

DRAFT Interview guide – Regional Governance Seminar Western Balkans 2016

What are the challenges of doing research on ‘out of fragility’?

- As indicated, there are a lot of different definitions of fragility, fragility can stem from challenges to authority, challenges to legitimacy and challenges to the economy/efficiency.
- There are different studies that aim to establish causal relations between fragility and an intervention or a particular kind of intervention. Also, the question is then: out of fragility has worked with regards to what? Causal arrows are oftentimes pointing in two directions.
- This might be one reason why we can observe renewed interest in ‘conflict’: we can more easily measure this and thus might establish clearer causal relationships.
- There is very little empirical research on that particular question. One of the difficulties is that the data that the research is based on is relatively ‘old’ meaning 3-4 years old, also the data of the OECD and the ‘States of Fragility report’ is from 2-3 years back. A lot has changed since then. Thus, the overall situations of most of the countries and the interventions needed for or by development cooperation take place in a rapidly changing environment.
- What is also interesting is that some of the large donors, like USAID and DfID seem to be less interested in using the term fragility. They want to revert back to the term conflict. What works in conflict.
- If there is one credo in the fragility literature, it is: there are no ‘one size fits all’ solutions to coordination or programming in fragile contexts. The main issue is that these are context-dependent. Thus, the answers on ‘what worked’ can only serve as a kind of a loose inspiration, as they have been developed in other contexts than West Balkan.

What kind of programming has worked in fragile situations in general?

- As I said above, it is important to think programming has worked with regards to what? So if we take the MDGs as the reference point, then research from the World Bank has identified Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Nepal as those countries that stand out as the most successful in meeting the MDG targets. It is mainly in three indicators where success has been achieved in fragile countries overall: Gender parity in

education, access to improved water sources and maternal health. In how far this also led to 'out of fragility' is questionable.

What has worked in terms of statebuilding as a goal?

Recent studies by USAID, ODI, UNU Wider and the World Bank have all stressed two elements:

- inclusive democratic institutions
- security sector and justice reforms

Security sector and justice reforms

The link to fragility is that security sector and justice reforms make a link to one of the causes of conflict. The argument is that these approaches are critical to address past discrimination and promote greater equality in the future.

Inclusive democratic institutions

Here, most of the work focusses on local level issues

- Service delivery with a focus on non-discrimination. How do you achieve non-discrimination?
 - o For example through performance based contracting system (Afghanistan)
 - o Investment in capacity building of public servants
 - o Monitoring of service delivery mechanisms by third parties
 - o Financing to enable national audit offices
 - o This finally means also innovative ways to fight corruption
- Community-driven development programs
 - o Connecting communities to legitimate authority
 - o Develop citizenship skills
 - o Building government from ground up

Does it mean to do other things or just to do things differently?

Looking at the different experiences of bilateral and multilateral donors, it most often means both. Do additional things and do things differently.

There are to my knowledge no systematic studies that have addressed the aspect of 'doing things differently'. Most concretely, this means there are no evaluations on what the effect was on a project that had a security or justice lens included rather than mainly a poverty lens.

Most of the examples that are stressed by the larger development cooperation agencies that have mandated research are again on the level of aid modalities or conflict-sensitive approaches:

- DfID in Nepal, where a conflict and exclusion analysis led to different kind of programming in education,
- or an innovative approach for working in Iraq, where collaboration among home state departments (interior and foreign office) led to better coordination in the host state (police service and home ministry),
- or in a situation where working through and with the state was not possible, they worked through NGOs but with a clear humanitarian focus.

What made it work? Approach, power or money, or all of them together?

Power and money are always part of the game when you work in politicized environments like fragile states. I guess this is part of the game and everyone working in this field needs to appreciate this. However, as always, this is often an 'elephant in the room', also when we look at research that is conducted. Most development organizations that have looked at 'what works' are not discussing these issues.

Most of the evaluations that are looking into reasons what worked argue mainly that it is the different way how they organized development aid made it work:

- *Better coordination and strategic identification of gaps in assistance / clear division of labor.*
- *Kind and flexibility of donor funding*
- *Connection between humanitarian assistance and fragility assistance*

The determinants apart from the different kinds of approaches however also seem to lie in the *local capacities*: The World Bank argued that the success in their programs was amongst other things based on strong tradition of community participation and local institutions that continued to function during crisis.

These findings seem to be relevant mainly for countries where aid is a relevant percentage of the overall income of a country. How are these findings now relevant for the specific situation in West Balkan?

In the Balkans, as Jordan has discussed so well in the morning, fragility stems from a lack of legitimacy, and less from a lack of authority efficiency.

It is true that Switzerland is one of the biggest bilateral donors in the region, and at the same time, aid is not so relevant to the overall GDP like in other fragile situations.

Still, if we take the findings that mainly focus on statebuilding and legitimacy above, we find that they are relevant for West Balkan:

Security and justice reforms

The justice sector seems to be captured by the most powerful elites in the country and are mainly geared towards satisfying their needs. The people do not feel that the services of the justice sector are for them, but for a selected few. There is the possibility to establish legal aid systems – as is already done – parallel to the existing state system. Media came under strong attack lately and it would be important to stress the freedom of expression and independent media to ensure access to information.

Inclusive institutions

Also here, there are several issues that are relevant from a regional perspective. In terms of service delivery, also here people do not feel that the state is organized around them but around a small elite.

- The political system is often perceived as a class itself, not only in West Balkan, but in a lot of different countries all over the world. One particular problem in the West Balkans is that there are fractions based on party politics, that often seem non reconcilable and hamper government functioning. Enable constructive dialogue that results in participatory and inclusive (and people oriented) decision making in different spheres of society for improved quality of life and democratic future of the country.
- With governments that are perceived to be working for everyone and not only for their kin, trust of the people in the government system, and thus a strengthening of the state society relationship would be

established again. One possibility is to facilitate dialogue. This could include inter party dialogue building on a Parliament Steering Council and the Mavrovo Process. Also inter community and citizens with institutions dialogue. There, it is important to include disadvantaged regions and communities for equal development perspectives.

- Corruption has several effects, first, there is less finances for public service delivery, secondly, it again influences trust in government, this in turn has an effect on the willingness of people to pay taxes, as the state is not perceived as an institution that is supporting everyone equally. Thus, those studies that are stressing issues of procurement and auditing institutions, can also help not only with regards to influx of aid, but also corruption needs to be tackled internally, with the aim to reestablish trust in a state institution that has no ethnic or class-oriented face.

[What are/may be the risks of not recognizing the nature and extent of fragility and the need of state building in governance portfolios? Why not focus on 'easy reforms' and 'low hanging fruits'?](#)

- The main risks for not including fragility in statebuilding is the old problem of making a non-responsive and non-inclusive state stronger. When looking at the literature of democratization and fragility, we see that semi-democratic states are most fragile and prone to laps back into conflict.
- Also, as indicated earlier, there are several gateways that lead to fragility: a lack of legitimacy seems to be the most pronounced in West Balkan. However, if this is not discussed, then this will have an influence on the other two elements again. We saw this in the past in Macedonia with the issue of security. The overall economic situation worldwide is bad, this also leads to an instable situation for West Balkan.