Triple Nexus – Assessing the HDP view of its functionality and implementation

C-thesis
2FU33E

“We need to always keep our focus on the fact that it needs to be better for the community. It can never be a means by itself.” – Interviewee

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ABSTRACT

What are appropriate and relevant ways for collaboration and coordination between the three sections of aid work, humanitarian, development, and peace? This question has been topical for the aid community for decades when working in places where all three entities are present (Guinote, 2019). It is sometimes rejected, neglected but sometimes it is also considered and pursued (Hövelmann, 2020).

This study aims to assess and analyze the arguments and breeding grounds for the triple nexus approached work in the DRC, the dynamics of promoting and receiving directions in a headquarters-field office relation exploring the challenges and opportunities between the three sections of HDP. Assessments have been done through conducting interviews remotely with people working on-site in the DRC at national or local offices and headquarters in Sweden and Central Europe. By interviewing eleven people with experience from all three HDP sectors, where a few people come from the donor sector, the goal has been to provide a broad picture of the aid community's perspective. This study's findings and inferences are related to funding structures where a more flexible funding system is requested. There are local involvement findings where signs through this study indicate local initiatives have been implementing the nexus approach for years. In environments such as presented in this study, of interrelating groups of people with differences in working culture, there are also challenges of clashing organizational principles, hegemonic approaches, and the ever-topical issue of clear and relevant communication presented in the thesis. Through this assessment, power structures are pertinent to analyze to understand how the triple nexus approach can be further implemented. The agency theory will, in this study, be used as an eyeglass to assess these power relations.
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Abbreviations

BMZ - The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CHA – Center for Humanitarian Action
DDR – Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo
ECDPM – The European Centre for Development Policy Management
FAO – The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
HDP – Humanitarian, Development, and Peace
I1 – Interviewee number one
I2 – Interviewee number two
I3 – Interviewee number three
I4 – Interviewee number four
I5 – Interviewee number five
I6 – Interviewees of the sixth interview (group interview of three people)
I7 – Interviewee number seven
I8 – Interviewee number eight
I9 – Interviewee number nine
IASC – The Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC – The International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA – International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDP – Internally Displaced Person
IGO – Inter-Governmental Organization
INGO – International Non-Governmental Organization
LRRD – Linking Relief, Rehabilitation, and Development
MONUC – UN Organization Mission in the DRC
MONUSCO – UN Stabilization Organization Mission in the DRC
MSF - Doctors Without Borders
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
NRC – Norwegian Refugee Council
NWOW – the New Way Of Working
OCHA – Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD – The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD DAC – The OECD Development Assistance Committee
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>P-A</td>
<td>Principal-Agent</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHAP</td>
<td>Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Corporation Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>TDA</td>
<td>Transitional Development Assistance</td>
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<td>UD</td>
<td>Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>The United Nations</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>The United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nation’s Children’s Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>VOICE</td>
<td>Voluntary Organisations In Cooperation in Emergencies</td>
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<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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Keywords: Triple Nexus, HDP Nexus, Humanitarian, Development, Peace, DRC
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Relevance

For several decades actors in the humanitarian, development, and peace sectors have been working parallel in the field, in many ways overlapping both in time and in focus-area. There have been initiatives to coordinate these sectors through mutual collaboration and partnership such as the "security-development nexus," the "Grand Bargain," the "Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development" (LRRD), and the "relief to development continuum," to mention a few approaches used previously (Tronc, Grace and Nahikian, 2019; Howe, 2019). Some initiatives within these frameworks have reached functionality, but others have not been very efficient and need a re-take (VOICE and Thomas, 2019). One example of a not so efficient HDP collaboration was in the significant impacting event in the East African region, the Rwandan genocide, which also spilled over as wars in the DRC. In evaluations after the Rwandan humanitarian crisis, there is one crucial finding that points to the importance of an increase of nexus sensitivity. In the synthesis report of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda (Eriksson et al., 1996), it is stated: "One of the hallmarks of a complex emergency is that the political/diplomatic (including conflict resolution), human rights, humanitarian, military/peacekeeping, and development aspects get -inextricably intertwined – before, during and after the peak of the crisis. The Rwanda experience is a prime example. Rwanda's problem was that policy and strategy formulation by the international community seldom took these elements into account in an integrated manner". Consequently, the inadequate coordination and integration of the conflict and its effect spilled over to the DRC with a long and fatal war period, which has gravely affected the country.

There is a renewed current expectation that the nexus approach will become more successful, but in some sectors, skepticism and far from optimistic forecasts are dominating, which aggravate the possibilities of success (VOICE and Thomas, 2019; Hövelmann, 2020; Tawil, 2020). In 2016 there was a new initiative launched, the new way of working (NWOW). It was introduced through the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul. The initiative was focused on improving the cooperation and collaboration between the three fields of HDP, where there have been attempts from the UN and other humanitarian, development, and peace organizations
to partner and collaborate better to see more sustainable results. The NWOW initiative took steps to involve the triple nexus concept between the HDP actors striving for an intentional approach. This study aims to bring relevant insights about attitudes, practices, obstacles, opportunities, internal culture patterns, power relations, and communication challenges that impact the implementation of a broader triple nexus use. This is done by focusing on a country's specific case; in this study, the DRC.

1.2 Research Problem

The research problem concerns the difficulty for different actors to understand the concept in a conformed way. Because of the differences in the humanitarian, development, and peace sectors' background, the complexity of its implementation in practice (Tronc, Grace, and Nahikian, 2019). Moreover, there are power relations between different actors bearing elements that preclude the critical building block of sensitivity from becoming part of the nexus approach. The research problem is also related to the fact that the concept is still young and recently introduced. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature for assessments of the triple nexus implementation in practice. There are a few assessment initiatives, but those analyses are primarily from the humanitarian actors' perspective (Hövelmann, 2020 and Tronc, Grace, and Nahikian, 2019). When analyzing policy documents and the literature on triple nexus implementation, there are vast differences in the viewpoint of the possibilities for an actual triple nexus implementation. There has also been a shift within several humanitarian organizations where work bordering the development sector has become more common. This change might be a sign of approaching more nexus sensitive work and blurring the border between humanitarian and development work. However, there is generally a skeptical attitude within the humanitarian community towards triple nexus implementation concerning how the commission will be related to the humanitarian principles (Guinote, 2019). Assessment initiatives have been missing and therefore requested by active organizations (Tawil, 2020; SIDA, 2020; PHAP and ICVA, 2017). Hopefully, this study's findings can help organizations and their continuous striving for a broader implementation of the triple nexus approach. The choice of focusing on the DRC for this study is motivated by the prolonged presence of internal conflicts and vast humanitarian needs resulting in an extensive presence of representatives from all HDP spectrum sectors. The nexus discussion has the last few years been upheld and targeted in the aid community relations in the DRC, even if
respondents of the interviews indicate a low representation of the local actors in the discussion. Therefore, there is relevance in putting the DRC aid relations under lens for a closer look to see how the triple nexus is conceptualized in that context. The bearing also lies in possible outcomes of better efficiency and re-use of each other's resources resulting in potential savings in overall resources for the involved actors. Since many actors promote the HDP triple nexus, yet the implementation's limited success is seen, there is a need to assess the situation for further direction in overcoming challenges and possible obstacles. It could give both policymakers valuable information in the active organizations in developing the concept and the people working in the field that are the practical implementation's actual contact points.

1.3 Objective

The objective is to investigate the attitude towards and implement the triple nexus work approach in the field. The view from the national or local office in the DRC versus the viewpoint of implementation from the headquarter/capital office will be assessed to reflect a broader perspective from all three sections of HDP than what is available through the previous research. The attempt will also shed light on the challenges and obstacles of reaching an HDP triple nexus and see if there are differences in these challenges between the three entities of HDP. It will also be investigated if there are challenges and communicational gaps between the administrative and the field office. The collection of material will be through a qualitative study by interviewing people from both the main/headquarter office and field office from all three entities of the HDP. Additionally, there will be donor representatives interviewed as well. The agency theory will be used as a framework for the research.

