

CONVIVENCE AMONG PEOPLES

FRANCESCO AVALLONE¹

Full Professor of Work and Organisational Psychology, University of Rome Unitelma Sapienza. Former vice-rector of “La Sapienza University of Rome”.

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ABSTRACT

In the face of increasing situations of destruction, violence, hunger, forced migration and armed conflicts, this paper – drawing on previous research into affective, organisational and social convivence and recalling the appeals of the United Nations and a number of religious authorities on the need for the planet's population to live together in peace, harmony and justice – proposes a framework for interpreting convivence on a planetary scale in order to enable a multidimensional reading of situations and behaviours, thereby allowing the inhabitants of the planet to make their own representation of reality felt. The construct of convivence among peoples is defined and articulated along seven dimensions: culture of legality and respect for signed agreements; respect and tolerance of diversity; common goals and collective efficacy; solidarity and support; equity in access to and management of resources; power and international relations; trust and hope. The paper concludes with a call to researchers to form a network to promote studies on new forms of convivence and planetary development.

THE PROCESSES OF CONVIVENCE

The theme of convivence and the challenges of living together is a constant in the life experience of all individuals and is increasingly at the centre of political debate.

Since antiquity, numerous studies have considered convivence between a man and a woman within or outside the marital bond (Blundell, 1995). There are, however, also examples of attention to social convivence such as the famous speech delivered by Emperor Claudius to the Roman Senate in 48 AD in favour of granting citizenship and rights of access to the Senate for the elites of Gallia Comata. This address reaffirmed that the development of the Roman Empire was made possible thanks to convivence among its peoples, who were united by the inclusive project founded on Roman citizenship².

At the beginning of our century, the *European Association of Work and Organisational Psychology* (EAWOP) decided to dedicate its twelfth congress, held in Istanbul from 12 to 15 May 2005, to the theme *Convivence in Organisations and Society*. For the first time at an international conference, the term “convivence” was presented as a construct capable of encompassing and synthesising thematic areas characteristic of psychological research.

The term “convivence” is first adopted in the Spanish language (*convivencia*) in 1948 by the historian Américo Castro to describe the coexistence of Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities in medieval Spain and the cultural exchange fostered by such proximity (Moreillon, 2024). In 2004, the *Académie Française*, introduced the term *convivance*, into its dictionary to distinguish it from related concepts such as cohabitation and coexistence. The new term designates a situation in which different communities and human groups live together while maintaining neighbourly relations and reciprocal exchange (Alajouanine, 2018)³.

In the opening address of the conference (Avallone, 2005), after defining convivence as the “*process that allows*

¹ Full Professor of Work and Organisational Psychology, University of Rome Unitelma Sapienza. Former vice-rector of “La Sapienza University of Rome”.

² Cf. Tabula Claudiana, Gallo-Roman Museum of Lyon (Fourvière). In: F. Philippe, 1929.

³ In other languages, such as English, the concept of convivence generally tends to be expressed by a locution (*living together*) or reduced to one of its specific aspects – the sharing of a physical space (*cohabitation*) – thereby excluding its processual and relational aspects. In German, the term *zusammenleben*, the preposition *zu* precedes the concept of living together, expressing a pull towards the other, an intentionality in approaching. Also in German, the concept of convivence is rendered more institutionally through the term *gemeinschaftshaushalt*, which designates a collective body responsible for the management of the public good and shared resources.

individuals, organisations and communities to manage meaningful and stable relationships, located in a physical and symbolic space, with other people, groups and social systems", three different levels of social relations were presented, based on the assumption that the modes of living together vary across different relational contexts.

The *affective level*, which concerns convivence in relations between parents and children or between siblings or between relatives within an extended family⁴; the reasons for the success/failure of couple relationships within or outside the marital bond in cases in which the members of the couple share a common project and envision a future together⁵; inter-ethnic differences; convivence in same-sex couples⁶.

The *organisational level* constitutes a new element in studies on convivence. The organisational context is the environment in which many people spend a large portion of their lives, building relationships and setting up shared ways of being together, investing energy, emotions and hopes. Studies that have addressed areas and dimensions related to organisational convivence refer, in particular, to organisational cultures and climate⁷; organisational citizenship⁸; and organisational well-being and health⁹.

