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LEARNING TO BECOME SMART RADICALS: A REGENERATIVE LENS ON THE POTENTIAL FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION THROUGH YOUTH AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Mieke T. A. Lopes Cardozo

ABSTRACT

Media coverage and foreign policy around the globe often spread messages of fear about the possible radicalization of the world's growing youth population. More nuance was brought into these debates in 2015 by UN Security Council Resolution 2250 and the subsequent Global Study on Youth, Peace, and Security (Simpson 2018), while specific attention was directed at the potential of education to support young people's agency for peacebuilding. In this reflective piece, I aim to bring a fresh perspective to current education in emergencies thinking and offer insights into how a regenerative approach to education can help reshape it to prepare the younger generations to respond effectively to peacebuilding and to the related "wicked challenges." I bring together two existing conceptual frameworks—the 4Rs (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo, and Smith 2017) and Tomaševski's 4As (2005; see also Shah and Lopes Cardozo 2019)—that are directly relevant to the education in emergencies field. Building on this conceptual work, I adopt a regenerative lens on reconciliation and engage a law of three framework to encourage a deeper understanding of education's transgressive potential to inspire alternative, reconciliatory paths toward peacebuilding. I will invite and encourage you, the reader, to apply these regenerative conceptual explorations to your own experience. The aim of this conceptual exploration is to inspire the development of "smartly radical" questions; to support research, policy, and practice design that is more critically informed and consciousness driven; and, finally, to support the transformative potential of

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education systems and stakeholders to serve younger generations more effectively and enable them to respond to "glocal" challenges in ways that are mindful, conscious, and effective.

INTRODUCTION

> *"Building and sustaining peace through the transformative potential of young people demands a seismic shift and bold reorientation from governments and the multilateral system, for which Security Council resolution 2250 planted the seeds."* (Simpson 2018, xiii)

Young people's unique potential to influence peacebuilding processes has gained momentum since the December 2015 adoption of UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security. By urging member states to increase the representation of youth in decisionmaking at all levels, SCR 2250 shifted the international focus on youth from seeing them as passive victims or a security threat to recognizing them as a large sector of the population that has the potential to contribute to constructive change. In this same period, increasing attention was given to both the constructive and the undermining roles education can play in addressing youths' needs and fostering peacebuilding. This latter development is largely due to advocacy by education specialists and members of the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, increased recognition in UN circles of the connection between education and peace and conflict, and a growing body of scholarship.

Findings from recent studies on education in emergencies (EiE) emphasize education's potential to play a constructive, transformative role in peacebuilding processes. At the same time, the scholarship shows a need to uncover and address the ways education systems and actors may (re)produce inequalities and various forms of violence, thereby becoming key drivers or potential triggers of conflict. Addressing peacebuilding issues in a way that can transform—or, rather, transgress (Peters and Wals 2016)—existing structures and systems requires a complex understanding of the role education plays in multiple global-to-local, or "glocal," "wicked challenges" (Flemming et al. 2021; Davies 2016). Hence, a more complex understanding is needed of the intersectional relations between increased inequality and conflict, among other dimensions, of the impact of global health pandemics, and of the continued effects of neocolonial power relations and climate crises.

Masses of young people are taking to the streets in cities around the world, carrying banners that cry for recognition of the climate crisis and for changes in the way we treat our earth—and each other. Courageous young individuals, such as Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg and numerous less well-known yet equally important smart, radical thinkers, carry the voices of a younger generation. They are speaking up, loud and clear, for the need to disrupt the status quo of ongoing climate crises, of institutional forms of racism and exclusion (including in education), and of the need for young women and men to have a seat at the peace negotiation table. At the same time, media coverage and internal and foreign policies in many contexts are spreading a message of fear about the radicalization of the world's growing youth population. How can we bring more nuance into these debates and recognize the potential of both youth and education systems to promote radically new ways of thinking, acting, and being? These and similar questions were at the heart of the Advisory Group of Experts for the Progress Study on Youth, Peace, and Security meetings, which were led by author Graeme Simpson and Cécile Mazzacurati, who heads the UN Population Fund/UN Peacebuilding Support Office (UNFPA/PBSO) secretariat for the Progress Study. Members of this advisory group expressed the urgent need to reclaim the language on radicalism and youth civic engagement, to move away from a discourse that narrowly emphasizes the danger of radicalizing youth, and to recognize the powerful transgressive potential of young people as "smart radicals." This requires rethinking the often-automatic negative connotation of the term "radical," as well as a more agentic understanding of young people's roles in the world and their potential to reconsider, inspire, and even lead in changing and evolving the ways in which we as humans coexist with each other, with the systems we have built, and in relation to our living environment.

Education systems are potentially powerful arenas for nurturing, or hindering, the younger generations' development into smart radicals. So, how can education become a nurturing space where today's youth can develop appropriate, constructive ways to address demands for radical change? And how do current education systems support the younger generation's development of the reflective capabilities and attitudes they will need to address such highly complex issues? In this article, I argue for the need to think beyond educating to sustain peace (Reed 2007) and to instead examine the potential of education systems and stakeholders to support regenerative development—that is, to redesign education systems so that the younger generations will be fully able to respond to ongoing and emerging glocal challenges in ways that are mindful, conscious, and effective.