1.4 Research Questions

In the process of research, there are a few questions in the focus of this study. The following research questions will work as a framework for the study and will be investigated in this paper:
1. What elements are essential for a functional triple nexus in practice?
2. What are the main challenges for operational triple nexus cooperation horizontally, between the HDP sections and vertically, in the relationship between administrative office and field office?
3. How does the interaction between the international and national/local actors affect the overall triple nexus process?
4. How can the donor community contribute to a more efficient triple nexus implementation?

1.5 Analytical and Theoretical Framework

The agency theory has been selected as the theoretical framework for this assessment. It has traditionally been used to analyze economic principal-agent (P-A) relations, where the agent has a self-interest conflicting with the principal's interests (Mitnick, 1975). The theory has been exposed to critics partly founded in an over-focus on the agent being self-interest driven. This view stands in contrast to the values of a mutual interest focus of the society (Wiseman, Cuevas-Rodríguez and Gomez-Mejia, 2012). Therefore, an alternative interpretation of the theory is introduced by Wiseman, Cuevas-Rodriguez, and Gomez. In this alternative view, the agency theory is applicable in any P-A relation context where one can find a general conflicting interest between the principal and the agent, not necessarily affected by an agent's self-interest (Wiseman, Cuevas-Rodriguez and Gomez-Mejia, 2012).

1.6 Methodological Framework Considerations

This study is qualitative, using an abductive approach where remote interviews conducted via a digital platform has been the prime source. The interviews are semi-structured for a larger focus on interviewees' reflections from headquarters located in Sweden and Central Europe and from field offices in the DRC. Whenever possible, interviews have been arranged from the same organizations to compare the headquarters and field viewpoints. The interviews were done with a qualitative approach. The interviewees and their origin of the organization have been anonymized for a more candid response. The DRC is chosen as a case study to analyze the triple nexus approach because it has had a long tradition of all three entities present and active for many years.
1.7 Disposition

In the following chapter, the DRC:s context will be explained from an aid perspective. A brief background of the needs and their current status is presented, followed by explaining some of the most frequently used concepts in the thesis. Chapter three is reviewed, and research gaps are explained both related to the topic and the theory. Moreover, the fourth paragraph follows a passage concerning the analytical framework and the theory applied and arguments of why it is best suited for this assessment. The process's methodology is thoroughly walked through with different angles covered, such as ethical issues and limitations. In the sixth paragraph, the most relevant findings are organized in subcategories where they are presented. The analysis of the results follows in chapter seven, with a concluding section eight.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Contextual Background

A country like the DRC with vast areal, complex ethnic relations that have ties to neighboring countries, an extensive number of IDP:s, richness on natural resources, a weak state, and a desperate need of development, there are huge needs within all three HDP sectors that both overlaps and creates a dependency to each other. All these issues are opportunities for nexus related collaboration. The presence of UN peacekeeping forces from 1999 and on, represented by at that time the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), later renamed MONUSCO, is and has been one of the most comprehensive peacekeeping initiatives for an extended period (Berdal, 2019). The multiple conflicts over time have also generated the largest displaced population globally in the DRC, together with other crises such as food insecurity and malnourishment (NRC, 2020). Added to these crises caused by insecurity are also the Ebola virus outbreaks, which have resulted in many humanitarian organizations being present for many years (MSF, 2020). The situation with the internally displaced persons (IDP) in the country has worsened, and as of today, there are more than five million displacements in the DRC, more than a tenth of the world's IDPs in total (NRC, 2020). As time has passed without significant transformations in the IDPs' situation, there has been an increase of development organizations trying to put in place a long term plan for the lives of the IDP:s and for
people that are stuck in a stalemate of barely getting by (NRC, 2020). These initiatives have created a spectral environment of initiatives where such initiatives' coordination is essential for better efficiency.

2.2 Explanation of concepts

2.2.1 The Triple Nexus

The word nexus comes from Latin and means link or connection (ICRC, 2017). As illustrated in figure 1, there are areas of aid work where humanitarian-development linkages and interconnections exist, as there will be humanitarian-peace and development-peace linkages (figure 1). These are nexus areas linking two of the HDP segments, illustrated by the shaded areas of overlap between two sector circles. In the middle, there is a shaded area where all three sector circles are overlapping. That is the triple nexus area. There are potential cooperation and partnering opportunities in all these linking areas, resulting in gains for the beneficiaries and the acting organizations.

![Diagram of the triple nexus concept](Figure 1 Illustration of the triple nexus concept. Source: Howe (2019))

The core idea of the triple nexus concept is not by far anything new or revolutionary. For decades humanitarian, development, and peace actors have been working parallel, overlapping in both areas and targeted people. However, in the process, the HDP actors have faced challenges when becoming isolated from each other in practice, working "in
silos," although close physically (Hövelmann, 2020). Donors have promoted further collaboration, cooperation, and partnerships, OECD DAC, INGOs, and the UN (OECD, 2020; SIDA, 2020; UN, 2016), but few broad changes have been seen far. To understand how cooperation and partnering can look like there needs to explain what differs between the humanitarian, development, and peace approach. Here follows a summary of the HDP domains' characters.

The peacebuilding and peacekeeping actors are involved in issues dealing with security and sustaining peace, where conflicting situations have occurred. The peace actors are involved in stabilizing between conflicting parties and in protecting the civil population. The mandate to act is authorized primarily by the government in the specific country of involvement. Their role is to be impartial, although not neutral to the actions made. Another purpose of peacekeeping actors such as the UN Peacekeeping forces is to assist in the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) of former combating soldiers (UN Peacekeeping, 2020). One area of the misconception about peacebuilding work is that it has solely to do with security. However, many organizations working within the humanitarian or development sector are also working with social cohesion, which is an essential piece in the peacebuilding approach (Oxfam, 2019). In areas where there are conflicting groups, whether it is ethnic, class, or other formations, social cohesion is essential when working preventive and post-conflict peacebuilding. Social cohesion can be defined as Stanley (2003) phrase it "the willingness of members of a society to cooperate to survive and prosper" (Stanley, 2003).

The chosen wording can sometimes be delicate in a cooperating context, further explained under the findings and analysis paragraphs. On the other hand, humanitarian relief work focuses on responding to the people's needs in an impartial way, which means that they do not engage through regular governmental channels. Here lies one of the foundational differences between the humanitarian and the peace actors and possibly one of the biggest challenges for cooperation and mutual understanding. The distinction between peace and humanitarian impartiality is mainly in engaging or not engaging with combating actors, where the peacekeepers are dependent on these relations to fulfill their task. On the other hand, the humanitarians commonly see this engagement as a problem in their work. They strive to steer clear from any political, religious, ethnic, or military relations as much as possible (Guinote, 2019). Neutrality is at the core of the humanitarian approach, which also differs from the development
work. Whereas humanitarian's core principle is to remain neutral, the development actors frequently engage with authorities. Besides strengthening civil society and empowering local actors, development organizations are also involved in promoting good governance and stronger institutions in society (Reitano, 2014). These are challenges that have surfaced in discussing pursuing triple nexus where much more effort must be put to bridge these differences in understanding. Several traditionally humanitarian actors have started a process in prolonging their project timeframes and actively assuring the continuance of beneficial outcomes from their projects. These developments can result in a "continuum" or sequencing between humanitarian and development work both within an organization and between different actors. This progress is brought up in the interviews of this study and assessed in the analysis paragraph, where organizations such as UNICEF, FAO, and WFP are mentioned as active in sequencing humanitarian and development projects (I1, I5)

2.2.2 Aid community

Throughout the thesis, there will be references to the "aid community" or "aid work," which can have many interpretations. In this context, the aid community's meaning includes nonprofit organizations of local and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Intergovernmental organizations (IGO), and governmental aid agencies involved in aid work within the HDP sectors. By aid work, it means, in this context, the work of these actors mentioned above.

