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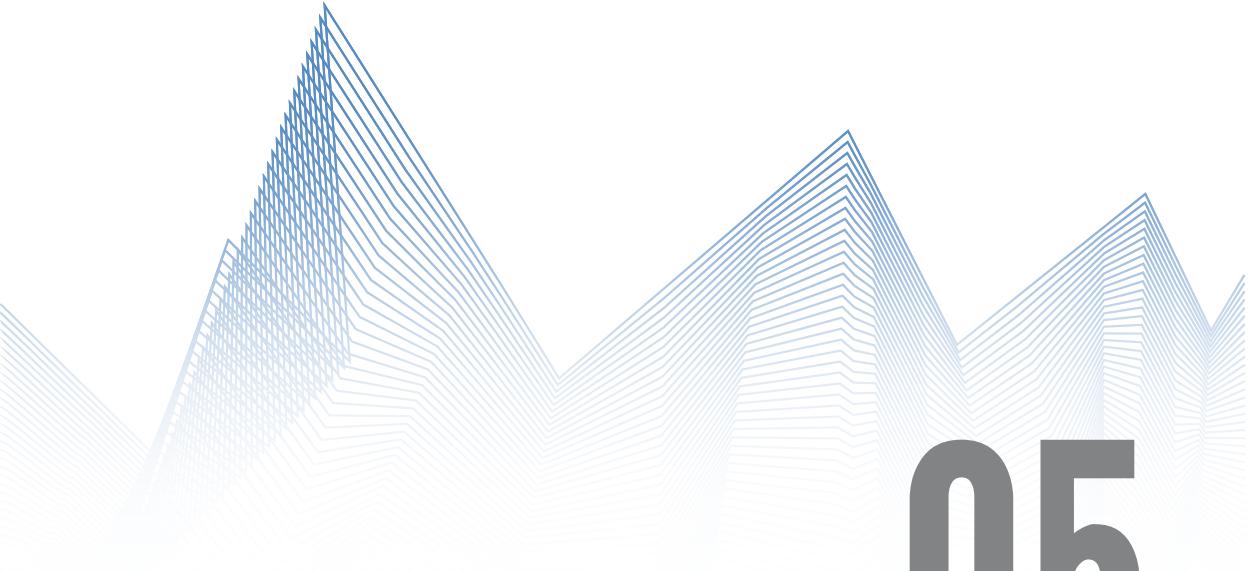
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## LOCAL PEACEBUILDING - CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Joakim Öjendal, Hanna Leonardsson and Martin Lundqvist



# Local Peacebuilding – challenges and opportunities

*Joakim Öjendal, Hanna Leonardsson and Martin Lundqvist*  
University of Gothenburg

*Rapport 2017:05*  
*till Expertgruppen för biståndsanalys (EBA)*

This report can be downloaded free of charge at [www.eba.se](http://www.eba.se)

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ISBN 978-91-88143-27-3

Printed by Elanders Sverige AB  
Stockholm 2017

Cover design by Julia Demchenko

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# Preface

Peacebuilding is at a crossroads. While it is one of the most important instruments for addressing crisis and fragility, it is also persistently criticised. Chiefly the critique focuses on a past record where peacebuilding efforts have been too superficial, and with a number of recurring conflicts taking place. International interventions – from large scale UN missions to bilateral projects and programmes – often operate at the national level of the state and omit to include a wider range of local level actors. Thus, peacebuilding can become disconnected from local realities and suffer in terms of quality and legitimacy.

In this EBA report, Joakim Öjendal, Hanna Leonardsson and Martin Lundqvist review the conventional peacebuilding formula and the critique that has come to be known as ‘the local turn of peacebuilding’. The authors unpack the meaning of local peacebuilding through a review of literature and practice, drawing on experiences from Cambodia, Liberia, Somaliland and Rwanda. The report is a timely contribution to an emergent assessment of peacebuilding aims and methods. Recent reviews by the UN highlight the importance of local processes, noting that attempts to rebuild or extend central authority in fragmented societies can actually lead to a deepening of conflict. The *Agenda 2030*, in particular *Goal 16*, draw our attention to the importance of capacity development at all levels of the state, while the collection of works from the Doing Development Differently community strongly argues for a ‘localisation’ of aid and peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is also a cornerstone of Swedish development assistance and the Government’s *Aid Policy Framework* identifies conflict as the main detrimental factor to development. Roughly one third of all Swedish bilateral aid is directed to conflict and post-conflict settings. The *Stockholm Declaration*, from the International Dialogue co-chaired by Sweden, emphasises that any strategy for supporting transitions out of fragility must be locally driven, locally owned, and locally led.

Yet, despite the emergent recognition that peacebuilding must take place at different levels of the society there are few strategies on how to ‘do’ local peacebuilding. If we should take the imperative of going beyond the national level seriously, it means that we must also understand what local peacebuilding looks like, how it works, and how it can be supported and promoted. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the limitations on outside support to the

local level, not least from a safety and security perspective. Another constraint is the risk of local peacebuilding coming at odds with international aims and objectives – for instance, on the inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes. Concentrating on the local level is not a panacea to the challenges confronting peacebuilding, and not all actors at the local level are committed to building a peaceful society.

Mindful of these challenges, Öjendal, Leonardsson and Lundqvist put forward nine policy recommendations to help peacebuilders ‘take a local turn’. Some recommendations may serve as signposts for a general re-alignment of peacebuilding – for example, when the authors suggest that peacebuilding should plan more consciously for local level engagement already from the start, and allow local actors to be involved in formulating policies that concern them. Other recommendations deal with peacebuilding capabilities, encouraging international actors to invest in continuous learning processes and a more resilient risk management so that peacebuilding interventions can make many ‘smaller bets’ at the local level instead of a few large-scale national programmes.

To build on, to synthesise and to make accessible results from previous research, in order to improve the management and development of Swedish aid, is at the heart of EBA’s remit. It is my hope that this report will stimulate debate and contribute to the improvement of policy and practice, making peacebuilding more ‘fit for purpose’. The authors’ work has been conducted in dialogue with a reference group chaired by Malin Mobjörk, member of the EBA. The analysis, views and recommendations presented in the report are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Stockholm, April 2017



Gun-Britt Andersson

# Sammanfattning

Under de senaste decennierna har fredsbyggande utvecklats till både en väletablerad global praxis och ett utpräglat forskningsfält. Som sådant har man betonat vikten av att tänka på fred som ett långsiktigt förfarande, vilket innefattar mer än slutet på direkt våld. Med ursprung i dylika insikter har en mängd fredsbyggande projekt initierats i postkonfliktsamhällen runt om i världen i syfte att skapa hållbar fred i dessa samhällen. Likväl förefaller en sådan positiv utveckling undflyende eftersom majoriteten av dessa samhällen fortfarande upplever krigsliknande förhållanden, som karaktäriseras av låg socio-ekonomisk utveckling, hög grad av motsättningar mellan grupper, påtagliga politiska spänningar, samhälleligt våld och, i vissa fall, en återgång till inbördeskrig. Mot denna bakgrund har en kritisk massa av forskare och praktikanter inom fredsbyggande börjat ifrågasätta grunden som konventionellt fredsbyggande vilar på, nämligen den så kallade ”liberala freden”. Inom kritiken som förkroppsligas av ”den lokala vändningen av fredsbyggande” samlas många olika perspektiv, där den minsta gemensamma nämnaren är att de ser den liberala freden som problematisk och en ökad lokal förankring som en nödvändig utveckling för att fredsbyggande ska få ökad legitimitet och bli mer effektivt. I ljuset av den starka uppsamlingen bakom denna kritik är det av största vikt att en utvärdering görs där fördelarna och nackdelarna vägs mot varandra, med ett särskilt fokus på huruvida kritiken kan utgöra en grund för policy. En dylik utvärdering finns dock inte tillgänglig i dagsläget, vilket är den här rapportens huvudsakliga existensberättigande.

De övergripande målen med rapporten är som följer: Först presenteras en teoretisk översikt av den forskning som ryms inom den lokala vändningen av fredsbyggande. Vidare söker vi bedöma den här teoribildningens påverkan på praktiskt fredsbyggande: I vilken form och i vilken utsträckning har den lokala vändningen omvandlats till praxis? Slutligen ämnar rapporten bedöma den lokala vändningens potential för att förbättra fredsbyggandets praktik, med ett särskilt fokus på dess relevans för policy.

## Den lokala vändningen inom fredsbyggande

Sedan det kalla krigets slut har fredsbyggande kommit att få en dominant roll i styrningen av det globala systemet, vilket bland annat

har resulterat i att det har blivit institutionaliserat i globala regimer såsom Responsibility to Protect (R2P), New Deal och Hållbara utvecklingsmål, för att nämligen nämna ett axplock. Fredsbyggandets praktik har dock inte varit statisk under dessa år, utan den har utvecklats gradvis under fyra generationer. Den första generationen innebar främst sjösättandet av fredsbevarande styrkor, den andra generationen sökte snabb förändring genom demokratisering och marknadsanpassning, den tredje generationen bestod huvudsakligen av ambitiösa statsbyggnadsprojekt, och i den fjärde generationen ser vi början till ett ökat införlivande av lokala röster och ett utpräglat underifrånperspektiv i fredsbyggandet.

Denna fjärde generation förefaller dock ha en långsam och något begränsad spridning. Trots den succesiva utvecklingen är många än idag skeptiska till hur fredsbyggande går till i praktiken; man pekar bland annat på de alltför regelmässiga misslyckandena med att främja fredliga samhällen och betonar således vikten av grundliga reformer. Kritiker har särskilt fokuserat på det som kallas den liberala freden och hur influenser från denna tankeskola fortsätter att påverka fredsbyggande negativt. Bland annat lyfter de fram den liberala fredens institutionella, programmatiska och teknokratiska tendenser som problematiska inslag i fredsbyggande. Den lokala vändningen av fredsbyggande bör således ses som en motreaktion mot dessa tendenser, och som ett försök att överbrygga dem.

Inom den breda kritiska skola som ryms under samlingsbegreppet ”den lokala vändningen” kan man hitta två huvudsakliga spår: en mainstreamkritik och en radikal kritik. Den första ser den liberala freden som bristfällig men likväl möjlig att ”reparera”. Således uppmanar mainstreamkritiken till ökat lokalt deltagande, mer transparens samt lokalt institutions- och kapacitetsbyggande. Den radikala kritiken, å andra sidan, betonar de maktasymmetrier som ligger till grund för internationella interventioner i konfliktdrabbade samhällen och ser till syvende och sist interventioner i den liberala fredens namn som en form av våldsutövande. Därmed ställer sig den radikala kritiken skeptisk till att den liberala freden kan ”repareras”, utan menar istället att fredsbyggande måste genomgå ett paradigmskifte. Ett sådant skifte skulle innebära att fredsbyggande blev djupt rotat i, och anpassat till, de specifika lokala kontexterna, att de lokala samhällena blev synnerligen involverade i fredsbyggandet, att lokala aktörer hade avsevärd makt att påverka fredsbyggandets utformning och att fredsbyggandeprocessen införlivade en mängd

olika lokala perspektiv och röster. Endast genom ett sådant skifte, menar den radikala kritiken, kan hållbar fred uppnås.

Samtidigt som den lokala vändningen har fått ett stort positivt gensvar finns det också de som menar att dess kritik är problematisk. Vi kan kalla denna positionering för ”kritiken av kritiken”. Denna sekundära kritik har ofta fötts ur fredsbyggares praktiska erfarenheter och har främst betonat att den lokala vändningens insikter är svåra, för att inte säga omöjliga, att omvandla till praktisk nytta. Från denna språngbräda ställer kritiken av kritiken svåra frågor till den lokala vändningen, då man bland annat hävdar att lokalt fredsbyggande tenderar att leda till problematisk ”lokalism”; att det finns starka finansiella och institutionella hinder för att implementera det; att ”det lokala” är omöjligt att definiera; samt att det är ytterst krävande att säkra att det lokala fredsbyggandet är i fas med den övergripande nationella fredsstrategin. Vi medger att dessa är relevanta argument som måste bemötas, men vi menar likväl att den lokala vändningen kanstå emot dem och att dess insikter faktiskt kan omsättas i praktiken, även om detta givetvis inte är ett enkelt åtagande.

## Global och lokal policyutveckling

Vi har i den här rapporten identifierat ett antal tendenser där den lokala vändningens insikter har bidragit till policyutveckling. För det första, den policy som faktiskt har utformats hämtar framför allt inspiration från mainstreamkritiken inom den lokala vändningen, då den huvudsakligen betonar vikten av att etablera lokala styrningsmekanismer. Exempel på sådan policy är bland annat diverse decentraliseringssstrategier, lokalt institutionellt kapacitetsbyggande och ökandet av lokala politiska/säkerhets-/juridiska institutioners mottaglighet för lokalsamhällets behov. I samklang med detta fokus på lokala styrningsmekanismer kommer också en ambition om att stärka den lokala kapaciteten, vilket ses som en nödvändighet för att de lokala styrningsmekanismerna ska kunna förvaltas väl. Det finns inte någon uttalad samstämmighet om vilka lokala institutioner som bör premieras vid sådant kapacitetsbyggande, men de flesta internationella aktörer verkar föredra att fokusera på lokala myndigheter eller liknande formella strukturer.

Vidare ser vi att de internationella aktörer som är involverade i fredsbyggande, såsom FN och Världsbanken, tenderar att blanda ihop

den nationella nivån med den lokala. Detta är kanske mest uppenbart i den etablerade idén om ”nationellt ägande” som den styrande principen för fredsbyggande, som är till för att öka förankringen i lokala verkligheter och behov men som i praktiken gagnar nationella regeringar snarare än lokalbefolningar och lokalmiljöer. Således missar den här synen på ”det lokala” målet fullständigt, då den dröjer sig kvar inom en statscentrisk världsbild där den nationella eliten behandlas som naturliga representanter för det lokala.

Som en kontrast till ovan nämnda institutionella fokus kan nämnas det mer lokalsamhällesorienterade arbete som internationella ickestatliga organisationer ofta står för, där stärkandet av lokal makt och inflytande ofta sätts i förgrunden. Således arbetar dessa organisationer utifrån premissen att lokal kapacitet redan finns på plats och därmed inte är något som måste ”byggas” genom initiativ utifrån. Vidare ser dessa organisationer ofta fredskapacitet som något som är potentiellt inneboende i en mängd olika aktörer och på en mängd olika nivåer – både inom och utom de formella institutionella strukturerna – och på detta vis kringgår man den institutionella tendens som annarsfärgar mycket av det konventionella fredsbyggandet.

## Slutsatser från fallen och påföljande policyrekommendationer

För att kunna avgöra i vilken grad den lokala vändningen har omsatts i praktiken, och dess potential för att förändra fredsbyggandet på lång sikt, analyserar vi fyra specifika fall, nämligen Kambodja, Rwanda, Liberia och Somaliland. Fallen analyseras via ett gemensamt analytiskt ramverk, där lokalsamhällets roll i fredsbyggandeprocessens olika faser utvärderas, med ett särskilt fokus på genus och civilsamhällets betydelse i de respektive fredsprocesserna.

Resultaten visar, som förväntat, att de olika fallen uppvisar många liknande tendenser men också har sina särarter. Fallens gemensamma nämnare kan sammanfattas på följande vis: *För det första*, alla fallen visar att internationella aktörer som påstår sig arbeta med lokalt fredsbyggande i praktiken ofta är begränsade till ett nationellt dito. *För det andra*, framgångsrikt lokalt fredsbyggande är sällan resultatet av en utstuderad strategi, utan snarare något som har vuxit fram på naturlig väg och ofta skett som en ren nödvändighet betingad av

omständigheterna, vilket fallen Somaliland och Kambodja tydligt visar. *För det tredje* förefaller det som om lokalt fredsbyggande vanligtvis faktiskt sker i en osammanhängande form, där olika lokaliteter arbetar i relativ isolering från varandra och ofta utan någon direkt koppling till den övergripande nationella fredsprocessen. På detta vis tappar dessa lokala initiativ något av sin potential till att bidra till den större nationella processen för att förankra freden. *För det fjärde*, medan de olika fallen visar på många positiva resultat av lokalt fredsbyggande förekommer det också exempel på mer problematiska konsekvenser av lokala fredsprocesser. *För det femte*, implementeringen av lokala fredsbyggandeprojekt komplickeras ofta av diverse strukturella hinder, som vanligen är av en praktisk, ekonomisk och/eller normativ karaktär.

Utifrån det ovanstående föreslår vi följande *rekommendationer för policy*:

1. Internationella aktörer som arbetar med fredsbyggande bör söka sig bortom den nationella statsapparaten i sin strävan att säkra ett lokalt ägande av fredsprocessen. Givetvis är staten ofta en viktig institution i sådana processer, men det är önskvärt att denna kompletteras med ett engagemang med aktörer på lokal nivå, och att dessa därmed är fullt delaktiga i de policyprocesser som berör dem.
2. Det är viktigt att skapa en plan för hur de lokala aspekterna av fredsprocessen ska implementeras. Företrädesvis bör detta ske i samråd med lokala aktörer för att försäkra sig om planens lokala relevans. Vidare bör den lokala dimensionen av implementeringen planeras till ett så tidigt skede som möjligt snarare än att skjutas upp till en senare fas.
3. Man bör försäkra sig om att lokala fredsbyggandeprocesser är sammanlänkade med andra liknande processer, både vertikalt och horisontellt, för att optimera deras synergieffekter. En sådan sammanläckning är beroende av både ekonomiskt och infrastrukturellt stöd, samt utvecklingen av policy som uppmuntrar till samverkan mellan lokala och nationella fredsprocesser.
4. Lokala aktörer bör, i möjligaste mån, vara involverade i de policyprocesser som berör dem. Dock är det samtidigt viktigt att komma ihåg att inte alla lokala aktörer stödjer fredsprocessen. Således är det angeläget att internationella aktörer anammar att det lokala är ”rörigt”, men att det likväld är viktigt att införliva i fredsbyggandeprocesser. Av detta följer att fredsbyggande måste vara

flexibelt och bör lämna visst rum åt lokala processer att växa på sina egna villkor.

5. Det är av största vikt att överge det status quo-tänkande som verkar genomsyra mycket av det samtida fredsbyggandet och istället våga satsa på att lokala fredsinitiativ kan vara fruktbara, även när de krockar med etablerade administrativa krav. En sådan ansats innehåller sannolikt att man måste lätta på kontrollen och låta lokala aktörer ta ansvar för en del av implementeringen, och ifrågasätta invanda sätt att rapportera om och övervaka fredsbyggandeprojekt. Vidare skulle det betyda att man faktiskt på djupet engagerar sig i lokala frågor och kontexter, och att man utmanar invanda liberala idéer om hur fred bör uppnås.

6. Att utforma fredspolicy bör ses som en ständigt pågående inlärningsprocess. Även om det är frestande att tänka på fredsbyggande som en linjär process med en tydlig kausalitet är det sällan verkligheten ser ut på det viset. Istället bör policy utformas utifrån den specifika kontexten och dess särskilda omständigheter. Man bör också ta hänsyn till det faktum att de samhälleliga institutioner som stödjer upprätthållandet av fred med största sannolikhet kommer att se annorlunda ut i olika sammanhang och under olika tidsrymder.

7. De allra flesta myndigheter som bedriver utvecklingssamarbete är under ständig press att minska administrationskostnader, öka kvaliteten, hantera komplexa situationer samt skydda sig mot korruption och misstag. Dessa krav driver hela fältet mot att endast anamma ett fåtal storskaliga projekt, vilket förefaller oförenligt med ett givande engagemang med lokala projekt och aktörer. För att kunna arbeta utifrån de insikter som den lokala vändningen har fört med sig krävs således, med största sannolikhet, att utvecklingssamarbetet får ökade anslag.

8. Medan kvalitetsförsäkringen inom utvecklingssamarbetet är en berömvärd norm så har den likväldigt bidragit till en viss rigiditet och en rädsla för att misslyckas. Strategiskt välplanerade risker bör istället omfamnas i utvecklingssamarbetet, för att kunna ge det långsiktiga stöd som lokala, om än ”röriga”, fredsinitiativ behöver. Detta är något som utvecklingssamarbetets huvudsakliga aktörer bör utarbeta strategier kring.

9. Att följa den lokala vändningens logik kräver djup kunskap och en grundad analys. Kännedom om den specifika kontexten, flexibel

övervakning av projekten, ömsesidig dialog och en beredskap att ompröva, anpassa och starta om projekt är viktiga aspekter för att lyckas med lokalt fredsbyggande.

# Summary

Over the last three decades peacebuilding has grown to become a prominent global practice and research theme. As such, it has accentuated the need to conceive of peace in the long-term, and to see it as something more than simply the end of direct violence. Along these lines, myriad peacebuilding projects have been set up in (post-) conflict societies across the globe, with the ultimate aim of securing sustainable peace within those contexts. Yet, such positive developments appear elusive, as the bulk of these societies continue to experience war-like conditions, characterised by low socio-economic development, high levels of group animosities, political tensions, and communal violence, not to mention the cases where full-scale civil wars have resumed.

Against this background, an increasing number of scholars and practitioners have come together in a forceful critique of conventional peacebuilding practices embedded in the ideational idea labelled 'liberal peace' in what has come to be known as 'the local turn of peacebuilding'. While highly diverse and scattered, most commentators within this movement emphasise the imperative of connecting peacebuilding practices to local realities in order to increase their quality and legitimacy. In light of this growing body of work it is crucial that an assessment be carried out of the relative merits of the critique, and its potential relevance to policy development. However, to the best of our knowledge, no work exists that brings together whatever research findings there are on this theme in a comprehensive format suitable for conclusions to be drawn that can support policy-making processes. This report aims to fill that gap.

