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**LOCALS AS THE OWNERS: THE LEGITIMIZATION OF PEACEBUILDING
PROCESSES THROUGH LOCAL ENGAGEMENT**
(P2a Atores e processos para construção da paz)

Hellen Oliveira Carvalho
José Carlos Portella Junior

Centro Universitário Curitiba – Unicuritiba

Abstract

Conflicts will certainly continue to occur. Peace operations, particularly the peacebuilding element of it, are not designed to eliminate conflict, but to help build robust and resilient communities that can go through and overcome crises. However, the establishment of positive peace takes time, and peacebuilding must be portrayed as a long, arduous and asymmetric process (like the conflict itself) that is unable to be built in a neat, progressive sequence as usually conceptualized by external actors. Thus, peacebuilding must support endogenous change in the intervened country. This is possible by allowing the local people to take part in the peace process. Although this paper assumes that genuine community participation affects peacebuilding in positive ways, it questions how the process must be conducted to be effective, legitimate and valid. With the intent of seeking for possible solutions, this paper will present a case study from South Sudan. By doing so, it analyses how external actors, especially from UNMISS and UNDP, are engaging local communities in the country. The outcome is that it may not be so challenging to think of ideal ways to engage communities, but the reality can get more obscure and complex than this.

Key words: peacebuilding, endogenous change, community participation, legitimacy.

Introduction

Conflicts are certainly going to continue to exist, and peace operations, particularly the peacebuilding element of it, are not designed to eliminate conflict, but to help build robust and resilient communities that can go through and overcome crises. The existence of conflict does not mean that a country is not resilient. War-torn societies still have agency and possess some capacity for conflict management.¹

The issue lies on the fact that outside actors usually have little knowledge of local practices, languages, histories and habits. This does not automatically nullify Western-centric efforts, nor does it guarantee that civil society operating at the local level is a pure locus for peaceful activities and values.²

The establishment of positive peace - meaning a change in attitudes, perceptions and behaviors³ - takes time and most importantly requires political will to guarantee the investment necessary. Thus, the idea is to portray peacebuilding as a long, arduous and asymmetric process (like the conflict itself) that is unable to be built in a neat, progressive sequence⁴ as usually conceptualized by external actors.

Therefore, this research presents the two 'local turn' periods in peacebuilding, both in response to a liberal peace approach at the end of the Cold War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan⁵. Although the peacebuilding discourse has evolved to a more people-centred and bottom-up one, this raises the question of to what extent this development represented a practical change on the ground. Inevitably, efforts were made to encompass locals in the peace process, but the power, money and guidelines still come from the same Western donors.⁶

Considering the flaws of this approach, this research proposes the adoption of a localizable cosmopolitan model towards peacebuilding and discusses the importance of the terms local governance, local capacity and local ownership.

1 Elizabeth M. Cousens, 'Introduction' in Elizabeth M. Cousens, Chetan Kumar and Karin Wermester (eds), *Peacebuilding as Politics Cultivating Peace in Fragile Societies* (Lynne Rienner 2001) 8.

2 Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* (Polity Press, 2011) 244.

3 Huma Haider, *Community-based Approaches to Peacebuilding in Conflict-affected and Fragile Contexts* (Governance and Social Development Resource Centre 2009) 14.

4 Elizabeth M. Cousens (2001) 16.

5 Thania Paffenholz, *Unpacking the local turn in peacebuilding: a critical assessment towards an agenda for future research* (Third World Quarterly 2015) 858-861.

6 Roger Mac Ginty, *Where is the local? Critical localism and peacebuilding* (Third World Quarterly 2015) 846.

Finally, it introduces a case study of South Sudan to analyse how external actors promote local participation in a specific situation. It presents the relationship between UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), one of the most ambitious operations in terms of local-level peacebuilding in UN history and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the ground and their intent to build a more resilient society in South Sudan. It also introduces the work being done by the Civil Affairs (CA) Division as the primary interface between UNMISS and civil society, and the establishment, in collaboration with the UNDP, of County Support Bases (CSBs) to guarantee more interaction at the local level⁷.

Therefore, this paper seeks to investigate if local engagement is a reality on the ground or only a desk-created discourse. Although it assumes that genuine community participation affects peacebuilding in positive ways, it questions how the process must be conducted to be effective, legitimate and valid. It may not be challenging to think of ideal ways to engage communities, but the reality is more obscure and peculiar than this. Some Western-minded interventions can (and do) develop a sense of sympathy towards locals with a distinct political, social, cultural and economic background, but hardly ever practice alterity (simply because it might not be possible).

⁷ Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud, *Moving towards local-level peacebuilding? Contextualizing early peacebuilding activities to local circumstances: South Sudan case-study* (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs 2012-2) 11.

The two 'local turn' periods in peacebuilding

From a conflict resolution perspective, the primary aim of any post-conflict peace operation is not to secure Western norms, but to empower indigenous capacity.⁸ Peacebuilding should be mainly an endogenous process and not an outcome of the imposition of technically and broadly defined norms. Furthermore, it has to encompass local engagement, considered a 'key' to sustaining peace and achieving legitimacy in post conflict scenarios.⁹

Within peacebuilding, 'local' has become a term of art, meaning that local stakeholders (not only represented by the elite) have to be included in the process of peacebuilding¹⁰ and have to be considered as resources and not recipients.¹¹ In this way, Kumar Rupesinghe, a well-known academic and human rights activist, stated that local actors are the architects, owners and long-term stakeholders of peace.¹² However, the concept of locals was not homogeneously constructed nor fully accepted by the international community.

Regarding the construction of the term, Roger Mac Ginty argues that 'globalization and associated technological, economic, cultural and political impacts have probably had the greatest impact on changing the local.'¹³ This does not mean that the value attributed to locals was something completely external to them. The 'local turn' understood as the rediscovery of the local, did not happen without any resistance, encouragement or reaction.¹⁴

Actually, there were two 'local turns' periods in peacebuilding. First, it was in response to the UN Agenda for Peace (1992)¹⁵ mindset of liberal peacebuilding as mainly a matter of national and international affairs, without sub-governmental sphere participation.¹⁶ The critiques emerged after some UN missions failures (Somalia, Rwanda and Balkans), with the intention of transforming the peace process into a more people-centric one.¹⁷ This movement has the Professor of International peacebuilding at The University of Notre Dame,

8 Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall (2011) 226.

9 Rama Mani and Jana Krause, 'Democratic Governance' in Vincent Chetail (ed), *Post Conflict Peacebuilding, A Lexicon* (Oxford University Press 2009) 110.

10 Ibid.

11 Hanna Leonardsson and Gustav Rudd, *The 'local turn' in peacebuilding: a literature review of effective and emancipatory local peacebuilding* (Third World Quarterly 2015) 826.