2.2.3 Triple Nexus Promotors and Facilitators

Globally, many actors in different segments of the aid community are actively promoting and facilitating the nexus approach. Those actors have different roles to play, complementing each other in the bigger nexus interconnection. A few examples of the most prominent actors raising awareness and connecting NGOs to make the aid work more efficient are the ICVA network and PHAP. They have both jointly and individually arranged seminars and conferences to discuss the triple nexus topic and exchange experiences and receive a broader picture of what it can mean in practice (PHAP and ICVA, 2017). These two actors mainly have a humanitarian-focused approach, but they make their resources available to actors in other sectors to promote the triple nexus concept. The UN agencies already formed a group of agencies responsible for the expansion and implementation of the humanitarian-development
nexus in 2017, especially as a support for the UN agencies on a country level. This group is called the Joint Steering Committee, where the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are involved in a joint supporting team (UN, 2020). For example, they have piloted initiatives in Mali and the DRC (Perret, 2019), where collaborative projects have been launched. In the donor community, OECD is driving the discussion through its Development Assistance Committee (DAC). By publishing recommendations for implementing the triple nexus, they have expressed an urgency for all OECD members to engage in the triple nexus approach (OECD, 2020). Sweden has traditionally had a prominent role in the nexus work in the DRC, where organized meetings and initiatives have been present since 2018 (Development Initiatives, 2019).

2.2.4 Humanitarian Principles

In discussing implementing the triple nexus into the aid work, it is essential to address humanitarian principles (table 1). These principles are frequently treated in the discussion and often comes to be the crux for the triple nexus to work. The principles originate from the International Red Cross (ICRC) but were later, in 1991, adopted by the UN. The present form of the principles found its phrase in 2004 (OCHA, 2012). There have traditionally been cultural differences in the humanitarian, development workers, and peacebuilders' work approach in conflict situations. In literature related to the triple nexus functionality and in interviews conducted in this study, there are concerns expressed for preserving the humanitarian community's principles. There is also some frustration over the reappearing clashes between, on the one hand, the principles and, on the other hand, the way peacebuilders cooperate with different armed groups and the way development workers cooperate with authorities (DuBois, 2020; Howe, 2019; Hövelmann, 2020).
Table 1: The Humanitarian Principles. Source: OCHA (2020)

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Triple nexus implementation

In retrieving relevant literature for the current topic, it has proven challenging due to the triple nexus concept's short history. Less than four years ago, the HDP triple nexus started to materialize as a concept. Although relevant literature has been retrieved, few articles discuss implementation and the triple nexus operationalization. Since the idea was introduced recently, the most pertinent literature is from between 2017-2020. A few actors have initiated implementation assessments, such as the Center for Humanitarian Action (CHA) and Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, the latter focusing specifically on the Mali context (Hövelmann, 2020; Tronc, Grace, and Nahikian, 2019). These actors and authors, unfortunately, both reflect the humanitarian perspective of the implementation, leaning towards a critical position, primarily because they see the HDP triple nexus in the current contexts as a threat to the humanitarian principles and actions and therefore question the actual functionality of HDP triple nexus (Hövelmann, 2020; Tronc, Grace, and Nahikian, 2019). Another gap in both literature and policy papers is practical examples of how to triple nexus cooperation can look, which is not
surprising due to its recent appearance as a concept. However, the fact that there are driving actors pushing for field implementation of the triple nexus approach result in the further development of internal organization policy documents produced, hopefully giving a framework and guidelines of essential elements in the triple nexus concept (Diakonia, IOM, SIDA, Oxfam, VOICE). One example of contributing to triple nexus's operationalization has been the International Journal for Rural Development, Rural 21. In their first edition of 2019, they have collected initiatives and different angles of the HDP triple nexus implementation (Rural 21, 2019).

One report found that contributing to a different nuance of perspective is done by ECDPM, an organization primarily a development-focused actor. ECDPM has, by focusing on the triple nexus initiatives, assessed the HDP nexus approach practiced in Somalia (Medinilla, Shiferaw, and Veron, 2019). They attempt to gain insight from several sectors and levels through conducted interviews. Despite the ECDPM initiative, a gap in the research is evident and vital to fill by investigating a broader scope to present a fuller picture of the view and attitude towards the implementation from all three HDP perspectives. It is the goal of this paper to fill one piece of this gap. Due to the late arrival of the peace sector in the nexus concept, this perspective is of utmost importance to highlight in the discussion.

3.2 Agency theory

In reviewing the literature on agency theory applications related to NGOs or the aid community in general, few examples are found (Peterson, 2010). One probable reason is Miller's (2002) influential and critical article assessing agency theory application on nonprofit organization boards. In her article, she argues that several organizational context elements speak against a good match of using the agency theory in the nonprofit organization setting. (Miller, 2002). On the other hand, Peterson (2010) holds a more optimistic stance on applying the agency theory to the NGO organizational environment. In the agency theory, Peterson also states that the funding partners have the principal role, contradictory to Miller's perception, and the NGOs holding the agent role (Peterson, 2010; Miller, 2002). Since Miller defines the principal role as the nonprofit organization board and the agent as the executive manager and Peterson defines the principal as the donor and the agent as the NGO, there is a gap in the literature of the dynamics of relations between the headquarters and the field offices and between the HDP entities on a field level (Miller, 2002; Peterson 2010).
Furthermore, the agency theory is traditionally designed for a corporate environment, where the agent's self-interest is in focus. Therefore, the alternatively developed agency theory model by Wiseman, Cuevas-Rodriguez, and Gomez-Mejia (2012) has been prioritized instead of the original model as a source since their angle, to a more significant extent, acknowledges the social context. Additionally, as mentioned above, literature has been found both in favor and against applying the agency theory on the aid community's environment in its different settings.

4 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In the multifaceted triple nexus settings and relations, several dynamics are expressed in power relations. Many of these layers can be interpreted as a principal-agent (P-A) relation in the agency theory (Figure 2). Throughout the conducted interviews in the link between headquarters and field office, it is seen and highlighted between the donor and INGO/NGO, between international and local actors, and sometimes between the UN and other NGOs. These power dynamics have through research been confirmed to be a potential risk of significant inefficiency in the use of funds in the aid organization and a possible skewed dominating role of the donor where the goals of the NGOs can be bent to fit the donor's desire (Scott, 2014; Peterson, 2010). In the case of a P-A relation, the supposed principal promotes the concept of triple nexus to the agent. The agent responds, not necessarily in a self-interest suggested by the agency theory's original model (Mitnik, 1975), but merely a conflicting interest and where a disharmonized information flow can play an important part (Wiseman, Cuevas-Rodriguez and Gomez-Mejia, 2012). In the corporate world, the agency theory's traditional setting, the principal and agent roles are often straightforward, with a manager or employer as the principal and the worker or employee as the agent. The aid community setting is less transparent since there are, as Miller (2002) argues, a vaguer principal role. Multiple principal actors are present in donors, managing head offices, and sometimes regional offices. In these cases, they monitor and review the results of triple nexus implementation progress. The unclarity over who is the owner or principal is one of Miller's (2002) argument against using the agency theory within this context.