The overarching aims of the report are as follows. Firstly, it presents a theoretical overview of the developments in peacebuilding literature pertaining to what is commonly known as 'the local turn'. Secondly, it seeks to assess the impact, or the lack thereof, of these theoretical developments on the actual practices of peacebuilding: to what extent, and in what guises, has the local turn been pursued in peacebuilding practice? Thirdly, and finally, the report seeks to gauge the potential of the local turn to change peacebuilding practices for the better, with a specific focus on its relevance to policy development.

## The local turn of peacebuilding

Since the end of the Cold War, peacebuilding has come to occupy a dominant position within the global governance system, and has been firmly institutionalised in international regimes such as the Responsibility to Protect, the New Deal, and the Sustainable Development Goals, to name but a few. However, peacebuilding practice has not remained static over the decades. It has evolved gradually in four generations: from first generation peacekeeping missions, to second generation 'big bang' approaches, to a third generation of ambitious state-building interventions, finally leading up to the embryo of a fourth generation characterised by a focus on 'peace from below' and from 'within'. However, the locally attuned fourth generation of peacebuilding remains stuck in its infancy, and is spreading only slowly. Despite its piecemeal evolution, many still remain critical of peacebuilding as it is conventionally practised, noting its far too frequent failure to build peaceful societies, and stressing the need to reform it. Critics have been particularly sceptical about the 'liberal peace' component underpinning most contemporary peacebuilding projects, and have, from different angles, joined forces in exposing its inherent limitations. In particular, the institutional, top-down, state-centric, programmatic, and technocratic biases of the liberal peacebuilding model have been branded as problematic. The local turn should be understood against the background of this overwhelming critique of the liberal peace, and can be seen as an attempt to overcome its many perceived shortcomings.

Within the diverse body of work that is grouped together under the umbrella term 'the local turn', two main strands appear: a *mainstream* critique, and a *radical* critique. The former sees the liberal peace as flawed, but somehow still possible to 'fix'. To this end, the mainstream critique calls for broader local participation, more transparency, local institution-building, and localised capacity-building. The radical critique, however, raises more challenging questions, highlighting the underlying power-asymmetries of international interventions in post-conflict societies, and ultimately labels liberal peace practices as a form of violence perpetrated by the intervenors. Thus, the radical critique challenges the notion that liberal peace can be 'fixed', and calls instead for a paradigm shift within peacebuilding. Such a shift would mean that peacebuilding should be deeply contextualised and adapted to the particular local contexts, considerably enhance the inclusion of the communities concerned,

contain a higher degree of local engagement, promote local agency, and encourage the existence of diverse perspectives in order to successfully build sustainable peace.

While generally conceived as relevant, there has also been a strong reaction against the critique embodied in the local turn, or - a *critique of the critique* - if you will. This derivative critique has often emerged from a practitioner's perspective, and has highlighted the difficulty of translating the findings of the local turn into policy that could be relevant to practice. As such, the critique of the critique asks hard questions of the local turn, by highlighting, *inter alia*, the tendency of localised peacebuilding initiatives to turn into problematic 'localism'; the institutional and financial barriers to effective implementation; the challenges of defining 'the local', and the difficulty of properly phasing localised peace endeavours within an overarching peacebuilding trajectory. While these are forceful criticisms, we argue that the local turn can still hold its ground against them, and that ultimately it *is* possible to translate many of its tenets into practice, although it is not a simple task, as will be evident below.

## Global and local policy developments

Some general trends can be identified when it comes to policy developments which have sought to relieve peacebuilding from its many perceived shortcomings. Firstly, the localised peacebuilding policies that are formulated have usually been drawn from within the mainstream critique of the local turn, i.e. primarily emphasising local governance. Examples of such policies include decentralisation strategies, local institutional capacity-building, increasing local political/security/legal institutions' receptiveness to community needs. Intertwined with the focus on local governance is an emphasis on increasing local capacity, without which local governance initiatives are considered inefficient. While there is a general diversity of opinion amongst the international community about which local actors are deemed eligible to benefit from such capacity-building, most international agencies tend to focus on local governments, or similar established institutional structures.

Secondly, there is a tendency for the major international agencies working in peacebuilding, such as the UN and the World Bank, to conflate the national level with the local. This is perhaps most

apparent in the widespread acceptance of ‘national ownership’ as the guiding principle in global peacebuilding policy, which is often championed as a means to anchor peace in local realities and needs, but which in fact commonly focuses on *national* governments rather than local populations and contexts. As such, this view of the local misses the point entirely, as it remains within an overall state-centric framework, where national political elites are often taken as representatives of the local. This report looks at peacebuilding processes carried out by a variety of international, regional and bilateral actors working with different mandates on different levels.

In contrast to the common institutional focus of many international peacebuilding agencies, several International Non-Government Organisations (INGOs) stand out by adopting a more community-oriented approach to peacebuilding policy, where local agency and empowerment are foregrounded. As such, these organisations see local capacity as already present within local contexts, rather than something which has to be built and cultivated through external involvement. Moreover, they view peace capacity as potentially embedded within a multitude of local actors and levels – both within and outside formal institutional structures – thus sidestepping the institutional bias of most mainstream peacebuilding approaches.

## Conclusions from the cases and the ensuing policy recommendations

In order to gauge the extent to which the local turn has been translated into practice, and its ability to transform peacebuilding policy in the long term, the report analyses four case studies in depth: Cambodia, Rwanda, Liberia, and Somaliland. The cases are analysed through a common analytical framework, highlighting the involvement of the local in different phases of the peace processes, as well as bringing up gender and civil society dimensions of the respective peace processes. While all the cases – as expected – embody their own specificities, importantly they also share common denominators, which can be summarised as follows. Firstly, all of the cases suggest that most international agencies who claim to be involved in ‘local’ peacebuilding are in fact often restricted to national-level peacebuilding, which is missing the point of the local turn.

Secondly, successful local peacebuilding is rarely a consciously planned element of international peacebuilding projects, but rather something that tends to grow organically (and by necessity) from within different (post-) conflict contexts, as was evident in the cases of Cambodia and Somaliland. Thirdly, when localised peacebuilding actually happens, it often appears to be scattered, uncoordinated, and in relative isolation from other socio-political dynamics in the societies at hand, rendering it inefficient in the larger processes of consolidating peace. Fourthly, while the empirical cases all exhibit the significant positive potential of localised peacebuilding initiatives, most of them also highlight the ‘messy’ and sometimes problematic consequences of such approaches. Fifthly, the implementation of localised peacebuilding projects is often complicated due to a number of structural constraints, variably of a practical, financial, and/or normative nature.

Drawing on the above, a series of policy recommendations can be made:

1. International peacebuilding agencies should seek to move beyond the state level in their endeavours to ensure local ownership of the peacebuilding process. This does not negate the fact that the state is often an important institution in such processes. It merely stresses the fact that it can be complemented by engagement with local actors, who should ideally be fully involved in the policy processes that concern them.
2. Peacebuilding practitioners should go to great lengths to ensure that local aspects of peacebuilding are consciously planned and included in the policy roadmap towards peace. Preferably, this roadmap should be devised in close consultation with local actors, to ensure its local relevance. Moreover, provision should be made to implement local peacebuilding initiatives at the earliest possible stage, rather than leaving them until an undefined later phase.
3. There should be safeguards to ensure that local peacebuilding initiatives are connected vertically and horizontally across the polity and beyond, in order to ensure that synergistic effects are promoted. Such connectedness would involve not only providing ample funding and infrastructure when needed, but also policy provisions that explicitly seek to contravene the common isolation of localised peacebuilding initiatives.

4. Local actors should, to the extent possible, be involved in the policy formulations that concern them. However, it is also important to bear in mind that not all local actors are committed to building a peaceful society. Consequently, it is necessary for international actors to accept that the local is inherently messy, recognise that, in spite of that, it requires engagement, and thus devise flexible peacebuilding programmes which provide room for the local to grow on its own terms.

5. It is imperative to move beyond the ‘business as usual’ logic that permeates much of current peacebuilding practice, and to seriously consider the benefits of more localised approaches to peacebuilding in spite of mismatches with administrative requirements. This may entail surrendering some control of the implementation process to local colleagues/counterparts, going beyond one’s comfort zone as a practitioner and challenging established reporting and monitoring systems. It may also entail actually engaging with local people and contexts, and challenging ingrained liberal-centric ideas about how peace can be achieved.

6. Devising peacebuilding policy should be thought of as a continuous learning process. While it is tempting to think in terms of linearity and ‘lessons learned’ in peacebuilding policy, the crude reality is that no roadmap to peace can be devised which is relevant in all polities at all times. Instead, policies should be devised in response to the circumstances at hand, and take into consideration the fact that the societal institutions which uphold peace are bound to look very different in different contexts and at different times.

7. Most development cooperation agencies are under pressure to reduce administrative costs, and at the same time expected to increase quality, deal with complex problems, and safeguard against malfunction and corruption. This combination gears the entire field towards few, large-scale projects/programmes, which biases it against local engagement. To promote a local turn effectively, it is most likely that more resources need to be allocated to managing development portfolios.

8. While there is a commendable trend of quality assurance in development cooperation, it has brought with it rigid approaches and an unfortunate fear of failure. Strategic, well-considered risks must be ‘allowed’ in order to make a difference in long-term local peacebuilding (since the local is ‘messy’ and causes of peace are hard

to predict). The development cooperation system needs to come up with modalities for thinking strategically along these lines.

9. To engage in a local turn requires thorough knowledge and sound analysis. Contextual knowledge, project monitoring, feedback loops, and the preparedness to revise, adapt, and re-launch are central to succeeding with a local turn (and many other interventions). These features need to be more prominent if a local turn is to be efficiently pursued.

# 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This study focuses on whether, and if so, how, a ‘local turn’ of peacebuilding practices may or may not have a positive impact on the quality of peacebuilding interventions.<sup>2</sup> It takes in a substantial part of the overwhelming critique directed towards the last two decades of peacebuilding and interventions in the name of peace, often carried out under the banner of liberal peace. Liberal peace emphasises democratic values, good governance and market liberalisation, but is criticised for pursuing excessive interventionism, harbouring unrealistic expectations, and even for resembling neo-colonialism.

As such, the intellectual material underpinning ‘the local turn of peacebuilding’ is a solid body of criticism of what is portrayed as the too centralised, too structural, too distant, too ideological, and too mechanical approach to reconstruction and the building of peace. As a result of the research all the authors of this report have conducted independently, we tend to agree with the critical views commonly aired in the researcher community. However, we also harbour a certain respect for the complexities and challenges of pursuing a more locally based peacebuilding strategy in practice (cf. Lundquist 2015; Leonardsson & Rudd 2015; Öjendal 2015; 2013).

The aim of the study is threefold: *firstly*, we will make an inventory of the critical literature (which is largely theoretical); *secondly*, we will review how local aspects of peacebuilding have been pursued (and not been pursued); and, *thirdly*, we will establish the impact of a local approach on the overall outcome of peacebuilding and how/to what extent this can be generalised.

Theoretically it draws on a school of thought initiated by Lederach (1997) emphasising a multi-level/multi-scalar approach, bringing verticality and inter-connectedness to the fore. This study takes in the

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<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to Kristine Höglund, Malin Mobjörk, Joakim Molander och Jan Pettersson for critical, constructive and precise comments on an earlier version of this report.

<sup>2</sup> ‘The local’ is an endemically confusing term. It will be discussed and defined in the conceptual section below. We also use the phrasing ‘the local turn of peacebuilding’ in contrast to ‘in’ peacebuilding; we investigate to what extent the entire field needs, and could benefit from, a ‘turn’, hence not whether individual projects/programmes embedded in the field are beneficial or not. As pointed out below, this does not mean that we investigate every aspect of, or activity in, the vast field of peacebuilding.

critique of the liberal peace and believes that a more grounded/localised approach to peacebuilding would be beneficial for sustainable peace.

Post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding have gradually turned into key ingredients in the global governance architecture. Internationally, the idea of peacebuilding and its various strategies has become institutionalised and has now assumed a ‘hegemonic status’ (Jabri 2013:4), with every international organisation ‘from the United Nations to NATO’ seeing it as one of their primary activities (*ibid.*). Interventions have become commonplace, and serving to protect, prevent, and repair has been codified and turned into a UN-based norm, for instance via the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ resolution (Evans 2006). Moreover, from another angle, ‘fragility’ became a novel focus for policy and research in the early 2010s (Wider 2014; Grimm 2014, and below).

Even more important, however, is the recent initiative labelled the ‘New Deal’, endorsed by 43 countries and the G7+ grouping of conflict affected states, which highlighted the necessity, in the policy world as well, of ‘legitimate, inclusive politics’ in relation to peacebuilding (Donais, 2016: 40). It possibly represents the most focused attempt to date by the international community to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of peacebuilding/statebuilding interventions in the so-called ‘fragile states’ (International Dialogue 2014). Moreover, and even more recently, the ‘Doing Development Differently Manifesto Community’ (DDD) argues for renewed policies in these fields. It is most likely that peacebuilding and statebuilding policies in the coming decade will be influenced by the first round of experience of the local turn (which we believe will not wane in the foreseeable future).

The *local turn of peacebuilding* is fundamentally driven by the inadequacies of the current practices emphasising rapid democratisation and the crafting of peace from above through liberal policies (Collier 2003; Mac Ginty 2013; Donais 2016) – often referred to as ‘the liberal peace’ by critics (Richmond 2005; 2010). While liberal peace is supposedly pursued in order to stabilise fragile states, and to provide an environment conducive to sustainable development processes, the exact opposite is a typical and even foreseeable outcome, critics claim (Ottaway 2002; Mac Ginty 2013). The ‘rediscovery’ of the local presents both a ‘solution’ and a ‘challenge to peacebuilding’s conventional understandings’ (Donais 2015:40f).

Consequently, the hitherto binary structure of international actors and national government is questioned as “the local turn has added a third (albeit somewhat unwieldy) set of actors to the peacebuilding mix.” (Donais 2015:41; cf. Paffenholz 2015; Kappler 2015; Schierenbeck 2015). Hence, it is a common argument among the local turn advocates that in order for peacebuilding aiming to stabilise states to be functional, the national government has to adopt a state-society dimension and accept both that the state is multi-dimensional and multi-scalar (Manning 2003; cf. Migdal 2001), and that verticality and interconnectedness are/should be central principles of peacebuilding (McCandless, Abitol & Donais 2015).

Although substantial, ‘the local turn’ is not necessarily (or not at all) a coherent body of thought and even less so a package ready to be operationalised. Given the immature state of the conceptual evolution of the local turn, and the lack of consensus on its content, this is chiefly an exploratory study. There are ample examples in the literature where interventions not explicitly branded as ‘peacebuilding’ have eventually served peacebuilding purposes, as well as labelled peacebuilding interventions of a local nature which are neither very local nor managing to contribute to peace.

As stated above, as we are aiming for an inventory of arguments, approaches and experiences (in contrast to a conceptualisation and/or a hypothetical deductive study), we use the ‘local turn’ liberally. Put differently, we neither *a priori* accept the usage of the term in practice, nor are we bound to its premature theoretical content. In fact, the definition of the local turn goes against the inner logic of the concept as it advocates the dynamism and engagement of a wide variety of stakeholders whose voices must be heard (and that it is not desirable to pre-determine these voices). To hear, and to take in, these sometimes deviating voices, a working definition needs to be broad. Hence, peacebuilding in this report encompasses projects branded as such, and also occasionally interventions that have peacebuilding effects but are not called peacebuilding projects. Peace and the effort to craft it are not fixed entities and they are hard to generically define, hence outcome and process substitute each other and they can only be fixed at a given point in time and from a particular perspective (see also Box 1 below).

Hence, the study is of an exploratory and inductive nature, reviewing a variety of conceptual approaches to the local turn, as well as a wide range of practices understood to be a part of the local turn.

Moreover, it is a desk-study, working with secondary literature of both a theoretical and an empirical nature, aiming at a comprehensive overview, rather than being a theoretically focused study (for conceptual clarification, see Box 1). It works through structured case studies and the primary focus will be on institutional and agency dimensions; the former is traced over three phases of peacebuilding (initiation, execution, result), and the latter through the special issue areas of gendered dimensions of peacebuilding, and the role of civil society in the local turn of peacebuilding (see Table 1). These phases and issues are compared across the cases.

Notably, this report is neither an assessment of the full peacebuilding field, nor is it an evaluation of any particular actors' or countries' policies and actions. In places, Swedish policies and interests receive extra attention due to the origin of this study, but it is in no way an assessment or evaluation of the Swedish policies or portfolio.

To the best of our knowledge, there is so far no work available bringing whatever research findings there are on this theme into a comprehensive format suitable for drawing conclusions that can support policy-making processes. In spite of the growing but atypical 'consensus' on the significance of local dimensions of peacebuilding, tangible adjustments and successful implementations are hard to find, problematic to define, and difficult to measure in real world interventions and their subsequent statebuilding processes. Much of the research literature emphasises that they are important, and many policymakers would agree (e.g. OECD 2011), yet it is (or seems to be) difficult to achieve a real shift, in spite of genuine attempts to make a difference, as many testify to (Donais 2016; Schia & Karlsrud 2013). Hence, this report seeks to identify and understand the local turn, and assess how and to what extent it has/can have a positive impact on the quality of peacebuilding.

It also provides reflections on how this could relate to international/Swedish development policy. Particular attention is given to how peacebuilding pertains to a number of Swedish/MoFA/Sida priorities such as, *inter alia*, the promotion of empowerment, the building of local institutions, gendered localisation of peace, and the role of civil society in post-conflict societies. By reviewing the critique of the liberal peace, emphasising what the local turn can contribute, displaying a number of thematic examples and in-depth cases, and offering some tentative conclusions on the merits and

feasibility of the local turn, we hope this will inspire and guide the policy community to incorporate local aspects of peacebuilding in a more swift and focused manner.

In terms of structure, after this introduction, background and justification of the study's approach, there follows a review of the global policy developments pertaining to the local turn. This is subsequently complemented by a selection of theoretical views underpinning the discourse of the local turn. In order to illuminate experiences to date on how the local turn may be manifested, a thematic section reviews tentative attempts to pursue local peacebuilding. At the core of the report, then, there is a section of four case studies further illuminating what the local turn may look like, and which results it may produce. The report is concluded with an analytical section, which ends in a discussion of conclusions and policy relevance.

#### Box 1: Key concepts – working definitions

**Peacebuilding:** It is a contested term, engaging academics, policymakers, and the UN system writ large. We have chosen to work with the classic definition by Lederach: "...a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships" (Lederach 1997:20; cf. Björkdahl et al. 2015). Hence, when we talk about improved quality of peacebuilding, we refer to interventions that raise the ability to 'transform conflict' as in the definition.

**Liberal peace:** A highly ideological concept with roots dating back to Immanuel Kant. In recent peacebuilding debate, it appears as variations on a formula based on "democratisation, the rule of law, human rights, free and globalized markets, and neo-liberal development" (Richmond 2006: 291).

**Empowerment:** It is a highly normative concept, at risk of being romanticised. We prefer here to see empowerment as: "...an intentional, ongoing process centred in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation..." (Perkins & Zimmerman 1995: 570)

**Participation:** Arnstein (1969) may have been the first to critically scrutinize the concept of involvement in a development context, which he saw as ranging from *manipulation* to *consultation* and finally to *citizen power*. The 'good' participation referred to in this report is a minimalist term, which enables citizens to be a part of decision-making processes that are of their concern.

**Agency:** In contrast to an over-emphasis on structural determinants in the development process, an agent is seen as someone who acts and brings about change. Or, in the words of Barker: "the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices." (2005: 448).

**Local:** This is a recently heavily contested term which is subject to intense debate, and on which the meaning of the entire ‘local turn’ hinges (MacGinty 2015; Paffenholz 2015; Leonardsson and Rudd 2015). Ultimately, the debate concerns whether the local is a unit of small scale where proximity plays an important role or constituted by agency and practices that define the local; both these conceptions are in contrast to centralised, instrumental, structural and large-scale approaches. The concept of ‘the local’ is further elaborated in section 3.2 below.

## 2. Policy developments pertaining to the rise of the local

The increasing critique of the post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding agenda that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s has sought to influence peacebuilding policy to reform and remedy its apparent weaknesses. As we have seen above, some of this has taken the path of a 'local turn of peacebuilding' (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015; Randazzo 2015). However, and as we shall see below, the policy responses very much follow a critique adhering to a body of thought within the liberal mainstream. This disallows more radical alterations in policy, or at least limits the fields in which re-thinking peacebuilding policies can take place (to be discussed further below).

At first it must be stressed that the primary UN approach to 'the local' is seemingly not so 'local', but rather 'national' (but often referred to as 'local'). National ownership is the dominant concept in the mass of UN reports, emphasising that 'the success of peacebuilding fundamentally depends on national ownership' (Rosenthal et al., 2015: 17) and that '[u]ltimately, political primacy rests with national actors. The United Nations and other international actors can only support and facilitate a national commitment to peace' (High Level Panel on Peace Operations, 2015: 27). It seems as if 'national' is as 'local' as the global aid community is willing or able to go. As such, it seems more influenced by the Paris Agreement than by the 'local turn'.