12 Kumar Rupesinghe, *Conflict Transformation* (St. Martin's Press 1995) 81.

13 Roger Mac Ginty, *Where is the local? Critical localism and peacebuilding* (Third World Quarterly 2015) 842.

14 Ibid.

15 Thania Paffenholz (2015) 858.

16 Roger Mac Ginty (2015) 843-844.

17 Thania Paffenholz (2015) 858.

John Paul Lederach, as its most prominent representative, who raised that the role of peacebuilders was limited to supporting internal actors¹⁸ and that ‘the greatest resource for sustaining peace in the long term is always rooted in the local people and their culture.’¹⁹

According to Thania Paffenholz, a Research Associate at the Graduate Institute Geneva, this first ‘local turn’ did not necessarily place outsiders peacebuilders as ‘bad’ liberals, but as ‘misguided’ ones who overestimated the international ability to change post-conflict local communities. In contrast, the second peacebuilding ‘local turn’ leans towards a more resistance discourse ‘against the hegemonic international liberal actor and his/her dominance.’²⁰

This change took place especially after 11 September 2001 and the subsequent war on terror, when liberal peace started to gain momentum again.²¹ The policies enforced in Iraq and Afghanistan by the US and its allies, usually administered by force and conditioned and dependent on outsiders, are a proper example of liberal peacebuilding²². The second ‘local turn’, although with its own peculiarities, also happened against failed liberal projects models that involved ‘the promotion of democracy; market-based economic reforms and a range of other institutions associated with “modern” states as a driving force for building peace.’²³

This discourse is closely linked to democratic governance values, with democracy promotion as a security strategy, and the promotion of good governance as a development concern.²⁴ It advocates that democratic governments do not: go to war, sponsor terrorism, or ethnic cleanse their own population; and are more reliable and honour international treaties.²⁵

For this approach, peacebuilding goals are linked to structures of ‘developed’ countries and the idea that democracy and free economics allow people to live in peace and to fulfil their

18 John Paul Lederach and Scott Appleby, ‘Strategic Peacebuilding: An Overview’, in Daniel Philpott and Gerard F. Powers (eds), *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World* (Oxford University Press 2010) 19-44.

19 John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (US Institute of Peace Press 1997) 94.

20 Thania Paffenholz (2015) 860-861.

21 Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall (2011) 232.

22 Oliver Richmond, ‘Beyond liberal peace? Responses to “backsliding”’ in Edward Newman, Roland Paris and Oliver Richmond (eds), *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding* (United Nations University Press 2009) 56. Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall (2011) 232.

23 Edward Newman, ‘Liberal peacebuilding debates’ in Edward Newman, Roland Paris and Oliver Richmond (eds), *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding* (United Nations University Press 2009) 3.

24 Rama Mani and Jana Krause (2009) 109.

25 Larry Diamond, *Promoting Democracy in the 1990s: Actors and Instruments, Issues and Imperatives* (Carnegie Corporation of New York December 1995) 9.

aspirations.²⁶ Authors such as Lant Pritchett, Michael Woolcock and Francis Fukuyama have referred to the attainment of stability, democracy, peace, prosperity, and low level of corruption as ‘Denmark’ or ‘reaching Denmark’ objectives.²⁷

However, other than the discourse ‘from 2005 or so this hegemony of states and international organizations has experienced something of a retreat’. The huge international investments seemed not to cope with many post-war societies remaining tense, sullen, and with serious economic inequalities. It is clear that the international community cannot take the blame for all the problems, as many of them are also ‘a result of local actors failure to address the central conflict problem.’ Therefore, the idea that peacebuilding was not delivering the anticipated results was apparent enough to cause some discomfort and reflection on the part of international organizations, NGOs and other interveners.²⁸

The rhetorical value of ‘the local’ in international reports

Within the UN, the UNDP has emerged as a central operational actor of democratic governance. However, its philosophy is shared by many international organizations and its main promoter is certainly the World Bank.²⁹ In response to the second ‘local turn’, these institutions, traditionally related with liberal peace and development, came to the realization that a vibrant civil society is an essential pillar for democratization.³⁰

This phenomenon happened due to the fact that ‘the promotion of good governance without parallel legitimacy of nationally rooted democracy was proving to be normatively more and more inadequate and unacceptable.’³¹ Local actors gained value for state reconstruction programmes as they ‘could provide access, legitimacy, value for money, cultural sensitivity, linguistic skills and, potentially, could facilitate a swifter exit for

26 Edward Newman (2009) 49.

27 Lant Pritchett and Michael Woolcock, *Solutions When the Solution is the Problem: Arraying the Disarray in Development* (Elsevier 2004) 192. Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order* (Profile Books 2011) 14.

28 Roger Mac Ginty (2015) 845.

29 Rama Mani and Jana Krause (2009) 111.

30 Thania Paffenholz, International peacebuilding goes local: analysing Lederach's conflict transformation theory and its ambivalent encounter with 20 years of practice (*Third World Quarterly* 2013) 2. Thania Paffenholz, ‘Civil Society’ in Vincent Chetail (ed), *Post Conflict Peacebuilding, A Lexicon* (Oxford University Press 2009) 62.

31 Rama Mani and Jana Krause (2009) 107.

international actors.’³²

The ‘local turn’ can be clearly identified in the development of UN and other institutions’ reports. While the 1992 An Agenda for Peace did not explicitly mention the word ‘local’ even once, more recent Reports from the UNDP and the World Bank are inundated with it.³³ The UNDP acknowledges its work as one that promotes local governance programs with a focus on local development and reconciliation. For this purpose, its Reports constantly mention terms such as local relationship, local initiatives, local authorities, local retail business, local products, local actors, and local transformation, among others.³⁴ Like the UNDP, the World Bank is a sponsor of local governance and the language in its Reports is oriented to local capital markets, local challenges, local projects and local solutions.³⁵

Another document that gives great emphasis to local, although not as focused to governance, is the 2015 UN Nyakhat Report. According to the Report, peace operations have not only to consult local people, but also to include them in their work and in the decision-making process. It affirms that working with local communities allows missions ‘to monitor how the local people experience the impact of peace operations, to ensure the mission does no harm and to design better protection strategies.’³⁶ This engagement is important during the peace operation, but also before it, as the Security Council mandates should be tailored to the needs of that particular territory. Mandates must be aligned with local capacities and deficits, not the other way around.³⁷

However, despite the boom of the term ‘local’ in the UN and many organizations discourse, the Nyakhat Report recognizes that ‘the UN Secretariat is not yet a field-focused or field-enabling entity.’³⁸ Contrarily, the Report establishes that UN peace operations and other actors still act as though post-conflict countries are blank pages and people are projects and

32 Adam Moore, *Peacebuilding in Practice: Local Experience in two Bosnian Towns* (Cornell University Press 2013) 121.

33 Roger Mac Ginty (2015) 840.

34 United Nations Development Programme, *Time for Global Action* (UNDP 2015). Jago Salmon and Eugenia Piza-Lopez, *Capacity Development in Post-Conflict Countries* (UNDP 2010) 9.