Moreover, Miller (2002) argues that there are limited other agency theory areas in the nonprofit organization setting. But these arguments are related to the doubts that the organization board (principal) and the executive manager (agent) will find
disagreements associated with the purpose of the organization, and the administrative manager will strive for a convergence of the organizational goals towards the principal (Miller, 2002). However, this study does not question the organization's purpose but possible disagreements and information asymmetry related to implementing the triple nexus. Thus, the issue concerns the path to fulfill the specific implementation goal and not the organization's purpose itself. One should also remember that Miller's article was written a decade before Wiseman, Cuevas-Rodriguez, and Gomez-Mejia (2012) reported their article about taking the agency theory one step further in applying it in a social science setting. Therefore, this thesis will use the further interpreted model of the agency theory developed by Wiseman, Cuevas-Rodriguez, and Gomez-Mejia (2012) having non-corporate settings. A vital idea presented by Wiseman, Cuevas-Rodriguez, and Gomez-Mejia (2012) is that choosing others' interests over oneself and a strong sense of personal responsibility are crucial building blocks in many cultures (Wiseman, Cuevas-Rodriguez and Gomez-Mejia, 2012). These characteristics also resonate in the context and culture of international aid work (Scott, 2014). Therefore, the argument is that the developed social theory of agency that Wiseman, Cuevas-Rodriguez, and Gomez-Mejia (2012) produced is used instead of the original form of agency theory strengthened. Even if this further developed agency theory has been available for several years, few research examples have been applied to the aid work community.

Figure 2 Illustration of the Agency theory. Source: CFI (2020)
As in the case of this thesis, the relationship between the headquarters office and the field office, between the donor and aid organization, between international and local actor, and possibly between the UN and other agencies supposedly consist of conflicting interests that are important to take into count when promoting a new way of working. If both the principal and the agent further understand these dynamics, the chance of better efficiency in cooperation and communication will have a higher probability. Furthermore, Peterson argues that there are benefits for the NGOs themselves to look into the theory of agency to understand different corporations and foundations, potential funding partners, and how to find funding partners that go along with their goals and mission with the organization and its projects (Peterson, 2010). By investing more in this understanding, it could also result in preventing a "mission creep," as Peterson puts it, meaning "a gradual mission or goal deviation for the sake of meeting funding requirements" (Peterson, 2010).

Throughout the research process, two different planes will be assessed in this study, described as the vertical and the horizontal (see Figure 3). There are applications for the Agency theory both in the vertical and the horizontal plane. What differs in the implementation on a vertical and a horizontal plane is that on the vertical plane, the principal will, as mentioned, be the headquarter office, the regional office, or the donor, and a traditional agent, the field office worker. In the horizontal plane, a principal's role can be more challenging to distinguish. Still, there will be informal principals in the form of dominating organizations or sectors within the aid organization community that will push for and emphasize pursuing nexus work. As will be presented in the findings, there are also dynamics between international organizations such as UN agencies and smaller NGOs that resemble P-A relations' characteristics. In either case, the agents are still the field workers. It will be the prime assessment to analyze people's interviews from the two different levels, headquarters and field, being the vertical approach of the investigation, top and bottom. The horizontal direction will be when investigating the three HDP triple nexus sectors and how the differences look like in the approach.

Additionally, the donor perspective and relation to the aid organizations will be assessed in the interviews. As illustrated in figure 3, the donors will be evaluated on the vertical plane. Moreover, the available literature will be a critical perspective concerning the analysis of the interviews.
5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research process and structure

In the following section, the methodology process of the study and its character is presented. There will be an explanation of the methodological structures and how the research has been implemented. Furthermore, a brief description of the respondent's backgrounds, positions, and locations is also clarified.

The method used for this study is remote research by interviewing people working within the humanitarian, development, and peace sector or in a donor organization at headquarter level or field level, using a digital platform. Remote research has entailed the advantages of interviewing people from many parts of the world, including central Europe, Scandinavia, and different parts of the DRC. In choosing interviewees, it has been essential to find respondents within each segment of HDP, from the main office, field office, and additionally from donors. Initially, a few contacts were established and contacted from the start. In turn, these contacts generated more interviewees through their network. Hence, the sampling methodology was initially purposive, developing into snowball sampling. Originally, the plan was not to cover the donor perspective, but after further exploring the literature and conducting the first interviews, it became essential to include this perspective.

There have been eleven people interviewed, where three were interviewed in the group (I6), which means there have been nine interviews. Four of the interviewees have been questioned when infield; two were interviewed, generally working in the field but
currently from the home office in Central Europe during the pandemics. The other five usually are working at headquarters either in Sweden or in Central Europe. Three of the interviewees were men, and eight were women. Former experience and current positions include embassy staff, NGO country director, consultant, program coordinator, liaison officer, or senior advisor. There are at least three of the interviewees with experience of working in a UN agency. Since the goal is to see the triple nexus concept from the respondents' perspectives and further be analyzed through the agency theory lens, the abductive research method has been selected as the fittest (Bryman, 2016).

All the interviews were recorded, consented to by the interviewee before each interview, and an assurance of anonymity. The interviewees have been interviewed individually, all except for one interview is a group interview, including three interviewees from the same organization. To ensure that insight from all three HDP entities on both field and headquarter level is covered, the interviewees' experiences have been assessed by their recent or current position (see table 2). If they have been working in one of the HDP sectors from 2016 and onwards (from when the triple nexus concept started to take form) or are currently working in one of the sectors, they are assessed to hold that specific sector's perspective. Similarly, suppose they have been working from 2016 and onwards or are currently working at a field or central office. In that case, they are assessed to have the perspective from that office level, which applies to the donor perspective. Moreover, the donor perspective gives an essential input as the donor community is actively promoting the HDP triple nexus and has a vital role in the funding process (Development initiatives, 2019). There are three donor organizations represented through interviews to cover this perspective as well.

The interview questions were individually customized to gain insight into the specific sector due to the interviewees' different expertise areas. After the interviews were finished, they have been transcribed in summary, not in full. In assessing the findings, the transcription was coded by keywords of interest that stood out as significant during the interviews. These keyword findings have furthermore been considered and organized under the following subtitles of the findings section. This approach had a challenge because two of the interviews were done in Swedish, and the rest were English. Regardless of this challenge, five subcategorized findings are presented in the findings paragraph, identified through the keyword coding system. The interviews were semi-structured and made through a qualitative study. The qualitative
A semi-structured approach has been chosen as the most fitted form of practice. The argument as to why interviews were selected as a data collection is because of the recent creation of the HDP triple nexus concept and few sources of implementation assessments. The logical consequence of a limited supply of sources is finding available primary sources, namely the people actively working with policies, implementation, and triple nexus promotion. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018:50), the qualitative approach is the best fitted when researching a topic is scarce. Furthermore, Creswell and Creswell reinforces the argument for a qualitative approach when a new topic. When there are variables unknown to the researcher and when specific categories of people relevant to the subject have not been included in former research, as in this case where limited or no initiatives has been made in the development and peace sector of the HDP triple nexus (Creswell and Creswell, 2018:50).