The notion of the local as national is also present in the recently developed, and globally significant, 'New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States'. The New Deal represents a 'locally owned' agenda for increased stability and security in that it is owned by the G7+ group consisting of self-declared fragile states and, thus, supposedly gives these states a clearer voice in the international arena (Hingorani, 2015: 88). As in other contexts of the international peacebuilding community, 'the New Deal is predicated on the primacy of national ownership', echoing the stance that international actors 'cannot build peace and states from the outside' (Hearn, 2015: 1). Its view of local ownership is represented by an emphasis on state-led and state-owned processes of stabilisation and development that take into account local political circumstances, but not necessarily going below the national arena in its approach to the local (Hingorani, 2015: 88). As such,

‘there is a risk that the process may in fact be unfolding in a state-centric manner and may ultimately do little to engage ‘the local’ in peacebuilding processes’, if that local is taken to mean anything closer to the population than the national government (Donais, 2012: 41f.). To follow Paffenholz (2015), to strengthen the national elite may in fact be the most efficient way to suppress local initiatives and grassroots voices, *de facto* disempowering local stakeholders. By this logic, it is not a small matter to confuse the ‘local’ with the ‘national’.

A recent contribution to the peacebuilding agenda is the inclusion of peace and conflict as the 16<sup>th</sup> sustainable development goal (SDG) aiming to *‘Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels’*. Although too early to say whether SDG 16 will add to the current local turn of peacebuilding, the emphasis on inclusive institutions *at all levels* leaves some room for local adaptations moving away from universal approaches and possibly to a more sub-national level (Lucey, 2015). The overall focus of the UN, the New Deal and G7+ group as well as now SDG 16 is a local that pertains to local institutions and local democracy for locally (or rather nationally) owned peace.

Internationally, UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UN Security Council, 2000), together with consecutive resolutions on women in conflict, have implied a growing commitment to gender and women’s participation in peacebuilding, emphasising local empowerment and local agency of conflict-affected women. The resolution established women’s and girls’ particular vulnerability in conflict but also women as agents of peace. Women in conflict and post-conflict societies often tend to emphasise an understanding of peace starting at the community level, including access to education, sustainable livelihoods and individual rights and freedoms. Involving women in peace negotiations and as peacebuilders is therefore of great importance for establishing sustainable peace (Moosa, Rahmani, & Webster, 2013: 457) and including a local that goes beyond institutional reforms. With a growing commitment to gender on an international level, the mentioning of gendered aspects of peace has increased in peace agreements, from 11% in 2000, to 27% in 2010. However, the incidence of women as active peacebuilding agents, measured by female inclusion in negotiations, is still strikingly low with numbers often far below 5% when it comes to women as signatories, witnesses, or mediators (Moosa et al., 2013: 455). At the

same time, peacebuilding processes often follow a masculine and militarised script with men as protectors and policymakers and women as victims to protect or to include only in already settled processes (Willett, 2010). Consequently, although Resolution 1325 put women as peacebuilders on the international agenda, mainstream peacebuilding operations seem to have failed to include women's agency beyond predefined measures for building peace – missing a chance to move local peacebuilding beyond institutional arenas.

However, when policy actors do try to include the local, the local varies widely. Relating local ownership to national ownership, the UN may see civil society as the local actor that holds the national accountable, thus legitimising the national elite and national institution-building (United Nations, 2011). Assuming that civil society has such a legitimising role can be problematic since civil society is not necessarily closer to the people, often consisting of professional Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) based in the capital of the country with a limited constituency and chiefly financed by the international development community, *de facto* constituting a 'proxy actor' for those defending/pursuing the liberal peace (Kappler, 2012). Nor do these NGOs have the power or ability to hold the national actors accountable – or are allowed to do so in the typically semi-authoritarian environments in which they operate in the aftermath of civil war and protracted violence. Having said that, there is a minor part of the UN's (and others') efforts that addresses a sub-national local in a more focused manner.

Two themes stand out in international policy actors' responses to demands for a more local focus (all within the mainstream critique); there should be increased attention to local governance and local capacity. *Local governance* is often approached by emphasising its efficiency for service delivery to meet local needs and grievances and its ability to be more inclusive in terms of participation in local democratic arenas (United Nations, 2012a; UNDP, 2011; DFID, 2010; World Bank, 2011b). Consequently, local governance is assumed to play a conflict-mitigating role in its ability to foster dialogue by taking into account local claims and providing access to government (UNDP, 2011; United Nations, 2012a: 25). In this sense local governance is taken to mean local government, decentralisation or local political structures by, for example, the World Bank, the UNDP, several municipality organisations such as the City Diplomacy project, and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes

(ACCORD) (ACCORD, 2014a; UNDP, 2016; Klem & Frerks, 2008; World Bank, 2011b). For others, such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and United States Institute for Peace (USIP) it is instead non-state and community actors, civil society organisations or traditional leaders and traditional structures that are emphasised (DFID, 2010; USIP, 2012). Nevertheless, no matter which actors are approached, local governance is emphasised here in order to rectify national peacebuilding failures by localising the problem-solving logic of liberal peace. Thus, when ‘peacebuilding’ turns local, it tends to be pursued as ‘development’, expecting processes of localised democracy, enhanced state-citizen dialogue, and good local governance practices to sustain peace.

However, according to the UN, peacebuilding measures cannot be localised in practice if local actors do not have the *local capacity* to engage in all phases of planning and implementation, without which local ownership would be null (United Nations, 2010a). The importance of capacity for local ownership raises the question of which actors are assumed to be capable actors in the local arena. Again, the policy debate reveals a divergence between an emphasis on formal institutions or traditional structures and an emphasis on local communities. For example, the UNDP focuses on local governments (UNDP, 2016), DFID and USIP suggest building on existing local formal *and* informal institutions (DFID, 2010; USIP, 2012), and the World Bank points towards local community committees and NGOs as actors to include in their ‘community driven development’ (CDD) (World Bank, 2011a).

The diversity in preferred actors carrying the local dimension forward reveals two different arguments; first, the view that institutional structures at the local level represent the most appropriate way of establishing a local process of peace, or, second, that capacity for local peacebuilding is necessarily found in the local context and its traditional culture. These two approaches have both been criticised, for assuming local capacity to feed into ownership over externally pre-defined models (ACCORD, 2014: 6), or, for assuming a traditional local as inherently authentic and legitimate (Donais, 2012: 1-21), falling into the trap of romanticising the subaltern in a naïve over-compensation for previous (and contemporary) neglect (Richmond 2009).

The international peacebuilding state agencies and multinational organisations mostly pursue localisation of peacebuilding within the

institutional and democracy-oriented approach, whereas the more empowerment and agency-focused approach to local peacebuilding is more commonly found among international NGOs. These NGOs emphasise the need to locally ground peacebuilding and view peacebuilding capacity as existing within local communities themselves. These approaches are increasingly opening up to the need to include deviating local voices, and to allow for alternatives in the peace process, as articulated by a radical critique (International Alert, 2007; Swiss Peace, 2015; McCann, 2015).

Instead of singling out a single recipient actor in the local context their approach may entail building cooperation between different actors locally, nationally, and/or internationally and emphasising joint learning through a flexible reciprocal process (Swiss Peace, 2015; McCann, 2015). Instead of a peacebuilding approach to a large extent grounded in the peacebuilding as statebuilding discourse, these approaches pertain more to the tradition of conflict resolution and bottom-up peacebuilding as found in writings by, for example, Lederach, Nordstrom, Curle and others (Lederach, 1997; Fetherston & Nordstrom, 1995; Nordstrom, 1997; Curle, 1994).

A movement that brings academic and policy actors together to respond to the identified failures of development and peacebuilding is the Doing Development Differently Manifesto Community (DDD Manifesto Community). The DDD Manifesto Community acknowledges the complexity of development work, emphasising the need to solve local problems locally and work with all levels of politics and societies (DDD 2014). In addition, the DDD Manifesto Community sees the need to reform development thinking overall, embracing diversity, rapid changes, and the inability to completely pre-determine outcomes of projects. Instead they advocate the need to accept uncertainty and learn lessons from the local context in order to have real impact on the ground (Pellini 2015; DDD 2014).

In Swedish peacebuilding policy the turn towards the local mostly comes to the fore in its emphasis on inclusive participation (Inksater, Powell, & Baser, 2015; Sida, 2015b). In particular Swedish aid policy emphasises the need to include women, civil society, and marginalised groups “To attain lasting peace, all stakeholders must be included. The active participation of women in all phases of the conflict cycle is fundamental. Civil society also plays an important role” (Government Offices of Sweden, 2014: 38). The emphasis on UN Resolution 1325 is a recurrent theme, together with UN Resolution 1820 and UN

Resolutions 1612 and 1882 on children in conflict. Despite acknowledging the need to locally anchor aid and empower individuals, local level governance is not specifically targeted, although it is acknowledged that it may be necessary: “If national ownership is weak, ownership in some situations can also be sought, for example, at local level and through civil society” (Government Offices of Sweden, 2014: 40). The role of civil society is also often taken to mean an avenue for localising peacebuilding as Swedish aid should aim at “Partnering with civil society to reach the local level” (Government Offices of Sweden, 2014: 49).

Partnering with other actors is one of Sweden’s channels for distributing aid. One example is when aid is distributed through an umbrella organisation such as Forum Syd and through the Olof Palme International Center, which in turn cooperate with civil society organisations in Sweden and the global south. Through such measures it is envisioned that inclusion on the ground is enhanced and power over decisions moves closer to those concerned (Sida 2016; Forum Syd n.d.; Palmecenter n.d.). Another example is Sida’s support of local democracy through municipal partnerships in which Swedish municipalities can share their knowledge and experience of municipal self-governance and also learn from partnering municipalities. Cooperating with the municipal level is seen as strategically important in fulfilling the UN’s 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and promoting the Swedish government’s prioritised goals for equality, women’s participation, human rights and the environment and climate (Sida 2015a; ICLD 2015).

Participation of different kinds of actors is crucial to Swedish peacebuilding policy. As such, it is a policy situated within the problem-solving approach of including the local as a means to remedying current peacebuilding failures by localising state institutions and involving civil society actors in democratic practices.

### 3. Critique of peacebuilding and its consequences

Below we will, firstly, trace the tenets of the local turn from its origin to its current state (3.1.) before we, secondly, zero in on the contested concept of ‘the local’ itself (3.2.). Thirdly, we will display the most common weaknesses of the operationalisation of the local turn by reviewing the critique of the critique (3.3.).

#### 3.1. Brief genealogy of peacebuilding travelling towards its local turn

Perceptions of liberal peace came to increasingly permeate interventions in the 1990s. After the end of the Cold War there was a firm belief that liberalism represented the ‘end of history’ (cf. Fukuyama 1993), and that it could be fruitfully exported to troubled regions of the world in order to craft peaceful and democratic societies. Thus - or so it was assumed - the spread of liberal democracy would ensure international peace and security (*ibid.*). Liberal interventions in the name of peace quickly came under scrutiny as critics, from different angles, joined forces in exposing the inherent limitations of ‘the liberal peace’ model. Particularly, its institutional, top-down, state-centric, ideological, and technocratic biases were branded as problematic (Mac Ginty 2008; Richmond 2009).

Inherent in this critique is often a strong focus on the problematic power relations that the liberal peace embodies, as it confers agency on the ‘expert’ interveners, while the populations intervened upon are rendered passive ‘recipients’ of said interventions (*ibid.*). Against the background of this critique, a ‘local turn’ of peacebuilding has gradually developed.

As an overall historical trajectory, interventions in the name of peacebuilding can be seen as a sequence of generations, replacing one another, changing its key characteristics. A ‘first generation’ of interventions for peacebuilding has been replaced by a second, and possibly by a third, and even the embryo of a fourth in a progressive learning process of past failures (cf. Richmond 2010).

The *first* generation was the UN peacekeeping missions, basically observing ceasefires (Cyprus, Lebanon, Korea), which have little to do with contemporary peacebuilding. The *second*, commencing right after the end of the Cold War, was pursued with short interventions of a ‘big-bang’ nature, with an over-belief in rapid democratisation, marketisation, and the swift crafting of peace within a given mandate and absolute time period (cf. Cambodia, Mozambique, Somalia). A *third* generation shifted to more ambitious peacebuilding/statebuilding processes where interveners stayed on, presumably, until the task was/is completed (DRC, Afghanistan, Kosova, Liberia). In this generation, an interest (by necessity) in more comprehensive statebuilding processes emerged, hence comprising a far longer time period than hitherto. Often these were hybrid operations with several international interveners in a mix of civil and military operations. *Finally*, as a fourth generation, peacebuilding is moving on to more participatory- and agency-oriented approaches aiming at ‘from-below’ and ‘from-within’ peacebuilding in the spirit of the pioneer John-Paul Lederach, as well as more radical views based on post-modern/colonial perspectives (cf. Jabri 2013). This approach is evolving gradually across the globe, but half-heartedly and with only limited impact (Richmond 2010). Currently this trend is evident in a variety of outlets, such as the SDGs and calls for ‘Doing Development Differently’ (DDD 2014).

Critique of peacebuilding practices has been massive from a number of directions. It has been articulated from liberal corners and from more radical circles; in quantitative studies and case-study oriented research; and from studies focusing on short-term interventions and those studying its long-term effects (Paris 2004; Paffenholz 2015; MacGinty & Richmond 2013; Öjendal & Ou 2015). In light of the unsatisfactory results of conventional peacebuilding practices, two broad types of critique have emerged.

The *mainstream critique* typically emphasises the need for broader participation, more transparency, local institution-building, and localised capacity building. According to this critique, it is imperative to find more efficient channels for resources to reach all the way ‘down’, to build local institutions, and to establish the conditions for proper service delivery (Paris 2010; World Bank 2006; Brinkerhoff 2009; UNDP 2014; OECD 2011).

The *radical critique*, on the other hand, claims that revision of regular practices is not far-reaching enough – and will not become so

because it is not possible within the regime of liberal peace – and calls instead for a paradigm shift. This would need peacebuilding to be contextualised and adapted to the particular cases, considerably enhance inclusion of concerned communities (indeed start there), contain a higher degree of local level engagement, promote local agency, encourage the existence of diverse voices, and support the establishment of formal and informal institutions for local governance. This line of critique is often underlined by the observation that the liberal peace approach (and its subsequent statebuilding approach) is *de facto* a violent process,<sup>3</sup> and by the argument that liberal peace prevents the mainstay of the population (whose peace is to be secured) from engaging in the consolidation of peace by excessively centralised and shallow approaches.

Moreover, through the involvement of the international community, unequal power relations, and its heavy reliance on pre-determined liberal principles often alien to the countries in question, peacebuilding and statebuilding carry, it is argued, a range of problems resembling imperialism, (neo-)colonialism, and global power politics pursued by vested interests and for the wrong reasons (cf. Richmond 2005; Duffield 2001; 2007; Jabri 2013; MacGinty and Sangheera 2013; Richmond & MacGinty 2013; cf. Collier 2003). Let us follow a narrative of the growth of this critique.

Within peace research, the concept of peacebuilding was introduced by Johan Galtung in 1975, and in a more contemporary form brought up by John Paul Lederach in 1997. The latter argued that peacebuilding should be a bottom-up process and that all layers of society needed to be included. His writings were the beginning of, and have remained a platform for, the critique of the liberal form of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. The subsequent (and more aggressive) critique was pioneered by a wide circle of critical scholars such as Ottaway (2002), Duffield (2001; 2007), and Chandler (2013), who argued that inserting liberal democracy as a way of reconstructing a broken society cannot work and that interventions are not made for the right reasons, and constitute in essence a mechanism for exerting

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<sup>3</sup> Statebuilding processes ending in liberal democracy have typically been preceded by decades or even centuries of struggles over territory, political systems, language, culture and populations. Historians (for instance various works of Eric Hobsbawm) typically see the growth of liberal states in Western Europe as a result of its devastating wars. Globally, it is hard to find examples of state formation and statebuilding that have not included violent struggles.

power in the global arena. This was followed by a more comprehensive investigation of the ‘liberal peace’ by Richmond in a major work (2005), developing a systematic critique of the liberal peace and its lack of agency approach. Its clinical and automatic application irrespective of context was, it was argued, a recipe for failure, exclusion, and unsustainability of interventions (cf. Richmond & Mitchell 2016). Although the critics grew increasingly sophisticated, the substance of the critique is similar from Lederach onwards: interventions have to be grounded, states have to be built from below, people on all levels have to be involved in the process, and verticality has to be a core quality (McCandless, Abitol & Donais 2015). The liberal interventions aiming at quick democratisation are wishful thinking, putting reconstructing states at risk, rather than saving them. Time after time, this produces facades of stability and only a virtual peace, it is claimed (cf. Franks & Richmond 2007).

The perspective of the local turn stands in stark contrast to the previously dominant view that the state is rebuilt by crafting elite compromises and through the establishment of central key functions and institutions which will then roll out peace (Manning 2003). Instead, much of the literature on the local turn advocates verticality and integrative approaches (Hellmuller 2013). Accordingly, local governance needs to be an integrated part of the peacebuilding efforts, connecting the dots between intervention, statebuilding, and democratisation. However, this is often absent (cf. Donais & McCandless 2016). Quite to the contrary, national elites often hijack the peace process and the new order without considering or consulting the local – the less powerful and less articulate – citizens, and thus prevent the building of local institutions able to connect to broad layers of the population. As a result, the emerging peace is far too often ‘virtual’ (Franks & Richmond 2007) and unsustainable.

Moreover, the agency in local peacebuilding debate is linked to two other key fields of importance (as mentioned above, these are also central issues among the donor/policy community), namely *gendered* peacebuilding and the role of *civil society* in peacebuilding. As the old elite formed under the civil war often also dominates the peace process, frequently in patriarchal social systems, women are typically disfavoured and excluded from what is supposed to be a more democratic and rights-based order under a regime of liberal peace. In reality, this often reinforces existing archaic gender perspectives, further masculinised through war and violence (cf. Kim & Öjendal

2011; cf. Lorentzen 2016). Similarly, *civil society* is often excluded (or given a menial role) in regular peace processes/peacebuilding due to the standard state-centric approach and the monopoly of power held by state institutions and the established elites. This excludes a key avenue to dialogue and engagement with citizens (cf. Paffenholz 2009) (See Table 1).

Massive criticism of peacebuilding prevails. The ‘local turn’ became the entry point for the critique from both the left and the right. It stressed in particular necessities such as the building of local institutions (Brinkerhoff 2005; 2009), the inclusion of civil society (Paffenholz 2005), the spreading of peace into the ‘everyday’ (Richmond 2010), and daring to involve the ‘messy’ and the ‘wild’ (MacGinty 2013). However, what ‘the local’ actually entails has been a contested issue which is not yet resolved (Mac Ginty 2015; Paffenholz 2015; Donais 2015). We will discuss this further below.

### 3.2. The weakest link of the local turn – what is the local?

The local turn of peacebuilding, emphasised by several parties, often lacks a discussion of what the local *is*, and when there is one, it is apparent that a common understanding is far from achieved. Conceptualisations of the local range from using the local as a fixed, small-scale spatial unit to a fluid network of actors and actions (Lambek, 2011). The continuum of definitions allows for interpretations of the local turn of peacebuilding that emphasise, *inter alia*, local governments, local communities or local agency. Emphasising that it is a continuum, we will present the two extreme positions and then tease out our own understanding of the term to be used in this report.

At one end of the continuum, the local is defined as a small-scale unit. It may be a geographical space, level of government, or institution. The spatial local has fixed boundaries and as such is placed next to other locals and opposed to the global. In opposition to the global and universal the local has also been interpreted as the particular. However, as a response to globalisation the particularities of the small-scale locals have been downplayed in favour of increased universalisation and emphasis on equality between locals and modernity for all (Lambek, 2011). In the peacebuilding agenda, a

tendency to view the local as a small-scale unit can be seen in the increasing emphasis on local democracy and local governments. Because it is a unit of smaller scale than the national, local democratic arenas are seen as more accessible, attentive and encouraging greater participation of the people, all essential features of a legitimate state and, as such, “specific responsibilities of local governments, or even their very creation, can be a fundamental part of the peace agreement” (Jackson, 2013: 354; Donais, 2012: 53; Sisk & Risley, 2005: 37). In this view, strengthening the local is largely a tool for achieving the predefined (and desirable in the liberal peace) outcomes of legitimacy and peace. Local governments are often allowed limited agency and institutional design and formal requirements are emphasised instead, with ‘given’ answers to local questions (Sisk 2009; Donais, 2012: 145).

At the other end of the continuum of what the local represents, we find notions of a local that has no physical boundaries. Instead of the local being spatial or institutional units void of agency, the local is defined by agency and the acts of actors. The local is de-territorialised and created through human activity which inhabits a place and is consequently an abstract space (Lambek 2011, p. 206; Mac Ginty 2015). This conceptualisation of the local acknowledges mobility, across spaces and across ideas. The local can be constituted as much by the activities of people inhabiting a space as by activities of mutual understanding across space, enabling, for example, the notion of a diaspora as local. The local is created by doing and being; by people inhabiting a space, leaving and returning. Thus the local is formed through actions that engage people and which are understood to be internal even if they appear to be global (Lambek 2011, p. 216). In its understanding of the local as acts of agency, peace only emerges out of those acts in a process of doing. Predefined tools of peacebuilding have little correspondence with how peacebuilding emerges locally, which explains why peace cannot be built from the outside. The aim of engineering peace in a local space versus the impossibility of engineering peace from outside is the basic dividing line between these two interpretations of local peacebuilding.

Within this continuum of ideas of the local, there are, of course, plenty of interpretations used by both researchers and policy actors. They vary in terms of the perceived degree of peacebuilding capacity found within local communities, emphasising the need to build capacity locally (United Nations 2012a; World Bank 2011) or build on knowledge already there (DFID 2010; DDD 2014), as well as in terms

of the need for designed institutions (United Nations 2012; World Bank 2011; Accord 2014a; Accord 2014b) or governance without a government (Menkhaus 2006; International Alert 2007).