35 World Bank, *Annual Report 2015* (World Bank 2015).

36 United Nations Secretary General, *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people* (Nyakhat Report), A/70/95-S/2015/446 (UN 17 June 2015) para 38 and 255.

37 Ibid, para 186 .

38 Ibid, para 59.

therefore unable to set priorities for themselves and their country.³⁹ The Report also observes that various local community actors and civil society representatives revealed that: it is difficult to interact with UN personnel who appeared remote and aloof; the communication is often frustrated by language barriers; peace operations do not take time to understand existing capacities, they ‘simply replace local structures with exogenous ones.’⁴⁰

The reality behind the localism discourse

It is therefore evident that the value added by liberal peace in local participation up to this moment is in the way that locals are needed only to give legitimacy to Western-minded development projects. As such, the participation discourse picked up, but the efforts on the ground to engage people genuinely did not match the rhetoric of international organizations. According to Roger Mac Ginty, the liberal peace paradigm still attempts to build Mini-Me states that are politically aligned with the global North.⁴¹

In theory, locals have become the saviour of contemporary peacebuilding. However, they are still considered as a static block: rural, traditional and incapable. Their engagement is only considered on the premise that they are waiting to be civilized, developed and monetised. Anne Betts-Fetherston, a senior lecturer at the Department of Peace Studies of the University of Bradford, deconstructs liberal peacebuilding as a colonial approach that seeks to discipline and normalize.⁴² This does not mean that organizations and donors have not made an effort to at least adopt a more sensitive language, it simply shows that the Western ideas of civilizing, educating and transmitting knowledge is still very much alive.⁴³ Thus, it is possible to argue that the alleged ‘local turns’ in peacebuilding are largely rhetoric and shallow. After all, the fundamental question is ‘*Where does power still lie?*’ followed by: ‘*Where do the money, direction, concepts and authority of peace initiatives come from?*’

The discouraging reality is that although projects may have a local face, there was not a shift in power relations as power usually still come from donors mainly from Geneva, New

39 Nyakhat Report, para 134-135.

40 Ibid, para 254.

41 Roger Mac Ginty (2015) 855.

42 Anne Betts-Fetherston, *Peacekeeping, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding: A Reconsideration of Theoretical Frameworks* (International Peacekeeping 2000) 200.

43 Roger Mac Ginty (2015) 841.

York and London.⁴⁴ Even more discouraging is the fact that this concentration of power scenario will most likely continue the same in a remote future.

In the end, the ‘local turn’ has transferred the responsibility of caring about the process to locals but the power is still held by the same countries and institutions that years ago spread Westernization at all costs. Neoliberalism certainly has an impact in local communities, one of which is that by ‘pushing local communities into space that central government used to occupy, competition might rise between them and spark conflict.’⁴⁵

Moving towards a localizable cosmopolitan model

Particularly before the release of the Brahimi Report in 2000, the critiques of peacebuilding were booming.⁴⁶ Most of the problems addressed then are still present today, as demonstrated by the 2015 Nyakhat Report. Among the issues faced by the UN peace operations are the deployments to cover a vast terrain making the access to dispersed population difficult; the challenge in identifying local representatives who genuinely speak on behalf of a certain group and in engaging with certain network of people who speak English or French; the lack of clarity on how to help local population and to promote truly consultative processes; and the difficulties executing a transparent process that does not raise concerns with the host Government.⁴⁷ In light of this, the UN peacebuilding discourse has to constantly be questioned and revised.

According to Mark Hoffman, lecturer in international relations at The London School of Economics and Political Science, genuine peacebuilding must abandon uniform and bureaucratic imposed structures to encompass a variety of voices in a creative and dynamic way. Instead of asking ‘*What do we want to achieve?*’, the appropriate question is: ‘*What do local people need?*’. Nevertheless, Hoffman judiciously states that no peacebuilding approach should fall into the trap of ‘romanticizing the local.’⁴⁸ The civil society should not be seen as a pure locus of peaceful activities and values. These narratives deprive communities of their

44 Roger Mac Ginty, 846.

45 Ibid, 847.

46 Hanna Leonardsson and Gustav Rudd (2015) 827.

47 Nyakhat Report, para 253.

48 Mark Hoffman, ‘*What is left of the liberal peace?*’ (Connect 1999) 11.

agency and disregard complex and frequently contradictory identities.⁴⁹

Contrarily local cultures and communities are a place of agency and ‘sites of power asymmetry, patriarchy and privilege in which customs and civil society organizations may replicate what external actors are accused of in the international arena.’⁵⁰ Locals are not incapable of reconciling, negotiating, resisting and making peace, but they are not saviors that are able to achieve a level of development that took centuries to be reached by Western states⁵¹.

Therefore, the cosmopolitan peacebuilding approach aims ‘to privilege local capacity building, while recognizing the necessity of negotiating between local/communal and international/global perspectives’⁵². According to Wendy Sargent, author of the book *Civilizing Peace Building*, ‘cosmopolitanism focuses on values that validates the needs and rights of each person both as an individual and as a member of humanity as a whole’⁵³. For the cosmopolitan theory, what is fundamental about the human condition is that we are all citizens of the entire world and whatever place we occupy is always ‘conditional, relational and dependent in other localities’⁵⁴.

However, the theory of cosmopolitanism has several divisions that go from Liberalism to Marxism, such as the liberal-universalist theory, the elite, the glocal and the localisable cosmopolitanism⁵⁵. Within the framework of this research, the most appropriate theory is the last one, which has David Harvey as its major proponent. It addresses indigenous social movements and how local populations confront globalising forces⁵⁶. It is not the pure idealization of locals, but it is the closest theory to the idea that local initiatives work better than global approaches and that peacebuilders should interact meaningfully with local populations to identify possibilities and conditions of local ownership.⁵⁷

Although the theoretical concept of ‘going native’ has gained momentum with the

49 Roger Mac Ginty (2015) 847.

50 Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall (2011) 236-244.

51 Michael Barnett, *Building a Republican Peace: Stabilizing States after War* (International Security 2006) 89.

52 Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall (2011) 233.

53 Wendy Sargent, *Civilizing Peace Building: Twenty-first Century Global Politics* (Ashgate 2007) 54.

54 Eduardo Mendieta, ‘From Imperial to Dialogical Cosmopolitanism’ in Matthias Lutz-Bachmann and Amos Nascimento, *Human Rights, Human Dignity, and Cosmopolitan Ideals, Essays on Critical Theories and Human Rights* (Third World Quarterly 2014) 122.

55 Berit Blieseemann de Guevara and Catherine Goetze, *Cosmopolitanism and the Culture of Peacebuilding* (Review of International Studies 2014) 774-783.

