Partners in Peace

Discourses and practices of civil-society peacebuilding
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Dit onderzoek is uitgevoerd binnen de onderzoeksschool CERES – Research School for Resource Studies for Development.
van Leeuwen, Mathijs

Partners in Peace - Discourses and Practices of Civil-society peacebuilding

Thesis Wageningen University. –With ref. – With Summary in English and Dutch


Subject headings: peacebuilding, civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development programmes, development discourse, politics, armed conflict, peace, southern Sudan, Guatemala, Burundi, DRC, Great Lakes Region.
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Acknowledgements

This study would never have been possible without the support and input of many staff members of various development organizations. In the first place, I would like to thank the people of the Dutch relief and development organization Cordaid. In particular I am grateful to Lia van Broekhoven, who set up the collaboration between Cordaid and Disaster Studies, and kept it running. Lia, thanks for your commitment and relentless efforts to motivate others for our research, and for the transparent and pleasant way in which we worked together! Many thanks also to the members of the steering committee. I greatly appreciated the support of Nico van Leeuwen, Niek Thijsse en Kees van den Broek, who facilitated my research, established contacts with local partners, and gave their feedback.

The women of the Sudanese Women’s Voice for Peace showed me their work, their life, and through them I experienced southern Sudan. In particular, I would like to mention the women of Narus and Mapel, and Dolly Anek Odwong, with whom I lived through the hardships of dusty and scorpion-infested Lokichogio-outside-the-UN-compound. The friendly staff of the Diocese of Torit provided us a place to live, that due to the numerous visitors from inside Sudan was a site for field research by itself. I am also grateful for the commitment of Yvonne Heselmans and Edwin Ruigrok of Pax Christi. Thanks to the staff in the Cordaid office Nairobi I had an office during day-time and a bed during night-time. I am grateful to Judy and Rose, Mumelo, Esther and Bernd, for your company and the enjoyable nights we had in Nairobi. Thanks also to the MSF-staff in Mapel, Wim and Kathy in Katigiri and Kigali, Brother John in Narus, and Materno from Palotaka.

In Burundi, the support and enthusiasm of Francine Umwali and Olivier Heck of CED-Caritas were indispensable for my research. I am grateful to the members of the parochial Justice & Peace commissions that assisted me in the communities, and in particular Zéphyrin, who became my closest friend in Africa. Though my contribution to the work of Cordaid Bujumbura was minimal, Cordaid staff have highly facilitated and given zest to my stay. A big hug to all of you, in particular to Ben, DKV, Rene, Tanja, Pascal, Gringo, and Christophe! Thanks to the slow service at the terrace of the Cercle Nautique (“toute suite”) we spent endless enjoyable nights at the lakeside. Special thanks also to Dr Canut, late Dr Roger, Abbé Adrien Ntabona, Father Richard, Luc and Bernadette, Daniel and Carolien, Sonja, Mary T, Denise, Rene Claude, Frauke, and Peter. During my travels, I enjoyed the hospitality and company of Erwin and Snezana (Uvira), Ilse van der Schoot (Bukavu) and Christol Paluku (Goma).

In Guatemala, I had a splendid period with the team of Pastoral de la Tierra in San Marcos. I greatly enjoyed participating in your daily activities, and am grateful for your comments on my writing. In particular I would like to thank Ruth Tánchez, Patricia Meléndez, Juan Carlos Peinado and Carlos Juárez, my colleagues from Nivel III, and Susana López, the coordinator of the team. My deep gratitude to the women and men of San Luis Malacatán and Tacaná that were so hospitable, in particular Icelia and
Partners in Peace

Hermelindo and their relatives in the Comunidad de 15 Enero. I would also like to thank Lidia Villagrán, and Susana Urbina of Serjus in Quetzaltenango for the opportunity to do a short but insightful assignment. In Quetzaltenango, I am most grateful to our splendid neighbours in our fairytale garden: Doña Eugenia and Don Horacio, Angeles, Fernando, Andreas, Ruth and kids. Our daughter has now outgrown your baby clothes, but for sure we will come back to show her to you and let you teach her Spanish! Many thanks also to Mariellos, Anna Isern, Willy, Ade, Louis-Marie and Sophie, Pieter, Anton Coolen, and Mario Roberto Silvestre.

Most of all, I would like to thank all those women and men in the rural communities who were willing to share their lives and stories with me, and told of their experiences with peacebuilding interventions. Without them this research would never have been realizable. Finally, I am grateful to those that funded my research: the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research, WOTRO, that awarded me a 4-years research grant, and Pax Christi and Stichting Nationaal Erfgoed ‘Hotel de Wereld’, that enabled my work in Kenya and southern Sudan.

To my supervisor, Thea Hilhorst, I extend my deep gratitude for pushing me to go on with my work, believing in my abilities and forcing me to be clear. Many are the splendid and hilarious moments we have shared together. Few PhD-candidates will have experienced such a diversity of supervision talks – hovering over southern Sudan, pick-nicking in a marshland swarming with crocodiles, or chilling on a boat-deck in a crater lake. It can be challenging to combine a working relation with being friends, but I think we managed well. Thea, under your wings, I have grown from a student to a PhD candidate, and –hopefully– now to Doctor. Though I might leave the nest, I sincerely hope for other adventurous cooperation!

Many thanks also for my colleagues at Disaster Studies. Georg, thanks for encouraging me along the way and the late night chats. Bram, you were a great running mate, sharing the ups and downs of our PhDs. That you may run a glorious final mile in Spain! Lucie, if one person offered me a home at Disaster Studies, it was you. And not only in the Netherlands, you and Ferko even equipped our home in Guatemala! You are more than welcome at our next destination. Hilde, you will no longer suffer my stiff touch on the keyboard and erratic attacks of snorting. That you may write a beautiful book after (about?) your visa-nightmares. Rens, I enjoyed the discussions on institutions and appreciated your tireless help in solving my computer problems. Gemma, many thanks for your kind and constructive help in the last months of my thesis. Annelies, mindful of the writing course that was followed by us together I like to have the opportunity to be able to thank you without the excessive use of unnecessary words for our discussions on peacebuilding and the hazards of fieldwork. Martine, your endless but relentless calling to head-offices of international NGOs was of great help. Jeroen, you did a marvellous editing job, and I enjoyed the witty conversations we had. Jilles and Martijn, your sharp comments on unpolished drafts were more than welcome. Jos, thanks for saving me from financial disaster! Patrick, Maliana, Luis, Hilde, Zelealem, Milabyo, Aschale, and Gerrit Jan, thanks for all the good company.

Gratitude to all my nice friends in the Netherlands. Esther and Martin, thanks for your hospitality in all the places where you lived and for editing. Pascale and Nico, for
the terrific meals and chats at your table, and lodging in-between fieldwork. Floris, for
being my best friend. Marieke and Mark, who are always there. Special thanks also to
all those others: de paarse plukjes, Ilse (thanks for editing!), Anton, Anne and Bart,
David and Annemarieke, Jasper and Elise, Gijs and Jessamijn, and Menno. And to
Gaia and Marchien, two marvellous women I will never forget.

My deepest gratitude to my parents who made me into what I am. My father, who
inspired my curiosity into this world, and who tirelessly helped me out with financial
and computer problems when I was away. My mother, from whom I inherited the
adventurous genes, and who kept me informed on the news in the Netherlands. Mum,
you reminded me that my research on peacebuilding initiatives should have included a
case study in the Netherlands. Clara, my wonderful sister, next time abroad I hope you
come to visit us! Tante Wies, you will always be special to me. Oom Paul, you
instigated my love for Africa. Oom Frans, your artistic mind inspired me; with such
rich imagination you had no need for travelling yourself. Hen, for coming over to
share a beer with us wherever we were. Janneke, for all your love and heroic efforts to
send an email. Bas and Els, for exemplifying us the ‘bear necessities of life’, and
Willem for just arriving.

I save my final expression of most profound thanks to Linda. Without your
unwavering encouragement, willingness to accompany me to all the corners of the
world, and putting on hold your own ambitions, this research would never have been
possible. You were my all-time sparring partner, the cynical angel on my shoulder,
accomplice, research assistant and editor, and you are still my beloved wife! Our
terrific daughter Emma made me realize the relative importance of a PhD… after all,
my thesis was far less interesting than Niintje. I am looking forward to what other
adventures our life together has in store for us!
"Wonderful these houses! They should add mailboxes and house numbers on the front doors and it would be a perfect suburb", a member of an UNHCR evaluation mission said to me when she surveyed the neat rows of identical houses of a resettlement village in Rwanda. It was mid-1999, five years after the genocide and the international community was helping to construct 85,000 houses in 250 villages, for the 2.5 million people that had returned from refugee camps. Radio campaigns promised that people in villages would receive schooling, water and electricity, and that there would be more land available than before when houses were scattered throughout the countryside. If people would live in villages, ethnic groups would live together and become good neighbours, thereby contributing to reconciliation in this deeply-scarred country. However, the people I spoke to in the villages were angry and disappointed. They never received these services and no land to make a living was available. Other people told me they had been forced to move, and felt the programme was a means of government repression (Hilhorst and Van Leeuwen 2000).

Amazingly, I encountered many foreigners, including the evaluation mission woman, to whom the programme embodied the positive, radical change necessary after the horrors of the 1994 genocide and the promise of a new and ordered society. Here, peace
was literally built from the ground up. In the years since, I have often pondered over the evaluation mission woman’s remark. Her view of the villages was so radically different from everything the people (the so-called beneficiaries) had to say about them. There were, of course, a lot of politics involved in the new programme that would have informed her opinions. But her remark did not seem political. She genuinely saw the solution to Rwanda’s problems emerging before her eyes. She had particular assumptions about the causes and consequences of the Rwanda conflict and the newly built villages fit these assumptions perfectly and defined for her what peacebuilding in Rwanda was and should be about. This incident illustrated for me the importance of images and assumptions in international support to peacebuilding. In the years to follow, I was going to encounter many more such examples. And like in the Rwanda case, the images of international supporters of peace barely corresponded with the reality on the ground. The real situation was always much more confusing and contradictory to what such neat images of peacebuilding suggest. This book is about such images and assumptions of peacebuilding and how they relate to what is happening on the ground. It analyses discourses and practices of civil-society peacebuilding and the support by international development organizations. It is based on three years of fieldwork in southern Sudan, Burundi and the African Great Lakes Region, and Guatemala.

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been an increasing recognition of the contributions that civil-society actors make to peace. Illustrative of this trend was the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize for Guatemalan indigenous woman peace-activist Rigoberta Menchú Tum. Menchú received the Nobel Peace Prize, “in recognition of her work for social justice and ethno-cultural reconciliation based on respect for the rights of indigenous peoples”.¹ The story of Rigoberta Menchu’s prize and the controversy that followed provide a window to the themes of this book.

Menchú’s international profile started in 1983 with the publication of I, Rigoberta Menchú, in which Elisabeth Burgos-Debray narrated the account of her life history. In the book, Menchú describes the exploitation of indigenous labourers on the coastal plantations in her country, the violence inflicted upon the rural population by the government army during the civil war—including the killing of several of her family members— and the local resistance that developed against this violence. The book I, Rigoberta Menchú resulted in worldwide condemnation of the atrocities committed by the Guatemalan army and has been credited for leading to negotiations between the guerrillas and the government. In 1988, Menchú was invited to talks with the government as a representative of the opposition in exile, which she had joined after her flight to Mexico in 1981. Since her return to Guatemala, she went from being a representative of the opposition to become a leading advocate of Indian rights. The Nobel Peace Prize was a turning point in Guatemalan politics and has generally been seen as a trigger in the process towards peace (Arias 2001).

Seven years after the Prize, Menchu’s life-history became the topic of fierce debate. The controversy started with the 1999 publication of a book by the American anthropologist David Stoll (1999), in which he challenged the veracity of key details in

I, Rigoberta Menchú, in particular the ways in which her family members had found their death at the hands of the army and the way she pictured the sympathy of the rural population for the guerrillas. The book caused a storm of reactions, including a front-page article in the *New York Times*, which questioned Menchú’s integrity as a political activist, claiming she had lied, fabricated and seriously exaggerated her story. Some critics even called for her Nobel Prize to be revoked (on this episode, see Arias 2001). The so-called ‘Rigoberta Menchú controversy’ illustrates some of the concerns that motivated me to write this book, in particular contemporary perceptions of civil society’s roles in peacebuilding, the underlying theories that guide support by international institutions for local peace actors and the character of ethnographic research.

First, in the discussion that evolved, the image of Menchú as a hero of peace and reconciliation was tainted by her portrayal as a fraudulent political actor. Doubts about her integrity as a person came to disqualify her peace activism. Often, discussions on civil society are dominated by equally strong and ideological images of what civil society is about. Civil-society organizations are either praised as the democratic forces in society that bring about change and pose an alternative to the violence of states. Icons like Menchú play a significant role in such images. Others disqualify civil-society organizations and their potential for peace, pointing to their limited legitimacy among the people they claim to represent, or their deep involvement in the politics of conflict. In this book I will explore the roles of civil society in peacebuilding while maintaining that the different faces of civil society constitute multiple realities that may coexist. A civil society representative may be sincerely concerned about the suffering of indigenous people, while also being concerned about personal –financial, emotional, political– interests. Menchú’s past affiliation with the guerrillas does not foreclose that she made a real contribution to peace. Hence, the civil society does not exist and to understand how it works and develops we need to look at the multiple realities it represents.

Secondly, the case also illustrates how difficult it often is to interpret conflict situations. International observers tend to prioritize particular images of what conflict is about, often those that are in line with their experiences and ideologies. Menchú’s story represented the guerrilla movement in Guatemala as an indigenous response against army violence. This was an interpretation of local conflict which resonated with what was then a global current concern for indigenous peoples and international images of the character of the civil war. This interpretation of conflict legitimized international actors to choose sides in the conflict and intervene in it (see also Stoll 1997). Stoll doubted the sympathy of local peasants to the guerrilla and pointed out how army violence was sometimes deliberately provoked by guerrilla activities. According to Stoll, the changes Menchú made in her life-story met the publicity needs of the guerrilla movement and voiced what international activists wanted to hear. Whether Stoll’s interpretation is right or wrong and on what it is based does not matter here. What is interesting are the interpretations of international organizations of conflict and what they imply for their interventions. The case points to the
importance of investigating why and how particular –often simplified– interpretations of conflict come about and how they influence peacebuilding practices.

Finally, the case raises discussion on the character of ethnographic research and academic engagement (see Hale et al. 1997; see also the epilogue in Hilhorst 2003). In his book, Stoll repeatedly points to the incorrectness of Menchú’s story. Apparently, Stoll aims to modify visions on the character of the Guatemalan civil war as presented by academics and civil activists, including Menchú. While Stoll targets Menchú, implicitly he accuses his colleagues of political bias in support of the Guatemalan guerrilla movement. Stoll seems to have strong reservations about their activism. On the other hand, Stoll was also accused of bias, especially because he never interviewed Menchú to ask her to clarify her account, even though his research was done 15 years after her story was published. Apparently, academic representations of conflict and peacebuilding are also likely to be coloured by (political) preconceived imaginations.

The controversy raised by Stoll further shows the delicate nature of research in matters of conflict and peacebuilding, in particular the question of how to do sound and independent analysis while respecting the life-worlds and interpretations of the actors concerned. As I will describe later in this chapter, in my case this was facilitated and in some ways complicated by doing ethnographic case studies in dialogue with civil-society actors.

Aim of this book

Since the end of the Cold War, attention for the roles that local civil-society organizations can have in peacebuilding and the possibilities of international support to their efforts has increased. In the early 1990s, many authors and development practitioners observed that after the Cold War, conflicts were overwhelmingly of an intra-state nature and mainly affected civilian populations. Such conflicts occurred in societies where states had lost legitimacy and their monopoly on organized violence (Kaldor 1999/2001). In such conflict, identity politics were seen to play a large role, with particular groups excluded from political participation, discriminated against and their cultural identity oppressed (Frerks 1998: 6-11). Conflicts were seen to have informalized – conflict was no longer fought between national armies but between regional and local factions. States took part in inflicting violence on their own citizens and the distinction between soldiers, rebels and civilians largely disappeared. In such ‘informalized’ conflicts, conventional (diplomatic) mechanisms for conflict resolution lost their relevance. Where state institutions had broken down or taken part in inflicting violence, civil-society actors’ contribution to conflict resolution came to be seen as essential. In addition, the end of the Cold War implied a new freedom for international NGOs to operate in countries in the ‘global periphery’.

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3 The term ‘conflict’ as used in this thesis denotes violent conflict and not forms of dissent or differences of interest that are pursued with peaceful means.

4 I often feel uncomfortable about what term to use here. The term ‘developing countries’ fails to specify the processes of development referred to, while suggesting that ‘western’ countries have
organizations working for peace therefore shifted their focus from the negotiating table and the national level to civil society and the local level. Even if civil society had no direct influence on the political processes, it was perceived as crucial in creating the critical mass necessary for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Thus many international agencies started to support civil society initiatives for peace, focusing on entities as diverse as media, churches, human-rights groups, development and women’s organizations, traditional leaders, and educational institutions.

Programmes of international organizations for local conflict handling are a fairly new phenomenon and raise many questions. In the first place, to describe their involvement in matters of conflict and peace, many international and local organizations use the term ‘peacebuilding’. However, the term is used in diverse ways which leads to confusion. Organizations often regard peacebuilding as a distinct set of activities. Civil society interventions for peace are viewed as activities for building bridges between polarized groups, promoting dialogue and reconciliation. These can be initiated by human-rights networks, peace groups, and media organizations, but also by community and religious leaders, traditional leaders, trade unions, and professional associations. Examples include: advocacy and training for human rights, journalistic exposures to produce reconciliatory information, excursions for politicians to encourage peace politics, development programmes for vulnerable groups, and reinforcing reconciliatory traditional institutions (OECD-DAC 1997). At the same time, the notion of peacebuilding refers to a process of societal transformation, rather than a distinct set of activities. This process is to be enhanced through activities in several domains, such as governance, human rights, development, and reconciliation. As a process, peacebuilding has come to refer to almost any activity aiming at the prevention, alleviation or resolution of conflict. And though the term peacebuilding may suggest a circumscribed strategy and common understanding of what peace is to be achieved and how, in practice, its meaning is diffuse. Thus, there is a need to explore the diverse practices of peacebuilding: what constitutes peacebuilding in the view of different actors involved? And how is this translated into their claims, objectives and strategies?

Many initiatives to support the peacebuilding work of local organizations are based on an idealistic perception of civil society. Civil society has become a catchphrase associated with the ‘shared vision’ of a local population as opposed to the machinations of regional or national power politics. Nonetheless, at the local level, we know little about the orientation, practices, and sustainability of civil-society peacebuilding initiatives. Civil society is often presented as a non-partisan, a-political force trying to reconcile warring parties. Such images of civil society overlook the political nature of civil-society organizations’ involvement in conflict and peace. They ignore that different visions and opinions exist at all levels and overlook the possible
ethnic or partisan biases of civil society. Presenting civil society as a-political does not take into account the (historical) links that often exist between civil society and formal politics. Therefore, instead of taking the concept for granted, there is a need to contextualize civil society, and to investigate the origins and significance of those organizations and initiatives that are referred to as or call themselves ‘civil society’. What are the roles of civil society in a particular society? How can we understand their emergence and development?

To understand how peacebuilding activities work out and what they do to enhance peace requires insight in the dynamics of organizations. Peacebuilding practices are not only a result of policies, but also evolve out of the organizing practices of people within an organization in interaction with people in the communities and their authorities. There is a need to look not only at what peacebuilding is, but also how it develops as a result of those organizing practices. Furthermore, organizations transform as a result of changes in their operational contexts and in the support from international organizations. Not much is known of how civil-society organizations transform as a result of violence and what this implies for their peacebuilding capacities. During conflict, organizations have to continuously adapt their strategies, while they may need to change profoundly after war has come to an end. Individual staff members of organizations are economically or emotionally affected by conflict. Staff members may depend on their organization for making a living and contributing to that of others, sometimes being the rare individual in their community having regular employment. There is thus a need to look into the everyday practices of organizations to further understand how organizing practices and organizational transformations influence civil-society peacebuilding and its sustainability.

Support by international NGOs and donors to local civil-society peacebuilding has so far received little critical attention. International development agencies support peace initiatives of local civil society in a variety of ways. They provide training in new approaches for conflict resolution and capacity building. Some international organizations intervene directly, for example by organizing reconciliatory activities, often involving local civil society. Other international organizations secure the follow-up of local peace-agreements through development activities. Some organizations regard development assistance through local civil society as a peacebuilding instrument, as in so-called ‘Development-for-Peace’ projects. There are many questions about the possible contributions of outsiders in local peacebuilding. Goodhand and Lewer (1999) consider the overall contribution of international organizations and NGOs to be limited: they may create humanitarian space and serve as catalysts and facilitators, but cannot do much about top-down violence as they lack diplomatic weight. Likewise, Kane (1999) argues that the most valuable contribution of international NGOs is to help local players (including local authorities) to carry out their roles rather than implementing their own peace programmes. But then, what capacities of local organizations need be strengthened to facilitate this? Also, many practitioners experience that it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of local civil-society peacebuilding and their support to it. And how to assure that diverse contributions to peacebuilding are complementary to each other? To answer such questions, it is important to examine how outside support to local civil-society peacebuilding works out in particular situations.
In particular, there is a need to pose questions on the agenda and theories of change that underlie international interventions for civil-society peacebuilding. While some international organizations may be apprehensive of the diversity of roles of civil society in peace and conflict, their general policies continue to be based on technical and a-political models of civil society support. Similarly, though empirical studies and practice point to the multiple and changing causes of conflict, approaches to peacebuilding often persist in assuming that conflicts can be adequately analyzed and reduced to a series of root causes. And while analysts increasingly point to the continuity between conflict and ‘normal’ situations of development, in the practice of development organizations, interventions remain organized according to separate phases, implying different intervention modalities. A recurring idea in development circles is that after violence ends, society can be profoundly changed and rewritten according to the ideals imagined by outsiders (Barakat 2005; Crammer 2006). This kind of expectation glosses over the political, social and economic continuities between violence and peace. Why do supporting international organizations maintain more simplistic notions? This thesis starts from the assumption that this is the result of the policy need of organizations to reduce conflict to manageable and predictable situations. However, a consequence of such simplification is that important parts of reality may be lost or have attention diverted away from them. Those parts of reality that are ignored have an impact on how interventions work out. While intervening organizations and local civil-society organizations are often aware that they make simplifications, they consider them necessary to be able to operate. At the same time, many international organizations are motivated to learn and to adjust their intervention practices, if they would lead to better strategies to deal with the complexities of conflict and peacebuilding. Hence, in my opinion, more attention should be given to how such simplification occurs and what it implies for the politics and practices of peacebuilding.

This thesis is about the discourses and practices of local civil-society peacebuilding and its international support. I look at these practices from three different angles:

**Policies and images of civil-society peacebuilding** – I analyse the models of civil-society peacebuilding that international and local organizations wittingly or unwittingly apply, and look at what they imply for their claims, objectives and strategies. International organizations imagine particular roles of local civil society in governance as well as their own roles in enhancing the capacities of civil society to fulfil these roles. In case studies of the everyday practices of civil-society peacebuilding I will analyze what such assumptions lead to in practice.

**Organizing practices of peacebuilding** – I am interested in what peacebuilding discourses, models, policies, and strategies mean for the everyday practice of organizations. I consider peacebuilding practices to be strongly influenced by what organizations are, how they operate, and how they develop, as well as by the different meanings attributed to peacebuilding by the diverse parties involved. I explore how understanding peacebuilding is part of organizational politics. Furthermore, I look at how civil-society organizations develop under influence of conflict and the support of international organizations. At a practical level, I look into how
international supporting organizations can take these organizing practices better into account.

- **Framing conflict and the assumptions informing peacebuilding** – International and local development organizations need to simplify reality to be able to operate and deal with the complexity of conflict and peacebuilding. I look at how organizations simplify reality and how this informs their theories of change. In particular, I study the perspectives of organizations on conflict, and the kinds of peace they promote, as well as the consequences of choosing particular representations of reality for the everyday practices of those organizations. I also look at how simplification always implies political choices by prioritizing certain problems and regarding particular interventions appropriate. At a practical level, I explore how development organizations can take better into account the necessary simplifications they make.

This thesis is built principally on a series of case studies of peacebuilding interventions and organizations working in southern Sudan, Burundi and the African Great Lakes Region, and Guatemala. The selection of those particular cases was the result of cooperation with the Dutch development organization Cordaid as will be explained later on in the section on interactive research. In each country, I look at several levels of the ‘aid-chain’, by looking at both the practices of international NGOs and donors and those of their partners from local civil society.

As Chapter 2 describes, the meaning of the term civil society has become very broad, including a variety of institutions and forms of association at the local and national level, as well as international NGOs operating globally. In the coming chapters, I look at those different manifestations of civil society. I refer to ‘local civil society’ when discussing entities such as traditional institutions, local community organizations, churches, labour and activist movements, and NGOs operating at national levels; contrasting those to ‘international development organizations’ or ‘international NGOs’. Furthermore, taking into account that peacebuilding does not represent a generally accepted agenda or series of practices, at the start of each case study, I explored what local actors understood by peacebuilding and selected research themes accordingly.

**Exploring everyday practices of civil-society peacebuilding**

To study the everyday practices of civil-society peacebuilding, and the assumptions and strategies of supporting organizations, I use an actor orientation (Giddens 1984; Long 1992). Such an orientation starts from the premise that social actors have agency. People reflect upon their experiences and on what happens around them and use their knowledge and capabilities to interpret and respond to this. An actor orientation recognizes the large range of constraints that impinge on social actors –such as a persons, place, and role in the social system or the values and norms of a society– but emphasizes that such constraints operate through people. Likewise, peacebuilding is a socially-constructed process, involving diverse groups of social actors. Structures and
norms are constituted or maintained because they are reproduced by people in their daily practices. This recursive character of social life and the mutual dependence between structure and agency are what Giddens (1984) calls the ‘duality of structure’. Conflict resolution and peacebuilding are socially constructed processes, involving diverse groups of social actors. An actor-oriented approach allows one to take into account the political contests in and over conflict and peacebuilding and opens a venue to analyze how actors find room to manoeuvre in promoting particular representations of reality (Long 1992). To find out how interpretations are formed, reformed, and further distributed, and how organizational interventions acquire meaning and gain legitimacy, an actor-oriented approach focuses on the everyday practices of organizations (Hilhorst 2003).

As this thesis aims to study the politics of understanding and representing peacebuilding, the concept of discourse is of particular relevance. I understand discourses as “ensemble[s] of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena” (Gasper and Apthorpe 1996:2) or as “more or less coherent sets of references that frame the way we understand and act upon the world around us” (Hilhorst 2003: 8). Discourse is thus a collective practice of ordering or ‘framing’ in the minds of actors, who try to organize and make sense of their experiences through coherent schemes. But discourse is not only a systematized body of knowledge, a way of speaking about our world. It does not just describe things – it does things and has effects on the world in which it has its roots (Wittgenstein, in Suurmond 2005). Discourse is a social practice in itself, that is “produced through everyday conditions and activities and thus constantly subject to change and to the agency of individuals” (Gardner 1997). An actor-oriented approach may help to provide insights into how actors form and reform discourses, and how actors find room for manoeuvre in promoting particular representations of reality (Hilhorst 2003).

A discourse constitutes power, in that it mainstreams particular ways of making sense of the world. “A discourse (e.g. of development) identifies appropriate and legitimate ways of practising development as well as speaking and thinking about it” (Grillo 1997: 12). Much theorizing on discourse is concerned with how certain representations of the world become hegemonic and dominant in shaping how reality is imagined and acted upon, while other modes of thinking are overshadowed or even disqualified. Various authors, however, have relativized this idea of dominant discourses (Grillo 1997; Gardner and Lewis 2000; Chiapello and Fairclough 2002; Hilhorst 2003). They argue that there are always multiple discourses whose relative importance changes and is continuously renegotiated. For example, many conflict situations involve a conflict about what the conflict is about (see e.g. Lemarchand 1996). Similarly, mainstream thinking about peacebuilding and reconciliation practices does not prevent alternative visions from being used. Rather than mechanically implementing discourses, development actors draw upon a combination of discourses at the same time (Fairclough 1989: 39).

At times, some discourses can become more powerful than others. For example, as a result of wider political processes that enable particular discourses and pose threats to others (Hilhorst 2003: 9-10). Discourses may be reproduced through the unintended consequences of everyday routine practices (Fairclough 1989). But even when a certain discourse becomes widely adopted, it may continue to acquire different
and often multiple meanings at the local level. Though particular visions on problems and their solutions may become hegemonic, development knowledge is not a monolithic enterprise, controlled from the top. Development knowledge is recreated by multiple agents, who have different understandings of their work (Gardner 1997). Multiple, co-existent discourses of development come into being (Grillo 1997). Counter-discourses do not only develop bottom up. Within international organizations counter-discourses may emerge, while local actors are contributing to the maintenance of dominant discourses (Gardner and Lewis 2000). There is a duality to discourse. Even though discourses may be imposed or employed strategically, they acquire local meaning and tend to become real in ways that cannot be planned (Hilhorst 2003: 100/211).

At the same time, discourse entails power in that it may influence social relations, regulate behaviour, or even exercise disciplinary power. Unnoticed, discourse may come to encompass a certain ideology, by routinely drawing upon ideological conventions that then become ‘common sense’. As a result, discourse may legitimize a given political order, sustain existing power relationships, and perpetuate inequalities (Fairclough 1989: 107). Various authors have explored the power of discourse in development practice (Hobart 1993; Ferguson 1994; Escobar 1995; Crew 1997; Fairhead 2000). Hobart (1993), for example, points out how dominant discourses of development result in that local knowledge is ignored or treated as obstacles to rational progress, while the West is endowed with the task of disseminating knowledge and civilization. In the field of humanitarian aid, Duffield observes how the notion of human security, rather than as a physical or material condition, may better be seen as “a set of discursive practices whereby the international community of effective states understands and intervenes within ineffective ones” (Duffield 2005: 4).

Labelling something as a crisis or not has far-reaching implications on which organizations can legitimately respond, which sources and types of financing are available, and which types of involvement of local partners are considered necessary (Hilhorst 2007). The same counts for levels of security to qualify conflict zones. In Darfur in 2007, qualifying human-rights violations by local militia supported by the government as ‘genocide’ –the deliberate extermination of a people– would have obliged the international community to intervene and trespass on the sovereignty of the Sudanese state. Finally, discourse often plays a powerful role in conflict. Conflicts are often accompanied by radically different interpretations of facts and realities, which legitimize claims for power and ongoing fighting. The construction of exclusionist identities and discourses of exclusion may be instrumental in creating conflict (Jabri 1996, in Frerks and Klem 2004).

In this thesis, I explore how discourses on conflict and peacebuilding are adopted and adapted by local actors, and how local peacebuilding practices are consequentially understood. I also reflect on how power enters into those discourses, how particular alternative visions are excluded and others promoted, and how particular discourses legitimize particular interventions. At the same time, I demonstrate that discourse is also a cognitive or rational process - a necessary practice of ordering, to be able to live in this world whose full complexity we are unable to grasp.
The complexity of conflict and peacebuilding, and its simplification

“If we acknowledge that the world in which we have to live is complex, we also have to acknowledge the limitations of our understandings of the world” (Cilliers 2005: 256)

This thesis is built around the notion that conflicts and peacebuilding are characterized by complexity. Complexity means that conflicts and peace processes are shaped through interactions of multiple actors that each have a certain degree of information and influence but cannot determine the course of developments as a whole (cf. Waldrop 1992). Societies continuously change, and even more so during conflict. ‘Before’, ‘during’ and ‘after’ conflict, different politically and culturally informed ordering and distribution processes result in social change in ways that can not be reduced to single patterns. While one may understand particular aspects of conflict and social change, this understanding is always partial, temporal and subject to alternative interpretations. How do local actors and development organizations deal with this complexity? To answer this question, a note on complexity is needed.

The notion of complexity is theorized on in a variety of scientific disciplines. In the natural sciences, ‘complexity’ refers to new practices of modelling that have developed since the end of the 1980s, emphasizing contingency, context-dependency, non-linearity, and the “essentially unpredictable and fluid, yet self-organizing and describable materiality of the world” (Saldanha 2003: 426). Rather than searching for cause-effect relations in parts of the system, complexity modelling aims at understanding behaviour of the system as a whole. In a moderate way, complexity language also resonates within the social sciences, in particular in organizational and management studies (e.g. Marion 1999; Carroll and Burton 2000), as well as in research focussing on the interactions between human and technical or ecological systems (e.g. Geldof 2001).

In organizational and management studies, complexity is mainly used metaphorically. Morgan (1997), for example, describes how complexity metaphors may help in understanding how organizations work. Complexity metaphors present ‘order’ and ‘organization’ not as states that can be externally imposed or controlled, but as emergent properties. Managing is then about shaping and creating contexts in which effective forms of self-organization occur (Morgan 1997: 266ff.). Morgan argues that complexity is as valuable as other metaphors –such as ‘machine’, ‘organism’, ‘instrument of domination’– in understanding organizations. It contains an element of truth, but a truth that is as one-sided as those other metaphors (Morgan 1997: 347ff.).

In particular, research at the interface of technology and society has been experimenting with more natural sciences-like understandings of complexity. What seems to come out from this so far is that complexity thinking does not so much result in better models of complexity itself, but offers ways to take complexity into account and make it manageable (Geldof 2001: 163). Such a concern with how people understand and deal with complexity comes close to constructivist sociological perspectives on how we understand reality. Both complexity and constructivism “emphasise that we deal with a world of growing plenitude, that our understanding of that world involves a reduction of the plenitude, and that there is no meta-method for
doing such a reduction” (Cilliers 2005: fn 4, 265). Meaning and knowledge of complex systems is always contingent and contextual, local rather than universal (Byrne 2005). This does not imply relativism as to the value of particular interpretations, however, as the generation of understanding is not a haphazard process, but depends on choices, norms, values and ethics (Cilliers 2005: 259; Lee 2006).

In the talking of staff members of organizations involved in peacebuilding, all those understandings of complexity resonate. They see violent conflicts as essentially complex: being highly chaotic, and unpredictable, and developing in their own ways, outside the influence of organizations. Conflict situations are also metaphorically described as complex –as in ‘complex political emergencies’– to express the multitude and intangibility of relationships, the constantly changing causes and factors that play a role in conflict, their impact and changing intensity, and their cross-border political and social implications. Finally, much talking about conflict situations is about the challenges posed by dealing with their complexity. In the absence of adequate information, organizations may choose strategies that will be the least affected by unforeseen changes, apply ‘best practices’ that have worked in other situations, or simply accept that interventions sometimes do work and sometimes do not. Of course, organizations also try to understand better what is going on. They try to develop comprehensible and workable representations of the complexity they are working in. This thesis is particularly interested in those latter strategies – how do organizations represent reality in such a way that they can operate? And what are the implications of their practices of simplification? And how can they do it better and reduce the risks of simplification?

In this thesis, I maintain that discourse plays a central role in such practices of simplification. Discourses as cognitive processes fulfill a function of simplifying the world in which we live (Law 1994), and are thus a means by which actors make sense of complexity. Law (1994) points out how this ordering is performed and emerges, rather than that it is a given, and that it is the result of organizational routines or daily practices. Ordering is precarious, reversible, and limited in scope and reach. Law shows how different ‘modes of ordering’ (discourses) are in use at the same time. They include, exclude, depend on each other, and are in constant competition with each other. By employing different ordering modes in a parallel way, switching at times from one to the other, people manage to keep their organization together as a whole. Ordering is thus not a one time effort, but a continuous process, that involves both simplification and complexification alternatingly (Mol and Law 2002: 11-3; see also Nowotny 2005).

Discourses are thus more or less deliberate efforts to order our world; to reduce its complexity to manageable proportions. Ordering arises when particular possibilities of a system are (temporally) not taken into account (Nowotny 2005). By ignoring part of reality, discourse may create coherence out of fragmented ideas, experiences and practices, and thereby facilitate understanding and policy-making, and routinize those. However, precisely by simplifying complexity, important parts of reality may be lost, or attention is diverted away from them. Simplification always implies a level of exclusion and obscurement, and tends to forget about the complexity underlying it (Mol and Law 2002). The accompanying box (1.1) presents some of the discursive practices that help to order and simplify reality, and points to the dangers involved.
Box 1.1 - Examples of simplification

**Narratives**  
A narrative is a representation of reality that makes the inter-relatedness of certain problems and social facts plausible and as such provides a justification for a specific course of action (Roe 1991; Hoben 1995). "Narratives help decision-makers confidently fill the gap between ignorance and expediency", while they may contribute to shared understanding (Fairhead and Leach 1997: 35). However, a narrative may divert attention away from puzzling parts of reality (cf. Yanow 1996, in: Colebatch 2002: 70). When in early 1997 the government of Rwanda embarked on an ambitious programme for villagization and resettlement, it presented the programme as entirely different from earlier, negative experiences with such programmes in other East African countries. The programme received substantial support from international agencies that accepted and upheld the ‘narrative of difference’ of the Rwandese authorities, thereby neglecting the lessons that could have been drawn from earlier programmes that had largely failed elsewhere (Van Leeuwen 2001).

**Metaphors**  
Metaphors are not just a means to embellish language, but imply “a way of thinking and a way of seeing that pervade how we understand our world generally” (Morgan 1997: 4). Metaphors are paradoxical, in that they can create powerful insights that at the same time become distortions. Metaphors have an element of truth, but it is a truth that is one-sided and in effect denies the complexity of the realities to which the metaphors are applied. By highlighting certain interpretations and forcing others to the background, metaphors result in understanding that is biased, incomplete, and potentially misleading (Morgan 1997: 347ff.). Metaphors lead to people dealing with phenomena as if they were similar to the metaphor used to explain them. For example, in reconciliation the metaphors of ‘process’ and ‘consequentiality’ are often used: divided persons or communities slowly reach a point of reconciliation through a series of steps, each of them leading to the following one. This makes people believe that the progress of reconciliation can be planned and evaluated as if existing of steps. Lederach (1997/2004) has pointed out how reconciliation is often a circular, repetitive and simultaneous activity. Keen (2001) observes how in the interpretation of wars, a pervasive metaphor is that of ‘sides’ as in sport: usually two, often ethnic, whose main interest is to win. Amongst others, this metaphor hides that some conflict actors may gain from prolonging rather than winning war. The term ‘peacebuilding’ is metaphoric in that it suggests a process of building a new structure, starting from a plain surface, and on the basis of a preconceived design (cf. OECD-DAC 2006: 12). As this thesis argues this is a misleading perspective of what overcoming conflict is about.

**Labels or catchwords**  
Labels such as ‘gender’, environment’, ‘sustainability’, ‘participation’, and ‘peacebuilding’, have become so common, that they suggest agreement on what they mean and how to deal with them. Labels make it easier for development agencies to compare and align their programmes to each other. The same counts for the use of categories such as ‘poor’, ‘women’, ‘vulnerable’ (see Escobar 1995: 109ff.) They create the feeling among people they are talking about similar things, and may facilitate collective action. The label ‘peacebuilding’ may unite development organizations that all agree that it is important to work on peace, while masking their different views on how to achieve it (cf. Barnett et al. 2007). In addition, labels may legitimize what they stand for. The label of NGO suggests that an organization is doing good for others and is worth funding (Hilhorst 2003: 7). Like metaphors, labels shape what is viewed and how it is interpreted. The label of ‘civil war’ suggests that a conflict is almost entirely internal to a country. It draws attention away from other dimensions of such conflicts, from alternative ways to respond to it, and from the similarities between civil wars and other types of violence (Cramer 2006: 51).

**Conventional ways of talking**  
Feelings of consensus can also be created through particular ways of presentation: for example use of statistics, schematic representations (Colebatch 2002: 63); or ‘genres’, which are the conventional ways of talking within particular groups of people (Chiapello and Fairclough 2002). Development policy often uses the policy cycle, which is a neat description of the process of policy making. It often remains unclear whether the policy cycle is an accurate description of what policy is like, or a normative description of what it ought to look like (Colebatch 2002: 85-6).
Much analysis of discourse focuses on the power of discourse – how it regulates behaviour, and legitimates power relations and inequalities. I acknowledge the important relation between discourse and power, in particular the ways through which discourse legitimates some interventions and disqualifies others. However, at the same time, I underline the importance of discourse as a cognitive process to simplify reality, a necessary response to complexity. Those different attributes of discourse are often closely interlinked. For example, from the perspective of highlighting the power of discourse, the substitution of the idea that crises move from relief to reconstruction to development in the 1980s by the notion of a continuum between disaster and development may be seen to legitimize organizations with limited mandates to expand their range of operation. At the same time, the discourse of a continuum reflects a real reordering of our understanding of crisis that has very practical implications for the ways we respond to crisis. From a power-perspective of discourse, the portrayal of civil conflicts in ethnic terms proves extremely useful to elites to protect their privileges. Hence, the elite do their best to promote such discourse (Keen 2001). At the same time, understanding conflicts in the global periphery in ethnic terms is also the result of our difficulty to develop alternative, more shaded interpretations. As I describe in chapter 3, organizational interests may play an important role in the appropriation of the term peacebuilding. At the same time, to staff members, talking in terms of peacebuilding may imply a real alternative way of understanding their ongoing interventions. As such examples show, discourse is closely related to power and processes of legitimization, but power alone is too simple as an explanation. Ordering, or the use of particular framings, also stems from the need of agencies to order the world and routinize their work (cf. Hilhorst 2003).

The social life of policy

“Ideas that make for ‘good policy’ – policy which legitimizes and mobilizes political and practical support – are not those which provide good guides to action. Good policy is unimplementable; it is metaphor not management” (Mosse 2004: 663).

One of the major discursive practices that is reflected on in this thesis is policy making. Conventionally, ‘policy’ is presented as a rational process of analysing, selecting objectives and guiding principles, planning a course of action, and implementation; which may be followed by evaluating and modifying the policy. In such a representation, differences between what we see on the ground and the goals of policy result from failure to implement (Colebatch 2002: 52).

This policy paradigm, however, is not sustained by what we experience in practice. Policy is not a linear process that guides practice, but works in different ways and has diverse objectives (Long 2001; Mosse 2004). In practice, policy is not made in locations separate from the action. It is an ongoing process that is shaped along the way. Down the chain of implementation, there are many participants that shape policy in practice. Participants have their own agendas and perspectives of any policy issue. Policy always involves a struggle for advantages (Colebatch 1998/2002). Policy is shaped as a result of personalities and personal visions, social relations and ongoing politics and rivalry within organizations, and diverse demands by outsiders.
Implementing community projects, for example, depends on how effective staff members are in convincing villagers to take up their ideas, but also on the mix of development interventions in the community, and the relations between NGOs and the state, and past experiences with intervention (Long 2001: 33; Hilhorst 2003: 107-110). To understand how policy works out on the ground, we thus need to look at how it is transformed and interpreted down the ‘chain of implementation’.

What is important is not only how policy is made and how it acquires meaning in practice, but also what it does. Policy may exist for different purposes: to create order and make sense of action, to establish routine, or to legitimate (Hilhorst 2003; Nuijten et al. 2004). Rather than simply describing action, policy labels or frames situations so that we can make sense of them in a particular way. In this way, policy directs attention away from other dimensions of the situation. In fact, much policy activity takes place precisely because of the existence of alternative framings (Colebatch 2002: 18). In this sense, policy models may be more important for sense-making within an organization itself than for steering local development processes (Hilhorst 2003: 104). Policy is also about routine. Organizations need procedures or predictable ways of dealing with events (Colebatch 2002: 57). Policy provides such common language or model for decisions making. Routine emerges when people believe that this model is reality, even if in practice no examples conform the model can be found. Policy is also symbolic, as projects cannot be done without believing that it is possible to work systematically towards particular objectives (Hilhorst 2003: 122-4).

At the same time, policy is about power and legitimization. Policy does not just explain an action, it also validates it: “it explains what people are doing, and makes it appropriate for them to do so” (Colebatch 2002: 20). To outsiders, policy may convey the impression of manageable, coherence and rationality, even if this is absent in practice (Mosse 2003: 46). From such a perspective, there is no need for a relation between policy and what is being implemented at all. The role of policy is often “to mobilize and maintain political support, that is to legitimize rather than orient practice” (Quarles van Ufford and Roth 2003: 83; Mosse 2004: 648). Success of development interventions, for example, may depend more on the success of development organizations to promote particular authoritative interpretations of their interventions, than on their practices. Development policy metaphors –such as participation, partnership or governance– are important in this context (Mosse 2003).

In this thesis, I take such a constructivist approach to policy. Policy and intervention models have a social life. They are constantly negotiated, interpreted and transformed in the context which actors make them operate (Hilhorst and Van Leeuwen 2000; Hilhorst and Schmiamann 2002). I look for the underlying or hidden objectives of peacebuilding policies. What are they meant to do, how do they contribute to order, routine and legitimacy? Furthermore, I study the processes of policy making and implementation. Whose peacebuilding policy is being promoted, whose interests does it serve? And how is policy shaped during implementation?
A note on methodology

This research was grounded in the ethnographic tradition. Ethnographic methods allow in-depth insights into the everyday practices of conflict and peacebuilding of the organizations involved. A major methodological device is ‘following the actors’ (Latour 1987; Long 2001). Case studies were done of a number of individuals and organizations to investigate their strategies in relation to peacebuilding and to identify relevant relationships. Extended case studies (Van Velsen 1967; Burawoy 2000) were carried out for a number of organizations to analyse the historical and political meaning of civil-society organizations concerned with peacebuilding and to deepen understanding of how different actors in this field use their knowledge and capabilities to create space for their (institutional) projects.

In addition to more formal interviews and conversations during participation in diverse activities, situational analysis (Van Velsen 1967) and participant observation (Spradley 1979; Burgess 1984) were used to make reconstructions of meetings, informal gatherings and public events in which negotiations took place and strategies were developed. I consider the aim of a case study not so much to be to draw conclusions that can be generalized, but rather to contribute to exploration and detailed description. Whereas in quantitative research the aim is to identify the distribution of particular variables and relationships, the aim of a case study is to identify new variables and their possible interrelatedness. In fact, case studies highlight particularities with the aim of drawing attention to differences and similarities in other situations (Mol and Law 2002: 16).

Valid insights in how discourses and policies on peacebuilding work out, and are (re)negotiated in the process of intervention were gained through interface analysis. Interface analysis focuses on the linkages and networks that develop between individuals or groups at points where different—and often conflicting—life worlds or social fields intersect (Long 2001). Interface analysis can reveal the interplay between multiple discourses, the ways in which power relations get shaped and how different actors give meaning to and transform aid interventions. At interfaces, conflict is defined and negotiated, different parties’ claims are legitimated, and conflict resolution and peacebuilding interventions actually take shape. The most important interfaces for this thesis are those of international organizations and their local partners, and those of indigenous organizations and their grassroots supporters.

Though during fieldwork an ethnographic methodology was applied, reporting in this thesis is less ethnographic in character. It does not follow the convention of including extensive parts of detailed description of the interfaces and actors studied, after which the reader is taken by the hand to interpret them. The principal reason for this is that it is a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995; Burawoy 2000). This implies that I am less interested in the detailed properties of each case than in themes that cut across the different cases. Through the use of vignettes and excerpts from case material throughout the text, the cases are contextualized and the daily practices of peacebuilding presented.
My experiences with an interactive approach

The research on which this book is based applied an interactive approach. I got interested in participatory research set-ups following research I did in 2001. At that time, I conducted research for Wageningen Disaster Studies on local peace initiatives in southern Sudan (see chapter 4), while having a part-time contract with a Dutch peace organization. This organization employed me in the expectation that my research would enhance their lobby work in the Netherlands, while strengthening one of their Sudanese partners.

Unfortunately, over time, it turned out that all of us had different expectations of my responsibilities towards the Dutch peace organization, the Sudanese organization, and my research. According to the desk officer of the Dutch organization, being delegated by them to their Sudanese partner implied that I had to keep her informed on progress made, and compliance with agreements. This put me on unequal footing with the staff of the Sudanese organization who at times perceived me as one of them, and at times as representing the Dutch organization. Though intended to enhance their work to the Sudanese organization, my research was perceived more a disciplining exercise, especially after their relationship with the Dutch organization deteriorated.

A further problem was that at the start ownership over the research was not properly defined. The Dutch organization and I expected that my own research interests and their interest to learn more on possibilities and constraints for local peace initiatives would smoothly go together. However, when I showed my preliminary findings to the desk officer of the Dutch organization, she felt deceived. I had analyzed the problems with peacebuilding as they resulted from the interaction between the different partners, including the role of the desk officer and her agency. The desk officer felt that I had subversively pursued my own private research interests at the costs of her organization. The issue was resolved only one year later when a new Sudan desk officer was appointed who appreciated the analysis and contracted me for an end-of-project assessment of the cooperation between the Sudanese and the Dutch organization.

The experience painfully shattered my optimistic assumption that combining research with working for an organization would automatically be beneficial for both researcher and organization. Cooperation with the Dutch organization showed how difficult it was to ensure that research serves the interests of all parties involved and has their ownership. And though the Sudanese organization provided a venue for my research and had discussed my findings with me, they were not involved in its preparation, nor was I convinced of its usefulness for them. I promised myself that in research experiences that followed, I would devote more attention to assure that my research really contributed to the work of practitioners and that they would develop a sense of ownership of questions, implementation and recommendations.

This personal concern about ownership and accountability of research on organizations corresponded to developing ideas within Disaster Studies (the department at Wageningen University where I did this PhD) and within social sciences. Various researchers at Disaster Studies have adopted ‘interactive research’ – research practices involving collaboration with organizations, in which dialogue and interaction
with staff are central in shaping the research process. This is to ensure that research takes account the interests, concerns and possibilities of the researcher into account as well as the organizations involved (Van der Haar 2006). For doing research on humanitarian interventions in situations of disasters and conflicts—the core interest of our research group—interactive research has added value. It guarantees the relevance of research to the field. It creates interest and involvement from agency staff and contributes to the depth of analysis, as practitioners are motivated to reflect on their own practices and to tap their vast experience and knowledge. Not unimportantly, close collaboration with organizations makes research on the volatile contexts of disaster and conflict practically possible. Interactive research creates reciprocity, and mutual commitment. Finally, responsiveness to the needs and interests of organizations enabling research and the communities involved is also seen as an ethical obligation (see Hilhorst & Jansen 2005).

In the following sections, I reflect on my experiences with interactive research, and explore if and how it contributes to better research. What stands out is that rather than a research methodology, the interactive character of research should be seen as a research intention. The extent to which it becomes truly interactive—being useful to and owned by the different partners involved—is not entirely in the hands of the researcher. The interactive character of research cannot be planned, but develops in the process of collaboration.

Development of the research project ‘Partners in Peace’

‘Partners in Peace’—the PhD research that resulted in this book and in which my adventures into interactive research took place—started to take shape in 2002. My supervisor Thea Hilhorst and I got in contact with the theme specialist on ‘Peace and Conflict’ of the Dutch development organization Cordaid. From a shared interest to explore views and practices of peacebuilding within Cordaid and its partners, a collaborative research programme was born, named ‘Beyond Conflict’. This programme looked into the daily practices of peacebuilding, how Cordaid and its partner organizations learned from their experiences, and how policies within Cordaid developed in dialogue with partners. The research was interactive in nature, and a major tenet was that Cordaid staff and partners would participate in the formulation of questions and the analysis of findings. The research process was partly planned and partly open-ended, building in flexibility and the possibility to adjust objectives on the way.

