

THE MIDDLE-DEVELOPMENT TRAP ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

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Abstract <p>The ongoing discussion about connections and differences between basic needs and basic human rights seems to not be any close to a conclusion. Notwithstanding, human development activities are based on them, and use those definitions to develop and promote human development projects and establish human development programs. Using the idea of the theoretical economic middle-income trap, I argue in this paper that human development activities fall into a <i>middle-development trap</i> when trying to work beyond the basic needs towards human development and I attempt to point out, using a human development program as study case, that the confusion between the achievement of basic needs and/or basic human rights is the core issue for this middle-development trap.</p>	
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“A missão do Programa Comunitário (da Reconciliação) é promover o desenvolvimento humano para a plena cidadania de crianças, jovens e adultos (...), voltada para o resgate da dignidade e cidadania.”

Ms. Hermann Wille.

(artigo Presença Luterana, pg 16, Ano 3, Ed 05, Out-Dez 2014)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION: LOST & FOUNDS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES	1
2	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	4
3	THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT DIFFERENTLY UNDERSTOOD	10
4	BRAZIL IN THE WORLD OF DEVELOPMENT	19
5	RECONCILIAÇÃO	23
5.1	Its history with the poor children in São Paulo	26
5.2	Its functioning.....	28
5.3	The I-YOU introspective	35
6	CONCLUSION	54
	REFERENCES.....	58

1 INTRODUCTION: LOST & FOUNDS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Unlike most of my colleagues in the International Master's Programme in Development and International Cooperation (D&IC), I started my studies with a very different idea of what this program would bring to me.

With a bachelor in International Relations, also majoring in Political Science, I was very familiar with the terms "development" and "international cooperation" in a more political science manner, such as the use of foreign affairs and diplomacy of a government to interact in the International arena of politics and trade with the objective of furthering a State's development, making it more economically strong and politically influential, the more so the more developed a country considered. My education on the subject was critical about the practice of international politics, including development cooperation. Following this line of thought, I started this master's program thinking to study specifically Brazil and how it had the power of engaging both in economic development and influential regional politics, but still it was in the category between a "developed country" and "underdeveloped country". Statistically, it was considered a middle-income country. Once I started my studies in the program it was quite clear that its aim was not along my line of thoughts, and that my entire goal of studies would have to be reviewed and redirected.

Nevertheless, I went through the studies and tried to link my knowledge from international relations to the idea of development presented by the program. So, for the compulsory internship placement, I found an institute in Brazil in São Paulo willing to accept an intern from a foreign educational institution. Thus, in February 2015, I started a three-month internship in Praxis Institute, an institute of a Brazilian

Lutheran church aimed at personal development. It suited me well, my main objective as an intern was to develop myself, and the way to do so was to have the accomplishment of my master's thesis. This congregation of the Lutheran church in Brazil and its priests has supported for over 30 years a social development program called "Programa Comunitário da Reconciliação", meaning Communitarian Program of Reconciliation, reconciliation of the people of the community with the society (usually called Recon), in the community of Vila São José. It is a peripheric neighborhood in southern São Paulo.

My main work as an intern for the Praxis Institute was to analyze the Programa Comunitário da Reconciliação in question, to try to understand the development of the institution, its progress in creating development, and its problems in trying to continue supporting the community in its real needs. Over the years the need of a community in development changes according to its own development, but the eyes of donors and fundraisers of development may be stuck in only one line of activity.

The initial objective of Recon was to provide food for the kids of the community that didn't have a home. Then it proceeded to provide food for the parents of such kids, growing then to attempts at creating a good environment for these kids to grow up without feeling "outsiders" in the society, simultaneously turning itself from a project to a program. Then it expanded to empowering the parents of these kids in order to provide stability so they could help their kids to grow with better opportunities. Then it turned to formulate a formal Statute on human development that might have been too big and too abstract to have practical relevance.

I chose this topic also for my thesis because during my internship I understood the value of development done through a multitude of small projects in specific communities helping in specific problems. But doing my internship also opened my eyes to the practical reality of development as community programs for the sake of the community and its inhabitants. This approach does help if done right, but the matter is complicated. In the specific case, I study it started right, and it did develop the community and its people, but along the way, the project got lost in track and now it is gasping for breath and drowning in so many problems.

Moreover, the issue of development activities is on how it is done, to which purpose, and what exactly it intends to tackle. In the sphere of Economy, there is an ongoing discussion about the middle-income trap that some countries may or may not fall into within the process towards economic development. Perhaps we could apply the generalized idea of such traps to describe what I believe happens in development activities, be it on projects or programs - or both.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I explicate the research methodology of this thesis. As the methodology used was somewhat unusual in social science studies, I will try to explain in more detail not only the research strategy, the research approach, the research method, and data collection, but also the reasons for such methodologies.

The research approach in this thesis was an inductive one. According to this approach, the researcher's starting point is observation and data collection, moving to the perception of patterns of interaction in the data and then formulate hypotheses that could explain those patterns (Blackstone, 2012, p. 19-20). Trochim expressed it as:

“(...)begin with specific observations and measures, begin to detect patterns and regularities, formulate some tentative hypotheses that we can explore, and finally end up developing some general conclusions or theories.” (Trochim, 2020).

Thus, moving from empirical observations to conceptual conclusions, I applied the inductive approach when I developed the research problem for the thesis only after I had done the observations and data collection, and I reached my research hypothesis by connecting what I had learned from development studies, some economic theories, and the patterns found in my observations.

The research strategy used was qualitative. It is relevant to emphasize that the observations and data collection methods were unstructured, as the observations were

done in the context of compulsory internship and not necessarily as methodically planned systematic research observations. There was a consciousness that the internship visit to the Recon could be part, in some way, of the master's thesis, though there was no readily formulated research plan for it. Anyway, the visit opened me to the variety of possible approaches to gather empirical material with a broader scope of methods and tools, which characterize qualitative research (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Thus, the data collection phase was open to everything and anything that the subject could offer, positive or negative, within development studies. Most of these data were a collection of thoughts and feelings that I had from what I saw and heard, and that people involved with the Recon had raised in response to my inquiries. The introspective method used in doing those direct observations allowed me to extract more personal and intuitive data.

Introspection was described by Gould as "an ongoing process of tracking, experiencing, and reflecting on one's own thoughts, mental images, feelings, sensations and behaviors" (1995, p. 719). In terms of research methodology, I also consider myself as a valid, legitimate, and important element to be observed in this kind of study, because I am a rather special case in this kind of Finnish university master program. I, as a person, come from a poor developing community, which is also the object of this thesis research. I have then been lucky enough to study at the university level both in Brazil and Finland, and then went back to the locale where I spent my childhood, about 25 years ago, a few years after the beginning of the Recon. This has been an important psychological journey to me, and I can understand the problems of development better when I listen to myself feeling about them in different situations, making it natural for me within development studies to undergo an introspective path.

I acknowledged that introspective research is a method very seldom used in development studies as it is considered a controversial method for not giving a consistent base for an objective and, most important, scientific data collection. However, I had sensible grounds for using it; despite its controversiality, it is a powerful tool for research focused on understanding human conditions and their development (Xue & Desmet, 2019, p. 37).

Within the introspection research method, there are several categories, which disclose the position of the researcher and his/her research subjects on the epistemic perspective in which each would be placed. Among those categories, I mostly used the researcher's introspection and reflectivity within research. With one subject of the research I could use the interactive introspection method, which consisted of actively sharing introspective data between myself as the researcher and the subject-person working as equal partners with a very emotional involvement (Xue & Desmet, 2019, p. 47). This interactive introspection not only enriched my data collection but also created an opening in the Recon for the possibility of reflection.

The researcher's introspection method consists of the epistemic perspective of the first-person, so the researcher's knowledge and point of view affect the outcome of the observation and data (Xue & Desmet, 2019, p. 38). Moreover, within my own researcher's introspection, I used a great deal of the second-person epistemic perspectives. Though the perspective of second-person is even more uncommon in social sciences, to undergo a human development research without it just seems abstract and unrealistic. When looking at research through the three epistemic perspectives, there is a substantial "difference between an "I-it" relationship (third person) and an "I-me" relationship (first person) and an "I-you" (second person)" (De Quince, 2000, p. 153). As said before, I returned to a community, where not only could I see the change and development that already had taken place, but I knew a big part of the subjects or could relate to the other part for knowing Recon from the beginning. I also came with a better understanding of the notion and practice of human development programs, which - within my already natural introspective approach - I could not detach from the observations. Here the epistemic perspective of the second-person was essential for using the other, more common, research tools explained further below. The participation within the I - You and the mutuality of the shared perspective of the situation enrich the research with the knowledge acquired through relationship (De Quince, 2000, p. 147).

Such research tools in this thesis were done in the reflectivity within research method using the second-person perspective, whereby researchers use reflective data about their own experiences throughout the observation (Xue & Desmet, 2019, p. 47).

Thus, the researcher's own introspection was used to guide subjects to reflect on the situation, which they, themselves, did not see as an issue before.

This kind of reflectivity within research (Xue & Desmet, 2019, p. 47) is typical for ethnographic research. According to Gobo (2015, p. 31) ethnography as a research methodology implies direct observation with an active role of the researcher, in which research methods, such as interviews and document analyzes, are additional sources of information, to better understand the involved people's points of view in relation to their vision of their own situation.

The most used research tool was the participant observation, which means that researchers collect their data by observing the subjects and their activities in the natural setting through observing and/or participating in such activities (DeWALT & DeWALT, 2002; Kawulich 2005). I was daily at the Lutheran church, where the accountant office is, where the priests are, and where most of the "outsiders within Recon" are (meaning people who know Recon and its work, mostly since the beginning, and who support the church that supports the Recon, but are not directly active in the organization). I also observed Recon 2-3 times a week while participating in its daily life. In this kind of informal interview approach (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006), conversations over coffee were one form of participant observation. I also categorize as a kind of interview the situations where I listened to people gossiping - but gossip is one element of life in such a community.

Other research tools used for data collection were unstructured interviews, as the interviews were progressing in the reflectivity second-person perspective mode, a few focus groups interviews, and an attempt at analysis of written documents.

I tried to gather as many documents as I possibly could to offer this research a more solid basis of primary data, on which perhaps some quantitative analyses could be used. Unfortunately, I only had access to fairly few documents available to me. Firstly, the documents of the organization were distributed in too many different places - church, Recon (each nucleus with an amount of them), older members and staff - with different methods and prioritization for filing. Secondly, the staff that could have helped me through it were too busy to be able to take "a day off" to collect such documents with me or for me. Thus, the small number of documents I received

were insufficient, sporadic, and/or completely outdated, therefore not used as references in this paper.

I did not use direct formal interviews. Instead, I have had great informal conversations with some staff members, and though I am disclosing information from there, the people remain anonymous because throughout my observation I could notice there were some hierarchical concerns and fear. I used purposive sampling for choosing the interviewees, as this technique allows the researcher to decide what kind of participant to use according to the qualities the individuals could provide to the relevant research (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim 2016, p. 2-3); some of the staff I talked to were in a coordinating position, some were not; some were working there daily and some were irregular participants; and some were in the organization since its early days and some were new arrivals. I chose people who appeared interesting, in different positions in the community and the institution, and were willing to talk. I did not use any recorder but wrote down at least some direct quotations after the discussions. Keeping the people anonymous has been followed throughout.