56 David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (Columbia University Press 2009) 85.

57 Berit Blieseemann de Guevara and Catherine Goetze (2014) 782.

development of peacebuilding and the experience on the field, quantitative research carried out by Catherine Goetze and Berit Bliesemann, the first a Professor at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China and the second a Senior Lecturer at Aberystwyth University respectively, found that peacebuilders still display a global culture evolving around Westernized symbols and values and are usually not aware of the host country's culture.⁵⁸

Therefore, if localizable cosmopolitanism has not been properly applied it means that locally-owned forms of peacebuilding should still be upheld and its applicability explored. This does not exclude the fact that peace can be formalized in governmental, institutional and constitutional structures. It only means that the legitimacy and validity of any peace process is in the hands of the local population. The genuine engagement in the process and consensus with the outcome is what turns an ideal process to outsiders into a meaningful one for the insiders.⁵⁹

The key idea is to guarantee and instigate, not theoretical, but effective participation. To that end, there are some concepts within peacebuilding or directly related to it that move away from the theory and shed light on more practical skills that are being used on the ground. Such concepts are local governance, local capacity, local ownership and community-based approaches.

Local governance, local capacity and local ownership

Experiences have shown that when local level experiences are included, the operation has a greater chance of building sustainable peace. According to Alex Bellamy a Professor at University of Queensland and Paul Willians a Professor at George Washington University, it is surprising that peace operations have entirely excluded the local level from the way they were accessed and understood until very recently. They affirm that among the reasons that explain the movement to include this level is the influence of feminism, as studies at this level have showed that 'masculinized and militarized peace operations have actually made some

58 Berit Bliesemann de Guevara and Catherine Goetze (2014), 802.

59 Oliver Richmond, *Peace in International Relations* (Third World Quarterly 2008) 163.

segments of the local population more insecure, through the commission of sexual exploitation and abuse.’⁶⁰

Although the idea of democratic governance is still very much attached to liberal peace and development concepts, the creation of vibrant, resilient and sustainable local communities involves necessarily the will of international actors to facilitate the self-organization of communities (though they happen in complex and non-linear ways).⁶¹

When a conflict takes place and factions fight for territorial control, local governments are usually the first to collapse. Actually, one of the reasons that sparks conflict in the first place is the fight over power, especially when it has been monopolized and over centralized for years. Thus, building legitimate and efficient government structures became a core role of peacebuilding. However, the central state is often too weak to get back on its feet alone, and ‘arguments arose on the need to look beyond national-level governance and see the conflict-mitigating potential of sub-national governments.’⁶²

According to the UN, local governance is ‘a vital means for the populace to have access to government – a foundation for any state-society compact.’⁶³ Within local governance, the study and practice of decentralization methods of shared responsibility between central and local governments have considerably gained ground. According to a Report from the UN, decentralization is a good tool to counterbalance the tensions caused by elitism and authoritarian rule, to reach local people’s inputs for the development process, to allocate resources effectively and to deliver services. The World Bank discourse is of an actor that takes advantage of decentralization to increase the efficiency of service delivery.⁶⁴ Thus, by creating situations of engaged governance (where the concern is how power is exercised for the well-being of the whole population), decentralization can become an effective instrument to build and sustain peace.⁶⁵

Carefully designed decentralization in places ‘where sub-national level has sufficient means and autonomy to control resource’ can help achieve peace and increase ‘legitimacy,

60 Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, *Understanding Peacekeeping* (Polity Press, 2nd ed 2010) 22.

61 Cedric de Coning, *Understanding Peacebuilding as Essentially Local* (Stability 2013) 4.

62 Hanna Leonardsson and Gustav Rudd (2015) 827.

63 United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, *Peace Dividends and Beyond* (UN 2012) 24.

64 World Bank, *The State and Peace Building Fund addressing the unique challenges of fragility and conflict* (World Bank 2011).

65 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Reconstructing Public Administration After conflict: challenges, practices and lessons learned* (UN 2010) 87-90.

accountability, inclusion and participation.’⁶⁶ According to quantitative research carried out by Joseph Siegle and Patrick O’Mahony, senior advisors in democratic governance and development, societies with ‘decentralization initiatives that support increased levels of local government expenditures, employment, and elected leaders, have been less likely to succumb to ethnic conflict.’ However, the same study observes that decentralization is not a risk-free endeavor.⁶⁷

In a post-conflict scenario, local governments, often representing the front lines of fighting, are not able to engage people and deliver services.⁶⁸ Thus, the implementation of any project might fail as a result of elite capture, low levels of administrative efficiency, corruption, nepotism, lack of resources⁶⁹ and it might end up playing into the ‘dynamics of group identification and political polarization that are major contributors to internal conflict.’⁷⁰

The implementation of local governance strategies could be facilitated when two other concepts are present: local ownership and local capacity. According to the UN, there is a vital connection between ownership and capacity because ‘unless local actors have the capacity to fully engage throughout all phases of planning and implementation, national ownership will remain theory rather than reality.’⁷¹ Béatrice Pouligny also explains that ‘local ownership refers to the capacities of political, social and community actors in particular country (referred to as ‘insiders’) to set, and take responsibility for, the peacebuilding agenda and to muster and sustain support for it.’⁷²

Local capacity is represented by local tools that can significantly influence the conception, design, implementation and review of peacebuilding strategies. As reported by Peace Direct and the Quaker UN Office, local capacity has to be placed at the center of the process, giving locals a leadership role and taking into consideration their expertise and

66 Hanna Leonardsson and Gustav Rudd (2015) 828.

67 Joseph Siegle and Patrick O’Mahony, ‘Decentralization and Internal Conflict’ in Ed Connerley, Kent Eaton, and Paul Smoke (eds), *Making Decentralization Work: Democracy, Development, and Security* (Lynne Rienner 2010) 135-147.

68 United Nations Peacebuilding Commission Working Group, *Local Governance and Decentralization in Post War Contexts* (2007) <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf/doc_wgll/decentralization_governance/wgll_background_note_13_12_07.pdf> accessed 4 August 2017.

69 Hanna Leonardsson and Gustav Rudd (2015) 828.

70 Joseph Siegle and Patrick O’Mahony (2010) 167.

71 United Nations, *Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture* <<http://www.un.org/ga/president/64/issues/pbc/PBCReport.pdf>> accessed 15 July 2017.

72 Béatrice Pouligny, ‘Local Ownership’ in Vincent Chetail (ed), *Post Conflict Peacebuilding, A Lexicon* (Oxford University Press 2009) 110.

commitment.⁷³ A community that is able to engage in the process by offering pre-existing capacities and developing new ones will be certainly empowered.

In this sense, The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes notes that if local societies create their own social institutions and make their own decisions about the future, they are able to develop the resilience necessary to address and manage context specific tensions in a sustainable way⁷⁴ and to collaborate for the construction or reconstruction of local governments.

