

The feasibility of an integrative negotiation approach today

Proposal submitted for theme 3: Inequality and Social Exclusion

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The present paper addresses the following question: Can the neoliberals' contention that globalisation generates more "mutual benefit" than "conflicting interests" ever materialise ?

Globalisation has obviously its winners but also its losers. And the question might be asked as to how globalisation in the context of the world economic regime in place will generate more mutual benefit than conflicting interests. According to the neo-liberal argument (Dollar & Kray, 2002; Wolf, 2002; Wolfensohn, 2001; World Bank, 2002), the globalising direction of change in the world economy since the breakdown of the Bretton Woods regime in the early 1970s has served the great majority of the world's people well. It also advocates that the world economy is an open system, where free, rational individuals who are acting out of self-interest will generate mutual benefit.

Although these hypotheses were shaped within the realm of economic theory, the concept of a free, rational individual acting out of self-interest also applies to the distributive negotiation model in social psychology (Blake & Mouton, 1964). Drawing on the classic examples of union and management negotiation, the model views negotiation as a context of strength and directs its attention to persuasive tactics and power plays. From that point of view, negotiation is primarily concerned with the distributive aspect of negotiation (that is, the allocation of resources) and the model focuses on each party's strategy to force the other to submit: use of reward and coercive power, threat and opacity in communication.

As observational and experimental research has consistently shown, these ingredients have hardly ever produced mutual benefit – even in situations where partners were engaged in a symmetrical relationship. Indeed, they transform partners into adversaries and entrap them in a fixed-pie perception, when negotiators believe that there is a fixed amount of resources for which they must compete. When engaged in an asymmetrical relationship – which is most often the case in the North-South, core-periphery, rich country-poor country divide - the more powerful party not only sets the rules of the game, it erects barriers to prevent the less powerful to join it, and it uses reward and coercive power to

produce dependent behaviour; that is, their effectiveness depends on the presence of the powerful actor.

The search for mutual benefits - not as a hypothetical by-product, but as a necessary adjunct for a win win solution - is at the heart of the integrative negotiation model (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Raiffa, 1982; Thompson, 1990) in which partners strive for their own interest at the same time as they strive for the interest of their partner. Instead of opacity in communication their strategy is to put their cards on the table and to search co-operatively for alternative solutions. Experimental and case studies are meant to illustrate the feasibility of the integrative negotiation model in the context of today.