This study will focus on the DRC representing the "field," meaning they work on a local or national level. As there are several aspects in the DRC such as ethnic conflicts, weak governance, IDP:s, sexual violence, and armed groups, that are also aspects found in other countries in a current conflict or a post-conflict period, it will be a representative case study. According to Bryman (2016), when you do a case study, you can choose a case, not because it is extreme or unique in its settings, but some characteristics could be recognized in other cases. Therefore, the conclusion from this specific study of the DRC can then be applied to other cases (Bryman 2016:62). This being said, it is also important to remember that the triple nexus approach needs to be context-sensitive (Howe, 2019). The study is done from Sweden, and since the DRC has been targeted as one of Sweden's prioritized national financial assistance areas, it adds interest. A five-year bilateral strategy plan between 2015-2020 was put in place for long-term development and humanitarian work (UD, 2015). Furthermore, in the recently approved 2021-2025 strategic plan, the Swedish Foreign Office (UD) has more than doubled the support for the continuing development work in the DRC (UD, 2020). The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) is also promoting the triple nexus approach, both in general and in the DRC, to search for better efficiency.
Table 2. A matrix is showing the experience and area of expertise of the interviewees. It is indicated in parentheses the summarized number of people interviewed, including I6, the group interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Humanitarian</th>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Peace</th>
<th>Donor</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>HQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I6</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3 interviewees)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I8</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary:</td>
<td>4 (6)</td>
<td>4 (6)</td>
<td>5 (7)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3 (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 The Validity of the Primary Sources

In choosing interviewees, there has been a conscious endeavor to get as equal representation as possible from the study's different entities, such as field, headquarters, donors, humanitarian, development, and peace. The reason is to reflect different perspectives from the aid community. It has been done by asking the interviewees for recommendations for additional contacts within the desired segment. It has not always produced the wanted result, as shown in a slight unbalance between field and headquarter staff interviewed (table 2). However, if looking at the number of people interviewed, including the group interview of three people, five represents the headquarter viewpoint and eight represents the field office viewpoints, which would be considered reasonably representative. The sum, as one can see, exceeds the number of people interviewed. The reason is a double experience by two of the respondents,
having experienced both working at head office and field office within the last four years.

One prominent group not directly represented is the local organizations. This group will be described only from secondary sources by people that work closely with the local NGOs and through available literature. The goal is to validate the data with published sources to the extent that there are open sources. As Webb et al. (1966) states: "Once a proposition has been confirmed by two or more independent measurement processes, the uncertainty of its interpretation is greatly reduced." There are areas of findings that will be difficult to triangulate or verify by other sources due to the triple nexus concept's recent introduction. Hence, the broad representation of the different sectors will be paramount.

5.3 Limitations and delimitations

The delimitations have focused on a few people in Europe, mainly Swedish, headquarters and administrative offices and compare with people in the DRC field offices. It will give a limited picture of the implementation and attitude towards the HDP triple nexus. The argument in favor of these delimiting choices is that Sweden has a leading role in striving and implementing the triple nexus, which gives them credibility in the current field (Development Initiatives, 2019). On the other hand, by focusing mainly on Swedish headquarters, the probable leaning will be to the triple nexus implementation's optimistic view. The critical perspective is, in this way, poorly represented from the headquarters' viewpoint. Sweden is active in policy creating, and one of their top-four focus areas for foreign aid is in the DRC, which makes a case study highly relevant (Kronholm, 2019). The DRC also has decades of all three HDP entities present in the country. A second delimitation is to solely look at literature and research connected to the more recent HDP triple nexus concept, even if some older ideas are similar such as the Grand Bargain, the LRRD, or others mentioned in the introduction.

Moreover, a limitation in the literature is identified. It will only be the literature written in English due to language barriers. There were articles in German and French in the literature review process, difficult to assess if relevant for the study because of the language barrier. The fact that the study will not be conducted through a field study is also a limiting factor that would, if pursued, have resulted in better conditions for successful interviews and a broader perspective by better taking into count the current context.
5.4 Ethical considerations

The plan to interview people from the administrative office and the field office has no purpose of pointing fingers and creating difficulties for people in the field for not following policies and directives given by the administrative office and donors. The aim is to illustrate the complexity and difficulty of implementing procedures. The views of what is best for the organization and the beneficiaries can differ from one setting to another. These were considerations taken seriously, which have also been clearly stated for the interviewees before the interviews were conducted. The anonymization of the interviews was also of help for a more secure interviewing environment.

6 FINDINGS

In the following section, the significant findings of this study will be presented. It will be categorized under sub-titles that are significant findings retrieved by keyword coding of the transcribed interviews. Initially, there will be a brief background summary of the nexus work in the DRC.

The triple nexus approach has been part of the cross-organizational work in the DRC ever since Spring 2019 in an organized matter, according to I1. Before that, the nexus work was not organized, not even the double Nexus of development-security or the humanitarian-development Nexus (I1). In March 2018, an initiative by the Secretary-General of the UN resulted in pointing out the DRC as one of the countries of priority to establish a nexus-based focus drawing inspiration from the New Way Of Working (NWOW). In the first phase, there have been three nexus pilot programs in North Kivu, Kasai, and Tanganyika, where joint programs have been launched to target specific SDG:s (Nexus Fact Sheet, 2019). Other leading actors have been Sweden as they have, through the embassy, arranged regular meetings to raise awareness and improve coordination (Development Initiatives, 2019). Since 2017 they have also been co-funding a joint WFP-FAO resilience program with a nexus character in the Tanganyika province, funded partly by Sweden. Norway has joined as one of the co-financiers (FAO, 2020). IOM has also contributed to a better practical understanding of the triple nexus operationalization in the context of IDP:s, which has been part of the staff training in the DRC (Grundy and Zingg, 2020).
An assessment of the conducted interviews has been performed and will be presented in this section. There are many dynamics when trying to find solutions to cross-sectional cooperation, such as the triple nexus. The findings will be categorized into five primary subtitles, and a concluding paragraph of the strategical conclusions will end this findings chapter.

6.1 The delicacy of wording

In implementing the triple nexus, several of the respondents expressed concerns about the words to use when discussing the nexus work with other actors in a different section of HDP, especially for the peace work. I3 makes a distinction of peacekeeping not being likely to become part of the triple nexus. Still, peacebuilding emphasizes that it is essential to talk in terms of peacebuilding in the triple nexus. I8 says that it is less wise to call peace work peacebuilding in the nexus relations with other actors. There is a risk that other peacebuilding actors take over the meaning of peacebuilding by securitizing it. A better alternative of wording for peacebuilding is to call it social cohesion instead.

Moreover, I8 states that when you talk about the humanitarian-development nexus combined with social cohesion as the triple nexus, many will accept it, even within the humanitarian sector. Still, when you use the word peace in the triple nexus equation, many will not receive it because, as I8 states, the UN sometimes hijacks that component when peacekeeping forces are present and making it something that usually includes military operations. Several respondents also mention peacebuilding projects named food security and livelihood projects for a better common cooperation ground, both for humanitarians and developers.

When applying for funding, certain buzzwords can be used to become more successful in being granted funds. Triple nexus is such a buzzword that is easily misused for such a purpose, even if there is questionable focus or connection of the actual project's nexus approach (I7). Using buzzwords run the imminent risk of overusing it, so the meaning or the edge of the word is lost, especially when promoted without basic guidelines for implementation or what it can look like in practice (I2, I8).

Furthermore, there is a gap in discussing the triple nexus acknowledged by several interviewees between the international and the national actors (I1, I3, I6, I8). The problem is not always the implementation or working accordingly. The language
barrier of international actors being academic in their wording about the nexus makes the comprehension of the concept difficult for nationals since English often is their second or third language. Initiatives have been taken to find common ground discussing the triple nexus with local partners to understand the functional approach. The way of working with a triple nexus approach can be well known among the local actors without using the phrase triple nexus (I2, I3, I6).

6.2 The importance of mutual understanding

Several respondents emphasized the importance of an increased understanding of how the different sectors and actors are working practically. I1 can see a misconception of workers, especially within the humanitarian sector, of their view of how the development actors are working and how peacebuilders do. I2 has issued a paper for humanitarians in her organization to increase their understanding of how the peacebuilders are working. I3 also brings up the humanitarian sector of being cynical about the concept and not having the patience to invest in the needed cooperation. I2, I3, I6, and I8 are all lifting the fact that the local actors often have firsthand experience and have already worked in nexus settings without calling it as such. A common misconception is also the triple nexus approach is supposed to erase the borders between the HDP sectors, but that is not necessarily the case, according to I1 and I8. The best would be for everyone to stay in their area of expertise and coordinate between the different segments to understand what different actors do and when they act (I1 and I8). Other components in the actual triple nexus interaction are to bridge knowledge gaps and build trust between actors (I3).