To facilitate the interactive character of this research, we established a steering committee, including Cordaid desk officers and researchers from Wageningen Disaster Studies. These people regularly met to define the direction the research was taking. The research was composed of a sequence of steps. After each step, findings were discussed with Cordaid and its partners, the general aims of the research were reviewed and new research issues identified (cf. Heymann 2001). Step one was a desk study on learning processes of Cordaid staff in the context of peacebuilding, focussing on partnership and mainstreaming of the themes of peace and conflict (Van Dijkhorst and Hilhorst 2003). Step two was to gain more insight in the possibilities, perceptions and dilemmas involved in peacebuilding activities of local NGOs and networks for
peace. For this field research was conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi in 2003. The latter research resulted in a workshop in Burundi with partners from the region and a workshop within Cordaid to discuss findings and draft recommendations for its peacebuilding policies (Douma and Hilhorst 2004). Step three in the ‘Beyond Conflict’ research programme was my PhD-research.

The interactive character of my research ‘Partners in Peace’ was to be ensured through various strategies. In the proposal, we emphasized the participation of local partners, local grassroots groups and communities in drafting questions, interpretation of findings, and the discussion of the practical and policy implications of this research. In addition to the steering group in the Netherlands, similar groups would be formed in the countries of research, including local scientists, and organization representatives. In those country steering groups we intended to identify research questions of particular relevance to the partners involved on the basis of the more general research themes already identified by Cordaid and myself. We hoped that in this way the research also would contribute to organizational learning within the partner organizations. To further enhance learning, I intended to have staff of partner organizations participate in data gathering.

Our approach stepped away from pure ethnographic projects where a publication concludes years of research and stakeholders are not engaged to develop a sense of ownership about questions and recommendations. At the same time, the approach prevented some of the pitfalls of participatory and action research (see Cooke and Kothari 2001) where ownership is handed over to stakeholders, the importance of theory is undervalued and data gathering relies heavily on group dynamics. Conventional action or participatory research is typically conducted by practitioners who analyse the findings and improve their own practice, sometimes under the guidance of academics. Action research risks becoming dogmatic, being discussed as ‘what it really is/ought to be’, and being juxtaposed to ‘positivistic research’ (Van der Haar 2006). Moreover, it is often expected that action research results in social or organizational change, as it perceives research as part of a process of innovation, emancipation or development, and the researcher basically as a facilitator of change (Coenen 1998), who may participate in the action (Smaling 1998: 2-3). In ‘Partners in Peace’ the aim was to do better research by having different stakeholders co-own the process and participate in the drafting of questions, the collection of data, and the analysis of findings. Nonetheless, the division of labour was maintained – while the researcher was responsible for an independent analysis, it was the responsibility of the organizations to decide on what to do with the findings.

The emphasis on interactive research was also a logical consequence of our theoretical orientation towards complexity. Such an orientation urges one to take into account not only how knowledge from research can be made more useful for participants, but also how knowledge takes shape in the interaction between researchers and researched. Knowledge production is about negotiating the accuracy and correctness of the common-sense knowledge of the researched, in which the competence of the researched parties is as essential as that of the researcher (Coenen 1998: 26). Knowledge production then does not so much depend on applying rules of logic, as on establishing dialogue with researched (Smaling 1998: 13; cf. Byrne 2005: 99). Further, interactive research acknowledges the ‘double hermeneutics’ of
researcher-researched interactions, in which both continuously interpret each other’s behaviour, and change their own behaviour accordingly (Smaling 1998: 7). Moreover, dealing with complexity requires (peacebuilding) organizations to simultaneously formulate perspectives, to change perspectives and to question continuously one’s interventions (Shackley et al 1996). To understand how organizations deal with this requires a flexible and iterative research processes. In such research, where research development, data collection, analysis and dissemination are parallel to policy making and intervention, the strict separation between researchers and researched cannot be maintained.

‘Partners in Peace’ in practice

My research consisted of cooperation with various organizations: Cordaid, and in particular the steering committee of ‘Beyond Conflict’ and the Central Africa and Latin America regional desks; CED-Caritas in Burundi; and Pastoral de la Tierra de San Marcos (PTSM) and Servicios Jurídicos y Sociales (SERJUS) in Guatemala. The forms of collaboration that developed and the participation of partners in the research varied largely. While in some cases the collaboration approached the ideal of interactive research, in others it was more of an exchange of services. In practice I entered into a variety of ‘deals’ with different research partners, as can be seen in the accompanying table (1.1).

Cordaid’s steering committee was closely involved in the development of the overall research questions, while a series of consultations with the regional desks resulted in specific research themes for the regions. These included two themes I finally researched – civil society regional peacebuilding in the Great Lakes Region and organizational development ten years after the Guatemala peace agreements. Involvement of Cordaid staff in data gathering was limited to participation in interviews in The Hague and encounters in the field. During field work, some staff from the regional desks in The Hague also provided inputs. In between and after field work, various Cordaid staff reflected on my findings, by commenting on my reports and on the presentations I gave in workshops they organized.

Though research was foreseen with the Cordaid country office in Burundi, drastic organizational changes left little time for reflection, which made the foreseen research on mainstreaming peacebuilding in the medical emergency programme inopportune. In the end, my contribution to their work was minimal. They, on the other hand, highly facilitated my research by providing office space, inclusion in their security protocol, transport through the whole country, and opportunities for socializing and informal discussion on aid programmes in Burundi.

Local partners had less influence on the initial conceptualization but participated all the more in defining research themes and questions, and contributing to field work. Both in Burundi and Guatemala, my research started with a two-month period of visiting partners from Cordaid and many other organizations to establish contacts and present myself and the research, to conduct general interviews, and to identify possible research topics.

5 The research with them is not included in this thesis, and will not be further discussed.
Table 1.1 - Agreements reached with different partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research partners</th>
<th>Their part of the deal</th>
<th>My part of the deal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cordaid the Hague (international NGO)</td>
<td>Identification of main research questions and themes for the regions Establishing contacts with local partners</td>
<td>Presentations in several workshops Providing inputs to the further development of the ‘Peace and Conflict’ theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cordaid Bujumbura (country office of the above)</td>
<td>Facilitation of my stay in Bujumbura</td>
<td>Presentation on opportunities to mainstream attention for peace in their medical programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CED-Caritas (country-wide development organization of the Catholic Church)</td>
<td>Facilitation of field work Participation in workshops in the communities and conducting part of the interviews Diffusion of findings Co-organization of an international conference</td>
<td>Field research and report on local dispute resolving mechanisms, and the role the Catholic Church could have in strengthening those</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSM (development organization of the Catholic Diocese of San Marcos)</td>
<td>Facilitation of field work Co-organization of workshops in the communities to discuss findings Publication of findings and feedback of findings to PTSM partners</td>
<td>Field research, workshops and report on how their strategies to assist peasants with land disputes worked out Contribution to day to day activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERJUS (development organization)</td>
<td>Full organization of fieldwork Publication of findings</td>
<td>Field research and workshop on the influence of party politics on local development practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Burundi, I hoped that this would result in the establishment of a steering committee with local Cordaid partners. However, Cordaid’s partners regarded each others’ activities as too diverse and no common ground on research themes could be found. In the end, rather than establishing a steering committee, I maintained personal contacts with some partners, whom I consulted regularly. One of Cordaid’s partners, CED-Caritas proposed that I would conduct research as part of their programme to address land disputes of returning refugees, a theme described as a central dynamic of conflict in many of the previous interviews. Staff of CED-Caritas facilitated my field work and co-organized workshops in the communities. We collaborated to organize a conference, where we discussed my findings with other organizations, and in which other Cordaid partners also participated.
In Guatemala, I put less effort into establishing a steering committee, but maintained regular contact with a core partner of Cordaid and some other organizations I had encountered. Both PTSM and SERJUS approached me after I had visited their offices. PTSM asked me to conduct an assessment of their past intervention strategies to assist peasants with land conflicts. At PTSM, in addition to conducting research, I fully participated in their daily activities. I attended meetings with other organizations and government institutions, co-organized workshops, and participated in monitoring and evaluation missions. They co-organized workshops in the communities to discuss my findings, and reflected on my findings in various internal meetings.

The importance of relationships and commitment
In literature on action research, much attention is given to the relationship between researchers and researched. A researcher should establish a relationship of trust with the researched, to guarantee the quality of data gathered and to facilitate that research partners feel free to discuss alternative interpretations of findings (Coenen 1998: 17-8, 27). A researcher should also try to achieve so-called ‘communicative symmetry’, to allow those researched to equally determine topics of conversation, level of sophistication and type of language used (Smaling 1998: 6). In my own experience, an interactive research set-up may enable close interaction, enhance feelings of equality, and develop mutual trust. Participating in the daily activities of an organization facilitated that I came to share much more with my research partners than research alone. With PTSM, I practically became a volunteer staff member, participating in all aspects of office life on equal footing with my colleagues.

However, establishing good relations and trust with research partners is not something specific to interactive research – it is a basic requirement for all good ethnographic research. To me, more specific to interactive research is the need to establish and maintain mutual commitment between researcher and research partners and enthusiasm. In my research, this worked out in different ways.

In the case of CED-Caritas Burundi, the ex-pat coordinator of the social programme was much in favour of his team participating in the research. However, the other team members were less interested in doing actual field work, and contributed only in the initial workshops in the communities and conducted a couple of interviews. Although at the end of the research, the team took care of editing and translating my report and organized a workshop to discuss and validate the findings, for them the research was just one among a series of projects that needed to be implemented. After the start of a multi-million dollar World Bank programme, attention for the land programme diminished significantly, and so did the interest in my research. Though grateful for my work, comments from the team on my final report were limited.

In contrast, from the start of our cooperation the team of PTSM in Guatemala was very committed and remained so beyond the end. They carefully defined the Terms of Reference of my research, organized the initial meetings in the communities, and planned and implemented the verification meetings in the communities together with me. They organized several meetings within the organization to discuss my findings and their implications for their work, for example taking very serious my
recommendation that they needed to give more attention to mediation in their work. They were critical of the final results, and we went through various rounds of editing before the report was acceptable to all of us. The report was published by them and distributed among their partners.

In the case of my principal research partner Cordaid, staff members were in general enthusiastic about the research programme, but they were also buried under daily demands. Interest in my research was sometimes difficult to maintain. Some staff members expected results that would be directly applicable in their work and were impatient for results, which took time to appear. Important was also the open-endedness of the collaboration. While the earlier steps of ‘Beyond Conflict’ were financed by Cordaid, my research was not a regular project with a budget. Rather than being followed up routinely as part of procedures for accountability, it was necessary to actively generate and maintain interest for the research. Participation from staff was on a voluntary basis and was not part of the policy routines and reporting. Halfway my collaboration with Cordaid the steering committee ceased to operate. The driving force behind the collaboration, the officer responsible for the ‘Peace and Conflict’ theme within Cordaid, was given other responsibilities. In addition, policy changes in 2007 resulted in a lower prioritization for the theme. Many staff members got new positions and the new approach left little opportunities to reflect on matters of conflict and peace.

The experiences show that commitment and enthusiasm to research is not something that can be established and planned for. Commitment emerges in the process of doing interactive research, needs to be continuously fuelled, and is contingent upon surrounding policy processes. In my case the difficulty of maintaining the interest of all partners at the same time, the open-endedness of the collaboration, and the many changes in staff and organization over the period of research were important. Furthermore, the process depended much on the enthusiasm and dedication of particular individual people.

Balancing interests of all participants

To assure that my research would be useful to my research partners, they participated in defining questions and interpreting findings. At the same time, the research had to be useful for me. I was not just experimenting with participatory research – I also had to come up with findings on the basis of which I could write a thesis fulfilling academic standards. My research strategy was aimed at respecting the needs and roles of all parties involved. Frankly, reality was not as smooth as theory of interactive research suggests.

When I discussed research questions and the direction of my research with (possible) research partners, questions of a very practical nature were often suggested. For example, they were interested in the effectiveness of particular interventions and the possibilities to make those visible. This was often motivated by pressures from donors to measure results. To me, research into such a topic was advantageous, as it provided easy venues to explore assumptions and imaginations of my research partners. Though, I was also interested in more reflective questions such as: where did particular ideas about interventions come from, why do organizations at all want to measure their effectiveness? To arrive at win-win situations thus required flexibility. In the case of CED-Caritas in Burundi, we compromised on a research question on the
effectiveness of their own interventions on land disputes, including a qualitative exploration into land disputes and what other organizations and local institutions were doing. This made it possible for me to compare different intervention strategies. In Guatemala, with Pastoral de la Tierra, their question on the effectiveness of their legal assistance over the last couple of years was also satisfactory to my scientific interests.

Further, my concern with taking on board diverse interests often led to work of no direct relevance to my academic work, but which nonetheless resulted in valuable insights. Both in the cases of CED-Caritas and Pastoral de la Tierra, the reports I wrote were for practical use – discussing a variety of issues at the same time, highlighting practical implications, and requiring certain inside and local knowledge. Therefore, these reports required major editing before they could serve as chapters in this book. At the same time, investing in the specific concerns of organizations was profitable and –in the end– time-effective. In my collaboration with PTSM, one of the case study communities selected by them first seemed of limited relevance to my research theme. However, this particular case turned out to highlight PTSM’s bias towards legal approaches, an insight that helped me in my analysis of the other case. By to some extent giving my research out of my hands, and by not being too concerned about the ‘relevance’ of my activities, my insights were enhanced.

I also realized that sometimes it was necessary to extract relevant issues from the interviews and so define ‘relevance’ by myself, rather than wait for my partners. In Burundi, it turned out to be difficult to agree on a collaborative research agenda with Cordaid partners. In the end, together with Cordaid the Hague, we agreed to conduct research on land disputes, as many Burundian organizations considered this important. In Guatemala, I built further on this experience and started my research with an exploratory period of more than two months. I agreed with the Latin America desk on a research intention, listing themes of interest for Cordaid that could be specified later. This experience again underlined the flexibility and the time necessary to achieve a balance between the interests of researcher and partners. This guarantees research that is not only useful but also contributes to deeper insights. Interactive research is thus often a matter of balancing various scientific and practical concerns. The most appropriate fit between those cannot be planned in advance.

**Research influencing practice**

Literature on action research is highly interested in the role of the researcher in the practices of the researched. In this, it follows contemporary anthropological concerns with the ‘ethnography of the ethnographer’, and doing away with the notion of a detached and ‘neutral’ observer (Long 1992). A thought-provoking example of this is found with Law (1994), who critically reflects on how his work as a researcher is as much about ordering as the efforts to order of the people he investigates. By taking part in the social processes he/she is investigating, a researcher influences them as well as the perceptions and visions of his/her research subjects. This is all the more the case in interactive research in which participation by the researcher and reflecting with research partners is a central concern.

My presence in organizations frequently had effects. For example, in staff meetings, colleagues from partner organizations repeated observations I had made in
private to underline their statements, even to underline arguments that had little to do with my research.\(^6\) In my earlier work with the Sudanese organization, my own responsibilities in the organization made it difficult to assess ‘objectively’ the effectiveness of strategies to which I had contributed. To prevent too great involvement in the processes studied I accepted no direct roles in the peacebuilding activities of my research partners during this research. This prevented my own concern for these activities to be brought to a good end from interfering with my research. For example, though it contributed to the daily activities of Pastoral de la Tierra, my research reflected on a period much longer than the months during which I worked with the organization. Of course, such strategies remain a bit artificial – influence through participation is unavoidable. In the case of CED-Caritas, my research contributed to legitimizing the organization’s interventions in land disputes. We organized an international workshop, where the efforts of the organization were presented to other NGOs and funding agencies.

At the same time, the aim of my research was also to contribute positively to the practices of organizations. At the time of writing, it is too early to assess to what extent I achieved this. A significant part of the interpretation of my findings only took place after field work was completed, namely in the process of writing this thesis. In some cases, I was able to start discussion on the implications of my findings, but the extent to which research partners have integrated those in further policies and practices is still ongoing and can not yet be assessed. In the case of Burundi, during a return visit in 2007, I realized that my research had not been picked up by Burundian organizations, but by international organizations. This probably resulted from the more effective exchange of information among international organizations. In the case of PTSM, my research resulted in reflection on the legal focus of their programme. A follow up project was started in one of the case study communities because of my research. In the case of my principal research partner Cordaid, apart for a few specialized workshops, I have not yet been able to present all my findings in an ordered and accessible way. This thesis is part of my efforts to realize this.

**Stimulating bias or enhancing reflection?**

By participating, a researcher develops a perspective that is strongly influenced by his/her particular experiences and emotions. This implies that in interactive research one needs to take account of how to prevent the pitfalls of being too embedded, such as bias, prejudice, and dependence. One of the strategies I applied to prevent bias was verifying my findings with outsiders, staff working in other organizations, or fellow academics. I also kept a personal diary in which I noted my feelings, considerations and opinions on the people and organizations I was working with. At the stage of analysis, this enabled me to take account of how my personal experiences of working within organizations might have influenced my observations.

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\(^6\) In this, there is a risk that interactive research may turn into a disciplinary exercise. The presence of the researcher may be interpreted by partners as checking on their work, or research partners may be facilitated into accepting a particular vision of what peacebuilding is about and how it should be done (cf. Hilhorst and Jansen 2005).
Rather than a source of bias, however, I experienced that close participation could also stimulate reflection on one’s own theoretical frameworks and biases. As was elaborated in the case of Rigoberta Menchú at the start of this chapter, within the social sciences anthropological knowledge easily becomes the product of its own mental frameworks and theoretical approaches. Close interaction with research partners forces one to review one’s own frameworks, prejudices and ways of thinking. In my case, I slowly realized that as a researcher I was as much indoctrinated by models of policy making as the people I was researching. Further, as a result of working with organizations, I realized how politically tainted doing research is, and the importance of taking account of one’s own political and ideological positions. In discussing research with research partners, one is constantly challenged to express one’s opinions. In particular in Guatemala, people inquired about my political position regarding the agrarian problem and questioned my affiliation with Pastoral de la Tierra. Various people predicted that doing research with an activist organization would inevitably be biased by the preconceptions and prejudices of my colleagues. This urged me to critically review my data and conclusions. Interestingly, research partners turned out more concerned about political biases than fellow sociologists, who are probably getting used to embedded research.

Furthermore, my research started from analytical concepts – discourse, policy making, civil society, peacebuilding – which were also used among those I was researching. Such concepts pose problems as they are so-called ‘boundary objects’. A boundary object is “a term that facilitates communication across disciplinary borders by creating shared vocabulary although the understanding of the parties would differ regarding the precise meaning of the term in question” (Star and Griesemer 1989, in Guijt 2008: 14). The use of such terms was often confusing for both sides, as each of us had particular understandings of those concepts. At the same time, by participating in organizations, one becomes critically aware of their particular meaning within an organization.

**Striking a balance in interactive research**

Guaranteeing that my research efforts would enhance the work of practitioners, and that my research partners would develop a sense of ownership about questions and recommendations have been major concerns in my research. In my experience, an interactive research set-up contributed to this aim.

In most instances, partners were closely involved in the research design and the interpretation of findings. In all cases, the research process included workshops to discuss and interpret findings. In two cases, partners’ ownership over the research was expressed by a publication of the findings. Still, the extent of involvement in the research varied considerably. My intention to do interactive research resulted in different deals with research partners, and different levels of participation. In some instances, staff of partner organizations actively participated in collecting data (PTSM and CED-Caritas).

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What has become clear is that rather than a research methodology, the interactive character of research should be seen as a research intention. The extent to which research becomes interactive cannot be planned and is not determined by the adoption of particular interactive methodologies. Rather, the interactive character of research evolves as the collaboration develops. Like any policy or intervention model, interactive research has a social life, which is shaped, re-interpreted and renegotiated during its implementation. I have described the importance of commitment in this process and suggested that commitment depends on the flexibility of the research and research partner, the expected benefits for the participants, the extent to which expectations are satisfied along the way, and the enthusiasm of individual participants. The interactive character of research further develops as a result of organizational changes and interests.

I sometimes found it difficult to be working with and assuring the participation of a variety of partners simultaneously. At the same time, over the course of the process, I often experienced that other people than those I had foreseen participated and learned. Interactive research as an intention acknowledges the legitimate right of actors to be involved in efforts to understand their life. At the same time it acknowledges their right to choose not to participate. Practically, this means that rather than focussing on carefully designed strategies to make research interactive, or planning for the best interactive methods, a researcher needs to ensure that space for participation and non-participation is maintained throughout the process.

Finally, to make research rewarding for both researcher and partner organizations, it helps a lot if the overarching, theoretical questions are defined broadly to facilitate the later inclusion of specific concerns relevant for partner organizations. For this, flexibility is a prior condition. In this respect, I was privileged to be funded by WOTRO (Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research). WOTRO appreciated the emphasis on stakeholder involvement in my initial research proposal and did not recoil from the flexible research plan – an attitude not found with every financer.

Does interactive research result in better research? In the below table (1.2), I summarize the advantages of interactive research and the challenges it poses. The interactive character of my research contributed to the usefulness, richness and validity of ethnographic data collected. The interactive research set-up made it evident for actors within organizations that I accompanied them and followed them closely in their daily activities. Working for an organization provided opportunities to observe from within organizations how peacebuilding comes about. Stimulating reflection within partner organizations was to the advantage of ethnography. At the same time, ethnographic methodologies also enhanced the interactive character of my research. Interviews with key informants from organizations provided ethnographic data but also involved those informants in the research. As a researcher being based within an organization enhanced the trust and commitment so necessary to assure the interactive character of the research.
Table 1.2 - Advantages and challenges of an interactive research approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accepts accountability towards those researched</td>
<td>To ensure scientific relevance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results in research topics of direct interest or practical relevance</td>
<td>To maintain commitment and enthusiasm from the research partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encompasses ownership over research and its final results, and assures</td>
<td>Requires time and money from research partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>that they are available and useable for those researched</td>
<td>Makes research dependent on others:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partners may learn from research and research may enhance internal</td>
<td>• Requires continuous investment in relations and assuring commitment,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussion</td>
<td>especially when research takes place over a longer period</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitates doing research:</td>
<td>• Needs investment to assure quality of data provided by partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Enables doing field work in ongoing conflict situations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Partners may provide contributions to research</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Partners may serve as an entrance to other contacts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Results in better ethnography:</td>
<td>Distorts ethnography:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitates relations of trust and communicative symmetry</td>
<td>• Difficult to identify the contribution of the researcher in what</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Enables witnessing organizing practices as well as changing</td>
<td>happens</td>
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<tr>
<td>discourses and perspectives</td>
<td>• Bias as a result of identifying too much with the organization and its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enables discussion with research partners on findings and</td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpretations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Urges the researcher to understand interventions and discourses from</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the perspective of the intervener</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enables flexibility, taking account of changing priorities and</td>
<td>Requires flexibility of the researcher on research topics and planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>developing insights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urges one to think through the politics of research</td>
<td>Requires flexibility of research funder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urges one to write about organizations without discrediting them</td>
<td>May become difficult to maintain focus in the research, and not to be</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>diverted by the moment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research becomes a ‘stake' in legitimating organizations - it promotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>particular interests and provides access to funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How to maintain good relations with organizations and at the same time be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>critical?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Finally, I am often concerned about the moral question of what legitimizes an outsider like me to comment on the practices of fellow people. By getting involved in the efforts of those I am researching and allowing them to have an influence on my research efforts, I experienced this as less of a problem. At the same time, the interactive research set-up taught me more about ethnography. The interactive research set-up highlighted the process-like character that research efforts always have. It also underlined the fact that the outcomes of research are closely entwined with the development of relationships and how research is always oriented by a researcher's own ideology. An interactive orientation may help to acknowledge the actual practice and politics of doing ethnographic research. Maybe the criticism that in interactive research a researcher loses his independence should be reversed. Interactive research requires one to acknowledge that research is always politically or theoretically embedded, a fact that may be easily missed in more conventional research approaches.

Outline of the book

The next chapters of this book analyse international discourses and policies of peacebuilding, and look at a general level at how organizations try to make sense of conflict. Chapter 2 is a review of literature on how policies of international development actors reflect new ways of thinking on conflict and peace since the early 1990s. In particular, the chapter looks at the developing images of civil-society organizations – both their portrayal as the heroes of peace like Rigoberta Menchú as well as the emerging doubts about the roles they can effectively perform. While during the Cold War period, keeping peace was the responsibility of the UN and governmental actors, in the early 1990s there was an increasing acknowledgement of the civil character of conflict and the roles civil-society actors might have in bringing peace. Peacebuilding discourses developed, in which military, policy and development interventions were joined together into a comprehensive strategy. Peacebuilding was taken up by organizations with diverse mandates, many of whom emphasized the peacebuilding potential of local civil-society organizations. Chapter 2 analyses how this consensus on peacebuilding disappeared again in the new millennium, and how donor governments and multi-lateral agencies reclaimed responsibility for peacebuilding from civil society. The focus shifted again: from local civil society to the state as the main actor in accomplishing peace. Nonetheless, there was also continuity in the support of international NGOs to local civil-society peacebuilding. Many of the discussions that came up in the 1990s on enhancing the role of local civil society in peacebuilding continue to be relevant. The chapter ends by outlining new and old questions on civil-society peacebuilding and support to it, some of which will be explicitly addressed in the remainder of the book.

While chapter 2 discusses policy trends and emerging discourses regarding peacebuilding and civil society, chapter 3 analyses how those are reflected in the work of particular international development organizations. What different approaches and concerns emerge against the backdrop of the talking in terms of peacebuilding, what does peacebuilding mean in particular organizations and specific conflict situations?
The chapter explores the peacebuilding landscape and sets the scene for the case-studies to follow. It analyses how four international development organizations have defined conflict and peacebuilding and the roles of local civil society in their mandates and general policies, and maps out their strategies for peacebuilding and addressing conflict in southern Sudan, Afghanistan, and Guatemala. The chapter demonstrates that peacebuilding is not just a policy label but has acquired meaning in the strategies of organizations. It also points out that even if most contemporary development organizations represent a mixture of mandates, diversity remains in how they interpret conflict, peacebuilding and the roles of civil society. While general policies about peacebuilding are reflected in particular country policies, local conditions set limits and pose specific opportunities for peacebuilding practices. The chapter concludes that while the peacebuilding discourses discussed in the previous chapter certainly affect the practices of agencies, this is a slow process.

The remainder of the book consists of a series of case studies describing everyday practices of civil-society peacebuilding in a variety of countries. The aim of these cases is to reflect on the discourses, assumptions, and theories of change that underlie civil-society peacebuilding. By looking at the everyday practices of civil-society peacebuilding, I explore how peacebuilding takes shape within organizations as a result of the different meanings attributed to peacebuilding and visions promoted by all actors involved. In particular, I reflect on how particular representations of complex conflict situations come about and how those inform peacebuilding practice. The cases discuss the historical and political meaning of NGOs concerned with peacebuilding, and look into the opportunities and constraints for such initiatives to contribute to peacebuilding at local level. They also reflect on the collaboration with international donors and NGOs. The case studies concern organizations working in contexts of continuing violence (southern Sudan, eastern DRC), where violent conflict was coming to an end (Burundi) or where violent conflict had ended some time ago (Guatemala, Rwanda).

Chapter 4 analyses the organizing practices of a local women’s peace organization in southern Sudan. The case follows how this organization derives meaning for the actors involved, their clients in the villages of southern Sudan, and the international supporters of the NGO. In this case, support by an international NGO turned into a frustrating process, because of misgivings about the nature of local organizations. The case illustrates how peacebuilding is done by people and the dynamics in their organization are crucial for the success of programmes. It underscores how the practice of policy making and implementation is more related to the internal dynamics of an organization than to the planned objectives of the intervention. The chapter highlights that to understand civil-society peacebuilding better, we need qualitative approaches that focus on the dynamics of peace organizations, the way conflict is experienced in the every day life of local people, and how actors in and around organizations give meaning to it. The chapter outlines such an approach, presenting five properties of local peace organizations, and discusses what lessons can be learnt from such a perspective for the practice of peacebuilding.

The following two case studies look in particular at how the framing of conflict situations works through in interventions. Chapter 5 discusses regional approaches for civil-society peacebuilding in the Great Lakes Region. In recent years, the idea has
gained ground that as conflicts in the countries of the Great Lakes Region are strongly interlinked, regional approaches are necessary to resolve them. This interest in regional dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding is also gaining ground in other parts of the world. Attention to regional approaches is reflected in the efforts of international organizations and donors to promote civil-society peacebuilding. They assume that regional cooperation and exchange between civil-society organizations contributes to peace, and provides an alternative to single-country interventions or regional diplomatic initiatives. The chapter explores what such assumptions lead to in practice. Experiences in the Great Lakes Region show that local and international organizations have difficulty in analysing the regional character of a conflict and developing collaborative regional strategies. Moreover, local civil-society organizations are deeply embedded in the politics of regional conflict. Consequently, the shift to regional peacebuilding approaches remains more theoretical than practical. This chapter suggests that international supporting organizations need to adjust their ambitions in regional peacebuilding, but nonetheless have roles in fostering regional identification among civil-society organizations.

Chapter 6 is about the importance of framing the causes of conflict for peacebuilding. Early 2005, with the expected massive return of refugees and displaced to their home communities in Burundi, many international and local organizations were concerned about the land disputes accompanying their return and the risks those posed for the fragile peace process. Based on this framing of land disputes and considering the weaknesses of the formal juridical system, organizations initiated programmes for strengthening the capacities of local conflict resolving institutions. The chapter reveals that in reality the nature and origins of land disputes was diverse. Though the return of refugees was a factor in disputes about land, there was a lot of continuity between conflict-related and regular land disputes in Burundi. Most actual land disputes were between relatives, rather than between strangers or people of another ethnic group. Many land disputes resulted from state interventions, rather than from problems between returnees and on-staying populations. Most of these latter disputes required solutions at the political level first and foremost. Moreover, local dispute resolving mechanisms could neither guarantee the protection of vulnerable people –both returnees and people involved in more regular land disputes– that was not assured in the formal juridical system. A focus on the vulnerability of returnees turned out to put vulnerable people in general at a disadvantage.

Chapter 7 is about the important question of what the official ending of violence implies for the roles, policies and practices of civil-society organizations. It discusses how Guatemalan civil-society organizations dealt with agrarian conflict, ten years after the 1996 peace agreements. The Guatemalan peace agreements included a detailed agenda for political and societal reform. However, as the chapter illustrates, detailed policies to restructure the unequal land-holding pattern and enforcement of labour laws were implemented slowly and only partially. Among civil-society organizations, this resulted in uncertainty regarding their strategies. The chapter analyses the case of a Catholic Church development organization that provided legal assistance to groups of peasants involved in agrarian conflicts. It explores how one of those groups experienced this assistance and how it contributed to the resolution of their conflict. The chapter discusses how the development organization continuously had to define
how to interpret the conflict and the assistance they could provide as an organization. The choice of the organization to conform to the legal status quo did not result in the justice community members expected. The chapter brings out the difficulties of organizational change, and points to the strong influence of the pace and extent of societal transformation on how organizations can develop. At the same time, it illustrates how framing conflict and intervention is a continuous process in which organizational politics play an important role.

Chapter 8, the conclusion of the book, underlines the importance of looking at the everyday practices of peacebuilding. It points out how international discourses on civil-society peacebuilding have resonated in the policies of international development organizations. However, how such discourses acquire meaning in practice requires one to look at the everyday day efforts of the civil-society organizations concerned – their organizing practices, and the way peacebuilding acquires meaning as a result of the agency of staff members, and people and authorities in the local communities. This chapter emphasizes the importance of contextualizing peacebuilding, civil society and intervention. It underlines the need to further explore the assumptions underlying contemporary peacebuilding work, in particular on the roles of civil society and governance. It highlights the importance of framing in peacebuilding practices, and shows how ordering is as much a cognitive exercise as the result of organizational politics.
Chapter 2
Civil Society Building Peace
The development of an idea

Since the early 1990s, attention has turned to the roles that civil-society organizations can have in building peace. International development organizations, donor governments, and multi-lateral agencies started to reflect on how their work related to conflict, and how to assist the peacebuilding work of local partners from civil society. How has the international focus on civil-society peacebuilding developed? What peacebuilding roles were imagined for civil society?

This chapter reviews the development of what I will call ‘peacebuilding discourses’, the assumptions about civil society they convey, and how those reverberate in the work of international non-government organizations (NGOs). It analyses how the interest in civil-society peacebuilding can be understood in the context of global political developments, in particular the ending of the Cold War, and the emergence of new ideas about the character of violent conflict. Important dynamics were also the sharp increase in international NGO activity, the expansion of their roles, and the increasing popularity of civil society in wider development practice. The chapter shows how discourses on conflict and peace have changed since the beginning of the new millennium and the so-called ‘Global-War-on-Terror’, while space for civil-society peacebuilding was reduced. Nonetheless, the discussions that emerged in the 1990s on
the roles of civil society in peacebuilding continue to engage academics and practitioners. After describing and analysing those trends in chronological order, the chapter analyzes how the civil-society discourse has reflected in three particular domains of peacebuilding intervention: reforming governance, development and economic reconstruction, and restoring the fabric of society. Before elaborating discourses on peacebuilding, let me first examine the meaning of civil society.

On the meaning of civil society

Contemporary definitions regard civil society as the public space between the state and its citizens, occupied by organizations which function separately and autonomously from the state, and are formed voluntarily by members of society to promote their interests and values (Van Rooy 1998; Biekart 1999). Often, the term excludes organizations from the business sphere. The term civil society became widely used in the 1970s and 1980s, to describe civil movements against military dictatorship in Latin America or urging for democratization in Eastern Europe. Civil society referred to the potential of local people to change the relations between state and society, to arrive at more democratic forms of government, and a redistribution of power and economic wealth (see Goodhand and Lewer 1999).

In the 1990s, the meaning of civil society broadened significantly. Kaldor (2003) distinguishes three different understandings that developed. Firstly, the term ‘civil society’ was adopted all over the world by the so-called ‘new social movements’. The language of civil society suited their brand of non-party politics (see e.g. Pearce and Howell 2001; Hilhorst 2003). In a similar way, the term civil society was adopted by transnational activists coming together on issues such as human rights, landmines, HIV/AIDS (Kaldor 2003), that increasingly started imagining a ‘global civil society’. Secondly, an interest in civil society developed as part of the promotion of the liberal democratic ‘good governance’ agenda (see also Lewis and Wallace 2000: ix). Multilateral donors and governments became convinced of the positive contribution of civil society to facilitating market reform and the introduction of parliamentary democracy (Rupesinghe 1998; Crowther 2001; Kaldor 2003). In this, they primarily worked with NGOs rather than with social movements. As a result, to such international actors the term civil society basically came to stand for ‘NGO’, both international and local (Biekart 1999; Kaldor 2003). This went along with a formidable growth of the NGO sector. The end of the Cold War brought about a new freedom for international NGOs to operate, while democratization in many countries in the global periphery allowed new local NGOs to come up. An increase in the percentage of official development assistance spent through NGOs rather than through multilateral agencies, and a doubling in funding for humanitarian assistance further stimulated the formation of NGOs (Slim 1997; Stoddard 2003; Fitzduff and Church 2004). Thirdly, the term civil society came to refer to an assortment of other—often non-western—forms of organization representing a check on state power, including religious and ethnic movements, or local traditional institutions (a.o. Anderson 1996; Richards 1996; Prendergast 1997).

Consequently, civil society now refers to the entire spectrum of associational life (Goodhand & Lewer 1999). The only things that are definitely not civil society are the
formal structures of government. Nonetheless, the boundaries of the concept remain subject to discussion, for example, whether the term should exclude political parties or labour unions, or even northern NGOs, as many of those heavily depend on state financing (Biekart 1999). Further, the (self-ascribed) roles in peacebuilding of those organizations which are called civil society are very different, as I will demonstrate in this chapter. Though my thesis is interested primarily in discourses on the roles of local civil society in peacebuilding, those discourses cannot be properly understood without taking into account how international non-government organizations have included peacebuilding in their mandates and policy strategies.

**Addressing conflict during the Cold War and the offstage roles of civil society**

Before the 1990s, emphasis on the contributions of civil society to dealing with conflict was limited. During the Cold War, the major actors in the resolution of international conflict were the United Nations and in particular the Security Council, and individual governments. Since World War II, their diplomatic activities mainly concerned conflicts related to the decolonization process, conflicts between states, and also some intra-state conflicts. Many of the latter intra-state conflicts were heavily affected by the political rivalry between the superpowers. Cold War ideology certainly influenced their interpretation: intra-state conflict was often either presented as a fight against communist insurgence or as a fight by democratic opposition movements against dictatorship, military repression, and severe inequality.

Direct military intervention in conflicts was reserved to individual governments, rather than to the UN. The principles of state sovereignty and self-determination limited the possibilities of the UN to act against violence within states (Chandler 2001). In the context of the Cold War, the members of the Security Council could seldom agree on military intervention. Until the end of the 1980s, UN peacekeeping missions had only a limited mandate, existing mainly of monitoring cease-fires through peacekeeping forces and civil observers. The major role of the UN was preventing wars through quiet diplomacy. The UN also helped to facilitate settlements in conflicts such as the Iran-Iraq war (1988), and facilitated agreements for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan (1988). The emphasis of UN operations was thus on reinforcing political solutions, usually through diplomacy, rather than military response.

International non-government organizations played important roles in countries in conflict, though in the margins. In the late 1970s, western development organizations increasingly contributed to the activist work of local partners in countries such as the Philippines, South Africa, Chile, and other countries with authoritarian regimes in Latin America. Under the banner of ‘solidarity aid’ those western organizations supported citizen movements against dictatorships and for political reform, or for empowering the poor. Western governments were willing to fund such development projects with political components, as those enabled them to tacitly support the democratic opposition, and bypass authoritarian governments. Consequently, international non-government organizations came to perform a key role in ‘informal
diplomacy’ (Biekart 1999: 72-3). At that time, international organizations framed their support to anti-dictatorial civil movements as a contribution to justice, rather than to peace as would be the case in the 1990s.

Some international non-government organizations worked directly on resolving conflict. Miall et al. (1999) trace how in the 1950s and 1960s the field of expertise of conflict resolution (then referred to as ‘conflict and peace studies’) developed. Pioneers like Johan Galtung and Kenneth Boulding studied conflict as a general phenomenon in society. In the United States, a tradition grew of applied peace organizations, many from a religious background, such as the Quaker peace service. They explored how to build personal relationships ‘across enemy lines’, to decrease misunderstanding, anger and fear (Diamond and McDonald 1996). They exported their knowledge and experiences in alternative conflict resolution and local dispute settlement to their partners in the south.

Increasingly, ideas from this field found their way into mainstream international relations studies, and influenced diplomatic efforts to address conflict at the national level, for example in South Africa, the Middle East, and Northern Ireland (see also Lederach 1997/2004). Simultaneously, the idea of citizen diplomacy developed – the idea that unofficial contacts between ordinary citizens might positively influence formal processes of dealing with conflict. Acknowledging the importance of citizen initiatives led Joseph Montville in 1982 to distinguish between ‘Track-One’ diplomacy as the official, governmental actions to resolve conflicts and ‘Track-Two’ as those unofficial, informal and non-government efforts to resolve conflicts within and between states (Davidson and Montville 1982). Though taking place outside formal political processes, Track-Two diplomacy was believed to create a critical mass lobbying for peaceful solutions, and thereby strengthen Track-One from below. Over the 1990s, the role of citizens in the resolution of violent conflict moved from the margins to the core of mainstream peacebuilding.

From ending conflict to building peace - civil society moving into the spotlight

The central roles of civil society in peacebuilding that developed over the 1990s must be understood against the backdrop of several developments. In the following paragraphs I will first elaborate how a significant rethinking of conflict and peace took place after the Cold War. The roles of the UN in ending violence were transformed and multilateral and international development organizations and governments reflected on how their work related to conflict and might also build peace. The increase in international NGO activity was accompanied by a reassessment of how their mandates related to conflict and peace. Finally, I will describe some of the points of critique triggered by these developments.
New notions of conflict and peace

In the early 1990s, academic and policy attention shifted to the intra-state nature of conflicts. The occurrence of those conflicts was related to the ending of the Cold War: the divisions between the superpowers had contained internal conflicts which now came to erupt (see Wallensteen and Axell 1993; Richards 2005: 2). In the years to follow, various authors concluded that this was a matter of perception. Already before the end of the Cold War, the larger part of conflicts had been of an intrastate nature. As a result of the decline in interstate wars in the early 1990s, the intra-state character of most conflicts became more apparent (Holsti 1996). During the Cold War period, the intra-state character of conflicts was overshadowed by the involvement of the superpowers, or was seen as residual from interstate conflict. Intra-state conflicts were also labelled in ways that devaluated their relevance, such as of ‘low-intensity conflict’ to describe guerrilla warfare and its suppression by state armies.

Emphasizing the intra-state nature of conflict in the early 1990s gave way to underlining that there was something ‘new’ about conflict. Characterizations of conflict highlighted the changing role of the state in conflict. From being the only players in conflict, states became the stakes of conflict, and their authority challenged by secessionist movements (Wallensteen and Axell 1995, in: Miall et al. 1999). State institutions eroded or broke down, lost their monopoly on organized violence (Kaldor 1999/2000), or took part in inflicting violence on their citizens. Most conflict was not fought between regular armies but between factions where the boundaries between soldiers, rebels and civilians are vague. Conflict was seen to ‘informalize’ - violence affected civilian populations rather than rival armed groups, while civilians were not only victims, but became perpetrators as well (Duffield 2001). The character of the ‘new’ warfare was seen to provide ideal circumstances for opportunistic business, looting, and war-lordism (Allen 1999). The ‘New Wars’ thus involved a mixture of violence for political motives, organized crime, and large scale violations of human rights (Kaldor 1999/2001).

Several academics also highlighted the effects of globalization on conflict. Attention was given to the favourable conditions for conflict created by changes in the global economy, such as the impoverishment and instability created by trans-national economies, or the increases in global flows of illegal economic goods (World Bank 2000, Collier 2000, FitzGerald 1999). It was pointed out how conflicts were financed through a globalized war-economy, involving remittances from diaspora communities, military support from neighbouring governments, taxation of humanitarian assistance, or illegal trade in arms and drugs (Duffield 2001; Kaldor 1999/2001). Increased possibilities for communication were seen to provide combating parties with new opportunities (Lerche 1998). Such reflections made observers realize that many so-called intra-state conflicts entailed a high degree of foreign involvement.

Discussions on the ‘new’ character of conflict triggered questions about the ‘root causes’ of conflict, such as the roles of poverty and population pressure, identity issues, and criminality. The controversial work of Kaplan (1994), amongst others, contributed to the classification of new civil wars as ‘identity’ or ‘ethnic’ conflicts. It was argued that the Cold War had kept the lid on conflicts based on ‘ancient hatreds’, which now came to expression and uncontrollably spilled over from country to country (Richards 1996, criticising such perspectives). The emphasis on ethnicity to explain conflict
contrasted to earlier explanations that related civil war to geo-political interests, class-based conflict or ideological differences. It resulted in debates on whether ethnicity itself should be seen as causing conflict, or rather its strategic use by politicians and rebels, and whether ethnicity was an issue of identity, rather than of dominance and class (Doyle and Sambanis 2006: 37). Simultaneously, economic theories of conflict developed, focussing on how competition over scarce resources created incentives for violence. Economists analysed the economic opportunities in war, the rationality of joining rebels rather than farming to make a living, or the factors enhancing probabilities for rebellion to occur (see Doyle and Sambanis 2006: 32-3).

Towards the end of the 1990s, discussions on the roots of conflict came to revolve around two competing interpretations of civil violence: ‘grievances’ versus ‘greed’. Interpretations based on grievance interpreted civil wars as responses to perceived injustices, and highlighted the role of ideology in civil war. Interpretations based on greed pointed out that most ‘new’ civil wars were fought by political actors or criminals motivated by greed. Those interpretations built on analyses on the importance of resource abundance in conflicts in eastern DRC, Sudan and West Africa. The emphasis on greed in explaining conflict met with a lot of criticism. It was argued that it reframed grievances by labelling them as economic and hence depoliticizing them (Richards 2005: 10; 2006), and delegitimized social movements fighting economic inequality and political marginalization (Duffield 2001). By assuming that conflict was basically about criminal leadership, conflict entrepreneurs and violence specialists, it overlooked the interests of normal people in conflicts. Despite the popularity of the idea that resource abundance would result in conflict, the relationship remained disputed (see e.g. Brunnschweiler and Bulte 2008). Such emphasis on greed or grievances in explaining conflict shines through in the strategies to reform governments that developed (see below), which either highlighted combating corruption and predation by states or emphasized that governments needed inclusive, assuring equal development opportunities for all ethnic groups and socio-economic classes.

Although the greed versus grievances debate continued until well into the 21st century, at the end of the 1990s the concern with root causes of conflict diminished. Interpretations of conflict emphasized that causes of conflict were multiple, interlinked, and changing, due to particular incidents, interventions, and changing perceptions (see e.g. Miall et al. 1999; Wood 2001/2003: 13). Violent conflict was increasingly seen in terms of ‘complex political emergencies’; underlining their complex origins, the multiplicity of actors involved, and the complexity of relations between the state, the military and the international political economy (see Goodhand and Hulme 1999). It was pointed out, that the distinction between new and old wars was more a matter of analysis: an overestimation of the characteristics of new wars, and a misinterpretation of old wars (Kalyvas 2000; Cramer 2006: 78; Kalyvas 2006).

Conflict dynamics were increasingly found to be contingent upon contextual factors, rather than root causes (Cramer 2006; Doyle and Sambanis 2006: 41; Goodhand 2006: 179; Kalyvas 2006). Consequently, at the end of the 1990s, there was a rising interest in the fine-grained analysis of violent conflict, and the contribution anthropology could make in this (Goodhand and Hulme 1999). Studies explored the locality specific manifestations of civil conflict, or investigated how violence at state
level was related to violence at the individual level, for example, seeing civil conflict as “a continuation by other means of the violence of everyday life” (Chabal & Daloz 1999, in Allen 1999). Rather than the proximate causes and (structural) conditions under which violent conflict developed, the importance of the individual behaviour of conflict actors was emphasized (Galtung 1996/2003; Brown 2001).

Conflict became understood as a process, with no clear ending or beginning. From such a perspective, war has been described as a “social project among other social projects” (Richards 2005: 5), as but one option in a wide range of social possibilities. In this, there is a lot of continuity between violent conflict and peace (Goodhand 2006). “[M]any wars are long period of (uneasy) peace interrupted by occasional eruptions of violence [...] ‘peace’ can often be more violent and dangerous than ‘war’ [while] fighting draws upon the social and organizational skills people deploy to sustain peace” (Richards 2005: 5).

An important aspect of the rethinking of conflict throughout the last decade has been the relation between gender and conflict. The developing theorizing on this theme illustrates the expanding interest in the informalization of conflict and the increasing attention for its everyday patterns. After the many cases of rape in Bosnia in 1992, researchers came to focus on the influence of conflict on women. In conflict situations, in the absence of men, women have to take more responsibilities in taking care of their families, while at the same time their social roles may be reduced to rearing children for the ‘fatherland’. In the process of militarization, they come to be seen as the ‘bearers of culture’, which raises expectations about their behaviour and makes them particularly vulnerable targets of violence (Byrne et al. 1995/1996).

Increasingly, it was realized that women are not only victims but fulfil different roles in conflict. Conflict may also empower women. Women may be peace builders and combatants, they may take on new economic roles, assume leadership roles in their communities, or in NGOs, and participate in local organizations or governance (Moser and Clark 2001). The question rose whether such newly acquired roles during times of conflict are maintained in peace-time (Byrne et al. 1995/1996; Cockburn 2000). Towards the end of the 1990s the focus on women in conflict changed into attention for gender in conflict. It was acknowledged that men also have specific vulnerabilities, with men being mobilized or victimized by sexual harassment (Lindsey 2000; Lindsey 2001). Conflict affects gender roles of men, for example, by disabling their capacities to take care of their families (Turner 2004). How masculinities are defined and acted upon may change as a result of conflict, and be a source of violence (see various contributions to Correia and Bannon 2006). Further, there was increasing recognition of the continuities of structural violence against women in war and non-war situations (Schirch and Sewak 2005). In 2000, Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted calling attention to the plight of women in conflict and recognizing their important role in peacebuilding.

The emergence of peacebuilding
The new manifestation and/or understandings of conflict and peace of the 1990s were accompanied by changing strategies of international actors intervening in conflict. The roles of the UN in dealing with conflict transformed significantly. Since the late 1980s,
the number of peacekeeping operations increased substantially.¹ This was related to a renewed confidence after the Cold War in the military role of the international community in intra-state conflicts, exemplified in the idea of an emerging ‘new world order’.² No longer hampered by Cold War divisions, the Security Council revived and increased its activities in preventive diplomacy and sanctions. The peacekeeping operations that started after the Cold War were multi-functional missions, integrating political, military, humanitarian, and electoral components. Over the 1990s, the UN more and more resorted to military peace enforcement if no consent could be reached between the fighting parties. International intervention in domestic conflicts was increasingly legitimized, and state sovereignty redefined to prioritize the protection of people rather than their government (see Doyle and Sambanis 2006).

In addition to this redefinition of peacekeeping, the UN expanded its activities for global peace. How this was to be done was pointed out in UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s Agenda for Peace (Boutros-Ghali 1992). Not only should the UN aim to manage conflicts through diplomacy, sanctions and peacekeeping missions. It should also aim for peacebuilding, defined by Boutros Ghali as “actions to strengthen and solidify peace, in order to avoid a relapse into conflict”. He described peacebuilding as part of a four-component package of mutually supporting activities: preventive diplomacy; peacemaking (bringing hostile parties to agreement); peacekeeping (the deployment of United Nations forces and staff in the field), and peacebuilding. The idea of peacebuilding was further elaborated on in the Supplement to an Agenda for Peace (Boutros-Ghali 1995). The supplement emphasized that peacebuilding was not only a post-conflict activity to prevent a relapse into conflict, but also a means to transform conflictive societies into peaceful ones.

The Agenda for Peace highlighted the development of new discourses in the field of development cooperation – those of peacebuilding. Over the early 1990s, narrow definitions of peace as the absence of war or putting an end to violence –or ‘negative peace’– gave space to more encompassing notions of peace as the creation of conditions for the prevention of future conflict –or ‘positive peace’ (Lederach 1997/2004). Peacebuilding should imply structural and institutional changes to come to societies in which people would have fair access to resources, based on social justice, and where fundamental human rights would be respected (Lewer 1999: 12). The importance of institution building and transformation was emphasized in a definition of peacebuilding as the fostering of institutions that can deal in authoritative and legitimate ways with the conflicts that always exist in a society (Cousens 2000: 12). Such structural transformation of a society was to be achieved through a “hybrid of political and development activities” (Chandler 2001), meant to address the root causes of conflict and not just their symptoms. Though such more encompassing ideas about peace had been familiar to peace movements, over the 1990s they were mainstreamed in many organizations.