The notion of the local used in this report lies in-between the two extremes. It acknowledges the importance of geography in the sense that small-scale units promote an opportunity to be close to the population and adapt peacebuilding to local needs. However, it also acknowledges that those local units have agency as it is in the practices of local units that the particularity of the local is found, meaning that there is a need to build on local knowledge and capacity in order for something to be local. In addition, our definition recognises that no matter how rural or remote the local is, it still relates to the global, and chooses to adapt, co-opt, or resist other practices it encounters.

For the sake of clarity in this report, we draw on the definition of the local as put forward by Arandel, Brinkerhoff and Bell (2015): that local actors are of a great variety. These include local state institutions, non-state actors such as civil society organisations (Fuest 2010), local communities (Schou 2014) or the local people (Kent and Barnett 2012). What this definition leaves out is a local existing in isolation, as both local and global connections continuously shape what happens in the local space and how local actors behave. Quite to the contrary – and very much in line with Lederach's (1997) argument on a multi-level approach – verticality and horizontal interconnectedness are at the core of our view of the local. Consequently, a small-scale local which is not institutionally and/or organically connected to the bigger picture is not significant for peacebuilding purposes.

### 3.3. The critique of the critique – Challenges facing the operationalisation of the local turn

As empirical research on local peacebuilding piles up, its success story is also being contested (Leonardsson and Rudd, 2015: 828). Despite the need for the inclusion of traditional and bottom-up approaches in the peacebuilding agenda, the view of it as a *panacea* has been severely criticised and many view it instead as something to be considered with caution (Paris 2010). While critical scholars may claim that “the ‘failure of liberal peacebuilding’ is actually a sign of the ‘success’ of local claims for autonomy” (Richmond and Mitchell 2012: 2), practitioners and certain scholars are appalled by the frivolous nature

of the critique, welcoming peacebuilding failures which may in reality have devastating consequences (Paris 2010). Stemming from the difficulties of operationalising the local turn, there is a counter-critique, asking very pertinent questions on the viability of implementing a local turn. Confronting the post-conflict and peacebuilding reality, this critique centres around the local turn being unrealistic, impossible to implement or at worst bringing with it counterproductive results. Below, we have gathered some of the most crucial critiques of the critique to emerge in the literature. These are unavoidable issues if/when reflecting on the pursuit of a local approach.

*The local turning into 'localism'* is probably the most common critique pertaining to the fear of the local being romanticised and at worst illiberal practices being legitimised in the name of the local context. When international practices are perceived as imposed democratic failures (Chandler, 1999), traditional practices are perceived as the rosy alternative already filled with local legitimacy. However, supporting traditional practices may serve instead to reinforce existing power-holders and maintain constraining social norms, sometimes with brutal means. During the Cold War such an approach was used by both the US and the Soviet Union in supporting local authorities, for example in Afghanistan and Somalia, with dreadful results that still persist (Paris 2010: 358f.). A more recent example is the *gacaca* reconciliation process in Rwanda. However successful, the question remains whether it has resolved rather than suppressed ethnic cleavages (Donais, 2012: 6).

*The risk of the local being atomised and disconnected* is another theme that has been highlighted in the literature. Local initiatives for peace may be able to create a haven, or so-called local zones of peace – or ‘islands of civility’ to use Mary Kaldor’s term (1999) – for the local population but, despite their necessity, their impact on the larger conflict is often limited. What is missing is a *vertical* connection to the larger scale, and *horizontal* interconnectedness between various parts of the societies in question, without which the local is atomised and fragmented, and thus insignificant for the larger processes. In addition, when local truces are achieved they are often fragile as they too are subject to changes in the larger conflict (Mitchell and Hancock 2012). As such, despite the pressing need for local truces, they have often been short due to changes in the power dynamics between the main actors in the greater conflict (Turkmani et al. 2014).

*There is an obvious risk of ‘the local’ becoming subordinated to top-down dynamics or established systems and routines.* The logic may run like this: the crude reality of conflicts necessitates a distinct response. Getting conflicting players to the negotiating table is often a national, and international, issue excluding actors other than militarised parties. At this stage already, the local is marginalised in a self-fulfilling prophecy. To the extent that peacebuilding is localised, it is a national issue instead – as has previously been emphasised through the Paris Declaration and to some extent the New Deal – which can be dealt with later (or not), with the result that sub-national/local input is commonly neglected. In addition, as international actors are concerned about the success and measurable results of peacebuilding, as well as their consequent exit, engaging with local actors or giving ownership over the peace process to local actors may be too time-consuming and unpredictable (hence ‘risky’ for delivering measurable results). Adding to the concerns, identifying which local actors to ‘give’ ownership to is not so straightforward as local dynamics are multifaceted and messy and can be defined as more diverse than uniform (Donais 2012: 8f).

Despite the common criticism that peacebuilding imposes liberal ideals on societies emerging from conflict, there is little success amongst the advocates of the radical critique for a viable alternative (Paris 2010). When the local is approached it cannot be involved as an owner of the peacebuilding process. It must be involved to take responsibility for predefined peacebuilding measures. Such responsibility is in turn dependent on the existence of local capacity as well as available resources to support it (Hughes and Pupavac, 2005).

Finally, the lack of consensus on the benefit or harm of local peacebuilding approaches is also mirrored in the question of *when local peacebuilding should be introduced*. There seems to be substantial support for addressing the local level in peace agreements themselves (Mitchell and Hancock 2012: 176) but, as will be seen in the case studies below, later local governance reforms owned by the local community may also have considerable effects on peacebuilding locally as well as beyond the local arena (Öjendal 2015). Such ambiguity in results often leaves practitioners in the dark about how to implement a more localised peace.

## 4. Implementing the local turn – a thematic overview and practical experience

The ‘local turn’ is supposedly the inversion of the liberal peace: ideally, it is grounded and present where liberal peace is shallow and distanced; it is human-oriented and inclusive where liberal peace is technocratic and excluding; and it is real and tangible where liberal peace becomes invisible and virtual (or incomprehensible) for ordinary citizens. However, in the real world the pursuit of a local turn is anything but simple and straightforward. Before we turn to the richer and more analytical case studies below, we will give some broad thematic examples displaying how a local turn has been implemented. The themes are derived from the critique of the critique reviewed above in order to illuminate some difficulties involved in operationalising a local turn. This is done in order to briefly review the pros and cons on a general level before zooming in on the specific case studies.

### 4.1. The risk of the local as localism.

A fundamental criticism of the local approach is that it is a regressive force in peacebuilding initiatives. Consequently, local actors are seen as an obstacle to peacebuilding efforts, for example due to conflicts between ethnic groups, corruption and greed of local elites, or the inability of local populations to come together. This is a variation of the ‘greed or grievance’ debate in development studies (cf. Collier 2003). For instance, local elites in South Sudan have commonly been portrayed along these lines, and have often been seen by academics and policymakers as anathematic to the peacebuilding process. As a result, they have been characterised as driven by greed and the short-term benefits of international aid and the perpetuation of conflict, rather than the long-term gains of a peaceful, stable, society (Ylönen 2013: 18; Menkhaus 2010: 188; Schomerus & Allen 2010).

Despite this chiefly negative view of the local in South Sudan, a number of locally-oriented peacebuilding initiatives have been set up. For instance, in 2013 the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF) initiated a three-year project in support of the livelihoods of young people in the troubled Jonglei region. This programme

provided funding to improve employment opportunities, as well as safe water access for both human and livestock consumption in the area. Emblematically, however, the project had to be discontinued after only a few months, as large-scale violence re-surfaced in the region by the end of 2013. Since August 2015, the project has been up and running again, and the UNPBF hopes to finalise it without further interruption by conflict (UNPBF 2015).

Similar conceptions of the local can be observed, for example, in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, where parallel political structures, criminal networks, ethnically driven violence, terrorism, and widespread corruption are seen as undermining the peacebuilding process (Proksik 2013; Donais 2003). These are often organised along ethnic lines and can thus be seen as a continuation of the war by other means. Therefore, in this case, encouraging the local risks jeopardising sustainable peace. Even so, exceptions abound. For instance, Sweden's official backing for civil society groups stands out. Perhaps most notably, Sida's long-term support for organisations such as *Kvinna till Kvinna* and the *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* represents a positive initiative that has helped strengthen peace at local level (Sida: c. 2015).

There are further examples where the 'local' does not equal 'localism'. Nepalese traditional conflict resolution mechanisms – known variably as *mukhiya*, *anjuman* or *pancha bhaladmi* – have received ample funding from international agencies over the last decade. These local institutions are common features across most of the country, and have traditionally relied on a combination of dialogue facilitation, mediation, and arbitration in solving community disputes. They have exhibited a remarkably high success rate, with approximately 70% of disputes being settled in a satisfactory manner (Suurmond & Sharma 2013:83). When it comes to their impact, John Paul Lederach – the initial protagonist of the local turn of peacebuilding – states that they "change both individuals and historic patterns of exclusion. In essence, [these] mediation programs create a new kind of space for cooperation within the local community" (Lederach & Thapa 2012: 10).

It should be noted, of course, that part of the reason why these mechanisms appear to work so well is the fact that they have firm historical roots in Nepal, and that therefore they are generally perceived as legitimate and just (Suurmond & Sharma 2013). Although successful, these also carry features of 'localism'. For

example, Coyle and Dalrymple (2011) note that these mechanisms often operate in a remote space outside of state control, and sometimes handle conflicts that would ideally be dealt with by the formal criminal justice system. Consequently, there are concerns that they undermine the formal criminal justice system, and ultimately the legitimacy of the Nepalese state.

Obviously, not all local actors are geared towards the building of a sustainable peace. This fact goes against the grain of some of the more naïve literature within the local turn, which displays an irksome romanticisation of local actors, who are commonly portrayed as inherently peaceful (Donais 2009:12-13). Thus, one should take care not to *a priori* generalise local actors as inherently peace-loving (or, for that matter, as inherently antagonistic).

#### 4.2. The risk of the local being disconnected

Another trend that we can identify in the practice of localised peacebuilding is that there are many worthwhile, progressive, initiatives that unfortunately have very little impact on the bigger picture of peacebuilding. One example is the Haitian Peacebuilding Partnership (PBP), a three-year peacebuilding programme funded by the European Union in Haiti. The PBP focused on the poor and conflict-ridden neighbourhoods of St. Martin and Martissant in Port au Prince, where it sought to “contribute to a reduction in violence/..../and increased local capacity, as well as codify good practice for transforming protracted social conflict” (Devas 2012: 2). This was envisioned as a community-oriented approach to peacebuilding, with peace education and dialogue facilitation as the main devices for fostering harmonious relationships in the communities. While mostly local-to-local in character, the project also sought to develop connections with influential middle-level actors, such as local elites, religious leaders and NGO representatives (ibid.).

Overall, the PBP was quite successful in containing violence in the two neighbourhoods of Port au Prince. Most commentators agree that the initiative contributed to a marked decrease in hostile attitudes and behaviours, and that it has inspired a palpable culture of peace in the previously very insecure neighbourhoods (see for example: Devas 2012, and Donais and Knorr 2013). On the other hand, critical voices have been raised which question what the larger benefits of the project

really are, i.e. its impact beyond the confines of St. Martin and Martissant is minimal (cf. the example of Nepal above). These critics stress that the valuable connections with middle-level actors could have been emphasised more, and earlier on, in the project phase, which could arguably have enabled the peacebuilding efforts to “put the ‘up’ in bottom-up peacebuilding”, as stated by Donais and Knorr (2013:58). Thus, without a strong connection to middle and top-level political dynamics, local peacebuilding initiatives may have a rather limited impact.

Likewise, civil society peacebuilding initiatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina have been lauded for their ability to promote conflict transformation, at least in the local communities in which they operate (Fischer 2010: 304). When it comes to changing the broader conflict dynamics of the stalled peace process in Bosnia, however, civil society organisations are generally considered relatively impotent (*ibid.*). As in Haiti and the PBP, this means that in order for these civil society peacebuilding efforts to have a deeper impact, their work must be complemented by, and connected to, middle and top-level actors and institutions in the Bosnian political context.

The disconnectedness of local peacebuilding projects can stem from a variety of sources – such as an acute lack of funding, a disjuncture between local projects and national politics, or a lack of strategic coordination between different grassroots projects – which have to be analysed and overcome individually in order to bring forth the strong potential of localised peace initiatives, and for them to influence the overall peacebuilding environment in a positive way. Otherwise, these valuable local developments will remain stuck in relative isolation and be unable to contribute to synergetic effects on the national and/or regional plane.

#### 4.3. The risk of the local being subordinated to top-down dynamics, established systems, or contextual difficulties

The local level is frequently treated as less important than the national level in peacebuilding practice. In effect, this results in local peacebuilding initiatives rarely being pursued with the same weight as projects that aim at the state level. Consequently, this represents a case of ingrained state-centrism; an issue which has been at the centre of much of the recent critique against liberal peacebuilding, as

formulated by, for example, Richmond (2009), Mac Ginty (2010), Chandler (2013), and Öjendal et al. (2015). Still, the critique remains relevant as the local level generally remains under-prioritised and under-funded.

For instance, in Nepal, the first wave of peacebuilding efforts initiated by the UN in the wake of the conclusion of the civil war in 2006 were overwhelmingly of a top-down and state-centric nature. These initiatives sought to enhance and consolidate the power of the state, by assisting for example in the disarmament of Maoist combatants, the creation of a new national Constitution, and the monitoring of the national elections (UN News Center 2012, UNDP Annual Report 2013). These projects all treated the state as the most important platform for building peace in Nepal. This is puzzling as the root causes of the civil war in Nepal have invariably been identified as everyday issues, such as poverty and income inequality (Von Einseidel et al. 2011), thus articulating the importance of the local level in the conflict.

State-centric peacebuilding approaches can be seen in many other post-conflict societies, including Bosnia-Herzegovina, where international intervention has chiefly focused on strengthening rule-of-law institutions such as the police and the military, and influencing national policies through the establishment of a semi-protectorate (Cameron 2006). This is not a critique of these interventions as such, but it is a typical example of how central state reconstruction often ends up as the centrepiece of peacebuilding activities, including those of a more hands-on character.

At times, institutions and agents of the liberal peace have not fully considered a local approach, or the administrative functions/ideas/principles do not ‘allow’ the local to live up to its potential. “Yes, that is a good idea, but there is no way that can be squeezed into the administrative regulation that we work under” is a reply from a project officer that illuminates this impediment. These obstructive regulations would include ‘results-based management’, limited time to report results (commonly demanded in a three-year cycle), the otherwise well-meaning principles of ‘do no harm’, or that there is no manpower/counterpart to administer a local programme of significance. Another obstacle may be that substantial funding is not available. The above reasons for avoiding a local approach are generic within the development community and would, with extremely few

exceptions, be applicable to all cases discussed in this report to a greater or lesser degree.

Another aspect of ‘difficulties’ is when donor and organisation would like to work on a local level, but where the level of violence is too high for systematic and localised development work, as in Syria for the past six years. This is, however, paradoxical: during the last decade the lines between war and peace have become increasingly blurred, featuring peacebuilding amidst civil war, and unprecedented levels of civil-military cooperation. An argument against any meaningful local development work due to the difficulty of the context has been made in cases like Colombia, South Sudan, Afghanistan and Somalia, amongst others, yet this is exactly what is needed.

To shift the financing, staff and administrative mechanisms of international development actors may be difficult in the short term, and to challenge brutal and uncontrollable violence may not be advisable, yet more local peacebuilding (assuming it is sound and vertically interconnected) seems to increase the chances of ingraining peace in broader layers of society, to work as a barrier against resumed insurgency, and to reduce the incentives for mobilisation of violent resistance (to be further elaborated in the conclusions).

#### 4.4. The challenge of phasing the local

In many international peace interventions over the last two decades, there has been a common assumption that peacebuilding should start with the state level, and then gradually make its way towards the local level. Supposedly, the logic behind this is that the state embodies the institution which can secure negative peace, whereas the local level is understood as the arena where a more positive, or emancipatory, peace can be created in due time (Richmond 2009: 566-569). Following this reasoning, it comes as no surprise that most peacebuilders tend to commence with the state level, and then successively – at least in rhetoric – move towards the local level (a move which critics would say is often aborted or severely delayed in practice). There might, however, be good reason to challenge this kind of thinking, and embrace a peacebuilding model which embraces synchronicity rather than phasing. This is echoed by Oliver Richmond who suggests the following standard for progressive peacebuilding: “rather than mainly

stopping overt violence from threatening regional stability, it would concurrently establish an understanding of a local and everyday peace” (Richmond 2009: 576). Yet, this remains a very uncommon modus operandi in contemporary peace operations.

Interestingly, the UN in Nepal anticipated the need to engage with local realities in the peacebuilding process, albeit only at a later stage: “Nepal will also require investment for medium and long-term initiatives to address the underlying causes of the conflict” (UN News Centre). This indicates that the UN conceives of peacebuilding in Nepal as a sequential and hierarchical process, where addressing the local root causes of the conflict is considered relevant only in the medium to long-term. (As we saw above, there are also exceptions to this pattern). While this may still happen at some point, the current political situation in Nepal is volatile and laden with violence, and political analysts have warned of the risk of civil war recidivism (ICG 2015; Blunck 2014). Consequently, one cannot help but wonder whether the situation would have been different, had peacebuilding actors resolutely addressed local issues and grievances at an earlier stage.

Similarly, the UN-led intervention in Haiti was based on an explicit notion of phasing, where the first phase focused exclusively on building and strengthening state institutions. Consequently, international attention was initially focused on the reconstruction of the state’s criminal justice, economic, and social infrastructure, while locally attuned development activities were left until a later stage. In fact, commentators have argued that the lack of “harmonized strategies /.../ especially in the transition from security to developmental activities” (Hagman 2002: 4) was partly to blame for the relatively unsuccessful intervention in Haiti.

While the above should be read as a call for a more immediate engagement with the local level of peacebuilding, there are also precarious elements involved in this. First, in order to provide meaningful assistance to local communities in a (post-) conflict environment, the specific contexts have to be properly understood. Consequently, in-depth needs and grievances assessments should be carried out prior to involvement. These are often time-consuming undertakings, especially if one operates under the assumption that no ‘blueprint’ solution can be devised (cf. Richmond 2009: 579). Obviously, then, it might be practically impossible to engage in meaningful local level peacebuilding from day one. However, this does

not negate the urgency of getting such endeavours under way as soon as possible, and designing the overall approach to ensure the earliest possible local engagement. Moreover, as this entails a much more ambitious and work-intensive model of peacebuilding than the current standard approach, it could be questioned whether funding agencies and peacebuilding practitioners are willing to go the extra mile. Finally, in some instances, the initial focus on overall security and state institutions can serve as a necessary precondition for being able to carry out local level peacebuilding at all. As the case of South Sudan aptly illustrates, state-wide security concerns might otherwise derail locally oriented peacebuilding projects.

## 5. Four case studies of the local turn

Below, the four case studies of Cambodia, Rwanda, Somaliland and Liberia will be reviewed using an analytical framework for empirically assessing the local turn. The *justifications for the choice of cases* are as follows:

1. The first pair is *Cambodia* and *Rwanda*, where there have been two decades of peacebuilding efforts and where the countries have reached a certain level of stability and success in development. The second pair consists of *Liberia* and *Somaliland*, which are cases where peacebuilding is still ongoing and where the outcome is less clear.
2. Although with different hallmarks, they have all experienced extreme forms of violence and have had a very strong need for reconstruction and to move towards sustainable development. The cases all display tangible efforts at pursuing activities which we collect under the broad heading of a 'local turn' of peacebuilding (although it is not necessarily branded so).
3. Under various degrees of national ownership, they have all been subject to international aid and/or interventions in order to craft reconstruction, peacebuilding and sustainable peace. They are all reasonably well documented and appear frequently in research papers and policy documents.
4. The cases are not identical (it is essential to the 'local turn' that no cases are), but they display some similar features. Approaching the cases in pairs also offers opportunities for comparison: Cambodia and Rwanda are long-term and concluded; Somaliland and Liberia are still in the making. Cambodia and Liberia have experienced deep and enforced international interventions, Rwanda and Somaliland have experienced significant intervention, but the degree of the interventions has been restricted. Liberia and Somaliland have modest populations, whereas Rwanda and Cambodia have slightly larger populations.

The *analytical framework* of the study consists of five questions that have been answered in each case. Of these five, three questions concern different phases of peacebuilding. As we aim to follow the full cycle of peacebuilding, the following phases are central to an understanding of the local turn. *Firstly*, historically, few national-level

peace agreements pay attention to the local aspects of peace and peacebuilding. As such the report asks how the local has been included in the design and approach of the peace agreement. *Secondly*, as peace is to be consolidated and built, how has peace been ‘localised’ and gradually made into an everyday reality? Or has it been subdued under habit and administrative routines preferring a centralised approach? *Thirdly*, how can efforts to localise peace be understood as contributing to the growth of the overall sustainability of peace? How are verticality and interconnectedness catered for?

In addition, two questions seen as central policy priorities are included in the analytical framework in order to illuminate in depth their relevance to practical policy development. These two are central to Swedish international development cooperation, as well as to many international actors. In addition, they are central to the pursuance of sustainable peace and in the debate about the local turn itself: *Firstly*, the exclusion of women is endemic in societies permeated by violence and is highly eschewed in countries in processes of post-conflict reconstruction. This is a threat to the sustainability of peace in a deeper sense. Has this been addressed through the local turn? *Secondly*, the wider spreading of peace into broader segments of the population than the initial agreement can accomplish has been identified as a missing core quality of peacebuilding. As a result, the role of civil society turns into a critical dimension of any sustainable peacebuilding process and merits the question; have civil society aspects of peacebuilding been promoted? The three phases and the two policy priorities are compared, including the four cases, the result of which is presented in Table 1, Chapter 6.