The creation of a peacebuilding environment in South Sudan

When a crisis is exposed to the international community, the country in question may experience an outsider ‘invasion’. Outsiders are understood as people that do not originate from the country or society they are intervening in and have little to lose.⁷⁵ According to The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), these actors include, among others, international or regional peacekeeping operations, UN agencies, donor agencies, a wide range of NGOs, and interested governments.⁷⁶

Béatrice Pouligny, a long-term independent researcher in peacebuilding, asserts that crises cause the arrival of hundreds if not thousands of representatives of international organizations (intergovernmental and non-governmental) in the capital city, occupying a space no longer available to local actors. Inevitably, this ‘external invasion’ also has a detrimental effect on local economies, as the value of salaries, products and services usually increases to the point that the locals’ daily relationships are negatively affected.⁷⁷

However, there is no doubt that among the people and projects dealing with peacebuilding, there are many with good intentions that actually collaborate for the outcome of peace. Some are able to put into practice the ultimate goal to enhance a society’s institutional capacity and to ‘stimulate the development of local human abilities and collective

73 Carolyn Hayman, *Ripples into Waves, Local Level Peacebuilding on a National Scale* (Peace Direct and the Quaker United Nations Office 2010) 9.

74 Gustavo de Carvalho, Cedric de Coning and Lesley Connolly, *Creating an enabling peacebuilding environment: How can external actors contribute to resilience?* (ACCORD 2014) 6.

75 Mary Anderson and Lara Olson, *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners* (The Collaborative for Development Action 2003) 36.

76 Gustavo de Carvalho, Cedric de Coning and Lesley Connolly (2014) 2.

77 Béatrice Pouligny (2009) 181.

social institutions, processes and mechanisms, so that societies are better able to manage change⁷⁸. Although most external actors may implicitly share a liberal agenda, their strategies vary greatly and like the locals they also have unique agency and can be differentiated from one another.⁷⁹

Therefore, although locals must take the lead, external actors may contribute to the creation of a peacebuilding environment by offering some tools to stimulate and facilitate the development of resilient institutions and communities. To this extent, the presence of international actors is sometimes crucial, as in the case of South Sudan. The Eastern Equatoria State Peace Coordinator and Secretary to the State Peace and Reconciliation Committee (the state organ that spearheads peace activities in various communities in conflict in South Sudan) declared to researchers from the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) in 2011 that the Government of South Sudan could not implement anything unless it uses an international organization to do so.⁸⁰

After becoming independent on 9 July 2011, the government of South Sudan launched a state-building and reconstruction development plan entitled 'Realizing freedom, equality, justice, peace and prosperity' which underlines the importance of partnership with other bilateral and multilateral stakeholders. However, according to Kenneth Omeje and Nicodemus Minde, researchers that conducted an empirical fieldwork study in Juba, South Sudan in the months of January and February 2013, even though South Sudan has rich and abundant resources, oil being the most significant one, it remains a poor and impulsive country.⁸¹ The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) shows that there are deep and severe levels of poverty across the country (91.1% of the total population are considered poor, with 71.1% considered severely poor).⁸²

Thus, South Sudan still relies heavily on international funding and specialized labor. The Global Humanitarian Assistance Initiative reported that since 2005 the country has been a

78 Gustavo de Carvalho, Cedric de Coning and Lesley Connolly (2014) 2.

79 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud, *Contextualising Liberal Peacebuilding for Local Circumstances: Unmiss and Local Peacebuilding in South Sudan* (Journal of Peacebuilding and Development 2013) 62.

80 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2012-2) 15.

81 Kenneth Omeje and Nicodemus Minde, *The SPLM Government and the Challenges of the Conflict Settlement, State-Building and Peace-Building in South Sudan* (Africa Insight 2015) 56.

82 Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, *OPHI Country Briefing June 2016: South Sudan* (Oxford Department of International Development 2016) 1.

major recipient of Official Development Assistance (ODA),⁸³ primarily in the form of humanitarian aid, and it will continue to receive a great amount of global aid resources.⁸⁴ As demonstrated in the UN General Assembly Agenda, the approved resources for UNMISS from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 was over 1 billion dollars,⁸⁵ which makes the mission the third most expensive in the system. Moreover, its current forces are of 13,490 uniformed personnel (including troops, military liaison officers and police); 787 international civilian personnel; 1,215 local civilian staff and 435 UN Volunteers⁸⁶. This does not include all the investments made and the personnel placed by other agencies as part of the country's team (such as UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, UN Women, UNOPS, UN Habitat, UNESCO)⁸⁷ or the donations from the European Union (EU), the United States (US) and other private international or national agents.⁸⁸

Thus, external support has been assisting South Sudan with its countless urgent necessities such as personal and community security, food security, basic healthcare facilities and disease prevention programmes, the provision of education, and the development of women's role in securing the future of peace and prosperity, among others.⁸⁹ However, having many international organizations on the ground is not necessarily an advantage if the work is not harmonized. The previous chapter demonstrated the importance of creating project linkages so they could merge towards a common strategic framework. Considering the early stage of conflict recovery in South Sudan, in order to create a peacebuilding environment, interveners need to assure that there is a variety of coordinated initiatives operating simultaneously and at various levels, but, in reality this has not been always the scenario.⁹⁰

83 ODA is defined as 'flows of official financing administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as the main objective'. International Monetary Bank, *External Debt Statistics: Guide for Compilers and Users, Appendix III, Glossary* (IMF 2003).

84 Global Humanitarian Assistance, *Resource Flows to Sudan: Aid to South Sudan* (GHA 2011) 1.

85 United Nations General Assembly, *Approved resources for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016*, A/C.5/69/24 (UN 26 June 2015).

86 United Nations, *UNMISS Facts and Figures (UN)* <<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmiss/facts.shtml>> accessed 11 August 2017.

87 United Nations, *UN Country Team South Sudan (UN)* <<http://ss.one.un.org/united-nations-country-team>> accessed 28 July 2017.

88 Kenneth Omeje and Nicodemua Minde (2015) 56.

89 United Nations Development Programme, *South Sudan National Human Development Report 2015* (UNDP 2015) 101-103.

90 Gustavo de Carvalho, Cedric de Coning and Lesley Connolly (2014) 4.

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

On 11 June 2004, the UN Security Council established a special political mission in Sudan, called the United Nations Advance Mission in the Sudan (UNAMIS). The mission was intended to facilitate contact between the NCP and the SPLM and to prepare for the introduction of a UN peace support operation⁹¹. Therefore, in 2005 the UN Security Council authorized the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) to support the implementation and to assist the parties of the CPA to facilitate the return of refugees and IDPs and to protect and promote human rights⁹². Finally, after the cessation of conflict in South Sudan, the Security Council established a new mission on 8 July 2011, the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)⁹³. All these mandates and mission shifts have been extremely difficult for the local population, the members of local government and even to the UN staff itself⁹⁴.