² In 1990, Presidents George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev used the term to describe the nature of the post-Cold War era and the new possibilities of the world powers for cooperation and to contribute to global peace.
Though a coherent doctrine or set of institutional arrangements for peacebuilding never emerged (Tschirgi 2004, in Goodhand 2006: 179), nonetheless, a consensus developed among international development organizations and donors that peacebuilding implied the combination of different intervention mechanisms, including diplomatic, military, developmental, and humanitarian ones. Peacebuilding became associated with a variety of strategies and activities, ranging from the reintegration of former combatants to the reform of the security and justice apparatus, from technical assistance for good governance and democratic development, to conflict resolution, reconciliation and trauma-counselling. Some definitions even considered action against HIV/AIDS as peacebuilding (see e.g. Brahimi 2000).

On the basis of academic literature as well as peacebuilding strategies and programmes of numerous organizations a number of domains can be identified that peacebuilding addresses.\(^3\) Below, I have presented these different domains in a table (2.1). A division in domains is, of course, partly artificial as several strategies could belong to more than one domain. Rather than presenting a comprehensive overview of what peacebuilding is, the table exemplifies different priorities of peacebuilding, and the processes and transformations interveners hope to enhance.

While the field of peacebuilding expanded, a related development was an increasing recognition of civil-society organizations as central actors for peacebuilding. In the first place, international NGOs believed that they had peacebuilding roles themselves. Further, many international NGOs concurred in the idea that local civil-society organizations were preferential partners for peacebuilding, or should form the starting point for the institutional change and societal transformation necessary for sustainable peace.

**International NGOs taking on peacebuilding roles**

While some international NGOs had always regarded peacebuilding as their core business, organizations working in other fields of expertise—development or humanitarian assistance—started to incorporate peacebuilding in their mandates in the 1990s. This expansion of mandates cannot be separated from the fact that since the early 1980s the number of NGOs in development had vastly expanded and, since the end of the Cold War, so had the number of humanitarian agencies (Slim 1997; Stoddard 2003; Fitzduff and Church 2004). The growth of the sector led to redefining roles and responsibilities.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain of peacebuilding</th>
<th>Examples of strategies by international organizations and governments</th>
<th>Examples of local civil society contributions to those strategies</th>
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| **Diplomacy and peace negotiation** | • formal negotiations (peace conferences)  
• mediation (special envoys, providing good offices, consultations)  
• sanctions, embargoes  
• international condemnation or recognition  
• economic and political co-operation | • informal mediation and facilitation  
• support to local dispute resolving mechanisms  
• civilian peace monitoring  
• organizing local peace conferences and encounters between civilians and rebel groups  
• peace education |
| **Military actions** | • deployment of peacekeeping forces  
• military intervention  
• arms embargoes  
• Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programmes  
• Security Sector Reform  
• de-mining | • early warning  
• campaigns for non-proliferation of small arms  
• support to reintegration programmes for former combatants |
| **Economic reconstruction and development** | • rehabilitation of infrastructure: water, sanitation, schools, medical infrastructure  
• resettlement of refugees and displaced  
• agricultural programmes | • establishing self-help groups, associations  
• programmes for micro-credit |
| **Reforming governance** | • electoral assistance and formation of political parties  
• constitutional reform  
• power-sharing arrangements  
• decentralization  
• international supervision  
• mainstreaming of human rights, gender, anti-corruption | • civic education on elections  
• election monitoring  
• promotion of human rights, gender, anti-corruption  
• support to local dispute resolving mechanisms (including state institutions) |
| **Justice and human-rights protection** | • Security Sector Reform  
• Transitional justice and reform of the judiciary  
• International reporting on and denouncing human-rights violations | • civilian peacekeepers  
• human-rights monitoring and advocacy  
• civic education  
• training staff of the juridical system, security system, police |
| **Restoring the social fabric of society** | • trauma counselling  
• war crimes tribunals  
• truth commissions  
• reparation programmes | • functioning as counter-balance to divisive politics  
• advocacy for restorative justice, forgiveness, and alternative forms of conflict handling  
• exchange programmes, meetings of civilians from different sides  
• promotion and training of local conflict management institutions  
• demonstrate by life and example the values of reconciliation |
In the first place, many international development organizations reflected on how their work related to conflict and peace. Through their solidarity work in the 1970s, various western development organizations had been involved in conflict and peace-related work, although this had not been interpreted as peacebuilding. Such politically oriented work had ended in the 1980s, as a result of pressure by donors for more accountability and professionalism. Further, the end of the Cold War had made agencies hesitant to support ideological organizations in countries where democracy was formally re-established (Biekart 1999; Douma and Hilhorst 2004). Over the 1990s, development organizations focused again on how to respond to the political instabilities in the countries where they were active. Increasingly, development organizations working ‘in’ conflict aimed to prevent that their regular development activities promoted conflict. Several organizations also tried to work ‘on’ conflict, contributing to peace through their development activities (Goodhand 2001). Some adopted the resolution of conflict and peacebuilding as a specialized theme with separate programmes. Others ‘mainstreamed’ peace in all activities, by becoming conflict sensitive (Hilhorst and Van Leeuwen 2003). The idea that development interventions could enhance peace also emerged among multi-national development organizations without a mandate to work in conflict situations. As relief, rehabilitation and development were increasingly seen as inter-connected and simultaneous activities, countries in conflict became legitimate working areas for multi-lateral organizations like the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank (White 2000). Those organizations presented development assistance as a necessary response to conflict. They saw conflict no longer only as causing the failure of development – the failure of development was also seen to cause conflict (Wood 2001/2003: 23). Development thus curiously began to be cause as well as cure to conflict.

Secondly, peacebuilding became a concern among humanitarian organizations. In the 1990s, the classical humanitarian principle of neutrality was increasingly subject to discussion. Humanitarian organizations grew concerned about the interplay between assistance and the dynamics of conflict, resulting in the credo for agencies to “do no harm” (Anderson 1996, 1999). The aftermath of the Rwanda genocide was a turning point. Here it was painfully experienced that aid could fuel conflict: the assistance to Rwandese refugees abroad enabled the recuperation of the militia residing among those refugees (SCJEEAR 1996). Another eye-opener was southern Sudan, where emergency food rations were channeled towards fighting groups, thereby prolonging the fighting (African Rights 1997). Some humanitarian agencies responded by minimizing the impact of aid on society and limiting themselves to neutral life-saving service delivery. Others instead contemplated how to maximize their interventions and make them functional to peace. A favoured strategy was strengthening ‘local capacities for peace’ (see Anderson 2000), in particular through activities that enhance civil society. Finally, various humanitarian agencies –especially those with a dual mandate in development– were particularly worried about how aid eroded local institutions and organizing capacities (Hilhorst 2007). They argued that principles from regular development cooperation, such as sustainability and participation, also applied in emergency situations (Allen and Morsink 1994). From this perspective, rather than implementing projects themselves, they favoured working through implementing partners, and strengthening local institutions.
Finally, also many international peace and advocacy organizations adopted the emerging peacebuilding discourses. Now that Cold War-related advocacy and civic education, as well as the proliferation of nuclear arms had come to an end, many peace organizations were searching for new roles. A number of them expanded their work and changed their East-West focus to a North-South one. The Dutch peace organizations Pax Christi and IKV, for example, became closely involved in supporting local peace initiatives in conflict regions in developing countries, and participated in international coalitions for disarmament and the strengthening of the international justice system (Schennink 2001). Partnerships with peace and human-rights organizations in countries in conflict were advantageous for both sides. They helped local partners to get international attention, and at the same time enabled peace organizations to do well-informed lobby work in Europe. To give substance to their new roles, peace organizations further aimed to enhance the work of local partners by bringing them together for dialogue and mediation, by capacity building, and small scale development projects (see diverse contributions to Schennink and Van der Haar 2006).

As a result of the expansion of their traditional peacebuilding work with local partners, peace organizations thus moved closer to the practice of development organizations. At the same time, some of the larger relief and development NGOs integrated components of informal conflict resolution practices in their work (Aall 2001). Moreover, the pacifist discourse of traditional peace and advocacy organizations was adopted by large international lobby organizations such as International Alert, Saferworld, and the International Crisis Group (Reimann and Ropers 2005). The inclusion of peacebuilding by a variety of organizations thus contributed to that mandates of organizations increasingly approached each other. This did not mean, however, that organizations were also operating in the same way. Despite talking about apparently similar themes, in practice, the different pedigrees of organizations remained influential, with different visions on peacebuilding and the roles of civil society prevailing (Schennink and Van der Haar 2006, see also chapter 3).

The imagined roles of local civil society in building peace

The role of civil society in peacebuilding could expand due to political conditions that started to favour civil society in the 1990s. Formal diplomacy had always focused on inter-state conflicts, regarding conflict management as the concern of states and international organizations. The main actors in conventional mediation had been states, represented by their ‘enlightened leaders’, who acted on behalf of ‘national interests’, which supposedly corresponded to the interests of all their citizens. Changing notions about the character of conflict in the 1990s resulted in a questioning of those practices (e.g. Wehr and Lederach 1991; Stedman 1996, 1997). It was acknowledged that in contemporary wars both state and non-state actors played a role, while it was often unclear whose interests the leaders or fighting parties represented. How to assure that peace agreements would be seen as legitimate and acceptable by all stakeholders? In addition, the ambitions of international diplomacy changed. The aim was no longer only to settle disputes, but also to prevent future conflict through transforming and democratizing societies. This was impossible without involving those that had been
marginalized or that had not taken up arms. Such concerns resulted in increasing political recognition for civil society in resolving local conflicts (Diamond and McDonald 1996). Moreover, it was acknowledged that civil society should participate in formal peace processes. Consequently, several international development organizations, the EU, and the UN developed strategies to enhance civil society participation in diplomatic efforts to solve conflicts. The Netherlands-based European Centre for Conflict Prevention, for example, was established specifically to enhance participation of southern peace organizations in official diplomacy.

The interest in the potential contributions of civil society to peacebuilding evolved at a time when the concept of civil society became popular in development cooperation in general. In wider development practice, civil society had become the “imagined agent of development” (Pearce 2005). Civil society was viewed as more efficient than governments in bringing development (Rupesinghe 1998). Moreover, in the peacebuilding discourses of the 1990s, strengthening civil society became seen as contributing to good governance and a democratic state (see Bebbington et al. 1997; Biekart 1999). The notion developed that civil-society organizations had potential for building more democratic political institutions, enlarging political space for grassroots change, and generating alternative thinking to poverty reduction (Lewis and Wallace 2000). Evidence for the correlation between civil society and good governance had been found by Putnam (1993), who showed how long traditions of associational life in northern Italy had created the ‘social capital’ responsible for economic growth and good governance (see Smillie 2001). A healthy civil society could enhance good governance by playing the role of ‘watch-dog’ on the state, or acting as political opposition. Civil society was further presented as a democratic alternative to the centralized and autocratic state (Van Rooy 1998: 6). Civil society could be an alternative for states that failed to provide development to their citizens, or as an alternative channel for people to express their interests and get them acknowledged (Crowther 2001).

The expanding literature on civil society hence added arguments for acknowledging civil society contributions to peace. Civil society was attributed the capacity to build bridges between polarized groups, promote dialogue and reconcile people (e.g. OECD-DAC 1997). “[Civil-society organizations] can build inter-communal links that are critical to reconciliation, have comparative advantage of local knowledge and contextual understanding of barriers and opportunities to making peace at local level, and, in contrast to international organizations, have inherent understanding of the postconflict situation” (Prendergast and Plumb 2002: 329; see also Aall 2001). Civil society was seen to represent the forces in favour of peace in a society, and as more representative and closer to the grassroots than government institutions (ECCP 2004: 84). Numerous international NGOs and UN agencies integrated support to local civil society in their peacebuilding policies. They regarded civil-society organizations as the most appropriate entrance to working on peace, or made the development of a healthy civil society the objective of their peacebuilding programmes. In the table (2.1) presented above, examples are given of the various contributions that local civil-society organizations could make in different domains of peacebuilding.
In the discourse on civil society and peace, special attention was given to the role of women in peacebuilding, in particular since the Fourth UN World Women Conference in Beijing in 1995. International development organizations have come to attribute particular peacebuilding qualities to women. Women would be more interested in peace than men, being innately peaceful (Anderson 1999), or having more to win by opting for peace as a result of the constraints conflicts imposed on them. Others believed that women might reach a much broader grassroots base (Kant 1998). The peacebuilding qualities of women have been qualified by observations such as that women also may directly or indirectly support conflict, or that in many cases, women can only make themselves heard by speaking as mothers, as illustrated by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (Davids and van Driel 2001). Just the same, the international discourse on women and peace resulted in wide-spread international efforts to strengthen women’s capacities for local conflict resolution, supporting women lobby groups, and fostering a ‘culture of peace’. Some attention has also been given to promoting the representation of women in official peace diplomacy, for example the ‘engendering the peace’ programme of the Dutch embassy in Nairobi and Khartoum (see chapter 4). Security Council Resolution 1325 called specifically for a larger representation of women in peace processes.

Developing criticism on the peacebuilding agenda

While the role of civil-society peacebuilding grew over the 1990s, expectations were quickly sobered by experiences and critical reflections on the peacebuilding agenda. First, the envisaged ‘new world order’ and the militarization of UN peacekeeping accompanying had mixed results. While the UN successfully negotiated peace and established transitional authorities in El Salvador, Cambodia and Mozambique (Doyle and Sambanis 2006: 2), the more ambitious military operations in Somalia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia were disastrous. This diminished confidence in the new military role of the international community in intra-state conflicts and its proneness for peacekeeping. Between 1995 and 1997, the UN did not establish any peacekeeping operation, and called instead for a radical rethinking of UN peacekeeping (Doyle and Sambanis 2006: 17). Consequent UN reforms underlined the importance of clear and achievable mandates for peace-operations, as well as the political back-up of states (see APFO/IAG/Saferworld 2001; Chandler 2001; Duffield 2005). However, the UN appeared unable to repeatedly generate the military capacity necessary for such a wider role. Peacekeeping increasingly became the responsibility of the NATO or other ‘coalitions of the willing’, rather than of the UN (Chandler 2001). This was even more the case after 9/11.

The great expectations of a concerted, global –military– response to conflicts thus faded away. What remained was the expansion of the NGO sector with their many, but uncoordinated efforts for peacebuilding. Consequently, cynics have come to regard those efforts as a ‘fig leaf’ covering the failures of the international commitment to intervene in civil war (Eriksson 1996; Slim 1997; Atmar 2001). It was argued that to the international community, local peacebuilding activities were less costly, less diplomatically risky and less insecure than engaging in international military interventions or international diplomatic efforts for peace (Duffield, 2001). From such
a perspective, civil-society peacebuilding was not so much the most appropriate response to new global realities, but rather the ‘default’ option. The prominent peacebuilding roles attributed to women seem to conform to this interpretation. Discourses on women’s contribution to peace rarely lead to a proper representation of women in official peace diplomacy, and in practice their peacebuilding roles are particularly associated with grassroots level (Rupesinghe, 1996). This raises the question whether the interest in women for peace bears evidence of an elevated respect for women’s leadership qualities or rather, whether it concerns the degradation of peacebuilding to the low-profile, informal domains, that happen to be mainly inhabited by women (Duffield 2001; Hilhorst and Van Leeuwen 2005b).

The expansion of the work of international NGOs and the emphasis on civil society also led to critical reflection on the underlying assumptions. Experiences from the field and evaluations toned down expectations of the contributions international NGOs could make to peacebuilding (Goodhand and Lewer 1999; Hulme and Goodhand 2000). Further, discussion developed on the peacebuilding roles of local civil society. Much peacebuilding work was based on idealized and ideological images of civil society, with little distinction between character, levels and types of civil society. International development organizations and local organizations, self-help or public interest, service delivery and advocacy organizations were often all referred to as belonging to the same category. Various researchers warned to be careful when generalizing about civil society. Hewitt de Alcantara (1998) pointed out that many civil society initiatives have no explicit political objectives, or even depend on the maintenance of the political status quo rather than its transformation. Some exponents of civil society may have an anti-democratic character or an exclusionist agenda, the so-called ‘un-civil society’.

In particular, peacebuilding discourses tended to represent civil society as neutral force in favour of peace. Such a notion neglected the internal conflicts and ethnic biases of civil society, and the different visions on political options and tactical approaches (Cardoso 2003). As Crowther (2001) argued, “civil organisations are often set up precisely to cope with and strengthen an interested party’s hand in conflict with other interests”. In the Philippines, for example, several civil-society organizations that implemented development activities or provided services had their roots in the underground revolutionary movement (Hilhorst 2003). Many of the civil-society organizations in pre-genocide Rwanda that received the wholehearted support of international agencies were part of a clientelist system linking them to an exclusionist government (Uvin 1998). The question arose to which extent civil society is representative of the grassroots or is speaking on behalf of a constituency at all. Discussing the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chandler (1999) pointed to the large gaps between the civil society associations supported by international institutions and the Bosnian people they claimed to represent, and the limited participation in civil society associations. Further, in peacebuilding practice the concept of civil society is often reduced to refer to NGOs. The risk is that other important institutions such as churches, trade unions, community organizations and traditional leadership institutions are then neglected (Hulme and Goodhand 2000:21). Authors such as Crowther (2001) warned that the overall focus on civil society neglects that it is sometimes more appropriate to strengthen (local) state structures.
Questions were also raised about the support to local civil society by international organizations. Some warned for the potential harmful effects of interventions by international NGOs, which in their eagerness to pursue peace indiscriminately funded local organizations without thinking through how their support could be sustained or whether it contributed to the establishment of strong local organizations (Miszlivetz and Ertsey 1998; APFO/IAG/Saferworld 2001; Schennink 2001). Various observers – including many development practitioners themselves– have pointed out how the perception of local civil society as neutral force in favour of peace may depoliticize peacebuilding work (Duffield 2001). While such a perception of civil society is convenient for donors and international NGOs (Crowther 2001), not taking account of the political character of civil society may result in unexpected results. Such concerns continued to dominate discussions on civil-society peacebuilding among international organizations in the new millennium.

After 9/11 - from peacebuilding to addressing insecurity

“If we’ve learned anything from Sept. 11 it is that if you don’t visit a bad neighbourhood, it will visit you” - New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman (in Renner 2005: 9).

“The security of people is as important as the security of states and we believe that each has the potential to be mutually reinforcing” - UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Danilo Türk (in ECCP 2004: 74).

The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the controversial invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq resulted in a re-evaluation of what violent conflict was about. Academics and politicians alike have come to emphasize the global character of contemporary violence and terrorism. In contrast to the limited interest for economically less developed states and marginal countries in international politics during the Cold War period, and even in the 1990s, now they featured important roles in analyses of global security (Macrae and Harmer 2003; Renner 2005: 9). It was underscored that terrorist networks like al-Qaeda had prospered in contexts of pervasive poverty and the absence of democratic governance structures, finding safe havens in states like Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia (Atwood 2002: 335).

The focus on the global character and the worldwide implications of violent conflict reflected an important shift in international thinking. In the new millennium there was increasing thinking in terms of threats to global security. This was a major breach with the 1990s. In the early 1990s, the notion of ‘human security’ took root, as an alternative to the conventional interpretation of security as an issue of states. Human security focussed on the security of individuals, outlining the need to protect the citizens of states from violent conflicts, or more broadly, to protect them from threats such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation (Frerks and Klein Goldewijk 2007). The notion also resounded in the peacebuilding discourses from the 1990s, whose area of interest was the human security of the citizens of unstable states
or countries suffering from civil war. In contrast, security discourses in the new millennium emphasized how insecurity affected citizens worldwide, including citizens of western countries. From first being individualized in the 1990s, security became globalized. Two important and partly conflicting interpretations developed about the nature and character of the threats to global security.

**Islamic militancy and illiberal states**
The first and dominant discourse on global security highlighted the threats posed by Islamic terrorists and the danger of undemocratic and illiberal states. This interpretation has had a profound impact on notions and practices of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and has had several implications for civil society. The concern with Islamist militancy and international terrorism resulted in a redistribution of roles among international actors. Authors notice a waning legitimacy of the UN in its role as a peace builder at the advantage of the United States (Macrae and Harmer 2003; French et al. 2005; Harcourt 2005). The Iraq invasion scattered hopes for a unified international response in combating global terrorism, and a central role for the UN in global governance (French et al. 2005: 160). However, rather than a breach with the past, this dominant understanding of security in many ways reflected continuity with the late 1990s. The unilateral decision of the United States to invade Iraq was in line with the ‘new interventionism’ that became current, in which states regarded themselves as having the right –even if there was no approval from the UN– to intervene in local conflicts and failed states (see Glennon 1999). A difference was, that whereas such interventions in the 1990s were framed as protecting people's human rights, the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq were more clearly set in a frame of global security, where the interests of the local population was added as a lame afterthought.

This dominant understanding of global security resulted in a de-emphasis of peacebuilding in favour of military intervention. Indeed, as a result of the idea that ‘poverty is the terrorist’s ally’, some authors observed a new urgency for adding development cooperation to the mix of diplomatic and security interventions (Atwood 2002: 349). For example, the World Bank pointed out that failed states provided fertile ground for terrorism and that poverty reduction was more important than ever (Wood 2001/2003). The Millennium Project Report of the UN reiterated that development was the lynchpin of collective security (Tschirgi 2005). Nonetheless, many governments interpreted terrorism rather as a military issue, and development as a strategy to combat terrorism moved to the background (Clements 2005; Rice and Graff 2005). The failure of a state to live up to international security standards legitimized international military intervention (Duffield 2005; Renner 2005: 9-10). The emphasis on military intervention also resulted in shifts in funding at the expense of peacebuilding and development. Funds for the demobilization and reconstruction in Afghanistan have been channelled away to the military intervention in Iraq (Cosgrave 2004; Renner 2005: 15-6). In 2007, the European Union planned to spend ODA
budgets on fighting terrorism. Overall, most western countries’ official development assistance and contributions to the MDGs (68 billion USD in 2003) fade in comparison to their military expenditures (almost 700 billion USD) (French et al. 2005).

A variety of threats to security
Parallel to this dominant interpretation of global security, an alternative interpretation developed which emphasized more amorphous security threats and the need for non-militarized remedies. Rather than focusing on violent conflict and terrorism, this broad interpretation of security was concerned with a whole range of ‘problems without passports’: “endemic poverty, convulsive economic transitions causing growing inequality and unemployment, international crime, the spread of deadly armaments, large-scale population movements, recurring natural disasters, ecosystem breakdown, new and resurgent communicable diseases, and rising competition over land and other natural resources, particularly oil” (Renner 2005: 3). Indicative of this discourse is the 2005 year-report of the World Watch Institute The State of the World 2005: Redefining Global Security. This discourse found the Nobel Prize Committee on its side, and was exemplified by the awarding of two Nobel Prizes: in 2004 and 2007. In 2004, Kenyan activist Wangari Maathai received the Prize for her contributions to democracy, the promotion of the rights of women, and her activism for sustainable development and the protection of the environment. In 2007, Al Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), were awarded the Prize for creating understanding of the connection between human activities and global warming, and the measures needed. According to the Norwegian Nobel Committee, extensive climate changes “may induce large-scale migration and lead to greater competition for the earth’s resources. […] There may be increased danger of violent conflicts and wars, within and between states”.

I consider this latter interpretation of global security as a counter-discourse that posits itself in contrast to the dominant understanding of global security. It describes international terrorism as just one among a multitude of threats to human life, and as representing a mixture of threats such as rogue states, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and terrorist organizations (Renner 2005: 15). And while in the ‘Global War on Terror’ failed states and terrorism were often seen as causes of insecurity (Richards 2005), the counter-discourse talks of growing inequality and social insecurity, of which despair and extremism are the symptoms. Confusingly, both discourses use the same language of ‘security threats’. To some extent they are reconcilable, as both believe that security is a global problem that requires global solutions. At the same time, their starting point is different: global security interest versus human security. Further, they emphasize different methodologies: addressing causes of insecurity through development intervention, nurturing participatory

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governance, and global cooperation; versus military intervention, and –as it has been called– ‘bombing people into democracy’.

Consequences for peacebuilding

As a consequence of such developments, the appreciation of peacebuilding has changed. In the 1990s, it had been emphasized that more comprehensive approaches were needed for building peace in failed states, in which humanitarian and development interventions were made coherent with political and military interventions. Now, with the merger of the agenda for dealing with failed states with the war against terrorism, this issue of coherence increasingly turned problematic (Macrae and Harmer 2003). In Afghanistan and Iraq, military personnel have taken up peacebuilding or humanitarian roles (Stoddard 2003). International NGOs got concerned that humanitarian and development interventions became tools in the ‘Global War on Terror’ – means to political and security ends rather than inalienable rights of local people. They also feared that the mixture of humanitarian assistance with military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq put aid workers in danger as they were associated with the occupying powers and lost their neutral identity (Macrae and Harmer 2003; ChristianAid 2004; Cosgrave 2004).

These fears among humanitarian practitioners were reflected in academic discussion. Various authors in a special volume of Development (Harcourt 2005) are deeply worried about the power politics and interventionist agenda underlying peacebuilding policies since the beginning of the new millennium. They warn that peacebuilding is overtaken by external strategic and economic interests. Rather than a democratic agenda negotiated by people experiencing conflict, peacebuilding has turned into a nation-building agenda, designed by the multilateral financial institutions, at the interests of powerful donor countries on one side (Guttal 2005), and conditioned by Washington’s ‘Global War on Terror’ on the other side (Bendana 2005; Pearce 2005). Guttal talks in this respect of the ‘violence of reconstruction’ -the resources for rebuilding lives, economies, societies, and political systems come at an extremely high price, with long-term implications (Guttal 2005). Harcourt (2005) underscores how this way of peacebuilding undercuts efforts to build new forms of global political legitimacy, as it translates into little more than imposing new political leaders enhancing their own interests, and rules out genuine self-determination. An important concern of peacebuilding post 9/11 is thus: whose agenda is being promoted, whose democracy and whose peace? (cf. Pearce 2005)

At the same time, observers argue that international development organizations themselves contributed to the affiliation between their interventions and political agendas. Over the 1990s, international NGOs have been calling for western military interventions for humanitarian purposes. They have acted as distributors of relief and humanitarian assistance provided by their governments, or relied on government funds for their programmes. As a result, they are seen by local people as carrying out the foreign policy objectives of their governments (Guttal 2005: 77). And in fact, organizations often also share the same goals as the military or their governments, as Slim (2004) argues for the case of Iraq and Afghanistan. All believe that peace will come from good governance, effective development and improved livelihoods. All
argue for security, and rule of law, and aim to transform society towards liberal peace and prosperity.

Further, it appears that talking in terms of peacebuilding is increasingly being replaced by other terms, such as state-building (see below) (cf. Tschirgi 2005), and ‘human security’. The term human security is often interpreted to imply not only protecting people against violence, but also against other threats, such as poverty. To which extent the term then implies practices different from the already wide variety of practices considered as peacebuilding cannot yet be assessed. The term appears attractive for its connection with human rights – it defines economic and social wellbeing as individual rights of citizens, rather than concerns whose fulfilment depends on the discretion of governments. The notion resonates with the rise of rights-based approaches in development organizations. Rights-based approaches view poverty as the result of inequality and a denial of rights by powerful groups (see contributions to Gready and Ensor 2005). From this perspective, development is only possible if political and civil rights are guaranteed. The term ‘human security’ reflects concerns with social justice and political reform which are now defined as absolute rights, rather than a possible goal of peacebuilding.

Despite those trends, many development actors remain concerned with peacebuilding. The surest sign of the survival of this concern was maybe the 2005 establishment by the UN and its member states of an intergovernmental Peacebuilding Commission, Support Office and Fund, to improve the coordination of peacebuilding operations. The peacebuilding commission would work closely with the UN Security Council and ECOSOC (Strand et al. 2005; Tschirgi 2005: 50). As the next chapter will show, many international development organizations carry on peacebuilding in ways similar to the 1990s.

What does this all imply for the peacebuilding work of local civil society? The new preference for military responses to global insecurity diminished the financial and operational space of civil society in peacebuilding (Clements 2005). Apart from decreases in funding, perceptions of civil society also changed negatively. Governments in different parts of the world redefined insurgents, political opposition, and local civil organizations advocating for change as ‘terrorism’, hoping thereby to legitimize internationally their harsh military responses to such movements (Cosgrave 2004; Van Tongeren et al. 2004; Clements 2005; Renner 2005). Moreover, donor governments have re-assumed responsibilities for conflict and peace that in the 1990s were left to international development organizations. Geo-political interests in failed states resulted in a renewed focus on re-establishing states, rather than on enhancing the role of civil society in governance. On the other hand, the fact that civil society is now seen as a potential threat to security also warrants a new focus on civil society: to ensure the engagement of civil-society actors in the national peace project. The effects for civil society are thus mixed.6

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Diminished appreciation for civil society’s peacebuilding roles in the global political scene coincided with sobering experiences with the actual involvement of civil society in formal peacebuilding. Global advocacy of the international NGOs contributed to the establishment of the International Criminal Court, and international restrictions on the arms trade and the use of mines. Some see this as evidence of the emergence of a global civil society with important roles in peacebuilding (see Fitzduff and Church 2004; Nuijten et al. 2004; Renner 2005: 11). However, the question is whether local civil-society organizations may acquire equally important roles in their own context. Despite efforts of multinational organizations, such as the EU and the UN, participation of local civil society in formal peace processes –promoted so much during the 1990s– continues to be marginal (Aall 2001; APFO/IAG/Saferworld 2001; Schennink 2001; Barnes 2002; CTWG 2002; Cardoso 2003; ECCP 2004; Fitzduff and Church 2004; Saferworld/InternationalAlert 2004; Van Tongeren et al. 2004). In practice, the role of local civil society in peacebuilding is thus often limited to localized peacebuilding work, and advocacy.

In countries that remain outside of the spotlight of the ‘Global War On Terror’, there is a lot of continuity in practices as well as discussions on civil-society peacebuilding and international support. International development organizations and donor governments are often concerned with questions of effectiveness of local organizations in peacebuilding, and the impact that particular interventions by civil society interventions may have on overall conflict. International organizations continue to contemplate which particular capacities of local organizations need be strengthened. Further, in the new millennium, discussion arose on the importance of supporting institutions of the state (Goodhand 2006), and the roles that international development organizations should play in this. Many discussions were also about the nature of the working relationship between international NGOs and local organizations, and the inherent tensions in such relations (Schennink and Van der Haar 2006). Though many international NGOs regard themselves as partners to the local organizations whose peacebuilding work they support, in practice, they also finance those activities. The question is then to which extent local organizations conceptualize their own interventions, or take over the peacebuilding agendas of their donors – whose peace is being promoted? (Pearce 2005). Finally, discussion continued on the political agendas and interests implicitly underlying peacebuilding interventions (Duffield 2001; Wood 2001/2003; Reindorp 2002; Goodhand 2006).

Thus, while over the 1990s a seemingly shared vision emerged on the roles of international actors in conflict in developing countries, since 9/11 this feeling of consensus has been scattered. The notion of peacebuilding was slowly replaced by the notion of addressing new ‘security threats’. In practice this notion referred to different ideas. Many donor governments and some multi-national organizations came to focus on the threats posed by terrorism to global peace. Addressing security threats again became perceived as a military effort mainly, and legitimized far-reaching interventions

7 For example, UN-Resolution 1325, which was an import effort to guarantee women inclusion in formal peace processes. (see Resolution 1325, Adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th meeting, on 31 October 2000, S/RES/1325 (2000)).
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in other countries. Concern with governance was replaced with a focus on re-establishing governments and state-building. In this perspective, space for civil-society organizations was reduced. The latter continued to be important, albeit in the role of security threat that needed be appeased rather than in the role of partner for peace. At the same time, a counter-discourse developed focusing on the multiplicity of threats to security in the world. To some extent, the term 'human security' has replaced peacebuilding. Despite the changing global context, many international development organizations remained concerned with how their activities contributed to peace and the strengthening of local civil society. Consequently, many of the discussions from the 1990s on the peacebuilding roles of local civil society and the appropriate support by international NGOs continued to be relevant in the new millennium.

Domains of peacebuilding intervention

The preceding sections chronologically discussed changing assumptions about the roles of civil society in peacebuilding. I already discussed the growing focus on civil society in the domain of formal diplomacy and peace negotiation. In the remainder of this chapter, I review three other domains, which are of particular concern for the case studies in the following chapters. Those are: reforming governance; economic reconstruction and development; and restoring the social fabric of society. In those domains, changing ideas about conflict, peace and the roles of civil society are clearly reflected.

Reforming governance as peacebuilding

At the beginning of the 1990s, a wave of democratic openings in eastern Europe, central Asia and Latin America, created optimism about the possibilities for the promotion of democracy over the globe (Shin 1994: 161). Western-type democracy became regarded as the most effective promoter of liberty, political participation, and legitimate government. Democracy was also seen as an important instrument of conflict management (Rothstein 1992; De Nevers 1993; Mansfield and Snyder 1995; Douma et al. 1999). Democracy would prevent the exploitation of ethnic differences (Peterson 1994; Diamond 1999; Smith 2000), promote the equitable distribution of resources, and contribute to state legitimacy (De Gaay Fortman 2000). In this perspective, elections had an important role to play. After a war, they would transfer power to a legitimate government, and function as the first step towards nurturing democratic institutions. Moreover, elections would enable reconciliation, through enabling all factions to propagate their agendas (Kumar 1998: 6; Joseph 1999: 9).

Over the 1990s, the ideal of democracy became increasingly criticized. It was observed that in many cases the introduction of democracy only resulted in superficial changes (Kumar and Ottaway 1998: 55; Diamond 1999; Joseph 1999: 6). It was doubted whether western democracy was appropriate in all the contexts where it was promoted. Analysts pointed out how the introduction of democracy in Africa’s weak states fed into historically developed regional or ethnic divisions and greedy winner-
takes-it-all competition over resources (see Ellis 1996; Bratton and Van De Walle 1997; Rothchild 1997; Joseph 1998; Young 1999; Van Walraven 2000). In many cases, rather than contributing to peace, the introduction of democracy aggravated conflict. Elections intensified competition or resulted in massive violence, and further weakened central authority (Adekanye 1995; Mansfield and Snyder 1995; Kumar and Ottaway 1998; De Nevers 1993; Rothchild 1999; Luckham et al. 2000). Such negative experiences made some analysts urge for alternatives to liberal democracy, such as power-sharing – the creation of broad-based governing bodies, in which minority representation is assured, at the expense of democratic competition (Horowitz 1991; Kaufman 1996; Sisk 1996; Reynolds and Reilly 1997; Diamond 1999).

Towards the end of the 1990s, the promotion of democracy continued to some extent, yet was largely overtaken by a preoccupation with governance. International interest in governance originated in the late 1970s, when the central role of the state in economic and social welfare was discredited. Over the 1980s, the ‘crisis of the state’ resulted in an interest in the market, and later in civil society, as alternatives for state-led development (Nuijten et al. 2004). This was accompanied by a shift from ‘government’ to ‘governance’ to label the process of governing, and the notion that governing is not so much about decision making and implementation but about the weaving together of the activities of a range of participants, also non-governmental ones (Colebatch 2002). The increasing interest in the role of non-state actors in governance did not do away with the central role of the state, but resulted in different ways of imagining state-society relationships (Nuijten et al. 2004).

Such thinking on governance also resonated in discussions on peacebuilding. Over the 1990s, many studies on violent conflict highlighted the implication of the state in conflict (see Allen 1999; Diamond 1999; Joseph 1999), and pointed out that state-society relations were among the primary reasons why people had turned from politics to violence to resolve their differences (cf. Goodhand 2006: 180). To multilateral organizations and donor governments, strengthening capacities for governance became a major strategy for peacebuilding. ‘Good governance’ became seen as essential for a wide range of issues, ranging from encouraging economic growth and reducing social inequalities, to enhanced participation, accountability, protection of human rights, and limiting military expenditure (Wood 2001/2003). At the same time, the disenchantment with the state resulted in a focus on civil society strengthening. Civil-society organizations were imagined to be capable of checking and improving government practices to address conflict and development, or even as the most appropriate institutions for resolving conflict. It was argued that through revitalizing civil society and supporting local political reconstruction, people could carve out areas for autonomous action in authoritarian states (Ottaway 1997: 5-6). A strong civil society could control or even replace authorities, and nurture alternative and more peaceful forms of governance. For donors, the balance between supporting civil-society organizations and local authorities often tipped in favour of civil society.

However, high expectations of civil society’s contribution to peaceful governance were dampered by the authoritarian suppression of nascent (Zambia) or even vibrant (Nigeria) civil society (Joseph 1999: 3). Particularly in Africa, socio-economic conditions appeared unfavourable to generating a countervailing influence that could force authoritarian regimes into concessions. It was also observed that many civil
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organizations shared the despised characteristics of formal institutions (such as corruption and clientelism) or were even controlled by state actors (e.g. Ellis 1995). Such observations have resulted in that analysts started questioning whether for transforming state-society relations the emphasis should be on civil society. Ottaway (1997) argued, that to transform governance, society in its entirety needed to be addressed, in particular political forces. Diamond pointed out that the “single most important and urgent factor in the consolidation of democracy is not civil society, but political institutionalization” (Diamond 1999: 259). Goodhand (2006: 183) concludes that to manage, resolve and recover from armed conflict, no institutions are more important than those of the state (see also Chesterman 2004; Paris 2004; Voorhoeve 2007).

This concern with political institutionalization reflected in the agenda of multi-lateral organizations. Since the beginning of the new millennium, they became highly interested in the functioning of governments, therein particularly concerned about the threats that weak states posed to world security. Renewed efforts were put into state-building – to help failed states to get back on track. The language gaining currency talked of establishing the ‘rule of law’. The term points to the existence of internally recognized and legitimate legal order with clearly defined powers; security for individuals and respect for basic human rights; an independent, functioning justice system; and independence of the media to check corruption and abuse of power (Voorhoeve 2007). An important aspect of the state-building agenda was the idea of security sector reform. Security sector reform is concerned with the deficiencies of the military, police and other law enforcement agencies, and seeks to rebuild and reform these, with the ultimate goal of supporting governance in transitional states (see Fitz-Gerald 2004). UN peace-operations started to include demobilization and reintegration of combatants, the training of police and election monitoring, and the promotion of human-rights awareness among police and armies (Van der Lijn 2006).

Rather than a renewed concern with establishing political processes and assuring the inclusiveness of governments and political participation, the state-building agenda appears mainly concerned with establishing the institutions of the state. This implies quite a redefinition of peacebuilding. Instead of cultivating political processes and institutions to authoritatively and legitimately manage group conflicts (Cousens 2001: 12) its aim is now the establishment of functioning state institutions. From the new interventionist rationale (see above), international governments take far-going responsibilities in this. Chandler (2006) points out how this far-reaching interference of the West in the governance of non-Western states is not accompanied by an acceptance of responsibility for its outcomes. In Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, governance is promoted as a technocratic transformation, without addressing the social and political divisions existing in those post-conflict states. According to Chandler, this results in ‘phantom states’ that continue to depend on international supervision and lack the capacity for self-government.

In short, the emphasis on democratization and elections of the early 1990s first has given way to a focus on governance and the role of civil society in this to as a precondition for lasting peace. In the new millennium, many researchers and development practitioners have refocused on the state as the preferred agent of
societal change, and on government. The renewed focus on strengthening the rule of law and the notion of state-building is an exponent of this.

Nonetheless, even if general attention has shifted again in favour of institutions of the state, for development organizations it remains important to further investigate and define the roles that civil-society organizations can play in the development of better state-society relations, as well as in dealing with violent conflict. They need to take account of the diverse contexts in which institution building takes place. It is also important to investigate the motivations underlying programmes for civil-society peacebuilding, and how international organizations supporting local civil society evaluate existing relations between the state and civil society, and which alternatives they imagine.

**Development and economic reconstruction as peacebuilding**

*Mu nda harara inzara hakavuka inzigo! ('an empty stomach will bring anger in the morning') - Burundian proverb*

In the 1990s, many development organizations included resolving conflicts in their mandate, or regarded development assistance as peacebuilding, for example in the so-called ‘Development-for-Peace’ projects. This discursive linkage of conflict, peace and development can also be observed in the policies of multi-national development organizations, some of which so far had refrained from working in countries in conflict. For long, the World Bank did not consider conflict a theme of their concern. However, in the late 1990s, the Bank started to work on post-conflict recovery and reconstruction, in a range of conflict-affected countries (Wood 2001/2003:25). 8 Publications by World Bank researcher Paul Collier on economic causes and consequences of conflict re-affirmed the linkage between conflict and poverty, underscoring the contribution that development could make to prevent conflict (Collier 2000). Boutros-Ghali’s *Agenda for Peace* (1992) and UNDP’s *Human Development Report* (1994) saw development cooperation as central elements in the in pursuit of peace (see also UNDP 2001: 20). In the EU’s security strategy, strong emphasis is given to development and the eradication of poverty to security. The EU now acknowledges that “development is one of most powerful means at [our] disposal for conflict prevention”.9 Among donor governments, similar ideas became current (see e.g. Pronk 1996).

Among multi-national organizations and donor governments, the development agenda has come close to the agenda for good governance. In their perspective, national development and strategies to improve the conditions of the poor basically require effective and accountable public institutions and sound policies (Mikos 2001;

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8 The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), one of the five institutions that now comprise the World Bank Group, was once established to facilitate post-war economic reconstruction in Western Europe, and this new emphasis on reconstruction may be seen as a return to the World Bank’s original mandate.

UNDP 2001: 20; Wood 2001/2003). Often, in the practices of multilateral organizations, strategies for the promotion of civil society for development do not differ substantially from those to promote governance. This is not surprising, taking into account that most multilateral organizations have government institutions as their primary partners.\(^\text{10}\) In contrast, for many international development organizations, the distinction between the governance and the development agenda remains more pertinent. From my interviews during the case studies underlying this thesis, it appears that many international NGOs interpret their development interventions in a variety of ways. Some indeed include efforts to support local civil society to enhance their contribution to government. Others focus on enhancing technical capacities of civil-society organizations to implement community based development programmes, to enable them assisting the needs of under-served populations, filling the gaps left by the state. Again, in such programmes, governance relations may also play a role – rehabilitation of public services may be accompanied by efforts to promote community participation in their management. To others, economic development and rehabilitation of service delivery is seen primarily as a precondition for reconciliation or a form of social justice, rather than related to a governance agenda.

The equation of peacebuilding with long-term development has resulted in discussion. The assumed relationship between poverty and conflict does not pass the test of empirical analysis: poor countries are not necessarily more violent (De Zeeuw 2001). Moreover, development assistance might strengthen vested interests in a continuation of war, and in boosting war economies. It may support corruption or help to perpetuate an unjust status quo. In the case of Rwanda, development assistance changed little in the highly centralized state system that facilitated the organization of genocide (Uvin 1998). Large-scale modernization and development projects may contribute to conflict, depriving people of their land and livelihoods without appropriate compensation, a process which in the Philippines is referred to ‘development aggression’ (Heijmans 2004: 124). As Cramer (2006) argues, often, development is not even possible without (often violent) conflict, while violent conflict may contain dynamics that bring about progressive change (see also Galtung 1996/2003: 70). Cramer observes how contemporary practices of war financing may contain the seeds of institutional, organizational, and even political, development (Cramer 2006: 12).

Much debated is the introduction of neo-liberal economic reforms –favouring a small state and a free market economy– as a strategy for post-conflict reconstruction and for putting countries back on track towards development (Duffield 2001; Wood 2001/2003; Cramer 2006: 14). Observers notice how such economic reform programmes may weaken social and political stability in countries emerging from violent conflict (e.g., APFO/IAG/Saferworld 2001: ch1, 4-6). Therefore, Paris argues for a slower-paced approach in which stable institutions are established before all efforts are put on liberalization and democracy (Paris 2004). Others are even more pessimistic of neo-liberal economic reform programmes. Klein (2007) argues how neo-liberal reforms have been aggressively promoted in post-war and post-natural

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\(^\text{10}\) It should be noted that the linkage between development and peace has also resulted in more attempts by multilateral organizations to include non-government organizations (Frerks 2007: 46-7).
disaster situations, making use of the public disorientation following these events. She underscores how multi-national companies have raised extreme profits from the introduction of free markets in those situations, at the expense of reconstruction. In Klein’s political economy of reconstruction, the end of crisis is not obstructed by local greedy warlords and arms traders, but by the promoters of the ‘regular’ neo-liberal economy, and global corporate interests. Finally, Duffield warns against the implicit assumption underlying development as a strategy for peacebuilding, which presents conflict as a temporary aberration of the normal peaceful way of development of a society, as a disease, or as unaccomplished development. This representation of violent conflict as failure of modernity legitimates far-going interventionist policies to reform, and to reinvent and remodel society “to stem the regressive tide” (Duffield 2005).

Discussions on the contribution of development to peace remain unresolved. Though the strategies for reconstruction and development currently applied might be conflictive, at the same time, few observers would argue that peacebuilding is possible without any form of economic and social reconstruction and development. For international NGOs and donors it is important to scrutinize how through their programmes they intentionally or unintentionally take positions in those debates. Important issues in this context are the way in which development is being promoted, whose development is being promoted, and who decides on the direction to go. An important question is also the role that civil-society organizations might play in this.

Restoring the social fabric of society as peacebuilding

“Real reconciliation cannot be achieved without a thorough transformation and democratization process. True reconciliation can only take place if we succeed in our objective of social transformation” – Thabo Mbeki, then Deputy President of South Africa (in Scott 1999: 352).

Over the 1990s, many development organizations have come to believe that the restoration of the social fabric of a society is a precondition for lasting peace. In Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, after violence had come to an end, perpetrators and victims of violence had to continue living together. Researchers and development practitioners acknowledged that in such cases, there was a need to address “deep-rooted, intense animosity; fear; and severe stereotyping” (Lederach 1997/2004: 23). This restoration of relationships is often referred to as ‘reconciliation’ (Lederach 1997/2004: 34; Assefa 2005: 637). Reconciliation is sometimes seen as a method of creating encounters between parties in conflict, with the aim of exchanging perspectives and feelings, to arrive at mutual understanding and compromise (Assefa 2005). More often, reconciliation is defined as a process. Lederach describes reconciliation as a paradigmatic shift in addressing violent conflict, as a “movement away from a concern with the resolution of issues and towards a frame of reference that focuses on the restoration and rebuilding of relationships […] as the central component of peacebuilding” (Lederach 1997/2004: 24). The title of his book, Building Peace; Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies, expresses this merger between
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peacebuilding and reconciliation. Here, reconciliation is not so much a separate domain of intervention, but rather a perspective on what peacebuilding should be about – the restructuring of relationships. In this, the focus is not so much on the issues at stake in conflict, but on the experiential and subjective realities of people in conflict (Van der Mark 2007: 36).

Reconciliation as a process refers to a variety of elements such as truth, healing, forgiveness, reparation and justice, which are seen as inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing in diverse ways (Lederach 1997/2004; Huyse 2003). It is argued that truth-telling and understanding why violence occurred may have a healing effect on individuals, may re-humanize victims and perpetrators, and may lead to new moral order, and thus to justice in the future. Forgiveness may be a way for victims and perpetrators to acknowledge their common humanity and release anger and fear. Many discussions on reconciliation concern the relative importance and most appropriate order of each of those elements. To result in reconciliation, acknowledgement of past injustices need be accompanied by certain measures to redress those, and to prevent them from re-occurring in the future. To be effective, reconciliation might also require economic development and changes in living conditions.

A variety of mechanisms to address past violence and heal societies have been developed, at different levels. In some countries, Truth Commissions were established, the most well-known in South Africa. In other instances, for instance in Guatemala, reconciliation was to be achieved through reparation schemes and official apologies to former victims. War criminals from some countries have been prosecuted by the International Criminal Court. In many countries traumatized by violence, international and local development organizations facilitate reconciliation meetings and interfaith dialogue at community level, or are active in trauma healing and psycho-social support.

Many efforts focus on the strengthening of local conflict-resolving mechanisms or traditional justice systems. Such institutions are believed to be rooted in the local culture and history, to have intimate knowledge of local realities, and to be more trusted or effective than state institutions. As many such institutions are based on consensus decision making and principles of restorative justice they are seen as more effective in arriving at locally accepted solutions (see e.g. Prendergast 1997; Ntahombaye et al. 1999; Wardak 2004; Dexter and Ntahombaye 2005; Edossa et al. 2007). At the same time, questions are posed if such institutions are still able to fulfil their traditional roles, having eroded by conflict, or being perceived locally as elitist and reaffirming pre-war inequalities (e.g. Hutchinson 1996; Reyntjens and Vandeginste 2001; Deslaurier 2003b). The question is, furthermore, whether their traditional roles for dispute resolution can be stretched to comprise dealing with violence on a massive scale, or societal reconciliation (Molenaar 2005). An important issue is also their legitimacy – are they locally seen as inclusive, representing both men and women, and are they sensitive to international principles of human rights? (Tiemessen 2004; Fierens 2005) These questions recur in chapter 6 on efforts to strengthen local dispute resolution institutions in Burundi.

In practice, particular mechanisms to deal with a violent past and to restore relationships enhance some elements of reconciliation more than others (see Minow 1998), and are thus often highly contentious. For example, human-rights organizations may believe that prosecution of perpetrators is a precondition for achieving peace. To
them, a mechanism focussing on forgiveness or amnesty may be too easy on the perpetrators and might even encourage impunity. Conflict resolution organizations, concerned primarily with ending violence, may want to involve all important parties, even if some of them have abused human rights. This might require that truth on injustices be temporarily postponed (Aall 2001; Reimann and Ropers 2005: 32). Different responses to past violence affect the extent to which truth is achieved and the past is acknowledged. The choice for particular reconciliation mechanisms is thus a highly political one.

The appropriateness and applicability of reconciliation mechanisms further depends a lot on the local context. For example in Rwanda, ideally all perpetrators of genocide should have been judged in court. However, the juridical system was unable to deal with the massive amount of suspects, and a compromise needed to be found: the revitalization and reform of the traditional *gacaca* system. In many cases, the massive numbers of people suffering from trauma make individual treatment an unlikely option. In addition, various authors discuss how the process of reconciliation depends heavily on the power positions of protagonists when violent conflict is brought to an end (Minow 1998: 133-4; Bloomfield 2003; Assefa 2005). In Rwanda, conflict ended in the military victory of the minority group that was the main victim of the genocide. The predominant approach in dealing with past violence was to emphasize the punishment of perpetrators, rather than forgiveness. In El Salvador, those that came to power after violent conflict were accused of perpetrating human-rights violations, and promoted the idea of forgiveness and a focus on the future. In South Africa, conflict ended with a stalemate, and a balance was negotiated between punishment and forgiveness, in the form of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Assefa (2005) points to the roles that civil society can play to counter-balance the predilections of the state for particular mechanisms to deal with the past. Through small-scale reconciliatory activities, civil society can introduce alternative ways of doing justice in societies where the emphasis is on punishment. Where emphasis is on forgiveness and the future, civil-society organizations may stimulate perpetrators to address the past. Civil society can further promote the adaptation of traditional conflict-handling mechanism at the community level to address reconciliation. By their life and example, prominent members of civil society can demonstrate the values of reconciliation, and provide inspiration for the rest of society. Where reconciliation is not taking place at higher levels, civil society can create momentum at lower level. At the same time, Assefa acknowledges that civil society mirrors the divisions and fault lines in wider society. Civil society may be biased, lack objectivity and distance, and often need a reconciliation process themselves before they can play reconciler roles (Assefa 2005).