I believe that in such a delicate situation formal interviews with set questions might masquerade the truth of the problem, as many staff members would find that kind of questioning alienating. Thus, I used the unstructured interview tool, in which I and the interviewee had a date and time for it, and it was clear to both participants that the issues related to the Recon were the center of the interview, but there was no structured interview guide and the questions were open-ended (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The interviews were conducted following the reflectivity within research method as the interviewees were reflecting on the Recon and their role in it while I was doing participant observation (Xue & Desmet, 2019, p. 47) from the second-person epistemic perspective. Thus, I used my own introspection about the Recon issues to directly relate with the interviewees' responses, creating a relationship of understanding that allowed the interviewees to relax. I believe this method helped people bring up their real thoughts and feelings about the entire issue.

I conducted three focus groups and I was an observer of one internal focus group. Two of the focus groups were conducted with the children that use the services provided by Recon - more specifically the C.C.A. - where I tried to collect the data of

how the community, the users of the institution, sees the work Recon was doing. I, as the researcher, was the moderator of the group and used a set of structured questions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

The other focus group in which I was merely an observer, was conducted by one of the collaborating priests, with whom I had used the interactive introspection method by sharing my reflections on the data observed and receiving his reflections on the data I was sharing (Xue & Desmet, 2019, p. 47). This interactive introspection opened the question 'does the staff know what exactly we are doing and why?', 'do they know the purpose of the Recon that they work for and should be active members for such purpose?'. Thus, he decided to conduct a focus group with Recon's staff to access, himself, the observations I was bringing to our interactive introspection.

The third focus group that I conducted as a researcher-moderator was the last activity I did within the data collection in the Recon. It was a coffee gathering in which key people were invited to talk about their reflections on Recon. There was a new-comer staff member, an original staff member, a founding volunteer member, a staff member who had used the services when he was a child, and a collaborating priest. Though I was the moderator, there was little for me to do. There were no set questionnaires to be answered, and they all knew what the focus group was about. After the 3-4 months of participant observations (from February to May 2015), interviews, self-introspection, and prompted introspection of the participants, they all acknowledged that the Recon was under a turning point in its history and that the moment was passing by without their recognition until the self-reflection provoked by the study took place. Now they all felt more confident to share their thoughts and feelings towards each other with a more second-person perspective for a better outcome on the inevitable turning point.

3 THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT DIFFERENTLY UNDERSTOOD

Peet and Hartwick start their book on *Theories of Development* (2009. p.1) with “Development means making a better life for everyone”. And it is my belief that this is what most people believe when they talk, work, or engage in developmental activities. In fact, that is probably the main reason most of them engage in development at all; the feeling and the notion that they are helping “making a better life” for “those in need”. And Peet and Hartwick continue that line of a better life with “means, essentially, meeting basic needs”. And once again most people, especially most people engaged or willing to engage in development, couldn’t agree more to this; we all want to work towards everyone to have a roof, food, water. Thus, the discourse of development per se is not really questionable; and so, perhaps, not many really question it. Development in this sense simply described is a goal that all people want to achieve unquestioningly. And the reason is that the thought of someone not having the food, and water and a safe roof is unnerving, “development is optimistic and utopian. Development means changing the world for the better.” (Peet & Hartwick, 2009. p.2).

But of course, here I am talking about “all people”, us as humans, individuals, emotional beings. But development is a concept, studied and discussed and theorized, which are made by scholars and politicians, and they do so with more than just emotions; scholars look for reasons and politicians look for specific goals.

Development has been discussed as a concept among intellectuals since 1500s by Thomas Hobbes, throughout John Locke, Adam Smith, John Maynard Keynes, Max Weber, as a political-economic approach issue on how to achieve great and constant economic growth towards social and political modernization, which can be seen when a good amount of development theory books have in its contents primarily economic theories, meaning that development has been seen theretofore as monetary-economic growth to achieve political stability (Krueger & Myint, 2016. p. 3).

The social-development concept was introduced to the development approach in the 1970's, when the economic growth mindset for development failed to ensure development largely among the developing countries. Therewith development theorists saw the need for the reduction of poverty as an important means for development, as a society is developed when all its people are able to meet their basic needs, and a poor person is the one who cannot meet such needs (Watson, 2014. p.1). Thus, the introduction of the basic needs as development policies, which encompassed elements such safe shelter, food, water, sanitation, education, and health to attend the basic needs of a family (Thorbecke, 2006. p.14), changed the meaning of development to a process in which both economic growth and poverty alleviation would promote what was then seen as economic and social development (Thorbecke, 2006. p.11).

Understandably, development as still ultimately related to economic growth was cloaked by the introduction of basic needs to development policies, but it is important to see that that did, not yet, refocus development to a social-human-individual view, thus "it must be recognized that the shift in development thinking from meeting basic needs to asserting basic rights is a long process" (Facio, 1995. p.16). Through all this history of development and the discussions of poverty alleviation and basic needs after the 1970's, the conceptual goal of development continued to be focused mainly on economic growth / political power. There was not yet an explicit focus on human development; there was "no hint of social transformation [...], no mention of reducing social inequalities" (Peet & Hartwick, 2009. p. 94).

From the result of this long process of discussion, in the 21st-century development thinking emerged with a "new" social approach with the United Nations Millennium Declaration of the then called "Millennium Development Goals" (MDG) in

September 2000, when 147 leaders of states of the United Nations (UN) gathered to adopt the responsibility to uphold the values, principles, and objectives stated in the declaration towards “all people” (United Nations, 2000). As United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said to the world’s leaders in the conclusion of the Millennium Summit:

“It lies in your power, and therefore is your responsibility, to reach the goals that you have defined” (United Nations, 2000).

The Eight Millennium Development Goals were:

1. to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2. to achieve universal primary education;
3. to promote gender equality and empower women;
4. to reduce child mortality;
5. to improve maternal health;
6. to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases;
7. to ensure environmental sustainability; and
8. to develop a global partnership for development. (United Nations, 2020)

With such a declaration a slight shift centering development to basic human rights and not on basic needs moved the focus of development, to some extent, away from economics. It introduced the notion of the social need for change and the individual well-being. “Development is quite different from growth. Development springs from the most optimistic moment of the modern rational belief, whereas mere growth is practical, technological, but also class-prejudiced thought.” (Peet & Hartwick, 2009. p. 3).

I will not enter into the ongoing academic debate on definitions of basic needs and basic human rights, but I will take sides on it, saying that though they are intrinsic and correlated, they are not synonyms. Manuel Solis (2016) exposes the discussion on needs vs rights between many scholars in an attempt to find a better language to achieve a specific goal of social development. Nonetheless, through his article it is

possible to see that the development approach to needs and rights cannot be seen as equal, nor derivative. “Whatever the relation between needs and rights, they clearly are two different things” (Streeten, 1980. p.107). And perhaps this slight difference is one of the reasons for the research hypothesis I bring to this thesis.

I believe that Alda Facio (1995. p.17), though focusing on the gender issue of Molyneux’s (1985) conception of practical gender interests and strategic gender interests, scratched the difference between basic needs and basic human rights when she described needs for ‘practical interests’, such as food, clothing, housing and water, and rights for ‘strategic interests’, such as freedom and physical integrity. Here it is seen how the focus of basic needs is correlated with an economic approach, and basic human rights is correlated with a social approach. You can, theoretically, achieve basic human rights just by seeing each other as equal and, thus, not violating human rights. In this line, you cannot, allegedly, achieve basic needs without a monetary aid of some sort.

I would stress here the importance of the 8th goal of the MDG from 2000. The United Nations developed the goals for social development and also defined the “global partnership” to achieve such goals, implicating not only the state members, but also international institutions, the private sector and, in a way, civil society. Hence, the social transformation of development became a universal goal.

The concept of development established during the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000 is now about 20 years old. The Millennium Goals formulated then took development thinking to a smaller, localized, community-oriented approach, instead of focusing on the economic growth of a determinate country considered underdeveloped in comparison to other countries. The ethos of developmental activity turned to improve and develop directly the lives of people. It was an overture from the neoliberal view of national economical development and became the central activity of many non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Even in the Master’s Degree studies at the University of Jyväskylä we had a whole course just reading together an entire book titled *Theories of Development: contentions, arguments, alternatives* (Peet and Hartwick, 2009), and at that time I remember thinking that: “This is what I believed this Master’s study would be about, Development through politics,

economics, and government”; but the main studies turned out to be about NGOs, aid, and outside-interventions in small scale.

Yet again, the concept of this social-human development has taken a broad scope. It has been done on a small scale by NGOs, but also continued as governmental policies; it has been funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Bank as well as bilateral-multilateral-international cooperations. But as the concept of development broadened to a small, direct scale, so did the donors for it, and it is on this “small” scope of donors that I am focusing in this thesis; the volunteer tourists, the children sponsors, the monthly or yearly or even once donors, “the people”. It sounds so simple for well-meaning people in developed countries to find a needy community in an underdeveloped country, decide that they need to improve the lives in this community towards the “better life for all”, not necessarily do much research on the matter nor ask what is the real need, and finally develop a project and raise funds to aid for that community.

This thesis is not really addressing too deeply the idea of how the relations between development projects and development programs should be seen as the latter being a derivative of the former. This will stay for further research. But I believe that improving one aspect of a certain problem will, necessarily, unveil the deeper group of problems that lead to it. A development project cannot, technically, provide these further supports, because it was not planned, appraised, and budgeted for it. It is a project because it has a time-life, a targeted beginning and end within the goals should be achieved with the financial budget it was planned for. But a development program could attend to further needs that arise by achieving development, because development itself is not time-limited nor financially pre-budgeted and is often flexible to changes. “A program aims to identify and understand stakeholder needs and expectations in order to reduce ambiguity through negotiations, while a project appears to achieve clear, certain, and well-defined objectives using the least possible resources.”(My Management Guide, 2020) And that is when development projects, which usually tackle basic needs, often tend to become development programs, which usually have the initial goals to help in alleviating basic human rights - strategic

interests, to continue supporting the people/community to keep those first obvious problems solved and to start working in solving the deeper problems.

“Development means improvement in a complex of linked natural, economic, social, cultural, and political conditions.” (Peet & Hartwick, 2009. p. 3) Thus, many problems are easier to fix in an individual case but extremely hard to keep solved at the structural plane, because for that you would have to address the reasons why that child was in hunger, why that woman was ‘depowered’, why that community was in poverty; not to say what these situations caused to the people, emotionally and mentally. That is when I believe the ‘deeper problems’ surface. There can be ethnic, cultural, or religious problems, but these situations also show problems related to psychological aspects, violence, drugs, and corruption. If there is a serious effort to tackle this complex, then short-term projects become long-term programs that try to address those issues. This happens often coming from the community itself after the development project timeline ended. They might use the structure of the project, with which they saw that they fixed this one problem, perhaps they can fix the others, in order not just to fall back to the situation of hunger, poverty, and “un-empowerment”.