Building on former work by myself and my colleagues, I acknowledge in this article that education systems alone cannot build peace. My aim here is to expand the conceptual thinking developed in my work with a range of colleagues on the potential role education can play in peacebuilding and social transformation. I begin with a discussion of key concepts and debates in the literature on education, sustainable and regenerative development, youth, and peacebuilding. In the second section, I introduce two relevant conceptual frameworks that bring together insights from the 4Rs framework (Novelli et al. 2017), which was inspired by Fraser's (2005) social justice framework and the rights-based 4As model developed by Tomaševski (2003; Shah and Lopes Cardozo 2019). I also discuss the complementary benefits of engaging with these two frameworks when designing and implementing empirical research or practical interventions, and of continuing to explore the concept of reconciliation in relation to education.[1] In the next section, I introduce a regenerative perspective (Mang and Haggard 2016) on education's role in peacebuilding and apply the law of three framework—the activating, restraining, and reconciliatory forces at work—to reflect on the transgressive potential of education systems, actors, and processes to move our thinking, acting, and ways of being onto an alternative, reconciliatory path toward peacebuilding.

My aim in this reflective piece is to bring a fresh perspective to current EiE thinking, to move beyond the current rhetoric to "build back better," and to increase the resilience of education systems and actors facing adversity and emergencies (Shah, Paulson, and Couch 2019). I offer insights into how we can rethink and reshape education to prepare younger generations to respond more effectively to peacebuilding and to the related "wicked challenges" (Davies 2016), such as pandemics, climate change, and community violence. Throughout this text, I will invite you to pause and reflect on an actual issue or example relevant to your own work and life. My intention is that, by testing and applying the frameworks offered in this piece to your own work, you will be encouraged to experiment with developing radically smart questions, approaches, and communities. In so doing, I hope to inspire you to formulate bold, "smartly radical" questions that will spark informed debate on the potential and pitfalls of educating youth for a more peaceful, regenerative future.

1 This analytical exercise is not meant to be a revision of the initial 4Rs framework I developed with colleagues, but to provide further insight into what it means to see theory-building as a continuous process of reflection and revision, as we suggest in our earlier work (Novelli et al. 2017).

KEY CONCEPTUALIZATIONS AND DEBATES

Education and Learning

In this paper, I employ a broad conceptualization of education and learning that promotes understanding of the various learning environments available to diverse groups of youth around the world. This includes both formal forms of schooling (government led, with a formal curriculum) and nonformal learning spaces (nongovernmental, civil society or community led). As emphasized in Sustainable Development Goal 4, which addresses providing quality education, when understanding education systems as part of broader societal processes, focusing on access to education alone will not suffice. A more inclusive development approach is needed, one that addresses the quality, relevance, and safety of the education available to various constituencies of young people (Gupta and Pouw 2017; Gupta, Pouw, and Ros-Tonen 2015; Lopes Cardozo and Scotto 2017). And while the Sustainable Development Goals provide an important frame of reference for development practitioners, policy designers, and researchers, scholars who have a more regenerative focus argue that adopting these goals could lead to an "optimization frame" that would leave intact—and unquestioned—such underlying mechanisms as neoliberal thinking, individualism, and anthropocentrism (Wals 2021, 1).

Interestingly, SCR 2250 includes several direct references to the importance of education in young people's lives. This notwithstanding, it has a relatively narrow view of the role education plays in supporting "youth entrepreneurship and constructive political engagement" (UN Security Council 2015, 4). This is also reflected in the findings of a comparative four-country study conducted by the Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding (Lopes Cardozo, Higgins, and Le Mat 2016). In their synthesis report on youth agency for peacebuilding, the consortium concluded that most interventions in an education context focus first on fostering economic empowerment and, second, on political participation. The sociocultural aspects of young people's sense of identity and agency are often underestimated and its educational support systems remain underfunded, while both formal and nonformal education have a limited focus on creating spaces for reconciliation, which is a key aspect of a transformative approach to peacebuilding (Novelli et al. 2017).

The dialectic relation between education and conflict is highly complex. In postconflict periods, education can support young people's psychosocial recovery, provide a sense of normalcy and hope, and inculcate the values and skills they

will need to build and maintain a peaceful future (Sommers 2002). Drawing from Salmi (2000, in Seitz 2004), we can view two significant ways violence is related to education: (1) direct violence, where schools become ideological battlegrounds for control and/or where physical harm is being done (e.g., physical punishment or attacks on students and teachers); and (2) indirect violence, through which social injustice and inequality are perpetuated and legitimized in discriminatory or culturally, linguistically, and politically biased schooling practices, which maintains social exclusion and sows the seeds for further violence.