However, to be fair, UNMISS represents the consolidation of a project already built by the previous missions in the region, and is a clear example of the expansion of peacekeeping operations to include other activities, such as civilian protection and the support of disarmament⁹⁵. For that, it is considered the first UN peacekeeping mission with an explicit and comprehensive peacebuilding mandate. Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud argue that UNMISS is one of the most ambitious operations in UN history ‘in terms of local-level peacebuilding and the level of decentralization from the capital to its field offices’⁹⁶. However, the Resolution establishing the mission made it clear that the main responsibility of peacebuilding is not on the UN, and the organization is to act as a supporter⁹⁷.

With the escalation of conflicts on the ground, particularly the incident in Juba on 15 December 2013, the Security Council temporarily increased the overall troop and police strength of UNMISS⁹⁸, and made the increase permanent by unanimously adopting Resolution 2155 on 27 May 2014. In this Resolution, the Security Council urged the mission to protect

91 United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 1547 (2004)*, S/RES/1547 (UN 11 June 2004) 1-2.

92 Ibid, *Resolution 1590 (2005)*, S/RES/1590 (UN 24 March 2005) 4.

93 Ibid, *Resolution 1996 (2011)*, S/RES/1996 (UN 8 July 2011).

94 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2012-1) 2.

95 Aleksí Ylonen, *Peace or Stability? A Critical appraisal of external interventions in South Sudan* (Journal of Peacebuilding and Development 2014) 103.

96 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2012-1) 1.

97 Resolution 1996 (8 July 2011) 2.

98 United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 2132 (2013)*, S/RES/2132 (24 December 2013) 4.

civilians by, among other measures, facilitating ‘inter-communal reconciliation in areas of high risk of conflict as an essential part of long-term state-building activity’; monitoring and investigating human rights; creating the conditions for delivery of humanitarian assistance; and supporting the Implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement⁹⁹.

During this period, the relationship between UNMISS and the South Sudanese government deteriorated quickly¹⁰⁰. The mission was blamed by the government for taking sides, as they cannot conceive the mission as neutral, and could not interact with the opposing parties to the government¹⁰¹. The relationship with the South Sudanese people is also not simple. Since the independence has proven not to be the direct way to peace, the hopes of the population fell on the international community. One Civil Affairs interlocutor reported to the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs researchers that ‘the population is a bit negative, they think we (UNMISS) are not doing enough. They want to see something tangible. Soft development in the form of workshops is not enough’¹⁰². This is a clear example of how important is it for the mission to manage the government’s and people’s expectations.

The interaction between UNMISS Civil Affairs and UNDP

Before a mission’s deployment, there are usually negotiations to define who will be the main interlocutors of the international community. Nevertheless, throughout the mission, actors are constantly compromising and adjusting themselves to reflect the change in the power relationship on the ground¹⁰³. The decision of UNMISS to practice decentralization in South Sudan was due to the realization that the country’s greatest needs existed at the county and subcounty levels. However, by adopting this strategy, the mission had to be aware that the work at the local level could not be done without the full collaboration of many UN agencies and programmes and other national and international actors.

One Civil Affairs (CA) officer interviewed by NUPI researchers affirmed that the mission would find added value at county level and below, and proposed that instead of being

99 United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 2155 (2014)*, S/RES/2155 (27 May 2014) 4.

100 Eli Stannes, *The United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS): Protecting Civilians in a Volatile Environment* (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2015) 1.

101 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2012-2) 26.

102 Ibid, 20.

103 Béatrice Pouligny (2009) 177.

entrenched in ministries like the UNDP personnel is, UNMISS CA should focus on local interactions¹⁰⁴. By this statement it becomes clear that the relationship on the ground between UNMISS and UNDP is not an easy one. This does not mean that the mission and programme lack interaction and partnership; in fact, their goals overlap in many projects. This only shows that these institutions approach conflict management from different perspectives, which might cause disagreements¹⁰⁵.

It is true that the UNDP focuses its actions on South Sudan's institutional actors, as their staff usually work within the government's offices at the state level. There are more than 100 UNDP Volunteers integrated in central level Ministries in all ten states in a position to provide technical advice to government officials. By locating their staff within government structures, UNDP enjoys a high and cheap leverage. However, the UN Programme also carries out community-level consultations, especially through its project Community Security and Arms Control (CSAC). In the words of a UNDP officer interviewed by NUPI researchers in 2011, the UNDP reaches down, send roots to the ground and does consultations. By the use of Participatory Rural Appraisal tools, the Programme hears women, the youth, religious and traditional leaders and local authorities¹⁰⁶.

According to the UNDP page, the overall goal of the CSAC project is to support the Government of South Sudan to build sufficient capacity to discharge its duty to protect the rights and lives of citizens.¹⁰⁷ These consultations seek to contribute to the creation of a social contract between the government and its people, and in fact they have been carried out jointly by UNDP, UNMISS CA and the Ministry of Interior of the Government of South Sudan¹⁰⁸. Thus, although they have different approaches, this is an example of how it is possible for the UNDP to work closely with the UNMISS CA in areas where there is intersection between the mission mandate and the Programme, notably in the areas of conflict prevention, community security, rule of law, and governance processes such as the constitutional process in South

104 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2012-2) 35.

105 Jeremy Taylor, Gustavo de Carvalho and Zinurine Alghali, *The Conflict Management Work of the Civil Affairs Division of the United Nations Mission in Sudan* (ACCORD, 2010) 20. Although this research was carried in the timeframe of UNMIS, the problems brought up about the difficulties in the relationship of the mission and UNDP could also be applied in the present case.

106 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2012-2) 27.

107 United Nations Development Programme, Community Security and Arms Control (UNDP) <http://www.ss.undp.org/content/south_sudan/en/home/ourwork/Projects/democratic_governance/community_securityandarmscontrol.html> accessed August 3 2017.

108 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2012-2) 34.

Sudan¹⁰⁹.

UNMISS Civil Affairs

The connection between CA and local-level peacebuilding is based in the understanding captured by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that ‘peacekeepers are, in an important sense, early peacebuilders’¹¹⁰, and therefore should also implement peacebuilding tasks.¹¹¹ CA promotes the interaction between local communities, helping the mission to understand conflict-localized trends and to create better strategies to manage conflicts. Within this context, the CA is considered ‘a local enabler’ and ‘the ears and the eyes of a mission.’¹¹²

The increasing use of the specialized CA knowledge is a response to more complex peacekeeping missions needs post-Cold War. In the mid-1990s CAs started being used in the Balkans with the objective to ‘support their civil police colleagues and provide their good offices for resolving problems among the parties on the ground’¹¹³. However, its role evolved; by the end of the 1990’s, the CA Division was responsible for directly managing all aspects of civilian life and in the 2000’s it was considered a key actor in providing local level interface¹¹⁴.

For a while the CA functions still were not clear enough and its roles frequently overlapped with the roles of other substantive sections and departments of the UN¹¹⁵. It was not until 2008, that the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) released a Police Directive that sought to delineate the CA roles precisely. The core activities to be carried out by CA are: cross-mission representation, monitoring and facilitation at the local level; confidence-building, conflict management and support to reconciliation; and support to the restoration and extension of state authority¹¹⁶.