### 5.1. Cambodia: Partial success and a local turn by default

Following genocide and a prolonged civil war, Cambodia was the target for one of the first major UN peacebuilding interventions in the post-cold war era, stretching from March 1992 to September 1993, with pre-determined start and stop dates. It was huge and spectacular, taking place in a novel international peacebuilding environment, feeling its way forward through ‘trial and error’ and ‘learning as we go’. With more than 26,000 peacekeepers, in excess of 2 billion dollars in budget, and based on a 23-country peace agreement, the UN *de*

*facto* took over the governing of the country. It constituted a massive intervention and had a huge impact in both the short term and the long term (United Nations 1991; Öjendal 1996; Lizee 2000). It is beyond the scope of this report to assess the full and multi-dimensional effects of the intervention, but it is clear that, for better or worse, it came to constitute the platform for post-war Cambodia and the subsequent efforts to build sustainable peace (cf. Doyle 1995; Öjendal & Ou 2015). However, it is also clear that it was a deep but very short intervention of a ‘big-bang’ nature, creating anything but simple and definitive outcomes. The critique of the sustainability of its long-term effects was, and still is, major (Chandler 1998; Heder 2005; Öjendal & Ou 2013).

### *The local in the peace process*

The nature of the intervention and its ensuing attempts at peacebuilding were extremely centralised, attempting to control central ministries, aiming primarily for national elections, and being pre-occupied with mediating among contending national elites to maintain a fragile peace. It carried no provision for local reconciliation, everyday dynamics, participatory politics, or localised peace. If these elements were considered at all, they were expected to emerge in due time as a result of the electoral democracy established at national level. Although the UN operation had staff positioned at province and district level, they were tasked with supporting the process of the national elections, and they had clear orders *not* to interact with local politics or even development. At the outset, the intervention was not successful: part of the country remained at war, elections were messy, the dominant party did not leave power in spite of losing the elections; in the post-election period the civil war raged on in the outskirts of the territory; and four years later the political opposition was chased into exile in a violent showdown, seemingly bringing down the hope of a sustainable peace. In mid-1997, the country was not at peace in any definition of the word (John 1998; Chandler 1998; Lizee 2000).

However, subsequently, the externally fed civil war died down from exhaustion since the peace agreement managed to detach all foreign patrons of the warring parties, and the war was strangled from declining military support from abroad and the closing of the borders, shutting down the illegal border trade hitherto feeding war efforts. National politics settled in a semi-authoritarian fashion but with

limited stability, reconciliation, and sustainability. The international community provided major resources for various aspects of peace, development and democratisation – of which a fair share was framed as peacebuilding – but with limited success. During this period, many voices were heard advocating reaching ‘out’ and ‘down’, increasing participation and supporting broad-based agency. However, these feeble attempts were generally non-existent or failing as development modalities and the funding structure were simply not in place (and neither were sufficient interest/engagement, some would say) and no major efforts were made to change that. Minor exceptions were seen in this period. A cooperation between Sida (Sweden), DFID (UK), and UNDP attempted a multidimensional rural development/local governance programme, which would subsequently prove to be vital (see further below). However, up to 1998/99 – up to six years after the first elections – ‘peace’ remained virtual, shallow and fragile. ‘Peacebuilding’ generally remained a negotiation issue among contending national elites, rarely involving ordinary people, and leaving individuals’ engagement to chance; neither institution-building nor agency was encouraged during this phase, and was even less successful.

### *Progress of local institutions and agency*

By the early 2000s, there was a certain political stability, but still little progress in the deepening of peace beyond a ‘negative peace’. In 2007, in spite of other societal progress, Franks & Richmond rightfully called the peace in Cambodia ‘virtual’, and indeed there was a near-consensus among analysts that much of the democratic content developing as a result of the UN intervention was thin (‘facades and charades’). Instead a ‘hybrid’ governance system thrived, where aspects of liberal democracy were mixed with a broader and deeper neo-patrimonial system, allowing vested interests with roots in the civil war to dominate the political system (Pak 2007). This was possible since it was almost solely centred around national elections as the single source of power, being relatively simple to manipulate with subtle methods. It was also highly personalised, creating in/exclusion and rival sub-groups along a pre-existing patronage system. Instead of deepening peace, it served to reinforce cleavages and block societal reconciliation (Öjendal & Ou 2015).

The result was emerging neo-patrimonialism in a hybridised governance system. Various national elites were fighting over political power, lucrative economic concessions, and other forms of rent (of which there are many in a post-conflict environment void of solid institutions and rule of law, but with many needs and aspirations to be fulfilled) at the expense of broad reconciliation and national development. However, and most importantly for this report, in contrast to the elite vying for influence at national level, there were also more substantial and fundamental processes slowly growing from below. Although these were rarely either framed as peacebuilding or primarily intended to serve that purpose, the local dynamics resembled a ‘local turn of peacebuilding’; it was not directly a result of peacebuilding activities, but emerged nevertheless because of the space that was opened up by liberal policies. This consisted, for instance, of a reform of the local authorities and a gradual awakening of the localised civil society, often in terms of Community Based Organisations (Öjendal & Kim 2006); the former donor/government driven, the latter NGO/Civil Society Organisation (CSO) driven. Democratic content, reconciliation, and agency were also growing in rural areas previously seen as docile, lacking political awareness, ambitions, and agency (Öjendal & Kim 2013). Although not intended at first, the international community and national government gradually turned towards supporting local institutions and local democracy while NGOs/CSOs pursued more agency-focused and empowerment-focused localisation of peace, echoing the common division of roles as discussed in the policy section of this report.

As a centrepiece of the move towards the local, in 1996 a major participatory rural development programme was initiated and funded by UNDP, Sida, DFID, and to some extent the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and the Cambodian government. It had roots in the repatriation of refugees in relation to the first election and was an integrated part of the peace process/agreement. It heralded a bottom-up approach and high ambitions for participation and inclusive democratic practices. After initial success as an ‘area programme’, it gradually scaled up and moved into a country-wide programme named ‘Seila’ (‘foundation in stone’). This programme gradually made its mark and became well-known as piloting a bold attempt at a shift in values, government style, and the overall nature of the state-citizen dialogue (Öjendal & Kim 2006). It strongly pursued, *inter alia*, ideas of local elections, in-depth participation, citizen-state

dialogue, and broad-based inclusion. It became a vehicle for localising the new political regime and for establishing a progressive relationship between the state and its citizens (*ibid.*).

While it was an uphill battle to establish these traits in rural Cambodia, it soon grew unexpectedly successful. By 2001 it had been transformed into a full-blown democratic decentralisation process, codified in law and holding its first local elections in 2002. These local elections have since been held every fifth year and been comparatively clean and void of violence, producing multi-party commune councils that have worked in a spirit of cooperation and good faith (e.g. COMFREL 2007). They have also become an important part of national politics as the outcome of local elections determines who/which party controls the rural areas and the vast number of votes gathered there. It has also been regarded as the best available 'barometer' of the political sentiments in the country before every national election. The next one – the fourth, to be held in 2017 – is widely considered exceptionally important due to the increasingly contested and volatile nature of national politics. Overall, there is a progressive localisation of peace and both institution-building – local elections, commune councils, participatory policies – and agency-oriented processes – gendered development, CBO-empowerment, participatory practices – are pursued in this process.

### *State of local institutions and agency*

The local-level political spaces are important in their own right, but are of limited political value if not interconnected horizontally and vertically. In this case they have emerged distinctly different from the harsh and violent political manoeuvring at national level with its occasional outbreak of political violence. Although neither universal across the country nor consistent over time, right from the outset the political climate at the local level, inside the communes, was less plagued by historical and ideological animosity. Instead, from the late 1990s, a deep pragmatism marked the political work, and although local politicians have operated under different party labels with agendas linked to those of their peers, they have often primarily sided with the local people against outside repression and threats (although they have not necessarily been able to protect the local). Many of the local leaders have developed a sense of duty to take care of their local society and provide the leadership it needs, repressing grievances and

fostering inclusion, hence slowly spreading reconciliation (Öjendal & Kim 2006). Overall, reconciliation and the political climate have been considerably improved to the extent that it has been tangibly measurable in repeated investigations (COMFREL 2007; Öjendal & Kim 2013).

Moreover, in the wake of more permissive and inclusive local politics and the rising capacity of local politicians to manage differences, there are signs of agency, local initiatives, and an everyday dialogue between the local state and its citizens (and occasionally citizen-to-citizen). In the process, substantial regime legitimisation is also tangible (Öjendal 2013). In a broad interview series pursued 2014/15, commune leaders argued typically that the communes were ‘pockets of peace’ which national-level political fighting could and would not reach. In the sample group, the commune leaders reached a consensus that serious political conflicts in the communes would stem neither from localised old animosity nor from tensions in the multi-party councils. Hence, in the minds of many commune leaders, there was a distinctly decreased risk of re-igniting old conflicts stemming from the local level. Put differently, if violence were to flare again nationally, it would be among national elites, and it remained unlikely that it would spread to the local level and even less likely that it would be fed from below (Öjendal, forthcoming).

### *Gendered aspects of peacebuilding*

The decentralisation reform has opened up for gender-sensitive politics at the local level and a more numerically distinct presence of female representatives in the councils, thus including voices often unheard in national peacebuilding. In other words, the commune councils have provided a forum where women are ‘allowed’ to engage politically and access at least a small budget for local development work. There have also been instances of exceptional female leadership (including broad recognition of its specific virtues, Kim & Öjendal 2013). These have often been highlighted by male colleagues, but although sincerely meant, their statements have also often consisted of gender-stereotyped arguments on women taking care of the ‘soft sectors’ and seen as having difficulties with security and police matters. And while there is both recognition and appreciation of emerging female leadership, the influence of the arguments made by

women often does not carry the same weight as those expressed by males in the same councils (ibid.).

Finally, there is also a tangible shift in gendered social norms at work: “At large, the political reform of decentralisation has opened political space and started to re-arrange social norms that effectively used to prevent women from entering politics” (Kim & Öjendal 2013: 26). The degree deeper and longer process of this fundamental (but so far largely hypothetical) shift in norms has only started and its effect on gendering peace so as to include everyday concerns of women remains to be seen. Although the local political arena presents a shorter and more forgiving path for women into politics, representation in political fora remains low for women, which is commonly justified by statements to the effect that women are suitable for dealing with ‘women’s and children’s issues’. Moreover, women’s opinions are commonly reported to carry less weight than men’s in local councils, so although progress is detectable, political gender equality is not in place.

### *Civil society aspects of peacebuilding*

Turning to the role of *civil society*, a similar pattern emerges. For cultural and historical reasons, civil society was never a vibrant sphere in Cambodia (Thion 1993). But as in many poor post-conflict countries, organised civil society saw a niche as implementer, agents, advocates, etc. and managed to match the international community’s ‘need’ to find a ‘local’ partner/implementer.

Civil society in Cambodia is also a product of the country’s unique political and social history. Most professional NGOs in Cambodia today owe their existence more to the influence and financial support of international donors than to the gradual opening up of democratic space, the natural scaling up of grassroots organizations, the emergence of a culture of volunteerism/social activism or the organized charity of an established middle class. World Bank 2009: 1-2

As a result, organised civil society initially resembled more a flurry of local consultancy companies, taking on tasks for the donor community for a price. Very few of them had a consistent ideology, working methods or a constituency. Therefore, these NGOs/CSOs rarely represented citizens or broad population categories, and had very little popular and/or ‘everyday’ character to them. The non-civil nature of this ‘civil society’ was bred and fed through the donor mode

of operation and came to create a money-driven ‘civil society’ far distanced from regular people and their problems.

However, by the early 2000s, popular organisational ability and the political climate (not least locally) had improved and civil society gradually became more ‘real’. The process was initially centralised and foreign-dominated, but over time CSOs proliferated far beyond comprising international NGOs based in Phnom Penh (Öjendal 2013). As a result, the messages and the work of voluntary organisations started to reach broader population groups and to be run locally to a greater extent. Community Based Organisations (CBOs) mushroomed and although they were often organisationally weak, they made a difference in local society. They were involved in small, everyday measures permitting the protection of forests and fisheries, supporting local schools, or participating in local reforms of the health sector, and engaging in many other locally important issue areas. Even more importantly, they constituted a ‘school’ for participation, agency, and engagement, heralding debates about political and/or sensitive issues. Consequently, democratisation found a foundation from which it could develop further. By the 2010s, the civil society sector has grown into a vibrant and important sphere of activity. The World Bank estimated that CBOs numbered 8,000, that there are some 2,000 NGOs, maybe 400 labour unions, and many ‘other’ organisations (World Bank 2009).

There is little doubt that civil society now serves as a vehicle for everyday issues for a vast number of Cambodians, often involving issues of rights, democratisation, good governance, human rights, and peace. In 2016, however, the state’s repression of the rights-based NGOs increased and the government seems intent on pushing back their influence.

## *Conclusion*

To conclude, the above is a dual process of successful and failing peacebuilding that escapes linearity (cf. Chandler 2013) and simple notions of the liberal peace (*and* of ‘a local turn’). There was no intentional ‘local turn’ emanating from the peace agreement nor from the subsequent intervention. Also the immediate peacebuilding efforts ignored, undervalued, or were unable to pursue localised and everyday peace. This remained a truth for almost ten years after the UN intervention. By itself, the liberal peace neither involved the local level

nor derived any benefit from it, and it failed to act as a *deus ex machina* to spread peace in society (cf. Lizee 2000; cf. Öjendal & Ou 2013).

In spite of this neglect, the local emerged and developed over time into a significant contribution to the grounding of peace, partly moving it away from its previously virtual nature. It is telling though that local elections evolved by default through a returnee integration programme, and that funding mechanisms were only made possible through a range of coincidences and atypical arrangements. In spite of neglect, a process of peacebuilding from below developed with quite solid results, seemingly raising the sustainability of peace considerably. Notably, this was not triggered by liberal peace, although, paradoxically, it could not have happened without the framework under which localised peace was allowed to grow (whereas the same liberal peace also fostered other processes reducing the level and sustainability of peace, such as land-grabbing, exclusion, and poverty-driven migration).

Despite being *ad hoc*, in Cambodia a few things emerge as having supported a localisation of peace – and therefore the sustainability of the overall peace, we believe – and are therefore something that could be learnt from:

- Although not part of the peace agreement, local institutions and local elections were by default (and much later) constructed in subsequent peacebuilding efforts. Giving local leaders a platform to prioritise local concerns, making them a part of reconstruction, establishing a real citizen-state dialogue, and establishing the embryo of democracy and perceptions of rights have been central features of the consolidation of peace in Cambodia (and of democracy).
- Eventually, a growing civil society has emerged and served to both give non-political voices space and enable the inclusion of issues important to peoples' everyday lives on the agenda of 'peacebuilding' (broadly defined); these include fishery rights, forest management, and schools development. These are essential dimensions of turning post-conflict reconstruction into sustainable peace.
- Women are far more active now in low politics, rights advocacy and development work. Although rarely to the

same extent as men, or with fair working conditions, the progress of women's inclusion in vital parts of local society is clearly visible, and clearly connected to the building of local state institutions and the spread of peace to the everyday.

There is definitely a tangible and progressive 'local turn' of the peacebuilding trajectory in Cambodia. However, it was not implemented by design, and it is not as sustainable as one could hope for. The sustainability of peace in the face of sharpening national politics is also questionable, as some already see the strengthening of local society as having stalled. One could also question the strength of the verticality of the local interventions and suspect that the 'pockets of peace' may unfortunately remain pockets. We will return below to 'what kind of local turn' will/would make a difference after all four case studies have been pursued.

## 5.2. Rwanda: A country-owned local turn evolving on its own terms

In 1994 Rwanda witnessed one of the most brutal acts of genocide humankind has ever seen. In only 100 days close to a million people mostly, but not exclusively, from the Tutsi ethnic group were killed. However, this was also a continuation of cyclically returning outbreaks of violence dating far back in history, intensifying with colonialism and subsequent independence. Much has been written about the roots of this outbreak of violence, ranging from struggle and competition for scarce natural resources (Percival & Homer-Dixon, 1995) to being a result of identity politics aggravated during the colonial era and reinforced by recent violence (Mamdami 2002), to the historical dilemma of the gap between state and citizens and the overall absence of democratic governance able to withstand assaults on normality (Ndahiriwe 2014; Mugume 2015). Either way, it left the country institutionally devastated, ripe with violence, deeply divided, and in dire need of in-depth reconciliation, foresighted governance, community healing, and sustainable peacebuilding.

In the immediate aftermath of the genocide, there was still a civil war-like situation in the country where perpetrators had either fled the country or gone into hiding in rural areas. There was neither a UN intervention nor a peace agreement to guide the evolution of

peacebuilding; rather the strategy for creating peace was in the hands of the victor (i.e. the Rwandan Patriotic Front, or RPF). The army of the regime responsible for the genocide was to some extent intact, operating in and from eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), still posing a threat to the new RPF regime. Renewed warfare flared up several times in the mid/late 1990s, confusing and/or delaying attempts at reconstruction. Nevertheless, reconstruction and reconciliation needed to go ahead and although kept at arm's length by the Rwandan government, international actors engaged increasingly. The processes of peacebuilding were pursued in many different ways (although not necessarily named as such), many of which are beyond the scope of this report. In the following, we will focus on two localised processes aiming at reconciliation and stabilisation, namely the *gacaca* courts and the *decentralisation reform*, and how and to what extent they succeeded in reconstituting peace.

### *The local in the peace process*

Interestingly, in the *Arusha Agreement* from 1993 (pre-genocide), paving the way for a 'would-be' peace process in Rwanda, decentralisation was mentioned and carried political weight. However, the outbreak of the genocide, the civil war, the change of regime, and the harsh aftermath of the events in 1994 sidelined both the Arusha Agreement and the decentralisation reform. Nevertheless, towards the late 1990s the decentralisation reform was re-awakened and the Arusha Agreement was then referred to for its justification and implementation (Ndahiriwe 2014). As a result, the aborted peace agreement came back to life. The decentralisation process came to be seen as one of the key reforms to legitimise the new regime, deepen democracy, and as a way of dealing with small-scale conflicts at local level, including remaining (and re-created) problems and conflicts originating in the genocide and the civil war(s) (cf. Ndiharwe 2014; Sentama 2009). By 2000 the reform was launched, and it was gradually deepened in the decade to come.

Before this, a process of transitional justice urgently needed to be initiated, including widespread reconciliation. This was no small task given the circumstances. As in many other cases of reconciliation after deep-seated violence, a balance needed to be struck between punishing major crimes and not punishing an entire ethnic group, triggering

revanchism, excluding large parts of the population, or re-igniting the civil war.

The interesting and much observed ‘solution’ to this dilemma in Rwanda was the revival of the traditional, local *gacaca* courts (*gacaca* literally means ‘sit down and discuss an issue’). These were nationwide, decentralised, ‘grassroots’ courts drawing on traditional local methods of conflict resolution, yet inserting at least a minimal amount of legal professional competence and systematically related to national processes of reconstruction and reconciliation. The lion’s share of the convictions was for petty and/or property-related crimes, resulting in petty punishments often of a community service type, whereas major offences were sent upwards in the system, into the formal judicial system.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, community healing and local-level reconciliation were stated as particular purposes of the systems of *gacaca*, providing a cornerstone for conflict transformation and subsequent peacebuilding.

### *Progress of local institutions and agency*

The Rwandan post-1994 (semi-)peace was the result of neither international intervention nor a multilateral peace agreement. Moreover, the regime shift in 1994 and the immediate post-conflict phase were neither controlled nor designed by internationals and their peacebuilding preferences. To the contrary, the RPF government in Rwanda has consistently kept a high degree of ownership of its post-war policies, often in an authoritarian or semi-authoritarian manner with high degrees of central control. Consequently, Rwanda presents an opportunity to study how a ‘non-international’ and ‘non-liberal peace’ local turn unfolds and works under these premises.

Having said that, both the decentralisation and the *gacaca* process soon became internationally funded and to a large extent pursued with external resources and through the growing foreign aid that evolved in the early 2000s. In fact, both these processes soon emerged as ‘darlings’ of the international community, containing peacebuilding,

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<sup>4</sup> Where to draw the line here was a major source of discontent and criticism: rape cases were first referred to formal courts but later sent back to the *gacaca*, creating, critics say, awkward or even devastating results in terms of personal integrity and traumatisation in the local context (cf. HRW 2011). Later these were processed with a higher degree of integrity, but were still, reportedly, prone to revictimisation of the victims.

democratic visions and local engagement: attractive features to most of the international aid-cooperation actors. Overall, the *gacaca* courts were supported with some 20 million Euros during the first decade of the 2000s by a range of European funders (including the EU). Although Belgium also funded external monitoring, and Switzerland discontinued its support due to identified deficiencies, most donors chose not to influence the design and operations of the trials. The donors' hands-off approach was a source of frustration for *gacaca* critics, who expected the funders to use their power to improve the human rights standards of the trials.

