

“Peace from Below” and Transformative Peace Engineering in Burundi: Sant’Egidio and the “Catholic sciences of peace”.

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In Africa, the international actors involved into “pacification” contribute to the building of a new legitimate space for intervention for themselves but also for their networks, for international organizations, for international financial institutions, for local organizations, for private firms and for universities. This space allows a revision of the practices and traditional forms in matters of humanitarian help and development. One of a striking feature of the new transnational practices of pacification is their alternative vision of how to manage and end conflicts. Far from official cease-fire and power politics, peace should come “from below” and should always be embedded in a larger process of “social forgiveness” and “reconciliation”. A numerous sets of analysis, trainings and tools in order to prevent, manage and end violent political conflicts have emerged. “Social-scientist practitioners” produce an “alternative” knowledge about the causes of conflicts and the most secure path to a “true” and “sustainable” peace. In this emerging field of “*alter-pacification*”, mainly focused on “forgiveness”, “reconciliation” and “social coexistence”, religion appears as a strategic asset. Since a few years, a “Catholic peacebuilding” has recently emerged, with its experts, its networks, its organizations. It offers new tools, new concepts and new analysis in order to implement effective strategies to build a “profound” and “sustainable peace” in war divided societies.

Our proposal aims at presenting the main results of a fieldwork in Burundi that assess the transformative paradigms at work in the “Catholic sciences of peace”. This proposal leans on my doctoral thesis (defended at the *Institut d’Etudes Politiques* of Bordeaux) and is supported by numerous interviews and observations collected during field missions in Bujumbura. The proposal focuses on a specific Catholic actor: the roman community of Sant’Egidio. The organization develops, promotes and diffuses peculiar formalized protocols and practices of *alter-pacification* grounded on a Catholic ethos (ranging from “transformative mediation” to “forgiveness” and “social coexistence”). The proposal scrutinizes, from a socio-ethnographic standpoint, the production and implementation of this transformative peace engineering, aiming at “changing mentalities” in order to build a “real” and “sustainable” peace.