A strong underlying assumption of the idea of reconciliation is that without restoration of the social fabric no lasting peace is attainable. The above discussion shows the variety of preconditions that are believed important for this. However, this raises the question to what extent international NGOs and donors impose their notions of reconciliation on local societies. It remains important to take into account how local people understand processes of reconciliation and its preconditions.
Images of civil-society peacebuilding

This chapter has analyzed the development of the idea of civil-society peacebuilding. While civil society peace building was marginal during the Cold War, over the 1990s, peacebuilding discourses developed that attributed a major role to civil-society organizations. Increasing acknowledgement of the informal character of conflict resulted in that civil society was seen to present the local voices so far marginalized in formal diplomacy. Against the backdrop of the expansion of international NGO activity, their growing interest in peacebuilding, and the increasing popularity of civil society in wider development practice, civil society was imagined to contribute to peaceful societies in a variety of ways. Civil-society organizations were seen as alternatives to the state in providing development needs. Further, they were imagined to contribute to good governance and democracy through playing watch-dog roles or act as a form of political opposition, proposing development alternatives. Finally, they could play roles in healing societies torn apart by conflict, by mediating in local conflict and other reconciliation activities. In the new millennium, the seeming consensus that peace should be built as a collaborative effort of political, military and development actors disappeared. Peacebuilding roles claimed –and acquired– by international and local civil society over the 1990s were reclaimed by donor governments and multi-lateral agencies. In the context of the ‘Global War on Terror’, focus shifted again from peacebuilding to military intervention, from local civil society to the role of the state and its institutions in reforming governance, and promoting development.

While opportunities diminished, many international NGOs and local civil-society organizations continued to be involved in peacebuilding, underscoring diverse roles for local civil society. This continuing interest in peacebuilding, however, has not resulted in the resolution of a number of problems that already emerged in the 1990s. So far, talking in terms of peacebuilding has not created consensus on what peacebuilding should look like. In practice, development actors differ considerably in the extent to which they prioritize particular domains, nor is there agreement on the sequencing of interventions, or the need of those being implemented simultaneously. The review of different domains of peacebuilding pointed to different assumptions implicitly underlying peacebuilding, for example, an emphasis on properly functioning state institutions, a desire to promote particular neo-liberal economic values, or a need for restoring the social fabric of society before peace can be achieved.

Nonetheless, crosscutting all those different domains of peacebuilding is a concern with civil society. In each domain discussion is ongoing on the most appropriate contribution and roles of civil society, on its relation to the state, and on how and whether their work may be enhanced through international interventions. Few of those discussions have been resolved so far. It appears that, in the absence of a wider consensus on what peacebuilding is, at least there is a shared belief that in all those domains civil society should play an important role. In the next chapter, it is explored how this works out for four selected international agencies.
In the previous chapter, I discussed the changing context of operation in situations of violent conflict, as well as policy trends and agendas regarding peacebuilding and civil society. How do those changes reflect in the work of international development organizations? What different approaches emerge against the backdrop of these general trends, and what do they mean in practice? This chapter is an exploratory mission into the landscape of peacebuilding. It investigates the diverse ways in which international organizations integrate conflict and peace in their mandates, policies, and interventions.

Firstly, the chapter looks at mandates and general policies of international organizations. How do they talk about conflict and peace, and define their responsibilities for peacebuilding? How do they consider the role of civil society in their policies? Presumably, organizations with different mandates, specializations, and historical and ideological roots have different understandings of peacebuilding. How does this ‘character’ of an organization matter in how organizations approach peacebuilding?

Secondly, the chapter explores the actual peacebuilding practices of organizations in countries in conflict. How are they dealing with conflict and what kind of
peacebuilding activities do they have? In what different ways do their programmes relate to peace and conflict? How do they actually work with local civil-society organizations? What differences exist in the practice of different organizations? How do organizations adapt general policies to their operating context? How do actual peacebuilding practices reflect mandates and general policies of organizations?

To answer these questions, I analyse mandates and general policies of four international organizations, and look at their interventions in three particular countries. The following organizations are analysed:

- **The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** is an intergovernmental organization, traditionally focussing on (long-term) development. The organization has a yearly budget of 3.5 billion Euros, not including the budget for coordinated UN system activities. Since the beginning of the new millennium, UNDP has interpreted its development activities as strongly related to conflict prevention and recovery.

- **The Catholic organization for relief and development Cordaid** is the result of a merger in 1999 of four Dutch Catholic organizations, all coming from a tradition of charity work through Dutch missionaries and bishops in developing countries. More recently, they have shifted to working through local organizations that were not necessarily church-based. Their merger resulted in a multi-mandate organization with a tradition in medical care, relief assistance, structural development cooperation, and lobby/advocacy work. Cordaid has a yearly budget of about 160 million Euros, of which 65% comes from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the 2001-2006 period, ‘Peace and Conflict’ was one of the thematic areas in which Cordaid was active.

- **Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)** is a non-governmental and ecumenical organization, mandated by the protestant churches of Norway, operating through churches and church-related organizations in emergency response and long-term development work. It has a yearly budget of about 50 million Euros, of which about one fourth comes from private donors, and the remainder from the Norwegian government. In collaboration with the Norwegian government, it facilitated peace processes in various countries. NCA is also involved in local peacebuilding work.

- **Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)** is an activist membership organization, founded in the 1930s by Norwegian trade unions and the labour movement, as an expression of solidarity with the opponents of fascism in Spain. Currently, it has local chapters throughout Norway, active in youth work, health and relief, and social projects. In addition, NPA is involved in international development, functioning as the humanitarian organization of the labour movement in Norway.

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It is working from a rights-based approach. It does not have a separate strategy for peacebuilding.

At the start of the research on which I based this chapter, I searched for a UN organization and three international NGOs: one humanitarian, one development, one lobby or human rights, and one peace organization. Among the UN organizations I selected UNDP, as the organization has developed into a major player working on crisis prevention and recovery. In the identification of international NGOs, it turned out rather difficult to find a match of organizations that were also working in the same three countries. Moreover, though most organizations have their origins in particular intervention strategies, many organizations have become multi-mandated and work in a variety of domains. Rather than for their present programmes, I selected the above organizations for their different religious and ideological roots. I chose Cordaid because it was my principal research partner in my PhD research. The selection of two Norwegian organizations was not made on purpose, but represented the best ‘fit’.

To select the case study countries, I used the following criteria: different continents; different phases of conflict (ongoing violence, transition to peace); diversity in the issues at stake; and diversity in the level of international involvement. The analysis looks into the following cases:

- **Southern Sudan**, where the 2005 peace agreements resulted in widening opportunities for organizations to implement development programmes. The conflict in southern Sudan seems to represent a ‘typical African conflict’, including ethnic and governance issues, and conflictive exploitation of natural resources. This case played a prominent role in discussions on the negative effects of humanitarian interventions.

- **Guatemala**, where a 1996 peace agreement ended a civil war heavily influenced by the Cold War. This case was chosen because post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction have now been ongoing for more than ten years.

- **Afghanistan**, where a transitional government was installed in 2001, but hostilities continued. Afghanistan was chosen as an example of a post 9-11 conflict, as a case where military and humanitarian intervention have gone side by side, and where international (ideological) interests continue to play an important role.

For the analysis, the organizations concerned provided policy documents on the case study countries, while I conducted a series of 19 interviews with desk officers and field-staff. I also used data collected and interviews conducted for the case studies of this thesis and research I conducted prior to this project.

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3 A special word of thanks to Martine Jeths, who assisted me in collecting the documents, contacting the organizations, and conducting some of the interviews.
Peacebuilding in mandates and general policies

International development organizations are not a homogeneous group. The organizations discussed in this chapter stem from different practical and ideological traditions. In different ways, they have come to regard peace, conflict and peacebuilding as relevant to their mandates. The organizations differ significantly in the extent and the way in which they address those themes in their general policies. Cordaid and NCA explicitly aim to work on conflict and peace. UNDP interprets its regular intervention strategies as contributing to peace. NPA does not specifically work on conflict and peace, but considers that its empowerment of marginalized people influences conflict in society.

Over the 1990s, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been considering its role in the pursuit of peace. UNDP’s Human Development Report (1994) saw development cooperation as central element in bringing about peace. In 2001, UNDP launched a strategy for crisis prevention and recovery, pointing out how the organization could contribute to preventing natural disasters and conflicts, early warning, and resolving conflicts. Regarding peacebuilding, UNDP considered itself to have a role in the development dimensions of crisis prevention and recovery, addressing the root causes of conflict, and putting in place institutional, economic and social conditions to address them in the longer-term. To facilitate this new strategic interest a Thematic Trust Fund for Crisis Prevention and Recovery was established in 2000, and a Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery was set up to manage this fund. The latter bureau provides technical and financial support to UNDP conflict prevention and recovery activities. As a result of this new focus, conflict prevention and peacebuilding have been mainstreamed in the work of UNDP, through promoting conflict-sensitive approaches to development assistance, and assuring that development programmes promote participation, dispute resolution and gender equality. Apart from that, UNDP developed specific programmes for building the longer-term capacities of national actors for peaceful management of conflict. Post-conflict peacebuilding further includes: assistance to transitional governments; economic recovery programmes; reintegration of internally displaced populations; de-mining programmes and programmes to reduce the availability of small arms; Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programmes; strengthening of police and justice systems; and programmes to strengthen social cohesion and reconciliation.

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In 2001, when the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs imposed a thematic approach on government-supported NGOs, ‘Peace and Conflict’ became one of four central development themes in the work of Cordaid. The focus on conflict and peace stemmed from a growing awareness within Cordaid of the impact of conflict on its development interventions and partners. Cordaid not only intended to become conflict-sensitive, but also aimed to support organizations working on conflict transformation and peacebuilding. The selection of the ‘Peace and Conflict’ theme was not just strategically motivated, but also related to the Catholic identity of Cordaid, with human rights and social justice as guiding policy values. The organizations that had merged into Cordaid always had been dealing with conflict to a certain extent. In the 1970s, for example, they had supported partners belonging to oppositional movements in Central America, Chile, the Philippines, and South Africa. However, dealing with conflict in those years depended on the personal initiatives of programme coordinators and was not the result of specific policy (Douma and Hilhorst 2006: 52). Moreover, support to such oppositional movements was motivated by a concern with social and economic justice rather than with peace. In those days, the fact that a partner (in)directly supported armed resistance would not be an obstacle for engaging in a funding relation. Criticism on NGO performance in the late 1980s resulted in a shift from solidarity to selecting partners on the basis of performance. The focus moved to socio-economic development, marginalizing matters of conflict and peace (Douma and Hilhorst 2006: 53). The choice of the ‘Peace and Conflict’ theme in 2001 was thus an actualization and confirmation of a long-term concern existing within the organization. For Cordaid, peacebuilding aimed “[t]o support peace processes through the investment in social, economic and political structures, mechanisms and relationships that enable people on the ground to end injustice and inequality, handle conflicts in a peaceful manner and shape reconciliation processes”. Peacebuilding consisted of two sub-themes: reconciliation, including support to so-called ‘local capacities for peace’; and empowerment of marginalized groups, assuring their inclusion in decision making, and enabling them to assert their rights. Cordaid’s strategy built on John Paul Lederach’s idea of a ‘just peace’, and on the interrelatedness of truth, justice and reconciliation. Cordaid related peacebuilding to development, acknowledging its long-term and structural character. Attention for ‘Peace and Conflict’ had to be mainstreamed in other activities, and at the same time, it would be addressed specifically through capacity building and lobbying.

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is a relief and development NGO that originated in the provision of assistance to war-struck people in other European countries after World War II. Over the 1960s, increasingly it shifted its focus towards development projects. During the Biafra war, NCA provided humanitarian aid in areas not controlled by the recognized government of Nigeria, whereas the traditional humanitarian organizations attached to the UN and the Red Cross had to work through that government and could not get access to the Biafrans in need. In 1972, a massive district development programme started in southern Sudan. In 1976, since the

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Guatemala earthquake, NCA expanded its activities to Latin America. NCA aims to work from a rights-based approach to development assistance. Among five thematic priorities identified in its Global Strategic Plan 2005-2009, two relate to conflict and peace: *Religions for Conflict Resolution and Peace* and *Civil Society for Accountable Governance*. NCAs peacebuilding activities focus on promoting dialogue and on constructing relationships between people directly affected by conflict, or involved in conflict with local and national governments. NCA emphasizes the potential role religion plays in conflict transformation and resolution, and therefore works principally with religious and faith-based groups. Yet, NCA also works with other organizations involved in conflict situations and facilitates dialogue between them. Peacebuilding at the local level includes capacity strengthening of core partners in peaceful conflict resolution, facilitating learning alliances, and promoting community safety. NCA also promotes the concept of ‘Do-No-Harm’. At the international level, NCA advocates for control of small arms, good governance, law and order. Finally, NCA works closely with the Norwegian government in the facilitation of peace processes.

**Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA)** presents itself as a ‘solidarity movement’, supporting people in their struggle for greater influence over their own lives and social development. In the past, NPA has often taken a stand in political conflicts. Amongst others, it supported the ANC and the anti-apartheid movement in southern Africa, as well as liberation movements in Central America, Ethiopia and Eritrea. Since 2001, NPA redefined its strategy, and now presents itself as working from a rights-based approach, “to combat political oppression and unequal distribution of resources”. In this, NPA addresses six rights in particular: land and resource rights, democratic rights (participation, freedom of expression and information), women’s rights, youth’s rights, indigenous people’s rights and the right to a landmine free environment. In contrast to the other organizations, NPA does not have a separate strategy or policy on peace building. Peacebuilding is seen either as a side effect of the programmes or an impact, and thus part of all the programmes. Especially since the majority of countries where NPA is operating are experiencing violent conflict, programmes often include a conflict resolution component. A major focus in the work of NPA is empowering suppressed and marginalized people. A particular experience in Ecuador where assistance to a partner resulted in provocation and violence increased NPAs awareness for the unintended consequences of its assistance. Out of the four organizations, NPA is the most explicit about the fact that development is conflictive, implying

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competition and a redistribution of resources, and that grounded analyses should assure that such processes do not turn violent.15

All four organizations have multiple mandates and multiple domains of intervention. Cordaid integrates both humanitarian and development activities, while also considering lobby and advocacy as part of its mandate. Similarly, NCA and NPA have made crossovers between developmental and humanitarian activities. Even UNDP, whose core business is still long-term development, relates its mandate to relief and conflict resolution. It raises the question whether mixed-mandate organizations have not rather become the norm in the twilight zone between development, emergency and reconstruction. Still, different origins shine through in policies and practices.

The relative importance of peacebuilding in the programmes of the different organizations is varied, with Cordaid according central importance to the theme, NPA not emphasizing it at all, and NCA and UNDP falling somewhere in between. Moreover, there are differences in the extent to which they consider peacebuilding as separate activities, or as a process to which all interventions contribute. Staff members of Cordaid, NCA, and UNDP identify separate activities for peacebuilding. Those include direct contributions to the resolution of particular conflicts, such as facilitating local peace conferences, and mediation activities at local or national level. In addition, they support programmes to promote human rights or peaceful co-habitation, and trauma counselling. At the same time, they also aim at mainstreaming peacebuilding, reflecting on principles of Do-No-Harm, and conflict-sensitive ways of working. Within NPA, peacebuilding is the outcome of a larger process, to which the organization can only make limited contributions.

Further, when defining peacebuilding, the organizations emphasize different domains of intervention. UNDP aims to contribute to peacebuilding through its regular activities in development that have been adjusted as relevant for conflict prevention and economic recovery. Its concern with government actors results in a focus on state-building: the strengthening of capacities and re-establishment of state institutions, and the promotion of principles of gender and equal participation in governance. Similarly, Cordaid gives emphasis to the relation between development and peace. Within Cordaid and NCA, a strong focus in peacebuilding is on reconciliation, creating dialogue, re-establishing social relations and healing trauma. Both NPA and Cordaid emphasize the transformation of social and political relations, and talk of the empowerment of marginalized groups. Among the three non-government organizations, lobby is an important strategy to draw attention to violations of rights (NCA and NPA), and promote social and political transformation (Cordaid and NPA). All organizations aim to make their regular interventions conflict-sensitive.

UNDP, Cordaid, and NCA have been talking explicitly about peacebuilding since the turning of the century. However, the introduction of peacebuilding policies is also partly a matter of labelling: in all organizations there is continuity with earlier concerns with and policies on conflict and peace.

Considerations and strategies concerning civil society

All organizations explain in their policies how their work relates to the activities of local civil-society organizations. For NCA, Cordaid and NPA, enhancing the capacities of local civil-society organizations is core business, while working with civil society is closely related to peacebuilding policies. UNDP’s general policies on relating to civil society pay particular attention is given to peacebuilding.

As an intergovernmental organization, the mandatory interest of UNDP is with governments. Nonetheless, since the late 1990s, UNDP tries to mainstream civil society in policy making and operations. This reflects UN wide efforts for civil society mainstreaming.16 In 2003, a Panel of Eminent Persons on Civil Society and UN Relationships was established to review past and current practices and produce practical recommendation on UN relations with civil society. A working group was set up, chaired by UNDP, to follow up the recommendations.17 UNDP considers civil-society organizations not as substitutes for government but as central to sustainable governance - as participants, legitimizers, endorsers, watchdogs, and collaborators of government policy and action. Within UNDP, mainstreaming civil society is thus a strategy to enhance the proper functioning of governments. To this aim, UNDP commits itself to collaborate with civil-society organizations whose goals, values and development philosophy correspond to those of UNDP.18 One of the priority themes for collaboration with civil society is conflict prevention and peacebuilding. To operationalize this, UNDP has established local and regional Civil-society organizations Advisory Committees that provide inputs to country documents and propose themes to address at global level.19 UNDP also launched a small grants programme to strengthen partnerships with civil-society organizations in post-conflict countries.20

For Cordaid, working with civil society is at the core of the operationalization of peacebuilding.21 Cordaid considers civil society as both an alternative to the state and as a countervailing power. “Within civil societies we support initiatives that aim to transform imbalanced power relations and structures. […] Transforming civil society into a countervailing power has great significance particularly in areas of (potential) violent conflict. […] the presence of civil society is crucial [to contribute to stability, security and improvement of the broken lives of the people involved], as most states

18 UNDP and Civil-society organizations …  
19 Interview, Programme Adviser, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP New York, 16 May 2007.  
have shown to be ineffective in managing conflict transformation processes (on their own)\textsuperscript{22}. Rather than focusing on activist peace and human-rights organizations only, Cordaid considers strengthening of civil society in general as peacebuilding. It is argued that without capacities in basic sectors such as education, healthcare and agriculture, people will never have negotiating power and the skills to change their situation into a more peaceful one. Hence, a programme for health care in Rwanda is related to peacebuilding, as it contributes to transforming state-society relations, with people taking decisions on and gaining control over their own community services.

For NCA, establishing relations between partners is an important strategy for peacebuilding. To arrive at dialogue and mutual understanding between different faiths, NCA focuses on capacity strengthening and networking between its partners. Further, NCA assists local communities to strengthen their capacity to resolve conflict through strategies for justice and reconciliation instead of violence.\textsuperscript{23} From a rights-based perspective, NCA considers a major aim of its work to empower the poor and vulnerable to participate in civil and political activity. Therefore, it works on increasing cooperation between civil society and government at local and national levels.

Strengthening the role of civil society is a central concern for NPA, with the objective of “strengthening their ability and capacity to mobilize for democratization and social and economic change”.\textsuperscript{24} NPA sees the existence of a strong civil society as a “prerequisite for participatory democracy and for the respect of human rights, and therefore a basis for the changing of unjust power structures and fighting for a sustainable development”.\textsuperscript{25} The organization mainly works with rights based organizations, although under specific conditions co-operation with local government may take place, as is the case in mine action, where involving national and local authorities is required. NPA has developed a policy document called ‘Partnership Cooperation in Civil Society’\textsuperscript{26} to guide its international cooperation programmes.

All four organizations thus have explicit notions about the roles of civil society in conflict and peace, as well as strategies to support civil society. For the three non-government organizations, enhancing the capacities and representing the interests of local civil society has always been their core business. All four organizations attribute a role to civil society of contributing to responsive governance, but differ on how this works. Civil society is depicted either as representative of local communities, informing and assisting their authorities, or as activist, pressuring authorities for change.

\textsuperscript{24} NPA (2003) \textit{Policy and Strategy ...}, p.5.
\textsuperscript{26} NPA (2007) \textit{Norwegian People’s Aid ‘Partnership Cooperation in Civil Society’}, adopted in principle by the NPA Board on 13.12.04, document provided by Regional Office Latin America, 16 April 2007.
UNDP views civil society as representing the development interests of local populations, and aims to facilitate them in this role. On the other hand, Cordaid and NPA emphasize that civil society can also play the role of change-agent, and may pursue an independent agenda for political transformation. Civil society may also be considered representative of the voices that normally remain unheard. Hence, interventions of those organizations aim at empowering civil-society organizations to bring about change. The position of NCA is somewhere in between that of NPA/Cordaid and UNDP. Both Cordaid and NCA emphasize the roles that civil society can have in reconciling people.

It is remarkable that the three international NGOs hardly refer to possible relations with states or local authorities. Though NPA points to possible cooperation with local governments, Cordaid and NCA are not specific about how to deal with governments. NCA has little confidence in the roles governments can play in reconciliation.

Different organizations, different peacebuilding mandates and policies

While all four organizations are now working on peacebuilding, their pedigree, their different specializations and historical and ideological roots, are still recognizable in current mandates and general policies. Cordaid’s approach to peacebuilding resonates with its Catholic tradition, focussing on reconciliation, truth and justice. In addition, the activist past of some of the partners supported reflects in a concern with human rights and social justice, the promotion of social and political equality and hence the empowerment of marginalized groups. Finally, its background in development work has contributed to attention for mainstreaming of peace. In a similar way, NPA’s roots in the labour movement and activist tradition result in an intervention strategy of empowering suppressed and marginalized people. Its rights-based approach often implies taking position in conflict. Rather than mainstreaming peacebuilding in the sense of always taking account of the negative effects development might have on conflict, NPA considers that development and peacebuilding are conflictive processes anyway. Conflict can even be advantageous to generate the necessary social, economic and political changes.

To some extent, these perspectives contrast with UNDP, an inter-governmental organization with governments as its ‘natural’ partner. Its general policies concentrate on institution building of (national) authorities, properly functioning political systems and mainstreaming peace in the sense of assuring that regular development interventions do not contribute to conflict. Its peacebuilding strategy appears rather ‘technocratic’, in that it focuses on the extent to which state institutions function according to international standards and conventions. This is in contrast to the transformative and reconciliatory aims of Cordaid and NPA. Finally, the Christian tradition of NCA is reflected in its preference for working with religious and faith-based groups in themes of peace, justice and reconciliation. Similar to NPA, NCA presents itself as a rights-based organization. In contrast to NPA, however, general policies of NCA tend towards impartiality, emphasizing reconciliation and dialogue. The organization has participated in the facilitation of several peace processes.
Such historical and ideological differences also reflect in how organizations define civil society and envisage strategies to work with civil-society organizations. The three international NGOs have a tradition of working with civil society. From a mandate of assisting governments for development, UNDP primarily interprets peacebuilding as strengthening government institutions, where enhancing civil society is mainly aimed to help ensure that governments better fulfill their roles in development. UNDP writes about civil society as a more or less neutral representation of the interests of the local population, and aims to strengthen those organizations that are working in line with their own concerns and strategies. Both Cordaid and NCA emphasize the Christian notions of justice and reconciliation, and consider the roles that civil society, and in particular religious groups, can have in reconciling people: both organizations have a tradition of working with church-related partners and faith-based organizations. Finally, both Cordaid and NPA emphasize that civil society has a role as agent of change, not just to represent ‘people’. To them, civil society stands for marginalized and vulnerable people in need of empowerment. Hence, interventions of those organizations aim at empowering civil-society organizations to bring about change.

Practices of peacebuilding

The remainder of this chapter looks into the practices of peacebuilding - how do different mandates and general policies work out in particular countries in conflict? The country case studies reflect on differences between organizations in conceptualizing peace, conflict, and peacebuilding, and the roles they envisage for themselves and civil-society organizations. The cases provide the basis for the reflections in the final part of the chapter on how general policies get shape and transform in the practice of implementation.

Practices of peacebuilding in southern Sudan

In January 2005, a peace agreement was signed between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), ending more than forty years of civil war. The uprising of the southern resistance movement related to ethno-linguistic divisions in the country, a long history of northern domination over the state and its resources, and -more recently- the increasing influence of northern Islamic identity on the state (see van Baarsen 2000). With the end of the Cold War the two main contenders in the conflict largely lost their international military support. After the disposal of its main supporter Mengistu of Ethiopia, the SPLA has been plagued by factionalism, resulting in fighting between diverse militia at regional and local level (see Lesch 1998: 157ff; Johnson 2000, 2003). Insecurity in the communities further resulted from inter-ethnic conflicts, conflicts between displaced and local residents, and conflicts about resources such as land and cattle, which were intensified by the widespread availability of light weapons (PaxChristi 1999).
At the start of the new millennium, the UN and most donor agencies still considered southern Sudan to be in a situation of emergency. However, many organizations reflected on how relief could contribute to development and peace building. From 1999 onwards, human rights and peacebuilding became priority components of Operation Lifeline Sudan, the main channel for humanitarian assistance to southern Sudan. Slowly, budgets for rehabilitation became available, providing space for peacebuilding activities in the communities. A few international agencies specialized in peace, organizing local peace conferences, or supporting activities of peace, human rights and women’s groups, or traditional conflict resolution institutions. Most international NGOs mainstreamed ‘peace’ in their regular activities, by embracing the principle of Do-No-Harm or conflict-sensitive approaches. Most approached peacebuilding through development, assuming that local conflict often resulted from competition over resources (see also chapter 4; for a more detailed account on peacebuilding in southern Sudan, see Van Leeuwen 2004).

Most international NGOs were reluctant to build the capacities of the emerging civic authorities installed by the rebel movements. They feared that support to civil authorities would be at the expense of civil society, or worried to compromise their image of impartiality by working with the rebel movements. While over 2000-2003 more funding became available for peacebuilding, funding for strengthening local governance remained limited. At the same time, international NGOs were cautious regarding capacity building of Sudanese NGOs. Their number had mushroomed, partly because of the financial opportunities in the wake of the relief operations. Most were operating from outside Sudan, in particular from Kenya. Many international NGOs considered that those organizations possessed little capacities and local knowledge and were no trustworthy partners. Instead of supporting existing structures of Sudanese organizations or churches, most international NGOs thus created their own community-based organizations inside Sudan.

Over the period 2002-2005, security in southern Sudan improved, and it became easier to travel to the communities. International NGOs discussed how to support returning refugees and IDPs and how to address the conflicts likely to accompany their return. Disarmament and reintegration of demobilized fighters became priorities. To some donors, the time was ripe to address governance issues. Many emphasized the need of clearly informing communities in the interior on the peace agreements, and started civic education programmes on legislation and local governance. The interest of international funding agencies in local peacebuilding increased. Several western governments and embassies sponsored peacebuilding activities. USAID

29 Operation Lifeline Sudan was established in April 1989, as a consortium of UNICEF, the World Food Programme, and more than 35 non-government organizations. It was the result of a tripartite arrangement between the UN, the Government of Sudan and the SPLM/A to deliver humanitarian assistance to all civilians in need, regardless of their location.
initiated a large community reconciliation programme. These trends persisted after the signing of the peace agreement in 2005.

Given its mandate for development, UNDP initially was not operational in southern Sudan. Nonetheless, its Nairobi office supported confidence-building between the northern government and representatives from the south. Since 1999, UNDP played a leading role in the ‘Planning for Peace’ initiative, a framework for post-conflict recovery, including an inventory of possible development activities if peace would arrive in southern Sudan. However, in the absence of a peace agreement, it remained difficult to advocate reconstruction and development activities. Nonetheless, slowly activities started in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and rehabilitation at community level. Under the broader aims of the UN system of governance, peacebuilding and protection of human rights, UNDP worked on governance and environmental management, and promoting peace and social inclusion, all from a poverty reduction perspective. Programmes started to address resource-based conflicts at national and local level. UNDP also started preparatory activities for peacebuilding, for example in the context of the resettlement of Internally Displaced People. UNDP further supported peacebuilding in the Nuba Mountains through grassroots (development) activities, support to local conflict resolution mechanisms, and arms collection. UNDP continued support to the intra-Sudanese dialogue and the IGAD partners’ forum.

After the signing of the peace agreement in 2005, UNDP’s southern Sudan programme became part of the overall UNDP Sudan programme, focusing on governance, rule of law, human security and recovery. In southern Sudan, the programme facilitated interaction between civil society and state judicial representatives, and considered how customary legal systems could be integrated into the formal juridical system. In addition, programmes started for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of ex-combatants, security sector reform, and socio-economic recovery. As a result, peacebuilding became less central to the programme, though it was seen as a secondary effect of programmes on governance. For example, according to UNDP staff, local residents’ feelings of security closely related to the effectiveness of decentralization, and governance thus closely related to conflict and peace. Supporting civil society was an explicit aim of peacebuilding, but cooperation with civil society remained limited, in practice meaning little more than information sharing with (international) NGOs. Local governance programmes in

33 UNDP Project Fact Sheet - Supporting Broad-Based Constitutional and Legal Reform, http://www.sd.undp.org/Project_fact_sheets/The%20Promotion%20of%20Rule%20of%20Law/Supporting_Broad-Based%20Constitutional%20and%20Legal%20Reform.htm
the south aimed to involve wider civil society, for example by including women organizations in programmes on sexual and gender based violence, but this was incipient work. UNDP staff further found it difficult how to deal with manifestations of civil society at the community level and to engage civil society in local governance.36

Before 1999, two of the organizations that merged into Cordaid had been involved in emergency assistance and a number of educational and health projects in southern Sudan. Since 1999, Cordaid’s Sudan programme included peacebuilding and development activities. Civil society building was a priority, to assure meaningful civil participation in peace negotiations (Douma and Hilhorst 2006: 9). After the introduction of the ‘Peace and Conflict’ theme in 2001, Cordaid signed a structural alliance with the Dutch peace organization Pax Christi, who would take charge of supporting local peace initiatives, monitoring human rights, and lobbying with the Dutch government. The 2003 annual country plan stated that all activities were undertaken from a perspective on conflict and peace. ‘Peacebuilding’ covered a wide variety of projects, including support to peace conferences of the ecumenical council of churches, support to a newspaper for peace, capacity building of a women association working on trauma counselling and violence against women, veterinary projects and health services, support to a youth development agency organizing peace meetings, and local peace councils. Some of those projects aimed directly at peacebuilding or conflict prevention, while others were redesigned to better suit peacebuilding objectives. In other cases a process of re-labelling took place, rather than that programmes really changed (Douma and Hilhorst 2006: 73).

In later years, the southern Sudan programme specifically selected its partners for their peacebuilding activities. Since 2005, demands for funding were rejected if they did not address the ‘Peace and Conflict’ theme. Important in this was the transfer of responsibility for the programme from Cordaid head office to the Cordaid office in Nairobi, which considered peacebuilding narrowly as activities directly related to mediation, reconciliation and trauma counselling. When in 2007 the responsibility for the Sudan programme —which meanwhile had become a structural development programme— returned from Nairobi to The Hague, it was put under the emergency and reconstruction department. This again resulted in a redefinition of peacebuilding. Cordaid head office considered that a range of interventions could have a ‘peace dividend’, including for example the establishment of health structures. Trauma counselling and reconciliation activities remained part of the programme, but support to organizations working on justice and human rights diminished.37 Nonetheless, the programme continued to support the Justice and Peace department of the Catholic Church, inter-ethnic dialogues facilitated by local organizations, and peace activities of local bishops. Hence, where responsibility for the programme was located was important for what peacebuilding looked like in practice.

NCA has been present in Sudan since 1972, both in the north and the south. For long, the Sudan programme included a strong lobby component, and aimed to facilitate dialogue between the government and the rebels. The NCA programme in southern Sudan provided humanitarian assistance through Operation Lifeline Sudan. Attention for peacebuilding increased since the 2005 peace agreement. Civil participation in planning towards sustainable peace became an aim of the programme. NCA always primarily supported faith-based organizations, viewing those as the only structures providing basic services in the communities throughout the civil war. The choice for faith-based organizations was also strategic, as religion grew increasingly important in the conflict, and religious institutions could play crucial roles in resolving local conflict. Since the peace agreements, NCA aimed at strengthening the advocacy work of the Sudanese churches. The dilemma was how to do this without negatively affecting their roles in service provision. Religious organizations had to be careful in criticizing local government and arguing for civil rights, as their communities depended on the services provided by the authorities.

NCA saw it as a challenge to bring faith-based organizations together, and overcome mutual distrust. In their experience, this became all the more important since the war on terror. NCA further observed that violence was regional, because of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, ethnically related cattle rustling, and increased religious fundamentalism. Hence, NCA wanted to address peace also at the regional level through its network of strategic partners. Other peace related components of the Sudan programme were the promotion of women in education and government, assistance to people affected by trauma, and establishing peace committees in the communities. The latter were to create awareness about the peace agreements. Further, NCA explored possibilities for the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission in southern Sudan.

NPA has been involved in southern Sudan since 1986. Until the end of the 1990s, assistance to southern Sudan mostly consisted of the supply of medicines and food. Over this period, NPA became the largest operational organization in SPLM/A held areas, functioning as an important conduit for assistance by the USA. Peacebuilding has never been a central concern of NPA in southern Sudan. Nonetheless, NPA has always seen its interventions as directly related to political and social transformation. From the beginning, NPA took a strong political position in the conflict. At international level it criticized the regime in Khartoum which it held responsible for the war, and condemned its violations of international humanitarian law. The humanitarian wing of the southern resistance movement SPLM/A became NPA’s main implementing partner. NPA maintained continuous dialogue with the leadership of SPLM/A to enable its operations in SPLA controlled areas, and to enhance the

39 NCA (2005) Eastern Africa Strategic Plan...
movement’s respect for human rights and democracy, and to facilitate the development of a civil administration. Collaboration with the resistance movement led to criticism from other organizations, as well as rumours about the provision of weapons to the SPLA by NPA staff. When Operation Lifeline Sudan started in 1989, NPA decided not to join, afraid that government involvement in the structure would restrict its freedom of movement.

Since its new global strategy in 2001, NPA thoroughly reconsidered its Sudan programme. It came to consist of four components: mine action, health, food security, and agricultural and vocational training. NPA regarded mine clearance a number one priority for facilitating the return of refugees and IDPs, and enabling the delivery of assistance. Though its agricultural and vocational training programme did not aim directly at peacebuilding, it deals with local conflicts and political injustices. Since the peace accords, NPA saw disputes about land and water increasing. In the absence of effective land governance, local leaders grabbed land on a large-scale, which resulted in lots of violence. NPA initiated research on customary land management, and local mechanisms of conflict resolution. More in general, staff members interpreted the agricultural and vocational training programme as a response to the injustices underlying past violence, such as the failure of the central government to take care of the development of the south. In the same way, a programme on state legislation on land was to reverse past practices of occupation of land in the South by northerners. NPA also implemented programmes on free media, violence against women, and the promotion of women participation in governance.

In the case of southern Sudan, a widening up of opportunities for more developmental activities made organizations reflect on how their interventions related to peacebuilding. The programmes of the four organizations reviewed differed considerably in how they did this, interpreting peace either as an overall issue or as a specific theme within programmes. UNDP considered peace to be at the core of its regular activities. In fact, the close relation UNDP saw between peace and development legitimized their presence in southern Sudan. Cordaid believed to have mainstreamed peacebuilding by working through civil-society organizations as agents of change. Later, peacebuilding referred to a series of specific activities. Thereafter, Cordaid applied again a more general definition of what peacebuilding was about. Their definition of peacebuilding depended strongly on where responsibility for the programme was located – in The Hague or in Nairobi.

NCA considered enhancing civil society’s roles in participation and planning for good governance as a key strategy. From the beginning, peacebuilding was accompanied by advocacy. NPA’s programme did not define peacebuilding, but staff

42 NPA (1999) The Sudan Situation …
members considered the programme relevant for peace, by contributing to mine-clearance, agricultural development, and addressing local land disputes. The latter two organizations showed striking differences in the way they interpreted a rights-based approach. NCA always tried to maintain a presence at both sides in the conflict. Its rights-based approach implied working on good governance and protecting vulnerable people. In contrast, NPA always chose the side of the southerners. Its rights-based approach implied promoting the rights of the southerners vis-à-vis the government. Interestingly, a rights-based approach can thus both be adopted in neutral and in partial or solidarity approaches to conflict.

Depending on their mandates, the organizations worked at different levels. Cordaid, NCA and NPA primarily focused on civil-society organizations as their mandatory partners. UNDP was also concerned with government actors and authorities, assisting them in the establishment of local governance structures, the identification of development priorities, and the planning of reintegration of returnees and demobilized soldiers. Being also committed to collaboration with civil-society organizations, UNDP was the only organization explicitly dealing with both state and civil actors. This in contrast to NPA, which made an explicit choice for civil society partners as the preferred agents for social transformation.

To a certain extent, peacebuilding policy thus moves with the situation on the ground. On the other hand, differences in choices and emphasis turn out to be more based on mandates or internal organizational changes as in Cordaid, than the outcome of empirically grounded country specific policies, or the result of dialogue with local partners. Because peacebuilding can be expressed in many different activities, ranging from state building to post-9/11 inter-faith dialogue, each organization can define it in such a way as to suit its mandate and organizational interest.

Practices of peacebuilding in Guatemala

In 1996, Guatemala emerged from 36 years of civil war, which involved a confrontation between the government army and leftist –largely indigenous– guerrilla movements. The conflict in Guatemala was a typical Cold War conflict, which was either interpreted as a fight against communism or as a fight against severe inequality, military rule and human-rights violations (Verstegen 2000). More than 200,000 people were killed or disappeared. International pressure resulted in peace agreements, including an extensive agenda for economic and political reform. However, many of the reforms foreseen were not implemented, due to practical difficulties and for lack of political will of consecutive governments (see chapter 7). Persecution of those responsible for the atrocities during the civil war is progressing slowly. The justice system is in a pitiful condition, and Guatemala has become one of the most violent countries of Latin America.

After the peace agreements, governments and multilateral donors made generous financial contributions for reconstruction. However, international engagement for pushing for political reforms has been limited, and financial support was never made conditional on the implementation of the agreements (Leonhardt et al. 2002: 2). Most funding went to addressing the socio-economic causes and consequences of war, in particular to social infrastructure and poverty reduction. Some financial support was
given to democratization, decentralization and a few well-established civil-society organizations. Little support was given to politically sensitive issues, such as security-sector reform, reform of the tax system, land redistribution and indigenous rights (Leonhardt et al. 2002: 12).

Guatemalan civil-society organizations have played a visible role in the lead-up to the peace agreements. After the agreements, international development organizations have put efforts into civil society strengthening, assuming this would strengthen the peace process (Biekart 1996; Warren 1998; Pearce and Howell 2001; Sieder et al. 2002). Many Guatemalan organizations worked on conflict and peace-related themes, informing people in the communities about the peace agreements and the reports of two truth commissions, providing trauma counselling and psychosocial assistance during excavation of mass graves, advocating for protecting land rights of indigenous people, and rights of labourers, and lobbying for new agricultural policies. Since 2002, local democratization and public participation in local governance (Participación ciudadana) have become important themes when new legislation came in place. In 2006, when I visited the country, many organizations were addressing violence – violence against women, lynching in the rural communities, or criminal violence among urban youngsters.

Despite the importance of peace and conflict-related themes in their work, few Guatemalan organizations regarded themselves as having a peacebuilding mandate. To many of them, the peace agreements remained the guide to their work, as the only nationally agreed-upon political agenda. They considered their efforts for realizing the agreed upon socio-economic and political reforms as contributing to the peace process. Several organizations refrained from presenting themselves as working on peace related themes. They experienced terms like ‘reconciliation’ and ‘human rights’ to have negative connotations in local communities, where they were associated with giving up their demands for social change or forgiving the perpetrators of human-rights violations. People in the communities felt excluded in the agreements, and had not seen the changes promised. Moreover, Guatemalan organizations found it difficult to secure financing for peace-related activities. They experienced that funding agencies were hesitant to finance politically sensitive issues and advocacy activities. Since the peace agreements, international organizations soon returned to development-as-usual, preferring non-political programmes for service provision, or had drastically decreased the size of their programmes.

In Guatemala, UNDP works with the government to identify development priorities and to complement efforts to address those, either by supporting the government in its work or by directly implementing particular programmes.46 Between 2001 and 2004, under the heading of ‘peace and emergency’, UNDP assisted the reintegration of uprooted and demobilized people, and supported communal development, and the juridical system. A national programme for reconciliation included psychosocial assistance in areas affected by the armed conflict, income generating activities, and civil-military dialogues. A programme on modernization of the state included support

to fiscal reform, decentralization, and the preparation of proposals to address the agrarian conflict. In the 2004-2008 period the UN system in Guatemala prioritized the elimination of discrimination, and the institutionalization of the peace accords. UNDP came to work on four themes: state-society relations; reform and modernization of the state; equitable and sustainable economic development; and the strengthening of national managerial capacities. In contrast to the other countries, UNDP Guatemala policy documents regularly emphasize the need for reconciliation. National reconciliation is seen as a prerequisite for development, and requires the establishment of trust of citizens in the state. To this aim, UNDP considers the relationship between civil society and the government as very important. The programme thus supports human-rights groups, and organizations representing women and indigenous people. To facilitate citizen participation in decision-making, UNDP stimulates cooperation between civil-society organizations and the government on themes such as anti-racism, cultural rights, access to justice, and transparency. UNDP also facilitates civil-society organizations’ advocacy towards implementing the peace agreements.

Though many UNDP policy documents on Guatemala mention peace as an objective, or relate it to particular stipulations in the 1996 peace agreement, UNDP does not apply the term ‘peacebuilding’ to its activities. When discussing political instabilities and societal unrest UNDP prefers to talk of ‘crises’ rather than describing them as ‘conflict’. As one staff member explained, the term ‘peacebuilding’ would be inappropriate, as it would suggest that UNDP had its own agenda, independent from the government, its main partner. This sensitivity of the term ‘peacebuilding’ points to an important challenge in UNDP’s work in Guatemala – the limited means it has to pressure the Guatemalan government to make the peace agreements a reality. While UNDP aims to contribute to the implementation of the peace agreements and thus has an agenda for social transformation, as a multilateral organization it cannot criticize the Guatemala government. Interestingly, by having a significant civil society component in its programme, UNDP appears to be dealing with this challenge to some extent, by counting on the possibilities of its civil society partners to do what it cannot do itself: insisting on social and political transformation. Staff members pointed out that civil society involvement in the UN system in Guatemala is advanced, and not an add-on, but a strategic choice.

47 UN (2000) Sistema de Naciones …, Annex UNDP.
49 PNUD en Guatemala …
50 Interview, Programme Adviser, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP New York, 16 May 2007.
52 Interview, Specialist and Regional Team Leader, Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Team, UNDP New York, 3 May 2007.
53 Interview, Programme Adviser, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP New York, 16 May 2007.
The Cordaid programme in Guatemala reflects the above trends in donor support to civil-society organizations. Before and after the peace agreements Cordaid supported the advocacy and human-rights work of a variety of church-related organizations, but this type of assistance was reduced at the turning of the century. Until 2004, Cordaid programmes focused on the rural areas, on strengthening the organizational capacities of peasant communities to sustain their production. Support was given to the progressive Diocesis of San Marcos (see chapter 7), for the formation of peasant cooperatives and marketing of their produce. Peasant organizations received assistance to lobby for land rights, access to services, and participation in local governance. Cordaid also financed a health programme through a series of partners from the 1980s and 1990s. Following the reduction of the other programmes, the health programme effectively became the major component of Cordaid assistance to Guatemala.

In 2004, staff members of the Latin America desk in The Hague reflected on how to strengthen and reorganize the Guatemala programme. They observed the limited progress in the implementation of the 1996 peace agreements, and realized that the Guatemala programme focused not enough on the societal transformations foreseen in the agreements. It turned out difficult to reverse this trend. Some opportunities were identified to work on access to justice, the unequal distribution of power and wealth, and the establishment of a truth commission. Early 2006, a programme on youngsters and violence started, including psychosocial assistance, economic development in the suburbs, and advocacy. On the basis of discussions with local partners, Cordaid staff interpreted violence among youngsters to result from low education levels, lack of employment, and the falling apart of social structures and families. However, it was difficult to find partners capable to implement this complex programme. At the beginning of 2007, existing relations with the Diocese of San Marcos expanded, and came to include support to an advocacy network on the exploitation of natural resources. Cordaid thus tried to adapt its programme to local manifestations of conflict and violence, focusing earlier on land issues, and with the increase in violence, focusing on violence among youngsters. In the end, the programme conformed to the themes that its long-term local partners were already working on.

For long, peace and conflict have been central concerns in NCA’s programme in Guatemala. NCA arrived in Guatemala after the 1976 earthquake. Quickly, its programme came to focus on the peace process. NCA played an important role in the negotiations leading to the peace agreements. In 1986, it organized initial meetings with both sides in the conflict, but those stopped due to the violence. The NCA country office closely cooperated with the Norwegian government to facilitate informal dialogues between representatives of the military, which resulted in the March 1990 Oslo agreement. In 1994, the UN took over the responsibility for the peace dialogue, although facilitation by Norway continued. Since the 1990 Oslo agreement, a concern with peace was central in NCAs policies. Its current working areas are human rights, water and sanitation, emergency assistance, HIV/AIDS, and

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54 Jongeren in Latijns Amerika in risico voor geweld, internal document, Latin America desk, January 2006.
participation of women. According to staff members, the overarching theme in the programme remains the protection and support to the peace agreements. The mobilization of civil society for more equitable distribution of resources, and improving local and national governance are also central concerns. We may conclude that the programme applies a broad definition of peacebuilding.

NCA’s activities in the aftermath of the tropical storm Stan in the autumn of 2005 reflect the way in which the organization mainstreams societal and political development objectives in its programme. After the storm, through its primarily church-related partners, NCA provided humanitarian assistance to local groups of the Catholic Church. Soon, NCA and its local partners started lobbying with the government to give more attention to the needs and vulnerabilities of indigenous people, the prime victims of the disaster. NCA also supports the human-rights work of the Protestant Episcopal Conference of Guatemala and the Ecumenical Forum for Peace and Reconciliation. The latter organizes community consultations to inform people on the contents of the peace agreements, and public events to discuss their implementation. At international level, NCA participates in a coalition of European organizations lobbying with the Guatemalan government on reforms proposed in the peace agreements.55

NPA started operating in Guatemala in 1986. Since then, NPA supported Guatemalan activist organizations aiming for social change, in particular NGOs linked to the church. During the preparation of the peace accords, NPA supported the peasant movement Comité de Unidad Campesina. Since the end of the 1990s, as NPA experienced that many peasant organizations had become detached from their communities, NPA came to directly support indigenous organizations in the highlands. NPA considers that the distribution of power and resources in the rural areas is very unequal, and that rural society is dominated by a feudal and paternalistic culture, in which democratic traditions are lacking. The focus of the current programme is on indigenous rights, concentrating on local democracy and the right to land. To support local democracy, NPA supports local indigenous and popular organizations that promote local participation and influence in local politics, following new legislation in 2003 on decentralization and participation in local governance.56 To promote equitable access to land and ensure its sustainable use, NPA assists indigenous peasant organizations seeking redistribution of land and resources. It helps them enhance their mobilization capacities, and supports them in networking for capacity building and sharing of experiences in sustainable land use.57 Considering the weakness and fragmentation of the indigenous movements at the national level, NPA works on their empowerment, in particular through exchanges with other, much stronger movements in South America.

55 Interview, Senior Adviser for Peace and Reconciliation, NCA Oslo, 5 June 2007.
56 Interview, Section leader development section, NPA Oslo, 16 April 2007.
The discussion of the work of those four international organizations shows how ten years after the peace agreements in Guatemala, there is a (renewed?) interest to work on peace-related themes, in particular on those issues included in the peace agreements. Strikingly, among the countries considered here, in Guatemala there is the least explicit reference to peacebuilding. The organizations considered all aim to contribute to social and economic transformation, but struggle how to realize this. Cordaid realized it had disregarded the theme in the past and hence adapted its programme. UNDP emphasized social and economic transformation to an extent nonexistent in the other countries considered. Nonetheless, its collaboration with the government made it difficult for UNDP to talk explicitly about peacebuilding as this would be construed as critique on government programmes that UNDP helped shape and implement. NCA played a significant role in facilitating the peace process in Guatemala. Its advocacy work appears to promote societal changes more explicitly than its programmes in the other two countries. Like in the other cases, the NPA programme strongly emphasizes political reform. In Guatemala, it is particularly concerned with public participation in local governance.

All four organizations underscored the strengthening of a ‘representative’ civil society, and emphasized civil society’s role in democratic governance. This is in contrast to the case of southern Sudan and particularly Afghanistan, where civil society strengthening was less of an overall concern. In Guatemala, UNDP focused on both government and civil-society actors, and appeared relatively successful in integrating civil society in its programme. The importance attached to civil society seemed partly to result from the fact that Guatemalan civil society is already relatively well developed. This implies that rather than pro-actively supporting the growth of civil-society organizations, international organizations seek institutional opportunities to pursue peace regardless of their pedigree, or respond to lobby from civil-society actors in the respective countries.

Interesting in this case is that all organizations relate developments in Guatemala to other countries in the region. Cordaid, for example, identifies inequality as a regional issue, as well as the fading legitimacy of governments, and the ongoing privatization of service provision, security and justice. Guatemala policies often relate to priorities for the region as a whole. NCA identifies lack of accountable governance and representative civil society participation as a widespread problem in the region and also emphasizes those themes in Guatemala.

Practices of peacebuilding in Afghanistan

After the Taliban had been driven from power in Afghanistan, an ambitious programme for state-building and reconstruction was started, based on the Bonn agreement of December 5, 2001. Not all parties to the conflict participated in this agreement, and the process has thus been coined an example of ‘conflictual peacebuilding’ at best (Suhrke and Strand 2005: 877/882). Fighting continues between regionally based warlords, local commanders, and factions of the Taliban. War is

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raging between US-led coalition forces and the Afghan army against the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and supporters of former Mujaheddin. The authorities in Kabul have little control beyond the capital, and the legitimacy of the transitional government is contested.

For long, international assistance to Afghanistan has blended with international geo-political agendas. During the Soviet occupation (1979-1989), international humanitarian programmes for refugees in Pakistan formed the “nonlethal component of aid to the Afghan resistance” (Atmar and Goodhand 2002). Support to the ‘just cause’ of the Mujaheddin was more important to donors than issues such as gender, drug production or human-rights abuses (Barakat 2002: 805). After the withdrawal of the Soviets, international NGOs shifted from solidarity to service delivery. Assistance became oriented by principles such as Do No Harm, and attention was given to the perverse side effects of aid (Goodhand 2002: 843-4). With the Taliban coming into power in 1996, emergency and development assistance became very political again. Taliban edicts contradicted international principles of human rights. International organizations made development assistance and institutional capacity building conditional on the Taliban giving in on their harsh ideological positions (Van Brabant and Killick 1999: 5ff; Goodhand 2002: 845). This ‘principled’ assistance had little leverage on the Taliban, but highly politicized aid (see Van de Goor and Van Leeuwen 2000).