Moreover, the argument against the triple nexus cooperation that often comes from the humanitarian community is that other actors within the development and peace sectors are politicized, which will clash with the humanitarian principles of being impartial and neutral to the parties on sight. This argument is met by I3, stating that in every situation where you are funding or contributing financially to other parties, it becomes a politicization. I8 also calls for a better understanding of how different actors are working and urges for coordination between the actors/sections of the HDP to prevent situations where one actor is directly endangering another because of poor communication between them of actions being made. I8 exemplifies this by mentioning that just choosing the same brand and color of a car in the fieldwork can put actors in danger because of negative affiliation for a specific target group.
6.3 Clear directives and guidelines

There are explicit P-A dynamics in the relation between headquarters - field office and donor–aid organization. It becomes visible when concepts such as the triple nexus are promoted to become part of the work approaches. Even in the relation between the UN agencies and other smaller NGOs, this dynamic can be found. Another common element in the P-A relation is the asymmetry of information (Eisenheart, 1989), which is an evident problem in the communication between headquarters and field and sometimes between the UN agencies and the other smaller NGOs (I1, I3, I4, I6). The headquarters tend to become theory-oriented, where few suggestions or guidelines are produced.

On the other hand, the field office is very practically oriented and will need policies to implement the triple nexus work in their fields (I1, I3, I4). Several respondents expressed that donors and organizational headquarters, the main actors imposing the triple nexus, are not commonly context-sensitive. They have little knowledge about where the nexus approach would be implemented, which compose a problem and communication gaps (I2, I4, I6). Several organizations that the respondents are representing have recently started to produce policy documents with more practical guidelines in certain situations on how to implement a triple nexus approach, drawing from experiences and successes in other places (I2, I6, I7).

Both I3 and I9 inquires for leadership in the process if the actual implementation of the triple nexus will be realized. It is not only asked for within the aid community but also in state leadership. The process must not be solely internationally driven (I9). In implementing and integrating the triple nexus approach in existing work, some respondents inquire for more practical examples of the triple nexus work implementation. One way could be to collect success stories from existing initiatives that have implemented the nexus approach (I1, I6). Further on, in making it even more concrete, one of the I6 respondents suggests that the success stories should be reconstructed and analyzed to see what elements from the triple nexus are present and the benefits.

6.4 Funding structure

A frequent component for a functional triple nexus brought up in the interviews is flexibility in funding. I1 addresses this matter and starts by saying that the percentage
of designated funds is too significant. More flexibility must be built in the funding system to facilitate better nexus work between the HDP sectors (I1, I4). It is essential to have flexibility in development project funding and to have the option to pause in the process if there are situations where violence and conflict arises. These are crucial components, according to I4. One of the I6 interviewees brings up the funding architecture as a challenge but stating contrary to I4 that it is not an imminent problem within development projects but sees the lack of flexibility becoming a problem, especially between humanitarian work and the early recovery phase. I5 points out the lack of flexibility from the donors when setting up funding streams. The funds are earmarked to go to a specific humanitarian project, a long-term development project, or a peacebuilding initiative that makes it more challenging to find cross-sectional initiatives. I7 emphasizes the importance of integrating flexibility in agreements and program proposals as well. I9 brings up the need for both long-term strategic planning and sequencing, which needs to feed into each other, where flexible funding becomes essential to do that. According to I1, when the NGOs receive funds from the donors, the funding directions are often precise about what it should be used for or for which geographical area.

Moreover, project funding is often categorized to target only one of the three sectors of HDP, which deepens the silos of the sections and does not help in the cross-sectional debate. It also affects the sequencing process of different actors' initiatives to work (Oxfam, 2019). These matters related to flexibility in funding are also confirmed in the literature (Alcayna, 2019; Poole and Culbert, 2020). In a paper by IASC (2016) about donor conditions for humanitarian work, there are issues discussed how donors respond to multi-year funding plans. There are funding mechanisms identified which restrict the funding flexibility, where even multi-year funding plans contain directed yearly budgets that must be kept.

In some cases, it forces the receiving organizations to spend the budgeted funding within that specific calendar year, not allowing the organization to use it the following year for similar projects (IASC, 2016). Some donors cannot fund a multi-year project because of internal budgeting restrictions. These matters do not help in the work for a broader triple nexus approach. However, according to the interviewees who hold the donor perspective, changes are starting to happen. An increase of built-in flexibility in the funding systems is developing (I1, I5, I7). Sweden and Norway are two examples of donors who work closer to the partners on the ground and add flexibility. I1 says that
both humanitarian and development organizations see this change. Meanwhile, peace organizations are still more tied to specific conflict areas. One project brought up as an example of operationalizing broader flexibility between the HDP sectors in the DRC is a joint funding project of WFP and FAO in the Tanganyika province working towards resilience (I5). Several other examples of funding flexibility improvements can be found both in literature and brought up in the interviews (Poole and Culbert, 2020; I1, I5, I7). In Alnap's report about flexibility in the triple nexus approach, they highlight World Vision as an example as they strategically pursue an increase in private and flexible funding instead of grant money, which is more often earmarked (Alcayna, 2019). Another initiative is the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) who has developed a flexible funding system called Transitional Development Assistance (TDA). It is designed to strengthen people and institutions' resilience with an ensured connection between short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals (Schröder and Schilbach, 2019). In a joint report from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), UNDP and FAO, it is argued that flexible multi-year funding is an essential catalyst in the nexus approach (Poole and Culbert, 2020). There are downsides to this new way of funding. Suppose the fund-receiving organizations are accustomed to yearly and result-based financing and do not get the support to re-organize and re-think. In that case, there might not be any change to become multi-year and transformative in its thinking. There have also been indications from some humanitarian donors claiming that some flexibility is lost in multi-year funding of humanitarian projects when changes can lead to partial losses of the multi-year funding benefits (Poole and Culbert, 2020).

6.5 Existing initiatives for years

Several of the respondents believe that many local initiatives and organizations have already worked according to triple nexus approaches for several years, even though they have not called it triple Nexus (I1, I2, I6, I8). Moreover, it is suggested that the local actors might be the ones that have come furthest in the process of implementing the triple nexus. Their work has already, from the beginning, automatically an HDP integrated approach where they do not distinguish between humanitarian, development, or peace work (I1, I6, I8). Moreover, as most often local actors do not think of aid work in terms of humanitarian, development, or peace sections, they see human needs and respond to them in the way needed and will not be limited by sections or organizational
matters. The HDP categorization is something the donors, the UN agencies, and the more prominent NGOs have created to organize and structure the aid work and the funding (I1). There is a skew in the conception of nexus-related work, especially from the international community, where initiatives are taken to promote the triple nexus approach without assessing what is already in place. In some cases, the interviewees express a concern that the triple nexus concept is hijacked or promoted by donors or sometimes by the UN agencies to give the impression that the concept is something new (I2, I6, I8).

6.6 Strategical findings

In the findings section, there has been a presentation of the findings made in the interviews. These findings and findings in additional literature will be concluded in five specific strategic points that are significant for the future of the triple nexus work and implementation. It should be noted that the strategies mentioned below might be contradictory to each other because they are strategies for different actors in different contexts.

- Stay within your field and strengthen the coordination of projects, efforts, and campaigns between the organizations.
- Expand within your organization to span over several sectors and blur the borders between the HDP for a more long-term and durable result.
- An increase of flexible funding can allow breaks in the project due to unpredictable events and qualify financing, not only within one segment of the HDP.
- Pay attention to the local initiatives already in place and assess if those initiatives can be multiplied and further empowered.
- An attempt to prolong the project plan and work for sequencing between projects so that the projects' benefits can be passed on, pushing for a continuum of the aid work.
7 ANALYSIS

In the following section, the findings from the literature and the interviews will be summarized and analyzed under four subsections. Personal reflections and inferences are also shared.