109 United Nations Development Programme, *South Sudan Annual Report 2014* (UNDP 2014) 41.

110 United Nations, *Secretary-General's remarks to Security Council Open Debate on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding* (UN 16 April 2010) < <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2010-04-16/secretary-generals-remarks-security-council-open-debate-post>> accessed 07 August 2017.

111 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2012-1) 2.

112 Gustavo de Carvalho, *The Role of Civil Affairs in United Nations Peacekeeping* (Conflict Trends 2010) 28.

113 United Nations Secretary General, *Report Pursuant to Resolution 1035 (1995)*, S/1996/210 (UN 29 March 1996).

114 Handbook on United Nations Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations (2003) 35-43.

115 Gustavo de Carvalho (2010) 30.

116 United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support, Policy Directive: Civil Affairs (UN 1 April 2008).

Moreover, considering that CA representatives are located in areas where not all civilian components are deployed, the first-hand analytical assessment made by the CA is relevant to inform higher levels in the mission and help them to set targets and make appropriate decisions¹¹⁷.

It is clear that the CA functions must also develop with the evolution of a particular mission and frequently more specialized goals are set throughout it. In Sudan for instance, the CA Division of the former UN mission (UNMIS) was involved in mapping and monitoring the root causes of conflict in the country, preparing for the 2011 referendum and facilitating reconciliation processes at the local level¹¹⁸. After the secession of South Sudan and the beginning of the conflict the CA Division became responsible for the implementation of the UNMISS political mandate at the local level, and its work became more focused on conflict management and extension of state authority. However, it also provides analytical information and plays a significant part in cross-mission representation, monitoring and facilitation.¹¹⁹

In South Sudan, CA officers spend much of their time working with the government, and one of its main tasks is to provide transport for government authorities at the local, state and national levels¹²⁰. This role should not be underestimated, ‘as it enables officials to attend peace conferences and engage with local populations to hear their complaints and concerns’. If one of the goals of peacebuilding is participatory governance and the strengthening of local confidence, this should be considered a profitable measure, especially in South Sudan where the rural areas are both physically and politically not connected to the centre. Moreover, even though CA officers work in the backstage of the meetings, the fact that they are physically present there allows them to better understand the dynamics, build trust with authorities and be aware of the early warnings¹²¹.

In addition to providing transport to government officials though, CA also offers this service to other relevant stakeholders such as representatives of Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) and local church organizations. With this, these actors can attend peace conferences and related events in isolated parts of the country. Since UNMISS ‘envisions a more decentralized approach, with a focus on reaching the most vulnerable areas and populations and engaging

117 Gustavo de Carvalho (2010) 33.

118 Gustavo de Carvalho, *The Role of Civil Affairs in United Nations Peacekeeping* (Conflict Trends 2010) 35.

119 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2012-2) 23.

120 Ibid, (2012-1) 2.

121 Ibid, (2012-2) 24-25.

local communities in a bottom-up manner', and considering that women are key actors in peacebuilding, keeping close relationship with churches, where they are active members helps CA strengthen the mission's relationship with this group¹²².

Another recognized function of CA is to support and organize civil society meetings¹²³, roundtables and workshops in order to identify threats of conflict and mitigation measures¹²⁴. The Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan from 29 April 2009, confirms that UNMISS CA teams held 337 meetings with local authorities, community leaders, youth and women across the 10 States, including in opposition-held territory. By facilitating these environments, CA seeks to de-escalate tensions 'and continue to engage Nuer and Dinka communities in the greater Bor area to promote peaceful coexistence'¹²⁵.

According to the UNMISS CA Division website, there are CA officers deployed to all 10 states of South Sudan and there are also teams at the local level. One of their achievements includes providing logistical and technical support to peace and reconciliation initiatives such as the Madi-Acholi Peace Conference in April 2012, the Jonglei State Peace process in May 2012 and the Migration peace agreement between Dinka Panaruu and Fellata Wella and Jafwon pastoralists in Unity State in March 2013¹²⁶.

Finally, CA also function as the 'institutional memory', as they have a long list of contacts from school teachers to state governors. Although this puts them in a comfortable position as information holders, many critics were made to the fact that the information was not actually shared, not even with UN agencies, undermining the idea that the Division works as a facilitator¹²⁷.

122 Ingrid Marie Breidlid and Andreas Stensland, *The UN Mission and Local Churches in South Sudan: Opportunities for Partnerships in Local Peacebuilding* (Conflict Trends 2011) 35.

123 Some examples of events supported and organized by the UNMISS CA, reported in its website are the Peace Actors Forum in Upper Nile State and the Youth Forum and Civil Society Network in Eastern Equatoria State. United Nations Mission in South Sudan, Civil Affairs Division < <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/civil-affairs-division>> accessed on July 17 2017.

124 Eli Starnes (2015) 3.

125 United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan*, S/2015/296 (UN 29 April 2015) para 29.

126 United Nations Mission in South Sudan, Civil Affairs Division < <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/civil-affairs-division>> accessed on July 17 2017.

127 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2012-2) 49.

Local-level County Support Bases (CSB)

Most of UN currently deployed peacekeeping operations have a considerable reach in the countries where they are, but UNMISS goals are even broader, as it aimed to establish 35 County Support Bases (CSBs) in the ten states of South Sudan. These CSBs promote a county-level presence and serve as ‘a platform and a portal’ for local authorities to extend the delivery of services to the rural population.¹²⁸ The idea is to provide hubs to encourage the government, UN agencies and NGOs to operate in some of the most isolated areas and to spark a sense of equality between international and national actors, as they would be sharing the same building to provide services to the population¹²⁹. Each CSB, designed to be handed entirely to the local authorities when the UN leaves, is to consist of a large tucol (an assembly area for about 100 persons), classroom-sized multi-purpose spaces, a borehole for water, satellite internet, and toilets¹³⁰.

Although the CA Division is responsible to support conflict management and is present in all field locations, the implementation of the CSBs is in the charge of the mission Reintegration, Reconstruction and Peacebuilding (RRP) section¹³¹. The RRP officers are an innovation in UN peacekeeping operations, and they constitute an attempt to bridge peacebuilding and development efforts¹³². This might explain why the implementation of CSBs has been done so very closely to the UNDP throughout the years. For instance, when Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud from NUPI were doing their research in South Sudan in 2011, they found that the ‘UNDP had received \$5.8 million for small-scale peacebuilding initiatives to be conducted in cooperation and under the leadership of the RRP officers’¹³³.

Thus, although the RRP section is within the UNMISS structure, most of the mission’s budget is not available for development projects. For this reason, on the one hand CSBs will provide accommodation using UNMISS resources, and on the other it will operate as a community ‘portal’, built by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and

128 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2012-2) 1.