Since its installation, the international community considers the Afghan interim government to hold the overall responsibility for reconstruction (Barakat 2002: 810). However, the government appears to have limited management capacities and legitimacy in the communities (Goodhand 2002: 840). In practice, many government tasks at local and district level thus rely heavily on international and local NGOs. At the local level, international efforts for establishing government are seen as geared towards serving western political values. In the South in particular, the work of Afghan NGOs is complicated by the security situation, while NGOs are afraid that the Taliban will associate them with the fighting forces. Hence, they are thus unwilling to invest in relationships neither with ISAF nor with local government authorities.

At the time of writing, Summer 2007, programmes with developmental and peacebuilding objectives represented only a small percentage of overall aid, with most funding going to humanitarian programmes. ‘Peacebuilding’ as a term is not frequently used in the Afghan context. International agencies understand working on peace and conflict primarily in terms of reconstruction of governance structures, democratization and transitional justice, and the revival of the economy. Conflict-related interventions at the local and district level are about conflict resolution to deal with disputes about land, access to water, and women. In the absence of properly functioning local courts, such interventions often involve the strengthening of traditional institutions to manage local conflicts, introducing new methods to deal with conflict such as mediation. Nonetheless, few international organizations are working on conflict resolution at this

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60 The Mujaheddin insurged against the Soviet troops during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and continued fighting in the civil war after the Soviet Union pulled out.

61 Interview, Desk officer Afghanistan, Cordaid The Hague, 14 May 2007; personal communication with Annelies Heijmans.
level. Western agencies do not reach at this level due to security concerns, and often find it difficult dealing with Afghan local institutions based on kinship, ethnicity and religion.62

Of the four organizations considered in this chapter, three have programmes in Afghanistan. All three struggle with giving shape to peacebuilding in their programmes, which previously had a humanitarian character mainly, in a context where civil society has limited political influence, and where interventions are almost by definition political.

UNDP had a presence in Afghanistan since the 1950s. During the Soviet years, when most large international organizations had no local presence, UNDP started a small operation in Kabul, supporting development programmes of the Soviet-aided Afghan government. In the 1990s, UNDP was involved in the PEACE initiative, which aimed to limit the influence of the warlords through providing alternative economic opportunities and governance structures to the population (Fielden and Goodhand 2001). After the Bonn agreement, the UN confirmed its commitment to play a central and impartial role in the international efforts for consolidating peace in Afghanistan and rebuilding the country. UNDP had a substantial role in this, in particular in the establishment of the Emergency Loya Jirga (tribal grand council) and of the Afghan interim governance, and in the 2004 presidential elections and 2005 parliamentary elections.63 Furthermore, it initiated a programme for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the about 100,000 Afghan forces. This programme included the surrender and destruction of weapons, as well as reintegration packages including vocational training or the possibility to join the new national army or police forces.64 Activities further included poverty eradication and community empowerment, and development programmes based in vulnerable areas. A programme for state building and government support focused on public administration reform, the establishment of juridical institutions and legal reform, support to the human-rights commission, police capacity building and engaging women in governance.65

In 2005, all UNDP programme activities came to aim at consolidating peace, enhancing security and promoting the rule of law.66 The UNDP Afghanistan programme became organized around three themes: state-building and government support, democratization and civil society empowerment, and promotion of

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sustainable livelihoods. State-building activities ranged from supporting the establishment of the new national assembly, provincial councils and district councils, to developing the capacities of the public sector, fighting corruption and strengthening law and order institutions. Democratization and civil society empowerment activities included support to the reform of the juridical system, and support to human rights and empowerment of women, youth, disabled and civil society. Sustainable livelihoods were promoted through poverty reduction strategies, private sector development, and a rural rehabilitation programme. In the case of Afghanistan, UNDP thus has adopted a wide variety of interventions, most of those in collaboration with the central government authorities. UNDP in fact remained very close to its general policy priorities. Collaboration with civil society is limited and mainly implies that local organizations are implementing partners for UNDP, rather than UNDP engaging in their capacity building.

The programme of Cordaid in Afghanistan has a humanitarian character. Before 2001, Cordaid assisted refugees living in Pakistan, and supported an Afghan health organization. Early 2002, Cordaid established a humanitarian aid office inside Afghanistan, that mainly worked through local NGOs. Programmes focused on basic health services and small income generation in rural areas. In 2005, Afghanistan was to become one of Cordaid’s focal countries, and the programme transformed from an emergency into a development programme. The ‘Peace and Conflict’ theme only featured in the Afghan programme to a limited extent. In the past, partners were selected for the humanitarian aid programme and had little expertise in development. When the programme needed to move towards more developmental assistance, none of the partners had expertise with the ‘Peace and Conflict’ theme, and little happened to address it.

With the reorganization in Cordaid at the beginning of 2007, all Afghanistan programmes became the responsibility of the emergency and reconstruction section, thereby limiting again opportunities for a more developmental approach. Nonetheless, within the emergency and reconstruction section, reflection started on the role of civil society in Afghanistan and its relation to conflict. Staff members particularly considered the legitimacy of NGOs in terms of transparency, accountability, representativeness, and the ways in which targeted populations were involved in decision taking. Cordaid staff members realized that they themselves lacked knowledge of local community relations to assess the possible impact of interventions. From then onwards, the programme should pay attention to processes of reconciliation, conflict management, peacebuilding and reconstruction. Discussion would start with local partners on the possible negative effects of aid, their roles in conflict transformation, and on how to create ownership among the beneficiaries as well as trust towards NGOs.

69 Interview, Desk officer, BCPR New York, 12 April 2007.
70 Internal report on the reconciliation and rehabilitation programme for Afghanistan
71 Interview, Cordaid desk officer for Afghanistan, 14 May 2007.
NCA has been involved in assisting Afghan refugees in Pakistan since the Soviet invasion in 1978. In 1996, together with the refugees, NCA moved back to Afghanistan, and started programmes to assist in their resettlement, the reconstruction of their country, and the building of civil society. An important programme initiated then was the Co-operation for Peace and Unity (CPAU), which focused on peace advocacy and research, training in conflict resolution and peace education. Apparently, this initiative was one of the few examples of direct peacebuilding activities in the 1990s (see Fielden and Goodhand 2001), and, according to people interviewed, remains one of the scarce organizations implementing conflict-resolution activities at the local level. In 2007, NCA was working in one province, mainly in the field of rural development. At the national level, NCA had a programme for capacity development of civil-society organizations; peace building and advocacy work; women empowerment and their participation in governmental institutions and civil society; and emergency preparedness. The programme focused on enhancing Afghan NGOs professionalism and standards of accountability. NCA emphasized the role that religious leaders could play in peace building, and thus focused on them in their programmes.72

In the past, assistance to Afghanistan has been part of international policy agendas. Currently, many international organizations experience that their interventions are locally interpreted as related to western political agendas. In the work of the four organizations considered, interventions focusing on political transformation are limited. The question is, however, whether this results from the politicization of aid in Afghanistan. Like in the case of southern Sudan at the beginning of the new millennium, Afghanistan is still in the middle of a war, and many NGO programmes continue to have a humanitarian character. Attention for peacebuilding or for transforming relationships between authorities, civil society, and local populations is limited.

Of the three organizations, especially NCA’s programme is close to its general policies. Its Afghanistan programme focuses on advocacy and research, training in conflict resolution and empowering civil society to become accountable and responsible organizations. Its role is mainly at the local level. UNDP applies the whole range of post-conflict peacebuilding interventions defined in its peacebuilding policies, ranging from state building to DDR programmes (Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of ex-combatants), poverty reduction and development. Focus on developing relations with civil society is less prominent than in the other cases. In the case of Cordaid, the humanitarian character of its interventions made it difficult to address the ‘Peace and Conflict’ theme. Empowering civil-society organizations was not much of a priority in the past, and remained difficult with the actual humanitarian partners.

Discussion - diverse strategies of civil-society peacebuilding

This chapter has explored the contemporary peacebuilding landscape. How do policy ideas and discourses on civil-society peacebuilding that developed over the last 15 years shine through in the work of international development organizations? I observe various trends.

Peacebuilding discourses have impact

The practices of the four organizations discussed confirm an increasing attention for the theme of conflict and peace, and the mainstreaming of peacebuilding. The review of mandates and general policies of those organizations showed how diverse organizations considered how their work could contribute to peace. With the exception of NPA, the organizations explicitly defined peacebuilding roles. The country cases illustrate the variety of activities that those international organizations considered as contributing to peace, ranging from the national to the local level, from lobby to training, and from local conflict resolution and human rights to development, and HIV/AIDS. They attributed diverse roles to civil society in peacebuilding, and its strengthening was emphasized in general policies and country cases.

UNDP, Cordaid, and NCA have only been talking explicitly about peacebuilding since the turning of the century. Apparently, it took some time for peacebuilding discourses to articulate in general policies, and to grow into a core strategy of organizations. Hence, peacebuilding in organizations only started to become a serious concern by the time that the theme already started to lose significance in international policies and academic literature, as was discussed in the previous chapter. At the same time, the concern with peacebuilding appears a matter of re-labelling. Many of the themes and activities that organizations identified as peacebuilding in the case studies were in fact extensions of their regular activities. Hence, the term peacebuilding might well have been applied for strategic reasons mainly (Denkus 2007). Over a period that international NGOs grew increasingly dependent of external funding, highlighting their peacebuilding roles enabled organizations to demonstrate their continuing relevance in a changing global context (cf. Barnett et al. 2007). As such, peacebuilding has become a claim-bearing label (Hilhorst 2003: 7), that does not so much indicate particular policies or activities, but characterizes and legitimizes the interventions of an organization. By describing their work as peacebuilding, organizations claim that it contributes to the formation of peaceful societies. This legitimizes for example their applying for funds for peacebuilding and reconstruction, and may maintain public support to the work of international NGOs.

At the same time, the cases discussed in this chapter evidence that talking in terms of peacebuilding has also transformed existing practices. New programmes started, and new partners were identified in relation to peacebuilding. Hence, coining activities peacebuilding was not just a matter of a new label, but turned into a reality. Peacebuilding discourses had a real impact on practices of organizations. Moreover, in a way, in all four organizations there was continuity with earlier policies and programmes that already reflected a concern with conflict-related themes. Within
Partners in Peace

Cordaid, for long a clear commitment existed for working on justice. The introduction of the ‘Peace and Conflict’ theme underscored and formalized this commitment. Something similar happened in NCA. Labelling activities as peacebuilding was thus emphasizing existing practices and concerns within organizations.

In many cases, the two processes went along together – head offices re-labelled programmes for strategic reasons, while staff of the country programmes incorporated a concern for peace and conflict in their work. While talking in terms of peacebuilding was common in mandates and general policies, country desks or regional offices used the term more scarcely, but nonetheless addressed conflict and peace related themes in their programmes. For example, though UNDP general policies highlighted its role in peacebuilding, within concrete cases the theme was addressed in many different ways. In Afghanistan, UNDP spoke of ‘consolidating peace’ and ‘rehabilitation. Southern Sudan policies since the 2005 peace agreement referred to ‘rule of law’, ‘security and recovery’, while the term ‘peacebuilding’ pointed in particular to local level reconciliation activities. Guatemala policies did not even talk of ‘peacebuilding’, as the term implicitly conveyed the message that there was no peace and hence no legitimacy of then current power-holders, or that UNDP would have an agenda independent of that of the Guatemalan government. Even if peacebuilding discourses were employed strategically by organizations’ head-offices, or were forced on them by external financiers, they acquired meaning in country programmes and in the practices of agency staff in the field, but in ways not directly reflecting global peacebuilding discourses (cf. Hilhorst 2003: 100/211; Hilhorst and Van Leeuwen 2005b). Concluding, we may say that international peacebuilding discourses did have an impact on agencies, yet in highly variable and unpredictable ways, since this depended on the specific translation of peacebuilding in agencies.

Different mandates, different peacebuilding

The development of international discourses on civil-society peacebuilding has thus fuelled attention for the theme in the work of the four international development organizations concerned. Despite adhering to the same discourses, important differences existed in how peacebuilding and working with civil society worked out in different organizations and cases.

In the first place, though all organizations investigated represented a mixture of mandates and their fields of intervention had come close, there was considerable diversity in their actual peacebuilding practices. Ideological and experiential backgrounds remain important for the domains and activities they prioritize, their relation with civil society, and the extent to which they consider peacebuilding as social and political transformation.

Having the largest budget, UNDP had the broadest programme for peacebuilding, working in all cases at both national and local level, in a variety of fields. Peacebuilding within UNDP closely related to economic reconstruction and development, as well as the recovery of the state. UNDP applied certain minimum standards of how a

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90 Interview, Specialist and Regional Team Leader, Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Team, UNDP New York, 3 May 2007.
government should function to be legitimate, and considered how to facilitate the contribution of civil society in the governance of a country. However, its mandate provided limited space to operate concurrent to governments or to press for political change. As such, peacebuilding in UNDP was a technical procedure of strengthening the capacities of state institutions, and the promotion of internationally shared values of good governance, gender equity, and principles of participation. In the case of Afghanistan, the organization took up central responsibilities in this process. In southern Sudan, UNDP also played an important role in local conflict resolution and planning for development for peace.

In their general policies, NPA and Cordaid considered peace to be about social justice. For them, peacebuilding meant addressing the injustices and inequalities, and transforming political and economic institutions that resulted in exclusion and marginalization. Rather than a technical procedure of capacity strengthening, peacebuilding was about empowerment of marginalized groups. The objective of NPA’s rights-based approach—to counter political oppression and unequal distribution of resources—was in line with this. In both southern Sudan and Guatemala, NPA was working on local governance and legal reform concerning land. In the case of Cordaid, in southern Sudan this concern with social transformation resulted in empowerment programmes with a diversity of civil-society organizations.

For NCA, peacebuilding was also about bringing people together and facilitating dialogue. Effectively, their interpretation of conflict was as a breakdown of relations in society, which required reconciling people, both at national and local level. NCA’s rights-based approach was about assuring that everybody in society has a minimum chance of survival or a minimum access to development and social services, and was thus concerned with protection. From this perspective, for example, NCA advocated for addressing the needs of those affected by the tropical storm Stan in Guatemala. In contrast to Cordaid and NPA, NCA thus aimed to be impartial. The organization was concerned about bringing people from different sides together. In contrast to NPA, its advocacy activities focused not so much on social and economic transformation, but rather on the protection of vulnerable people and the fulfilment of their basic rights. For all three organizations advocacy was an important strategy in peacebuilding, in particular in Sudan.

In practice, different interpretations of peacebuilding implied, that similar activities were framed in different ways. Programmes for dealing with land disputes in southern Sudan, for example, were similar in that they strengthened local awareness of legislation, and supported local dispute resolving institutions. However, staff members of agencies interpret such interventions in different ways: as enhancing institutions and the rule of law (UNDP), as contributing to reconciliation and peaceful co-existence (UNDP, NCA, Cordaid), or as creating local awareness and enticing activism for social transformation (NPA). Moreover, while UNDP and Cordaid described such activities as peacebuilding, NPA refrained from using this term. NPA understood resolving land disputes inherent to its efforts to promote justice and the right to land. Remarkably, the broad interpretation of peacebuilding is used to support different political positions. While some agencies consider peacebuilding an activity requiring neutrality, others, in particular NPA, view that achieving peace implies taking sides for those less likely to achieve their goals in establishing peace.
### Table 3.1 - Overview of peacebuilding policies and practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peacebuilding</th>
<th>Domains of intervention</th>
<th>Dealing with Civil Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNDP</strong></td>
<td>Focus on development dimensions of crisis prevention and recovery, addressing root causes of conflict</td>
<td>Development and economic reconstruction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>State-building - building the capacities of national actors for peaceful management of conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Demining and involvement in DDR programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cordaid</strong></td>
<td>‘Peace and Conflict’ one of four working areas (2001-2006 period)</td>
<td>Reconciliation and creating dialogue to transform society and change relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflict-sensitivity Reconciliation and local capacities for peace</td>
<td>Empowering marginalized groups in decision making, political participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social transformation</td>
<td>Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NCA</strong></td>
<td>Bringing different faiths together for conflict resolution; involvement in peace negotiations</td>
<td>Humanitarian and development activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rights based approach - focus on protection</td>
<td>Reconciliation: promoting dialogue and reconstructing relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Accompany diplomatic efforts of the Norwegian government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NPA</strong></td>
<td>No separate strategy for peacebuilding - peacebuilding side-effect; development is conflictive</td>
<td>Humanitarian and development activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rights based approach - social and economic transformation</td>
<td>Demining</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Local conflict resolution</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Governance and public participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Peacebuilding practices

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Southern Sudan</th>
<th>Guatemala</th>
<th>Afghanistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grass-roots conflict resolution; development for peace; and state building</td>
<td>Implementation of peace agreements rather than peacebuilding; strong involvement of civil society; national reconciliation</td>
<td>Support to transitional government; DDR; poverty eradication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradual transition from labelling diverse development activities peacebuilding, to more specific reconciliation activities and back Strong focus on civil society programmes</td>
<td>Since peace agreements social transformation agenda less prominent, with introduction ‘Peace and Conflict’ theme searching for new opportunities</td>
<td>Humanitarian programme makes focus on peacebuilding and critical role civil society difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging parties in national dialogues, faith-based peacebuilding; local peace communities</td>
<td>Support to civil society as checks and balances; lobby with the authorities; advocacy after Stan</td>
<td>Enhancing professionalism civil society and religious communities; facilitating religious encounters and local conflict resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian assistance; political engagement with resistance movement; focus on de-mining and land disputes</td>
<td>Civil participation in local governance; land-rights and legal reform</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The country case studies also evidenced the diverse ways in which the four organizations dealt with local civil-society organizations, which was also clear from the comparison of their mandates. Though UNDP’s mandate identified governments as its principal partner, the organization defined policies on relating to civil society. In those, particular attention was given to peace related work. For UNDP, involving civil society was relatively new and incipient work. As observed in the case study countries, the relationship with civil-society organizations was often one of sharing information rather than of real cooperation. In the case of Guatemala, however, cooperation with civil society was relatively advanced. Cordaid and NPA defined civil society as a political actor striving for political and social transformation. In different country cases, this intention indeed was reflected in policy.

Strikingly, while the three development and humanitarian agencies have large implementing capacities and an enormous repertoire of themes and intervention strategies with which they have experience, all three focused on working with local NGOs. Only recently, efforts have been put into supporting the institutions of (local) government. An exception was the work of NPA in southern Sudan, where support was given to the political wing of the resistance movement SPLA/M in establishing democratic local authorities.

**Different contexts, different practices**

Differences in mandates thus are reflected in the intervention practices of the organizations. At the same time, local context matters. Local conditions set limits and pose specific opportunities for what peacebuilding comes to mean in practice. Several people interviewed emphasized that while staff members may be convinced of the relevance of working on peace, they found it difficult to apply general policies to particular situations. Desk officers told about difficulties with developing peacebuilding policies in a context of uncertainty and lacking local capacities. In the case of Cordaid in Afghanistan, local partners had primarily experience in humanitarian aid programmes. This limited opportunities for peacebuilding, while attention for the possible transformative roles of civil society was just emerging. The desk officer referred to this as “the shiny outside and the dusty inside” of policies. While Cordaid was committed to work in situations of insecurity and incapacity where addressing the ‘Peace and Conflict’ theme was imperative, in many cases, such intentions could be realized to a limited extent only.

In southern Sudan, UNDP staff experienced how national strategies on protection and governance –dealing with issues such as decentralization and the separation of state powers– had limited relevance in the communities. Field-staff experienced that for local people the functioning of local governments was of far less concern than their security and economic development, which were not taking care of under the protection and governance programme. Policies for demobilization and reintegration of former soldiers, which at national level created little problems, turned out difficult at local level, due to the volatility of the local security situation. In the end, local UNDP staff thus reinterpreted the governance programme to include the establishment of committees for local weapon collection, the training of police forces, and increasing the visibility of the security forces. This contributed to an improvement
of local perceptions of security. Hence, agency staff members adapt general policy priorities to comply with local necessities and demands.

**The social life of policy**

In conclusion, how do international peacebuilding discourses affect the practice of agencies? As the cases in this chapter convey, the peacebuilding discourses identified in the previous chapter did certainly affect the practice of agencies, though this took more years than the literature would suggest. When international policy dialogue already moved beyond peacebuilding around the turn of the century, implementing agencies started to make serious work of it. While the review of academic and policy discussions in the previous chapter suggested a sequence of discourses informing the interventions of international development organizations, this chapter showed that practices of organizations follow much slower and do not follow a singular logic. Consequently, rather than international development organizations changing their practices when new discourses come into fashion and replace previous ones, newer and older discourses continue to be relevant in the practices of organizations. This provides room for manoeuvre to organizations, who find in this multiplicity grounds to legitimize a large range of intervention strategies with reference to peacebuilding.

The way in which the discourse affected agencies was highly diverse and depended, amongst others on an organization's pedigree and the resulting organizational culture, their present mandate and the local context and negotiations of local actors. Actual peacebuilding practices are not the result of a more or less successful translation of general policies to particular situations. Policy is an ongoing process that is shaped along the way by participants with their own agendas, motivations, personal trajectories and experiences (Long 2001: 33; Hilhorst 2003: 107-10). In the end, what is happening may be presented as ‘policy’, but is the outcome of complex processes within and around organizations.

Staff members responsible for the implementation of policy have the tendency to uphold continuity in their programme and allow space for local actors in determining the priorities, notwithstanding policy directives of head quarters. In the case of Cordaid’s southern Sudan programme, for example, the introduction of the ‘Peace and Conflict’ theme required that new partners were identified and old partnership relations re-evaluated as to their contribution to peace and conflict. Considering that many of Cordaid’s partners in southern Sudan were long-term, the responsible desk officer was hesitant to radically shift priorities and terminate well-established relationships, while finding it difficult identifying new partners more related to the theme. Day-to-day contact with local partners made continuity in ongoing programmes more important. Hence, initially the peace and conflict theme amounted to little more than a re-labelling of activities. Over time, peacebuilding was (re)defined and partners identified accordingly. Staff members may indeed aim to relate organizational priorities to their ongoing work, if only because they chose to work for a particular agency and tend to share the organization’s values, but nonetheless their own priorities play an important role in this.

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Peacebuilding takes shape through the efforts of desk officers and field staff that interpret general policy and reformulate it to local and their own requirements. Peacebuilding practices are reinterpreted as a result of social and organizational processes – the ways in which organizations function, what they represent to their staff and people in the communities, and the politics of civil society. The next chapter will elaborate on this theme and focus on the importance of organizational processes in defining and shaping peacebuilding programmes.
Chapter 4
Grounding Local Peace Organizations
A case study of southern Sudan*

With Dorothea Hilhorst

Since Boutros Boutros-Ghali launched the UN Agenda for Peace in 1992, peacebuilding interventions have mushroomed, with an ever-widening range and scope of activities taken on by actors of all kinds, including governments, inter-government organizations, churches and the development community. Peacebuilding has become comprehensively defined, including interventions in development and economic reconstruction, state and institution-building, and justice and reconciliation (see chapter 2). In the comprehensive definitions of peacebuilding, a central role is attributed to civil society. A healthy civil society is seen as both a necessary condition for and as an achievement of sustainable peacebuilding. The vast majority of the peacebuilding policy and literature argues for strengthening local organizations as vehicles for peace. Strengthening local organizations is considered crucial because, in the first place, higher level conflicts always get manifested locally in specific conflicts that need to be resolved on the ground. In the second place, once peace is established

* This chapter is an adapted version of Hilhorst and van Leeuwen (2005a)
and international organizations withdraw from the scene one needs resilient local institutions that can absorb, alter or resolve future tensions.

While the international community discovered the potentials of local peacebuilding and aimed to strengthen local organizations to do the job, we find that there is a dire lack of organizational perspective to the processes set into motion. Current local peacebuilding policy is based on analyses that are far removed from the everyday practices of the actors engaged in peacebuilding.

We are convinced that local level peacebuilding should be grounded in the empirical analysis of social and organizational processes. This means that we step away from questions like what civil society ought to be and should do. Instead we want to see how peacebuilding interventions get shaped in local realities. People are always organizing and disorganizing in manifold, formal and informal, ways. When peacebuilding organizations emerge from or are inserted in these local realities, we want to know where they come from, how they operate and what determines their success or failure. To understand how peacebuilding activities work and what they do to enhance peace (or if they perhaps enhance conflict instead) requires insight in the dynamics of organizations.

The meaning of organizations

Existing literature on peacebuilding NGOs has several shortcomings. It usually deals with international NGOs with their headquarters in the United States or Europe, sometimes without the merest reference to NGOs in the rest of the world (e.g. Aall 1994; Voutira and Brown 1995; Anderson 2001). In addition, it hardly bothers to identify what organizational approach is taken. Implicitly, however, literature treats NGOs (and other organizations) as ‘things’, as if there is a single answer to the questions of what an NGO is, what it wants and what it does. There is, however, far more to organizations than their formal objectives, structures and activities. Since organizations are constituted by people that operate in multiple social settings, its structure may be different from its boundaries and influence in practice. NGOs present different faces to different stakeholders, for instance in relating with donor representatives, clients or colleagues. Which is the real face, or in case they are all real, what does that mean for our understanding of these organizations and how do we determine their impact? There are always different ideas of what an organization should be among and within staff, members or other stakeholders. How do these notions compete, what role do they play in shaping the practice of the organization? How do the formal and informal aspects of organization intertwine and affect its peacebuilding activities?

To unravel these questions, we have to take on board a dynamic approach to organizations (Hilhorst 2003). This starts with treating organizations not as things, but as open-ended processes. Viewing organization as ‘things’ means that one conflates the organization as it is presented –i.e. with particular objectives, a clear structure and a neat programme– with the real organization as it is. Under the surface of the ‘thing’, however, one finds organizations operate more like living organs (changing in relation
to their environment), or appear as multi-faceted entities that cannot be captured in a single description. Organizations are many ‘things’ at the same time (Morgan 1997). They can be rationally organized according to an international blueprint for NGOs, and at the same time be a social network, an income-generating project or an arena of competing factions. It is not clear in advance how these different identities coincide, interact, dominate, facilitate or divide. To explore these tensions that are inherent in NGOs, research can not be limited to formal organizational features, structures and reports. Instead, it must take into account the everyday practices of the social actors in and around the organization. Rather than taking organizations at face value, we have to ask and observe how their claims and performances acquire meaning in practice.

Our insistence on the importance of taking into account everyday practices in organizations is theoretically founded on an actor orientation. Such an orientation starts with the premise that social actors have agency (Giddens 1984; Long 1992). They reflect upon their experiences and what happens around them and use their knowledge and capabilities to interpret and respond to development. An actor orientation implies that gauging why and how organizations come about and operate in the context of local and global developments requires studying their everyday practices. We must follow how actors define the situation, chose their goals and find room for manoeuvre to realize projects. We must try to make sense of people’s motivations, ideas and activities by taking into account their past and present surroundings, social networks and histories. And we must observe the way they implement their activities because this conveys practical knowledge, implicit interpretations and power processes taking place in and around organizations.

The following cases discuss how Sudanese NGOs, community organizations, and international organizations deal with peacebuilding processes in southern Sudan. We start with an introduction into the context of war and peacebuilding in Sudan, and discuss the growing attention of international organizations for the role Sudanese civil society could play in building peace. We then discuss the Sudanese Women’s Voice for Peace (SWVP), an organization that moved from a membership organization to a women’s movement to an NGO. The second case concerns one of the local women groups affiliated to SWVP. Both cases reveal how those organizations represented themselves as peace organizations, how their claims and performances acquired meaning in practice, and how they were shaped by their internal relations and the dynamics in their surroundings. In the final section of the paper we elaborate what this means for understanding peacebuilding organizations, and outline an approach to take account of the practices of peace organizations and the different dynamics that play a role.

The cases presented in the chapter are based on ten months of fieldwork in 2001, and additional interviews in 2002 and 2003 as part of evaluation missions (Van Leeuwen 2004). From January to November 2001, I worked with the Sudanese Women’s Voice for Peace on behalf of the Dutch peace organization Pax Christi, where I assisted the Nairobi management team, and set up a training-of-trainers programme for community theatre. Most of the time I stayed in Nairobi and Lokichoggio in the offices of SWVP, interspersed with visits to communities in southern Sudan, including six weeks in Narus. Apart from the information obtained
through working with SWVP and Pax Cristi, interviews were held with representatives of 27 international NGOs and UN organizations, 28 Sudanese organizations, a number of donor representatives, and—above all—numerous women and men in the communities in southern Sudan. The field report on which this chapter is based was fed back to and approved upon by key actors of Pax Christi and SWVP in 2004 (Van Leeuwen 2004).

Civil society in conflict: the case of southern Sudan

At the time of fieldwork, 2001-2003, conflict in Sudan concerned the interplay of many conflicts that were manifested differently through time, space and scale. For more than forty years a civil war between the Government of Sudan in Khartoum and armed opposition movements had ravaged Sudan. While the southern resistance movement SPLA/M aimed to bring down the central government, factionalism within the insurgence resulted in regional conflicts between rebel militia (see Lesch 1998, Johnson 2000, 2003). At the local level, this had inflamed or intensified local conflicts, fuelled by the widespread availability of light weapons. Those included inter-ethnic conflicts and conflicts about resources such as land and cattle; conflicts between communities and between displaced and local populations (PaxChristi 1999). Hence, conflict in Sudan ranged from attacks by helicopter-gunships of the government killing up to hundred villagers at the time, to fights and occasional deaths resulting from local cattle-raiding.

The late 1990s witnessed a series of international diplomatic interventions to address the North-South conflict. Prominent were the efforts under protection of the IGAD (Inter-Governmental Authority on Development). Difficult issues in the negotiations were the principle of separation between state and religion, the right to self-determination of southern Sudan and other marginalized areas, the boundaries of southern Sudan and the entitlement to the oilfields located in the border zone between the North and the South (for the latter issue see Verney 1999). Early 2002, the two major factions in the South, SPLM (Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement) and SPDF (Sudan People’s Defence Force), merged forces. This was followed by a ceasefire agreement between the Sudanese Government and the SPLA, and the starting of peace talks in Kenya, under the auspices of the IGAD. In 2005 a comprehensive peace deal was signed, providing for a high degree of autonomy for the south for six years, after which a referendum on possible independence is to be held, and a share in oil revenues. However, at that time, an insurgence in the western region of Darfur had turned into a new human tragedy.

Civil society in southern Sudan

Southern Sudan has a rich tradition of conflict resolution at the local level. Prendergast (1997: 80-2) gives several examples of how elders from different cattle keeping communities in the border area between northern and southern Sudan were able to negotiate peaceful movement for the northern groups into the southern grazing areas,
Grounding Local Peace Organizations

and of reconciliation efforts by Dinka and Nuer chiefs in 1993, as a response to inter
militia fighting. Several agreements have been reached between cattle keeping groups
in the border area of Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda, as a result of combined efforts of
army commanders and elders. These traditional governance structures have been
severely eroded by the displacements, the power of the rebel armies and the large-scale
conflicts in the regions. In many areas their roles have been taken over by young rebel
leaders, often sons of the elders. Nonetheless, traditional structures are still very
important for local peace (see also Hutchinson 1996). In Narus (see below) the local
army commander strongly relied on the local elders to bring peace between the
Toposa and the SPLA.

Churches\(^1\) are the most locally present institutions in southern Sudan, and they
have played an important role in most initiatives for local peace. The Presbyterian
Church, for example, sponsored travelling peace committees in Upper Nile
(Prendergast 1997: 27). The New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC), comprising
catholic and protestant churches in southern Sudan) initiated the People to People
Peace Process (often referred to as ‘4Ps’). 4Ps consisted of a series of grass-roots
peace and reconciliation conferences which started in Wunlit (Bahr el Ghazal) in early
1999. The conference brought together traditional leaders, church leaders and
community representatives, and resulted in an agreement for peace between Dinka
and Nuer communities (OLS/UNICEF 2000). The conferences addressed and
involved the effective authorities, i.e. the rebel movements, whose collaboration was a
major condition for success. This strategy, however, also compromised NSCC in the
eyes of some international donors, who came to believe that NSCC was in fact
affiliated to the SPLA/M.

At the time of fieldwork in 2001, modern civil-society organizations were a recent
phenomenon in southern Sudan. Over the ten years to 2001, an estimated 65
organizations were formed, mostly in the format of an NGO.\(^2\) Most had their main
office in Kenya or Uganda, and had been established by Sudanese in exile. The
majority of NGOs worked in relief and many of these had secondary objectives
regarding peacebuilding. A few worked primarily and actively on peace at the local
level. Peacebuilding included activities such as social healing, promoting dialogue and
reconciliation, monitoring human-rights violations, or the promotion of participatory
government. Part of the work consisted of the formation of community based
organizations –in particular women and youth groups– in the communities.

This recent emergence of modern civil-society organizations has to be understood
in the context that until very recently institutional space for civil society initiatives was
limited. Neither the colonial authorities nor the post-independence government were
interested in the social, political and economic development of the South. The rebel
movements were initially organized in strict top-down fashions. They did nothing to
establish civil authority structures or to encourage civil-society organizations. Internal
discussion and occasional protest from local populations about the lack of engagement
of the rebels with non-military people and institutions led to an SPLA convention in

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\(^1\) Major churches in Sudan are the Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church, and the Presbyterian
Church.

\(^2\) Inventory of the Sudan Ecumenical Forum, 2001.
1994, stating the resolution to build civil structures (see Lesch 1998; SPLM 2000). Since then, new administrative structures were set up in several areas. The roles and responsibilities of army, civil administration, traditional leaders and civil society had been stipulated by the SPLM, but still needed to gain empirical reality. Their establishment was hampered by de facto resistance of local military commanders, little grasp of the division of responsibilities and a lack of experience of office bearers, who often had a military past. A situation had thus emerged where –not uncommon in conflict situations– civil authority structures and civil society had to be developed simultaneously. Many Sudanese and international organizations implicitly struggled with the questions what road to take or on which of the two to work at all.

(International) organizations strengthening Sudanese civil society

The humanitarian operation in southern Sudan was one of the longest in history, and since the mid 1990s UN organizations and international NGOs had adopted the idea that relief had to be made relevant to development and peacebuilding. Although different approaches could be discerned, international organizations considered that an orientation to development and peace required investing in capacity building of local authorities and civil-society organizations. The question was if and how they could do this.

In the first place, international organizations struggled with the question how to combine development with peacebuilding. SPLM maintained a policy of 'Peace through development' (SPLM 2000), and this was also the strategy of many international organizations. The strategy aimed to integrate the development of civil authorities and civil society with the provision of services. It was based on a notion that the root cause of local conflicts was often found in competition over resources. Hence, by providing additional resources and services, such as water points, conflict would be prevented or resolved. Most international organizations approached peacebuilding through development, although they found this difficult to realize in practice, with the capacity building components often lagging seriously behind. Both international and local NGOs had built expertise in the provision of services and much less in capacity building. A major problem was, of course, whether development projects that were not sustained with capacity building would still have a positive impact for peace. Unbalanced development was known to exacerbate conflict, and besides, many conflicts about natural resources at the local level did require political solutions and not merely an investment in development. Several international NGOs approached peacebuilding more directly. They focused for instance on training in conflict handling, the support of peace conferences, or the assistance of local women groups. In practice, there was not so much scope for direct peace work, because many local authorities and civil organizations were wary that these activities were ‘too political’ – they implied talking about the roles and responsibilities of local government authorities, or the involvement of members of the rebel movement in local conflict.
Secondly, they hesitated whether they should strengthen civil authorities or rather work through civil-society organizations. To organize relief, international organizations had always had to work with the authorities of the rebel movements and their humanitarian offices (such as the SPLA/M related SRRA). However, most organizations had refrained from capacity building of the emerging civic authorities that had been installed by the rebel movements, especially when the rival rebel movements were still active. International organizations had been worried to compromise their image of neutrality by working with groups that could be considered party to conflict (Macrae et al. 1997). Slowly, some organizations became convinced that capacity building of the movement was necessary to upscale peacebuilding and development efforts. USAID and UNICEF, for instance, launched the STAR (Sudan Transitional Assistance for Rehabilitation) programme, to develop local authorities in rebel-held territories.

Thirdly, the rhetoric on civil society notwithstanding, many international organizations were hesitant to invest in the capacity building of Sudanese NGOs. Many questioned the independence of NGOs, which were considered to be one way or the other linked to the rebel movement. Besides, questions abounded about the genuineness, democratic organization and accountability of Nairobi-based Sudanese NGOs whose numbers had mushroomed in just a couple of years, partly because of the financial opportunities that had presented themselves in the wake of the relief operations. The problem of trust was exacerbated because NGOs, operating in a competitive field, often accused each other of linkages to the rebel movements or corrupt practices.

With the obvious exception of church-related organizations, international NGOs rarely considered encouraging development and peace by strengthening the capacities of church-related programmes, even though churches were the oldest civil-society organizations and had the largest outreach and legitimacy in southern Sudan. There were some indications that international NGOs had little confidence in church-related initiatives, which they suspected to be too much integrated with rebel movements. Instead of supporting existing structures of Sudanese NGOs or churches, most international NGOs concentrated their capacity building efforts on creating Community Based Organizations in Sudan.

A situation had thus emerged that international organizations had taken on policies to strengthen local capacities but found it difficult to put these into practice. Those organizations that did support local organizations, as we shall see below, found indeed that this was a complicated process. Most organizations shied away from supporting existing organizations because of anecdotal evidence suggesting these did not fit into preconceived conditions about ‘civil society’ and ‘local organizations’. Many of these organizations decided to by-pass supra-local structures and directly invest in organization building at village level. Notwithstanding the question of whether local organization building would meet the same complications, it had to be asked whether such a strategy was sustainable.
The Sudanese Women’s Voice for Peace

Since the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, there has been a growing attention for the contribution of women in peacebuilding. This was also apparent in Sudan, where Sudanese and international NGOs had developed a strong discourse on gender and peace. Among the emerging women for peace initiatives, were several initiatives to give women a more active voice in the IGAD peace process. Amongst others, this was done through the ‘engendering the peace’ project, which was initiated by the Netherlands Embassy to bring women to the negotiation tables, and which later grew into a separate organization. Although these women were partly successful in participating in IGAD, it was generally felt that their influence was marginal, amongst others because they felt not taken genuinely serious by the SPLA/M (Hilhorst and Van Leeuwen 2005b). Most attention was given to the potential of women to build peace at the local level. The following case concerns what had been for some time the most prominent women’s organization of southern Sudan: the Sudanese Women’s Voice for Peace (SWVP). The narrative follows how the organization evolved and changed in the interplay with their international supporters.

SWVP was born out of a meeting organized by an East African NGO, the People for Peace in Africa. When peace negotiations between southern rebel factions continued to fail, this organization considered in 1993 that the wives of factional leaders could perhaps influence their husbands’ opinions. A meeting was organized for the wives of significant political leaders. After a tumultuous start when a woman affiliated to the Nasir faction was physically attacked in the streets outside of the workshop venue, creating an instant conflict among the delegates, the workshop nonetheless became successful. The women decided to form an organization promoting the interests of the women. They did not want to engage in politics, which they wanted to leave to their husbands.

The Sudanese Women’s Voice for Peace (SWVP) started in 1994 with the intention to unite southern Sudanese women of different ethnic groups and religions. SWVP wanted to accomplish “what men have failed to achieve”: peace in Sudan. SWVP emphasized the central role of women in the resolution of conflict. According to the founders, women as mothers were united in their desire not to see their sons killed in conflict. Besides, they considered women to have more interest in peace, because they suffer more from war than men do. Finally, they were convinced that women by their innate character and by traditional heritage were natural peacemakers. The initial membership of SWVP consisted of wives of political leaders and women who had become active in development organizations and peacebuilding initiatives. Their ethnic origin was diverse, they were generally educated and all lived in exile in Nairobi. SWVP thus started as a membership organization in Nairobi that, due to the ethnic diversity could claim to represent southern Sudanese women in peacebuilding processes. At the same time, they considered their group as the seed of a southern Sudan-wide women’s movement for peace.

In the first year, SWVP organized several public events to call attention to the plight of women and children in the war. They were able to get modest support, from Bishops and UNIFEM, for membership training and a visit to southern Sudan for a
workshop and to introduce the SWVP to the military command in the area. Within one year, after having had just one activity in southern Sudan, the organization was launched internationally. A delegation of SWVP was invited to attend the Conference in Beijing, where they were exposed to international discourses around women and peace. Beijing furthered the visibility of SWVP, resulting in international support in the form of training, funding for activities, and invitations to international events. Immediately after the initiation of SWVP, the organization thus became discursively and organizationally intertwined with the international community working for Sudan.

In the five years following Beijing, SWVP started to move from a city-based membership organization to a countrywide women’s movement. The Nairobi members received training in conflict resolution and civic education, after which they trained and organized women’s groups in ten communities of southern Sudan. SWVP facilitated workshops for peacebuilding and human-rights advocacy, and for trauma-counselling. Some of these were facilitated by international experts, flying in for the occasion. The Nairobi women started to present themselves as a chapter of a countrywide movement, even though the movement had not materialized in a formal sense and the groups had never had opportunity to meet together. The Nairobi ‘chapter’ had grown by that time to about 90 members.

Among the international supporters of SWVP was Pax Christi, a Dutch peace organization, which assisted finding financial assistance in the Netherlands, facilitated some SWVP activities in the field, and included the case of Sudanese women in their European peace advocacy campaigns. In the course of time, SWVP and Pax Christi visualized ‘Seeds for Peace’. This programme aimed to empower local women to participate in conflict prevention and peacebuilding on local and regional level. Part of the programme was the establishment of four regional ‘Peace Demonstration Centres’ that would function as focal points for awareness raising, training, and income generating activities. The programme was facilitated by Pax Christi and SWVP and financed by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. To take on the programme, SWVP had to register as NGO, thereby transforming into a service organization for the local women groups in South Sudan. This change in organizational identity signalled several problems.

The impact of Seeds for Peace on the organization
With Seeds for Peace, SWVP transformed itself from a voluntary organization to an organization with a few salaried members. It also changed from a flat organization into one with specialized and differentiated functions. A final major change was that the budget of SWVP became much larger. This resulted in a number of organizational problems. Since only few women got a salary, the other members of SWVP grumbled about the lack of fair recruitment procedures and started to reassess their willingness to work for SWVP as volunteers. The revision of tasks was little discussed and clarified, and led to all kinds of problems in the everyday division of responsibilities.

Though a few of the women had experience with working in (international) NGOs, they lacked experience in project planning and budgeting. SWVP’s donors tried to remedy these problems by hiring consultants to improve the management and financial administration, but programme reporting and bookkeeping continued to lag.
Partners in Peace

seriously behind. The availability of relatively large funds put the relation with the local ‘chapters’ of SWVP under strain. It raised unrealistic expectations, and stories about the possible misuse of funds by the Nairobi women started to circulate.

Further, the organizational problems stemming from Seeds for Peace exacerbated a number of problems between the women that had been building up over previous years. Many SWVP women had undergone traumatic war experience and SWVP work was at times very stressful, especially in the field. This contributed to the fact that the women had difficulty to maintain good personal relations. The only experience SWVP women had with management was in military-style environments, and their authoritarian management left little space to express discomfort about the state of affairs and resolve the internal problems. Instead, an atmosphere of suspicion and gossip arose. This was made worse by the political chicanery surrounding peace organizations in a country at war. SWVP was vulnerable to pulls of political powers that wanted to co-opt the organization’s resources. Fearing such complications, the leaders of SWVP were very secretive about the organization’s finances, which in turn led to the wildest speculations within and around the organization about the assets they would avail of. A core group of women emerged that trusted each other, partly because they came from the same area and shared the same background. This had the unfortunate consequence that, when more and more women outside the ‘trust group’ left the organization, SWVP lost its multiethnic character.

Another set of problems emerged in the relation with and between donors. Pax Christi was a Dutch church-related peace organization that combined supporting local peace initiatives with lobbying activities in Europe for resumption of peace negotiations between the North and the South, and against oil companies’ war-fuelling purchases of Sudanese oil. The simultaneous involvement with local organizations helped to inspire and dignify the lobbying work. At the start, relations between Pax Christi and SWVP were cordial, though not equal. Pax Christi considered its relation with SWVP as one of partnership and trust. SWVP valued the relation with Pax Christi, as one of its most consistent supporters. At the same time, they maintained relationships with other donors, using the competition that unmistakably had evolved among donors over this prominent women’s organization to their own advantage.

Seeds for Peace thoroughly changed the relationship between SWVP and Pax Christi. The money of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs was administered by Pax Christi, and as a result, Pax Christi became more of a donor than an equal partner. Pax Christi had to ensure that SWVP followed the funding conditions, which was perceived by the SWVP women as interference in their internal affairs. The Pax Christi representative on the other hand, gradually lost her confidence in the trustworthiness of the women in Nairobi. Her intensive efforts to request, facilitate, and eventually demand increased accountability and more visible activities in southern Sudan were not given substantial response. Finally, in the summer of 2002, Pax Christi severed its ties with the Nairobi women of SWVP, and started to look for other channels to support peacebuilding in southern Sudan.

The problems experienced by SWVP were not entirely organizational. Working in conflict is subject to a lot of practical and political constraints. Visiting the areas in southern Sudan was highly expensive and at times dangerous. Co-operation with the resistance movements and their humanitarian wings on the ground was not always
easy, with SWVP representatives sometimes being suspected of fuelling tensions, or local officials interfering with its work. Nor, however, can what happened to women’s peacebuilding be understood without taking into account the organizational dynamics in SWVP. The partly donor-driven transitions SWVP went through, from membership organization to social movement to NGO, took their toll to the extent of jeopardizing the entire organization. In 2002, the many difficulties surrounding SWVP had given the organization a bad reputation. Rightly or wrongly, in the eyes of many bystanders they moved from an icon of hope for peace to a bunch of quarrelling women.

Women’s Peace Demonstration Centre in Narus

Before thinking through some of the implications of the SWVP story, let us discuss a second case. This consists of a local organization affiliated to SWVP: the Peace Demonstration Centre in Narus.

Narus is located just over Sudan’s border with Kenya in SPLM/A-held territory. In 2001, its population of around 8,000 consisted of a majority of Dinka, a large number of Toposa (originating from the region), and smaller groups of displaced Equatorians, Nuba and Nuer. Narus had been hit several times by bombardments of the Northern Sudanese army, and experienced different kinds of local conflicts. Tension and suspicion between Toposa and Dinka had built up from the past when the (Dinka-dominated) SPLA had occupied the area and forcibly recruited soldiers. Many Dinka soldiers had settled in Narus and had occupied land. The resulting tension permeated the entire fabric of community life, resulting in a general ‘culture of suspicion’.

Another source of local conflict was cattle raiding and related violence. The people living in the area had a tradition of cattle raiding, which was related to cultural institutions surrounding bride-wealth and masculinity. With the increasing availability of guns, cattle raiding had become a deadly and escalating practice. According to many people, the insecurity and high levels of domestic violence in Narus partly resulted from the wide availability of alcohol. The relation between alcohol and local conflict was complicated, because the production of alcohol was at the same time one of the few income-earning opportunities available to women. On the other hand, an important local dimension of peace in Narus was the Bishop of the Diocese of Torit. In the past, he had been involved in reconciliation agreements between chiefs of different cattle-raiding groups.

Dreams and realities of a peace demonstration centre

The women group of SWVP in Narus started in 1997 with 15 participants from all major ethnic groups in Narus. SWVP-Narus set out to contribute to resolving local conflict. In 1998, for instance, they stopped the escalation of a fight between Dinka and Equatorians. In these conflicts, the women were not centre-stage actors, but they played an important role in early-warning and mobilizing the appropriate authorities (SimONSE 1999). The women of Narus soon wanted to extend their peacebuilding to
surrounding communities for which they wanted to build an office and compound where they could meet, receive and train visitors. To sustain the centre, it would include a shop and a tailor workplace. When the centre never materialized, due to constraints to be discussed below, the women’s group started to change. The women still wanted to address local conflict, but in addition, the group turned more and more into a social, mutual support network. They had a monthly bible sharing after church, made home visits or went to the dispensary when a member or her child was ill, cooked together for the church, attended funeral rites, and collected money for needy people. Several of these activities were continuations of pre-SWVP social life now headed under the label of SWVP. Apart from activities organized by outsiders, in particular the SWVP-Nairobi, there were no formal meetings. This had implications for the ethnic composition of the group. SWVP-Narus had come to operate as a social network, mainly of Toposa women. Only when official activities took place, with SWVP-Nairobi, they invited other members. As a result, the women outside of this network felt increasingly alienated from SWVP-Narus. These women developed more comfortable relations with other (I)NGO initiatives for women that were ongoing in the area.

An important constraint to the development of the peace demonstration centre was that it lacked the necessary resources, and capacities, and supportive institutional environment. Most of the Narus women had to balance their activities for SWVP with taking care of children, and making a living through cross-border trade and participating in NGO projects, while often their husbands were absent. They had little resources to bring in to the centre, and actually hoped that the centre would serve them as a future source of income. When this prospect faded, many of them lost interest and left. Another problem was that the skills to run projects and organizational capacities of the group were limited, with for example only 3 out of 20 women capable of writing. SWVP Nairobi was a distant supporter that could not train the women in the daily running of an organization. A major constraint was the lack of co-ordination between aid organizations at the local level. A number of churches, international and local NGOs in Narus provided income generating activities. Groups of women were loosely organized around such initiatives. Instead of collaborating or assisting the SWVP women’s group, these preferred to bind individual women to their own initiatives.

The meaning of peace

How significant was SWVP-Narus for peace? This depends, of course, on how one defines peace and what expectations exist about peacebuilding. The Narus women were convinced that their activities were leading to a more peaceful society. They developed a definition of peace that started from below, from the unity of the core-family, and primarily worked on “peace among ourselves”, by cultivating peace in their families and homes. Besides, they considered development as an important prerequisite for peace. As they claimed: “you cannot have peace in your mind without peace in your stomach”. They therefore considered their participation in income generating projects also as peace work. They maintained this mission as advocates for peace in the wider context of Sudan. As SWVP, they were often invited to other
organizations’ peace activities, where they could bring out their message for peace. Otherwise, they saw little opportunity to translate their mission in concrete activities. The North-South conflict and the bombardments were clearly beyond their realm of influence. Since the majority of members were not from cattle holding families they also saw little scope in addressing cattle-raiding. Addressing alcohol-related violence, on the other hand, found no constituency in the group because many of the Peace Demonstration Centre women brewed alcohol to earn an income.

It is the question if the significance of SWVP-Narus could only be read from its peace related activities. Clearly, for the women who constituted the organization, peace (in a strict sense) was important, but did not have the overwhelming priority outsiders attribute to it. They were primarily occupied with the demands of making a living and driven by the desire to realise good community relations in a more general sense. The group was very important for the identity and social relations of the women members, who found in the group a venue to share the hardships of life with likeminded women. The concern of outsiders that SWVP-Narus lost credibility as peacebuilding organization because they had largely lost their multi-ethnic character was not shared by the women. The ethnic composition of the group seemed, in their perception, to present no barrier whatsoever to continue their peace work.