While *gacaca* was essentially a necessary compromise created to unburden the formal court system, it was soon turned into a virtue, pursuing localised reconciliation and practising everyday peace; regular citizens played the key role in these processes as well as in the verdicts:

“ ...the new form of *gacaca*, like its customary predecessor, would be run by local judges and would encourage participation of local community members. One of the government’s aims in encouraging community participation was to make ordinary Rwandans the main actors in the process of dispensing justice and fostering reconciliation.” (HRW 2011:2)

This ambition is close to the ‘everyday’ peace as it was presented above. *Gacaca* covered every part of the country and virtually every citizen was involved in (or at least aware of) its purpose, execution and result. But as was said above, the local is ‘messy and wild’, and its peacebuilding processes do not necessarily come out well across the board. There may even be new lower-order conflicts produced in the process.

The *policy of decentralisation* had similar purposes although of a less spectacular and more permanent nature. It was commonly seen that in the genocide, ordinary people had been misled or coerced into their actions (or inactions), and that this was made possible through an over-centralised power structure embodied in the state and the historical/cultural habit of ‘blind obedience’ of ordinary people to higher level commands (Ndahiriwe 2014:121-2). Although designed and implemented from above, decentralisation was thought to be a counterweight to this, by reinforcing reconciliation, enhancing state-society dialogue, and continuing the pursuance of everyday conflict resolution. More formally, among the objectives stated in the key

policy guidelines from 2000 were: “citizens’ participation”; “accountability and transparency”; and “to consolidate national unity...in the spirit of reconciliation” (taken from Ndahiriwe 2014:127). Cell level units were, among other things, tasked to “Resolve conflicts, and fight injustice” and “Promote peace and security” (MoLG 2007). The decentralisation reform has been increasingly well-funded from external sources, and recently it has also received funding internally through a fixed share of the national budget and from own revenues (taxes and fees).

### *State of local institutions and agency*

As for *gacaca*, the government of Rwanda claims that the localisation of the genocide trials was a success and President Kagame stated that it was “an African solution to African problems”. Also seen from the outside, the process is impressive to many given the daunting problems that Rwanda faced in the mid/late 1990s. In seven years, it accomplished what would have taken the formal justice system centuries to conclude. The first trials of the *gacaca* process were held in 2005 and the process was concluded in 2012. During this period, some 12,000 courts delivered in excess of 1.2 million sentences. Moreover, although reconciliation is hard to measure, given the tensions, fear, and distrust that were present in mid/late 1990s, the *gacaca* managed fairly well to strike a balance between the need to stop impunity and to propel the local communities beyond genocide. Finally, the *gacacas* were staffed by locals, for locals, involving large parts of the local population, and although not all were satisfied with the process, most were heard and their issues discussed. To a certain extent, it brought peace and reconciliation to the grasp of the majority of the people. Although far from perfect, it is hard to envisage a centralised alternative having performed as comprehensively.

On a more critical note, the running of local trials with limited central monitoring, by laypersons, and with minor preparations and education, resulted in a number of problematic issues. *Firstly*, from a human rights perspective, the fact that the accused did not have a right to a lawyer and no formal right of appeal (so perhaps did not get a fair trial) was possibly its major weakness. Therefore, *gacaca* has been criticised for having handed out sentences randomly and without guaranteed fairness (HRW 2011). *Secondly*, *gacaca* officials (rapidly educated local elders/laypersons elevated to committee members)

were commonly accused of corruption and nepotism. This is not surprising given that they live and work in the local context with minimal compensation for their work, being embedded in the local society they were tasked to judge. *Thirdly*, fear and suspicion remained common in the local communities after the trials, since people sometimes perceived that they were unjustly treated and/or threatened (cf. Brouneus 2008). The courts issued verdicts, but not always so much conflict resolution. Overall, the trials were only feasible with a decentralised approach, and any comprehensive reconciliation process had to include a decentralised component, given the enormity of the task. Consequently, there was little choice but to make the trials local.

Overall, rights-oriented analysts tend to be critical of the entire *gacaca* process, judging the compromises, with fair trial standards, to be too crude (cf. HRW 2011), whereas peacebuilding-oriented analysts tend to see *gacaca* as a mechanism that took on a huge task and managed to deliver an acceptable degree of justice, reconciliation and a basis for future peacebuilding. Ultimately, many Rwandans seem to be reasonably pleased with the process as "...many genocide survivors and persons accused of involvement in the genocide view *gacaca* as having had some success, notably in bringing to light new information about the genocide and in accelerating efforts to achieve justice" (HRW 2011:94). This is a major achievement, given the depth of the misery during and after the genocide.

The decentralisation process could be seen as a continuation of sorts of the *gacaca* process in that it aimed to produce and localise an inclusive state, pursue local development efforts, and solve remaining (and newly arisen) conflicts. In 2007, the evolution of the decentralisation policy was assessed (and subsequently revised) by consultants working for the government (MoLG 2007). It was reiterated that it was (and should be) designed to counter historical experience of "highly centralized authority and lack of citizen participation in leadership and development." But it was also stressed that the reform was thin and lacking the impact it could and should have. With time, the reform has, however, become better funded from internal and external sources. It has also turned into more of a governance and administrative reform, and less one of reconciliation and community reparation, and its democratic content has been questioned.

## *Gendered aspects of peacebuilding*

The genocide of 1994 was brutal, with all forms of ultra-violence, including horrendous sexual violence, often directed against women. The wars before and after the genocide were to a large extent pursued by males exercising various forms of violence. Unlike for instance Liberia, the crafting of peace in Rwanda had neither an explicit gendered dimension, nor was it driven by women. No woman partook in the peace negotiations in the 1990s or the 2000s, and the leading political figures in contemporary Rwanda are still mostly men. Historical and social institutions – especially in rural areas – remain patriarchal, lacking the fundamentals for gender equality.

In contrast, contemporary Rwanda is one of few countries in the world with a majority of women in parliament, and it has launched sophisticated state policies that have been developed and codified to enhance gender equality (MoLG 2007). And although women are under-represented in decision-making positions, the Rwandan Government's 2020 target is for women to comprise 40% of all official decision-making positions. This has become a source of pride, a symbol of change, and a label for a post-conflict Rwanda (United Nations Rwanda n.d.).

By sheer necessity, and encouraged by the policies mentioned above, the role of women in post-conflict Rwanda may have been structurally altered by the genocidal experience and its aftermath.

...most of them have also been compelled to give up their traditional roles, assigned by the patriarchal construction of hierarchies, and started replacing their fathers, brothers, and husbands to ensure the survival of both their family and the community. Since then, they have been key actors in the reconciliation process, especially at the community level. (Gil 2013)

Moreover, the decentralisation reform and the restoration of local authorities in post-conflict Rwanda have been accompanied by enhanced female participation and representation. "Following efforts to mainstream gender and reconciliation, there has also been a visible improvement in the participation of women and civil society in local governance and socioeconomic activities through the decentralization process." (MoLG 2007:10). Female representation is reaching over 40% in the local councils and the mainstreaming of gender equality in these institutions is a centrally articulated policy goal, and appears to be rather successful.

The overall pattern is similar to the *gacaca* process, in which women were required to take part in many different capacities.

Women participated in the general assemblies, they appeared as witnesses, defendants or claimants, but they were also judges, presidents and secretaries of *gacaca* courts. This has led several observers to argue that the *gacaca* process contributed to empowering many women in Rwandan society. (Lorentzen 2016:1)

Overall, it is commonly stated that Rwandan women play a considerably more active part in social and political life (and are encouraged to do so) than they did prior to the genocide, and that the post-genocide peacebuilding attempts have played a significant part in achieving this. Judging from the above, both decentralisation and the *gacaca* process seem to have been instrumental in these progressive developments.

### *Civil society aspects of peacebuilding*

The number and activities of civil society organisations in Rwanda have grown considerably in the aftermath of the genocide of 1994. At first, the influx of international NGOs drove the development of NGOs but slowly local civil society organisations have grown in significance. Although growing in size, civil society in Rwanda mostly consists of relatively young NGOs struggling with the challenges of gathering human and financial resources. Many NGOs address social needs and service delivery while fewer NGOs are involved in advocacy work and citizen participation (Transparency International Rwanda 2015; Costantini et al. 2013). Interestingly, in an otherwise politically controlled environment, the sub-sector of NGOs oriented towards peace work seems to be allowed space to work rather freely, with a few high-profile NGOs such as ffa IRDP, Never Again Rwanda and Aegis Trust in the lead.

In general, civil society organisations in Rwanda score high on incorporating values of democracy, tolerance, non-violence and gender equality in their work. On the other hand, there is limited citizen participation and diversity of citizens involved, limiting their impact (Transparency International Rwanda 2015). However, there are also examples of high engagement and concrete results. For instance, the women's movements have had a strong influence on the *gacaca* in terms of lobbying for support for widows, orphans, and other

vulnerable groups after the genocide, as well as being active in protecting vulnerable women in trials involving rape and sexual assault, which has also been recognised by the government (CCOAIB 2011).

The Rwandan government has a clear view of what role civil society actors should have, emphasising their role of service delivery and consultation. Consequently, civil society organisations are implementors and participants rather than drivers of development and reconciliation in Rwanda (Gready, 2010). Thus, while civil society organisations are growing in importance in terms of social issues they have little opportunity to hold the government accountable or impact on policy (Transparency International Rwanda 2015; Costantini et al. 2013). One explanation for the lack of civil society impact is the absence of institutionalised and transparent relationships between society and the state. Instead, when impact is achieved it relies on personal relationships and opportunities that have appeared ad hoc (Gready 2010).

With the Rwandan government showing increasing tendencies towards authoritarianism, government control of civil society is growing, and they are facing harsher working conditions (Gready 2010). In addition to having to provide extensive documentation to achieve legal status, civil society organisations are tightly controlled by the ministry of local government that oversees the registration and operations of CSOs. All CSO projects are also required to go through the local government apparatus – officially to avoid duplication of projects, yet the influence of the ruling party (RPF) is notably present (Warigi 2014). Crackdowns on NGOs have occurred, including infiltration and repression.

## *Conclusions*

The case of Rwanda contains paradoxical features and the take-home lessons are thus convoluted. On the one hand, it is an excellent example of the local turn, the government owning the process of reconciliation and bravely pursuing major localised interventions in order to consolidate peace. These were crafted in order to reconcile local communities, solve remaining conflicts, and break historical patterns of violence through inclusive and development-oriented governance (cf. Ndahiriwe 2014). On the other hand, it is pursued by the victor in a war, through an authoritarian regime under strict

centralist directives, and with mixed results. Although civil war, local violence, and ethnic hatred have been kept at bay overall, (ethnic) tensions have not vanished. The government of Rwanda is increasingly being criticised for relying on authoritarian methods.

Rwanda may be seen as a difficult case to learn from. The violence preceding the peacebuilding phase was extreme, the 'peace' was mainly the victor's regime, and the methods pursued were/are authoritarian, departing from global norms of democracy and human rights. Having said that, there are nevertheless lessons to learn from Rwanda as regards the local turn of peacebuilding.

- Overall, the Rwandan government pursued several major localised peacebuilding interventions, of which at least one (*gacaca*) was of a magnitude that could save or break the nation. As could be expected, it was difficult to pursue a national reconciliation process, yet put an end to impunity through local makeshift courts, staffed by lay persons. In spite of this, a localised approach was the only one that had a realistic chance of success. The lesson is to dare, to monitor, and to adjust.
- Centrally initiated local peacebuilding has its limits. Rwanda overcame a critical phase, but has not solved its core problems. At some point the local inclusion needs to be made more tangible, democracy deepened, genuine popular participation achieved, and local empowerment triggered. Hollow, or manipulative measures centrally restricting local dynamics will not transform the core conflict lines in the local communities.
- While realised through harsh dynamics and endless tragedies, women in Rwanda have been vastly elevated in social and political life, including representation and overall status and rights. Peacebuilding can, and should, be gendered although in some places there is real distance to cover before anything near gender equality is reached.
- Organised civil society has grown dramatically and progressively since 1994, and contributed a fair share to Rwanda's peacebuilding. However, it is still (or possibly increasingly) severely restricted, curtailing its ability to

deepen reconciliation and peacebuilding in the country. This is a weakness for further peacebuilding.

### 5.3. Somaliland: Building peace from below?

The modern history of Somaliland began in 1960 when the ‘nation-of-intent’<sup>5</sup> gained independence from British colonial rule. However, independence lasted only for five days, after which Somaliland was incorporated into the recently independent Somalia which had been ruled as an Italian colony since the 1880s (Gassem 2002:4). The borders of the new state – the Republic of Somalia – were based on former colonial demarcation lines, originally drawn up by the United Kingdom and Italy. Consequently, the merger was void of local legitimacy, which became immediately obvious in the north-western Somaliland region, where a large majority of the population voted against a shared constitutional framework with Somalia in 1961 (Walls 2009). Moreover, a military coup was attempted in Somaliland in late 1961. While unsuccessful, the *coup d'état* drew motivation from the recent merger of Somaliland and Somalia, and sought to establish an independent government in Somaliland. Therefore, from the very inception of the unified Republic of Somalia, the region of Somaliland nurtured ambitions for independence (Shinn 2002).

The political tensions between Mogadishu (Somalia) and Hargeisa (Somaliland) gradually grew over the subsequent decades, and in 1981 the Somali National Movement (SNM) was formed: a Somaliland-based guerrilla group with the aim of ousting the Mogadishu government led by Major General Mohammed Siad Barre, which was conceived as illegitimate and repressive (Omaar 2010). In 1988 the animosities between *SNM* and the Barre regime had deteriorated into a full-blown civil war, which lasted until 1991 when the fall of Barre and his government came at the hands of the *SNM*. At this point, the central government in Mogadishu completely collapsed, with chaos ensuing in the epitomic ‘failed state’ of Somalia (Heleta 2014). In the same year, the Central Committee of the *SNM* autonomously declared independence from Somalia and named Abdirahman Ahmed Ali the interim president of the newborn Republic of Somaliland (Shinn 2002). Ahmed Ali governed the region until 1993, when his

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Samsul, A.B. "Nations of Intent in Malaysia" (1996).

interim period came to an end. Following his descent from power, inter-clan rivalries re-surfaced, and in the midst of this power vacuum several civil wars afflicted Somaliland until 1997 (Conciliation Resources 1997).

### *The local in the peace process*

Since 1997, Somaliland has been a relatively peaceful society, with increasingly consolidated state institutions, strong democratic credentials, burgeoning economic development, et cetera (Heleta 2014; Omaar 2010). This is a quite remarkable achievement, given the recent turbulent history, and the rather chaotic state of Somaliland's neighbouring regions/countries Somalia and Puntland. Despite its relative stability, Somaliland remains internationally liminal and entirely lacks recognition by other states in the international system, who generally continue to treat Somaliland as a renegade region of Somalia.

The lack of international recognition of Somaliland has meant that, by necessity, the state has had to persevere without barely any international involvement in the form of financial aid, dispute settlement, bilateral trade, and the like. One salient example of this international isolation is Somaliland's exclusion from the global policy agreement The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. In 2013 a high-profile conference was organised in London under the New Deal policy framework to discuss Somalia's severe problems related to statebuilding and peacebuilding. However, representatives from Somaliland did not attend the conference for, as explained by Somaliland's President Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud Silanyo: "we cannot take part in a conference that does not recognise Somaliland's unique status or move forward our long fight for international recognition" (The Guardian 2013).

The unique nature of international intervention (and the lack of it) makes it difficult to identify an intentional local turn in Somaliland. However, a local turn of sorts was nevertheless forced by circumstances. Let us look closer at how this process turned out.

## *Progress of local institutions and agency*

In order to come to terms with the civil wars of the 1990s a series of clan-based peace conferences were held in Somaliland between 1992 and 1997. In stark contrast to the neighbouring Somalia, where peace initiatives were overwhelmingly initiated and led by international institutions such as the United Nations, the peace conferences in Somaliland were all the products of local initiatives, and were organised and overseen by local actors (Terlinden & Ibrahim 2010; Heleta 2014). Moreover, these conferences were scripted upon local traditions and practices of conflict resolution, including adherence to social structures such as the *guurti* system – a council of clan elders, often religious and male<sup>6</sup>, who have customarily been consulted in times of violent conflict and political turmoil.

The *guurti* elders took on a leading role in the 38 peace conferences that were held between 1992 and 1997 and successfully sought to contain inter-clan violence by means of traditional dispute settlement and the gradual establishment of consensus amongst clan representatives (Farah & Lewis 1997). The practice of establishing consensus was a rather time-consuming enterprise, but importantly, it had the effect of conferring a coveted legitimacy on the peace process. Furthermore, the fact that the *guurti* system was already broadly accepted within Somaliland increased the legitimacy of the conferences and their outcome even further (Terlinden & Ibrahim 2010).

Another noteworthy aspect of the peace conferences in Somaliland is the fact that they were funded entirely by local actors, i.e. not by international institutions as was the case in neighbouring Somalia (Heleta 2014). This arguably increased the sense of responsibility for the outcome amongst local stakeholders in Somaliland and allowed for full local ownership of the peace process. The local funding structure has repeatedly been highlighted as a contributing factor to the relative success story of the Somaliland peace conferences (Heleta 2014; Phillips 2016). One might, however, wish to nuance this conclusion slightly. While it may indeed be problematic if international

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<sup>6</sup> Traditionally, Somaliland women are not appointed as clan elders, and indeed the first House of Elders was an all-male body. Since then, however, a small number of women have inherited seats from their husbands, but they still represent a minuscule minority.

institutions provide *conditional* funding for peace projects in fragile states it may, however, be less problematic if said aid is given *unconditionally* in support of locally initiated peace initiatives. Thus, in the case of Somaliland it is conceivable that *unconditional* international aid could have played a positive role in supporting the peace process once the structure of the peace conferences had already been established by local actors. This distinction is important as otherwise the implications of the local turn may be understood as encouraging a lethargic *laissez faire* approach by the international community, rather than active support for local peace initiatives.

Moreover, it should be duly noted that the actors who participated in the actual negotiations at the peace conferences, as well as the financial arrangements that supported them, came from *elite* levels of Somaliland society. This means that the vast majority of the Somaliland population was effectively excluded from having any real influence on these events (Phillips 2016). Thus, it is clear that the local turn does not necessarily ensure that grassroots/subaltern perspectives will have a significant impact on the peace process.

### *5.3.3. State of local institutions and agency*

Does it inevitably make a difference if marginalised groups are included in the peace process? In the case of Somaliland, it seems that most researchers answer this question in the negative. As eloquently put by Sarah G. Phillips (2016:644):

Despite the broad initial inclusiveness of Somaliland's peace process, the implicit bargain between Somaliland's political and economic elites was highly exclusive and laid the foundations for the concentration of economic opportunity in the hands of a very few. This has placed an apparent glass ceiling on the prospects for more inclusive development.

The above is not meant to negate the emancipatory potential of the local turn, but merely to highlight that broad local inclusiveness in peace processes does not necessarily translate into a just and egalitarian post-conflict society. While the local approach to peacebuilding in Somaliland appears to have put a welcome halt to the destructive civil wars, the inclusive process has seemingly been incapable, or unwilling, to alter traditional power structures such as patriarchy. In fact, it might even be argued that the Somaliland peace process has entrenched patriarchy even further, given its strong

emphasis on the *guurti*, whose power stems directly from patriarchal lineages.

Moving beyond the peace conferences of 1992 – 1997, one finds that Somaliland has been more internationally oriented in its post-conflict phase. There have been several noteworthy international peacebuilding initiatives explicitly aimed at building peace from below via an engagement with the local. A couple of these projects will be discussed below.

The United Nations (UN) has been increasingly involved in peacebuilding projects in Somaliland since 2001 through its various agencies. The UN joint programme on Local Governance and Decentralized Service Delivery (JPLG) is an apt example of such an initiative, seeking to support civil servants in seven different regions of Somaliland with the ultimate aim of increasing their capacity for service delivery to the most vulnerable groups amongst their constituents. This project has a distinctly ‘local’ focus, working in collaboration with local authorities rather than the national government, and involving community members in needs assessment to ensure the local relevance of the project. Examples of concrete measures being taken along these lines include provision of infrastructure and shelter to over 400 families in Hargeisa who belong to a group of refugees recently resettled in the city, and are thus in pressing need of these basic necessities. Furthermore, the programme has logically supported the building of a central market in Hargeisa, which has facilitated the everyday subsistence of street vendors and vegetable sellers in the city (UNDP n.d.:a).

Another example of a locally aligned peacebuilding project by an international institution in Somaliland is UNDP’s recent endeavour to strengthen the technical capacity of the administrative staff employed by the House of Elders, i.e. the *guurti*. To this end, 21 Secretariat staff, including eight women, have received intensive training in procedural and administrative skills in order to make their work more efficient. The project has been funded by a conglomerate of donors from the European Union, including the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Norway (UNDP n.d.). While this project could be seen as merely another good-governance initiative taken from the liberal peace ‘toolbox’, it is remarkable in the sense that Western donors supported a distinctly local and in some ways problematic, as discussed above, feature of Somaliland society, namely the *guurti* system. Consequently, the project represents a divergence from the common

practices of ‘the liberal peace’, and instead embodies the logic of the local turn by providing support for local initiatives that cannot readily be labelled ‘liberal’, but which still appear to bolster the building of peace in Somaliland.

Finally, it should be mentioned that Interpeace – a UN-initiated peacebuilding organisation with strong support from Sida – has been working in the Somali region since 1996. In the case of Somaliland, the organisation has been active since 1999, and has focused primarily on forging social cohesion across different local communities in the polity, and enhancing their ability to connect to and influence governance structures. The work of Interpeace is noteworthy as it firmly embraces a local approach to peacebuilding, by highlighting the inherent diversity of different local contexts and actors, and explicitly recognising the need for lasting peace to be ‘rooted in local realities’ (Interpeace: Mission & Values).