Everybody gets sensitive when seeing a picture of a starving child or an enslaved woman as it hurts deep in the heart, as development “is a powerful emotive ideal because it appeals to the best in people.” (Peet & Hartwick, 2009. p. 3). And thus it is easier to get funds and commitment for such ‘practical interests’ in the first stage problems like hunger in a specific location, but to take the leap for the next level, to shift the perception of development, to really start to develop the community and the people, there is the need of extra work, extra focus, extra commitment, and most especially extra funds. But these deeper problems - the ‘strategic interests’ of development rights of freedom, empowerment, mental and psychological support - are not anymore a question of survival - like the ‘practical interests’ of development needs for food and water and shelter.

Once the timeline of the project is over, that community is left by itself, in the same political-economic environment that it was in the beginning, or sometimes in a developed environment. Whichever, development requires continuation of broad support coming either from the national government or international donors to be

continued and successful. But usually, most projects don't have an exit strategy, so when the project comes to an end the stakeholders and the workers of the project are not necessarily trained for the continuation of the development effort as a program they should take care of. The exit strategy should be "a planned approach in which the implementing organization, responsible local government bodies and the community or target group plan for the handing over of the project management after completion." (Water Integrity Network, 2018) But most organizations that operate from social development projects "are often unable to manage their strategic and managerial challenges to ensure sustainability and scalability of their efforts." (The South African College of Applied Psychology, 2020)

Hence the difficult discourse for development to keep the community, NGOs, donors, "all people", continuously engaged in the next level of development activities; because even with the modern-human concept of development, with the emotional appeal and after the 8th goal from the MDGs, the main notion of government has not changed much from the Hobbes' Leviathan (1651), where the government is seen as protector and provider. And the main tasks/duties of the government are self-preservation, supervision and resolutions of conflicts, regulation of the economy, protection of political and social rights, and provision of goods and services (Heslop & Duignan, 2020). Thus, the development activities towards a deeper, and most likely longer, human development is quite often seen as a duty of the government to fix, not a task for international development organizations to spend their donated funds on.

Here lies the research hypothesis on what this thesis focuses on. I argue here that the concept of the economical middle-income trap (Gill & Kharas, 2007) can be applied also to humanitarian development; that the development projects, programs, NGOs, and activities most often suffer from a "middle-development trap", in which they are successful in achieving a certain level of development - most likely the basic needs practical interests -, but struggle to sustain and continue the development towards a secure basic human rights 'strategic interests', because the understanding of development in the eyes of "people" - donors and workers and volunteers - is not on the long term problem resolution. From the point of view of the communities in trouble, these communities that rely on projects, programs, NGOs - same ones that

struggle to secure funds and manage their projects exit strategies - to achieve and persist towards their sustained development, this thesis argues that “traps” exist also in this field of social development, and should be further research for benefit of genuine human development.

After my internship, I began to read literature on the middle-income trap, as I had experienced so concretely how development programs often fall into this situation. It appears to me that by not planning development projects from inside-out and by which donors not taking care of the programs after the early development phase, the development programs are doomed to fall into what I call ‘middle-development trap’, that is, not being able to help the community further in their next-level deepest problems. Staying mentally at the level of “food for hungry kids” means that once the kids are not hungry anymore the international corporation agencies, donors and funds stop coming for the programs.

The middle-income trap as a concept, whereon economic growth starts to depend less on elementary economic factors, especially cheap labor, and starts to require a more technological and innovative economic approach is a relatively new concept, though as a somewhat common phenomenon in the international economy practice. The middle-income trap “might be a relatively new phenomenon in a literary sense, but the underlying mechanism is well known” (Glawe & Wagner, 2016. p. 23). There is much discussion about it, but no agreement on a precise definition. However, this thesis is not about economics and does not intend to address the problem of the precise definition of the middle-income trap, but is satisfied with the general idea and wants to use the concept to demonstrate that individual and small-scale development programs often fall into the same kind of trap while doing the proposed development.

In this line, the rough theory of the middle-income trap is that a country, along its way of economic growth, gets trapped in some sort of limbo where it is no longer an under-developed country but cannot leap to the take-off stage where “the economy and the society of which it is part transforms themselves in such ways that economic growth is, subsequently, more or less automatic” (Rostow, 1956. p. 25) in order to generate more growth to become a successful continuously growing Economy, videlicet “countries cannot make a timely transition from resource-driven growth, with low-

cost labor and capital, to productivity-driven growth.” (Kharas and Kohli, 2011. p. 282) They stay at the stage that looks like a comfortable position of economic stability, but it is not a comfortable situation. It is a nagging situation when the country is unable to continue the growth towards a rich Economy, while people somehow expect it to happen, while slogans of high-sounding millennial and other development goals fly around. Theorists can enumerate lots of reasons for this trap, depending on their discipline. Nonetheless, in the international economic scope, to be stagnated in a middle-income trap hampers countries development, where “international competitiveness is undermined giving rise to a growth slowdown.” (Glawe & Wagner, 2016. p. 23)

4 BRAZIL IN THE WORLD OF DEVELOPMENT

The Federative Republic of Brazil is a democratic country composed of 26 states and the Federal District, based on three political levels: the federation, the states, and the municipalities. It is geographically situated in South America bordering every country except Chile and Ecuador. It has always been the biggest country in its continent, and the fifth largest in the world, not only in geographic proportion but also demographically (Meyer, 2010), with nearly 213 million people according to IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2020). For being geographically this large and for its vertically middle position in the global hierarchy the country counts with large natural resources and rich biodiversity. For its demographical proportions, the country also counts with a large number of labor workers and opportunities for improvement of technology. Combining these both aspects Brazil has the tools to leverage on international levels and to project itself in the international arena.

Historically Brazil has always been the country of the future. This has been going on for decades. But yet, in the last few years, it has seemed that this “future” is very near and that the country finally is reaping what it has sowed for all those decades. Even though Brazil is still considered an underdeveloped country, it is well known for its pro-activity in international politics and the global market. Brazil is an important country.

In the past decade, Brazil has been in conversations about how great the country is and how fast it has grown. In an international context, Brazil had been one of the rapidly growing economies, being part of the trade group BRICS (Brazil, Russia,

India, China, and South Africa). The Brazilian economy had been one of the fastest-growing in the world, being the tenth world's largest according to GDP (gross domestic product) and the biggest in its continent (Trading Economics, 2020). Regionally, together with Mexico, Brazil is the biggest political-economic power in Latin America, which goes from Mexico to Argentina. All this economic development has given Brazil a new international recognition and this fact has been used by the government to position itself internationally, though mostly in the Latin American context. The country is part or even the founding member of important groups, such as Mercosul, United Nations, G20, Latin Union, Organization of Ibero-American States and Organization of American States, and also Brazil is an important partner and cooperator of Africa and Asia in development. Even the ex-president of the United States of America Barack Obama perceived it when he pronounced in a visit to Brazil in 2011:

“With each passing day, Brazil is a country with more solutions. In the global community, you've gone from relying on the help of other nations, to now helping fight poverty and disease wherever they exist (...)” (Barack Obama, 2011)

This statement was given by the ex-president of the United States in his first political visit to Brazil, being the first country to be visited during his first international political tour, strategically planned to show how important Brazil has become. But this statement also brings up the ambiguous position of Brazil in the international system, as Obama was too polite, though being diplomatic. In one sense Brazil has become a strong country ready to help others in socio/political/economic necessities, but yet in reality it is also an underdeveloped country. European and North American countries concern with Brazil in terms of business, the market, labor issues, and economic partnership, but yet it is not as highly developed as the expectation is. Brazil continues being the country of the future, decades in, decades out.

Brazil has been strongest in the context of South-South cooperation, an indicator being that “(...) Brazil has more diplomats in Africa than Britain. It is a creditor to the IMF, providing development assistance to 65 countries. It is also promoting forums such as India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) and Brazil-Russia-India-China-South

Africa (BRICS) as well as the G20.” (Foley, 2012) However, the country is not really considered seriously as a great power. It has not succeeded in taking the step up the political-economic system and is still being regarded as an underdeveloped country that is not regarded ready for the responsibilities that a powerful country needs to “run the world”. Brazil moves into the narrow zone between a developing country - which needs help and aid to better develop - and a country diplomatically very proactive.

Brazil also needs social development to become better, not only in the international arena but also domestically. Brazilian government seems very aware of this and tries to utilize this knowledge, trying to reach its population to show a desire for clean politics, as it is seen in speeches of the ex-Brazilian President, Dilma Rousseff, such as:

“The open government is not only transparency and fighting corruption. It is citizenship, participation, and improved delivery of public services that put innovation at the service of policies, such as Education, Health, and Safety. It is, therefore, a democratic modernization project for the twenty-first century, and my country is very interested in the subject and I believe we can contribute.”
(Dilma Rousseff, 2011)

Brazil is not just a member of the Open Government Partnership; it is one of the founding countries and very active. The Brazilian government is very keen on development on a wide front. At the same time, the rest of the world is also developing, and the country of the future seems to be bound to remain eternally in the middle of the international hierarchy. This is not to say that life would not be improving for Brazilian society. It is. There are less hunger and more opportunities in the society than only a few decades ago, which can be seen also in small poor communities. But its international position does not change, either politically or economically. It is a middle-income country in a middle-income trap. “After previously strong per capita growth for about three decades, Brazil’s per capita income has remained nearly unchanged since 1980 (which marked the beginning of the country’s debt crisis) [...]

These developments are accompanied by weak social and institutional indicators: Brazil not only records one of the highest income inequalities worldwide [...] but also performed much worse than the developed countries (e.g., the US, Europe) with respect to institutional quality, measured by the Worldwide Governance Indicators” (Glawe & Wagner, 2016. p. 3)

5 RECONCILIAÇÃO

I'm a Brazilian, born and raised in the south region of São Paulo city, from a not wealthy family. Still, we had a roof over our heads and we always had food on our plates; we were not living on the street. Through one of my childhood friends, my mother became a friend with his mother, and the friendship of these two women was also based on sharing handcraft skills, such as baking, cooking, knitting, and so on. My mother is a non-practicing Catholic and her friend is a practicing Lutheran. This friend invited my mother to be a volunteer in a development project in Vila São José, a neighborhood in the south region of São Paulo city poorer than where we lived, teaching the skills that she knew for the people there. This was my mother's, and mine, first contact with the NGO Programa Comunitário da Reconciliação do Menor.

Whenever my mother went there to teach as a volunteer, I had to go with her, as I had no place else to stay - I was around 6 years old then. I remember not liking to go there because the children there were dirty, the place was ugly and the food, even though free, was tasteless (to not say bad - poor bread with greasy spread butter). But having to go anyways I played in the playground by myself or with my friend, and sometimes I participated in some classes such as knitting and dish towel painting - I didn't really like handcraft works, but I had nothing else to do. Anyway, I learned to know Vila São José well, and thanks to this experience I can also say that I have an almost life-long experience with development projects.