Lastly, the *social level*, which considers the interactions and encounters between different ethnicities, cultures, religions and political orientations¹⁰; the effects of immigration and social integration processes¹¹; conflicts related to tolerance, discrimination, or crime¹²; and the construction of a multiethnic and multicultural citizenship¹³. The focus was, however, on the context of individual national communities, rather than on global relationships and equilibrium among peoples across the planet.

The development of research on convivence processes has been advancing rapidly thanks to a series of events that have distinguished the political, economic and social transformations of the first decade of the 21st century. As a general rule, rapid historical, cultural and economic change tends to open up new opportunities for dialogue and integration with a multiplicity of different systems, but provides fewer clear "guidelines" to orient patterns of behaviour. The foundation of affective, organisational and social ties undergoes profound changes, generating uncertainty and disorientation, prompting withdrawal into individualism, and hindering processes of maturation and development (Avallone, 2003). Once age-old certainties have collapsed and barriers of space, time, values and cultures have broken down, new balances are sought in a globalised context. Convivence in societies and among communities can no longer rely on set rules and consolidated group identities, but requires a redefinition of the role of rules as a "weak" framework of reference, while simultaneously cultivating various new competencies and engaging in a continuous effort of exploration, integration, and respect for diversity.

The world's politicians seem incapable of governing complexity or of finding new ways and means for people and populations to live together in peace, harmony and justice. The theme of civil and social convivence has become a new emergency and the great challenge of the future.

Crisis of the contemporary world and calls for planetary convivence

In the year 2000, this emergency prompted a renewed commitment on the part of the UN which – in continuity with the principles that had animated the founding of the United Nations Charter¹⁴ to maintain peace and security and respect for human rights; to promote justice and economic and social progress; to consolidate cooperative

⁴ Bumpass, Sweet, 2001; Buyukkececi, 2025.

⁵ Yoon, 2003; Avellar, Smock, 2005.

⁶ Eyster, 2001; Westrick-Payne, Manning, 2025.

⁷ Schein, 2010; Alvesson, 2012.

⁸ Podsakoff, Ahearne, Mackenzie, 1997.

⁹ Bennett, Cook, Pelletier, 2003; Avallone, Paplomatas, 2005; Cartwright, Cooper, 2018.

¹⁰ Besozzi E., 200.

¹¹ Solivetti, 2010.

¹² Acar B, Bagci S.C, Verkuyten M., 2024.

¹³ Marques J., Dhiman S., 2022.

¹⁴ "We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, and for these ends to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples" (From the preamble to the United Nations Charter, which was adopted in San Francisco on 26 June 1945 and came into force on 24 October 1945) .

relations among nations – drew up a blueprint identifying eight fundamental challenges – the so-called *Millennium Development Goals*¹⁵, which were reaffirmed over the years¹⁶ until the adoption, in 2015, of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. The Agenda updates the Millennium Development Goals of 2000, setting 17 objectives focused on people, to combat poverty and social exclusion; to protect the planet's environment and biodiversity; to promote more sustainable patterns of production and consumption; to promote peace and an inclusive society without discrimination.

In particular, Goal 16, “Peace, justice and strong institutions”, reaffirms that peace is a fundamental condition for social and economic development, and calls for the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, guaranteeing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

In support of this agenda to promote development and civil convivence, the United Nations, during the 68th General Assembly on 8 December 2017, adopted the Resolution establishing the *International Day of Living Together in Peace* “as a means of regularly mobilizing the efforts of the international community to promote peace, tolerance, inclusion, understanding and solidarity. The Day aims to uphold the desire to live and act together, united in differences and diversity, in order to build a sustainable world of peace, solidarity and harmony.”(UN, 2017).

The UN's call to create a safer, more peaceful and sustainable world continues in 2024 with the “Pact for the Future”: a declaration that, renewing the commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, focuses on five key areas: sustainable development, international peace and security, science, technology, innovation and digital cooperation, youth and future generations, and transforming global governance.

Notwithstanding these goals, recent years have witnessed an increase in conflicts, including several high-intensity wars¹⁷.