### *Gendered aspects of peacebuilding*

Various commentators have lauded the fact that women and women’s networks were included in the peace conferences, and that the conferences sought to be inclusive of a broad spectra of the Somaliland populace (Phillips 2016). Women and women’s groups also partook extensively in fundraising activities to support the peace conferences financially, and provided food and logistical support (Omaar 2010).

Moreover, women commonly acted as peace activists during periods of inter-clan fighting, as they took on roles as communication facilitators. This intermediary function was enabled by the fact that women generally had access to both their paternal clan and the clan they had married into, and thus occupied a unique social position which was valued in the peace process (Interpeace 2008). In their capacity as peace activists, there are several recorded instances where women joined together to protest at the conferences if the conflicting parties could not reach a peaceful consensus, which ostensibly often had a positive impact on the outcome (Omaar 2010:24-25). Despite these important contributions, the role that women played in the actual negotiations at the peace conferences was quite marginal, as they were usually allowed to participate only as observers (Ridout 2012:147; Farah & Lewis 1997: 366). Furthermore, the *guurti* clan

elders, who played such an essential part in the peace conferences, were all male (Jhazbhay 2009).

Somaliland remains to this day a highly patriarchal society where women lack the same basic opportunities as men (Heleta 2014). This is manifested for example in the fact that the *guurti* system – i.e. a strictly patriarchal power structure – has been institutionalised as the Upper House of Somaliland's parliament, thus deterring women from involvement in this branch of government (Omaar 2010: 34; Menkhaus 2010: 184). Moreover, only one out of 28 Somaliland Government ministers is female, while merely two out of 86 members of parliament are women (UN Women, 2016). Thus, it appears that Somaliland's inclusive peace process has not resulted in any apparent gender advancement in the country, as patriarchal social structures continue to reign supreme in the post-conflict environment.

### *Civil society aspects of peacebuilding*

When it comes to civil society engagement in the post-conflict peacebuilding phase there are indications that a firm civil pacifist movement has evolved in Somaliland, which has helped retain the peace after 1997 despite several violent encounters. For example, in the midst of violent clashes resulting from a series of electoral crises in September 2009, civil society groups rose up in defence of the peace; helped to contain the violence, and engaged actively in the search for solutions to the political deadlock (Omaar 2010:44). This appears to have happened on an *ad hoc* basis, and included people from diverse civic groups such as journalists, intellectuals, and businessmen (ibid.). While this and several similar instances of popular pacifism in post-conflict Somaliland are certainly laudable and hope-inspiring events, several commentators have warned that a deeper peace cannot ultimately rest on civic activism, but must also be consolidated in political institutions and practices in order to be truly sustainable (Menkhaus 2015; Omaar 2010). This, regrettably, seems not yet to have happened in Somaliland. Furthermore, researchers advise us to treat the peace in Somaliland as still fragile and tentative by invoking the logic of the security-development-nexus, arguing that faltering development in rural areas could constitute a potential breeding ground for renewed violent conflict, unless properly addressed (Heleta 2014).

## Conclusion

The examples from Somaliland suggest that while the local turn may be successful in forging the necessary local consensus and legitimacy for the peace process, it will not always do so in accordance with ‘Western’ norms such as gender equality. This leads us to a final, and important, *problematique* of the local turn that the Somaliland case highlights, namely: can international actors support a form of peace that is not fully in line with liberal values, but which is – and perhaps for this very reason – locally legitimate and thus successful in making/building a local variation of peace? These are issues that need to be thoroughly considered if the local turn is to become a guiding principle for international development cooperation.

To sum up, the Somaliland case demonstrates that:

- Local actors have been able to make peace amongst themselves almost entirely without the intervention of international institutions. This has been a long and sometimes difficult process, lasting over seven years and including myriad local actors: albeit most of them male and elite. The process of building peace has relied largely on ‘traditional’ and thus locally legitimate measures, building on the *guurti* system to forge broad consensus amongst rivalling clans. Moreover, the local funding structure of the peace conferences appears to have incentivised participants to reach an acceptable consensus amongst themselves, as well as to foster a sense of local ownership of the peace process. These local factors have all contributed to the relative success of the Somaliland peace process, according to analysts.
- Women did play a part in the peacebuilding process, most notably in the form of communication facilitators between belligerent clans, and as fundraisers for the peace conferences. Women also attended the actual conferences, although their designated role was merely as observers.
- The overall outcome of the peace conferences is a relatively stable contemporary Somaliland, which is a rather remarkable achievement bearing in mind the country’s volatile recent history, and the instability of neighbouring states. The peace that has ensued is,

however, not yet an emancipatory peace, as traditional power structures – such as patriarchy – remain firmly in place, and may even have been strengthened by the peace process’s institutionalisation of traditional authorities and practices.

- While it seems clear that civil society is overall heavily invested in the maintenance of the peace in present-day Somaliland, increasing political tensions in certain regions raise concerns about the sustainability of the current peace. Up until this point, tensions have been effectively contained partly thanks to civil ad hoc mobilisations. However, commentators have stressed that the peace cannot be contingent solely on civic activism in the long term. Furthermore, the lack of development in rural regions of Somaliland represents a potential threat to the peace.
- Over the last two decades, Somaliland has increasingly opened up to international involvement, with international peacebuilding and development projects becoming more and more commonplace. Many of these initiatives focus on distinctly local aspects, seeking to improve everyday living standards for common people, and often involving them in needs assessment in order to ensure the local relevance of the programmes. Moreover, and interestingly, UNDP has recently initiated a project to enhance the capacity and efficiency of the staff of the *guurti* Upper House of Somaliland’s Parliament. This is significant as it signals a divergence from a conventional liberal peace practice – which is supposedly endemic in the UN system – and displays support of local peace initiatives that are not necessarily liberal in character, but which still appear to support the peace.

#### 5.4. Liberia: willing local partners in centralised peacebuilding

Between 1989 and 2003 Liberia experienced a 14-year civil war only interrupted by a short period of fragile peace between 1997 and 1999. The war rose out of a long history of polarisation along ethnic

cleavages over access to resources and state power. It was a brutal war, leaving between 150,000 and 250,000 people dead, displacing nearly half of the population of approximately 3 million, severing social ties, and creating immense insecurity, including a ‘culture of violence’ involving terrifying accounts of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Although many accounts of the conflict focus on changes in presidential power in the capital, the war played out along ethnic lines and was fed by unequal access to resources present in all of Liberia (Fuest, 2010; Bøås & Stig, 2010; Bacon, 2015). After lengthy peace negotiations involving the conflicting parties, political parties and civil society representatives, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in Accra on August 18, 2003. The CPA installed a provisional assembly based on power-sharing between the conflict parties, political parties and civil society actors. The interim government ruled the country until 2005, when Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected president (Utas, 2005; Pajibo, 2012; Zanker, 2014).

During the peace negotiations, civil society put pressure on the conflicting parties and influenced the negotiations in several ways. One contribution was the naming of the leader of the interim government chairman, not president, and ensuring that this position was awarded to a neutral person, and not one of the conflicting parties. When negotiations seemed to have come to a halt, the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), not part of the negotiations themselves, continued protests against the war outside the negotiations in Accra, barricaded the conference centre and threatened to undress unless negotiations moved forward. In hindsight, this was perceived as a breaking point in the negotiations (Zanker, 2014, p. 70f.; Arvidsson, 2010).

### *The local in the peace process*

The peace agreement signed in Accra in August 2003 partly relied on localising politics to achieve peace. The emphasis was on stabilisation, reconstruction and governance reform, devolving political decisions closer to the people through decentralisation and participation (Government of Liberia, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, Movement for Democracy in Liberia, & Political Parties, 18 August 2003). However, the treaty also requested international assistance in implementing the peace agreement through a United Nations peacekeeping mission to be deployed to Liberia under a

Chapter VII mandate to enhance security and promote democracy. In September 2003, resolution 1509 (2003) established the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), at the time one of the biggest UN missions, with over 15,000 troops, including a Swedish presence until 2006 (UN, 2016a; Wilén, 2009; Försvarsmakten, n.d.). Originally authorised to stay in Liberia until 2005, UNMIL is still active in Liberia today, currently downsizing the number of military personnel but upsizing the police force (UN, 2016b).

The local features of the peace agreement were thus mixed. Civil society played an active part in the negotiations and pressured parties from the outside. However, the main features of the peace agreement, and in particular key peacebuilding features such as SSR and DDR, were designed to be nationally owned and, as will be seen, internationally run in practice.

### *Progress of local institutions and agency*

As a mission called for by the Liberian signatories of the CPA, UNMIL officially has a light footprint approach, being invited to take on some responsibilities but not taking over ownership from the government (Bøås & Stig, 2010: 288). One of these responsibilities has been the Security Sector Reform (SSR). However, in the hands of the internationals, and a willing Liberian government, the light footprint approach quickly turned the operation of the SSR into calculable measures focusing on the technicalities of SSR rather than building capacity among local actors (Bøås & Stig, 2010: 292). Seeing it as a technical issue, the US, who had been entrusted with carrying out the reform, outsourced the reform of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) to the private security company DynCorp. DynCorp became it accountable to the US government for quantifiable output in terms of, for example, numbers of soldiers trained, but transparency, accountability and participatory democratic governance over security issues within Liberia was impeded. This heavily restricted the possibilities of national ownership, but this never seemed to bother the Liberian government. According to Bøås and Stig (2010: 289f.), neither the government nor civil society actors present in Monrovia perceived the international involvement as problematic, instead seeing the internationals as the most appropriate actors to carry out reforms. Thus, despite the peace process formally being nationally owned, it quickly became an international affair.

Consequently, peacebuilding in Liberia is largely an operation run by internationals, and, to a large extent, the UN. One way the UN has managed to adapt the peacebuilding mandate to the local context is through the Civil Affairs section, which works in the sub-national arena. With a very limited budget, Civil Affairs Officers (CAOs) focus on facilitating programmes with locally initiated content instead of providing projects. By emphasising their lack of funding and the UN's future withdrawal, CAOs in Liberia managed to localise ownership of locally initiated peace committees addressing local conflicts over land, ethnicity or religion as well as gender-based violence (Schia & Karlsrud, 2013: 242). The local ownership of peace committees that evolved in all 15 counties throughout Liberia suggests that the local population's awareness of limited resources and future UN withdrawal gave sub-national participants incentives to get involved in order to manage local challenges. The limited budget of the Civil Affairs section also encouraged CAOs to be creative in budgeting in order to get as much as possible out of available funds. Although a small part of the overall mission, the Civil Affairs section managed to localise peace by building on locally available resources and capacities, producing tentative positive outcomes and suggesting a need for the UN mission to expand its focus on sub-national arenas and actors (Schia & Karlsrud, 2013: 245).

The local governance reform envisioned in the peace agreement is an essential part of mitigating the centralised power structures in Liberia, considered by some to be one of the reasons behind the war (Zanker 2014). Decentralisation has been encouraged by the aid community and Sweden supports UN initiatives to devolve governance. However, despite President Ellen Johnson's statement in 2013 that "Monrovia is not Liberia" (Zanker 2014: 11), political power in Liberia remains highly centralised (Sida 2016; Kvinna till Kvinna 2015).

### *State of local institutions and agency*

As exemplified above with the UN Civil Affairs Section, the small parts of the UN mission which have focused on the local arena and solving local issues have produced tentative positive results. However, outcomes of involving the locals are not without complexities. Despite good intentions, Fuest (2010) shows how internationals' standardised

ideas of participation have rather hindered peacebuilding goals in Liberia.

Liberia, like many post-conflict countries, has seen an influx of parties hosting workshops on reconciliation such as the CAO, and also international NGOs. In cases where the more prominent local actors are given room to decide on who to include, or which minority groups to invite, some authentic stakeholders may be deemed outsiders and therefore may be left out, even if they are a party to the conflict. Therefore, placing trust in local NGOs as representatives of the local or as being able to better approach the local may not be as straightforward as it may seem. On the other hand, outsiders deciding on a broad inclusion of all may disrupt the purpose of the workshop if some participants perceive the others as unworthy negotiating partners (Fuest, 2010). Civil society inclusion in Liberia, despite being hopeful and ambitious at the start, reveals the complexities of contextualising internationally assumed goals where engagement often ends up in participation on someone else's terms rather than collaboration. In addition, including the population through everyday networks of traditional practices and customary law has largely been ignored, emphasising the centralised approach of many reforms (Loden, 2007: 306; Gizelis, 2011: 538).

### *Gendered aspects of peacebuilding*

During the war Liberia's women shocked the world with images as fearless fighters (Utas, 2005) or raised the hopes of peace by protesting against the war (Arvidsson, 2010). However, the engaged role of women in Liberia is not a new phenomenon. Women have always played an active role as traders, entrepreneurs, farmers, household matriarchs or local leaders (Gizelis, 2011: 525). Nevertheless, the civil war in Liberia paved the way for more gender equality after its end, as opposed to the more common scenario of post-war periods pushing women back into more traditional roles (Gizelis, 2011: 528). Post-war Liberia also took advantage of the momentum for gender-sensitive policies that prevailed in the early 2000's. With UN Resolution 1325 influencing international donors' gender awareness, the UNMIL included a mandate of gender mainstreaming SSR, as well as an all-female police unit. In addition, Liberian circumstances, with WIPNET and the women-led peace movement that had helped stop the war, and the election of Ellen

Johnson Sirleaf in 2005 – the first female African president – emphasised the fact that the situation was ripe for gender-sensitive policies (Bacon, 2015: 384, 386).

Responding to the severe problems of SGBV during and after the war, the reform of the police, as part of SSR, set out to increase the number of female police officers to 20% by 2015 as well as enhancing the police's ability to respond to SGBV (Bacon, 2015: 373). Recognizing that SGBV is a barrier to a peace that takes into consideration women's needs (Moosa, Rahmani, & Webster, 2013: 453, 457), gender mainstreaming Liberia's police reform is a significant step towards including women in peacebuilding and localising peace in the everyday lives of women. The results of the reform have also been assessed as positive. By 2013, 17.4% of LNP police officers were female and reports of SGBV had increased considerably, reflecting growing trust in the Liberian police rather than rising crime (Bacon, 2015: 377ff.). Some of the success of the reform has been attributed to experiential learning inherent in the reform, allowing it to change the project's priorities and methods based on the local context and extensive local ownership by the Liberian government (Bacon, 2015: 384f.).

However, progress was mostly seen in quantifiable measures within the police with fewer results seen in the judicial sector as very few cases of SGBV led to trial. However, the problems of the judicial system are not particular to SGBV cases. They affect all Liberians, not just women. On the other hand, the particular focus on SGBV within the police reform inhibited a more holistic approach towards the judicial system and rule of law in Liberia (Bacon, 2015: 381f., 387). In other peacebuilding work, the UN and other actors have approached women's organisations and women themselves have used their roles and social networks to engage in issues crucial to everyday peace, such as HIV/AIDS, female genital mutilation, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and female participation in elections (Gizelis, 2011:525, 527f.). For example, the Swedish NGO 'Kvinna till Kvinna' ('Woman to Woman') works closely with Liberian women's organisations to promote women's access to education, health and political and economic power. These issues are seen as important for localising what was achieved through the peace agreement into women's everyday lives, because, as noted by WIPNET, "we have built peace, but we cannot eat peace" (Kvinna till Kvinna, 2015b). In such localising attempts, women's movements

work closely with the local community and local leaders. However, the centralisation of power in Liberia continues to be a hindrance to women's influence throughout the country (Kvinna till Kvinna 2015a; 2015b).

Two things stand out in research into women and peacebuilding in Liberia. First, women's engagement tends to involve meeting everyday local needs. These needs may not be the ones commonly addressed in peacebuilding programmes but are nevertheless issues of great importance to the sustainability of peace. Second, women with higher status in society have more impact on peacebuilding due to their ability to mobilise collectively. The status of women varies greatly between regions throughout Liberia, with the result that women are more included in some regions than others. Generally, women also have greater opportunity to make their voices heard in local communities than in formal governance networks in the capital.

The positive outcomes in terms of gender have therefore mostly been through quantifiable measures such as the number of female police officers rather than gender awareness and the political influence of women (Gizelis, 2011; Moosa et al., 2013; Bacon, 2015). As Liberia's peacebuilding has been focused to a great extent on the capital and governmental institutions, the picture is still rather dark. Despite many of Liberia's women actively being involved in post-conflict reconstruction, international actors have consistently failed to involve women in the initial stages of planning for projects, emphasising the role of women as participants but not collaborators in peacebuilding (Gizelis, 2011: 538). Consequently, there has been limited opportunity for women to be a force to be reckoned with in localising peace into the population's everyday needs.

### *Civil society aspects of peacebuilding*

Overall, civil society engagement in peacebuilding in Liberia was hopeful at the start, with civil society involvement already present in the negotiation of the CPA and the subsequent allocation of 18 seats in the transitional national assembly to civil society representatives (Loden, 2007: 302). More than a decade later, civil society in Liberia has, to some extent, been involved in peacebuilding and reconstruction but has largely fallen into the pattern of post-conflict engagement with little ownership of and partnership in the process. In the post-war era, the civil society sector has blossomed, but further

scrutiny reveals that it is a sector largely dependent on donors for funding and survival, also in rural areas (Loden, 2007: 304; Fuest, 2010). The focus on SSR and DDR as a large part of UN peacebuilding reforms, as well as the technocratic approach focusing on measurability and efficiency, have further excluded civil society from the process. Not having military expertise as its main capability, civil society has been reduced to the role of fact checking in international actors' attempt to reconstruct a military force with a clean human rights record. Within the reform, constructing democratic governance over security institutions has been largely ignored, further excluding the voices of local actors in shaping reforms in areas where they have capacity to contribute (Boås & Stig, 2010: 289, 292; Loden, 2007: 305).

However, there are some ways in which international NGOs have worked to further peace outside of SSR and DDR. Interpeace, as an example, worked with the UN on a project to involve 10,000 Liberians in identifying obstacles to peace and furthering multi-stakeholder dialogues. Recognising that peacebuilding needs long-term engagement, Interpeace also supported the transformation of the project into a Liberian organisation, emphasising local ownership of the peacebuilding process (Interpeace 2016).

## *Conclusion*

Efforts to include the local in Liberian peacebuilding can be analysed on two levels. The first is when the local is made equivalent to the national government of Liberia (seen as 'local' from a global policy vantage point). In the case of local ownership as national ownership collaboration between national and international actors, the Liberian case is assessed as progressive, effective, and successful (Wilén & Chapaux, 2011, p. 543). The Liberian government is a willing partner of the UN but, some would argue, UNMIL is, to a large extent, "doing *for* instead of *with*" (Wilén & Chapaux, 2011: 543, emphasis in original). In central government circles the UN is seen as the most appropriate actor to carry out peacebuilding activities, hindering extensive participation and collaboration in peacebuilding goals which would enhance sustainability once the UN withdraws (Wilén & Chapaux, 2011: 543f.).

The other level of inclusion of the local is when localisation means moving outside central institutions and the capital to a sub-national

level. Research focusing on the main peacebuilding reforms notes that Liberian peacebuilding rarely moves outside the capital or beyond centralised institutions, as in the case of SSR, or has remained in theory as in the decentralised governance reform. When it does, it is meagrely resourced and of marginal status and effect (Bøås & Stig, 2010: 293; Bacon, 2015: 386, 388; Fallah, 2014).

More than a decade after the end of war in Liberia the country does display some comforting results.

- Stability prevails, democracy, with two consecutive peaceful elections seems to have taken root and gender equality has taken steps forward. However, bearing in mind that the brutal war in Liberia left the country in a devastating post-conflict state, peace prevails in some aspects, but not in others. With much peacebuilding activities being focused on the capital and central institutions or carried out through international standardised approaches, the rural, sub-national, and everyday local have not been involved in peacebuilding to the same extent, leaving the original root causes of the war, namely ethnic cleavages throughout Liberia, largely unaddressed (Bøås & Stig, 2010; Sharpe, 2012).
- In terms of the local turn of peacebuilding, the Liberian peace process thus seems to present a case of peace being localised in rhetoric but not in practice. In Liberia, an institutional local is discernible, but it rarely transforms into a sub-national level and even less takes people's everyday concerns into account. As national ownership is carried out through the government it does not go below the national level, and geographically rarely outside the capital. Moreover, the weakness of this institutional 'local' (but rather in practice national) can also be seen in that participation is emphasised, but rarely delivers empowerment and agency, and therefore has little meaning and few possibilities of establishing a peace of relevance to the people.
- When reforms do approach the sub-national local these arenas offer a greater chance to contextualise peacebuilding and localise ownership to address local conflicts and acknowledge women's initiatives for

peacebuilding (Schia & Karlsrud, 2013; Gizelis, 2011). As a result, the role of civil society and the work towards gender equality is promising, but has not been developed to its full potential.

## 6. What can the local turn contribute: Summary and conclusion

### 6.1. The local in the peace process

Below we will respond to the five questions for the evolution of the local turn in the four in-depth cases we have assessed. The table presents the analytical framework as described at the beginning of chapter 5 and as answered in each of the individual case studies.

On the one hand, the local has typically not been involved in the stage of designing and signing peace agreements. On the other hand, it has gradually been growing, intentionally addressed or not by the international peacebuilding/development community. For *Somaliland*, due to its unique and problematic international position, it is difficult to identify an intentional international strategy pertaining to the local turn. However, local efforts, by necessity, have somewhat followed a local formula. While this local turn may not be fully compatible with 'Western' liberal ideals, it has grown organically from local actors in a local context, and has managed to make peace in an overall violence-laden setting. Consequently, the peacebuilding process in Somaliland embodies many of the supposed virtues of the local turn, yet, it cannot readily be labelled as a just or emancipatory peace according to liberal standards. Rather, the local turned into a necessity due to international isolation, the country's broken state institutions, and its blatant lack of resources.