Then, almost 30 years later, I found myself in Vila São José writing my master thesis in Development & International Cooperation while doing my internship in an

NGO working there. I have experienced that the whole community - then very poor and in need of food - now is a somewhat more prosperous one; not that they are wealthy, but the overall economic situation is much better than 30 years ago. Most children and families that use the institution have houses to live in and food to eat, perhaps even cars and fancy cell phones. Also, and perhaps, therefore, the whole institution has changed; it is physically bigger and better structured, the food offered is of very good quality, the staff is now professional with paid salaries. But I also sense it being in a moment of crisis, both economic and existential.

Nevertheless, the institution is still very needed in the community. With the passing of time leading to deeper and longer relationships with the people in the community, it became more evident that although the food was no longer needed, more wide-level support - emotional, mental, and physical - became more and more important. Not only hunger can undermine the development of a person, but also her mental-physical and social surroundings can do it. This community might not anymore really need food for "surviving", but it is deeply affected by violence (external and within families) and drugs, as well as by discrimination.

In 2016 the institution celebrated its 30th anniversary, and after all this time with the evolution of the relationship between the community and the institution, it became evident food is not necessarily the central problem to be addressed in the developmental work, but actually the whole situation appears to be turning more complex and difficult after the elementary physical deprivations have been solved.

With all the international rising of the discourse of development, and also the Brazilian discourse of the importance of social and sustainable development, the approach that the government of São Paulo municipality has towards this institution is still mainly about providing food for the community, where also the intentions of the international donors mainly lie. At the same time, all the projects aimed to address the new deeper problems of the community mentioned above have to be financially supported by national and international donors. Here is the problem the institution is facing at the moment, as nationally these are a common problem and viewed as a governmental responsibility, while internationally the discourse of development between basic needs and basic human rights is still unclear, and therefore the promotion

and engagement on development activities are more focused on monetarily poor “groups of people” and their survival/empowerment.

That can be seen clearly in the Recon. It was initially a project to fight hunger in a specific community, and that problem was resolved, there was development; but the community had and has much deeper problems, including education and the unempowerment culture and short-time planning. The project/program has been used by the community to help the people, but it has lost its purpose. It cannot even elaborate the right way to ensure that financial aid would still keep coming in, as the relationship is somehow on paper still stuck in the “give money to the hungry kids” mode, and that is inadequate with what they have to face now.

The good thing with this organization is that it came from inside-out, so the community itself decided what they needed, and they created a project, and from there they started to look for funding to achieve and support it. The Lutheran church became a bigger support of the project and brought some of its international community people along. More specifically German donors helped a lot by funding the project that was created to give food for the children and training for their parents so neither children nor parents would stay on the streets.

Within 30 years of the program, it was divided into 3 different nuclei: a daycare center for small kids, and an educational care center for bigger kids; that is mainly: after school, instead of staying at home alone or on the streets doing wrong things, they stay in the program for further learning. The third nucleus is precisely the training to the parents and grown-ups on how to empower themselves and support their family by themselves, what already my mother was doing 30 years ago.

I believe here is where everything went somewhat wrong, or at least became disoriented, because the program didn't have a plan, an LFA (Logical Framework Analysis), and didn't have staff trained to follow the plan so the daycare for small children was somehow taken over by São Paulo municipal government that funds 100% of it. The educational care is somewhat also funded by the São Paulo municipal government (about 50-70%), and the training center for the community is a hundred percent reliant on donations by International donors, which is harder and harder to find because they don't want to give money for somebody that has an iPhone; they

want to keep their money for children that are starving. On top of all that the staff is somewhat disconnected as if they DON'T know exactly what they are doing, and why, and for whom, and for what.

5.1 Its history with the poor children in São Paulo

The Programa Comunitário da Reconciliação do Menor started in 1986, though it had some roots of activity going more than 30 years ago. One predecessor was a social development project called Projeto Reconciliação do Menor (or popularly known as Projeto Sopa, which means "Project Soup"). The catholic community of Vila São José had a youth center to assist and help children and youth of the community, but as a fixed institution they had criteria for acceptance, and street children tended to be excluded. It was here that the Soup Project acted. A group of women of the catholic community offered a plate of soup to those children that were excluded from the youth center, though the funds came from the Catholic church.

One priest from the Lutheran church of São Paulo, Eugênio Foehringer, after an internship in the catholic youth center where he visited families in their home and learned their problems, was very interested in helping that community somehow and thus the Lutheran community authorized the construction of a house in the neighborhood, where Eugênio came to live.

"For some reason", implying that someone did not like it, the Soup Project was later canceled and the group of catholic women came to priest Eugênio for help to continue some sort of project to offer food to those children, as they learned about his interest in helping the community. Not only priest Eugênio, but also the Lutheran community liked the idea and the initiative, and thus they built a woodshed in the grounds of the priest's house, donating all the necessary equipment for the project, such as stoves, refrigerators, pans, tables, chairs, etc. Thus, the Projeto da Reconciliação do Menor started.

The project work hours were from 10 am to 3 pm, and within this time the children had two meals and they could play in the yard, help the priest with the vegetable

garden and learn, also with the priest, knitting. As it was a church project, there was also biblical telling of tales and drawings of religiously related pictures. In principle, the project was only this, but after working hours the volunteer catholic women liked to sit with the Lutheran priest to study the bible and to discuss the community and their own problems.

The first donations outside the churches' communities were food and came from the volunteer women or from the residents of the community that saw how much this project was helping the children. The first international donation came in 1987 from a person in the USA, who donated money to buy the neighboring house beside the priest house, there to extend the project activities.

In 1990 another priest from the Lutheran church started his internship with Eugênio Foehringer, who became ill. The main focus of the new priest Dirk Oesselmann was the visitation in the families' house, to have a closer understanding of the problems of those people and the whole community. With the furtherance of priest Eugênio sickness, the community feared the end of the project, therefore they requested a meeting with the members of the Lutheran church to ask that the project was not terminated. The Lutheran community, analyzing and comprehending that the project was already assisting over 60 children, decided that a more formal administration should take place. They assigned a person as a coordinator responsible for administering the project, and they also asked Dirk Oesselmann to continue working in the community as the Lutheran priest in residence.

The number of children and relatives being helped by the project was growing day by day, and the project was still only funded by the volunteer women and few donations, mostly food from the community. Things came to change in 1991, when Projeto da Reconciliação do Menor made its first covenant with AMENCAR (Amparo ao Menor Carente), receiving funds that could pay some of the expenses. Another and perhaps the biggest change came when the social workers of the Municipality started to see how the project was helping that community and started to use the facilities of the project to attend to a wider circle of families of that region. This led to the first contact of the project with the municipal government, and on April 17th of 1994, the project was registered as an NGO - Programa Comunitário Reconciliação do Menor.

In the same assembly of 17th May 1994, there was discussed, voted and approved the Social Statute of Programa Comunitário Reconciliação do Menor, which stated that the administrative board would be composed of volunteers and it would be changed every 3 years in a voted assembly. It was also written in the Social Statute of 1994 in the art. 2 that “(Reconciliação) has the following purpose: to attend to the deprived population, especially the children and the teens, developing the dignity of each individual and promoting social justice through the formation, education, and professionalization of the teens, attending of the families, organizing income creation courses, full-time education of children and teens, and, moreover, social and juridical assistance of general and cultural activities.”

From there on, in 2001, the institution signed a covenant with the municipal government of São Paulo City, in which was stated the amount of financial support for the payment of salaries for the staff and supplies for materials and food for a total of 60 children (although by then the institution was already supporting over 90 children of the area). The covenant stipulated also financing running expenses of the institution such as water and energy. With this covenant also came more regulations to follow upon, related to the work of the staff, the quality of the physical structure, and how to approach the needs of the children. Thus, big changes were made in the institution to support all these responsibilities, but still, the NGO required donations to allow it to continue helping the over 90 children and with projects that the covenant did not support.

5.2 Its functioning

The Reconciliação works to promote human development in its community. Though it started as aid and care for children, soon enough it was seen that it was needed more than that, and an enlargement of its target public was made to absorb adolescents and adults, meaning parents and other family members. There are many ways Reconciliação uses to achieve the goals of human development they seek. In this fight for development, the institution focuses on children, youth, and adults. And each one of these groups has a different need to reach individual development.

Growing from a simple development project until the legal creation of the Programa Comunitário Reconciliação do Menor in 1994, the goals of the institution was concrete, focusing mainly on helping the poor and giving them food. With the legalization of the NGO in 1994, the institution discussed and approved in assembly the first Social Statute of the Programa Reconciliação do Menor, and from there they elaborated a more conceptually constructed goal of charity. Still, in the first Social Statute, the ideals were quite concrete, as the thoughts of the participants were focused on helping the community in its needs. Thus, the purpose was “[Reconciliação] has the purpose: to attend to the deprived population, especially the children and the teens, developing the dignity of each individual and promoting social justice through the formation, professionalization of the teens, attending to the families, income creation courses, full-time education of children and teens, social and juridical assistance as general and cultural activities.” Along the time, the people linked with the project/program started to become a bit more professional about the institution, and from this was developed the first, and only, Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) of the institution when preparing a plan for the period 2002-2005. The program needs systematic and holistic planning and unification of the goals and practices. The resulting LFA of the NGO was from 2005, but it is indicative of the haphazard system of administration that it has never been updated. In fact, the LFA was a lost document I found among administrative papers I was allowed to peruse. It was a document that almost nobody remembered nor knew that it existed. I explained to administrators that this document cannot be just updated; organization goals have to be done over and over again on a continuous basis. But they said they would just update it because there is nobody that has the skills to do an LFA. The first one was made because 15 years ago there was an intern from Europe visiting to learn development work and he/she did the LFA for the Reconciliação. As this person was no longer in the institution, the skill was not passed forward.

In 2010 a new Social Statute of Programa Comunitário da Reconciliação was registered and on it, some changes were made, such as the name, where it was necessary to drop the word “de Menor” (meaning “of underage”). Also changed was article 2 that disposes of the institution’s purpose, and here it was added a Unique Paragraph

that disposes of how the institution will assist the community, and thus already showing that the covenant with the Municipality was shifting the NGO to a Social Assistant Program of the government. (CONSTITUIÇÃO: NACIONAL E MUNICIPAL)

Art. 2 - The RECONCILIAÇÃO has for purpose the provision of permanent service in the area of social assistance, educational, recreational, sportive and cultural, developing activities of human promotion in own programs or, supplementing the public action to the attendance to social groups excluded socially and economically, in special to the attendance to children and adolescents according to pre-recognized guidelines from the Statute of Children and Adolescents (ECA), assistance to families, accordingly foreseen in the Bylaw of Social Assistance (LOAS) and deriving legislation.

Unique Paragraph: - The RECONCILIAÇÃO will maintain its own programs or in covenant with public powers and partnership with the private sector, as follows:

- Assistance to Children in Infantile Education Centers;
- Assistance to Adolescent in Youth Centers of Companionship;
- Courses of Capacity or Integration of the Adolescent and Young to work markets and Income creation;
- Attendance to families in exclusion situations;
- Defense and Preservation of life and other rights individual or collective.