Progressive voices in academia, which often are inspired by critical pedagogues such as Paolo Freire, call for education systems to provide transgressive forms of learning (Wals 2021; de Sousa, Loizou, and Fochi 2019), which refers to ways of learning that move beyond existing standardized boundaries, focus on holistic human and planetary development, and (re)imagine education as the practice of freedom (hooks 1994). Prior to her published work on so-called wicked problems, Davies (2006) coined the term "interruptive democracy" in the field of peace education. In her broader work, Davies (2008, 2004) argues that "positive conflict" can be a force for overcoming passivity and inertia and moving toward transformation. Thus, conflict is not necessarily something to avoid in educational spaces; it is, in fact, an inherent part of life and learning. When conducted constructively, positive forms of conflict can be one of the most powerful outcomes of an education. To make this directly relevant to the field of EiE, researchers must explore what positive forms of conflict might look like in places where students and teachers are confronted daily with violence, and/or where the conditions are such that youth have limited agency to express or engage in constructive nonviolent approaches to conflict.

Educating young people to become smart radicals thus requires a more holistic, even a transgressive approach to education. Such an education would encourage smart, or critical, thinking through a Socratic, question-based approach to gaining deeper knowledge and wisdom (Sanford 2020). According to Wals (2021), to become transgressive, education needs to move beyond the cultivation of so-called sustainability competencies, such as dealing with ambiguity and complexity, imagining alternative future directions, and taking action in mindful and empathetic ways. Wals states further that transgressive and regenerative forms of learning also require

> the capacity to disrupt, to make the normal problematic and the ordinary less ordinary, to provoke and question, to take risks for the common good, to complicate matters rather than to

> simplify them, to become uncomfortable—together—by asking moral questions and posing ethical dilemmas, and to learn from the pushback and the resistances from the normalized unsustainable systems all the above creates. (2021, 2)

Youth

Definitions of the term "youth" remain contested (Lopes Cardozo et al. 2015), as finding a meaningful definition is an apparent mission impossible. How can we provide a universally valid definition of a massive segment of the population that is characterized by diversity? One common representation of youth connects them with a variety of deep-rooted fears, ambivalence, and unsettling anxieties (Sayed and Novelli 2016). For the purpose of this article, it makes sense to work with the SCR 2250 age range for youth of 18-29, bearing in mind the limitations of any definition and the need to consistently acknowledge the intersectional heterogeneity—age, gender, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic class, geographic location, political views, sexual orientation, religion, disability—of any collective of young people. It is also important to take into account a long-term perspective: today's youth, who are dealing with inequality, violence, social transformation, and peacebuilding, were yesterday's children being affected by armed conflict, and they will be tomorrow's adult citizens who shape the future of their communities. The Progress Study on Youth, Peace, and Security calls for moving beyond narrow perceptions and stereotypes of youth as a threat to peace or as victims of violence and to focus instead on their agency:

> The consequence of these stereotypes has been a failure to adequately appreciate and harness the agency, creative practice and resilience of young people, most of whom are *not* involved in violence and are just eager to get on with their lives, and some of whom are actively invested in crafting more peaceful societies for themselves and their communities. (Simpson 2018, 17)

Peacebuilding

My understanding of peacebuilding is based on the 4Rs analytical framework (see Novelli et al. 2017), which identifies the dimensions of recognition, redistribution, representation, and reconciliation. This links Fraser's (1995, 2005) work on social justice with the peacebuilding and reconciliation work of Galtung (1976), Lederach (1995, 1997), and others. Combining thinking on social justice and transitional justice, this normative framework for the study of education and peacebuilding recognizes the multiple dimensions of inequality and injustice. It also characterizes contemporary conflicts and the need to address them in and

through education. This framework is in line with well-established thinking on peacebuilding (e.g., Galtung 1976, 1990; Lederach 1995, 1997) and with the need to address both negative peace, or the cessation of violence, and positive peace, or the remediation of the underlying structural and symbolic violence—that is, the drivers—that often underpins the outbreak of conflict. It also recognizes the importance of addressing and redressing the "legacies of conflict" in tandem with the "drivers of conflict" (Novelli et al. 2017).

Research in this particular field has generally been too focused on taking a problem-solving approach to the issues of education, violence, and conflict—namely, by identifying how to get the sociopolitical system back up and running. It also has failed to pay close enough attention to education's location in the quest for innovative education approaches and spaces as part of a broader agenda for governance and social transformation (Novelli et al. 2017). In response, critical scholars in the fields of international and comparative education have pushed to situate education within a broader set of cultural/semiotic, political, and economic processes—in short, to see it as an "education ensemble" in which all parts of the whole are closely intertwined (Robertson and Dale 2015). This line of thinking laid a foundation for the 4Rs framework. One of the main arguments following from this is that education can mitigate the relapse of conflict only if education reforms are embedded in the broader set of policies and programs included in the diverse peacebuilding processes being implemented in society (Novelli and Smith 2011, 12). The combined 4Rs and 4As framework discussed below provides a conceptual basis for analyzing education as an integral part of systemic processes that both foster and mitigate conflict and cause youth to experience political, economic, and sociocultural exclusion and inclusion. Building on these frameworks, I outline a regenerative understanding of education for reconciliation.