129 Ibid (2013) 58.

130 Ibid (2012-2) 37.

131 Ibid (2012-1) 2.

132 Ibid (2013) 58.

133 Ibid (2012-2) 38.

funded jointly by Norway and the Netherlands¹³⁴. Although this partnership may seem beneficial, it can also cause confusion¹³⁵. One example of this complexity was reported in the 2014 UNDP South Sudan Annual Report. This document clearly stated that the decision by UNMISS to change the location of its CSBs forced UNDP to abandon plans for CSB portals in the previously agreed locations and therefore reduced the opportunities for collaboration between UNDP and UNMISS Civil Affairs Division.¹³⁶

It seems that the prevailing idea is that whoever has the most money at a time is the most prominent¹³⁷. According to a news story from the UNDP website, it was the UNDP through its Community Security and Arms Control (CSAS) project who delivered one more CSB in South Sudan. Although the UNMISS Head of Field Office, Koliab Nahataba was present at the event, by reading the news one could think that it was the UNDP alone that constructed, equipped and furnished 22 community centers (of which 11 have been officially handed over to the communities)¹³⁸.

The number of CSBs delivered in May 2016 shows that early enthusiasm has given way to less ambitious plans, as many challenges regarding budget, climatic conditions, lack of engineering capacity and logistics were faced in the construction of them. As a result, some of the changes involved the expansion of the implementation time and the necessity to seek more partnerships.¹³⁹

Regardless of who is responsible for the CSBs, UN actors involved in the project ‘should have a sober vision about what the UN can realistically be expected to achieve with only a few CSBs in a country the size of France’. Some issues that have to be considered are whether the UN has the flexibility required to fully operate at the local level, the ability to promote cooperation between so many diverse actors and the power to follow this ambitious project through and fulfill expectations¹⁴⁰. If the structure is in place, services must be

134 Diana Felix da Costa and Cedric de Coning, UNMISS County Support Bases: Peacekeeping–Peacebuilding Nexus at Work? (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2013) 4.

135 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2012-2) 38.

136 United Nations Development Programme, South Sudan Annual Report 2014 (UNDP 2014) 30.

137 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2013) 59.

138 United Nations Development Programme, UNDP Country Director hands over a Community Center in Tombura (UNDP May 2016) <http://www.ss.undp.org/content/south_sudan/en/home/presscenter/articles/2016/05/06/undp-country-director-hands-over-a-community-center-in-tombura.html> assessed 12 August 2017.

139 Diana Felix da Costa and Cedric de Coning (2013) 4.

140 Ibid (2012-1) 1-3.

constantly delivered; otherwise it can cause frustration and anger in the population.¹⁴¹

At this point, as the CSBs are still being implemented, no assessment is precise enough to establish the relevance of this initiative to the broader goal of achieving peace through local participation or the quality of the relationship between different actors that are suppose to work closely together at the CSBs. However, it is undeniable that the CSBs represent an effort to support local capacity building that directly contribute to the creation of stable, resilient and responsive states¹⁴².

141 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2012-2) 12.

142 Jago Salmon and Eugenia Piza-Lopez (2010) 19.

Conclusion

Conflicts are inherent to social relations, and although contemporarily are related to ethnic, cultural, tribal, and political violence, this paper has demonstrated that when society can represent, manage and resolve differing interests in a productive manner, the outcome of conflict might be a positive one.¹⁴³

This paper discussed the fact that peacebuilding processes should not aim to spread liberal values of the wealthy and powerful industrialised democracies into weak countries,¹⁴⁴ creating replicas of the interveners' own home paradigms around the world.¹⁴⁵ The legitimacy of a peace operation is undermined if the international components are seen as above the law.¹⁴⁶ Any intervention (from the implementation of localized community-based projects to peacebuilding long-term process) must be capable of supporting people to change for themselves. In other words, the change has to emerge endogenously.¹⁴⁷

Then, it demonstrated that external actors have attempted to create a peacebuilding environment in South Sudan. Although it is too early to exhaustively assess the situation on the ground, considering that the peace process has suffered several setbacks due to renewed conflict, this research identified in the case study two main thoughts worth sharing. First, peacebuilders are people and therefore they are different. It is true that they represent international institutions that might implicitly or explicitly share a liberal peace agenda. It is also true that some act without knowledge of the context of their intervention.¹⁴⁸ However some of them are genuinely aware of the country's environment and the importance of local participation in the legitimization of peacebuilding. As such, a CA officer reported to NUPI researchers that 'we come up with Western ideas of conflict resolution and then impose them on communities, but they have good mechanisms, and should use them.'¹⁴⁹

Second, within the UN system, whoever claims to guarantee more local participation

143 M Kapila, *Conflict Handling in the Aid Programme* (UK Department for International Development 1996).

144 Roland Paris, *International peacekeeping and the "Mission Civilisatrice"* (Review of the International Studies 28 2002) 638-639.

145 Challenges Project, *Meeting the Challenges of Peace Operations: Cooperation and Coordination* (Elanders Gotab 2005) 21.

146 Nigel White, 'Peace Operations' in Vincent Chetail (ed), *Post Conflict Peacebuilding, A Lexicon* (Oxford University Press 2009) 225.

147 Rama Mani and Jana Krause (2009) 10.

148 Béatrice Pouligny (2009) 183.

149 Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2013) 62. Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud (2012-2) 43.

seems to have more power and influence. In the situation of South Sudan, UNMISS CA and UNDP are both aware that legitimacy not only comes from their mandate, but also from the engagement with the right people.

If in the 1990s the main research debate within peacebuilding was which external actors would achieve the best results, there is a growing understanding that only multiple actors working together in a range of approaches can lead to sustainable peace.¹⁵⁰ On this matter, the Nyakhat Report points out that the United Nations peace operations have to work in a more integrated way, underpinned by mutual respect and mutual responsibility. For this, it is important that the Special Representative and/or Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, working at the country level convene regional actors, international financial institutions, the United Nations country team and relevant Member States around a “big table”¹⁵¹.

In order to guarantee more participation, the peace process must be decentralized, as decentralization helps the achievement of stability and peace by establishing stable sub-national arenas for citizen interactions and increasing legitimacy, accountability, inclusion and participation¹⁵². Thus, it seems accurate to say that the locals are the owners and are the ones in a position to legitimize the intervention, while external peacebuilders are the facilitators that can help locals build capacity to increase the likelihood of peace¹⁵³. However, the locals are not the saviors and do not provide legitimacy to the process simply for being where they are; rather, peacebuilding legitimacy is achieved by genuine participation, like the one intended by the CSBs in South Sudan.

150 Thania Paffenholz (2009) 65.

151 Nyakhat Report, para 146.

152 Hanna Leonardsson and Gustav Rudd (2015) 828.

153 David Hulme and Jonathan Goodhand, *From Wars to Complex Political Emergencies: Understanding Conflict and Peace-Building in the New World Disorder* (Third World Quarterly 1999) 24.

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