However, in this matter, many members of the staff seem lost regarding what is the purpose of the institution. They want to help but they don't really know what the institution is about. There are a lot of buzzwords flying around that the workers do not really know what they mean in the practical every-day applicability within the institution. Surprisingly many staff members also have no clue why the Lutheran church is part of the institution, why the directory is formed by the church's members, and why there is a Fundação Luterana de Diaconia (meaning Diaconal Lutheran Foundation) in the institution. They know nothing of the institutional history of Reconciliação, which is an indication of the lack of organizational communication there. Many people simply do their daily chores.

Over the years the institution divided itself into three nuclei to better assist each of the different age groups of people that will receive the human development from projects made direct to them. Such nuclei are Cantinho da Criança (meaning “kid’s corner”, also called by Creche - meaning “daycare”), Centro da Criança e do Adolescente (meaning “Center for Children and Adolescent”, also called by C.C.A., a youth center) and Cantinho da Comunidade (meaning “community corner”, where the community can talk and discuss their problems and dilemmas in their environment).

Cantinho da Criança (Creche) caters to children from 2 to 3 years old, because after that the children have to go to the governmental school called EMEI and afterward, at age 6 they can move to Center for Children and Adolescents (C.C.A.), also called “Sede” (headquarter). In Creche the focus is the small children, not only to take care of them while their parents are working but also to develop with them the notion of development. There the collaborators work with “infantile development”, offering good food, love, care, affection, kindness, and creating a warm childhood, which sometimes is lost in the troubles their parents are living in - long working hours, violence, drug use, and drug trafficking, etc.

The C.C.A. divides its working hours into 2 periods, mornings and afternoons, thus the children that go to school in the morning use that institution on afternoons and vice-versa. Here the children/youth are divided by age groups, from 6 to 15 years old, and they receive “classes” on human development. In here the institution tries to stimulate the social sense they started working in the infants back in the kindergarten, such as equality, empowerment, progress, and also the education of professional skills so that they can go to the work market prepared and not fall back into easy ways of living, such as violence, prostitution, or drugs trafficking, because of income deficit. Each month there is a theme to be worked with the children, themes that promote the human development said above. Also, there are few projects, viewed as courses, to tackle such development in other ways. So, the C.C.A. also offers “courses” such as carpentry, theater, capoeira, music, and some sports.

One of the priests, Roberto Batista, of the Lutheran church is a volunteer collaborator that visits the institution twice a week, one day afternoon and one day morning, so he can work with “all” the children. He goes to one class each month and works

with this class on the theme they are working on in that period. He is always side-by-side with his guitar and he always sings to and with the children. The songs he sings are self-made and they all have an educational and evangelical theme. Thus, he tries to “touch” the children, bringing into their consciousness important issues in life such as respect for others with the joy of music.

The Community Corner (C.C.) is a center aimed at the wider community, mostly the adults - parents and families - that operates mainly on donations. For this part of the institution, there is no covenant with the Municipality. Here the community receives professional development treatment, in classes of capacitation and income generation such as knitting, sewing, cooking, baking, information technology, etc. There is again the emphasis on human development and empowerment for those people that live a reality of inferiority, dependence (either governmental or individual), emphasizing attention towards not only external elements such as the community, government, and environment, but also towards internal family situations, including violence towards women and children, single mothers or fathers of many children, and culture of the ordinary conduct of life.

Here, another Lutheran church priest, Hermann Wille is also a volunteer collaborator. He goes once a week to the institution to conduct a discussion with the families of the community, the gathering is called *Cantinho do Desabafo* (which means “relief corner”). There the people can talk about their problems in a group and discuss together the better solution for their worries. This priest goes there to be the mediator and to always remind those troubled people that they are not alone. He also talks about evangelical topics to emphasize his point and gives some psychological support.

The institution has the covenant with São Paulo municipality to assist 360 children under two of its main projects - *Cantinho da Criança* (Creche) and Center for Children and Adolescent (C.C.A.). A great part of the staff that care for these 360 children is paid by the Municipality - in a document sent to the institution, the Municipality stated that it will pay for 16 staff members for the C.C.A. and 16 staff members for the Kindergarten - in a total of 32 staff members out of 38 staff of the institution, that include the managers, a cook, assistants, cleaners, etc.

Major donors are international; there are almost no national donors. The German community is the biggest source of patronage of the institution, the national German community in the Lutheran church being a link to international Germans. There is a great bureaucracy to receive foreign donations. Most of the contacts with international donors are made by “word of mouth”, meaning personal contact, thus there are always complications on keeping donors if changing circumstances cause loss of this contact person.

A great part of these international donors was aiding the project/program since the beginning when the focus was fighting hunger. Once this issue was solved, there had to be done a big work on keeping those donors to continue donating so that the institution could shift its goal to the next level problems, human development, and violence. Once again, as it is 1 or 2 people to do the work of contact and connect the donors, and it is also voluntary work, the situation becomes difficult because understandably there was resistance to continue donating. The institution does not live only on donations, as it also has covenants to cover its expenses. The biggest covenant, as said before, is with the Municipality, but this covenant does not, and cannot, cover 100% of the institution’s expenses. Thus, if there are no donations to support the part that the covenants do not cover, there is no way to maintain the institution. Unfortunately, this is the situation where the institution is living now. A certain amount of funding outside of the Brazilian public system is indispensable.

According to rounded 2014 figures, the institution budget included donations on the order of R\$350.000,00 - meaning roughly 100.000 €. The account for running the institution yearly is around R\$2.000.000,00 - or around 600.000 €, so donations covered about 15% of the institution's yearly costs¹. This extra money comes from donations from the private sector and organizations for development. These are substantial sums.

The covenant with Municipality was the basic financial aid for the institution, and in times when the international aid and donors are abandoning them, this

¹ These numbers were verbally told to me within my participant observation.

covenant is what keeps the payments and the place running. But this covenant is linked to a reality that is not necessarily the community reality. This covenant with Municipality goes by the number of helped children, and not by how they are developed. So, the institution loses the covenant (or part of it) if it doesn't have a certain amount of children applied per year. But economically the surrounding community has developed, so the families want to pay their children to go to courses, such as English courses and swimming classes, IT education. The children would stay only part-time in the institution, to be helped in the issues that even the institution also say is the bigger problem in the region, namely violence. But the covenant rule is that the children should be in the care full time or nothing. Thus 2 sides are losing here - the children and the institution. So, is it worth to have this covenant? Yet, it is a large amount of money that the covenant offers.

Courses exist in principle, but they have to wait for a donation to start, after which the institution can pay the teacher. What is not very clear to me is “what came first: the egg or the chicken?” - meaning what happened first: the loss of volunteers - therefore the need to pay somebody to give some courses - or the start of paying some teachers - and then the others thought “if they pay her why not me also, so I will not volunteer anymore; if you need me you pay to me too”.

About volunteering in the institution, as it was a charity place run entirely by volunteers in its earlier years, and lately, it became more and more scarce. It is said that it is very hard to have volunteers in Brazil and that there is tight legislation about internships and volunteering that just make it very hard. I made a fast research about volunteer legislation in Brazil, and what I found was Law n° 9.608 from 18.02.1998 that stated volunteer work as a non-remunerated work, served by a natural person to a public entity of any nature or to a non-profitable private institution that has civic, cultural, educational, scientific, recreational or social-assistential objectives; and that the volunteer work doesn't generate employment bond nor any obligation of work-taxes-rights (BRAZIL, 1998). Moreover, there has to be a signed “work contract” stating what the volunteer will work and how will be the work conditions for him/her to develop the work. This all looks quite normal, so the problem is not in the basic law. In 2008 there was also legislation for Internship in Brazil, Law n° 11.788 from 25.9.2008.

This legislation was well-received by interns and companies in Brazil, with one exception: about the international internships and professional exchange. The Law nº 11.788 and the Normative Resolution nº 88 from 15.9.2010 and nº 94 from 16.3.2011 stated that international interns have to be enrolled in a national educational institution and professional exchanges have to have a normal work contract, and therefore be enrolled in the national bureaucracy of documents and taxation (BRAZIL, 2008; BRAZIL, 2010; BRAZIL, 2011). This takes about 2-4 months to arrange and by then the students and interns have mostly finished their period in the country. Thus, companies and institutions have been complaining since then there has been a significant drop in the number of international internships and that this is not good.

So, in the case of Reconciliação, the momentary cut on receiving international interns is understandable, but this does not explain the drop of national volunteers, as Brazil in fact has a high number of volunteers. I did not see any volunteers in the institution. After asking around if there were any, I received the answers saying no or saying that there were 2 in the kitchen of the C.C.A. and none in the kindergarten. This did not appear very clear, but anyway, volunteers are no more the way the institution is being run.

5.3 The I-YOU introspective

Since my arrival in the Recon and listening to people talking about the institution, my feeling is that they are walking on a knife. They have a goal, though the people within the institution are not too sure exactly what this goal is, and they need funds for it. There is the covenant with the Municipality, which was, and still is, a good financial aid for the institution, and in times when the international aid and donors are abandoning them, this covenant is what keeps the payments and the place running. But this covenant is linked to a reality that is not necessarily the community reality, and it could actually be holding back the institution towards their goals, with the rules for supporting it, rules that redirect the goals of the institution for a completely different way which they need and want, and also all the time and the attention of the staff

members are focused on fulfilling this covenant goal spot. Also, the families of the community don't want or need to let the children at the institution for the whole day as before - the families now can afford English courses and swimming classes to "fill up" the children's time out of school - and this affects the support received by the Municipality, as they pay per capita and the children should stay full time in the institution. Nonetheless, we can consider Recon a successful project, as it did a good job of helping the community develop financially. But, as said before, the real need of the community right now has shifted; not anymore for fighting hunger, but for fighting violence and to empower the children against it.

Fortunately, on the edge of its 30th anniversary, the institution is reviewing its goals, its need within the community, its way to the future, and thus reviewing which alliance are good and which are not, and what is needed for them to redirect the role of the institution in the community so that they can help empower those children against a stream so hard to swim against. As it is said in the opening of the paper:

"The mission of the Programa Comunitário (da Reconciliação) is to promote human development for the entire citizenship of children, youth and adults (...) towards the rescue of dignity and citizenship."

Within the I-YOU introspection, I retain the anonymity of all participants and subjects, but I combine their views of the institution and its issues to have a grasp of where Recon is within the eyes of its own people - staff and community. And I believe it is very important to state here that the entirety of the interviews and observations were of extreme emotions, which though I cannot shake the feeling that all this emotion also made me see more the bad stuff going on there than the good ones, it indicates me that willingness and heart of the people are emotionally committed to the institution. As one of the interviewees said to me:

"Whoever brought you here is my hope for a return to thinking Recon."

Or perhaps I had such a feeling also because I had somehow been part of the institution in my childhood and had felt already that it was not as it was before. Of course, it shouldn't be, as it was about 20 years ago and the program must have developed from what it was before, otherwise it would be a sign of no development of the community and equally a failure of the program.

Throughout my participant observations, I could see and feel that there are many issues in the institution *Reconciliação*, and some of them are important to the development of the institution's work. But the greatest issue as I see is communication, or better, the missing of it. Also from some participants, there is a pessimistic vision of the institution, with one saying to "wish to be fired, so I wouldn't have my heart broken even more for what is about to come" and another saying "perhaps the end [of Recon] is not that far".