COMBINING TWO CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS: THE 4RS AND 4AS

This combined conceptual framework starts with the idea of an education ensemble, as noted above (Robertson and Dale 2015). It combines complementary insights from the rights-based 4As model (Tomaševski 2003) and the recently developed social justice-inspired 4Rs framework. In short, while the 4Rs provide a conceptual lens to analyze the potential for peacebuilding and social justice, as well as concerns about education systems and actors, the 4As complement the 4Rs with a normative lens to uncover the ways education rights are, or are

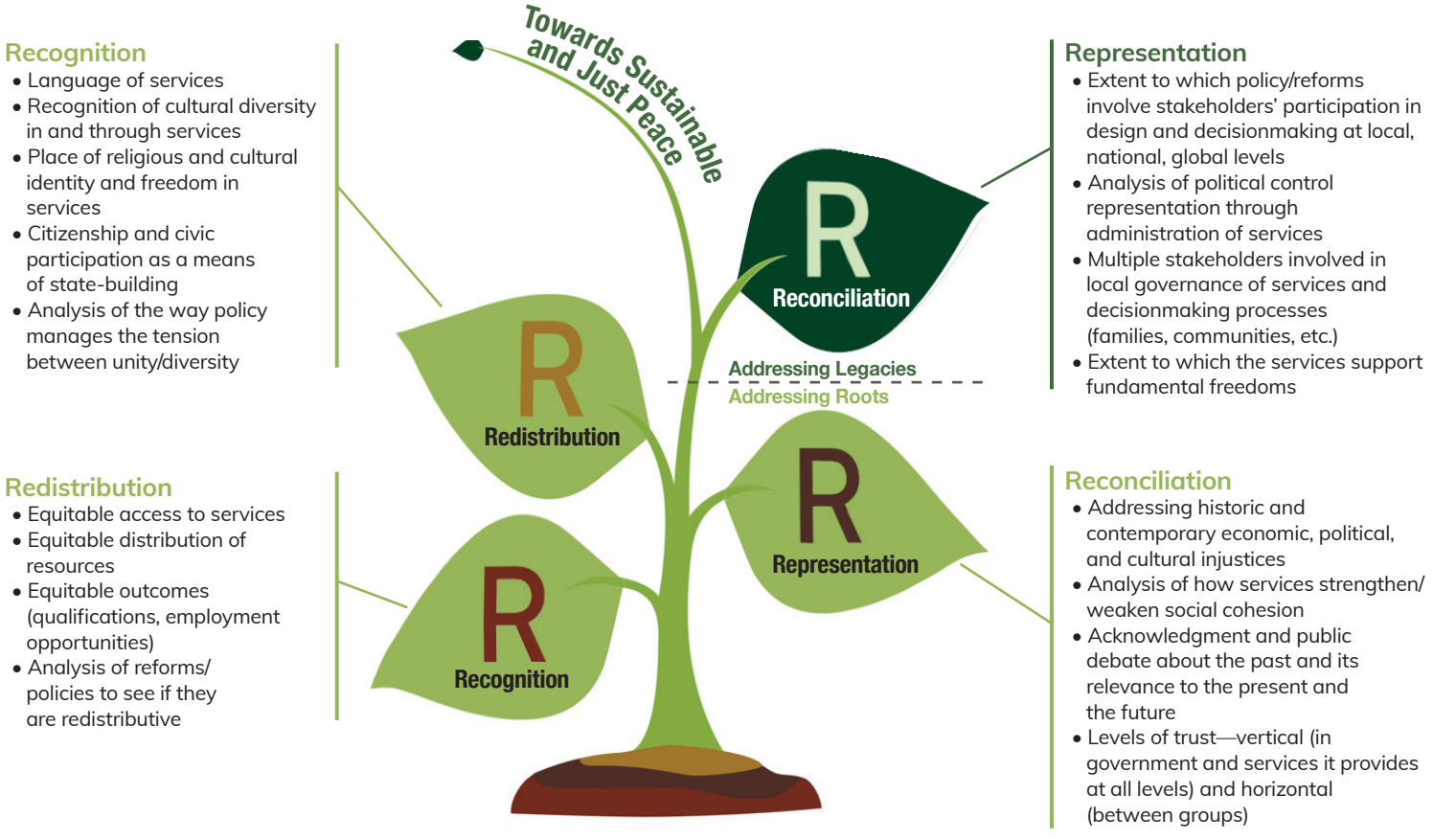
not, being met. What follows is an elaboration of the two frameworks and their unique contributions in analytical terms. I discuss the ways a combination of these two frameworks might help in the design and implementation of theoretically grounded studies that are well positioned to inform and stimulate meaningful debate and action in relevant fields of policy, practice, and activism.

The 4Rs Framework

The 4Rs framework captures the multiple economic, cultural, political, and social dimensions of inequality in education and the ways they might relate to conflict and peace from a social justice perspective (Novelli et al. 2017). Following this framework, education has the potential to make a significant contribution to sustainable peacebuilding through its effect on security, and on political, economic, social, and cultural transformation within conflict-affected societies. I define transformation as the extent to which education policy, peacebuilding, and development programs promote redistribution, recognition, representation, and reconciliation. When education policy and programming support social justice processes (Glasius and Pleyers 2013), they can contribute effectively to what Fraser (1995, 2005) termed a "transformative remedy."