This escalation of violence, misery and death could not fail to attract the attention of the authorities of the Catholic and Muslim faiths who decided to meet in Abu Dhabi on 4 February 2019 to sign the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together¹⁸.

Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb – perhaps also aware that, throughout history, much of the greatest violence and attacks on peace have involved responsibility on the part of the various religions and their authorities – declare that they are intervening “in the name of peoples who have lost their security, peace, and the possibility of living together, becoming victims of destruction, calamity and war” and “in the name of this fraternity torn apart by policies of extremism and division, by systems of unrestrained profit or by hateful ideological tendencies that manipulate the actions and the future of men and women”(p. 8).

The analysis of the causes underlying the crisis of the modern world is highly detailed. Among these, emphasis is placed on “prevailing individualism accompanied by materialistic philosophies”, “religious extremism, or (...) blind and fanatic extremism, which ultimately encourage forms of dependency and individual or collective self-destruction”. These phenomena underscore the need to “stop the shedding of innocent blood and bring an end to wars, conflicts, environmental decay and the moral and cultural decline” (p. 9).

These recent years have been characterised by a sharp deterioration in the process of convivence among the peoples of the planet, as documented by *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025* – the Report that the United Nations prepares annually to update the progress made towards the achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With reference to Goal 16, “Peace, justice and strong institutions”, the picture presented is alarming (pp. 40-41).

¹⁵ UN General Assembly (Resolution 55/2, September 2000),

Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger in the world; Achieve universal primary education; Promote gender equality; Reduce child mortality; Decrease the maternal mortality rate; Combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other diseases; Ensure environmental sustainability; Build a global partnership for development.

¹⁶ *World Summit on Sustainable Development* in South Africa in 2002; *United Nations World Summit 2005*; *Conference on Sustainable Development* in Rio de Janeiro, in 2012.

¹⁷ Caritas Italiana December 2018-January 2019.

¹⁸ Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, Shalom, Camerata Picena, 2019.

Violence and conflict continue to cause suffering and forced displacement. Loss of life in armed conflicts increased by 40% in 2024. Approximately four times more children (337%) and women (258%) were killed in 2023-2024 than in the previous two-year period. In 2024, at least one life was lost every 12 minutes due to armed conflict. Of these, 8 out of 10 children and 7 out of 10 women died in Gaza. Identified victims of human trafficking increased by 25% in 2022 compared to pre-pandemic levels, and by 43% compared to 2020. At the heart of this sharp rise lies the mounting toll of underage victims, up 31% since 2019. Minors accounted for 38% of all identified trafficked persons globally in 2022, up from 13% in 2004. And for many, justice is still hard to come by. There continue to be major shortcomings in the building of institutions that are effective, accountable, and inclusive.

In the face of these facts, forms of “urgent multilateralism” are called for: a renewed commitment to upholding international humanitarian law and human rights, and to strengthening international cooperation.

Towards a framework for interpreting convivence among peoples

Deaf to these authoritative affirmations of principles and values, the world continues to be marred by numerous armed conflicts with devastating consequences of death, destruction, violence, disease, hunger and forced migration, and the conviction is gaining ground on the international political scene, supported also by the media, that only weapons and force can establish new forms of convivence and development on the planet.

In the face of this landscape of devastating desolation, what role can scientific research – and in particular the social sciences and psychology – play? The commendable work of assisting refugees – that of giving them a renewed possibility of life after being traumatised by war and uprooted from their environment, and of systematically analysing the short- and long-term consequences of malnutrition, physical and psychological suffering, and the violence endured – should not be underestimated. Alongside these areas of research and intervention, there remains the need to build a framework for interpreting convivence on a planetary scale – one that enables a multidimensional analysis of situations and behaviours, and provides the inhabitants of the planet with the opportunity to make their own representation of reality felt.

The general objective of a framework for interpreting convivence among peoples is to develop the ability to understand the multi-determined behaviour in the relationships that bind the various national communities, their values, interests and cultural identities, potential clashes and conflicts, in order to increase the ability to interpret specificities and differences of such great complexity and identify possible opportunities for integration and civil convivence.

So a framework for interpreting convivence constitutes a conceptual tool that facilitates the understanding of events and interpersonal and social communication: it is a system composed of a number of elements that interact within a relationship of mutual interdependence, thereby making the complexity of reality more comprehensible by highlighting both similarities and differences.