There seems to be a general discontent about the administrative board of *Programa Comunitário da Reconciliação* as it was brought up by the majority of the interviewees. It is stated in the institution's statute that the board has to be voted every 3 years and that its members work voluntarily, so no monetary compensation is paid. And perhaps for this reason, though there are many people on it, very few are active on work and help the institution, as within the interviewees it was said "the board is not 100% [committed], the majority [of its members] are ghosts [that appear only for the annual meeting]" and that "we need a more active board". One interviewee discloses that "there is a huge discordance between what the administration [of Recon] wants and what the board wants [for the institution]. The board bans and stifles the development [of the institution]", mostly seen for financial reasons. By the time I was doing my participant observations, there was a lawyer as president of the board and it seemed that he/she had a more business view to administrate the institution, as one interviewee disclosed to have heard from the president on an occasion about some plan for a project that "the account is simple", meaning that such project couldn't be budgeted, while another interviewee complained that "on paper, all is accepted and in the reports they [the board] only show the good things"

I observed a good amount of people, within all my observation's spheres, separating the *Programa Comunitário da Reconciliação* into 3 bodies: Board - Church -

Recon, and these bodies do not work organically for the development of the institution, as a participant said “the board has a relationship towards the institution in a more vertical than a horizontal view. It is not a partnership”. Despite these pessimistic views towards the board, there is nonetheless hope for an entity, because as said “the board is the link to think the whole”, though “the president [of the board] is not the sole thinker of the institution”.

When the interviewees talk about “the whole”, they are meaning the entire institution, the Recon as a program, because throughout its 30 years of history the institution was divided into 3 nuclei and the partition of Reconciliação into 3 centers was one issue brought up by all of the participants, and mostly seen as not the best thing that could have happened.

With the division of the institution into 3 nuclei, there has also been the division of the administration of them. There are 3 powers in the administration of the institution and though some people see that “they are different manifestations of the same program”, there is almost no communication between them. Thus, it is easy to see one criticizing the others and blaming them for all the problems, and even alienate them as separate parts, as if the institution itself was not made of all of them, as one participant talks about the daycare center as “the daycare administration [that is 100% funded by the covenant with the Municipality] has an armoring attitude, as if in a survival context, [and with that] it is very little democratic” towards communication with the other centers; perhaps each administrative center sees itself as an institution on its own and not as a project within the program. And even though they are all working for the same program for development, it is quite easy to see that they do not see the same goals for the institution.

In some spheres, I see the acknowledgment of this miscommunication, and the willingness for a better understanding of the Reconciliação as a whole when I hear “the closer together [we are] the better”, but perhaps not from all the spheres, because I kept listening to the same complain of “there is no interest in having a union of the whole” and “there is no attempt to unify the 3 centers”; and also, it has been like this for a quite some time, that there is already the defense mechanism towards the other, so the listening process of communication is already damaged from the start - the

division into centers, which brings the administration of the program of Reconciliação to a snowball of miscommunication, that is well acknowledged because they know as they said, “there hasn't been the sustainability of the projects, for lack of communication, and therefore they failed.”

Another issue with the institution is that the majority of the interviewees and the people subject to my observations see that the charity institution lost its heart. There is a general feeling, from staff and the children, that the institution now feels like a school, an extra school because the public schools of São Paulo operate always part-time, so that the children are at school in the mornings (7-11 am) or afternoons (1-5 pm), so the parents use the institution to take care of their children while they are at work and they don't have another place to care for the children meanwhile. It fails to be a charity institution, being instead of an “institution of social assistance of the municipal government”, as I heard one staff member say to a mother that wanted to enroll her 2 children there. Thus, the family, if it wants to enroll the children in the institution, has to register itself in the municipal government's social system, to be able to receive social benefits, the institution being one of them. So, it is not anymore the place that received all the needy children of the community to work with them on the problems they had.

The blame for that falls a lot in the covenant made with the São Paulo municipality; all the requirements and demands of the covenant from the 2 centers under it made the Reconciliação too institutionalized - meaning that it lost its character of charity work to become more like a company where numbers are more important than development results, as I heard in one interview that “we [Recon] institutionalized ourselves so much [keeping such covenant] that now we are wondering about our purpose”.

There seems to be a legal difference between covenant and partnership, one that my research could just not grasp, but that feels somewhat important because I kept listening to the complaint that “partnerships are lost to institutionalization and money”, also when it was brought to my attention the case of another institution from a neighboring community - Institution Monte Azul - as they just got a partnership with a very good private hospital for donations of medical supplies and volunteer

doctors to work there for the community, and the question in the air is what wrong has been done in the Recon's administration that it is so hard for them to get any donation and even harder to keep them? Though for this question one participant complained that "it is easier to function under the covenant; this is the lack of interest [in really working for the benefit of Recon and the community]". But this is not what all the workers in the institution think, as I heard "we are too much under the routine."

One thing that kept coming back and forth is the lack of volunteers in the institution and the mistreating of the ones that were still there. Volunteers there are treated similarly as employees and demanded from them a level of professionalism as it is demanded from an employee. Thus, the spirit of charity gets lost for capitalism.

The year 2014 closed with 23 volunteers, the majority of this number worked on cleaning and assistance; and very few of them were volunteers in the Cantinho to provide courses to the community targeted on generating income and human development. Though in the cooking courses there were still some volunteers, all of them were old students that came to volunteer because of what the institution had done for them in the early days, and in gratitude, they come sometimes to volunteer on special occasions, such as Easter (to make Easter chocolate eggs), Christmas (to make some Christmas food) or some other event that they know there is need to do something special for the community. There are whispers that one of them said she doesn't want to come to volunteer there anymore because she doesn't feel her effort is recognized. Nonetheless, there is an acknowledgment that "everybody deserves to earn" for their work and time; but at the same time, from the regular staff of Recon, there is such a view exposed by a participant that "they [the volunteers] are going to surpass my work", and somehow with time "Recon started to trim down [the volunteers]".

The problem seen with the cutting of the numbers of volunteers is that it also was taking away the spirit of charity of the institution, as one interviewee said "the spirituality has also been lost" and another said, remembering the time when the whole institution functioned only on volunteer charity working, that "the volunteering would mean the community inside the institution". Thus, the lack of volunteer work in Recon is seen as synonymous with the "failure" of the institution and a sign of a very bad administration of resources.

That is probably the reason to talk about the third center, the Community Corner (commonly called C.C.), is so avoided and, as I felt every time I forced it in a conversation, so hurtful; because as one interviewee said “there were a bureaucratization and institutionalization of Recon, but the C. C. still is all heart”.

All that was observed does not stray from my research hypothesis that there is a middle-development trap within human development activities, in which after the basic needs are fulfilled the pursuing of basic human rights might be seen as less important and therefore disregarded for further projects and funds/ donations. And I see here a clear example of it.

Take that the Daycare center is 100% funded by a covenant with the São Paulo municipality, the Center for Children and Adolescents (C.C.A.) is about 50%-70% funded also by a covenant with the São Paulo municipality, and in Community Corner center (C.C.) is 100% funded by donations, which are year by year more scarce. And in one interview I got a great summarizing of Recon - the goals, the 3 centers, the program - as “the human development [of Recon] is divided per center. The daycare offers basic needs. The C.C.A. offers education, physical and mental development, and socialization & fraternization. The C.C. offers the tools so they [the people of the community] can rediscover themselves professionally and personally”. The joining of these two pieces of information shows that, even though the community still needs the institution, the knowledge that all basic needs are fulfilled restraints - on projects, funds, donations, and attitude - the further development towards the basic human rights, human development, and empowerment. Perhaps that is why there is the feeling of abandonment and negligence towards and from the C.C. center, and as said by a participant “[there is the] shortage of money and motivation, with good courses [projects]. There is a big depreciation [of C.C. work] and it is a concern.”

It was already March² and the activities in the C.C. had not yet started because they were waiting for an aid to be approved so they could pay the teachers for some courses. When a participant said “there is nobody to think about the sustainability of

² The school year and educational activities in Brazil starts in January.

the C.C.” it shows me the disregard and the middle-development trap faced by the center for human development towards basic human rights.

One participant remembered what was to be a charity institution, to work for the other, to “give without waiting to receive”, to see the other as one to be helped and not just one more number in some file. The projects that are planned in the Recon are fewer and fewer, and there is also a disconnect within the institution on how and why. But the one thing they all agreed in some way, unknowingly, is that the need of the community is no longer the main reason for existence, and all of them expressed it with a hurt feeling. One interviewee said, “Recon offers what the community asks for through C.C.; they come seeking for courses and thereby we know what they want”, but also continued right after with a quote of a song:

“The people know what they want.

But people also want what they don't know” (Gil, 1998)

But this is not necessarily how the rest of my observation’s subjects see this relationship between community and institution. For most of the interviewees “Recon works by deduction, there is no interaction with the community”, and this perception is the one that feels more right to me when I did my internship.

Throughout the 3-4 months of my participant observations, there were no relations with the community that I could see, no gathering with the community members. The only people from the community I got to see were the parents trying to enroll their children in the C.C.A., and in one interview that was pointed out in a complaining tone that “we [Recon] don’t want the community here inside, we want only the parents”, because, when enrolling their children, they are the ones bringing the numbers the institution needs to be funded by the municipal covenant. Another interviewee complained that “the Recon constrains the community” to come inside and be part of the evolution of the institution. Moreover, this interviewee also said that “it is missing the visit to the community! [so far] the community is simply the recipient of the services provided [by the Recon]”. And such services, that should be seen as development projects within the program, are also not planned for the benefit of the community, as I heard quite too often in my observations “the projects are not made

by all [the institution's stakeholders], but by few [the top of a hierarchy]" and " the projects are made from inside out."

Even though I argued that a development project should be done from inside out at the beginning of this paper, the "inside" part here has been distorted. The "inside" should be the community, the ones needing the help, but the above statement puts the community as an outsider, like the ones that shouldn't be listened to, and ones that should simply be grateful that someone is doing something to help, regardless if that specific help is even needed. Perhaps this has happened to this organization because as pointed out to me "not all the members [of the institution] embrace the cause".

And how does the institution get its funding and volunteers, and how has that changed in history? These questions describe its relation to the field of development aid, and also could indicate my research hypothesis of the middle-development trap that human development activities face in receiving funds and donations.

For starters, the covenant with the Municipality offers the bigger funds amount, and it came to be what is today when there was a merge between Recon and another institution that had to close its doors. In this process also came 120 children from the closing institution to Reconciliação. Thus, in 2006 the Reconciliação had 2 covenants with Municipality, its own for 180 children and another from the closing institution for 180 children. But this merger didn't bring only extra children and one more fund source, it also brought more staff, as the ones working in the closing NGO came to work for Reconciliação. With all these new elements - covenant, staff, and children - and adding to it a probable mistake in financial administration, the institution's financial reserves were dried up by paying all these extra staff and projects. It was available for the institution with the possibility of having about one coordinator/manager for each position, resulting in having too many coordinators, with therefore too many high salaries to be paid, and as the covenant of C.C.A. with the Municipality does not cover 100% for its bills, these payments came out of the financial margins Reconciliação had. And with the drawdown of donations, this financial margin/reserve was almost dried up.