Applied to the field of education by a range of scholars (e.g., Keddie 2012, 2014; Aikman 2011; Sleeter 1996), Fraser's (1995, 2005) well-established 3R social justice model provides valuable reference points for deciding where policy and practice should focus their energies to serve education's emancipatory potential. The 4Rs framework builds on Fraser's three-dimensional conceptualization of interconnected remedies to social injustice that address economic redistribution, sociocultural recognition, and political representation. When applied to conflict- and violence-affected settings, the 4Rs framework adds a fourth R, the overarching dimension of reconciliation. And while recognizing that this concept has many possible interpretations, in the 4Rs framework we interpret it as a relational process (Hamber and Kelly 2004; Lederach 2014) that calls for (1) the need to address cultural, political, and economic injustices and grievances; (2) increased levels of vertical trust—that is, trust in the government and its services—and horizontal trust—that is, trust between groups; and (3) public debate on multiple interpretations of the past in order to reimagine alternative futures (Novelli et al. 2017). The key underpinnings of the 4Rs framework are presented in Figure 1, which is an updated version of the original figure published in this journal in 2017 (Novelli et al. 2017); it was redesigned by Adrian Serezo for the *Early Childhood Peace Consortium Report* (Serezo 2018).

Figure 1: The 4Rs Framework

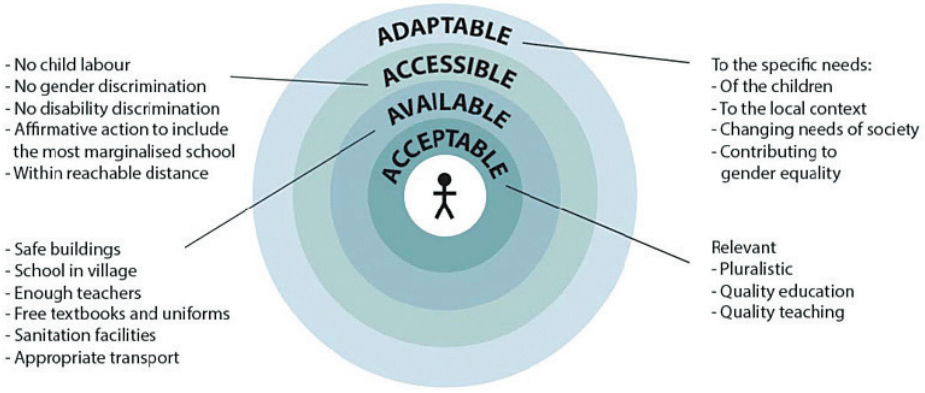


Having laid out the key premises of the 4Rs framework, I now turn to how Tomaševski (2001, 2003) developed the 4As model. I argue that combining the 4Rs with the 4As can provide a complementary analytical layer that, from a rights-based perspective, sheds light on the essential features of education systems that protect the right to education for all.

The 4As Framework

Katarina Tomaševski (2005) developed the 4As model as part of her work as the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, a position she held from 1998 to 2004. The model was an attempt to hold governments accountable to their human rights obligation to make education available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable. Availability means that education is free (or government funded) and that there is adequate school infrastructure, a safe environment, and trained teachers able to support its delivery. Accessibility refers to a system that is nondiscriminatory and safely accessible to all, and that takes proactive steps to include the most marginalized. Acceptability translates into education content that is relevant, nondiscriminatory, culturally appropriate, and of good quality. Finally, adaptability means that education can evolve with the changing needs of society, challenge inequalities such as gender discrimination, and be adapted to suit specific local contexts (Newman 2007, 24).

Figure 2: Tomaševski's 4As



Source: Tomaševski (2012)

Tomaševski's work on the right to education for every child has been called foundational for the field of education in emergencies. Tomaševski—who, unfortunately, died in 2006—fully recognized how difficult it was to get the right to education onto the international agenda. She shared the following lesson she learned through this process:

> I have abandoned what I call "the chewing-gum approach," whereby the remit for economic, social and cultural rights is constantly stretched and an image created whereby there is a human rights answer to every question. Stretching human rights concepts makes them weaker and thinner until they break. Common sense tells us that expanding an issue to cover everything reduces it to nothing. Experience tells us that human rights organisations which proved successful did exactly the opposite and defined their mandates narrowly. (Tomaševski 2005, 225)

Inspired by Tomaševski's self-criticism, I will offer a few additional concerns that should be brought to the fore when working with the 4As model, including Tomaševski's strategy to adopt a narrower focus on the right to education. Colleagues have rightly noted that minimal attention is paid to transnational civil society organizations and networks in the fight for the right to education, and the focus seems to be on primary education over secondary and tertiary levels (Klees and Thapliyal 2007, 508-09).

When adopting a rights-based approach to education, an additional critique needs to be acknowledged that relates to a broader concern for the universalist, neocolonial tendencies of human rights frameworks. For instance, Maldonado-Torres (2017) develops a decolonial critique on the evolution of human rights and how current definitions reinforce existing power imbalances between experts from the Global North speaking to marginalized peoples in the Global South about their rights. Spivak (2004) adds to the complexity of this critique by stating that "the difficulty is in the discontinuous divide between those who right wrongs and those who are wronged" (563). Of specific relevance to the 4As and the right to education is Spivak's argument that even the work of Global South-based human rights advocates is part of a larger human rights culture that follows "Northern-ideological pressure" and thus creates an "'epistemic disconnect" with the reality and actual needs of the (rural) marginalized populations that they aim to serve and protect, mostly because they have been "educated in Western-style institutions" (527). She continues to stress the importance of scrutinizing the ends and quality of education and how "the sort of education we are thinking of is not to make the rural poor capable of drafting NGO grant proposals!" (527).