In *Cambodia* interest in the local was entirely absent from the peace agreement and in its early phase of implementation. In fact the local was barred due to the risk of becoming impartial to the various parties in the agreement, and the international community willingly agreed in order to please the national elites. The sentence is not clear]. This reflected the major powers' approach to crafting peace in Cambodia, the role Cambodia had in the cold war and the degree of politicisation it was subject to. The exception to the disinterest in local dynamics was a successful (although mechanical) process of reintegration of refugees. Although not intended, this became important in the long run.

In *Liberia*, the local – as in civil society – was actively involved in the peace agreement. Nonetheless, the local was equated with the inclusion of actors seen as local (civil society and women's organisations), not in terms of building the peace agreement on local knowledge. It bears the hallmark of much development work, where 'participation' is a self-evident part, but at the end of the day, makes very little difference. As we shall see, later there was/is a renewed effort to engage various localised interests and actors, but the outcome of this cycle may be too early to assess. *Rwanda* is the exception, where decentralisation was a requirement in the original Arusha peace agreement of 1993. However, this was largely unrelated to any international peacebuilding initiatives, and came to the forefront for other reasons. As in Liberia and Cambodia, localised approaches to building a sustainable peace came many years later. But unlike Liberia and Cambodia, they were strictly controlled by the central state, and there was neither any flourishing of civil society organisations, nor any vibrant women's movement.

**Table 1: Key results**

Questions/Cases	Cambodia	Liberia	Rwanda	Somaliland	Comment/ Comparison
<i>Three phases of the peacebuilding cycle</i>					
<i>How was the local included in the design and approach of the peace agreement?</i>	Not at all	Little role for the local.	Strong, but policy from peace agreement fragmented	N.a. No formal peace agreement	<i>The pattern is that the local is disregarded in the design of the peace agreement and in the design of the ensuing interventions.</i>
<i>How has the local been supported and emerged over time in peacebuilding activities?</i>	Slowly, but increasingly significant	Slowly, and semi-significant	Strongly, but central state driven.	Gradually but strongly, from below.	<i>The pattern is that the local dimension of consolidating peace inevitably grows over time and does so 'by itself'. Rwanda is the exception in having strong centrally steered local reconciliation attempts.</i>
<i>Which result in terms of contribution to sustainable peace can we see of the efforts to include the local in the broader peacebuilding process?</i>	Albeit late, it established the post-conflict period. Inserting local democracy.	Progressive but only semi-significant with isolated engagements	Important for stability, but state controlled and instrumental.	Important for stability, but re-introducing archaic values	<i>The pattern is that local engagement for peacebuilding purposes has proved constructive and even necessary. It also shows that it must be done in a well-designed way and it may</i>

					<i>carry unwanted consequences.</i>
<i>Policy priorities</i>					
<i>How have gendered aspects of peacebuilding been promoted?</i>	They have been promoted broadly. Successful in everyday life, but limited political impact	They have been promoted broadly. Successful.	Very successful, but moderate impact of peacebuilding on outcome.	Very limited attempts, negative result.	<i>Here the results vary from highly positive to highly negative. Localised peacebuilding offers the potential for enhanced gender equality, while it also risks creating its opposite.</i>
<i>How have civil society aspects of peacebuilding been promoted?</i>	They have been promoted broadly. Partly successful in everyday life, but limited political impact. Threatened by increased political pressure.	They have been promoted broadly. Limited impact.	Civil society is suppressed. Minor impact.	Civil society is suppressed. Minor impact. Informal local elite networks important	<i>The pattern is fragmented. The civil society activities have been supported in all cases, but vary in degree of space, impact and nature. The everyday peace is supported to a limited degree through growth of civil society.</i>
<i>Overall success of peacebuilding efforts?</i>	Positive, but fragile peace. Tendency towards increasing authoritarianism.	Positive, but fragile peace.	Medium. On the terms of Rwandan central govt. Tendency towards increasing authoritarianism.	Positive, but fragile peace with weak state-building.	<i>Chapter 7. To be discussed below.</i>

## 6.2. Progress of local institutions and agency

In all cases, even if not addressed or prioritised, the local has emerged as a significant part of the post-conflict process, although in very different ways. In *Rwanda*, it was a well thought-through cornerstone of the entire reconstruction and transitional justice package, with the *gacaca* courts dealing with the genocide and the decentralisation aiming to enhance regime legitimisation and subsequent development efforts/local conflict resolution. Critical voices have focused on the central control over decentralisation and the volatility of the non-judicial *gacaca* courts; in other words, the local may in essence have been central concerns performed locally. Irrespective of that, both (especially the *gacaca*) have become important and necessary parts of peacebuilding in their own ways. In *Somaliland*, localising peace efforts were the only way forward, given the lack of recognition and international engagement. The work at the local level was subsequently supported by a part of the development community. Local actors were broadly included in the peace conferences leading up to the peace agreement. However, only elite members, for example clan leaders and elders, had any real influence on the outcome of the conferences. This indicates that while broad local inclusiveness in peacebuilding processes should still be a worthwhile aspiration, representation alone does not necessarily change deeper local power structures.

For *Liberia*, the local has been seen as a participant or beneficiary. International NGOs came to address local communities and the local civil society in peacebuilding activities, while the UN has focused on the national arena, avoiding lower level spaces, actors or knowledge. Not as a peacebuilding project, but out of necessity, the local governance arena has emerged strongly in *Cambodia*, converting local governments into efficient speakers for local conditions. In Cambodia, and to some extent in Liberia, the local emerged broadly and strongly a few years after the peace agreement with major support from the international community. However, it was a localisation of peace pursued by default with little or no thought about it being an integrated and supportive part of post-conflict reconstruction.

### 6.3. State of local institutions and agency

In *Somaliland*, *Rwanda*, and *Cambodia*, the gradually growing interest, engagement, and resourcing of local aspects of reconstruction became vital to stability and reconciliation. Albeit for different reasons – the decentralisation in Cambodia including the commencement of building local democracy, the *gacaca* courts and the decentralisation reform in Rwanda, and the gradual rebuilding of traditional structures in Somaliland – localised processes were among the most important factors in transforming these war-ravaged countries into more stable societies with less violence and more legitimate governments. *Rwanda* and *Somaliland* have been localising peace in harsh ways with either local/clan elites taking over on their terms (Somaliland) or the central government controlling localisation, eventually hollowing out its democratic content and potential for triggering agency (especially Rwanda). In *Somaliland* development is faltering in many regions of the country, gender inequality remains endemic, and peaceful cooperation eludes political life. The sustainability of Somaliland's peace is dependent on the local, but in an otherwise turbulent Somalia it has proven sustainable for two decades. However, with increasing stabilisation of Somalia and little international recognition of Somaliland as independent, the 'pocket of peace' that Somaliland has been remains threatened by various national and international agendas (thus highlighting the fact that the local does not exist in isolation). Recent international peacebuilding efforts to strengthen development in troubled regions are welcome initiatives. However, their impact is uncertain.

In *Cambodia*, decentralisation has been fortunate for Cambodia's peacebuilding process as it has moved power over daily issues away from the politically poisoned national arena, grounding politics in local everyday issues, adding a local development dimension to the consolidation of peace, and creating local state legitimacy. This enhances stability of peace but also enables the population to envision a changed political culture that could travel 'upward' to the national arena. Localisation of peace initially added democratic features, participatory practices, and conciliatory dialogue, but may subsequently have stalled and not delivered to its potential. In *Liberia*, the emerging significance of the local was of a different nature. It also grew with international assistance and under progressive policies, but in spite of impressive work by some NGOs, localisation of peace in Liberia has not assumed state-building qualities as in the other cases.

It is too early to tell if it is sustainable, and it is also so far unknown whether the inclusion of the local as participants and beneficiaries is enough. So far peace in Liberia is shallowly based on national elites with the risk of collapsing once international protectors of those national elites pull out. In a softer version, it resembles Rwanda's centrally steered crafting of localisation, although with less protection from external interests taking over.

## 6.4. Gendered aspects of peacebuilding

Post-conflict *Rwanda* is the most gender-equal state in the world when it comes to representation in the national parliament, but this hardly relates to peacebuilding activities as such. The decentralisation reforms and the *Gacaca* courts were gender-sensitive processes, possibly giving women a stronger voice and better rights than in previous regimes. However, localised peacebuilding in itself had no major impact on gender equality, which benefited instead from other trends in society. In *Cambodia*, and even more so in *Liberia*, the local dimensions of peacebuilding opened up avenues for women to engage, benefit and thrive in the post-conflict processes. Gender equality has been improved in Cambodia and Liberia, at least in numbers in terms of including women in political positions, but less so in changing expected gender roles.

In *Cambodia*, this has taken place across the board, but in a cautious manner, whereas, in *Liberia*, empowerment of women in this process has been spectacular at times, and, possibly, sustainable. The enhanced role of women in the new *Liberia* has reached all the way into high politics and discourses on state-building. In *Somaliland* gender equality has been downplayed in favour of continued traditional (patriarchal) societal structures. The peace process in *Somaliland* may in fact have strengthened patriarchal power structures in the country, especially through the institutionalisation of the *guurti* council as the Upper House of Parliament. Interestingly, UNDP has supported the *guurti* system as part of peacebuilding efforts in *Somaliland* by providing its staff with technical and administrative assistance, thereby obviously diverging from the traditional liberal peacebuilding trajectory. While this is an interesting development, it is also problematic from a normative gender perspective.

## 6.5. Civil society aspects of peacebuilding

Allowing a wide definition of civil society referring to wide networks of clan and local kinship-based elites, rather than an organised and membership-based community, *Somaliland* harbours a strong popular commitment to peace, as evidenced by the recurring civic mobilisations in the face of political turmoil over the last decade. While these voluntary movements are laudable, they appear to have occurred on an ad hoc basis, and thus represent a rather 'thin' form of peace infrastructure. Consequently, it has been frequently noted that the fragile peace in Somaliland cannot solely hinge on spontaneous civic mobilisation. It must also be anchored in political institutions and practices in order to be sustainable. The absence of a formal state, 'proper' peace agreement, and international recognition gave the informal society (in the guise of traditional structures and localised networks) a near-monopoly on the pursuit of reconstruction. International organisations came to work in a low-key fashion with these networks, reinforcing the peace process, but also strengthening traditional structures of a less progressive nature.

In *Cambodia*, civil society flourished after a slow awakening and has turned into a self-evident part of both political society and the development landscape. Although widespread and lively, it is also 'thin' and vulnerable as civic engagement is lukewarm at times. Moreover, for political reasons, in a hardening climate, advocacy-oriented, political and/or human rights-oriented NGOs/CSOs are feeling pressure from the increasingly authoritarian government and from declining donor interest and have had to scale down activities. At the same time, broad and spontaneous civic engagement seems to be growing stronger.

The role of civil society in *Liberia* shows a similar pattern, with an initial flurry of engagement and activities, but declining over time and being overly dependent on international funding. At the end of the day, it has played a minor role in the process after the turbulence around the peace agreement itself (as above). International and national civil society has played a role in peacebuilding reaching outside governmental institutions in Liberia. However, national civil society is also often caught between representing the local on the one hand, and fulfilling international expectations on the other, always risking neglecting local particularities in favour of adopting international standards. In *Rwanda*, due to political authoritarianism,

civil society was never allowed to thrive and take on a major role; NGOs/CSOs are apolitical (and of little relevance to peacebuilding), external and therefore kept at arm's length's from power, or extremely local and working on small issues (which is not a bad thing).

## 6.6. Conclusions on the local turn of peacebuilding

Pursuing a *structured, focused comparison* of our four cases, drawing on Table 1 above, we find the following. Peacebuilding is multi-dimensional and it is therefore hard to define cause and effect in a simple manner. However, it is notable that none of our cases can be seen as having experienced deep and sustainable peace and none of them has been subject to broad-based local peacebuilding. We can also conclude that all of them have shown some promising development and that local peacebuilding has played a part in whatever progress and stability there is.

The extreme opposites are *Rwanda* and *Somaliland*, where the former has a strong, centrally controlled, and intentional local reconciliation process, and the latter an organic, bottom-up process growing from within. Both have obvious weaknesses and strengths. *Rwanda*'s process is pursued by an authoritarian state with limited local buy-in. It enjoys a certain degree of stability and some post-conflict reconciliation, but with little space for peace to find its everyday form. *Somaliland*'s peace has grown organically of its own accord, but based on archaic notions, heralding less than progressive values including both gender inequality and elite domination. They display the two opposites that must be avoided: central domination for purposes of authoritarian control, and localism allowing local elites to take over, pursuing a less than satisfactory value base.

The couple in the middle – *Cambodia* and *Liberia* – have experienced attempts at local peacebuilding, creation of local institutions, promotion of agency, and initiation of everyday peace. *Liberia* has enjoyed a strong civil society, forceful women's movement and scattered local peacebuilding projects throughout, many of them being seen as positive and progressive, but none of which have substantially impacted upon the degree and sustainability of overall peace. *Cambodia* had very little local agency in its cultural make-up, but benefited from a local governance programme that succeeded and, somewhat unexpectedly, grew nationwide, introducing participatory

processes and inclusive values, drawing broad recognition. It had (and has) a considerable impact on the stabilisation of the rural areas and the deepening of peace. However, it is unclear how significant this reform will turn out to be as politics is turning harsher and local reforms are gradually being hollowed out. In both cases, the progressive local engagements are vulnerable due to their weak links to the surrounding processes (especially Liberia).

## 7. The potential and the shortcomings of the local turn: policy implications

This report stated three aims, namely to review the critical literature, to assess how local aspects of peacebuilding have typically been pursued, and to analyse which results of overall peacebuilding can be traced back to the local turn.

*Firstly*, we have seen how the critical literature unpacked liberal peace and called for a local turn (or local turns may be more accurate) in Chapters 1, 3 and 4. *Secondly*, we have illuminated how the local turn of peacebuilding has fared in international policy development (Chapter 2), carried out a brief thematic review (Chapter 4), and assessed four cases in depth (Chapter 5). *Thirdly*, a tentative assessment of what the local turn can contribute has been traced in the four cases (Chapters 5 and 6), through the analytical section (Chapter 6) and in the concluding chapter. The latter also suggests policy recommendations (Chapter 7). The remainder of this chapter will, firstly, review related research, secondly, identify available policy implications, and, thirdly, offer some explicit recommendations for the international development actors.

Overall, in spite of interest and various attempts, the international development community rarely intentionally implements local peacebuilding, and even less so with the ambition of having a systematic impact on the overall peacebuilding process. The combination of established administrative systems and the features of post-conflict conditions reinforces that trait. Actors in development cooperation are often obliged to work with the respective government at national level, and interventions emanating from a peace agreement are centralised and elitist by nature. Moreover, the dogma underpinning the dominant liberal peace approach is centred around state-building and the insertion of democracy, involving primarily the central level and its elite actors. Hence, neither the international community nor the various national elites naturally aim to engage with the local level. So if not addressed forcefully and with determination, local engagement will remain marginalised, pushing the consolidation of peace towards a fragile central level with few tentacles to the deeper layers of society and with limited dynamic effects.

Other segments of the development community such as International NGOs and certain multilaterals and bilaterals that are committed to working locally tend to create ‘zones’, ‘pockets’, ‘islands’, or ‘sectors’ of peace and development with limited connection to other parts of society in both horizontal and vertical directions. Therefore, projects are successful and progressive, but rarely manage to reach a structural level where the local approach has a considerable impact on the overall consolidation of peace. Here it needs to be emphasised that just because something is ‘local’, it does not mean that it is small and/or insignificant; a systematically implemented local/everyday strategy for consolidation of peace could/should have systemic effects. Interestingly, even if not planned, the local level dynamics seem to eventually demand their place in consolidating peace, sometimes in spite of (rather than due to) international interventions. At bottom, we believe, a local approach cannot work in isolation: interconnectedness, verticality, and multilevel approaches are of the essence. Consequently, it needs to be strategically planned and designed, and form a part of a larger whole.

Paradoxically, most actors in the peacebuilding/development community – including the carriers of the liberal peace – would regard focusing on the local as a good thing, yet its pursuit and implementation entail difficulties. Demands for immediate, tangible results, forced liaison with national level actors, funding mechanisms that are geared towards the central state machinery, the unpredictability of the local, and the lack of self-evident counterparts in the local space are among the more obvious practical obstacles the local turn faces. There is a path-dependency at work, gearing interventions away from the local and towards business-as-usual, and this is a dilemma that goes beyond individual donors, projects, and civil servants in the field, and even defies central policies developed to alter this situation. There is also another path-dependency at work; the liberal peace has historically proven successful at home for most of the donors on the international scene, and in spite of the massive differences between a smooth, decades-long, or even century-long, growth of political systems and thoughts in the context of relative wealth, and the rapid insertion of the same system in a post-conflict context stricken by poverty and broken institutions, very little attention is paid to this dilemma. Instead, the end product of this evolution in Western Europe/the USA – i.e. liberal democracy and

liberal peace – is used as a non-negotiable platform on which sustainable peace has to start to take root.

As this report has shown, the local turn of peacebuilding is neither a ‘theory’, nor a discourse or a single movement of how to do peacebuilding. Pinpointing what we can learn from it so far, and what international actors should and should not do, is not a trivial task. However, in this section we have selected nine points in three different sections that stand out in the report as essential in making peace less virtual and more relevant to the everyday lives of the people living it. The first three concluding points are on the most generic level:

- It is imperative to be clear of the aim of including the local and *define who, what or where this local is understood to be*, and which potential it has. As we have seen, it is not uncommon to say local and mean national in the policy world and this may be devastating for local peacebuilding. Although partnering with the national is surely important, in isolation it does not necessarily insert peacebuilding into the lives of the population.
- Although research on the local turn of peacebuilding has no ready-made template of when or how to address the local, our cases show that it should be done *as early as possible* and with a substantial plan to expand. Even if local peacebuilding can only grow gradually, missing the opportunity to design the local from the very start risks making the process slower than necessary or jeopardising the entire peace process.
- Working locally is productive, but disconnecting the local from the rest of the post-conflict situation limits its impact on overall peacebuilding. If the bigger context is disregarded, local advancements may become counterproductive as they may be ill-suited to the national level dynamics. In fact, a key feature of the local turn is to make it matter at central level and among power-holders as well. As such, *verticality and interconnectedness are core qualities* for making the local turn significant.

The second set of three points are of a more radical/critical nature – they are not incompatible with the first three, but less compatible with

business as usual within the peacebuilding field. In particular, the heavy emphasis on result-based management and strictly formalised reporting structures demanding quantitative measurability may be hard to combine with these points. These next three points stem from research claiming that peacebuilding cannot be designed from the outside as every peace process has its own path.

- The local is unpredictable for external development agencies and it must be allowed to be so in order to be able to grow. Consequently, *flexible aid programmes* that truly offer ownership to the local beneficiaries and adapt to local conditions in finding solutions must be encouraged, and successful results may neither come in a form that can be predefined, nor fit standard formats for how ‘success’ is understood (yet aid programmes need to be horizontally and vertically connected).
- The very notion of the local implies that not all places are the same, and can therefore neither be treated identically, nor prescribed the same cure. From this follows *the necessity to learn about context*. Many of today’s peacebuilding (and development) mechanisms are not based on knowing the particular context and there is rarely time or space to understand the context in which interventions are inserted; this may be efficient from an administrative point of view, but it is not the best approach for local peace and development.
- We need to continuously think, and rethink, peacebuilding policies. Although it is tempting to think of peacebuilding (local and national) as a flow of causal mechanisms, *there is no predefined linearity* between A (conflict) and B (peace). Instead, any social development in the aftermath of conflict will spur new opportunities and new choices to be made for the pursuit of peace. Local practices and societal institutions that uphold peace in one place may not do that in another place.

Finally, the last set of three points are recommendations addressing administrative impediments that may need to be reconsidered in order to improve peacebuilding practices along the lines of a local turn.

- Most development cooperation agencies are under severe pressure to reduce administrative costs, while at the same time expected to increase quality, deal with complex problems, and safeguard against malfunction and corruption. This combination gears the entire field towards a small number of large-scale projects/programmes and is biased against local engagement. To manage a local turn, it is most likely that *more administrative and monitoring resources need to be allocated to manage development portfolios*.
- While there is a commendable trend of quality reassurance in development cooperation, with it have come rigid approaches and an unfortunate fear of failure. *Strategic and well-considered risks must be 'allowed'* in order to make a difference in long-term local peacebuilding (since the local is 'messy' and causes of peace are hard to predict). The development cooperation system needs to revise its modalities for thinking strategically along these lines.
- To engage in a local turn requires thorough knowledge and sound analysis. *Contextual knowledge, project monitoring, feedback loops, and the preparedness to revise, adapt and re-launch are central features of success with a local turn* (and many other interventions). These features need to be more significant for a local turn to be taken seriously.

On the one hand, the idea of a local turn deeply questions peacebuilding and development agendas as generally performed today. On the other, it is simply a more concrete and radical version of 'old' insights emanating from the participatory revolution in the 1970s, and contemporary globally emerging trends as in the Doing Development Differently Manifesto Community (DDD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Overall, it is strongly felt in various contexts that the new era for development needs to include multiple localised solutions, where uncertainty must be embraced, and where researchers and the donor community need to remain humble about providing *the* solution (cf. Pellini 2015). Consequently, local peacebuilding is not a panacea. It is a crucial building block for the emerging architecture of international development cooperation

## 8. References

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