From 2010 onwards the Reconciliação started to try to rethink its financial strategic planning, and 2013 being financially the worst year so far for the institution when they went from 60 staff members to today's 38. Supposedly it was a good thing for the financial side of the problems, but having still the 360 children to administer and one of the lowest drawdown years on donations, the remaining staff became too busy and therefore the work for human development to the community was affected, as one interviewee pointed out that "the people are overloaded and overwhelmed, and this is a problem because for that reason Recon doesn't evolve forward".

One could argue, as the people from my participant observation do, that it is unclear why the institution lost so much of its donations, and therefore they have to operate according to the covenant with the Municipality, otherwise, they would not have any financial resources to keep the institution running. But with a bit of open ears and heart, and the introspection research, many reasons actually surface.

I heard from all my interviewees some version of the fact that the institution is not organically working, but merely surviving, such as "we are trying to survive", and "we are just surviving". And the more explicit "the daily survival prevents us from doing the link of the Recon". The link meaning precisely what the institution should be doing, to unite and connect the 3 centers, the administrative board, the community, and the donors towards the development and evolution of the institution towards working for the human development that is needed in the community. Perhaps the better pathway towards more funds and donations is not only the pursuit of it, but more the pursuit for this link, as an interviewee said, "it is necessary to treasure more [the Recon], more than just with money".

I could see and feel that this appreciation, or in fact the missing of it, for the institution and mostly for its people is one issue that does make the difference on what the Recon is about, and how it got where it is now, and most importantly how they could climb out of the hole of troubles they are in.

A participant said: "we need people passionate about Recon", but they had them, several ones, that didn't have their work and efforts recognized nor valued. Some volunteers could use their international connections to secure donations to the institution by mouth work in the German community to promote the work Recon was

doing. It is unanimous throughout my entire participant observation that this work was of utmost importance to the institution, and that nobody ever appreciated it. All the interviews and “listening” I had about these volunteers were said in a hurt emotional tone, as “she had many criticisms [about how Recon had been run], but nobody wanted to listen” and “the board didn’t appreciate [...]”.

How the depreciation of this one volunteer worker could be seen as to have damaged so much Recon? Well, this volunteer alone was the money bringer of the institution, most of the private donations came because through it, and this volunteer was really passionate about Recon, and truly believed in its work and the human development it was doing and could do, as an interviewee said “[...] was really aimed towards the future [of Recon]” and another pointed that “[this person] wanted to share”. Even though I knew that this volunteer work for the Recon was very important to understand the past, present, and perhaps the future of the institution, I could not dig much from my subjects, because from all the emotions and even pain that they felt, the talk about it was the one thing that I felt was too much for them to bear. The leaving of this person from the institution was of some emotional pain, perhaps even personal for some participants. Therefore I simply conclude here the work of passionate volunteers that worked vigorously to promote the work for human development Recon does, to bring in donations and aimed to further help the community; but a work that was depreciated in such a way that, once such volunteers were gone from the institution there was nobody that could continue the work, and perhaps, therefore, there was such drawdown on private donations.

“[The person] always wanted to share [the work and the knowledge to seek donors and donations], but no one wanted to listen [...pause...], and it was excluded.”

Notwithstanding, the institution needs more funds and donations, and partnerships, to pursue the work towards human development. They need the funds to take the leap from basic needs, as this development was achieved, to tackle the basic human rights the community needs to develop further to its empowerment. And the

institution wants to work more on looking for more aid, but they don't have the staff for it, and the ongoing staff doesn't have the skills to create projects needed to ask for financial aid. They would need a specific development expert only to create for them some marketable projects so that they could receive aid for more projects to work on the other issues of the community that with only the Municipality's covenant they cannot. More than one interviewee said, "we could do more to receive more donations, if we would only have such staff in the area [of development]."

Needing so much of the donations to keep functioning, the institution endures also the issue that many donors are sporadic, even one-time donors only. Thus, though donors still exist, the institution's planners cannot project their budget based on it. Moreover, these sporadic or one-time donors usually donate to the implementation of one specific project, and only the materials needed for it, but not the staff needed, nor securing the continuity of the project.

I also see as a donation problem the fact that the whole website of the institution is in Portuguese and German, but nothing in English. This way they are cutting out many possible donors around the planet that could be interested in the program and their project and might want to be part of it. This was also seen by one participant, as said "there is no "Brazil" [in the Recon], we depend too much from "Germany", meaning that most of the donations that the institution has, and has had in its history, came from German donors.

The language of a website might seem not as important, but Marketing is a central element of the development aid scene nowadays, and because there is so much competition globally, it has to be done skillfully, or there is "loss of donations due to lack of marketing and communication". Rising from abject poverty to the middle-development trap level definitely is a betterment, but it also reveals clearly how new skills become sorely needed.

Also, the institution has a bank account for donations, but they do not have the marketing about "adopting a child" for example. I see in Finland and Europe that the notion of "adopt a child" is well spread. It is a good and easy way for morally conscious individuals in rich countries to help. Many institutions get a lot of monthly/annual donations through this strategic mechanism of channeling morality into money.

But I do not understand why it is so bureaucratically difficult to do this for the Reconciliação. It might not be necessarily ethical, as the need of the community has shifted from the already achieved basic needs. But if the view of most donors to development projects still only sees basic needs for 'practical strategic' and say "what else I still would have to help?" or "[if the children are not in hunger anymore] why should I continue to help?", why not use it in such a way that allows the donors to see more of the community, and also it could bring the financial resource the institution needs, as an interviewee understands that "more donations equal more projects [better-structured ones], and that means more human development can be done".

Human development! So, this is the main goal of Programa Comunitário da Reconciliação. But then, what does it actually mean and how does the institution promote it for the community? Those are a few questions that showed how disconnected the stakeholders are, and the lack of communication that reigns in the institution.

It becomes clear to me that there is a misunderstanding of the ideals and goals of the institution for today, or worse, it is very unclear where they are going. As I bring up the question of what is the ideal of Reconciliação, each one of the participants gives me a different answer, though it is always a by heart answer. From one person the answer came as "provision of food, the guarantee of basic needs, formation & citizenship and culture - that is missing in the community". For me these answers were a bit unclear because firstly provision of food was the goal for the beginning of Reconciliação and the conversation about the development of the institution's goal brought up that that is no longer the need of the community; secondly, a quick question of "what does this actually mean?" showed that it is nothing but one among many buzzwords that sounds great but nobody would really know what they mean and how to pursue it. And I did not dig in the culture part, as the notion of the word culture by itself is so broad that even for academics it would be difficult to elaborate, though I believe she meant more music and arts and literature classically.

As mentioned earlier in the paper, the Lutheran church is a great contributor to the institution and its priests are regular volunteers, not to mention that it is the reason there is a Programa Comunitário da Reconciliação in the first place. So it is a shock to me when I hear "it is a mystery the role of the church here in the Recon"

“what does ‘diaconia’ have anything to do with the institution activities?” Though I have to stress that such questionings came mostly from the people that worked less than 10 years in the institution. Nonetheless, the no acknowledgment of the work of the church in the institution is, at least, a complete disregard to Recon’s history and its development activities in the community.

Notwithstanding, moving to the issue of the buzzwords I encountered in the 3 months of observations in the Reconciliação, such as formation & citizenship, human development, communitarian mobilization, social-familial support, diaconia, etc, almost none of the staff members could explain what would it mean as the purpose of Reconciliação, nor their applicability within the projects offered. And I tried to ease up for them, making a connection between the projects the institution has and those buzzwords, and that was when I had the feeling that they didn’t know how those projects (music, capoeira, theater) were linked with the purpose and goals terminologies. Thus, it is easier for them to hold on to the subjective emotional context of “it is to seed dreams in the hearts of these children” or “the mission is the communitarian development. Together in a single objective: take care of the children and spread values & principles”.

Hence, all these buzzwords that the stakeholders do know by heart to present the goals of the institution sound wise and fine, but what kind of use are these words listed when you are in a small community in the middle of people practicing something that is supposed to be development? What to do when people know some of these words, but not necessarily what they mean, or what relation they have on the daily life of the community?

Herein I expound on two focus groups I was part of, to access how the stakeholders see the institution and its activities. One, in which I was merely a participant observer, where the target subject was the staff of the institution. The other, in which I was the moderator, where the subject target were the children using the C.C.A. - aged 13 to 15.

Starting with the former and pointing that most of the participants were teachers or caretakers of the children. The meeting started with a simple question: “what is the definition of ‘pedagogy’?” and to my surprise, they could not answer such a

question. Then there was a discussion on the meaning of 'diaconia' - as a volunteer work from the church to the community. It means to serve the people; the service of the church (meaning the people) to the world (meaning the needy) - and what it represents to the Recon and then the participants were separated into 4 groups to discuss within themselves a few topics, such as "what is the philosophy of Recon?", "What is Recon?", "What does Recon do?" and "How does Recon do it?". Precisely, each group had a different answer for it each, and even the answers that were given showed the buzzwords that fly around and the miscommunication within the institution. At first, there was a bit of confusion of what the first question was really asking, as what is 'philosophy' of Recon was unclear to understand; nonetheless, the answers came as "to help", "to serve", "it is confusing" and one group could agree and did not answer; after they discussed those answers there was a consensus that "we don't know anymore what is the philosophy of Recon!". Then the one question/answer that is very clear to all participants is that Recon is an institution divided into three centers: Creche works with and for the children, C.C.A. works with and for the families, and C.C. works with and for the community. Therewith, what the Recon does is also, and still, unclear and confusing for the participants, as the answers came as "to promote" - but there was not a 'what' -, "to interact" - yet to clear with whom -, "to serve", "to embolden" - those were clear towards the community -, and "to give opportunity" - yet not clear what kind of opportunity. In answers to "how the institution does the above", the buzzwords came back as "events and activities for social-education and social-cultural", but nobody could point to a project that represents exactly this. As I said, it was a focus group with all the employees of the institution, and the four groups, perhaps on purpose, were mixed with employees from the 3 centers. Thus, the confusion of the ideals and the goals of the institution happened precisely because they seem different for each center, and as one participant said "we don't know in-depth the work of the other", meaning that within the staff of the Recon, they don't know the work done by the other center that is not the one they work for. In the end, there was a cry for better understanding, dedication, and interest for the institution as a whole, because "this here is a dream for some people" and "we are the mirror [of the community]; we need to be the example".

Moving to the focus group with the children using the C.C.A., I intended to figure out their notion of the institution and the development it is doing in their lives. Thus I made group questions such as “What is Reconciliação?” and “what is CCA?”, “What is the goal of Reconciliação for them?”, “What do they learn in there and how it helps them in their life and future?”, “Whose and to who is Reconciliação, and who commands the institution?”, “Without the Reconciliação where would they be, and how would be their future?”, “Those young ones you know and that are not in here, why are they not in the Reconciliação?” and for the last “What is good and what is bad in the Reconciliação?” It was not an easy task, with all the noise and all wanting to talk at the same time, I had to yell several times for them to be quiet and to listen to what the others had to say. Still, I believe I got from them a good idea of how they see, not only the institution but also the system and their own life.