Maldonado-Torres (2017) reflects on Spivak's call for a new kind of education geared specifically toward poor rural communities. He writes that "the goal is not to have experts in human rights addressing the denial of various sorts of rights among the rural poor, but creating the conditions for the rural poor themselves to engage in the process of affirming their humanity and defining it and their rights—if that is the way in which they think that defining their humanity is most appropriate" (39).

In line with this call to rethink education systems, de Sousa Santos (2007) and other scholars present important thinking on the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being, particularly in the Latin American region but with relevance worldwide. They call for a decolonization of the social sciences and humanities by opening up alternative knowledge, approaches, and paradigms that emerge from the Global South. These decolonial critiques on education and other forms of knowledge production are critically important when working with a human rights-based framework like the 4As, as they urgently call for a meaningful contextualization and translation of the dimensions that compose the 4As to reflect local understandings and meanings of the right to education.

Adopting a regenerative development perspective on the role of education in designing a more equal, inclusive, and peaceful community and society would mean seeing education spaces and systems as genuinely rooted in local systems of governance and value generation (Mang and Haggard 2016, 118). Connecting back to the Youth, Peace, and Security Progress Report's call for a radical shift in conceptualizing the potential of large youthful demographic cohorts, rather than seeing the problems, would mean shifting the purpose of our education systems to become a means to control and manage young women and men. Mang and Haggard (2016) suggest that,

> if we think of teenagers as highly energetic, idealistic, and adaptive people who are looking for meaningful places to belong, then we have the basis for designing a new educational system whose purpose is to access and nurture these culturally useful traits. (118-19)

So, what intersections and complementary insights do we gain from bringing the 4Rs into conversation with the 4As, and what new insights does this spark? Despite the challenges and critiques of working with a generic framework like Tomaševski's 4As, it is still considered "the most common analytical framework for understanding the normative content of the right to education" (UNESCO 2019, 75). The 4Rs and 4As frameworks share the fact that they were developed

as normative analytical hermeneutics meant to scrutinize the complex and highly political role education plays in processes of social inclusion and exclusion—not least of young people.

The 4As model advocates for the right to education, rights within education, and rights obtained by following/finishing an education. In so doing, it works toward what Robertson and Dale (2015) refer to as the education ensemble—that is, seeing the spaciotemporal aspects of the whole system in terms of the moment of the practice of education, the moment of policy, the moment of politics, and the moment of outcomes. In Figure 1, the 4Rs are visualized as a plant, a living system, where the first three Rs are considered the root causes and drivers of social injustices. In terms of the law of three, grasping these interrelated roots is crucial to building an understanding of the activating and restraining contextual forces at work. The 4As help deepen this understanding in terms of the potential of education to support the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability of young peoples' educational perspectives and trajectories.

The fourth R, reconciliation, adds an additional level of complexity to our understanding of education's potential to support or hinder peacebuilding processes by shifting our minds and enabling us to imagine new futures. I argued elsewhere (Lopes Cardozo 2019) that the 4Rs might be visualized in a pyramid shape, with the three drivers of inequality and conflict at the base while the R of reconciliation becomes visible as an overarching process that has a quality of being "lifted up." This would signify the potential of reconciliation to promote transformation and higher levels of thinking, consciousness, and interconnectedness relative to the process of sustainable peacebuilding and creating a socially just society. In keeping with this, I now explore what a regenerative development approach to reconciliation could contribute to conceptual debates and understandings of education in emergencies/peacebuilding education. My intention is to inform and encourage the design of critically informed, consciousness-driven research, policy, and practice.

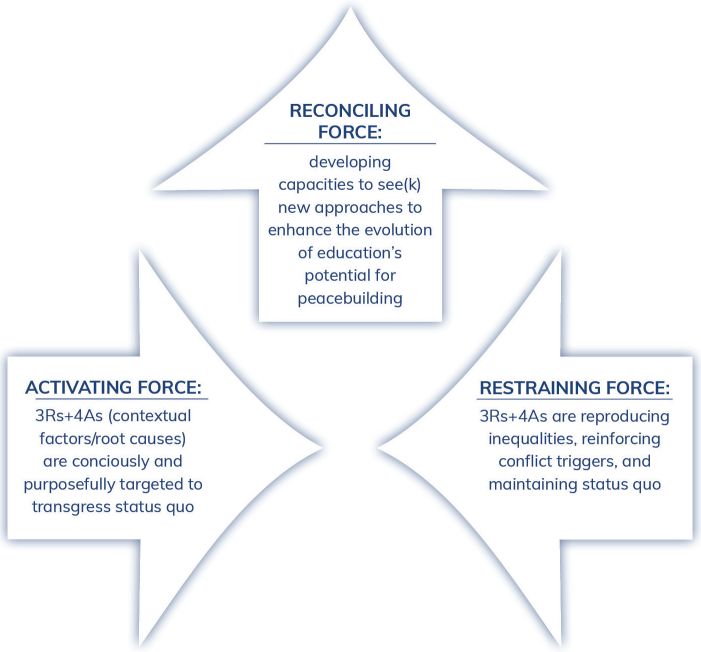
TOWARD A REGENERATIVE UNDERSTANDING OF EDUCATING FOR PEACEBUILDING

The tension between the activating contextual forces on the one hand and the restraining forces on the other pushes our thinking and awareness up to the next level (see Figure 3). Figure 3 was inspired by the law of three, which originated in Armenian philosopher Gurdgjieff's teachings in the first half of the 20th century