7.1 Localization

There is no uniform definition of what localization means. In the Grand Bargain, it is explained as further support and find tools for local and national actors and "to commit to as local as possible and as international as necessary" (UN, 2016). In several of the interviews made for this study, an essential aspect of implementing the triple nexus is brought up, namely that a nexus sensitive work is already happening and has been for several years on a local plane. Some respondents even go that far as to say the local actors are ahead of the international aid community in several areas. In literature related to local involvement and nexus, there are some contradicting signs. According to Tronc, Grace, and Nahikian (2019), several reports point at a pattern of countries that have implemented the triple nexus. According to these reports, what has been found is the lack of local involvement, and local ownership and leadership are scarce. But when looking closer at these reports, one (Reitano, 2014) is written in 2014 before the triple nexus concept launch. The nexus referred to is a secondary source from 2012 where the referral is to security-development nexus. In the other report (Jones and Mazzara, 2018), the nexus between humanitarian and development is the nexus in focus. The triple nexus referred to and mentioned in the report is humanitarian, development, and political nexus, making the argument less relevant because the area assessed has a different focus.

Moreover, the short amount of time for the triple nexus concept to be implemented also argues against these reports' convincing conclusions. There is no unanimous conclusion coming from the respondents from the interviews in this matter. Still, several respondents (I1, I2, and I8) state that the local actors are active in the triple nexus work in the DRC fieldwork. Although the interviewees in this thesis are situated in the DRC and could be viewed as a limited sample, the interviewee I8 has worked in Mali for several years with a triple nexus approach, close collaboration between humanitarian, development, and peace actors on a local level have been practiced. However, even if many local actors have worked accordingly for several years, none of
the local actors have called it nexus approach-based work. With these insights, one can wonder who is supposed to teach who about collaboration and cooperation. There are concerns about the character of the international aid community's approach when "introducing" the triple nexus concept, suggesting it to be something new and not being responsive to possible efficient ways of applying the triple nexus approach already in function. Here we can see signs of a P-A relation where the triple nexus concept is promoted from UN agencies and donors with sometimes hegemonic character, resulting in an evident communication gap and possibly damaging relations when the local actors' sensitivity is missing. The triple nexus promotors bring a concept to the field with a good cause and an important goal but forget to assess what is already in place. Suppose there would be an increase of sensitivity to each country's context by evaluating what already exists regarding Nexus sensitive initiatives on a local level and doing a joint assessment of the context specifics that need to be addressed. In that case, there is a reasonable probability for improvements. In Somalia, there have been attempts leaning in this direction, where IOM has, together with UNDP and UN-habitat in cooperation with national and local authorities, been involved in establishing a link between a community-based planning approach and a response to displacement and instability. The starting point is a community action plan (CAP), shared with local authorities and further used to coordinate other humanitarian and development actors (Perret, 2019).

However, there are complications and challenges in the funding systems of today connected to local organizations. There are incompatibilities between how the international donor community functions today and how far the local actors can stretch in adjusting to these regulations and funding policies. A further adjustment is needed from the donors' point of view to keep the local ownership and leadership, not becoming puppets for international initiatives to receive funding becoming a victim for a mission creep. The financial structures created by the international community of donors and INGOs are challenging concerning local actors, where local people and organizations reform to fit funding systems of the West, which is working against localization. This process also bears signs of P-A relations where the local actors (agents) are obligated to adjust heavily to receive funding from the international donors and partnering INGOs (principals). In these matters, it gets complicated because the local actors' reforming is neither the end goal for the local actors nor international donors. However, it is still part of the projecting process. OECD DAC recommendations have been a powerful tool as
a guiding document to emphasize the importance of the triple nexus approach. It also contains clear directions for localization as part of the nexus work (OECD, 2020). In the DRC, there are, as mentioned, signs of both a recognition of the local nexus-like initiatives and an involvement of the local actors in projects such as social cohesion and initiatives for local peace in the Tanganyika province (FAO, 2020).

There is a high probability of many challenges in this process of increased ownership and local leadership where time to invest is essential, making short-term projects impossible to use for these matters. In the complexity of local, national/international interaction within the aid community, structural elements are related to the P-A relation. There are explicit "functional dependencies" that Mitnick (1975) speaks of, between the local/national and the international actor. The problem is rooted in the fact that the international actor consistently becomes the principal in the relation. The local/national actor becomes the agent due to financial dependency, colonial structures, and sometimes education level. As previously mentioned, there is no primary representation from the local or national actors through the interviews conducted in this study. Therefore, to cover that perspective a bit more extensive than through the respondents as secondary sources, an initiative compiled by Brabant and Patel (2018), wrought from the World Summit 2016 and the Grand Bargain, is highlighted. In this report, voices from local and national actors, including the DRC, are put together to localize in settings where international actors interact and collaborate with local and national humanitarian work actors. The critique towards the international actors and donors is broad and multifaceted. There are clear signs of hegemonic behavior where the relation is unequal regarding decision-making and capacity recognition (Brabant and Patel, 2018). There are elements of funding regulations and restrictions that only apply to the local actors and not international actors. The local actors are often forced to go through a "due diligence assessment" every time they start a new partnership with an international actor. A more thorough audit is founded in a portrayed image of locals being more often corrupt and engaged in fraud, even if the local actors know that this happens within the international organizations. Usually, it involves more immense sums of money (Brabant and Patel, 2018). If localization is to happen, these structural, relational obstacles need to be removed. A shift of the view on local and national actors must change from being ignorant and less educated to actual experts of their local context, highly experienced and valuable. If true local empowerment, ownership, and rising leadership are to be formed, these matters need to
materialize. There is a deeper level of core values that needed to be addressed. In the statement: "Do no harm" lies both a sense of respect in the international community's response and communicates a lack of ambition in what can be accomplished. If the overall goal or aim is to do no harm, not much result will be seen in the long run. This motto must not become the dominating motor for the aid programs. Maybe a cautious but positive step to evolve the motto would be to "Do no harm but leave something durable."

7.2 Humanitarian principles – obstacle or opportunity?

Throughout the work towards and implementing the former double nexus between humanitarian and development and the current HDP triple nexus, there have been discussions about how and if the nexus areas bordering on the humanitarian work contribute to a compromise of the humanitarian principles. In several of the conducted interviews for this study, there is an urgent need for further understanding between the HDP sections about their way of working. Additionally, there is a need to understand what is meant by the triple nexus approach and that there are many engagement ways. In this present lack of understanding lies misconceptions such as erasing of borders between the HDP sections are imposed, the humanitarian principles will be compromised, or that the triple nexus approach always promotes organizations to work together (Tronc, Grace and Nahikian, 2019). This is a probable cause as to why most literature initiatives related to triple nexus implementation have so far been from the humanitarian entity. In situations of unclear objectives and when principles you live and work by are threatened, it is natural for a critical response. But there are many ways to conceptualize the triple nexus. The emphasis in both literature, policy papers, and the interviews' respondents is to have a context-based approach (Howe, 2019; SIDA, 2020; I4 and I9), which allows the triple nexus approach to be uniquely designed for a specific country which will facilitate a local connection.

Moreover, there are different paths to take in the contextualized solution for a nexus sensitive work, such as communication coordination without any practical joint projects or if the context allows collaborative projects with clear boundaries of the roles and collaboration areas. In these dynamics of the concept lie both opportunities and obstacles. The possibilities are already mentioned. The downsides are the difficulties of comprehending and explaining the triple nexus concept and what it means in practice since it can differ substantially from one implementation site to another. These
difficulties in grasping the concept combined with a lack of knowledge of how other sectors of the HDP are working have created unnecessary barriers, especially for the collaboration between the humanitarian and peace sectors. There are fine lines between the three HDP entities of when to work practically together and sufficient to cooperate through cross-organizational coordination. The policy and guiding documents concerning the triple nexus approach need a focus on crucial elements required for the triple nexus equation instead of suggesting methods or practical courses of action.