Finally, we like to mention the symbolic significance of groups like SWVP-Narus. Through their work, the concept of peace entered the everyday vocabulary of people in the community, which contributed to a slowly growing constituency of peace. This effect radiated far beyond their immediate activities. The fact that these women of Narus belonged to a larger women’s movement for peace was widely known and appealed to many men and women in and outside of Narus. We fully concur with Cynthia Cockburn, who concluded after her research into seemingly insignificant women’s groups in post-war Bosnia that: “It matters that these women’s organizations survive, because they are potentially a social space (and a rare one) in which a genuinely transformative progressive revisioning of the social might happen after catastrophic societal failure” (Cockburn 2000: 25).
A process approach to peace organizations

These everyday accounts of local organizations can be put into perspective by adopting a process-approach to organizations. By doing so, seemingly unrelated and mundane incidents of quarrelling women and misunderstandings between donors and local groups can be understood as part of the dynamics by which the wheeling and dealing of peacebuilding acquires meaning. To elaborate the approach, we identify five central properties of organizations. We shall discuss each of them in view of the presented cases and bring out what lessons can be learnt.

- Organizations are an amalgam of different pedigrees

Though NGOs the world over look remarkably like each other and are obviously modelled after some international standard, NGOs also reflect national, historical and cultural conditions (Tvedt 1998). NGOs, and other organizations, are the outcome of complicated processes and manifest locally grown organizing patterns and state society relations. SWVP and the Narus group went through several transformations that profoundly changed their meaning. SWVP moved from a membership organization, with a Nairobi-based constituency and an important role for the wives of factional leaders, to a women's movement, and finally to an NGO, mainly working in the countryside of southern Sudan, and with some paid staff. The Narus women group started as an informal social network, turned into a platform for interethnic dialogue brought together by outsiders, and finally became a mutual support group. When dealing with organizations in peacebuilding, it is thus wise to take into account their history and trace where they come from, and not restrict our interest in these organizations to how they operate in the context of conflict and peace (Bakewell 1999).

- Organizations have multiple identities

Organizations are made up of people who have multiple identities. The SWVP women were committed peace-activists, at the same time they were women struggling with their own traumatic experiences from war, living in displacement, and providers for their families. These multiple identities were reproduced in the organization, which represented for the women a peacebuilding organization just as much as a venue to meet other women and a prospective livelihood. While people shape organizations, inconsistencies between the life-world of organizational actors and the objectives of the organization can easily occur. Narus women's dependence on brewing alcohol, for example, prohibited that the organization campaigned against alcohol, even though they were aware of the fact that alcohol was a major factor in local violence.

In general, the identity of an NGO is added on to other forms of formal or informal organizing. Often, being a peace organization is added on to other activities. Taken on as a temporary or marginal focus, this often leads to organizational crisis, when actors after some time start to question if and how this must become their core identity. All formal forms of organizations are, at the same time, social networks. These may coincide with the organization, but more often organizations constitute different social networks that each stretch beyond its confines. This makes the
boundaries of organizations much less clear than appears on paper. How for instance
should one delineate the women’s networks in Narus, which linked up with different
donor projects and appeared as separate organizations (with overlapping membership)
in the reports of different agencies, each of which could claim to have successfully
formed a local group?

Obvious lessons from this are that international organizations have to invest in
gaining insight into these local dynamics, better co-ordinate in supporting local groups,
and tone down their expectations of what local groups can achieve. A particular lesson
can be derived from the importance of social networks in organizations. In both cases,
informal social networks underlying the organization provided more meaning, stability
and coherence than its formal objectives and activities. These social networks tended
to be single-ethnic in nature. In our view, this finding questions the high premium put
on building peace through multiethnic organizations. The everyday running together
of an organization requires a level of social proximity and trust, far exceeding what is
needed for a peaceful coexistence of groups in society, and demanding multiethnic
participation may create more harm than good.

- Organizations consist of multiple realities

There is no single answer of what an organization is, what it wants and what it does.
Organizations typically hinge around different discourses that each play a role in the
way in which the organization derives its meaning and which are played out differently
in different domains. A peacebuilding organization may, for instance, simultaneously
be a vehicle for political ambitions of its leaders, and fundraisers for peace may in
reality raise funds for war-fare. The most notorious example in case is Rwanda, where
despite its extremely high civil society density, genocide occurred partly because civil-
society actors turned out to have stronger loyalties to their government and ethnicity
than to the organizations they belonged to and worked for (Uvin 2001). Rwanda
stands out as the ultimate nightmare of a naïve support of civil society, but multiple
realities of organizations always exist and are usually more innocent, as in the case of
service NGOs whose informal objective is to generate job security for its staff.

SWVP was as much a peacebuilding organization as a vehicle to strengthen the
position of women. The Narus group was a mutual support group as well as a
peacebuilding initiative. The different discourses prevailing in NGOs are not
necessarily a weakness – they can reinforce or contradict each other. This is rarely
subject of reflection, and often NGO people are not aware of these multiple realities.
Creating such awareness can help organizations to identify and resolve inherent
tensions.

- Organizations are ‘decentred’

Organizations derive their meaning not only from their objectives and work plans; nor,
contrary to popular beliefs, are they made by their leaders. Organization theory has
come to emphasize that organizations are ‘decentred’ (Nuijten 1998; Stacey et al. 2000).
The meanings of organizations evolve in practice, and result from the everyday
negotiations of staff-members and other stakeholders. All staff members reflect on the
meaning of the organization, the context in which they work, and the events that
happen around them. Through their everyday practices, they display particular meanings of the organization.

The different expectations and interpretations between the core group of SWVP and the more marginal members, as well as between SWVP Nairobi and women groups like the one in Narus, all had repercussions on how the organizations could function. This was exacerbated by the way outsiders responded to these dynamics. Pax Christi, for instance, increasingly distanced itself from the Nairobi women and deliberately tried to give the local chapters centre-stage, amongst other means through financial conditions. The meaning of organizations is thus also negotiated by stakeholders around the organization. No matter how well-meaning an organization is, in environments where mistrust and rumours abound, organizations are highly liable to attract the reputation of being partisan, rendering ineffective as a consequence. One of numerous examples is given in OECD-DAC (1997), where a peacebuilding radio programme was considered partisan because the accent of the actors identified them with one of the clans of the conflict. Such processes also took place in Sudan. Women’s organizations considered single-ethnic by outsiders could hardly operate convincingly as peace builders. The New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) constantly faced complications because some outsiders deemed this organization to be too close to the rebel movement.

The decentred-ness of organizations urges possible supporting organizations to look beyond the contacts with management representatives and move into questions regarding the composition and perceptions of staff and the images portrayed by the organization to the outside world.

- Organizations are political

Development policy often leans on the notion of civil society as value-driven and a-political. However, often contrary to their appearance, civil-society organizations make ideological choices, and wittingly or unwittingly play political roles. International organizations working in conflict areas are usually well aware of this. As already noted, the question of whether organizations were associated with rebel movements was a constant concern. There are, however, also other political processes taking place. Much of what organizations do is inspired by and affects the power politics of internally and externally controlling and allocating resources, and the production of meaning, ideas and activities. This can be called the everyday politics of organizations (cf. Kerkvliet 1991: 11). At the same time, organizations are geared towards legitimization. In the case of NGOs, this means that in order to find clients and supportive stakeholders, they have to convince others of their appropriateness and trustworthiness (cf. Bailey 1971). In our case, it could be said that while Pax Christi assumed SWVP was genuinely interested to expand its work inside southern Sudan, the SWVP was mainly playing the donor’s tune, as NGOs often do.

The different kinds of politics intertwine in practice. When Sudanese NGOs accused each other of political involvement, they were actually engaged in organization politics to gain the upper hand in an NGO field competing for donors. It is important to realize that these politics operate in international organizations as much as in local ones. International NGOs need to convince their back-donor of their trustworthiness
and back-donors need to convince their governments and the public at large that they spend their money in an effective and accountable way. The fact that many international NGOs operating in southern Sudan preferred to set up their own local groups, rather than working through existing groups, was such an instance of legitimization politics. International NGOs, in order to enhance their legitimacy, often claim and aim to work in situations where they initiate organization.

Recognizing these different kinds of politics often helps understanding seeming incongruences in organizations. This can work different ways. Often, in development situations organizations tend to ignore the (ideological) political roles that NGOs play. In conflict situations, on the other hand, international organizations tend to overplay the importance of this kind of politics. They foreground the conflict and falsely assume that all organization politics and legitimization strategies stem from political difference around the conflict.

Although these five points can be generally applied for any organization, they are especially pertinent for instances of peacebuilding organizations. Capacity building in (post-)conflict situations is a particularly complicated process because conflict often erodes civil-society organizations and because of the difficulties of working in extremely resource-poor environments (Harvey 1998). Another complication is found in the complex field of actors that emerges in conflict situations, both within the area and because of the influx of intervening international agencies. Finally, conflict or transition situations lead to a lot of insecurity where people have to respond to unknown events and much of their knowledge is not based on experience but on political manipulation and rumour.

**Conclusion**

What is the point of supporting civil society, in particular women’s groups, to enhance peace in Sudan? When we look at the formal peacebuilding processes of IGAD, we see that NGOs had very restricted access to national or international negotiations. The limited role of women in peacebuilding was bound up with the space for women to participate in public affairs. In many cases, cultural impediments and prejudices to women’s political participation still prevailed. Women were ignored or simply ‘forgotten’. Although the involvement of women in the official peace process was slowly improving, mainly as the result of external interventions such as the Engendering the Peace project, most attention for the role of women in peace was geared to their potential to forge peace at local level.

As elaborated in the chapter, we concur with the position that it is crucial to support local (civil society) institutions that can make a difference by resolving frictions without resorting to violence. Strengthening local capacities for peace is crucial because, in the first place, higher level conflict always get manifested locally in specific conflicts that need to be resolved on the ground. In the second place, once peace is established and international organizations withdraw from the scene one needs resilient local institutions that can absorb, alter or resolve future tensions. As
southern Sudan entered a transition towards peace, such support was possibly even more important, given the increased tensions that could be expected once refugees started to return home, and the intensified resource competition that would result from renewed development interventions.

However, it is not enough to blindly advocate for building local capacities for peace. Local level peacebuilding should be grounded in the empirical analysis of social and organizational processes. The chapter has presented a case of a Sudanese peace programme and its support by an international NGO that turned into a frustrating process, because of misgivings around the nature of the organizations involved. When the Sudanese organization did not live up to its promises, the Dutch agency (pressurized by its back-donor) tried hard but was powerless to get the project delivered as envisaged. The Sudanese organization felt increasingly abandoned by the international NGO that showed little appreciation for their work. Most importantly, the project largely failed. No wonder, perhaps, that many international organizations shed away from these activities in southern Sudan, yet such a response was unfortunate. On the long term, bypassing or ignoring local capacities is simply no option when working on peacebuilding. When international organizations are serious about peacebuilding they have to make more effort to analyse the capacities of local organizations, to search for gems among the rubble, and to sit down with organizations to dialogue about the alleged problems. Moreover, in the case presented, the problems that occurred were partly induced by the donor agency that projected its ambitions and views on a local organization. Taking capacity building serious will thus also require from international organizations to reflect on the extent to which problems are related to their own culture and practices.

On the donor-side, much of what went wrong in the project was because the donor knew everything about conflicts in Sudan, but very little about the nature of organizations. Peacebuilding is done by people and the dynamics in their organization are crucial for the success of programmes. In this chapter, we have forwarded a process approach to peace organizations. Such an approach focuses on the question how actors in and around organizations give meaning to an organization. A process approach brings out five main properties of organization:

- Organizations are the outcome of their own social, individual and institutional history, as well as their national, historical and cultural context.
- Organizations constitute social networks that often stretch beyond their confines.
- Organizations consist of different realities and discourses that are used strategically to manage relations, including relations with donors.
- The meaning of organization results from everyday negotiations of staff-members and stakeholders.
- Organizations are fundamentally political in nature; peace organizations are not just involved in the politics of peace and conflict, but as much in everyday politics of the production of meaning and the reallocation of resources and in the politics of legitimation of their organization vis-à-vis other stakeholders.
Organizations, then, appear as entities where a bewildering numbers of stories can be told about. Grasping what peacebuilding means in practice requires in-depth or even ethnographic methodologies, focusing on the diverse meanings and local interpretations of peacebuilding organizations. International organizations supporting local peace organizations need be more sensitive to this multiplicity of discourses on and within organizations, as well as the dynamics and political aspects of organizations.
Chapter 5

Imagining the Great Lakes Region

Civil-society regional approaches for peacebuilding in Rwanda, Burundi, and DR Congo

“Countries in the region are communicating vessels”.¹

“A regional approach is not so much the fashion of the day, it is a necessity”.²

Despite a regional peace deal in 2002, and the formal ending of transition periods in Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo), peace in the Great Lakes Region remains uncertain. While each of the countries has its own history of conflict, developments are also similar or strongly related. All three experienced Belgian colonization, resulting in states organized on the basis of ethnic and regional differences. Politics and violence in Rwanda since independence have strongly impacted on developments in Burundi and vice-versa. Flows of refugees, military intervention by neighbouring countries, and cross-border war economies have further contributed to the regional character of conflict in the region.

² Representative of a Norwegian development organization, interview Kigali 12 January 2005.
Over recent years, a discourse has developed that the strongly interlinked problems in the individual countries require approaches that transcend the level of individual countries. Regional approaches for peacebuilding are required. Thus, the last few years have witnessed an increase in the regional activities of international organizations, governments, and non-government organizations (NGOs). This promotion of regional approaches to peacebuilding resonates in international support to the peacebuilding efforts of local civil society. Many international organizations and donors assume that regional cooperation and exchange between local civil-society organizations contributes to peace at regional level, and provides an alternative to single-country interventions or regional diplomatic initiatives.

Regional approaches to conflict and civil-society peacebuilding are also gaining ground in other parts of the world. Nonetheless, this is a relatively new idea. Most civil-society peacebuilding efforts remain focused on single countries, even in the Great Lakes Region. The current attention to regional peacebuilding thus raises several questions: Why would a regional approach to peacebuilding be more effective than an approach focussing on individual countries? How can regional interpretations of conflict be successfully translated into regional peacebuilding strategies? What are the experiences so far with civil society regional peacebuilding? Hence, is the shift to regional approaches for peacebuilding in fact desirable?

This chapter attempts to provide insights into these questions by exploring how regional peacebuilding works out in practice. It explores the case of international NGOs and local civil-society organizations in the Great Lakes Region. Its starting point is that regional discourses are ordering mechanisms to understand complex conflict dynamics (cf. Law 1994). In the encounters between civil-society organizations, however, it remains difficult to translate awareness of the regional character of conflict into practicable regional responses. This reflects theoretical difficulties of regional analysis and programming. At the same time, arriving at a shared understanding of regional issues and possible strategies among civil-society organizations is not only a theoretical, but also a political endeavour. In the Great Lakes Region, local civil-society organizations are deeply embedded in the politics of regional conflict. Consequently, the shift to regional peacebuilding approaches remains theoretical with limited actions on the ground. Finally, the chapter comments on the ambitions of international organizations supporting regional civil-society peacebuilding.

The chapter is based on research conducted from September 2004 to September 2005. This included interviews with representatives of 49 local organizations and 29 international organizations and donors. For practical reasons, the research was limited to organizations working in Burundi, Rwanda and the Kivu provinces in eastern DR Congo. During the research period, I was based in Burundi. There, I conducted research on land disputes and local dispute resolving mechanisms with the Catholic organization CED-Caritas (see Van Leeuwen and Haartsen 2005), with whom I organized a regional symposium on land disputes.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, I reflect on current thinking on regional approaches and their effectiveness for peacebuilding. This is followed by a review of the regional dynamics of conflict in the Great Lakes Region, and an overview of the strategies currently employed by international and local civil-society organizations.
Thereafter, I reflect on how those strategies work out in practice, and what this implies for international organizations supporting civil society regional peacebuilding.

Global discourses of regions and regional peacebuilding

“The fact that internal conflicts generally produce instability at the regional level means that effective strategies to proactively engage conflict situations will require a co-ordinated regional approach” (OECD-DAC 1997: §293).

Contemporary conflict analysis highlights the intra-state nature of conflicts and their civilian character, but also acknowledges that many conflicts are not simply ‘internal’ wars: their causes and consequences often transgress national borders. Terms such as ‘trans-national war’ (Kaldor 1999/2001), or ‘regional conflict formation’ (Rubin 2001) point to this regional character of contemporary conflict. Several authors suggest that since the end of the Cold War, conflicts have ‘regionalized’, as an outcome of Cold War strategies or as a by-product of globalization (FitzGerald 1999; Collier 2000; WorldBank 2000). But the interest in the regional dynamics of conflict may also be seen as a policy response to failures in dealing with conflict in individual countries, or as a lack of engagement with those conflicts. Here, the current attention to regional approaches is treated as a discourse: a particular representation for understanding and acting upon the world around us. There are always multiple discourses, and these are constantly renegotiated (Hilhorst 2003). The regional discourse comes as an alternative to the preoccupation with ‘nations’ as the central protagonists in conflicts, and coincides with an increasing attention to ‘the region’ within development debates.

The emphasis on the regional character of conflict resonates in the international support for civil-society peacebuilding. Since the early 1990s, civil society has been attributed important roles in peacebuilding, in particular in contributing to good governance and democracy. Civil-society organizations are seen as representing the forces in favour of peace, or the ‘shared vision’ of a local population as opposed to the machinations of states. Often, civil society is defined as politically neutral, or even apolitical (see Rupesinghe 1998; Van Rooy 1998; Crowther 2001; Pearce 2005; Goodhand 2006). In the light of the regional peacebuilding discourse, civil-society organizations are considered to facilitate the coming together of communities in favour of peace, which are separated by state borders. Further, civil-society organizations are seen as alternative or complementary to regional diplomatic initiatives, and are considered more supportive to peace than the heads of states in the region (see also Lund 1999a: 57; Mbabazi and Shaw 2000).

This chapter considers the initiatives of international organizations to facilitate regional exchange and collaboration of their partners from civil society, as well as the regional projects and imaginations by civil society itself.
Assumptions about regional peacebuilding

Various ideas circulate as to why ‘the region’ would be an appropriate and more effective entry for peacebuilding. First, an important notion is that regional cooperation contributes to peace as it creates mutual benefits and dependences (Alagappa 1995). In particular in Africa, there is much attention to regional bodies, such as the regional diplomatic initiatives of the African Union, and the peacekeeping mechanisms of regional economic communities such as IGAD and ECOWAS (see e.g. Juma and Mengistu 2002). Such bodies are promoted on the assumption that conflicts may be earlier detected, and easier resolved through them.3 In addition, regional bodies may reduce the necessity for the international community to intervene in conflicts, while diplomatic intervention by governments from the region is supposedly more effective (e.g. OECD-DAC 1997: §297). In the Great Lakes Region, a localized version of this idea proposes building forth on cross-border cultural and linguistic affinities, or continuities in the form of family relations, trade and intellectual exchange.

A related idea is that mutual dependence can bring parties together that otherwise are not on speaking terms. For example, a hydro-electrical power plant in the Ruzizi River at the DR Congo/Rwanda-border was never affected by conflict, and some see such economic dependences in the region as starting points for regional peace. Within debates on natural resources and conflict, a developing idea is that cooperation on shared ecological challenges might be a prelude to peacebuilding. Even if wider dialogue has come to an end, discussion on shared natural resources may be established or continue. In addition, the resolution of cross-border ecological problems may be a precondition for broader peace (Conca et al. 2005; Turton et al. 2006), while development corridors and trans-frontier natural parks offer alternatives to regional conflict (Shaw 2003).

Thirdly, many people interviewed in the course of this research share the core assumption that, if conflicts in a region are connected, focussing on their manifestations in individual countries separately is ineffective. Examples of such ineffective strategies are strengthening good governance in one country in a ‘bad neighbourhood’ of failing states, and addressing fluid cross-border networks for trading small arms only in particular states (see Kaldor 1999/2001; Tschirgi 2002). This implies that strategies for peacebuilding should address conflict dynamics in different countries at the same time.

The positive version of this argument is that developments in one country may also positively influence developments in another. For example, regional approaches may help to surpass patriotic discourses, and to acknowledge how developments in one’s own country impinge on the history of other countries. An exponent of this idea is Mamdani (2001), who identifies Rwanda as the epicentre of the wider crisis in the Great Lakes Region. He sees Rwanda as the source of a citizenship problem, in which full citizenship is denied to residents who are branded as ethnic strangers. In his view, a regional reform of citizenship is necessary to reform Rwanda. Political reform in Burundi could be significant, as past developments in Burundi have been read by

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3 Although experience shows that in existing regional bodies attention for conflict prevention (let alone conflict resolution) developed only after economic cooperation and political integration had been achieved (Lund 1999a: 58), the idea remains strong.
Rwanda as prophetic signs of their common fate and *vice versa* (ibid.: 280). In a similar vein, in 2005, expatriates in the Great Lakes Region expected a positive influence from successful elections in Burundi on the electoral process in the DR Congo. Several development organizations pointed to the peacebuilding potential of the media at regional level. Exchanges and common programmes for journalists would enhance freedom of expression in individual countries and stimulate a better mutual understanding in the region.

Lastly, an assumption underlying various regional perspectives is that the region offers the opportunity to surpass the country level, and go beyond individual governments and their particular sensitivities. In this perspective, the region is a forum where the international community can intervene and launch opinions, criticism and ideas, without addressing and confronting particular governments. The idea of the region as a safe haven for the generation of ideas also underlies initiatives for regional programmes with civil-society organizations. This is based on the assumption that these are in a position to influence their governments to accept compromises without losing face, or to introduce new ideas. On a more practical level, regional perspectives are assumed to provide the opportunity for civil-society organizations to take advantage of experiences from elsewhere in the region. To realize this potential, exchanges and meetings between different actors from the region are stimulated. The exchange of experiences is the major objective of most civil society regional initiatives so far taking place in the Great Lakes Region.

**Defining regions**

Realizing that conflicts have regional dimensions is one thing, analysing them and defining regional strategies is another. Tschirgi (2002) points out that the external dimensions of internal conflicts are often seen in terms of ‘spill-over effects’, while in fact many conflicts need to be seen as ‘trans-national’ in nature rather than as an aggregation of internal conflicts. Moreover, it is difficult to deal with the notion of ‘region’. While regions may be defined in terms of social groups or political identities (countries, provinces), in many cases regional conflicts include actors and networks that are far beyond such limitations. These may involve networks of armed groups, but also (illicit) economic or social networks, or region-wide grievances that mobilize people (Tschirgi 2002: 8). Regions should then be seen more as arenas for networked interactions than as geographic entities. Networks may expand or diminish, and their focus may shift. In the Great Lakes Region, the centre of regional conflict was perhaps located in Rwanda in the early 1990s, but later moved to the DR Congo (Rubin 2001: 3).

An important question is then how to define regions. In daily parlour, the use of the term is confused, including for example ecological regions (the Sahel), economic regions (the European Union), and political or historical regions (the Eastern Bloc). A conceptual note on regions is thus necessary. In the remainder of this chapter, regions are referred to as social constructions, resulting from identification. Such an understanding draws on constructivist perspectives within geography, that try to understand regions as a result of the meaning people give to their surroundings, and the regional identity they inscribe on them (Simon 2004). The constructed identity of a
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region may be accepted by others and be reproduced, or be rejected or redefined. To substantiate their interpretation of regions, people may refer to attributes such as cultural-historical inheritance, ethnicity, religion, language (De Pater et al. 2002: 127ff). This notion comes close to the work of Anderson (1983/91), who talks of nations as ‘imagined communities’ – i.e. a nation comes into being because individuals feel related to each other and hence form a community. Similarly, regions may be seen as imagined communities that are a collective social achievement. Regions are thus constructs of their inhabitants, but also of others, such as national states, international development organizations, and analysts. Those outsiders may recognize and build on local imaginations of regions or rather give their own meaning to what constitutes ‘the region’. The case study of the Great Lakes Region demonstrates how local and international actors have their own interpretations of what constitutes the region. Their interpretations depend on what characteristics are considered, what issues are looked at, how these are analysed and by whom. Such interpretations are often heavily politicized. This chapter explores how national civil-society organizations and international organizations imagine and construct the region and try to apply this in practice.

A brief history of regional conflict in the Great Lakes Region

Conflict in the Great Lakes Region has a long history that goes back at least to colonial times. Colonial policies in Rwanda and Burundi resulted in an institutionalized antagonism between Hutu and Tutsi populations (Reyntjens 1994; Malkki 1995; Prunier 1995/1997). During and after the decolonization process, this resulted in several rounds of ethnic violence and refugee flows to neighbouring countries. In the early 1990s, when negotiations for the repatriation of Rwandese refugees did not succeed, this led to guerrilla intrusions into Rwanda by the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) made up mainly of Tutsi refugees residing in Uganda. When in April 1994 the president of Rwanda was killed in the shooting down of his plane, this meant the abrupt beginning of a genocide, in which probably more than 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed. The genocide resulted in a mass exodus of Hutu refugees to then eastern Zaire.

From the refugee camps, extremist militia and members of the former army of Rwandan launched attacks on Rwanda and Burundi. The presence of the Rwandese refugees in the eastern Kivu provinces of Zaire fed strongly into local tensions. It was in this part of Zaire that in 1996 the Kabila-led rebellion started that with support from Rwanda and Uganda resulted in the dethroning of president Mobutu in 1997. However, internal support for Kabila vanished rapidly, and his failure to remove Rwandan and Ugandan rebels from Congolese soil soured relations with his allies. A new rebellion by the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD) started in the Kivus in 1998, again supported by Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, evolving into the second Congolese war. Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, Chad and Sudan intervened on Kinshasa’s side. At the end of 1999, half of Congolese territory was in hands of various rebels, and a stalemate developed. Relations between Rwanda and Uganda
soon turned sour and their troops started fighting in north-east DR Congo, resulting in the splintering of the RCD into several factions.

International diplomatic interventions in this regional crisis led to the signing of the Lusaka ceasefire agreement, the deployment of a UN force in eastern Congo, and an ‘Inter-Congolese Dialogue’ to facilitate a transition to a democracy. Over the course of 2002, a national agreement on power-sharing was reached. Rwanda agreed to a complete withdrawal of troops, and in exchange Kinshasa would disarm the extremist Rwandan rebels on its soil. In 2003 a transitional period started which concluded with the elections in 2006. Nonetheless, violence in eastern DR Congo continued into 2005, resulting from the presence of various militia and troops from Rwanda and Uganda, as well as the indigenous Mai-Mai movements and other local defence forces. In the eastern Kivu provinces, the relationship between the local RCD faction and the populations under its control remained problematic. Kivutians perceived the RCD as dependent on Rwanda’s Tutsi leadership, trying to profit as much from the ‘occupied territories’ as possible. In June 2004, the temporary takeover of Bukavu by an RCD commander led to the flight of thousands of Banyamulenge (who had become closely identified with the Rwandese), fearing reprisals by the Congolese army. As a result of the incident, fighting broke out north of Bukavu and around Goma, and Rwandese troops allegedly crossed the border to intervene and clashed with the DR Congo army. While Rwanda remained relatively stable, at the time of fieldwork, some rebels in Burundi had not laid down their arms, despite various dialogues.

Though each of the countries in the region has its own history of conflict, developments are also similar or strongly related. This regional character of conflict results from several elements. The first is the failure in all countries to establish inclusive political systems, guaranteeing equal access to decision-making and resources. In the DR Congo, Mobutu established a system of governance characterized by corruption, personal enrichment, patronage and ethnic favouritism (Rogier 2003: 3; ICG 2003b: 25 ff.). Democratization in the early 1990s facilitated the further development of the ethnic divisionism introduced under Mobutu, with ethnic identity, citizenship and land rights getting closely connected (Mamdani 2001: 25ff; see also Young 2006). In both Rwanda and Burundi states were established on the basis of ethnic and regional differences (Reyntjens 1994; Prunier 1995/1997). Rwanda became characterized by a high level of institutionalization, with a hierarchical, omnipresent and forceful state system (Reyntjens 1994). Political exclusion is often seen as the key to understand the difficult relations between Hutu and Tutsi in Burundi and Rwanda, and Banyarwanda and non-Banyarwanda in eastern Congo (e.g. Lemarchand 2000: 326-7).

Secondly, ethnicity is a regional issue in itself. Ethnicized political violence in either Rwanda or Burundi has stimulated civil violence in the neighbouring country. After the Rwanda genocide, cross-border ethnic affiliations have facilitated the reproduction of ethnic fault lines to North Kivu (ICG 2003b; Vlassenroot and Huggins 2005) and South Kivu (Jackson 2002). Ethnic solidarity is understood as an important reason for Rwanda’s engagement in the DR Congo (Longman 2002). Since 1996, all Tutsi in eastern Congo were increasingly referred to as Banyamulenge.
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Various organizations in eastern DR Congo also underscored the importance of language in the antagonism between various Congolese groups and Kinyarwanda-speaking people. For example, the violence that erupted in Masisi in 1993, in the context of growing land shortage, was directed against all Kinyarwanda speakers, both Hutu and Tutsi, who had acquired large properties in the region. After the June 2004 takeover of Bukavu, civil society in Goma split up into two ‘factions’; Kinyarwanda speakers and non-Kinyarwanda speakers. Resentments by the indigenous population in North Kivu were re-ignited by local leaders who suggested the involvement of Kinyarwanda speakers in alleged intentions of Rwanda to annex the area.

Further, the large scale refugee movements in the Great Lakes Region played important roles as ‘vectors of contamination’ (Lemarchand 2000: 332) in the reproduction of ethnic polarization across borders. Moreover, refugee camps have been used as training and recruitment camps for rebel militias, and as bases for attacks on the home countries. This was the case in the ‘Mulelist’ insurgency in 1964-5 in eastern Zaire, the RPF rebellion in Rwanda that started from Ugandan refugee camps in 1990, and the attacks on Rwanda from militia that reorganized in the refugee camps in eastern DR Congo after the 1994 genocide (Reyntjens 1994; Prunier 1995/1997). According to Lemarchand (2000: 331), “[d]ynamics of violence in the Great Lakes involves the transformation of refugee-generating violence into violence-generating refugee flows”.

The regional character of conflict is also related to an abundance of mineral resources. Mineral wealth in the DR Congo provides decision makers with continuous resources to sustain violence (Collier 2000). In the absence of an effective state system in DR Congo, a warlord system of exploitation has formed, which includes not only the Congolese elite, but also those of Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and Zimbabwe (UN 2001). This war economy has reached such a scale that several observers have come to regard it as an explanation in itself for the failure of the peace accords and the continuation of the war, with control over mineral resources becoming a military objective in itself (see Reyntjens 2001: 312).

Finally, scarcity of resources also contributes to conflict, with land shortages having resulted in violence through political manipulation. This analysis was initially made for Rwanda, where the economic situation and pressure on land has been explained as a central cause of the 1994 genocide (Prunier 1995/1997: 364; Pottier 1997). Land was highly politicized, and the Rwanda government used the scarcity of land as an argument against those Tutsi in exile who wanted to repatriate (African Rights 1994). In Burundi, land problems related to the reintegration of returning refugees and IDPs are a sensitive issue, considering that the expected return of Hutu refugees and their reclamation of land was one of the issues triggering violence in 1993 (ICG 2003a; Kamungi et al. 2004: 19). However, land disputes are also common among the on-staying population (see chapter 6). Land plays a dominant role in local disputes and has been a root cause of violence in Ituri and the Kivu provinces (Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers 2004). Various authors analyse how in eastern DR Congo land access has become linked to citizenship, as being considered indigenous

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4 This was not the first time that this happened.
became a necessity for ethnic groups to gain access to land (Mamdani 2001; Vlassenroot and Huggins 2005: 150).

Developments in the Great Lakes Region thus make conflicts regional. There is no agreement among observers on the relative importance of each of these, nor on how they interrelate to each other. Lemarchand has for example pointed to how theories explaining conflict from the abundance of natural resources sometimes contradict those starting from shortages of land. As we will see, local and international organizations alike differ considerably on how they understand the interrelatedness of conflict in the region.

At this point, two issues are remarkable about the regional analyses as they appear in the reports and policy documents of international NGOs, UN agencies and donor governments. First, most analyses explain the regional character of conflict in the Great Lakes by reference to a series of key events, often starting with the 1994 genocide, followed by the 1996 and 1998 rebellions in Eastern Congo. Little attention is given to the relatedness of economic and political developments and violence before 1994. It is as if regional history starts from scratch with the genocide.

Second, while there seems to be a consensus on the similarities between countries from the region, most analyses gloss over the differences that also exist. While the system of governance established under Mobutu resulted in a weak state, the Rwandese state is characterized by a relatively high level of institutionalization. In DR Congo, in the absence of healthy state structures, civil society took far-reaching responsibilities for development and the provision of services, and became strong and well-organized. In Rwanda, on the other hand, civil society has always been state-controlled and conformist. And while Burundi and Rwanda have been divided in the past by ethnic violence, the significance of ethnicity between those ‘false twins’ (see Reyntjens 1994) has been rather different. For example, while ethnicity has been abolished by government decree in Rwanda, peace agreements in Burundi included a power-sharing arrangement guaranteeing balanced political participation of both groups.

Regional responses to the crisis

“The region of the Great Lakes is an instable region that for long has been characterized by armed conflicts, ethnic struggle, failing states, flows of refugees and under-development. In such a context, to assure an effective Dutch contribution, an integrated as well as regional approach is needed”.7

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6 Some accounts include the 1993 assassination of Burundi’s first elected Hutu President Ndadaye as an element in the chain of crises.

“Ethnic, linguistic and economic ties between the countries have deep roots in the region’s history. The economic and social situation is similar across the three countries, and the causes of poverty and conflict are strongly interlinked. Instability easily spills over national boundaries. Consequently, efforts to solve the region’s problems are bound to fail if they do not take into account such cross-border dynamics”.

“Dans la région des Grands Lacs, il est clair que le processus de réconciliation dans un pays est fortement lié à ceux des autres. Toute solution viable aura donc un caractère régional”.

At the time of fieldwork, many international and local organizations were convinced of the need for regional approaches to peacebuilding, and various organizations developed regional policies. In the first place, several diplomatic initiatives were taken. Prominent among these was a series of regional conferences convened by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN. The initiative built on the notion of regional cooperation to enhance peace. The first meeting in Dar-es-Salaam in November 2004 resulted in a declaration of the Heads of State expressing commitment to promote peace, stability and unity in the region through the promotion of economic growth. DR Congo President Kabila held the door open for regional arrangements for the exploitation of natural resources in eastern DR Congo. In follow-up meetings, proposals were elaborated on issues such as the proliferation of small arms, joint border security management, and refugees. The revival of the Communauté Economique des Pays des Grands Lacs was considered, to promote economic and social integration, and to prevent and resolve conflicts.

“Civil society within countries in the region themselves is of great importance, in particular in light of the large problems confronting the region and for the cross-border nature of problems. Ethnic ties, economic relations and other communal characteristics imply that civil society might play an important role in regional processes […] The establishment of an open and pluralist society cannot be enforced from above, but needs to develop, in which civil society from the countries concerned has to fulfill an essential role”.


10 Organizations arguing for regional approaches include various UN-organizations, donors such as SIDA, the Dutch government and the OECD; international organizations such as International Alert, CECI, NPA, Christian Aid, Life and Peace Institute, Search for Common Ground, Pax Christi International, and numerous local organizations.

Secondly, many initiatives of a less diplomatic character developed. International organizations specializing in civil-society peacebuilding felt a need for regional approaches. They considered that regional exchange and cooperation between local civil-society organizations could contribute to regional peace, and complement regional diplomacy. Organizations such as the UN and the EU, several donor governments, and international development organizations thus searched ways to facilitate exchanges. Their efforts were complemented by those from Rwandese, Burundese and Congolese organizations. In addition, international organizations also reflected on how their own development programmes could become more regionally oriented. Various regional civil-society peacebuilding strategies came into being, some examples of which are given in the accompanying table (5.1).

The most common regional peacebuilding strategy was the organization of regional meetings. Facilitated by international agencies, national civil-society organizations liaised regularly with partners from neighbouring countries, primarily to exchange experiences in their fields of expertise or policy analyses. To international organizations, regional partner meetings were useful for training partners, or for enhancing their own lobby-work. Often, a direct objective of the partner meetings organized by international development was to contribute to reconciliation between partners from different counties.

Some regional meetings formalized into regional platforms or networks (such as the human-rights network LDGL and the women’s network COCAFemme). To local organizations, such regional networks gave credibility to their members and facilitated encountering sponsors (cf. Verkoren 2006). Regional networks further provided protection to their members against their governments, or served as a means for collectively voicing dissent. For example, civil-society organizations protested together after a parliamentary inquiry in Rwanda in 2004 singled out various human-rights organizations as ‘divisionist’ they also came up with a collective declaration after the murder of the Vice-Secretary of LDGL in Bukavu in 2005.

Another strategy was programmatic co-operation at a regional level. This included the implementation of similar activities by civil-society organizations in different countries, cross-border exchange visits, or programmes implemented collaboratively by civil-society organizations from different countries. Regional programmes by international organizations often focused on joint lobbying at an international level. Some of these started programmes to mobilize local civil-society organizations to exert influence on policymaking, or to participate in diplomatic initiatives. Other international organizations had national programmes with a strong regional focus.
Table 5.1 - Examples of strategies for regional peacebuilding involving civil society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Initiators</th>
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<tr>
<td>Regional meetings</td>
<td>• Preparatory meetings with civil society representatives for the UN's International Conferences on Peace, Democracy, Good Governance and Development in the Great Lakes (UN special representative)</td>
<td>Transnational organization</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Annual workshop with partners on conflict transformation (ICCO)</td>
<td>International NGOs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Regional exchange visits between the churches on their contribution to peace and reconciliation (Association Convenance Epsicopal d’Afrique Centrale - ACEAC)</td>
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<td>• Regional exchanges between universities on food security and land issues (Swiss cooperation)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Consultations with partners to come to a shared understanding of conflict and obstacles to peace (Pax Christi International)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Exchange meeting on experiences with working on HIV/AIDS (Trocaire)</td>
<td>National civil-society organizations</td>
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<td>• Regional encounters as a preparation for the UN Great Lakes regional conferences (COCAFemme)</td>
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<td>• Regional meeting on traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution (Chair UNESCO, Bujumbura University)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Regional discussions on Banyamulenge refugees (convened by LDGL)</td>
<td>National civil-society organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional platforms and networks</td>
<td>'Initiative for Central Africa', a platform on peace and development, including civil society, private sector, universities, civil authorities, NGOs and donors. Its aim is to develop common visions, and stimulate regional co-operation and information exchange (OECD)</td>
<td>Transnational organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research and conflict analysis</td>
<td>• Seminars for church leaders on regional conflict analysis (RIO Bukavu)</td>
<td>National civil-society organizations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Annual regional meetings on themes such as ‘regional economic integration’ and ‘land and identity’ (Pole Institute Goma)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lobby and advocacy</td>
<td>• The Ligue des Droits de la Personne dans la Région des Grands Lacs (LDGL), membership organization with 27 members from Rwanda, Burundi and DR Congo in the field of human rights or development</td>
<td>National civil-society organizations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Concertation des Collectifs des Associations Oeuvrant pour la Promotion de la Femme (COCAFemme), platform of collectives of women organizations from Burundi, Rwanda and DR Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional programmes</td>
<td>Transnational organizations</td>
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<td>Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme (sponsored by the World Bank)</td>
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<td>The ‘Femmes pour la Paix’ programme intends, through a series of regional trainings, to establish a framework that enables women to have influence on policy making (International Alert)</td>
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<td>The ‘Global Partnership for Conflict Prevention in Central Africa’ aims to integrate civil society in diplomatic initiatives for conflict prevention at a regional level (convened by the Netherlands-based European Centre for Conflict Prevention)</td>
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<td>Cross-border programme on the return of refugees from Tanzania to Burundi (JRS)</td>
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<td>Media programmes, in which journalists from the region are trained together and collectively make radio-items about regional issues (Search for Common Ground - SfcG)</td>
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<td>Youth programme, including exchange visits to guarantee the peaceful return of Banyamulenge refugees (SfcG)</td>
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<td>International lobby activities against sexual violence (International Alert)</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Commission Mixte’ of the Catholic Church, a regional programme of the peace commissions of several Burundian and Tanzanian Dioceses, to facilitate the return of refugees to Burundi (initiated by the Bishops)</td>
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<td>Research on human-rights violations in eastern DR Congo and training of local organizations in monitoring human rights (Ligue Iteka Burundi)</td>
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<td>Appointing a special representative to the region (EU)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing a regional approach for programmes in the region (EU / Dutch, Belgian, Swedish governments)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional offices (CRS / Action Aid), regional coordinators (International Alert), regional meetings between country offices (Christian Aid)</td>
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<td>Streamlining country programmes towards themes of importance in the whole region: land rights, rights of youth to participate, violence against women (NPA)</td>
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<td>In Goma, NRC builds forth on experiences with legal assistance for people in land conflicts in its Burundi programme.</td>
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<td>In Burundi, Oxfam Quebec replicates its experiences with reconstruction work in Rwanda</td>
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<td>Cordaid Rwanda, together with the provincial health authorities of Cyangugu, was able to facilitate medical staff for a Cordaid emergency programme after the volcanic eruption in Goma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Copying successful approaches and experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mainstreaming of regional themes in country programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional cooperation</td>
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A notable regional programme was that initiated by the Centre Canadien d’Étude et de Coopération Internationale (CECI). For its 4-year project Action Citoyenne pour la Paix (Acipa), regional offices were established in Rwanda, Burundi and the Kivu provinces, each focusing on their own prioritized themes of public participation, non-violent conflict resolution, promotion of human rights, and access to information. The offices each had their own partners, but met regularly to guarantee a common context-analysis, and to harmonize activities. CECI/Acipa also supported the regional networks LDGL and COCAFemme, and helped facilitate the input of civil society into UN-organized conferences for the Great Lakes Region, by organizing meetings in Goma and Kigali.12

Finally, for some international organizations, a regional strategy was more of an internal organizational affair. Examples are the integration of region-specific themes in diverse country programmes, or the regional exchange of best practices. Some considered programmatic regional cooperation as a means to increase operational efficiency, for example, through the sharing of emergency supplies between country offices. However, this was little tried and few successful examples could be identified.

The idea of approaching conflicts regionally and in particular civil society regional peacebuilding is relatively new. Though many international and local organizations discuss regional peacebuilding, the actual scale of its implementation remains unclear. Most current peacebuilding interventions continue to focus on single countries. Further, despite the fact that many civil-society organizations from the region are interested in regional strategies, most initiatives are still the result of efforts by international organizations. Though various regional meetings among local civil-society organizations aimed at establishing programmatic co-operation, regional civil society programmes remained limited. Most existing regional programmes were actually initiated by international rather than local organizations. Why was it so difficult for civil-society organizations from the regions to realize regional peacebuilding? To provide some answers to this question, let us explore some of the practices of regional civil-society peacebuilding.

Regional approaches for peacebuilding in practice

To start the exploration of regional approaches in practice, let us reflect on one particular example: the regional association of Catholic Bishops ACEAC, and specifically one of the regional meetings it organized. This regional initiative was supported by Caritas International and several members of the international Caritas network, including the UK-based development agency CAFOD and the Dutch development organization Cordaid.

In November 2004, ACEAC convened a 2-day regional forum on peace and reconciliation in Bujumbura, which was attended by about 80 priests and members of the diocesan development bureaus and justice and peace commissions from Burundi,

Rwanda, eastern DR Congo, and Tanzania. The aim of the forum was to identify whether agreement could be reached at a regional level on how the Catholic Church could contribute to peace at community, national and regional levels. The first day consisted of presentations by several bishops from the region, to provide their perspectives on regional conflict. The archbishop of Bujumbura emphasized the evolving economic rather than ethnic marginalization of groups in Burundi, and the involvment of the church in local reconciliation activities. The bishop of Kilwa-Kasenga (DR Congo) underlined the role the Catholic Church played in providing basic services to local communities, the protection provided to refugees from Burundi and Rwanda, and the efforts of the church in preparing communities for the upcoming elections. The archbishop of Kigali pointed out the difficulty of achieving reconciliation, with the Hutu population’s continuing insecurity about land, and large numbers of traumatized people. He underscored the important role justice should play in the aftermath of the genocide, and considered how the impending gacaca courts might contribute to this. On the basis of these presentations, the participants discussed the regional importance of trauma and local reconciliation, as well as local justice.

During the second day, the discussion focused on the question of how the churches in the region could work together for peace in the region. One of the working groups emphasized the importance of sharing experiences, and debating analyses of local conflict. A participant pointed out the need to look not so much at ethnicity in those conflicts but at how ethnocentrism pervaded politics within all the countries in the region. Another participant suggested that to develop a regional analysis of conflict, an outside neutral research institute should be invited to come to an interpretation acceptable to all. Among the participants, agreement could be reached on some regional issues, in particular the presence of arms and the need for demobilization throughout the region. The group acknowledged a need for ‘moral formation’ to assure the proper reintegration of ex-combatants into the communities. A second working group focused on how through local-level activities, people could be mobilized to exchange experiences, for example agricultural projects or youth activities. Though representatives of international organizations present at the meeting introduced ideas for various regional activities (a representative of Caritas France proposed demonstrations in border regions, referring to the burning of candles on a bridge in Sarajevo; another mentioned the organization of diaspora meetings involving different nationalities), the focus of most participants was on exchanges and collaborative lobbying on commonly experienced human-rights violations.

Striking in this case is that discussions on the regional dynamics of conflict primarily concerned shared victimhood to human-rights violations, and trauma. The presentations of the bishops during the first day did not delve into the regional politics underlying violence, but pointed rather to the effects of violence on the population. Consequently, in considering responses to violence, the focus was on protection, reconciliation and healing. When discussing possible collaborative strategies, participants suggested exchanging experiences on local reconciliation, and attuning human-rights advocacy. Though sharing experiences and concerns, organizations perceived little need for or could not imagine more substantial forms of regional
collaboration. Such an outcome was quite common in regional peacebuilding workshops.

However, in the above example, beneath the difficulties in arriving at more substantial regional collaboration, more was at stake. In the plenary sessions, little reference was made to regional dynamics like those analysed earlier in this chapter, or to regional political developments. In contrast, when meeting in private, participants from DR Congo would precisely outline how and why the violence in the Kivu region was closely related to Rwanda’s political and military involvement. Burundian participants pointed to how political unrest spread from southern Kivu into their country. Apparently, participants were afraid to talk about politics openly. From their statements in the formal parts of the meeting, it nonetheless appeared that they agreed that they disagreed politically. To retain the positive energy of the meeting they drifted towards common ground. By focussing on the effects of violence and recognizing each others stories they arrived at a shared notion of what conflict was about. However, the impossibility of making collaborative regional political analyses resulted in depoliticized regional strategies that focussed on the local rather than the regional dynamics of conflict, on effects rather than causes.

The difficulties in regional analysis and programming

Many organizations found it difficult to analyse the regional character of conflict, and to establish how to take account of it in their programmes. A number of factors hindered collaborative analysis and programmes. A practical limitation to regional analysis and programming was that many local and international organizations lacked regional experience and expertise. Organizations which sought to give more attention to regional dynamics in their work encountered few scientific analyses on the interconnectedness of conflict, peace and development in the region (notable exceptions are Reyntjens 1994; Lemarchand 2000; Clark 2002; Chrétien 2003), let alone practical ones, pointing out how to deal with regional dynamics.

Next to these practical limitations, there were theoretical difficulties in arriving at a regional understanding of conflict. In theory, a distinction could be made between common problems (for example, the exclusionist character of states, or the politicization of ethnicity in various countries); related or cross-border problems (for example, the presence of refugees or militia from other countries, or the spill-over of identity conflicts from one country to the other); and problems without borders (for example, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, and the spread of arms). In practice, it was difficult to make such distinctions.

Land-related conflicts were identified as a (critical) regional dimension in various regional platforms of local civil-society organizations. However, it was often difficult to agree on the regional character of such conflicts, which were interpreted both as a ‘common’ regional issue and as a ‘cross-border’ problem. In northern Kivu,

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13 See for example Uvin et al. (2004), who distinguish actions at regional level and multi-national activities to address trans-border dynamics; and activities in several countries to address national problems that share common characteristics or that have an indirect regional impact.

14 Donor interest in regional land issues was limited, and the theme has not been high on the agenda of those regional exchanges facilitated by them.
local land problems were seen as inextricably linked to the issue of nationality. A case in point was Masisi, where over recent years large tracks of land had been bought by a small group of people, many of whom were Kinyarwanda-speakers, and (senior) members of the RCD and the Rwandese politico-military establishment.\textsuperscript{15} By some, the conflicts resulting from this development were considered as a cross-border issue, as a direct result of the presence of the Rwandese. However, several organizations in Goma argued that the problem was basically about citizenship, and the failure of local land administration. In their view, land problems were more a ‘common’ issue: land disputes in the region were similar in that they resulted from past failures in local land administration and the erosion of local dispute resolving mechanisms.

Hence, in regional meetings, organizations often could not agree on the extent to which local manifestations of conflict were related to cross-borders developments, rather than just showing similarities. It was even more difficult to agree on how different issues and conditions interacted. For example, how far could land disputes resulting from land shortage be interpreted in the same way as conflicts resulting from the abundance of natural resources? And in what ways should problems of governance –such as exclusionism or criminalization of the state– be addressed simultaneously with other issues such as the cross-border spread of small arms?

As a result of these difficulties, it often depended more on the scope of interventions envisaged by organizations whether they considered conflict dynamics as ‘common’ or as cross-border issues, and if they focused on one or several conflict dynamics. In cases where organizations had the means to work regionally, their analysis tended to be more regional and focussed also on cross-border dynamics. In cases where they worked locally, their analysis focussed on similarities between countries.

As a result of these conceptual difficulties, many organizations did not really consider the regional character of particular issues. They simply saw instability spilling over from one country to the other inevitably, or always having repercussions in other countries. If instability was contagious, any problem in any country required a regional strategy. Other organizations, aware of the regional character of conflict, assumed certain comparability in the region, on the basis of which best practices could be replicated from one country to the other. For example, considering their country in a later stage of transition from conflict, Rwandese organizations promoted their experiences for demobilization and community reconciliation in Burundi. Various international development organizations also copied intervention strategies from one country to the other. As a result, regional and country specific analysis was de-emphasized, at the risk of glossing over both connections and differences in the region.

In the absence of regional analyses, organizations found it particularly difficult to define regional programmes as a collaborative effort of organizations from different countries. In theory, regional issues could be addressed in different ways, including regional programmes coordinated among organizations; similar programmes copied in different countries; or local programmes that take regional dimensions into account. Interventions could target geographic areas (for example, the Kivu provinces), or influential groups that fulfil key positions in linking conflicts (for example, civil society,

\textsuperscript{15} Interviews Goma, August 2005.
regional media, trade networks), or focus on key issues (for example, small arms) (Armstrong and Rubin 2002). In practice, local organizations often failed to arrive at a focused analysis, identifying different levels of intervention and related strategies, and ended with amorphous shopping-lists of issues and related projects. One example was a network of women’s organizations that in its regional analysis identified nine pages of themes and projects to address them. In the end, each participant selected her preferred themes and projects, and no collective prioritization and programming was done.