The availability of a framework for interpreting convivence among peoples could also have some operational repercussions.

Firstly, a shared frame of reference could constitute a sort of agenda of the problems to be monitored at the level of national and international political institutions in order to promote and maintain convivence among peoples, identifying areas on which to intervene preventively and with particular urgency.

A framework for interpreting convivence among peoples could also be a useful reference point for the development of training and intervention projects, particularly geared towards young people, individuals, groups and entire communities, aimed at understanding the dynamics of convivence and paving the way towards more evolved and more conscious forms and styles of living together.

A framework for interpreting reality cannot be improvised but is the outcome and synthesis of studies and research in different disciplinary fields.

In the context of convivence among peoples, increasing attention is being paid to the following thematic areas, each of which is illustrated with examples of recent publications:

LEGALITY. This is the area that concerns the exercise of power within the boundaries established by the laws and international agreements. Special emphasis is given to the commitment to avoid various forms of violence, inequality of opportunity and corruption (Koch, Kjølstad, 2023; Germeaux, 2022).

MULTICULTURALISM. This encompasses studies on the recognition of the right to cultural differences and on the prohibition of discrimination based on ethnicity, culture, or religion. It also examines practices that foster the integration of diverse cultural groups (Kymlicka, 1996; Shorten, 2022).

TOLERANCE. This refers to the numerous studies on respect for the ideas, opinions, and actions of others, even when they come into conflict with our own, particularly in the religious and political spheres (Wagner, Bhatia, 2009; Mokyr, 2025).

SOLIDARITY. This area includes studies on willingness to engage with the problems faced by all actors on the international stage, and on the various forms of mutual assistance based on common objectives (Kassoti, Idriz, 2023; Kozłowska, 2024).

EQUITY. This theme includes studies on the norms that regulate – by either authorising or prohibiting – specific actions in the interaction among national institutions, as well as the identification of practices that control impartial access to resources (Telem, Martin, 2021; Marques, Dhiman, 2022).

CONFLICT AND NEGOTIATION. This thematic area is devoted to studies on the various factors that promote de-escalation and the peaceful management of conflicts worldwide as well as on negotiation as the preferred instrument for conflict resolution (Baldwin, 2016; Coleman, Deuthsch, Marcus 2014; Owsiak, Greig, Diehl, 2023).

TRUST. Contributions on the building and maintenance of reputation and trustworthiness as the foundation of multilateral exchange and cooperation (Rathbun, 2012; Barton, 2018; Haukkala, van de Wetering, Vuorelma, 2018).

PEACE. This theme brings together contributions from different sources to illustrate the conflict-free condition, also characterised by a general social situation based on respect, justice and equity (Smith, Snidal, 2010; Adebowale Akand, 2023).

These eight thematic areas represent the main reference points for an analysis and in-depth study of the features of Sustainable Development Goal 16, which, in order to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, identifies as priority elements: the reduction of all forms of violence and related mortality rates; the promotion of the rule of law at national and international levels; the elimination of abuse, exploitation, and all forms of violence and torture against children; the significant reduction of illicit flows of arms and money; and the development of effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels¹⁹.

Dimensions and sub-dimensions of the process of convivence among peoples

On the basis of the studies in the thematic areas presented and the findings of previous investigations into affective, organisational and social convivence within the individual national contexts to which reference is made (Avallone, Kepir Sinangil, Caetano, 2005; Avallone, Farnese, Pepe, Paplomatas, 2007), it becomes possible to propose a definition of convivence among peoples and suggest the dimensions on which it rests, subject to empirical verification.

Convivence among peoples can be defined as the *set of actions that promote, sustain, and enhance the quality of life and relations among peoples within the international community, by recognising the value of diversity,*

¹⁹ DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. *Sustainable Development Goal 16: The importance of good security sector governance for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda*. SSR Backgrounder Series. Geneva: DCAF, 2021.

fostering dialogue and mutual understanding, and supporting the collective political will to build a more just and inclusive society.

This definition can be broken down into seven dimensions, each with three sub-dimensions, summarised as follows.

