

## The "5C" Theory

By Javier Schunk<sup>1</sup>

### **Do you say neutral and impartial?**

#### **Let's take a position**

When I hear the functionaries of development agencies saying "we are neutral and impartial", I ask myself what pictures might hang in their offices ... Whose pictures? Certainly they are inspired by priests, revolutionaries, pacifists, etc. but in any case "fighters", who fought "in favour" of someone and "against" somebody else. They certainly were not neutral and impartial people.

"Impartiality" and "neutrality" are two concepts that in the last years have been used in the humanitarian assistance field, to describe actions, which are not to be seen as supporting any specific party in the conflict, or which are not dependent on political influence. This last concept can be arguably extended also to ideological, religious, cultural interferences that could be carried out by humanitarian aid agencies during the implementation of their work.

Based on above considerations, why have these 'doctrines' of impartiality and neutrality rarely been applied to the context of development cooperation? Maybe because the conclusion says that those concepts are simply not applicable to interactions over as long periods, as those which characterise development cooperation activities. In other words, it is difficult to interact with other actors for a long time, without getting involved in their relationships.

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<sup>2</sup> Game theory: born in the mathematics field during the 40es, it studies the participants' behaviours during games. Today this theory is applied in many fields: political, markets, social, etc.

In fact, as the games theory<sup>2</sup> teaches, when interacting with other people, we are induced to modify our behaviour under the influence of those peoples' behaviour, and it is natural to start taking part to the game.

"Being" in a specific context, means making choices and automatically taking positions. It is impossible to do otherwise, and not to be in favour of someone, against someone else, or maybe indifferent.

Furthermore, is it true that international cooperation should always act in harmony with the local government policies, the local religious leaders' positions and all the other local powerful groups? Most of the time, for the external actors, being against the local power structures represents indeed the 'main' reason for intervening in a specific context. In this case, we would certainly not show our position openly. The consequence is that the external actors could have an apparent behaviour ("cooperative") and a second and hidden one ("competitive").

### **Sharing the local power differently:**

#### **The map of the local power network**

International cooperation is not merely spreading technical opportunities. Development work is also enhancing justice, "troubling" and making a contribution to changing and rebuilding local power network. Saying it differently: stimulating the less powerful actors in order to let them have more power, and leave the powerful ones with less. However, for what reason do we feel authorised to enter a foreign context and make these changes? There are two reasons: 1) the systemic theory<sup>3</sup> says that it is necessary to introduce

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<sup>3</sup> Systemic theory: born in the psychological field during the '60es, considers as system a group of elements having at least one common element. Today this theory is applied in many fields: political, markets, social, etc.

a new element into a system in order to change it; 2) the necessary condition to enter a specific context is being in agreement with the oppressed subjects, and have their “complicity”. This is the political side of the international cooperation, the hidden part of the iceberg.

External actor should seek the roots of the injustice, the causes and the actors responsible for it in each specific context.

During the feasibility study, one of the most important issue is the “stakeholders analysis”, which means the knowledge that the different actors have of a particular system, and the role that they play in it. The second step results in understanding the local power network. The third step is trying to design a new, more equitable local power network. The fourth step consists in defining the tactical alliances and the strategic alliances that we must carry on with each individual actor or group. The tactical alliance serves to mobilise common resources, methods, actions and results; the strategic one to motivate work towards common objectives.

Each of these alliances will have different scopes: creating of barriers in order to avoid actions of powerful actors against the beneficiaries’ actions; supporting a particular group to counter-balance the power; enhancing the capacity of our actions; creating a “critical mass” etc.

We must keep in mind that international cooperation is an “arena” where different actors with different approaches, interests and ideas of development and power are in competition.

Beneficiaries, often are only one of these actors, a less important one, but surely the most useful and the least powerful one.

Each of these external actors tries to do its best in favour of the beneficiaries but ends up in “manipulating” them. So, as Mr Paul Watzlawick said in his book “Change”: “The problem isn’t to avoid patient manipulation, but how to do it in favour of his real interest and not in the interest of someone else...”

This is the only possible neutrality.

## **Building alliances:**

### **Using the “5C theory”**






In order to define the kind of relationship that we will maintain with each actor in a system and the alliances that should be formed, we propose the following “5C theory”. In fact, this theory envisages five main strategies corresponding to five behaviours to be adopted during the interaction with other actors.

Following, I report on the different kind of strategies that can be applied for the interaction between two or more subjects. In order to simplify the example, we will analyse two subjects: one it is represented by the white circle and one by the black one.

The table describes: in the first column the name of the strategy starting with “C”, in the second one the graphical illustration of the relationship, in the third a short description, in the fourth an example chosen from the world of animals, in the fifth when we should use this kind of strategy.

When reading the grid from the top to the bottom, at the top there is the most competitive relationship. Going down, we find progressively collaborative strategies, finally arriving at the complementarity one, which represents the fusion of the two parts creating a single new entity.

Referring to what is described above, we can state that, for an external development practitioner, acting in international cooperation means “taking a position”. Having reached this position, he will take part in the game of actors operating in a particular context in order to change it, either technically and politically. In order to do this, it is necessary to have a good knowledge of the actors and the local power network, to define a new local power network, to choose the correct “C” strategy (real and apparent) with each actor and build the right kind of alliances with them. All those steps should be part of a good strategic plan in order to allow external support to have better chances to succeed, or at least, less probability to fail...

Strategy	Graphical presentation	Description	Example of behaviour	When?
<b>Competition</b>		Conflict between the parties. Fight where one is trying to take advantages.	<i>Gorillas:</i> to be the head of their society	One is more powerful than the other and fight is necessary to survive
<b>Cohabitation</b>		Equilibrium. Reciprocating control towards each other. No fight but non-interference.	<i>Zebra and giraffe:</i> drinking in the same water source	Similar level of power and both can survive separately
<b>Co-ordination</b>		Reciprocating information and at the same time maintenance of own positions.	<i>Lion:</i> hunting in group for enhancing the chances of survival	One doesn't need the other to survive but both have a convenience to find a new entity to belong
<b>Co-operation</b>		Approaching. Modification and influence in one or both directions. Negotiation.	<i>Shark-remora:</i> (commensalisms) <i>Bird-rhinoceros:</i> (mutualism)	One needs the other or both need each other to survive
<b>Complementarity</b>		Integration. Fusion. Each one think about the common wellbeing before the own benefits	<i>The ants society:</i> each member works for the wellbeing of the whole community	To have a new entity to belong to, is necessary to survive