Various organizations, rather than identifying developments they considered at the core of regional conflict in the Great Lakes Region, prioritized some general themes: ‘governance’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘gender’, ‘trade in arms’. Such a strategy reduced region-specific dynamics of conflict to general trends that legitimized standard interventions. Others took a ‘minimalist’ regional approach, which only considered the (potential) influence of regional issues on their own interventions (cf. Tschirgi 2002).

As a result, there were few regional programmes with regional activities. Exceptions were various programmes on refugees: the Catholic Church organized exchange visits between refugees and people from their home areas in order to entice refugees to go home, and the LDGL platform conducted cross-border research on the background and situation of refugees. Another exception was a cross-border radio programme organized by the US-based peace organization Search for Common Ground.

In the end, interpretation of regional conflict dynamics and appropriate strategies depended mostly on the type and expertise of organizations and their context of operation. Analyses of international organizations often focused on issues of governance. Organizations from the region tended to see governance in the context of regional dynamics of land, ethnicity and citizenship. And while civil-society organizations in Bukavu and Goma highlighted the presence of Rwandese rebels and troops on Congolese soil and their influence on the local population, organizations in Uvira emphasized local insecurity caused by the Mai-mai. In contrast, civil-society organizations in Kinshasa were more concerned about elections and the process of democratization. Organizations from Bujumbura city highlighted the political dimensions of violence, while organizations in the countryside also considered how violence in the rural areas had gained an ethnic dimension. Staff members of human-rights organizations highlighted impunity, and the deplorable record on human rights of various politicians, in their regional analyses. Peasant organizations emphasized the problems of land and the return of refugees. Regional approaches and strategies did not logically present themselves from the context in which organizations operated. Consequently, organizations tended to focus on those themes fitting their expertise and organizational priorities.

16 Such difficulties were not just experienced by international NGOs and organizations from the region. The proposal for a regional approach of the Dutch government (Uvin et al. 2004), for example, started from the general development priorities of the Dutch government. After a consultation with the Dutch embassies in the region, the above regional approach was reduced to giving attention to regional issues in individual country-programmes.
Regional analysis and programming thus came out as processes of defining the region. How the region was constructed around particular issues depended much on how, and by whom problems were analysed. Regional discourse is an ordering practice, creating coherence out of fragmented ideas, experiences and practices - or in other words, a way of understanding or framing the world, by which we make sense of complexity (Law 1994). Different regional approaches developed in the practice of civil-society organizations, depending on the expertise, operational context, and above all, the identification of the region by the organizations concerned. Since it was difficult for civil-society organizations to arrive at a shared understanding, common regional programming was complicated. Each organization created an image of the region that suited its programmes.

The politics of regional imagination

Civil-society organizations make ideological choices and intentionally or unintentionally play political roles. Rather than just value-driven and apolitically taking care of the interests of local communities affected by conflict, members of civil-society organizations personally experience the impacts of conflict, and also position themselves within conflict discourses. The emergence of civil society regional approaches therefore cannot be seen separated from the developing regional political context. Imagining regional approaches for the Great Lakes Region was deeply embedded in politics. Coming to a shared analysis among civil-society organizations from the region was not only a theoretical endeavour, but also a political one.

A first obstacle for regional initiatives is sensitivity to instability and the day-to-day conflict experiences of the participating civil-society organizations. Progress made in months could be undone in a matter of days. The anarchy after the rebellion by a group of RCD soldiers in Bukavu in June 2004 set back rapprochement programmes between the Banyamulenge (who were perceived as close to the Rwandese) and the other communities, thereby complicating the return of Banyamulenge refugees from Burundi. Continuing instability in DR Congo and Burundi brought many to question whether it was the appropriate time for regional approaches. This made some conclude that internal political change was needed before international rapprochement was possible.

Secondly, tensions between governments from the region were replicated in civil society relations, due to the closeness of civil-society organizations to their governments and political movements. While in the past civil society in eastern DR Congo was often considered activist and outspoken, violence and insecurity had severely restricted organizations’ freedom of action. Civil society had become ethnicized and no stranger to partisan tendencies (Romkema 2001). The Catholic Church was not exempt from these divisions. The Bishop in Goma and many priests there were considered as pro-Rwandese, while in Bukavu the Catholic Church was seen as a major symbol of resistance against the RCD. In some instances, the distinction between civil society and formal politics was blurred, with civil-society organizations functioning as a springboard to state politics. In Rwanda, although there was an active associational life, NGOs had always been state-controlled and had difficulties developing an oppositional attitude towards the government (see also

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Unsworth and Uvin 2002), Rwandese civil-society organizations had to participate in umbrella organizations, which were said to be firmly government controlled. NGOs working in Rwanda had to perform a balancing act in the themes they could work on, and in their criticism of government policies. 17 Congolese and Burundese organizations doubted the independence of the Rwandese organizations they encountered in meetings. There were for example indications, that for preparatory meetings to the UN regional conference, Rwandese civil society representatives had been appointed by the presidential office. In Burundi, in recent years, civil society had started to openly express itself politically, partly in opposition to and partly in conjunction with the government (Ntsimbi yabandi and Ntakarutimana 2004). Many insiders and outsiders doubted the independence of Burundese civil society, as associational life seemed dominated by Tutsi organizations, and rumours abounded about organizations being supported by politicians.

As a result of this, civil-society organizations often associated themselves with national discourses of conflict in their home countries. Many representatives of international and local organizations interviewed over the course of this research considered the involvement of civil society in conflict politics as the major challenge to regional civil-society peacebuilding. As a result of the affiliation of civil society to national political discourses, regional encounters were a platform for political confrontation, as well as for exchange.

At the time of fieldwork, the relationship between the Burundese and Rwandese governments was fair, with the electoral victory of the ethnically mixed CNDD-FDD in Burundi in late 2005 resulting even in further rapprochement. Rwandese-Congolese relationships continued to be tense. Serious political divisions continued within the Kivu provinces, in particular between political leaders connected to the RCD power-holders, and those supporting the Kinshasa government. These tensions were directly reflected in relations between civil-society organizations from the region.

A crucial point of disagreement between civil society from Rwanda and North-Kivu was their different understanding of the presence of the Interahamwe. The Rwandese authorities had blamed the Congolese for not taking action against the presence of those militia –main perpetrators in the Rwanda genocide– on Congolese territory, and this had been the legitimization for entering the DR Congo. However, several Congolese civil-society organizations considered the Rwanda government part of the problem, by not providing space for dialogue on the possible return of the Interahamwe. Its presence in the DR Congo was also seen to cover up interests in resource exploitation. Furthermore, many Congolese organizations in Bukavu were disappointed with the lack of understanding from their Rwandese colleagues for the suffering the Interahamwe were inflicting on their people. This issue broke up many regional initiatives.

At a regional women’s conference in Kigali in mid-2004, as a preparation for the UN Great Lakes regional conference, the participants were unable to reach agreement on what peace in the Great Lakes Region should look like. Before the meeting, the representatives from DR Congo were urged ’not to go and talk to our attackers’. At

17 Nonetheless, some organizations were able –very carefully– to criticise the government, for example regarding proposals for new land legislation.
the meeting, Rwandese and Congolese organizations had difficulty in distancing themselves from the discourses of their governments. The Rwandese women focused on the genocide in their country, and the ensuing right of Rwanda to fight the militia responsible that were still residing on Congolese soil. To the Congolese women, it appeared that the Rwandese women condoned the violence from their government in DR Congo, and failed to see that “peace for the Rwandese is a continuation of human-rights violations by the Interahamwe in our areas”.18

In other cases, the political positions taken by civil-society organizations turned regional encounters into events where power was renegotiated, positions could be strengthened and legitimized, and the definition of the region could be contested. At various regional exchanges, the status of the participants was fiercely debated, especially between organizations from eastern DR Congo and Rwanda. Often, the Congolese regarded civil society from Rwanda as representing the vision of their authorities rather than of their Rwandese constituents. At the same time, various Congolese organizations interpreted singling out the eastern Kivu provinces in donor programmes as supporting claims for a different status in the Congolese state, and threatening national sovereignty.

In 2002, the CECI-Acipa programme deliberately included Kinshasa-based organizations, to counter the impression among Congolese organizations that it favoured Kivu civil society, which was perceived as collaborating with Rwanda. In a workshop in 2004, a full day was lost on discussing the new location of the secretariat. The Rwanda and Burundi delegations proposed Goma, and strongly opposed Kinshasa, afraid of problems with the Congolese migration offices when travelling there. Goma, however, was unacceptable to most Congolese, who considered it under Rwandese influence, and argued that their capital was Kinshasa. The Congolese proposed Bukavu as a middle course, which was refused by Rwanda and Burundi. Finally the office remained in Rwanda.19

Rather than civil-society organizations serving as forces for peace, and a counter balance to their national governments or sub-national contenders for political power, civil-society organizations were deeply involved in regional politics. The political complications of regional civil society initiatives and the fact that several regional civil society meetings had been accused of partisan tendencies made some donors hesitant about getting involved in regional approaches.

The political engagement of civil society in regional politics strongly affected the analysis of regional issues. The affiliation of civil-society organizations with their home governments fuelled suspicions on the sincerity and intentions of the other players in regional encounters. This reduced the willingness to talk openly about issues of regional concern. A frustrating experience for international organizations was that often the preparation of regional meetings was a transparent process, in which civil-society organizations from different countries or regions voiced their independent opinions, while during the regional encounters they moved towards the positions of their governments. Suspicion of the intentions of others and identification with the

19 Interview Bujumbura, February 2005.
positions of their respective governments obstructed a genuine exchange of experiences.

To deal with returning refugees and to rationalize land-use, in 1996 the Rwanda government started a programme for villagization and resettlement (Imidugudu) (see Van Leeuwen 2001). During preparatory meetings for a regional workshop on land issues in Bujumbura, organized by the Catholic organization CED-Caritas, representatives of Rwandese organizations were quite critical of the programme and underlined the practical problems in its implementation. In the meeting itself, those same people gave presentations of the programme that were fully in line with the position of the Rwandese government. This also happened at other regional meetings. Subsequently, several organizations in Burundi came to consider the Imidugudu programme as a good example for dealing with land problems in their own country.

Various international development organizations, in convening regional meetings between their partners, deliberately chose not to discuss regional politics, considering this too sensitive. Regional politic issues were also circumvented because of their sensitivity at the November 2004 regional forum of ACEAC discussed above. In the formal parts of the encounter, participants made little reference to government politics at national level, and discussed conflict in their home regions without the slightest reference to the regional conflict history. A few days before the forum, the first of a series of UN regional conferences had taken place in Dar-es-Salaam. During the breaks between sessions, participants discussed the outcomes of this conference, and commented on the renewed threat of the Rwandese president after the conference to intervene militarily in the DR Congo, thereby ridiculing the commitments made a few days earlier. No comments were made on this in the formal parts of the forum. During the breaks, I had also various discussions with participants from DR Congo on the role of Rwandese military in the insecurity affecting their areas. People also commented on the likely cooperation between militia from DR Congo and the Burundese FNL and the latter's involvement in the Gatumba massacre in August 2004 (see HRW 2004). Representatives from different countries participated, or listened attentively to such discussions. In the official parts of the forum, regional politics was not talked about.

Such political sensitivities had consequences for the regional strategies envisaged. In the case of the ACEAC forum, the unwillingness or inability of participants to address regional conflict issues resulted in a concern for the effects of conflict (and how to deal with them) rather than the causes of conflict. To circumvent conflict between the participants, regional strategies focused on technical rather than political cooperation, such as exchange of experiences, and replicating best practices.20

In many regional encounters considering solutions for regional problems, the outcomes likewise reflected a preference for national strategies rather than regional ones. For example, various expatriates considered that land scarcity in Burundi and Rwanda implied a need for a regional solution, including regional economic

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20 This reflected the regional efforts of their governments. The first UN regional conference for the Great Lakes region in November 2004 resulted in a series of proposals for regional cooperation. All of those proposals were foremost of a technical nature—to promote regional economic integration, to respond to the needs of conflict-affected populations—focussing on similar issues in all countries, rather than on regional political differences.
specialization and more flexibility in migration policies. Organizations from the region considered the scarcity of land in their own countries as a given, and to them the problem was the failure of governments to develop agriculture or promote alternative ways of making a living. To them, the considerations of the expatriates would become relevant only after their heads of state had reached regional agreements. Suggestions on regional solutions to national land problems were also way ahead of what could be imagined by organizations from the North Kivu, considering the problematic presence of Kinyarwanda speakers in the region and perception of a historical process of Rwandese infringement on Congolese borders.

Highlighting the national character of problems and solutions rather than their regional political aspects was probably also a political strategy in itself. Though the Rwandan government has emphasized the harmful presence of Hutu militia, and the ethnicization of community relations in eastern DRC, regional dynamics seldom played a role in the discourse of the Rwandese government explaining the build-up to the 1994 genocide. Nor was this issue much discussed between Burundese and Rwandese civil-society organizations. The explanation of the Rwandan government of the genocide highlights Tutsi victimhood. A regional perspective would bring out how events of violence in either Rwanda or Burundi always had strong repercussions in the neighbouring country, while at a regional level both Hutu and Tutsi populations got victims of violence. One could speculate that emphasizing such regional dimensions might have drawn the character and legitimacy of the Rwandese and Burundese states into the analysis. This was an issue which organizations were willing to discuss in private, but not in meetings with representatives from the other countries, as they did not want to be seen criticizing their respective governments.

The ‘politics of regional imagination’ thus played an important role in how regional civil-society peacebuilding in the end came about. In many cases, the difficulties in reaching a shared analysis were the result not so much of a lack of analytical power, but of deep political cleavages. One might even speculate that the difficulties discussed earlier in arriving at collaborative regional analyses were not so much a technical or conceptual problem, but resulted from organizations circumventing thorny political issues, and de-emphasizing the regional linkages between problems. Emphasizing shared victimhood was then a first step in coming closer to each other.

The regional imaginations of international organizations

As a final point, in reviewing the difficulties in realizing regional civil-society peacebuilding, the ambitions of donors and international development organizations supporting such efforts require review. International organizations often assumed that regional exchanges and cooperation would be to the advantage of their partners, who would learn from each other, and whose collaborative efforts would be more effective than their separate programmes. It was however questionable how far organizations

21 Neither the official documentary produced for the commemoration of the genocide in 2004, nor the elucidation of the genocide memorial in Kigali make any reference to this (personal communication with Thea Hilhorst).
Partners in Peace

from the region shared this assumption. Rwandese organizations interviewed in the course of fieldwork often suggested that organizations from other countries could profit from their experiences, but did not assume they could learn anything from others. This attitude did not contribute to their motivation to participate in regional meetings. Various representatives of local and international organizations observed that without motivation from donors to exchange experiences, local partners were not inclined to meet. For many local civil-society organizations it was already problematic to work in synergy at a national level, let alone the regional level. They considered this as the major shortcoming of civil society regional initiatives, which in their eyes were ‘talk-shops’ to which organizations participated to entice their donors, but which did not translate into action.

Further, apart from those specialized in lobbying and advocacy, civil-society organizations often found it difficult to imagine regional strategies with direct relevance for their ongoing work. Most (peace) activities of local organizations were on a local scale. Though experiencing the impact of regional developments on their local interventions, they had the feeling that they could continue business as usual, with or without a regional approach.

As noted earlier, various regional platforms of local civil-society organizations discussed land-related disputes. Many of the participants –having expertise in agricultural programmes for enhancing community conflict resolution– were primarily concerned about the impact of land conflicts. They acknowledged that similarities existed with other parts of the region, and were interested to exchange experiences on local reconciliation practices. The cross-border causes of land conflicts were less of an issue to them, as these were beyond the reach of their interventions.

Many local organizations felt no urgent need for regional exchange and cooperation. In their daily practice, regional approaches and strategies did not logically present themselves. While for some organizations regional cooperation had advantages (being member of a network provided protection), for other organizations such advantages were far less. It was thus questionable whether the imagined advantages of regional exchange and cooperation were as important for civil-society organizations from the region as they were for their international supporters.

Moreover, in the perception of local civil-society organizations, the international insistence on regional approaches contrasted starkly with the fact that only a few donors were willing to fund regional activities, often because regional activities did not fit their funding practices, which were organized on a country basis. This further decreased the motivation of local organizations for regional analysis and programming.

Finally, international organizations and donors considered regional strategies with civil society as alternatives or complementary to diplomacy. In their view, they provided an opportunity to circumvent the sovereignty of states. Through working with civil society at a regional level, international organizations would contribute opinions, criticism and ideas, without confronting particular governments. As such, regional civil society encounters were complementary to regional initiatives at diplomatic level. The question was whether the political aspirations of supporting organizations matched the ambitions, mandates and expertise of their partners in this
respect. These aspirations built on an image of civil society as a counterweight to governments, a role to which many of their partners did not aspire.

Conclusion

“International organizations all have the same agenda. Everybody works on peace and security and a regional approach, everybody works with the same partners. What is the added value of a regional approach? The regional approach is a hype”.22

The above quotation shows the belief of several interviewees that regional discourses were no more than a fashion in the development scene. To them, regional discourses reflected an institutional need to regularly come up with new notions to legitimize the existence of the sector. Alternatively, they considered talking of regional approaches as a discursive practice to hide the failure of national and international organizations to effectively address conflict in the Great Lakes Region. Nonetheless, many representatives of national and international organizations considered regional approaches as imperative, because they contributed to a better understanding of what conflict was about, and indicated the need to operate regionally. For a variety of reasons, however, the shift to regional approaches remains more theoretical than practical.

Many local and international organizations found it difficult to analyse the connectedness of regional issues in such a way as to result in regional programming, and to arrive at a shared regional understanding. Regional discourses were different ways of making sense of complex conflict dynamics. Improved understanding of complexity, however, did not provide for strategies to effectively deal with this complexity.

Moreover, regional discourses on peacebuilding were shaped in a political process, related to the political space for civil-society organizations, and their relation with their governments. Civil-society organizations appeared to be fundamentally political in nature and deeply involved in the everyday politics of peace and conflict. This political nature of organizations meant that regional platforms for peace were not necessarily peaceful. Rather than working towards an ‘imagined regional community’ (cf. Anderson 1983/91) of civil-society organizations—as hoped for by many outsiders—state borders and the regional political map continued to play an important role in how civil society defined itself. As a result, it was difficult to facilitate exchange of experiences and establish regional cooperation, and to realize shared understanding of regional issues and regional solutions. Rather than providing neutral spaces for generating ideas and launching opinions and criticism, regional fora and exchanges were often interfaces where different regional discourses met, representing different readings of conflict. At many regional exchanges, such differences were silenced to circumvent conflict between the participants. The outcomes were depoliticized.

22 Diplomat, interview Kigali 10 January 2005.
regional strategies that focused on the similarly experienced consequences of regional conflict, rather than on the underlying political differences.

The challenge of civil society regional peacebuilding is thus not just about acknowledging the regional character of conflict, but more about reconciling the differences between the civil-society organizations involved, and coming to a shared regional imagination. Some considered that in order for this rapprochement to happen, agreement between governments was first required. However, a less pessimistic picture evolves when considering existing networks that had overcome regional differences to some extent. The question is whether civil-society organizations will be able to challenge the regional policies of their governments or other regional players, as long as they have not overcome the differences dividing themselves. This may be too much to expect of civil-society organizations. As Mamdani (2001) suggests, regional reform may also come about through the example set by other countries in the region. Perhaps the most important role civil-society organizations can play in achieving regional peacebuilding is by achieving political reform within their own countries. In this, regional dialogues may inspire processes of reform in other countries.

What could be the role of international organizations in this? Civil society regional approaches for peace require the fostering of regional identification between civil-society organizations, rather than assuming it. International organizations might support and facilitate this. Regional identification will never come about without encountering the other players from the region; thus I agree with Galtung (1996/2003: 271) on the need to 'let one thousand conferences blossom'. To achieve a shared regional identification, maybe the sharing of similar experiences is indeed more important than exchanging dissimilar views on what conflict is about. Exchanges and platforms may therefore be more important than regional civil society programmes. More prominence could also be given to enhancing already existing regional contacts, such as those between universities and trade networks. Even if the resulting exchanges are depoliticized, we should consider them as a first necessary step in a process of regional identification and (finally) reconciliation. At the same time, we should not disregard the relevance of meeting backstage in regional encounters, where politics may be discussed informally, and acknowledgement of regional connectedness may be achieved.

Finally, international organizations should not have too high ambitions in supporting regional civil-society peacebuilding. They should be careful not to expect levels of cooperation that often do not even exist at a national level, or to assume that their local partners share their expectations of the benefits of regional programmes and exchange. Donors' imagination of a regional civil society doing what their governments failed to do –bringing regional peace– was far beyond the realities of their partners. Before drafting programmes and setting expectations, donors should realize that there is no such thing as a Great Lakes Region in a singular sense, and start instead by asking how local people imagine (the possibilities of) their region.
Chapter 6
Continuity and Disruption
Land disputes and local conflict resolution mechanisms in Burundi

Over the first half of 2005, several Burundese and international organizations initiated programmes to strengthen local institutions for dealing with land disputes in Burundi. At that time, elections in Burundi were approaching, formally closing a transition period from a 12-years civil war. It was expected that a significant part of the approximately 400,000 refugees still residing in neighbouring countries, as well as more than 100,000 internally displaced people, might soon return home. Many organizations considered the resolution of the land disputes that would accompany the repatriation of refugees as decisive for their successful reintegration and the maintenance of the fragile peace. Violent events in 1993 had shown that reinstalling refugees was a politically sensitive issue in Burundi. One of the triggers of the violence and ensuing civil war had been the expected massive return of Hutu refugees and the accompanying land reclamation (Oketch and Polzer 2002; ICG 2003a). Hence, in 2005, development organizations and observers alike were committed to find adequate

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1 Between 2002 and 2007, 341,911 Burundians have returned to their home country (Burundi Situation Report: 23 - 29 Apr 2007, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).
responses to returnee-related land disputes, which could easily turn into a political ‘bombe foncière’ (land time-bomb) (ICG 2003a).

The level and scale of the disputes around land posed huge challenges to conflict resolution institutions in Burundi. Many organizations observed how legislation on land was inadequate, difficulties arose between the customary and state juridical system to administer land disputes, while the juridical system was not equipped to deal with the task placed upon it. Hence, in the expectation of a massive return of refugees and internally displaced people, international and national civil-society organizations wanted to strengthen the capacities of local institutions to resolve returnee-related land conflicts. Various organizations started programmes to support the formal juridical system and in particular the local Tribunals. Other interventions reflected a current international predisposition towards traditional or local dispute resolving mechanisms. They intended to enhance the dispute resolution capacities of the customary institution of the Bashingantaba, or of other institutions within the communities. Some organizations also established their own conflict resolution structures.

This chapter is a case study of how peacebuilding is not just a policy response to conflict, but rather a way of framing complex development problems. Framing refers to the practice that in describing reality, people resort to particular frames -or “principles of organization of experience” (Goffman 1974, in Jary and Jary 1991/1995: 242)- that guide and filter their perceptions of reality. Framing is an ordering practice that helps to understand and simplify the world, by creating coherence out of fragmented ideas, experiences and practices (cf. Law 1994). It helps to conceptualize reality in such a way that we can not only better understand it, but also respond to it. Framing facilitates policy making, for example in the complex contexts of conflict situations, by providing a vision on a problem and pointing into the direction of particular interventions. Framing implies an -often unconscious- choice for representing the world in a particular way, and is therefore a political practice. This chapter aims to clarify how framing takes place in interpreting and addressing land disputes: How are land disputes in Burundi being framed? How does this framing of land disputes direct interventions? And how does this correspond to local realities of land disputes?

In 2005, programmes of many (international) organizations to strengthen local dispute resolving mechanisms followed from a framing that identified returnee related land disputes as a central challenge for peace and social justice. The chapter reflects on this prevailing understanding, by looking at land disputes and local conflict resolution mechanisms in two particular communities. The case studies highlight that, rather than a temporary problem related to returnees, land disputes are a structural development problem. It is argued that interventions to enhance local dispute resolving capacity only succeed when it is recognized that land disputes are part of normality, and not just a temporary problem related to returnees. In addition, the chapter reflects on the current emphasis on local conflict resolution mechanisms. The case studies demonstrate that local dispute resolving mechanisms can deal only to a limited extent with local land disputes, and that many local disputes require first and foremost solutions at the national level. Moreover, local dispute resolving mechanisms can neither guarantee the protection of vulnerable people that is not assured in the formal juridical system. The chapter illustrates how framing helps to inform and validate
peacebuilding policy, but also directs attention away from other dimensions of a conflict situation and possible responses to it (cf. Colebatch 2002).

The case-studies in this chapter were conducted as part of a research I carried out from February to May 2005 for and with CED-Caritas, the Episcopal development organization of the Catholic Church in Burundi (Van Leeuwen and Haartsen 2005). The research was done in the context of a project for the reintegration of returnees through dealing with their land problems. It included ethnographic research in four communities, two of which are presented in this chapter. In each community, I made an inventory of the most frequent disputes about land in the respective communities through a meeting with community representatives organized together with CED-Caritas staff. For each dispute type the participants identified a series of cases. Among each series of cases, they selected the cases they considered most representative and regular. Hence, 55 disputes in the four communities were surveyed by interviewing the stakeholders. Interviews focused on the diversity of the nature and origins of land disputes, the local efforts and considerations for resolving these, and the sentiments of conflicting parties on the settlements achieved. Additional interviews have been conducted with local representatives of the Justice and Peace Commissions of the Catholic Church (Commissions J&P), the Bashingantabe, communal administrators, representatives of the Tribunanc de Résidence, and development organizations working in the communities concerned. The chapter further builds on interviews and field-visits I conducted during the remainder of my stay in Burundi between September 2004 and September 2005, and on my participation in a July/August 2007 consultancy mission for UNDP/CNRS on ‘Re-integration of Refugees, Real Estate Problems and Solutions’.

Returnees and land disputes in Burundi

On a resident population of about 6.2 million people, Burundi has a considerable number of refugees and internally displaced people. In 1972, after massacres of the Burundian army on the Hutu elite, about 300,000 people fled, mainly to Tanzania. In 1993, the assassination of President Ndadaye and the massacres that followed resulted in another massive outflow of refugees. In the peak-year 2000, the UNHCR estimated the number of Burundian refugees at about 570,000, of which the majority were living in Tanzania. With the political climate in Burundi becoming more stable, people started to repatriate voluntarily. At the end of 2005, about 400,000 Burundian refugees had still to return, the majority of which were living in refugee camps in western Tanzania. Civil war violence further resulted in massive internal displacement in Burundi, with about half a million displaced people half-way the 1990s. Displacement was highly dynamic, with every month new groups of people being displaced due to violence. The majority of displaced households (89%) resided in displacement sites in

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their own municipality, and continued to cultivate their land. In June 2005, OCHA considered 116,799 people still to be displaced.

Many international and local organizations considered the resolution of the land disputes accompanying the return of refugees and displaced as decisive for their successful reintegration and the maintenance of the fragile peace. Research by the Burundian NGO Ligue Iteka indicated that 90 per cent of problems experienced by returning refugees were land-related. Conflicts resulting from the return of refugees included those of people returning home to find their land and properties occupied by others. This resulted in even more conflicts when those that had found their land occupied themselves also settled on land belonging to others. Land disputes related to displacement resulted from the fact that displacement sites had been constructed on private properties or state land.

The reinstallation of returning refugees and internally displaced people and the restitution of land were considered a highly political issue, with ethnical dimensions. In the past, the return of refugees and the reclamation of their land had caused serious political problems. After the massive exodus of Hutu in 1972, many of their lands had been taken for personal use or redistributed by the authorities, or occupied by others, often at the advantage of the Tutsi population. According to 1977 legislation, to encourage repatriation, goods and lands vacated by the refugees should be returned to them. A commission was installed to facilitate this (Daudelin 2003; CARE et al. 2004). However, the government only took limited measures to recover properties of refugees, while the commission in effect massively legalized the land-grabbing (ICG 2003a: 3-4; RCN Justice & Démocratie 2004).

New efforts for large scale repatriation started in 1991, as part of a National Reconciliation policy, and a new national commission for the return, reception and reinsertion of returnees was installed (ACORD-Burundi 2002: 22). After the 1993 electoral victory of the FRODEBU, 50,000 refugees of 1972 returned spontaneously to their country. Their arrival was badly managed by the authorities, that needed to deal with the fact that returning properties to refugees was at the disadvantage of the Tutsi occupants (ICG 2003a). Though the government acknowledged that every repatriate had a right to access to land, in case his property was occupied, the rights of the occupant were also considered legitimate. This ambiguous principle resulted in a lot of conflicts and the chasing away of occupants by returnees (ACORD-Burundi 2002: 22). Demonstrations by expropriated Tutsi families contributed to a deterioration of the political situation, cumulating in the assassination of President Ndadaye in 1993. In the ensuing violence, many returnees fled again and their properties were again taken by the previous occupants (ICG 2003a: 5).

3 Recensement des Personnes Déplacées sur Sites au Burundi, Mars-Avril 2004, Résultats préliminaires, UN OCHA Burundi.
4 Study of Internally Displaced Populations in Burund 2005, UN OCHA Burundi. According to a 2004 study, 57 % of Internally displaced people residing in displacement sites expressed a willingness to return home, and related the willingness to return home to or remain or resettle elsewhere to the living conditions in the sites, the duration of their stay in the sites, the wish to reinstall before the return of refugees from Tanzania, and the security situation in their original communities (Recensement des Personnes Déplacées sur Sites au Burundi, Mars-Avril 2004, Résultats préliminaires, UN OCHA Burundi, p.5)
The peace agreements signed in 2000 addressed the rights of returnees: “all refugees and/or victims should be able to recuperate their properties, especially their land; if recuperation turns out to be impossible, everybody having a right should receive a just compensation and/or indemnification”. The agreements asked for the establishment of a National Commission for the Rehabilitation of Disaster Victims (CNRS) which would be in charge of repatriation of refugees and return of victims, and their reinstitution. A sub-commission would take care of evolving land disputes, including disputes about the properties of long-term refugees, and past misappropriations in land redistribution (ICG 2003a; Gatunange 2004; Kamungi et al. 2004: 10-12). However, at the time of fieldwork, expectations of the commission were low. Since its establishment in February 2003, its activities had been limited to providing short-term assistance to internally displaced people. There was lack of clarity about the division of responsibilities between CNRS and other entities involved in repatriation (see Kamungi et al. 2004), and CNRS had no presence at community level. An important practical problem of the peace agreements’ stipulations was that there was insufficient land available to grant returning refugees a plot of dimensions similar to their pre-flight properties. Although a government inventory estimated that there was enough land available for distribution, since (and as a result of!) the inventory there had been substantial manipulations of state land properties (Oketch and Polzer 2002: 123; ICG 2003a: 2; Kamungi et al. 2004: 2).

Various analysts thus had come to see the return of refugees and related land issues as a critical insecurity. According to the International Crisis Group (ICG 2003a), the restitution of land to returning refugees and internally displaced people might result in political uprisings, from both Hutu returnees and Tutsi occupants. Disappointment with the impossibility to recuperate land, or insufficient or delayed compensation for those expropriated would be ideal themes for political mobilization and might result in renewed conflict (Daudelin 2003; ICG 2003a: ii). Early 2005, the concern with the land disputes accompanying the return of refugees and internally displaced people was common among national and international organizations operating in Burundi. For example, CED-Caritas –the organization with whom this research was implemented– started a programme to “accompany the peace process and reinsertion of victims in Burundi trough the identification of land properties in dispute” (CED-Caritas 2004). This chapter explores how the concern with land disputes of refugees and displaced informed the interventions of those organizations.

5 “tout réfugié et/ou sinistré doit pouvoir récupérer ses biens, notamment sa terre […] si une récupération s’avère impossible, chaque ayant droit doit recevoir une juste compensation et/ou indemnisation”, Accord d’Arusha, protocol IV, article 8, points b and c.
7 In 2006, a National Commission on Land and Personal Effects (CNTB) was installed to continue the mandate of CNRS. Criticism on its functioning was very similar to that on CNRS.
Interventions by (inter)national agencies

Many organizations worried about the expected massive return of refugees and internally displaced people and the accompanying land disputes. Many were also concerned about the abilities of the state institutions to adequately deal with the level and scale of disputes around land. A variety of international and national Burundian organizations thus developed strategies to strengthen local capacities to deal with land disputes, reflecting an international predisposition towards traditional or local dispute resolving mechanisms.

Several organizations started programmes to support the lower echelons of the formal juridical system, in particular the local courts at commune level, the Tribunaux de Résidence. Those courts were dealing with both civil and penal cases. The incomplete legal formation of most magistrates serving these Tribunals was insufficient for the variety of issues they had to handle (CARE et al. 2004: 40; Dexter and Ntahombaye 2005). The Tribunaux de Résidence hardly had any means to implement their judgments, and no budget to carry out field visits for example. Development organizations considered further the limited accessibility of those tribunals, in particular for being too expensive. Critics have also pointed to serious corruption and irregularities in the procedures followed, and the extremely long periods that land disputes took in courts (Huggins 2004). Their work was further hampered by the incompleteness and contradictions of legislation on land, and ambiguities in the dispositions of different authorities in allocating land.8 To enhance those local tribunals, Burundian human-rights organizations started human-rights training to their staff, or contributed in the transport of witnesses.

Other organizations intended to enhance the dispute resolution capacities of the customary institution of the Bashingantahe. They had low expectations of the formal justice system in dealing with land disputes. Their choice for strengthening this institution was also motivated by the continuing importance of the Bashingantahe at the local level in administering land9 and mediating land disputes. In the past, these ‘Councils of Notables’10 consisted of the most respected community members on a colline (‘hill’/‘community’), and functioned independently of the local chiefs. Their traditional roles included keeping the land record, overseeing land transactions, settling local disputes, reconciling individual persons and families, and representing the local population to the authorities (see Laely 1997; Reynhjens and Vandeginste 2001; Ntabona 2002; Ntsimbiyabandi and Natkarutimana 2004).

Nonetheless, the institution’s role had eroded over time. With the introduction of customary courts by the Belgian colonizers, the Bashingantahe lost their independence

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8 For details on the problems of the juridical system in Burundi, consult Dexter and Ntahombaye (2005); Huggins (2004); Kamungi et al. (2004); Oketch and Polzer (2002) and Daudelin (2003).
9 Though the 1986 Land Tenure Code stipulated that all land be registered with the state, in practice, less than five per cent of land holdings had been registered. Land administration was still largely taken care of by the Bashingantahe (Kamungi et al. 2004).
10 In the remainder of the text, reference will be made to the institution as Bashingantahe, considering the particularity of the institution, which in the first place is associated with certain moral values rather than with wealth or dignity.
from the local chiefs and became accountable to the colonial administration (Nindorera 1998; Reyntjens and Vandeginste 2001; Gahama 1999, in: Deslaurier 2003b). After independence, the authority to dispense justice was reserved to magistrates (Nindorera 1998), while appointment of new Bashingantabe was controlled by the UPRONA national party (Deslaurier 2003b: 88). In the late 1970s, communal administrations became responsible for appointing the Bashingantabe, and tended to select individuals from within the UPRONA administrative structure (Nindorera 1998; Reyntjens and Vandeginste 2001). Halfway the 1980s the Bashingantabe were officially re-established as an auxiliary juridical institution. From then onwards, prior to submitting a case to the Tribunal de Résidence, a person needed to submit his case to the Bashingantabe first. If a case could not be solved there it would proceed to the Tribunal. The Tribunals took due notion of the propositions of the Bashingantabe, considering that they would be more familiar with the local context of disputes (Holland 2001).

The conflict since 1993 further weakened the institution. Being considered community leaders, several Bashingantabe were the direct targets of violence (Ntsimbibyabandi and Ntakarutimana 2004: 54).

Many Burundians, local and international organizations regarded the revitalization of the Bashingantabe as very important (e.g. ICG 2003a; Huggins 2004). They argued that the institution was still widely resorted to in the communities. Further, they regarded it an alternative to the expensive and corrupt official juridical system. They also hoped that the institution could serve as a force to stabilize society and stimulate pluralism (Nindorera 1998; Ntabona 2002). The Arusha agreement of 2000 explicitly referred to the need of solidifying the Bashingantabe, and emphasized their role in reconciliation at the level of the colline.\textsuperscript{11} Hence, various international and local organizations developed initiatives to strengthen this customary institution. UNDP financed a programme for the rehabilitation of the Bashingantabe, and more than 30,000 traditionally invested Bashingantabe were identified (PNUD 2001, in: Holland 2001: 10; ICG 2003a). A Burundian NGO, the Centre de Recherche sur l’Inculturation et le Développement (CRID), was financed to establish councils of Bashingantabe at communal and provincial level, and a new National Council for the Bashingantabe was inaugurated.

At the same time, in public discussions in Burundi the Bashingantabe were criticized for having lost legitimacy and integrity. It was pointed out that the institution lost immunity to the ethnicization and regionalism tearing the country apart. Certain Bashingantabe had justified army repression, or had failed to condemn exclusion (Ntsimbibyabandi and Ntakarutimana 2004: 57-58). Certain political parties portrayed the Bashingantabe as an elitist and Tutsi institution, or as being related to particular political parties (Deslaurier 2003a; Deslaurier 2003b), a perception that also was reflected in the discourse of some Burundian NGOs. A common critique was that they too had become corrupt, asking for remunerations, contrary to the tradition (Dexter and Ntahombaye 2005). Others were worried about the kind of justice the institution represented. In contrast to the local Tribunals that based themselves on state legislation, in dealing with land disputes the Bashingantabe relied in the first place on conventions and customary regulations. The latter differed considerably from state

law, in particular concerning the land rights of women. Women’s legal rights to a portion of the inheritance, for example, were often not acknowledged by the Bashingantabo (see also IHR Law Group 2002). Some criticized the limited accessibility of the institution to women, youth, Batwa (a marginalized ethnic community in Burundi), and the poorer segments of the population.

Many intervening organizations thus considered that revitalization was not only a matter of re-establishing structures but also of re-invigorating and reforming the institution. CRID sought to counter the erosion of the moral authority of the institution by stimulating debate on the values traditionally associated with the Bashingantabo, promoting the inclusion of women, and condemning practices that decreased its credibility, such as demanding payments for its services. Other NGOs explicitly included Bashingantabo as participants in legal trainings, to familiarize them with existing legislation on land, women and human rights.

Various Burundese NGOs13 have established their own structures at community level to assist in the resolution of conflicts. Their aim was to establish an alternative to the slow, expensive and corrupt formal judicial system. Some of those organizations also wanted to create an alternative to the Bashingantabo, which they regarded as corrupted as the tribunals, and unable to assure equal justice or protecting the rights of poor people and women. The most prevalent structures established were the cliniques juridiques, comprised of paralegals giving advice, mediating in conflicts, or orienting people towards the state institutions. In addition, facilitated by the Episcopal Justice & Peace (J&PP) Commission of the Catholic Church, local Commissions Justice & Paix (Justice and Peace Commissions) have been set up in many parishes of Burundi. Those commissions would contribute to peace and reconciliation through activities such as non-violent conflict resolution, awareness-raising about peaceful coexistence and human rights monitoring and vulgarizing the different peace agreements.14 Members were elected among the parishioners. The above mentioned programme of CED-Caritas to identify and resolve returnee-related land disputes aimed at accompanying and strengthening the conflict resolving capacities of the provincial and local Commissions J&P.

The remainder of this chapter reflects on the ideas underlying such interventions, by exploring actual land disputes and the current practices of local dispute resolution. Two communities are considered, both of which have experienced large movements of refugees. In southern Rumonge, properties of 1972 refugees have been massively grabbed by community members and local authorities. Land-grabbing has been followed by expropriation and redistribution of land by state development projects. The case study discusses the complex situation that has emerged and focuses on how it is further complicated by the return of refugees and displaced. Land disputes in Rumonge are intensified due to the return of refugees, but are in the first place caused by past governmental practices. Local institutions play a limited role in the conflicts that emerge. The second community, Giteranyi, experienced massive flight of people

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12 Including CARE, Africare, Ligue Iteka, and RCN
13 Including Ligue Iteka and the Association des Femmes Juridiques
in 1993. While many disputes here are related to and inflamed by repatriation, the case highlights the regularity of most of those conflicts, and that they are between relatives, rather than between strangers or people of another ethnic group. However, this makes them not less violent in potential, nor less complicated to resolve at the local level – on the contrary. What comes out from this case in particular is how local dispute resolving institutions deal with official legislation and what this implies for local justice.

**Southern Rumonge, Bururi province**

Southern Rumonge comprises the three most southern collines of Rumonge commune. Those are located in Bururi province on the slopes descending into Lake Tanganyika, is a region (in)famous for the large number of land disputes. Rumonge commune\textsuperscript{15} was in the centre of violent events in 1972. After attacks by Hutu rebels based in Tanzania on villages in southern Burundi, the military took their principal reprisal operations in this region, resulting in the massive flight of the Hutu population to Tanzania. 9,702 people returned to Rumonge commune between 2002 and early 2004. This is a considerable number compared to a total population number of 70,217 people in 1990.\textsuperscript{16} Many more returnees were still expected at the time of fieldwork in 2005.\textsuperscript{17}

Disputes about land were numerous in this community,\textsuperscript{18} with 85% of civil cases coming to the Tribunal being land related.\textsuperscript{19} At the time of fieldwork the refugees from 1972 had started to return, and disputes were on the rise about their former properties. In an inventory with chefs de secteur in southern Rumonge, 367 (53%) of 689 disputes they were aware of involved returning refugees as one of the parties in dispute.\textsuperscript{20} Nonetheless, the relationship between repatriation and land disputes in southern Rumonge were not straightforward, and we need a closer look at what disputes were about. The case of Rumonge further shows the limited extent to which local institutions were able to deal with the complex situation.

\textsuperscript{15} The provinces of Burundi are subdivided into 117 communes, which are further subdivided into collines or sectors, and nyumba kumi/cellules. In some communes, several sectors form a zone/district. Before the local elections in 2005, all levels were administered by administrators appointed by the government.


\textsuperscript{17} At the time of fieldwork, Bururi province was still expecting about 20,000 refugees to return home, many of those originating from Rumonge commune. See the map ‘Prefecture of return of the Burundian population in Western Tanzania’ of 15 January 2004, published by GIMU / PGDS, to be found at the UN-OCHA website.

\textsuperscript{18} The conseiller des affaires sociales of the commune Rumonge estimated that as much as 70% of the population was involved in a conflict about land, interview 10 March 2005.

\textsuperscript{19} Interview with the vice-president of the Tribunal de Résidence Rumonge, 10 March 2005.

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Land disputes prevalent in the community

When asked for the most frequent types of disputes about land in their community, people invariably pointed to the diverse expropriations and land-grabbing, both by the state and by individuals. 514 of the dispute cases the *chefs de secteur* were aware of involved expropriation or grabbing of land. After the massive flight of people in 1972, local authorities had distributed the properties of refugees. Many of those that had profited from this practice had come from communities higher up the mountains, in search of fertile lands in the Imbo plain. Since people from those communities included many Tutsi, whilst the original inhabitants of the Imbo plain were mainly Hutu, this episode of land-grabbing had an ethnic dimension. Hence, various residents interpreted past land-grabbing by the local authorities (as well as the later redistribution by the development programmes) as intentional appropriation of Hutu properties to benefit the Tutsi population. However, there were also cases in which properties left behind by refugees had been occupied by their own relatives or neighbours, or by other Hutu that had not fled.

Upon their return in the 1990s and 2000s, some of the original owners tried to reclaim the land, which easily turned into disputes. Occupants often had invested in the plot or the house and did not want to give it up, or had destroyed the original house. Claims to return the land to the original occupants appeared particularly difficult to hold for orphans whose parents had died abroad. At the time of fieldwork, many returnees were still too afraid to reclaim their land from the current occupants. In many cases they were afraid for being accused of participation in the 1972 attacks by Hutu rebels.

Donatien, a 1972-refugee that had returned in 1993 told us that a former *chef de secteur* had built a house on the only part of his land he could possibly reclaim (as the other parts had been redistributed under the SRD and PIA schemes; see below). The occupant was a rich person, and intimidated him to return to Tanzania, particularly after the violence after 1993. More than ten years after his return from Tanzania, Donatien still thinks the time is not yet ripe to reclaim his land: “The peace is still not there. At the moment I am on good terms with the son of the occupier. When peace is there and the situation is secure, I will try to reclaim my land”.

Another complication was that after the grabbing and distribution of land in the 1970s, many of the new occupants had received land titles. Returning refugees found it difficult to reclaim the land, as they had lost or never possessed any official land titles. Since many properties in the meantime had been sold and resold, current occupants often considered themselves as rightful owners. Efforts by a group of returning refugees to bring their case forward to the *Tribunal de Résidence* in Rumonge, as early as 1995, so far had not had results. 

Another dimension of land problems in southern Rumonge resulted from large scale development programmes in the 1980s, as part of which privately owned land had been expropriated by the state. A well-known programme was that implemented by the para-statal development organization SRD (*Société Regionale de Développement*),

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21 All names of people in the communities are pseudonyms.
22 Interview with the vice-president of the *Tribunal de Résidence* of Rumonge, 10 March 2005.
In 1982, the SRD started a programme to ‘modernize’ the cultivation of oil-palm trees by small peasants in the lowlands bordering Lake Tanganyika. As part of the programme, the old oil-palm trees were cut down, the land levelled and drainage improved, and a new species of oil palm from Ivory Coast was planted. Though owners had been promised compensation for the old palm trees, and had been assured they would return to their properties after the new palms had been planted, when the plots were redistributed, many former owners received far less land than their original properties. Many families were simply attributed one or two parcels of 0.5 hectares, irrespective of what they had owned before. Large tracks of land were given to army officers and staff of the SRD. In April 1990, a number of people from Kanenge had started a court case at the Administrative Court in Bujumbura, to request their due indemnification and return of their original properties. According to local residents, at that time, SRD accepted to pay an indemnification. There were no chances that properties would return to the original owners, considering also that due to the reconstruction works the original plots could not be retraced. However, the Court never came to a final verdict, and in early 2005, people were still demanding for indemnification by the SRD and a compensation for the lands lost. The government of Burundi did not speak out on the issue, despite demands from the local community.

Highly problematic in southern Rumonge was that in many cases those two types of land disputes blended together. The SRD programme had been implemented in areas from where many refugees had left in the 1970s. As a consequence, in many instances, properties that first had been grabbed had been consecutively redistributed. Occupants of properties vacated by the refugees were effectively ‘legalized’ through the SRD scheme. An inhabitant of Kanenge colline (who had migrated from another region) told us how he had given the chef de colline a box of beer, and since then he was considered a legal occupant, hence eligible for receiving a plot in the SRD redistribution. Two other para-statal development programmes, as well as a villagization scheme for resettling returning refugees halfway the 1980s, also had resulted in reshuffling land properties in areas formerly inhabited by 1970 refugees. As a result, in 2005, returning refugees entered into a complex local situation. With the occupation of their original properties by their fellow community members or state representatives, followed by the expropriation and redistribution of land as part of state development programmes, it was very difficult to reclaim their land. Many individuals were affected by various types of land-grabbing and expropriation at the same time.

Existing state legislation had no or conflicting answers to the disputes between returning refugees and occupants. Burundian law acknowledged a person as a rightful owner after cultivating a plot for more than 30 years, implying that many people that had occupied land in the 1970s in the meantime could be considered as legal owners. At the same time, returnees could reclaim their properties on the basis of 1977 legislation, which stipulated that after their return, their land and properties had to be

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23 This case of land-grabbing features in the Arusha agreement, and is also described in RCN Justice & Démocratie (2004) and ICG
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returned to them. Hence, many cases existed in which two parties could make legitimate claims to the same property. Moreover, many community members doubted the fairness of the state law and argued for alternative solutions. Many people pointed out that the 30 years rule was unfair towards the 1972 refugees. “Those people have not left voluntarily, and it are the current occupants that were responsible for their flight”, argued someone, referring to that many occupants were Tutsi, while most of the 1972 refugees were Hutu, and had fled the reprisals of a majority Tutsi army. They also considered the irregular way through which authorities had given out property titles in the 1970s.

At the same time, from discussions among community members I attended, it was clear that local residents also took the claims of occupants seriously. For example, when an illegal occupant had died and left the property to his children, people considered it unjust that the children should become victim of the fact that their parents had acquired the family land in an illegitimate way. The issue of ownership was even more complicated for those returnees whose land in the meantime had been redistributed under the SRD and the PIA schemes. Those returnees could not recuperate their lands, as the current occupants possessed titles.

The case of southern Rumonge is thus a clear example of a community where the return of refugees resulted in serious disputes at the local level about properties occupied by other community members, and some of such disputes had an ethnic dimension. With an even larger number of returnees still expected after successful elections, the situation would become even more problematic and urgent. Nonetheless, an important dynamic of land problems in southern Rumonge was that many disputes had blended with conflicts about the expropriation of land. Further, both returning refugees and people that had not fled had been affected by this expropriation on a large scale. In the experience of most people, rather than being an ethnicized problem of returning refugees, the land problems in southern Rumonge resulted from state interventions in the past. In many cases it had been the authorities that had redistributed properties of refugees, and para-statal organizations that had expropriated the lands thereafter. In the experience of community members, the resulting disputes were not so much between community members or between returning refugees and occupants, but rather between people and the state.

At the same time, many returnees in southern Rumonge also suffered from what we could call the more ‘regular’ disputes about land, i.e. those that did not have any relation with the crisis, such as disputes about the division of inheritance or the boundaries of properties. People also came up with numerous other land disputes when discussing land disputes at communal level, apart from the above problems related to expropriation and land-grabbing. Many of those disputes were of an intra-family character. For example, several disputes were related to the fact that customary law only considered sons as legitimate heirs. So in case one wife had few or only daughters and the other only sons, the sons tended to take all the land after the death of the family head (cf. CARE et al. 2004). An important source of intra-family dispute was polygamy.25 Polygamous marriages were not acknowledged under Burundian law.

25 The chef de secteur of Nyakuguma counted 50 cases of land disputes resulting from polygamy.
but were rather frequent in southern Rumonge. Children of additional wives could only claim rights if they had been formally acknowledged by their father. This resulted in claims of illegitimacy and disputes among children from different mothers. Local history recounted that when in the 1970s the communal administrator of Rumonge redistributed the properties vacated by the refugees, he had demanded beneficiaries either to move with their families from the highland communities to the lowland, or to marry a second wife in the plain. This to assure that occupation would be more permanent, and making it harder for refugees ever to return and reclaim properties. Disputes among different children from such polygamous marriages were usually about the location of plots inherited, considering that lowlands plots were more fertile than the plots in the highland communities.

The return of refugees in southern Rumonge thus indeed resulted in land disputes. However, at the same time, their repatriation fed into already existing conflicts between local inhabitants and the state, affecting both returnees and on-staying population. Finally, both returnees and on-staying population suffered from more common disputes, such as those between neighbours about the boundaries of properties or between relatives about the division of the inheritance. When discussing the seriousness of different types of disputes, local residents pointed to the urgency and seriousness of returnee related disputes. But they also invariably emphasized that those disputes that had resulted in violence and threats had been intra-family disputes about inheritances. The case of southern Rumonge shows that a framing of land disputes that identifies the return of refugees as the central threat to security at the local level is incomplete and negates other important dimensions of land disputes.