DIMENSIONS AND SUB-DIMENSIONS OF THE PROCESS OF CONVIVENCE AMONG PEOPLES

- 1. CULTURE OF LEGALITY AND RESPECT FOR SIGNED AGREEMENTS**
 - a) Respect for human rights.
 - b) Fulfilment of commitments arising from treaties, agreements and conventions.
 - c) Consideration of the rule of law, peace and inclusion as basic values of social convivence.
- 2. RESPECT FOR AND TOLERANCE OF DIVERSITY**
 - a) Acceptance and respect for differences.
 - b) Pursuit of equilibrium among differences.
 - c) Active listening to dissenters and antagonists.
- 3. COMMON GOALS, COLLECTIVE EFFICACY**
 - a) Attention to the emerging problems of the international community.
 - b) Mobilisation of skills and resources to achieve collective goals.
 - c) Integration and cooperation against marginalisation and discrimination.
- 4. SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT**
 - a) Hospitality and support to other communities when needed.
 - b) Active cooperation in international bodies.
 - c) Perception that the individual's rights are protected and guaranteed.
- 5. EQUITY IN ACCESS TO AND MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES**
 - a) Actions aimed at ensuring dignified levels of nutrition and living conditions.
 - b) Commitment to combat discrimination in fundamental rights.
 - c) Balance in the management of resources.
- 6. POWER AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**
 - a) Use of negotiation in the resolution of conflicts.
 - b) Ethics in economics and finance.
 - c) Respect for the boundaries of the democratic system in the exercising of power.
- 7. TRUST AND HOPE**
 - a) Promoting, in international relations, dialogue and exchange between different positions.
 - b) Consistency with promises made and commitments undertaken.
 - c) Rejection of opportunism and hypocrisy.

Proposal for international research

The aim of this document is to urge the academic and scientific communities in the field of social sciences, particularly psychology, to express themselves on the crucial theme of convivence among peoples. This can be done by promoting studies and research on this theme, also including theoretical perspectives different from those proposed, or by sharing the framework presented and, above all, by addressing the need to allow citizens to express themselves on the relevance of convivence and the main obstacles to its preservation²⁰. To this end, a simple tool is currently being prepared, the MQSCP– *Multidimensional Questionnaire for the study of Convivence among Peoples*, in which the dimensions of convivence presented are taken as generative criteria for the construction of a list of items that can be measured on a 4-point Likert scale (see table 1). Each item represents a social political action, considered as characteristic of a dimension of convivence, with respect to which the respondent is asked to provide two assessments on the basis of personal life experience: the first to express their opinion on the importance of the action indicated and the second to estimate how often, in their opinion, this action occurs.

²⁰ Anyone interested in taking part in this empirical study may contact the author: francesco.avallone@unitelmasapienza.it

In this way, it would be possible to establish a ranking of the relevance of the dimensions that underpin convivence among peoples and, at the same time, identify areas that have been neglected or that require special monitoring. Differential variables (gender, age, education, work experience, etc.) could aid an understanding of the potential differences in people's perceptions of the process of convivence among peoples and could make it possible to gather the opinions, fears and hopes of the citizens who contribute to the life of the different national communities, adding their voices to the philosophical and political observations that have, in recent years, fuelled the debate on convivence among peoples²¹.

Table 1 Example of the questionnaire structure, with one item for each of the 7 dimensions of convivence among peoples

How important is it for you? (please indicate with X) 1 = Not at all 2 = A little 3 = Quite 4 = Very				Some typical problems of convivence among peoples are reported Thinking about your life experience, consider each of the following statements. Assess each statement twice: once (left) to express your opinion as to how important the indicated action is for you and a second time (right) to indicate how often this action occurs.	How often does it happen? (please indicate with X) 1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Often 4 = Very often			
1	2	3	4	Respect for commitments arising from international treaties and agreements	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Understanding and respect for differences in race, religion, culture	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Monitoring of climate change and environmental degradation	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Being able to count on international solidarity in case of need	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Combating poverty, famine, epidemics	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Exercising of political power within the boundaries of democracy	1	2	3	4
1	2	3	4	Promotion of minimum levels of health in living and working environments	1	2	3	4

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²¹ The "Cordoba Forum, World Convivence Forum" <https://www.fundacionparadigmacordoba.es/en/home/>;

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