have a problem to make use of the services. Even if everything works out very well, the space for reflection can be used to become aware of it and savor or even celebrate it. Organizations don't wait for staff to come around just as the situation has become unbearable. They implement staff care for ordinary times and in regular intervals or at certain dates. This takes the responsibility from the staff, thus they do not have to assess if it is serious enough to ask for support. Another effect is that organizations will try to get staff care services fully funded, independent from trends and projects and without making hierarchies in the neediness.

Furthermore, the organizations will encourage staff to make use of the services and will actively initiate it. Some of the staff care instruments will work like outreach services with low threshold so that the first impulse does not necessarily have to come from the peace and conflict worker. When staff get explicitly invited, they lose their fear and the inhibition to try to make use of support.

In conclusion, this approach can lead to the implementation of different staff care services. Supervision and coaching, peer counseling and intervision, mentoring or organizational development are examples of instruments that can be an indication for this different paradigm.

Classification of Staff Care Justifications into a Paradigm Grid

Figure 1 shows the different arguments ranged in a grid of paradigmatic dimensions. The horizontal axis of the model describes the two paradigms that have been explored above. It illustrates the continuum between the idealized paradigms of 'avoiding risks' and 'enhancing potentials'. On the vertical axis the social dimension between the individual and organizational perspective is represented. On this axis a distinction is made between whether the argumentation for staff care relates to the

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individual person and his or her health, endangering or development or whether from the point of view of the organization or societal context with the focus on work and outcomes.

Depending on the perspective of the individual person or the employing organization, the reasoning for staff care is different, even if it works according to the same paradigm. This results in four fields that represent archetypical arguments for staff care: 'We need staff care to prevent individual risks like stress, trauma, burnout etc.' (upper left); 'We need staff care to avoid organizational risks like a lack of workforce.' (lower left); 'We need staff care to support the personal growth, learning and development of the staff.' (upper right); 'We need staff care to improve the work and the organization to be more efficient.' (lower right).
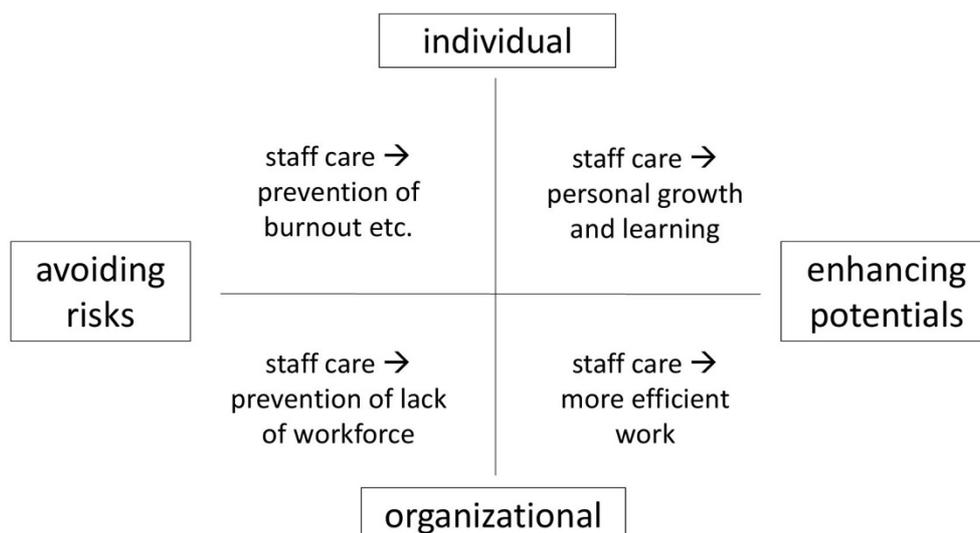
Figure 1: Grid of Staff Care Reasons and Paradigms (Own Presentation)

The classification of the grid should help to visualize the different paradigms and underlying assumptions. The simplification of the model can help to understand the different approaches to staff care and may explain different priorities in the areas of activity and the implementation of different staff care services.

Nevertheless, the aim of the grid is not to reinforce polarizations, but to make differences visible in order to understand and discuss them. The transrational and elicitive way tries not to replace and overcome one with the other, but to see the (dis)advantages of each paradigm and to combine and integrate all of these different perspectives in a holistic manner (Dietrich, 2014).

Introducing a Third Dimension: The Motivation behind Staff Care Reasons

The presented model is limited to systematizing and classifying observations. Of course, the reasons are often mixed and a staff care concept can serve several or all of these purposes. Although the above mentioned paradigms are relevant for reasoning and justifications, other paradigms are powerful as well. Deep-seated worldviews and human perceptions are related to them and there can be motivations and goals that lie beyond or even across the aforementioned paradigms. In a capitalist system, even staff care can be purely economically motivated. In contrast, in the era of human rights, human dignity and the preservation of life can be guiding values.

Following this first motivationor ideology, staff care may be far more prescriptive than elicitive, the first aim being to preserve, use and exploit the workforce in the best possible way. Exploitability, self-optimization and employability[8] are the central references. Reflection remains at the individual and interpersonal level, but does not necessarily include fundamental structural questions. In the second motivation, elicitive and transformative approaches to staff care come to the fore, and the goal is to give people space for critical thinking and questioning of circumstances – for the sake of themselves as well for others and their surroundings.

These motivations or ideologies are not congruent with the perspectives described above, but can be connected with both axes of the grid. According to the ideology of exploitability, the question of why risks should be avoided can be answered in the same way as the question of why potentials should be enhanced: to preserve and exploit workforce. The same

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[8] In other fields like in social work critical thoughts about the self-conception of the work and the underlying paradigms lead to a discussion about service or human rights profession, in which the neoliberal paradigm of employability faces a systemic paradigm of human rights (Staub-Bernasconi, 2007). This discussion is very similar to the argumentation presented in this article though the concepts cannot be transmitted directly.

holds true for the ideology of human dignity: we care about risks and potentials because we care about people. In parallel to this, both the individual as well as the collective argument perspective can be combined with these two motivations.

Thus, the ideology of exploitability and the ideology of human dignity can be seen as a new axis and thereby add a third dimension to the model.

Conclusion: Fostering a Reflective, Critical, Transformative Praxis for Staff Care

This article argues that there are different paradigms to justify staff care and that they have different impacts on the perception of the duty of care and the implementation of staff care services. These paradigms can be observed in other fields of activity as well, for example in education. Tony Jenkins discusses the necessity of strengthening "reflective, critical and transformative praxis" (Jenkins, 2016, p. 5) in peace studies. The same argumentation can be applied to staff care, because in the end it is also a question of educational processes and the inclusive connection between the inner (personal) and outer (political) dimensions of peacebuilding and "the interconnection between personal health and global health, between personal transformation and global transformation" (Pigni, 2014, p. 231).

If people care for themselves and organizations care for their staff, it has impacts: on themselves, on others and on the (peace and conflict) work they are doing. In conclusion, this means that a culture of peace, which peace pedagogy aims to boost, includes a culture of awareness, a culture of reflexive learning and a culture of care – care for your own and for others.

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