(Seamon 2020), and from Bennett's *Elementary Systematics* (1993), which was introduced and adapted by Mang and Haggard (2016) and their colleagues in their work on regenerative development and design. Rather than adding yet another framework to the mix, I aim to show how we can advance our thinking on reconciliatory pathways for education by building on the combined insights of the 4Rs and 4As, and by observing and understanding activating and restraining forces. This combined framework is not meant to be a blueprint for solving problems but is, rather, an invitation to students, researchers, educators, education designers, and policy developers to reflect on and apply the framework in the communities they are working in, and to consider what activating, restraining, and reconciliatory forces are at work. This also could be useful to those working in the broader field of peacebuilding.

The activating and restraining forces often come to the fore most prominently when we look at education's role in conflict and peacebuilding situations. This framework invites us to embrace these forces as part of a larger picture and expand into new and alternative ways of thinking, acting, and being a third, reconciling force. It invites us to hold the tension between activating and restraining forces as a form of cognitive dissonance and, rather than moving into a state of compromise, to develop the capacity to view opposite forces as valuable and to push our thinking, being, and acting to new levels of understanding.

Figure 3: Law of Three: A Regenerative Understanding of Reconciliation Relative to the 3Rs and 4As



I now return to the start of this article, where I introduced debates and strategies developed in and beyond UN circles relative to the Sustainable Development Goals and the notion of sustaining peace. Engaging with the 4Rs and 4As frameworks in unison and aiming for reconciliation as discussed above (see Figure 3) urges researchers from academia, policymaking, and practice to move beyond the notion of sustainability, to rethink the notion of resilience in education in emergencies, and to foster reconciliation processes that promote socially just societies. Taking a regenerative development perspective calls for developing an understanding of the unique character and essence of a school, or a larger education system, as inspired by three levels of learning (as interpreted by Sterling 2003, in Reed 2007, 675).

I now invite you to briefly pause your reading and bring to mind a personally relevant real-life school setting for a thought exercise, one where exams are a key aspect of learning. Try to bring this example to life and keep it in mind as you read and reflect further.

While Reed (2007) applies regenerative development thinking on the three levels of learning to environmental sustainability—that is, to move from sustainability to resilience to reconciliation—I employ it here to explore the role of education in regenerative peacebuilding. The first operational learning level focuses on

sustainability and is concerned with improving the way things are done as part of the status quo and striving for efficiency—basically, with doing things better, rather than doing better things. This might be illustrated by training teachers to be better at orienting their students to do well on exams and by students seeking tutoring to help them pass exams. In this sense, this first operational level concerns improvements within a given system without transforming the underlying mechanisms at play. It is perhaps needless to mention that these examples aim to serve as an imaginative basis for bringing to life a way of reflecting and for shifting our understanding of the education systems in our own work and lives.

Can you bring to mind how this sustainability/operational level plays out in the real-life example you are working with? How might this be connected to the restraining, status quo, protective forces at play in the system that your school is nested within?

Level two entails a transformation of the system it is part of and can be connected to the activating forces at work. This second maintenance level of learning is concerned with the notion of resilience, and with a move from efficiency thinking to effectiveness thinking. For example, teachers might collectively resist an exam-driven governance model, as it puts too much pressure on their already overwhelming workload. At the same time, youth might protest this standardized system and find support from teachers who are concerned that the students are being pushed into expensive and exclusive private tutoring, which reproduces existing inequalities.

In your own real-life case, what activating forces are at play to enhance and maintain effectiveness in the school and/or system it is part of? How, and to what extent, are young people and educators actively engaged in these processes?

The third level moves on to reconciliation, or the actual evolution of an education system. This involves a more epistemological and perceptual change that is driven by integrative awareness of the whole system. As depicted in Figure 3, the reconciliation level moves our understanding toward the ultimate purpose of educating for peace. An example of this is how an institution like a teachers union or student union brings together various stakeholders to explore alternative approaches that value the outcomes of student learning. This would involve recognizing the need to move away from exam-oriented curricula and to reclaim teachers' autonomy in knowing how to serve their students' learning most effectively. This would enable young people to reclaim education as a place that nurtures their potential contributions to a more regenerative, peaceful future in their unique community contexts.

What new potential can you see(k) within a school or learning institute that you engage with as a student, educator, researcher, education designer, parent, advisor, or otherwise? What capacities, skills, or attitudes would you need to develop—within yourself, and within the communities you engage with in this school setting and the broader system?