The kids using the C.C.A., the children of the community, the main focus of the whole history of the institution, have no clue what Reconciliação is, as they see Recon and C.C.A. been the same thing and the only thing, as if the Creche and the C.C. were just not part of the same institution or even worse, as if those centers didn't even exist. About the C.C.A. work in the view of those children, the goal is to help for the future, forming citizens. And the goals are disseminated through vocational courses and learning ‘respect’, which will help them in their life and for their future. Though in the question of the importance of Recon in their life and where they would be without C.C.A. (in the present and the future) the answers came emotionless “just at home” or “at home, studying” and even “on the streets [with my fellows]”. There is a confused view from the children on “whose and to whom” is the Recon, as for the later the clear and easy answer was “to everybody”, but the former was unclear as to if of the community, of the institution, of the Municipality or even of their own. The C.C.A. works with around 360 children, but there are considerably more in the community. So why are those children, probably friends of the Recon's users, not in the institution? Well, once again emotionless answers as “they don't know there is Recon”, and “they don't want to, because it is boring and not good to be here”, and “there are no places anymore. My friend wanted to come, but they said no to her”.

For the last question, it proves to be the point that the institution did achieve its first development goal, and also it is trapped in the middle-development trap regarding its funds and miscommunication. It is an easy answer from the children that the best thing about Recon is the food it offers. As it comes as easy the answer that the worse and the thing that has to improve is the people, meaning the staff working there, their teachers. Namely the people that are working precisely to promote the goals of the institution, the ones they should be helping the community towards human development.

Moreover, about the development of the community, as said before, it is not anymore about economic development, but social development. I participated in one presentation of students from 12 to 16 years old about Women Nowadays, following the International Women's Day. The view that those teens had about the importance of and the meaning of this day is very negative, including the girls of the class. I perceive they see that women of nowadays as very vain, individual and careless; as women that want only easy money, steal from their jobs, use drugs and alcohol, and instead be celebrating "quinceañera"³ they are doing "baby showers", meaning that they are getting pregnant young and that it is cool. Although there were those who said that "why to do this [drugs, alcohol, pregnancy]? Who wants to do it?", it became quite clear that the majority blame the environment where they live, as if "that is what all are doing, so it is hard not to be part of it". With concern a staff member told me that already heard from the children in the C.C.A sentences such as "I will get married at 12 years old" and another saying "forget studying! What for...?"

Notwithstanding, some people see the Reconciliação as a whole, and that can clearly see the goals and how such goals are achieved through each project, as an interviewee said "[project such] the capoeira, the theater, the orchestra [the music project], they all promote socialization and fraternization. They [the children using those projects] have to learn from each other, to learn how to work together, and to learn their importance in the whole". But this participant is not a regular worker in the institution, and I am not even sure if recognized within it, though he/she has a clearer

³ It is a tradition to celebrate a girl's 15th birthday as the transition from girlhood to womanhood.

view that “the project main target is the children, but with time we saw the need for more. The C.C. came as a support that could not have been scorned.” And not only that, but also the situation of the institution in the bigger context of life; “life changes, the way to see live changes; things become more and more complex [a way to tackle the development towards basic needs and basic human rights] and helping the others has become more and more difficult”.

In 2015 - the year of my visit, or perhaps because of it - and the years that followed, the institution had been trying to get up on its feet, rethinking their values to see where they want to go, how they want to help, what the community really needs and who are the best partners to help them in this path, re-planning some projects and rethinking partnerships, but it was clear that they were in the very beginning of this process, as without the covenant with Municipality, there is a risk that the institution doesn't have any financial support, as the international aids and donors are directing their focus to the issue of “fighting hunger” and after that, there is no more a concern of “is there an after?”, and “what to do after?”

Nonetheless, despite having not seen any concrete plan towards this progress, I did see and feel the strong will for it. Perhaps the reflectivity within research brought up buried feelings and a sense of confidence within the members to actually motivate them to fight for the institution and fight to have their voices heard. They, themselves, express this, and one participant said, “I have questions about the institution, and I want to talk”.

The good thing about having all the emotions surfacing is that it opens the door for communication. There is a more pervasive acknowledgment of the real situation of the institution without blaming nor guilt. Thus, at the same time that there is the recognition of the development already achieved I heard “the neighborhood [the community] was in a huge misery, and now it is no more”, there also is the acceptance of the issue to be addressed by everybody as “all of us have a share of the problems”. And when thinking of the past when “we [the community] belonged [to the institution], and we felt humanism”, it was no longer with the bitter feeling of loss, but with the promising feeling of hope, and hope with purpose. The purpose that said, “we do what we believe in!” and “I believe now things will get better”.

I heard ideas and opinions of different sources, from founders, administrators, staff, and collaborators, and considering both extreme sides - the beginners & nowadays doers. Moreover, there is in Brazil the victimization culture and the automatic defense mechanism. And in this balance, it is hard to develop an opinion or analysis, because from one side most are being done wrong and the other side can't accept seen/heard criticisms that something is wrong. I saw both sides in one single morning, and both sides argued well. I believe that the success of a good development program and its continuation is exactly the understanding of both and combine them with what the community target is in need. Thus, the open and free communication of all the stakeholders, also towards those who are going to receive the aid (financial or in projects of an NGO), so the community has to be the central focus of any project and program that want to say at some point "we did it!", though also acknowledging that there are more to be done.

6 CONCLUSION

Since starting in this Master's Program and seeing not only how development was done but also how the teachers were teaching the doing of development, plus my political science background in international relations, I grew a strong opinion that the practice of development should just stop. At that time I thought that if it was really for the greater good, the so-called "help" should be given to the government so that development would happen from top-to-down, so that it would actually be helping not only a specific community but the people as a whole. Yet again, development should NOT be a guide-list to be followed by the book, but a support for those who ask for it, for them to practice their own development according to their needs.

Doing an internship in a development program organization, I grew to change my initial view on development. I still believe that it has been done inappropriately, but I realized that development could actually be done on a small scale, away from direct intervention from the government, and yet it would really develop the people and help them to empower themselves to fight for their needs. I still strongly believe that it has to come from inside-out, in other words, the community as insiders should decide where and in what they need help from international cooperation, and they also be a strong actor on how this development should take place.

However, the practical problem does not concern only the international donors. The institutions in developing countries also do not have vocabulary and efficient arguments to address the changed situation. Individual institutions trapped in the

middle-development trap sort of remain stopped in time because as the funds start to dry out after the basic needs development is achieved, they go on asking for money for hungry kids, even though there are no more “hungry kids” and they don’t know how to tackle the shift for the basic human rights tactic on development that they want work on. The state is not much more skillful in helping the localities in getting out of the middle-income trap.

This can be seen in the Programa Comunitário da Reconciliação. The original project that gradually led into the establishment of the program was made, in my opinion, exactly as development should be done; the community felt, realized, and displayed its problem, elaborated a small project to deal with the problem and they sought for help to develop and implement the project, thus the institution was created. But as they blindly shifted from a development project aimed to achieve basic needs, to become a development program aiming to achieve human development and basic human rights without any exit strategy, nor even a transition strategy, the program might have lost focus on its goals when too many covenants were made, and thus too many rules had to be followed, not necessarily in the direction the institution would want or needed to go. The issue they are facing now is that because of national economic growth and international direction of development efforts nowadays, namely Africanism and the purpose to fight basic needs there, the institution has been losing a lot of its national and international donors/partners. Moreover, the view of municipal government towards the community and the work of the organization is still about providing food as the most important need of the children and the community, and there is no indication of the shift towards working with the deeper issues that led the community to be in hunger in the past. And as such issues have not been touched, they are still lingering in the community, stopping them to leap away from this middle-development trap.

Development is a tricky word that embraces so many subjective meanings. I grew to hate “development” the more I learned in my studies how it’s being done. But then, once you see a program that worked and that was started down-up as it should, from the needy to the helper and that it did create the development meant, including also continuation, I changed my mind. Development never ends. It is hard to end

because it takes time for the achievement of the fulfillment of the first need, and when that is achieved you see other needs, deeper inside the person, culture, and environment. As time passes the social/cultural dynamic also changes. This is what I finally understood clearly and concretely in Reconciliação, also thanks to me growing up in the same environment and knowing the institution already when I was a child a long time ago.

Can more donations for the Reconciliação be a big part of the salvation of the institution? Definitely! Is it the most important part for this salvation? Definitely NOT! As long as the workers and administration are not seeing eye-to-eye about the goals of the institution, all of them together, the increase of international donations is not going to happen, and even if miraculously it does, it may not be used in the full potential for the Reconciliação because of the administrative fighting between parts and conceptual confusion of the goals and tasks. There is a general definition of what is the purpose of the Reconciliação, namely human development & citizenship, assisted by a program of art & education. But the applicability of it in the institution's work is not necessarily homogeneous. I see it as the most important thing in a charity development program that all stakeholders work together towards the same goal for the community. To follow this speed of information and knowledge is already very hard for an every-day-life, more so for those trying to keep up with the need of others to help them. Thus, as much as you can see and say what a person or community is needing for development, without the integration of them in the discussion, the ideal program, and all its projects, is already doomed to fail.

Upon my leaving the internship period, many of the people I had talked with came to me to acknowledge that my work, in their view, had been important in bringing all parts of the development program together, and also gave encouragement to the less powerful members of the stakeholders to feel more empowered to fight for their community and the future of the NGO. I may not have been contributing very much, but I was an outsider - though in a sense also an insider, but nevertheless coming back from abroad - asking questions that made them think about what they were doing and emphasizing the idea of working together. I heard from a participant "we [all the stakeholders] are not in accordance and we need an outsider to make this link.

Somebody from outside to be the impartial mediator and with a technical vision. We need this.” Perhaps I gave this to them, perhaps the introspection worked to direct them to that path.

As for me, the period of my internship and the specific work in the Programa Comunitário da Reconciliação made me more aware that perhaps development is not necessarily the evil I saw when I started in the Master’s Program of Development and International Cooperation. Yes, I still believe that human development should be approached differently, that development projects should be created from the community in need instead of from some financial institution or a developed country’s government trying to use unpowered people for its own gain, either economic or moral. I still understand that many development projects out there in the world are being done for the mere purpose of running money and employment for citizens of developed countries. But when done well and in the right way, international cooperation can bring development and empowerment to people in need. Development work should be continued and not be ended because of a bigger-bad-picture. After all, if it is for personal human development and it happens, all is worth it.

Nevertheless, my own future as a development carrier is not quite clear, as I still believe that help should be given to those who ask for it and know what they are doing, instead of imposed as a favor of the rich for their own well-being, monetary or moral, or both. Thus, if I did not have family ties in Finland, I would like to continue to work with the Programa Comunitário da Reconciliação, perhaps using the skills I learned in the master’s program to better structure the NGO, so that they could get out of their middle-development trap and go forward in their work with the community and better support them. As changes always come when a long period development program is in place, these skills could be of use for development to continue in the Vila São José - São Paulo. Perhaps one day I will again go back to work there.

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