7.3 Overbridging and sequencing

There has been a possible path resounding throughout several interviews to search for practical facilitating elements in the triple nexus equation. There are better conditions for a triple nexus mindset within and between organizations that span over two or more fields of HDP. That might not come as a surprise, but all the more, it can work as an essential insight for strategic reasons in the development process of an organization and in planning for the implementation of the triple nexus. One actor, traditionally coming from the humanitarian sector, highlighting possibilities with the HDP triple nexus is the World Food Programme (WFP) that also happens to be the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020. WFP has started to pursue longer timeframes for their working plans, improve the sequencing of projects resulting in an erase of the line between humanitarian and development work, which means that they are already on an excellent path to bridge between the first two nexuses (WFP, 2017). Similar opinions come from respondents I1, I3, and I9, expressing that projects' sequencing is an essential building block. Oxfam (2019), both by size and engagement, a big promotor of and player in implementing the nexus, also emphasizes these matters.

There are examples of other organizations operating in several sectors of the HDP triple nexus. IOM and Diakonia are operating in all three sectors; UNDP works mainly with development and partly early recovery, which lies on the border between humanitarian and development work. The Danish Refugee Council is both operating in humanitarian and peace work. According to several of the respondents, these organizations spanning over two or three sectors are more open to cross-sectional cooperation. On the other hand, other respondents address the importance of staying in your specific field and strengthening coordination. There is a dynamic where much depends on the organization's culture, characteristics, and resources in these potential paths to take as an organization. There are different paths to take and still being able to
work with a nexus approach. A starting point suggested by several respondents can be to explore collective outcomes (I1, I2, I3). If reaching collective outcomes together as organizations in collaboration, the step to plan a sequencing of projects would be the next logical step. One element to consider in this process is the mentioned flexible funding that will be crucial for joint or sequenced projects to span over several years and span over several HDP sections. Another aspect to consider in sequencing projects involving development projects is the importance of conforming and aligning these plans with the applicable country's National Development Plan (I1). It is crucial for long-term ownership and honoring the local government's strategy for their country.

7.4 Nexus epoxy

In finding the required elements and characteristics for a functional triple nexus in a specific place and context, the process can be compared to putting together epoxy resin components for a hardening result. Each component does not have enough characteristics to build a formidable and resilient surface, but together, the new substance's characteristics become firmer and more resilient when mixing it. Using epoxy adhesive instead of another adhesive is often more time consuming, but the result becomes stronger. Another advantage of epoxy is to glue two different materials and make that connection strong. It is also the end goal of the nexus concept, through collaboration and cooperation between the various actors, well-needed components in building more robust, more resilient, and more durable supporting structures for the people in need.
CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, the process's methodology has been presented together with the analytical framework being used. In finding the relevant literature and the gap in research, explanations have been provided and argued for. The novelty of implementing the triple nexus approach has led the study to conduct interviews with people aware of and involved in HDP nexus processes to gain more understanding and insights into the current progress. The interviews were made remotely with people from all the HDP entities, from headquarters, field offices, and donor organizations in the DRC, Central Europe, and Scandinavia. By interviewing eleven people from all the mentioned entities, the different perspectives have been accounted for, partly filling the research gap. The study was chosen as a case study focusing on the triple nexus implementation in the DRC, with challenges, obstacles, and opportunities following the process. By gaining more insight through the interviewees, there are several clear findings presented, compiled, and analyzed with the hope of bringing a clearer view of critical elements in the implementation process of the triple nexus approach. The result shows a partly intricate image of the process. Different actors need to take different paths originating from their initial position where each organization's culture, character, and resources will play essential roles. In assessing triple nexus work dynamics, the different actors' environment, the interdependency and inequality present, significant power relations have been identified and analyzed by applying the Agency theory. Several levels of P-A relations have been found assessed throughout the process. Despite the complexity of the topic and its implementation, there are still crucial elements found both through the interviews and through the available literature that are vital parts of the nexus equation for it to work. Those elements are the following: flexibility in funding where donors need to adjust both to a multiple-year plan thinking and where more regard has to be taken to the local actors and their structures, a mutual understanding between the different HDP entities of how they are working in practice, an allowance of various solutions for other actors for the triple nexus approach to function with regards to the proper context, to be locally sensitive to the initiatives already in place and to strengthen these initiatives and thereby also strengthen the local ownership, empowerment and leadership. In these elements, there are also P-A relations that need more clarity in communication and expectation. Still, in some cases, these created P-A relations would benefit most by being removed and replaced by an
association of equality. Examples of desired equality are the relation between international and national actors and sometimes between the UN agencies and smaller NGOs.

In summary, although there are structural challenges and the process of implementing the triple nexus approach in the daily fieldwork takes more time and effort, there is hope for a functional "nexus epoxy." But it takes willingness and commitment. The improved result for the people in need of these support structures should be a strong motivator to pursue a triple nexus approach.
9 REFERENCES


9.1 Illustrations

CFI (2020)
https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/principal-agent-problem/

Howe, Paul (2019)
10 APPENDIX

10.1 Interview guide

The guide used in the interviews is presented below in its original form. There have been two main frameworks, one for the people working in the field and one for the people working at the head office. During the interviewing process, the guides have been adapted for each individual to retrieve unique expertise and insight.

10.1.1 Questions for the field offices in the DRC

How long have you been working in the DRC?
In what segment of HDP does your organization primarily work?
Is your organization active in several segments of the HDP?
How would you describe the general willingness among the NGO community to cross-sectional cooperation and partnering?
What is your organization's policy about engagement in the triple nexus?
What have been the initiatives from your organization since these policies have been introduced?
Looking back two years and comparing it with today, what are the triple nexus implementation differences? Have there mainly been improvements or setbacks?
How does the HD, HP, DP nexus look like from the viewpoint of your organization?
In what way does the triple nexus include the local organizations?
What main challenges do you see of inclusion of the local actors in implementing the triple nexus?
What are the biggest challenges in general for a triple nexus to work? In HD, DP, HP relation?
What challenges do you see in relation to the headquarters in the promotion of the triple nexus? Is the view from the field office versus the headquarters office harmonized, would you say? If no, elaborate on why.
Which elements in the triple nexus concept do you find being unrealistic, if any?
In your opinion, what are good strategies for a successful triple nexus? What practical opportunities for nexus sensitivity do you see in your work vicinity? Successful implementations, examples?
How often do you meet with other actors?
10.1.2 Questions for the Headquarters/administrative office

In what segment of HDP does your organization primarily work?
Is your organization active in several segments of the HDP?
How would you describe the general willingness among the NGO community for cooperation and partnering?
What is your organization's policy about engagement in the triple nexus?
What have been the initiatives since these policies were introduced?
Who is/are the driver/drivers of the triple nexus promotion, would you say?
In what way does the triple nexus include the local organizations?
What main challenges do you see of inclusion of the local actors in implementing the triple nexus?
What are the biggest challenges in general for a triple nexus to work? In HD, DP, HP relation?
What communicational channels do you have in your organization to receive feedback and input from the field offices of the challenges and obstacles in implementing triple nexus?
What challenges do you see relating to the field office in the promotion of the triple nexus? Is the view from the field office versus the HQ office harmonized would you say? If no, elaborate on why.
Which elements in the triple nexus concept do you find being unrealistic, if any?
In your opinion, what are good strategies for a successful triple nexus?