Finally, I would like to reflect briefly on what the conceptual reflections presented in this article could mean for the design of future research. I would argue that these reflections might be equally relevant when it comes to the design of formal and nonformal education programming. A research and/or education project design that draws from a regenerative development and design methodology (e.g., Mang and Reed 2012) encompasses a thorough and layered design stage that starts from living systems or whole systems thinking, which is supported by the application of dynamic frameworks, such as the law of three introduced above (Krone, in Mang and Reed 2012, 30). This can inspire collaborative projects that take an action-oriented approach that is focused on transformation and engaging communities (Mang and Haggard 2016). This entails engaging and developing the endogenous capacities of multiple stakeholders in rethinking and redesigning the essence and purpose of education systems that are connected to a specific location, state, or substate system, as illustrated above. This means establishing a meaningful level of community engagement and a shared will to transform, which requires moving from short-term models (e.g., training of trainers) toward longer-term processes, thereby transforming existing funding systems that are geared toward selecting and supporting interventions that last just a few years. And, while recent research I conducted with colleagues from Myanmar (Lopes Cardozo and Maber 2019) illustrates how training teachers in conflict sensitivity and in integrating social and emotional skills into a broader systemic approach to peacebuilding for youth is a crucial step, it is not enough to sustain, let alone transform, an entire education system to promote peace. This was unfortunately illustrated by the immediate impact the February 2021 military coup in Myanmar had on teachers and students.

A regenerative, living systems approach toward designing academic, policy-, or practice-oriented research on education for equitable peacebuilding requires the formulation of radically smart questions. As noted above, designing such questions requires a collective community- and place-based process. It could be argued that researchers need to develop a research design and knowledge-sharing practice that follows Tomaševski's (2003) logic about the right to education in developing and disseminating research designs and findings that are available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable. This would entail using participatory research

methods and engaging with youth researchers (Dunne et al. 2015), engaging with communities as partners in codesign (Mang and Haggard 2016), and ethical, conflict-sensitive, context-specific consideration of how research is conducted. Finally, as a researcher, educator, student, education designer, peacebuilder, or whatever role you play in this area of work, this framework is an invitation to see yourself as nested within these three forces. Achieving a more transformative, potentially regenerative approach to peacebuilding needs to start with working on ourselves and on developing our own capacity to (re)think, (re)act, and be(come) more capable of enabling the broader EiE ecosystem (Flemming et al. 2021), and the schools, communities, and systems we work with, to thrive.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: SEEING TRANSGRESSIVE POTENTIAL IN YOUTH AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS

My aim in this article was to provide a conceptual reflection that supports research, analysis, and practice. This is in response to the growing attention to and recognition of the importance of including young people "in the room, around the room, and outside the room of peace negotiations" (Altiok and Grizelj 2019, 37), and of seeing available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable education systems as integral to an integrated, multilayered approach to peacebuilding. I was inspired by my humble involvement in the work of a highly diverse, progressive, and smartly radical group of advisors who were working under the leadership of Graeme Simpson on a global study on youth, peace, and security.[2] According to this study, young people who are involved in international, national, and community-driven peacebuilding work need to be seen not as passive victims or a potential threat to dominant systems but, rather, as resourceful, creative drivers of social change and political transition in contexts of multiple challenges—or "smart radicals."

In this paper, I illustrate a conceptual exercise of theory-building from the perspective that theory is never static and that it needs to be adapted to specific research contexts and questions. In so doing, I brought two conceptual frameworks that have direct relevance to the EiE field into conversation with one another, the 4Rs (Novelli et al. 2017) and Tomaševski's 4As (2005). Building on this conceptual exercise, I adopted a regenerative lens on reconciliation. The law of three framework enables a potentially deeper shift in our understanding of the transgressive and reconciliatory potential of education systems, actors, and processes.

2 For more information on the UN Advisory Group for the Progress Study on Youth, Peace, and Security, visit https://www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy/AdvisoryGroup.

Inspired by insights from regenerative development thinking and transgressive education debates, I demonstrated how the law of three framework calls attention to the restraining forces at work in the 4As in connection with the 3Rs domains of social justice (misdistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation). Simultaneously, the framework invites us to conceptualize opposite and activating forces, which work to, for example, constructively disrupt existing curricular systems and hegemonic domination of knowledge, or rethink economic systems, forms of democracy, climate governance, and so forth. From this tension between restraining forces that maintain the status quo and activating forces that transgress the status quo, a reconciling force emerges that advances our understanding and, potentially, our actions. This allows a move from a sustaining peace approach to a regenerative development approach, which drives the sustainability agenda to adopt a more complex, whole-system perspective that goes beyond sustaining, adapting, and making education systems, actors, and processes more resilient to transform the value and purpose of education for peace. This regenerative approach calls for me, as author, and you, as reader, to develop our ability to (re)think, (re)act, and be(come) more capable of enabling those we engage with in our work and lives—especially the young people and the schools, communities, and systems we work with—to thrive. Education is one of the most potent systems through which we can support the younger generations and enable them to become the smart radicals the world community will need to face the multiple glocal challenges that lie ahead.

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