**Conflict resolving mechanisms in southern Rumonge**

In southern Rumonge, people could address several local institutions to deal with their land disputes: the Bashingantabe, the local courts, representatives of the local authorities, and the Commissions J&P. A clear distinction existed as to the types of dispute that could be resolved locally and those that required other types of intervention.

The customary system of the Bashingantabe was operating at the levels of the cellule, the secteur/colline, and the zone. At the level of the cellule met irregularly. At the level of the secteur they met every week, while at the level of the zone meetings were often convened twice a week. Procedures during their meetings had the character of arbitration. Parties in conflict would present their cases, after which the council would retire to consider its verdict. Finally, the council would give its verdict in public, thereby striking the Intabe (rod of wisdom and fair judgment) to emphasize the importance of their words. Most Bashingantabe were of considerable age, and few of them could read or write. In southern Rumonge, both Tutsi and Hutu participated in the council, and some Bashingantabe had experienced exile themselves. Women did not participate. To be nominated as Mushingantabe, a person needed to prove his merit

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26 Bashingantabe also played a role in the resolution of disputes within family councils or neighbourhoods. In general, land disputes were considered too complicated to deal with at those levels.

27 At lower levels and outside the formal council meetings, interventions by the Bashingantabe had more a mediatary character.
by his general behaviour and attitude, his deeds and public statements. Appointment was preceded by a period of preparation, training and initiation. Becoming a Mushingantahe was for life. As one of them explained, he had often been consulted in disputes when living in a refugee camp in Tanzania.

The Bashingantahe could take the initiative to intervene in disputes themselves, but could also be called upon by representatives of the local authorities. In southern Rumonge, the Bashingantahe functioned in close cooperation with the local authorities, reflecting the increased influence of the state administration on the institution in many Burundian communities. In this particular case, the chef de secteur28 was president of the council of Bashingantahe of the colline, and although he was not a traditionally invested Bashingantahe, he participated in the deliberations, and was witness of its outcome. Some people, rather than addressing the Bashingantahe, preferred to directly approach the chef de secteur for being a trusted and respected community member. Being a representative of the authorities, he had the advantage of having access to the property-register of properties distributed under the SRD program, and could thus authoritatively deal with border-disputes concerning such properties.

When the Bashingantahe of the colline could not solve a dispute, it could proceed to the Tribunal de la zone, including 15 Bashingantahe from all over the zone. The Bashingantahe at the cellule level were able to deal with some disputes about boundaries of plots, disagreements about property on the plots, fights and petty theft. The Bashingantahe at colline level played a role in disputes about the division of inheritance, the boundaries of properties, or the land-grabbing of the property of refugees by individuals. In southern Rumonge, the Bashingantahe were still considered as the communal memory for land issues. Still, many of such cases proceeded to the council of the Bashingantahe at zone level. The Bashingantahe of the colline could not force parties to accept their judgement, or to appear before their council. The council at zone level, through the participation of local authorities had some power to force people to appear, by being able to temporarily detain people, and to enforce decisions. Moreover, a lot of people wanted to give their case a second chance anyway and continued to the Bashingantahe at zone level. The fact that the Bashingantahe were organized at both colline and zone level made them more effective, by providing some sort of a court d’appel.

Cases that could not be solved by the Bashingantahe at zone level could proceed to the Tribunal de Résidence, located in Rumonge-town, at about 27 km from the hills under consideration in this case study. In practice, few brought cases forward to the Tribunal de Résidence, not in the least because of the distance from the community. Moreover, the Tribunal was considered an institute for the rich, and was not much trusted by people without money. Official fees, but in particular bribes to ensure advancement of a case, made the Tribunal simply too expensive. Problematic in this respect were the costs of field visits. Many cases stumbled at this stage, as the complaining party could not afford the transport and food for the judges. Supposedly, the Tribunal de la Résidence consulted the Bashingantahe to assist them in disputes about land, inviting them to participate in field visits, and asking them to serve as witness at the verdict. The Bashingantahe I spoke to told of various cases in which the

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28 A local government official, at that time appointed by the government from among the residents of a secteur.
representatives of the Tribunal turned up unexpectedly for field visits without consulting them, suggesting that the Tribunal had been corrupted by one of the parties. The fact that procedures took a long time was another reason for people to search a local solution. On community level, cases could often be decided upon in a few weeks time.

Most people I interviewed spoke with a lot of respect about the Bashingantahe. Nonetheless, respect had eroded over the years. The Bashingantahe frequently experienced that in particular wealthy people refused to appear in front of them. It was also difficult to call forward people that had moved to live in town, but still possessed a family plot in the community. At the same time, their task has increasingly grown more difficult. Though they were still considered for their memory of the exact outlay of plots, the (double) claims about the former properties of refugees often went beyond their expertise. According to one of the Bashingantahe we spoke, the Commission National de Bashingantahe had advised them to leave the resolution of such disputes and to await state legislation, in the meantime calming down the parties. Some Bashingantahe accounted of their efforts to convince occupants that people that had fled in 1972 should be given the chance to return to their former properties, and to demand the local authorities for land in compensation.29 Rather than just deciding a verdict on the basis of a set of customary rules, the Bashingantahe in southern Rumonge tried to consider the moral rightness of particular solutions for land disputes. In some cases, as a result they managed to achieve consensus rather than a verdict.

Apart from the Tribunal and the Bashingantahe, to deal with disputes, people could also approach the Commission J&P, set up in the parish of Kigwena in 1997, or one of its sub-commissions in the neighbourhoods. Members of this commission were elected by the people from the community, and some had received a four-day formation, organized by the Diocese, covering themes such as evangelization, and juridical procedures. In contrast to the Bashingantahe, the Commission J&P was not acknowledged by law, and could only propose solutions or give advice. Hence, if a case could not be solved by the commission it needed to proceed to the Bashingantahe at sector or zone level first, before being put forward to the Tribunal the Résidence. The disputes in which the Commissions J&P intervened ranged from settling fights and establishing compensation for crops destroyed by a neighbours’ goat to the precise location of the borders of a parcel, a dispute between two brothers from polygamous marriages about the inheritance of their fathers plot, and disputes about a fraudulent claim of ownership of a parcel. The Commission J&P worked from the same principles as the Bashingantahe (e.g. parties need to come voluntarily to ask their advice) and treat the same type of cases. Both exist of people considered to be ‘honourable persons’: strikingly, the people we interviewed referred to the Commission J&P as Bashingantahe Amahoro (‘peace’).

In comparison to the other case study communities, the Commissions J&P of southern Rumonge appeared as rather strong and capable to take responsibilities regarding land disputes. This had a lot to do with the fact that the parish priest was very much involved in the commission, and frequently called them together. Nonetheless, they were dependent on the Bashingantahe for the confirmation or

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29 Interview with three Bashingantahe, 16 March 2005.
enforcement of the resolutions they convened, while if needed, only the Bashingantahe could forward cases to the Tribunal de Résidence. In practice, the number of cases solved by the Commission J&P was small. Still, there was a preference among community members to first approach the Commission J&P, as their services were entirely free. Formally, the Bashingantahe also worked voluntarily and no longer demanded agatutu (the drinks and food traditionally provided for by the parties in dispute to celebrate the reconciliation) for their services, in line with the prescriptions of the national council of Bashingantahe. In practice, however, an exception was made in southern Rumonge for the resolution of land disputes and disputes about houses. And while in principle people in dire need would still be exempted, poor people in southern Rumonge pointed out that the payment has been an obstacle for them to consult the Bashingantahe. The fact that the Commission J&P was working voluntarily and did not ask any remuneration had resulted in friction with certain Bashingantahe. At the same time, in several cases the Bashingantahe and the Commission J&P worked closely together, with a number of Bashingantahe having become member of the Commission J&P.

What about the possibilities of the local institutions to deal with the land conflicts that had emerged with the return of refugees? In southern Rumonge, the violence of 1993 had not resulted in many refugees and those that had fled could easily recuperate their properties, because the law was clear: the new occupants had to leave. Even if there were disputes, the Bashingantahe or the local authorities managed to solve most of those amicably. More difficult were conflicts related to the return of the 1972 refugees. In the case of land of refugees that had been illegitimately occupied by neighbours or family members, sometimes solutions were found, and in the absence of clear legislation on how to deal with those complex cases, compromises could be achieved between the different claimants, such as a re-division of property. Nonetheless, as the Bashingantahe at colline level had no means at their disposal to force the people concerned into process or the execution of their verdict, it also often failed. Moreover, local conflict resolution mechanisms (Commission J&P, Bashingantahe at secteur level) had no solution for the expropriation by the state development programmes. Though they could come up with creative solutions (such as the division of properties between claimants), those were considered temporary, waiting for national legislation that would indicate a preferred line of action.

Neither could the local authorities in Rumonge deal with those issues. They acknowledged the need for proper indemnification for those cases but availed of no budget for this.30 Considering the scale of the problem and the fact that in many cases competing claims were both legitimate the communal authorities believed that the only solution was resettling people on other plots. However, resettlement at the commune level was already problematic as in Rumonge commune no governmental properties were available any more for distribution.31 Moreover, it was expected to become more difficult with the increase in returnees and accompanying claims. The

30 Interview with the conseiller des affaires sociales, commune Rumonge, 10 March 2005.
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authorities had thus compiled a list of those people in dire need of reinstallation and filed this with CNRS. CNRS had started measuring out parcels on the limited *terres domaniales* still available in some communities in Rumonge. However, implementation of reinstallation was pending, while it was already clear, that the allocation of those lands would only solve the problem of a limited few. 32 In addition, the communal authorities were contemplating resettling people on parts of the land that had been rearranged under the PIA scheme, including parts that had already been attributed. Local residents pointed out that this would result in even more cases of double reclamation: by those that had lost land through the PIA programme, as well as by those that received land through the scheme and would now lose it to the settlement program.

The existence of several councils of *Bashingantabe* at different levels, as well as the presence of a relatively strong *Commission J&P* provided local people a variety of alternatives before addressing the *Tribunal de Résidence*. In southern Rumonge, those institutions were able to deal adequately with a variety of ‘regular’ land disputes. However, they were powerless regarding the complex situation that had emerged from the policies of individual authorities and the state resettlement schemes in the past, and could do little about the complications posed by the return of refugees and displaced.

Giteranyi *secteur*, Muyinga province

*Giteranyi secteur* is located in the centre of *Giteranyi commune* (Muyinga province), close to the borders of Rwanda and Tanzania. Since the beginning of armed conflict in 1993, the commune of Giteranyi had experienced large scale population movements. The armed confrontations and killings –especially since February 1995– had resulted in a massive exodus to Tanzania. Since 1996, people had started to repatriate. In 1997, various NGOs had programmes for peaceful cohabitation and for enticing refugees to return in the camps in Tanzania. From 1999 to September 2004, 24,656 people were registered to have returned to Giteranyi *commune*, which was almost half of the total number of returnees in the province. 33 Considering that the *commune* had about 90,000 inhabitants, this implied that at least one in four people had been in refuge. In Giteranyi *secteur*, only about one in ten people had dared to stay during the crisis. 34 Those that had not fled had moved out of the valleys to settle around town. While many of those had returned at the time of fieldwork, several people had preferred to stay close to town. Despite NGO assistance to returnees to reconstruct their houses,

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32 Interview with the conseiller des affaires sociales, commune Rumonge, 10 March 2005.
33 Interview with the chef de commune, 29 March 2005, who was referring to data provided to him by the HCR. From 1999 until September 2004, the total number of repatriates to Muyinga province was 50,960. Overall, Muyinga is the province which received the largest numbers of returnees. Over the years 2002/2003, 32,140 people returned to the province (which represents almost a quarter of the total of 135,605 Burundian refugees.
34 Interview with the chef de quartier Giteranyi, 1 April 2005.
many returnees were still residing in temporary shelters made of sheeting or banana leaves in early 2005.

Like in southern Rumonge, there were numerous disputes about land in Giteranyi. For example, of 221 dossiers under consideration at the Tribunal de Résidence in early 2005, 160 (73%) concerned land. The majority of cases in the Tribunal files concerned inheritance. Other cases were about the illegal sale of land, about trespassing of boundaries by neighbours and relatives, disputes as a result of polygamy and divorce, and about disputed inheritance-rights of women. Of the 66 cases noted in the register of the Bashingantahe of Gisenyi secteur for the period 2002-early 2005, 25 were about the boundaries between parcels, 15 concerned the division of inherited land, 10 were about land that had been sold twice, 6 were related to polygamous marriages, and 4 were disputes resulting from orphans claiming land of their foster family. Disputes identified as frequent by community members were those resulting from polygamy, and disputes resulting from the double or illegal sale of (family) land. Despite the enormous amount of returnees, the number of returnee-related disputes brought before the conflict resolving institutions was limited.

Land disputes prevalent in the community

Since the 1980s, a lot of people from densely populated regions in Gitega, Ngozi and Kayanza settled in the community, and currently, 60% of people originate from outside. Community members explained that migrants that had grown rich invested their money in a second property, where they installed a second wife. In the experience of local residents, civil war violence had particularly resulted in male casualties. With women outnumbering men, polygamous marriages had become increasingly accepted. Polygamy was also related to histories of exile in the refugee camps. Often women and children were the first to return home from the refugee camps in Tanzania, even if the situation was still rather insecure, while men stayed behind, as the risk to be killed appeared to be larger for men. Consequently, in the meantime several men had taken a second wife in the refugee camps. Upon their return, they had to take care of two families. Women could do little to prevent their husbands from marrying a second wife, dependent as many of them were of the land their husbands provided them for cultivation. While in southern Rumonge disputes resulting from polygamous marriages emerged among brothers of different mothers claiming inheritance rights, in Giteranyi the disputes were rather between a man and an abandoned wife. For whatever reason, a husband would divorce one of his wives and send her away. A dispute about land would then arise as a consequence of the

35 Interview with the president of the Tribunal de la Residence, Giteranyi, 29 March 2005.
37 Interview with the administrateur de commune, 29 March 2005; see also République du Burundi and PNUD/UNOPS (2002) Province de Mayinga...
divorce – as the husband considered the land as his property, he would not allow the woman to claim part of it.

An important type of dispute in Giteranyi evolved from land that had been sold twice to different persons. Those disputes were directly related to the flight of people during the crisis. In some cases, upon return the original buyer would find his land occupied by someone else, which had also paid for it and hence claimed rights to the land. In other cases, a person who had sold his land before going in exile would return before the buyer and sell the land again. A related type of disputes concerned those cases in which people that bought land before the crisis, upon their return from exile found the land taken back by the original owner or his children. Some occupants claimed that the sale of land never had taken place. In other instances, they considered that the conditions of sale had been unfair, for instance, because they had had to sell out of distress.

Striking in those disputes was that many were between relatives rather than between strangers. Many severe disputes had resulted from the sale of family property in the absence of relatives. The convention in Giteranyi was that to sell family land one needed to consult and get permission from the other family members, including the women of the family. Nonetheless, in the absence of other family members due to exile, some people had negated this custom. Upon the return of the remainder of the family, disputes evolved with the new buyer, who could be considered the legitimate owner, but was often accused of having been aware of the cunningness of the procedure. Particularly vulnerable to such manipulations of family land were orphans. It turned out very difficult for orphans to make claims to family land in case their father's land had been sold by relatives. They would sometimes temporarily receive land from their stepfathers, but this implied that they often ended up landless, considering that upon the death of the stepfather inheritance of step-children were often disputed by his natural children.

During fieldwork in Giteranyi, we encountered several cases of women that got in conflict with people that tried to claim ownership of their land, apparently speculating on the inability of those women to resist their claims. The women concerned were all widows. This practice appeared to occur rather frequently. For example, a dispute identified by community members as being about the division of inheritance among two widows and their two cousins, turned out to be an example in which those cousins had abused the hospitality of those women and refused to leave a plot temporarily given to them. In some examples, the women concerned finally lost their land, which shows the particular vulnerability of women. In several of those disputes, severe threats made women refrain from bringing their cases before the conflict resolving institutions.

A tragic example of such a case was Bernadette, a widow who returned from exile in Tanzania in 1998, and whose neighbour Gilbert since long aspired to buy her property. Nonetheless, Bernadette refused him repetitively, as the plot concerned was her only property. Then, one day, Gilbert accused Bernadette of stealing bananas from his plot and requested her to give him her land in compensation. Bernadette felt very threatened by her neighbour, gave in and lost her land. Although they were aware of what had happened, the Bashingantahe did not intervene, as Bernadette did not dare to bring the case forward to them.
In general, women had a weak position in making claims to land. According to custom, women get access to the land of her husband through marriage. Upon the death of the husband, brothers in law sometimes reclaimed the land, leaving a woman landless. And while according to state law single women could inherit from their father in the same way as male heirs, these rights were often not acknowledged locally. In Giteranyi, landlessness was considered a potential source of conflict. Some of the earlier disputes –such as the sale of properties in the absence of family members, or the double sale of land– resulted in landlessness of one of the parties involved. Again, vulnerable and poor people in particular turned out to be at the losing end, while losing land implied a loss of opportunities for making a living and thereby marginalizing them even further. Several people lost their land because they had lost or never had owned property titles, and no witnesses could be found that had been present at the sale.

We encountered a woman whose husband had bought land in 1991. During their flight from the crisis, the couple lost their papers. The original owner of the plot got to know about this misfortune, and started claiming that he had never sold the plot to the couple in the first place. In this, he succeeded.

Landlessness was also a mayor problem among the about 200 households living in Giteranyi belonging to the Batwa community. The Batwa had very limited access to land, having traditionally been more involved in pottery and only having turned to cultivation since the area was hit by bad harvests and a famine in 2002. Several people in Giteranyi blamed the Batwa themselves for their limited access to land, having opportunistically sold their properties, even during the famine. In the interviews, members of this community showed a strong appreciation of landed property, but found it difficult to buy land, as it was almost impossible for them to find paid jobs, due to the stigma attached to their group.

Various interviewees blamed the many disputes around land in Giteranyi on the high number of returnees in the community. Reference was made to disputes such as the modification of the boundaries of parcels, the sale of land by family members (or those that claimed to be family members) or the double sale of a plot in the absence of the owner, disputes as a result of second (polygamous) marriages in the refugee camps in Tanzania, or the occupation of plots by others. At the same time, many of the land disputes as experienced by returnees were not very different from those experienced by people that had not gone into exile, as was confirmed by the Bashingantahe of Giteranyi secteur. They observed how fluctuations in the number of disputes related to fluctuations in the number of returnees. Nonetheless, the disputes

38 Meeting with 60 members of the Batwa community, Giteranyi, 2 April 2005.
39 19 out of the 30 cases assisted by AFJB concerned repatriates. Nonetheless, within the commune there was some regional variation. According to the president of the Tribunal de la Residence, in the northern, most densely populated part of the commune (Ruso zone) many conflicts that were brought forward to the Tribunal were linked to inheritance and divorce (and hence often also concern land), and not so many to repatriation, as the number of repatriates was considerably less than in the southern Giteranyi and Muyango zones. Interview with the president of the Tribunal de la Residence, Giteranyi, 29 March 2005.
40 Interview with the Bashingantahe of Giteranyi secteur, 31 March 2005.
experienced in particular by returning refugees, such as disputes about the boundaries of plots or illegal occupation, were rather routinely resolved.

Nonetheless, the re-installation of the large numbers of people returning from Tanzania gave a lot of problems. As most refugees had fled Giteranyi in 1994 and 1995, disputes about the occupation of their land by others were much less frequent than in southern Rumonge, where refugees had been away for a very long time. In Giteranyi, most people agreed that occupants had no rights and should leave. However, many returning refugees originating from other regions in the province settled in Giteranyi town. Before the war, the community had grown wealthy from cross-border trade with Tanzania, and new settlers hoped to start business here. Displaced and the first refugees to return had been installed on plots of state land along the road towards Muyinga town. At the time of fieldwork, this strip of public land was fully occupied, and no state properties were available anymore for re-installation. So far, the demand for land had not yet resulted in disputes, but the authorities were afraid that they might soon occur. In Giteranyi, the return of refugees thus precipitated land problems – not because returnees could not reclaim their original properties, but because of economic migration.

Conflict resolving mechanisms in Giteranyi

As in southern Rumonge, people in Giteranyi could approach several local institutions before proceeding to the tribunals. Giteranyi had a Commission J&P, which had its office at the main church of Giteranyi parish, which liaises with sub-commissions in each of the 14 minor churches of the parish. Some members of the Commission J&P had received training at the Diocese of Muyinga in issues such as mediation, conflict resolution, and family law, and tried to communicate what he learned to the other members of the commission. Responsibility for the resolution of disputes was primarily with the commission at parish level. In the sub-commissions, members of the Commission J&P preached reconciliation, and assisted in the social reinstallation of returnees, for example by informing them of the current situation of the country, and helping to rebuild their houses. A few members of the Commission J&P participated in the council of the Bashingantahe. But while the focus of the Commission J&P was on advising and reconciliation, and references were made to good Christian behaviour to convince people to reconcile, the Bashingantahe could also decide on cases and put social pressure on the parties to accept the solution. Further, the Commission J&P was in the first place seen as something of the Catholic Church and hence for Catholics mainly. The Commission J&P was said to assist in many disputes within families and between neighbours, but their role in land disputes seemed to be very limited. The Commission J&P itself could provide only two examples of disputes solved by them on their own: one about the double sale of land, and another about the boundaries of a parcel. Often, their role in land disputes was rather in calling the parties together. The

41 Interview with the administrator of the commune, Giteranyi, 29 March 2005.
42 Interview with 5 representatives of the J&P Commission, 2 April 2005
43 Interview with the Bashingantahe of Giteranyi secteur, 31 March 2005.
commission had merely a role of 'watchdog', alerting others—the Bashingantahe, the chef de secteur—to take action if a dispute occurred.

In Giteranyi, the Bashingantahe were organized at the level of the colline and the secteur, the latter of which was authorized to give the papers necessary to approach the Tribunal. While the chef de secteur sometimes participated in meetings of the Bashingantahe or accompanied them to visit disputed plots, this was not standard procedure. He could not participate in the deliberations, nor overpower the decisions of the Bashingantahe. Consequently, the Bashingantahe functioned rather independently of the authorities. In general, the Bashingantahe were able to bring disputes about the boundaries of plots to a solution acceptable to both parties. According to the Mushингantahe keeping the register of the Bashingantahe only one out of ten of such cases needed be forwarded to the Tribunal. Disputes about inheritance rights—e.g. concerning the inheritance by adopted children, or the refusal of the children of a deceased person to acknowledge a gift of land by their father to somebody—could be solved by the Bashingantahe in case witnesses of those arrangements could be found. The resolution of such cases was merely a matter of properly distributing land, and did not involve the payment of reimbursement. The Bashingantahe could often take care of the redistribution of the inheritance, for example when one relative felt disadvantaged. In fact, all those cases were the Bashingantahe were successful were examples or extensions of the traditional responsibilities of the Bashingantahe.

According to the Bashingantahe themselves, difficult cases for them were disputes between members of the same family. Those included cases of the sale of family land while some of the relatives were still in exile. The Bashingantahe preferred that in those cases the land returned to the original owner. Nonetheless, this required that reimbursement was paid to the buyer of the land, who often did not want to forfeit the land. In some cases the family had no money for this reimbursement. It was often difficult to prove to which extent the second buyer had been aware that the rest of the family had not been consulted in the sale. In a similar way, cases of the double sale of land were difficult to solve by the Bashingantahe, in particular when both sales had taken place without witnesses. Often neither of the parties wanted or was able to accept repayment. Cases related to inheritance matters were also difficult, in particular when involving claims by women. Many disputes resulting from the illegal sale of land, and related to polygamy, divorce, and the inheritance by women thus ended up at the Tribunal.

Despite the challenges to the Bashingantahe to deal with such conflicts, people still preferred to approach them, as the outcomes of cases in the Tribunal were very unpredictable, or cases were not concluded. People observed for example that when land disputes resulting from polygamous marriages were brought forward to the Tribunal, the outcome was not sure. Polygamous marriages are not acknowledged under Burundian law. Thus it depended a lot on the circumstances taken into consideration by the judge whether claims of additional wives would be taken into consideration. This made people hesitant to approach the Tribunal with such cases.

In one case, Révocate, a second wife had been chased from her house by the husband to make space for his first wife. When the verdict of the Tribunal to return the land to Révocate had not been properly implemented, she approached the Tribunal anew. This time, the Tribunal decided that Révocate was to return to her
mother, as she was “occupying the house and land of the legal wife”, and that the children had to go to the husband. At the time of fieldwork, rather than trying to reclaim her land, Révocate was now trying to reclaim her children.

Even if a person knew he was in his right, this guaranteed no success at the Tribunal. Even though the winning party was not charged for the procedure in court, he often needed to incur considerable costs to implement the verdict. Various interviewees calculated that a field visit by the Tribunal could easily cost more than the judgment itself. Hence, a favourable judgment would not automatically imply a favourable outcome - if the winning party could not pay the field-visit of the judges, the judgement would not be implemented. Further, community members observed a practice of rich people that tried to slow down procedures (whether or not through corruption), and otherwise continued appealing at the Tribunal in the provincial capital. Through such practices, they forced their opponents to make large expenses, while a final outcome to the dispute was delayed tremendously, and in the meantime they profited from the status quo. They speculated on the incapacity of their opponent to appear before court, as a result of which his case would never proceed any further. Finally, in almost half of the examples examined in detail that had proceeded to the Tribunal de Résidence, people suspected or alleged that corruption had played a decisive role. Interviewees often made accusations of corruption in case they did not agree with a verdict of the Tribunal or the Bashingantahe. However, when considering only those cases in which we could more or less confirm the account of the interviewees through additional interviews with other community members, the incidence of disputable conclusions by the Tribunal de Résidence in Giteranyi was high in comparison to the other case-studies.

In several cases, the Bashingantahe thus served as a first instance, before approaching the Tribunal. Nonetheless, like in southern Rumonge, people experienced that its authority had eroded. Community members experienced that especially rich parties in disputes felt no moral obligations to follow the decision of the Bashingantahe. They were not interested in the fairness of the judgment of the Bashingantahe, but rather in winning the case. Cases involving such people invariably proceeded to the tribunal. Moreover, the Bashingantahe seemed gradually to have had lost part of the knowledge base required to properly fulfill their function. Their memory was no longer reliable due to the massive displacements that had taken place over the past years. As a consequence, in the cases of double or illegitimate sale of land, the Bashingantahe had come to attach a lot of importance to official land titles, and the presence of those seemed often decisive in their judgments. This resulted in that people which had never had land titles in the first place, or had lost their land titles in the chaos of exile, could no longer resort to the Bashingantahe. It turned out that some people even speculated on other people’s lack of papers. By producing land titles, people could win disputes resulting from the illegal sale of land, which might have been concluded in a different way if the Bashingantahe would have relied less on the official papers. Rather than a local institution that had an advantage in availing of local specific knowledge to deal with land disputes, the Bashingantahe increasingly turned into

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44 The occurrence of this practice was also confirmed by the president of the Tribunal de Résidence, Interview march 29 2005
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a formal institute that based its judgement on state regulation. This often turned out to be at the disadvantage of people vulnerable to the machinations of others. At the same time, the Bashingantahe were not able to function fully as an alternative for the Tribunals, as their authority was not acknowledged by law, and they were unable to enforce their decisions. In the experience of several people, rather than a local alternative to the state juridical system, the institution gradually transformed into an extra and costly step, prolonging the way to justice, at the disadvantage of those having limited means.

In particular women experienced that they had little to win through the Bashingantahe. Customary rights as well as conventions in Giteranyi secteur were not in favour of rights of women on land. One of the Bashingantahe argued that inheritance rights of women only contributed to the further fragmentation of land. Though the Bashingantahe had received training from their national body and an NGO on such issues, they often found it difficult to divert from conventions.

In a case of divorce of a husband and his first wife, the Bashingantahe accepted the claim of the wife to the house, but did not consider her claims to part of the land, the decision on which was left to the discretion of the husband.

While in the various examples of inheritance disputes studied the Bashingantahe were willing to give women a symbolic portion of the inheritance (in the form of igikemanyi, a traditional gift of land to daughters to express affection), they were never awarded an equal share. In case the Bashingantahe accepted a claim by a woman to part of the inheritance, they could not enforce solutions if those were refused by her male relatives.45

Discussion

The case studies make clear that it is difficult to generalize about the nature and origins of current land disputes in Burundi, as well as about the nature of conflicts related to the return of refugees and displaced. Each community studied had its own particularities in the types and characteristics of disputes that were frequent, and each community used its own classifications of existing disputes. Nonetheless, in both cases it was clear that land problems are not just a temporary problem related to returnees, but largely form part of normality.

The continuity of land disputes

The case of southern Rumonge brings out that returnee related conflicts cannot easily be separated from regular land disputes. Part of the land problems in southern Rumonge are indeed between returnees and those people that have stayed on and occupied their lands. At the same time, part of the land problem is the result of state policies in the past that have affected properties of both returnees and on-staying population. And while some conflicts may indeed have an ethnic dimension, many of

the disputes studied rather involved relatives or community peers as contesting parties. While in Giteranyi the return of refugees was related to the prevalence of land disputes, non-returnee related disputes were destabilizing people’s livelihoods and community relations as well. Many disputes were primarily of an intra-family character. The reinstallation of returnees in Giteranyi was not yet a problem but posed a feature threat since most state land was now distributed. However, this threat resulted from urbanization rather than from the return of refugees.

The return of refugees thus contributes to the occurrence of disputes about land in Burundi, or intensifies land disputes. Nonetheless, in many cases histories of exile and return are a factor rather than the determinants of dispute. Often, land problems have a much more structural character, and are related to a diversity of factors, such as the limited size of family property to be distributed, customary regulations that do not allow women to inherit, the cultural value attached to family property even by people having moved to the capital, conflicting regulation regarding land, and manipulations by representatives of the state.

Interventions to enhance local dispute resolving capacity can only work when it is recognized that land disputes are part of normality, and not just a temporary problem related to returnees. Programmes focussing on returnees only may come to be perceived as predisposed and even ethnically biased, as land-spoliation and expropriation have been experienced not only by those that had been in refuge but by both ethnic groups. Such perceptions might consequently obstruct the legitimacy of dispute resolving institutions one aims to achieve. Focussing on returnees only will imply that many other victims of land disputes will not be addressed.

Furthermore, if land problems are structural, the question is whether it is enough to focus on the resolution of individual land disputes. The structural character of land disputes points to a number of underlying problems, including land shortage and lack of alternative livelihood options. In Africa, Burundi has extremely high population densities (297 inhabitants/km² on average) and over 80% of rural households have less than 1.5 hectares of land (Leisz 1998: 149; Huggins 2004: 3; Kamungi et al. 2004: 1), while 15% of the population is landless (Nkurunziza 2002, in: Jackson 2003: 8). Nonetheless, the majority of the population is still depending on agriculture for making a living (Sabimbona 1998: 3; Oketch and Polzer 2002: 120; Kamungi et al. 2004: 1). Various studies directly relate the occurrence of land disputes to land scarcity and the degradation of cultivable land. Land scarcity contributes to competing claims on land between livestock keepers and cultivators, or between peasants and the state. Regional migration of landless peasants in search of arable land has resulted in

46 In its 2005 country wide inventory of land disputes in Burundi (Ndarugirire 2005), the Burundian Catholic organization CED-Caritas identified that about 17 % of land disputes were related to repatriation. If we take into account that at the time of the inventory probably only one fifth of Burundian refugees had returned, this figure is indeed high. At the same time, figures from the CED-Caritas study suggest that in fact only about 5 % of returnees are experiencing land conflicts, though there is quite some regional variation, with Bururi and Bujumbura Mairie provinces experiencing high numbers of returnee-related conflicts in comparison to the number of repatriates. The study gives no information on the duration of particular dispute types or the difficulties in resolving particular dispute types.

increasing prices of land, and encroachment on forest zones. New arrivals get in fierce competition for land with the original inhabitants (Oketch and Polzer 2002: 123-130). But land scarcity is not just a migration or inter-community issue: more regularly it is an issue within families (see e.g. CARE et al. 2004: 30/31). In one of the communities where we did fieldwork, disputes about the inheritance and the boundaries of plots were locally understood as directly related to the decreasing availability of land. In several families, the equal division of the family property was no longer possible as this would result in unrealistically small plots.

Many community members observed that land disputes were seldom solved in an amicable way, due to the importance of land for making a living. Land is such a basic asset in Burundi, that compromising has become very difficult. Various studies have pointed out that conflicts about land can turn very serious, with people resorting to witchcraft and physical violence against each other (e.g. CARE et al. 2004: 30), and in some cases murder. In several of the cases we studied, parties were often not much interested in whether justice was being done or not, but rather in continuing their case until they had won access to land. The final outcome of those cases thus depended more on the financial capacities to proceed or to slow down a case, than on the local legitimacy or legal sustainability of their claim. Hence, a real structural solution to land disputes requires more than a functioning judiciary (in all its forms) to deal with the disputes that inevitably come up. It requires a good and working land and economic policy, providing livelihoods outside agriculture, thereby reducing the dependency on land for making a living, and thus decreasing the potential of land disputes to occur.

The responsibilities of local institutions and the state

In the experience of Burundian and international development organizations, state institutions in the past had been incapable to deal with land disputes. The legal system was considered inaccessible, corrupt and unfair for the poor. Many organizations thus considered a need to strengthen local dispute resolving institutions that were seen as closer to the communities, better adapted to the particularities of conflict, and more capable to deal even-handedly with local disputes. In particular, those institutions would be able to contribute to local reconciliation between returnees and the on-staying population, and find compromises for the disputes that evolve.

In some cases, local institutions indeed effectively mediated in disputes between refugees and people that had occupied their land. This was particularly the case in disputes resulting from the return of refugees that had fled during the 1990s. The case studies pointed out, however, that local conflict resolution mechanisms could deal only to a limited extent with the more complicated land disputes regarding the properties of 1972 refugees. In southern Rumonge, to some of the returnee related conflicts, (temporary) local solutions could be found. In particular the long-drawn and highly politicized disputes involving those that had fled in the 1970s surpassed the capacities of the local institutions, including the Tribunaux. Those disputes have

48 In an enquiry by the Commission Episcopale Justice and Paix conducted in January 2004 it was observed in the Diocese of Bururi that land conflicts could have a deadly result. Similar cases were observed in issues of *Au Coeur d’Afrique*, a publication of the Centre de Recherche sur l’Incultration et le Développement (CRID), Bujumbura.
become particularly intractable through state policies in the past and failure of the present government to pronounce itself on the issue.

Various other studies also point to the importance of manipulations by representatives of the state in the development of local land problems. They note other and more recent cases of state seizure of land, where land taken for reasons of ‘public interest’ ended up in the hands of high government officials and prominent businessmen (Oketch and Polzer 2002; ICG 2003a). “Land is one of the currencies of patronage” (Huggins 2004: 3), and high positions and power do open the way for land grabbing by individuals. A study by three NGOs in Ngozi province (CARE et al. 2004) identifies a whole series of manipulations of land at community level resulting in disputes. Those included cases where private land was expropriated for the construction of community services without the promised indemnification being paid. In some cases the project for which the land was taken was not implemented and the land was given to members of the administration. People have also been expropriated without indemnification, to make place for others as part of villagization programmes in the 1970s and 1980s. Many controversies involved the attribution or sale of state lands. In cases where displaced had been settled on state lands, the status of those lands remained unclear, and displaced started selling such lands.

Many conflicts involving returnees are thus not so much a local affair among returnees and on-staying populations, but rather between community members and the state, that has been ineffective to address land problems in the past or even has created them. The question can be raised whether local institutions are at all responsible to deal with the resulting disputes. In the case of southern Rumonge, it was clear that the Bashingantabe were unable to deal with the double legitimate claims of returnees and occupants to particular plots, the injustice done to those who lost land through expropriation, and the reinstallation of returnees. In some cases, through mediation, the Bashingantabe managed to achieve an effective compromise between the different claimants, but in most cases their power was limited. Those cases required political solutions at national level, rather than enhancing the conflict resolution capacities of local institutions. There was thus a need for development organizations to look not only at local capacities for reconciliation and finding compromises for returnee related disputes, but also to be concerned about strategies at the national level for compensation and indemnification and the search of alternatives to agriculture for making a living in rural areas.

Local dispute resolution institutions and the protection of vulnerable people

An important rationale for Burundian and international organizations to promote and support local dispute resolution institutions was that those would be fairer towards poor and vulnerable people than the formal juridical system. The case studies presented in this paper show, however, that strengthening local dispute resolution institutions did not result in better protection of vulnerable people.

A significant finding from the case studies was that particular groups of people (widows and orphans) were especially vulnerable to machinations of people trying to appropriate their land. Often those vulnerable people were the victims of their own relatives. The case studies pointed out that in many instances the Bashingantabe could
not effectively help the victims in those cases. The failure of the Bashingantabe to protect vulnerable people resulted from the fact that the institution had lost a lot of its authority in the communities. According to state law, the Bashingantabe had to be consulted before dispute cases could be forwarded to the Tribunals. Nonetheless, the Bashingantabe could not enforce solutions, and could only give advice to conflicting parties. The outcomes proposed by them were easily circumvented by parties in the conflict that did not respect their authority. In particular rich people easily surpassed the institution at the disadvantage of poor people.

In other cases, individual Bashingantabe turned out to be corruptible and were predisposed towards richer people. In many cases, the institution was not accessible due to the costs this would imply for the parties in conflict. A case in point was the traditional gifts donated to the Bashingantabe (the agatutu). Though often not regarded as a prescript, in effect it is a social obligation, a traditional part of the ceremony of reconciliation. In some cases the Bashingantabe themselves explicitly demanded a payment for their assistance in land disputes. Otherwise, wealthy people eagerly responded to the invitation of the Bashingantabe to bring forward some drinks by offering a large amount of beer and food. In case the other party did not respond in the same measure, this was seen as an insult of the institution, having consequences for the outcome. This put poorer parties at a disadvantage. Though ideally the Bashingantabe had to respond to any injustice they observed in their community, in practice they often only came into action when formally asked. Again this was often at the disadvantage of vulnerable people who refrained from doing so.

In particular, the Bashingantabe could not assure the protection of vulnerable women. While state law acknowledged the rights of women to inherit under certain conditions, in customary tenure women often only had limited possibilities to inherit land on their own (see also Sabimbona 1998; CARE et al. 2004; Kamungi et al. 2004). In several cases surveyed in the communities involving claims made by women, it was clear that most Bashingantabe had a sense of official regulations protecting women's rights, but often could not reconcile themselves with those. They considered that it was not of their concern to apply official legislation, and referred women to the state system. This put women at a serious disadvantage when their cases were being brought forward to the Bashingantabe.

Efforts to strengthen the Bashingantabe at the community level often focused on strengthening their basic knowledge of state law, land titling, and the rights of women. It is difficult to arrive at unambiguous conclusions on the effects of such interventions. On the one hand, enhancing their legal knowledge could increase the security of women and other vulnerable groups. If the Bashingantabe were knowledgeable about official state legislation, this would enhance their local authority and motivate people to bring their cases to them. They would know that the opinion of the Bashingantabe would correspond to that of the Tribunal, but might be faster, cheaper and taking more account of the local particularities of the dispute. In some instances, however, harmonization of state and local law also had less favourable consequences. In the case of Giteranyi, for example, the Bashingantabe had come to attach high importance to land titles in their judgments, rather than considering local entitlements to land, and the regular and irregular ways through which the properties in dispute had been acquired. In other cases, the Bashingantabe were more concerned with the legitimacy of
a child/orphan/woman and hence its/her rights to inherit, rather than with the question of how justice could be done to the individuals concerned. Interventions to enhance the legal knowledge of the Bashingantabe thus risked a diminishing importance of intimate knowledge of local circumstances, vulnerabilities, and local considerations of justice in their judgements. Strengthening the Bashingantabe thus had differentiated impacts, and did not necessarily guarantee the protection of vulnerable people.

Several development organizations established new institutions at the local level, amongst others because they were worried about the corruption and unfairness of the Bashingantabe in resolving disputes. Again, the question was what those interventions implied for vulnerable people.

In the case study communities not much could be observed of the alternative conflict resolving mechanisms introduced by international and Burundian NGOs. In most communities, they were not widely known, and their interventions were limited in number. We have focussed in particular on the Commissions J&P of the Catholic Church. In the communities studied, they represented a counter point to the formal conflict resolution mechanisms of the Tribunaux and the Bashingantabe, being considered more neutral and less demanding. Their strength was in drawing the attention of the Bashingantabe to cases of vulnerable people that were afraid to take action, while they spread knowledge on land legislation, referred people to the institutions that might solve their disputes, and contributed to discussion at the local level on what people considered just solutions for land disputes. They thus provided legal advice and orientation. However, their contribution to the actual resolution of land disputes was limited. While the institution of the Bashingantabe commanded a certain authority to deal with land disputes, the Commissions J&P depended even more on the consent of conflicting parties.

Strikingly enough, an important motivation for the CED-Caritas programme had been to strengthen alternatives for poor and vulnerable people, whose cases were not adequately addressed by the Bashingantabe and the tribunals. However, the programme was principally focussing on returnee-related land disputes. Hence, even a programme that aimed to address in particular those people that were at a disadvantage before the Bashingantabe and the tribunals missed out on many people most vulnerable to land disputes, as their disputes were not related to refuge and return.
Conclusion

Peacebuilding interventions are not just a policy response to conflict, but also a way of framing complex development problems. Framing helps to conceptualize reality in such a way that it is understandable and facilitates policy making by legitimizing particular courses of action. Efforts of (international) organizations in Burundi to enhance local capacities to resolve land disputes followed from a framing that saw returnee related land disputes as a central challenge for peacebuilding. This framing emphasized the local character of most such disputes, and underscored its ethnic dimensions. Considering the ineffectiveness and corruption of the formal juridical system, such a framing presented interventions to strengthen local dispute resolving institutions as the most effective strategy to address land disputes between returnees and on-staying population.

However, this framing directed attention away from other dimensions of land disputes in Burundi and possible responses to it. Both case studies highlighted that land disputes were not just a temporary problem related to returnees, and that there was continuity between conflict-related and regular land disputes in Burundi. Enhancing local dispute resolving mechanisms only makes sense when recognizing this structural character of the land problem. Many local disputes required first and foremost solutions at the political level. Moreover, local dispute resolving mechanisms could neither guarantee the protection of vulnerable people –both returnees and people involved in more regular land disputes– that was not assured in the formal juridical system. A focus on the vulnerability of returnees neglects that in reality other groups are much more vulnerable. Finally, the importance attributed in this framing to the ethnic character of land conflict was beside the point. Most actual land disputes were between relatives, rather than between strangers or people of another ethnic group. Some land disputes may indeed have gained an ethnic dimension, but this resulted from state interventions, rather than from local ethnic antagonism.

The policies to address returnee related land disputes developed at the height of humanitarian activities and on the threshold of the massive return of refugees, and clearly carry that stamp. In 2005, though a transition was being made towards more developmental approaches, many interventions in Burundi were still of a humanitarian character. Framing land disputes as a returnee problem was in line with the sense of urgency present in many interventions at that time. The question is thus, to what extent the interpretation of events informed responses rather than the other way around. The type of interventions that international and local organizations were able to provide might well have framed land disputes as an urgent problem related to the return of refugees. After all, many organizations working in Burundi had experience with resettling returning refugees, strengthening community reconciliation processes, and enhancing local capacities for conflict resolution. Humanitarian agencies familiar with the return of refugees were ready with their solutions.

The challenge to Burundian and international organizations alike is to move beyond such simplifications of local conflict situations, and to consider how support to local conflict resolving institutions could be accompanied by responses to the more structural character of land disputes.
Afterword

In the summer of 2007, two years after the fieldwork for this chapter, various international development organizations had adapted their understanding of land disputes in Burundi to some extent. They underlined the long-term character of disputes, and had set up alternative development interventions, such as diversification of crops, and searching alternatives for rural livelihoods. Still, many international interventions were of a short term nature, focussing on the training of conflict resolving institutions at the local level to solve disputes. Framing land disputes in terms of returning refugees had been replaced by a framing that interpreted land disputes as primarily resulting from the lack of or contradictions in state legislation (see Ouedraogo et al. 2007). The question remains to what extent such an approach would effectively deal with the structural character of land disputes.
“Estamos muriendo luchando” – “we are fighting to death”, observed a member of an association of ex-labourers of a finca (large landholding), down south in Guatemala. His association was deeply involved in a legal procedure to obtain land in compensation for improper payment of wages and dismissals in the early 1980s. At that time, Guatemala had been in the middle of a civil war, and those daring to protest had had to fear for their lives. When I spoke to this person in May 2006, ten years after the Guatemala peace agreements and 25 years after their dismissal, violence was long over. Now, one after the other, the members of the association were dying of old age - before their legal fight had come to an end. The observation by the ex-labourer underscored the long-term process of reform and societal transformation that post-conflict peacebuilding is about, and the slow changes it may imply in the lives of normal people. To those ex-labourers conflict was far from over.

Current conventions present peacebuilding as a long-term process of transforming a society, with neither clear beginnings nor endings (Goodhand and Hulme 1999). The signing of a peace agreement does not automatically imply an end to the societal conflicts that initially caused violence. Moreover, there may be a lot of continuity
between situations characterized as civil war and ‘normal’ development (Keen 2001; Richards 2005; Cramer 2006). Post-conflict development may be rather violent in itself, while peacetime crime may claim more casualties than wartime fighting (Cramer 2006). Though direct violence may come to an end, structural violence may continue in the form of marginalization or exploitation (Galtung 1996/2003).

Hence, what do the end of violence and the signing of peace agreements imply for the roles, policies and everyday practices of civil-society organizations? This chapter explores this question by looking at civil-society organizations in Guatemala after the 1996 peace agreements. In particular, it looks at how Guatemalan civil-society organizations deal with agrarian conflict. The chapter underscores the difficulty for peacebuilding organizations to transform, but also points out how organizational change is strongly influenced by the pace and progress of wider societal transformation. What does this imply for international support to civil society?

Ten years after the Guatemala peace agreements, the question is whether they have resulted in political and social change. Hailed as exemplary peace agreements, including a detailed agenda for far-reaching political and social reform, the balance of their effects is mixed. Optimists see enormous changes in the economic outlook of the country, and highlight how discrimination and social exclusion of the largely indigenous Maya population has diminished and their political participation increased. Significant institutional changes have been achieved regarding human rights (see Azpuru 2006). Critics underline how poverty, inequality, and the lack of effective law enforcement have made Guatemala one of the most violent countries in Latin America, how the human-rights situation in local communities remains deplorable, and point out that the major part of the peace agreements has not effectively been taken up (see e.g. Preti 2002). Many themes in the agreements in practice proved difficult to manage or plan (such as public participation in policy making) or remain interpretable in different ways, while it appears difficult to establish capable institutions to accomplish the changes proposed (MINUGUA 2000). More generally, the limited success in implementation is attributed to a lack of political will of government actors that have been pressurized into accepting agreements with no roots in Guatemalan politics. For long, various members of the government regarded them even as compromises and claimed they had no legal basis. On the other hand, their limited implementation may partially be blamed on the international community that has done little to enforce their accomplishment (Leonhardt et al. 2002: 2).

This chapter explores what this slow progress of the peace agreements implies for the practices of civil-society organizations, by looking at the efforts of Guatemalan civil society to address agrarian conflict. Agrarian conflict and related economic inequality were important issues in the 36-year civil war between the leftist, largely indigenous, guerrilla movement and the government. The 1996 peace agreements included detailed policies to restructure the unequal land-holding pattern, and enforcement of labour laws (Salvesen 2002; AI 2006). To many civil-society organizations in Guatemala I interviewed, the resolution of agrarian conflict was a critical condition for arriving at a lasting peace in the country.

1 In 2005, this discussion was ended when the government by law decreed the fulfilment of the agreements.
However, civil-society organizations addressing agrarian conflict were divided ideologically and politically, and had enormous difficulties in redefining their roles and strategies. International and Guatemalan observers alike often pointed to the organizational incapacities and organizational problems. This chapter argues, however, that the impasse of Guatemalan civil society resulted not so much from organizational incapacities and internal problems. It was strongly related to the Guatemalan context, and the slow and partial implementation of the proposed agrarian reforms. Civil-society organizations had to deal with the fatigue of the people they served, that were heavily disappointed with the limited progress made after the initially promising peace agreements. In such a context, it was difficult to identify what were the best strategies to apply.

To illustrate the difficulties civil-society organizations had in redefining their roles in post-conflict Guatemala, the chapter considers the case of Pastoral de la Tierra de San Marcos (PTSM). PTSM is a development organization residing under the Catholic Bishop of the western Diocese of San Marcos. The organization provided assistance to groups of peasants with land conflicts about land. The case study looks in particular at the experiences of PTSM in supporting an association of former labourers of the finca San Luis Malacatán. In response to the difficult post-conflict political context, PTSM had adopted a legal approach. This approach of conforming to the juridical status quo, however, framed the conflict and interpreted justice in such a way that its final resolution did not result in the justice the members of the association expected.

This chapter is based on fieldwork from January to September 2006. From March to September, I carried out a research assignment for PTSM to systematize its strategies and practices of accompanying peasant organizations with agrarian conflicts, which included two weeks of fieldwork and follow-up visits in the communities around the finca San Luis Malacatán (see Van Leeuwen 2006). This research also coincided and contributed to efforts by PTSM to create a database on particular land conflicts, and my exploration of the legal aspects of the case is strongly influenced by the discussions we had within the team (see also Peinado 2006). Over the research period, I fully participated in the daily activities of PTSM, visiting other communities with land conflicts, and attending meetings with the peasant association, the provincial government, and CONTIERRA. The chapter further builds on visits to projects of and interviews with representatives of 32 Guatemalan organizations and 14 international organizations in Guatemala.

The evolution of Guatemalan civil society

The first cooperative movements and community organizations in Guatemala emerged in the 1960s, including labour and student unions, and peasant organizations (see Leonhardt et al. 2002: 13). Like in many other Central American countries, the Catholic Church played an important role in the development of such movements, in particular after the Second Latin American Episcopal Conference in Medellín (Colombia) in 1968, where it was decided to focus on the poor and defend the rights.
of the oppressed. In many Guatemalan parishes, Catholic Action groups were set up to organize the poor, while local priests contributed to the formation of peasant unions. However, oppression and military counterinsurgency in the late 1970s and early 1980s dealt a heavy blow to those social movements.

Over the 1980s, many new organizations were formed, including grassroots human-rights organizations, as well as new labour and peasant organizations, and indigenous movements. In contrast to the highly organized and mobilized grassroots movements of the late 1970s, those new civil organizations were issue-organizations (Sieder et al. 2002: 16), or ‘new social movements’ (Kaldor 2003). Pearce and Howell (2001) describe how since the latter half of the 1980s, Guatemalan activist organizations adopted the term civil society to create space for political discussion after armed conflict, to express their civilian character, and their longing for democracy and a renewed social order. As the guerrilla movements lacked a post-conflict political project behind which those organizations could unite, the concept of civil society helped them to create a common identity. Though some of them had roots in the resistance movements, to the organizations, ‘civil society’ represented autonomy from both political party and guerrilla. In practice, civil society came to include both popular organizations, rooted in the leftist movements, as well as cultural organizations, that focused on the ethnic dimensions of oppression and exclusion in Guatemala (Pearce and Howell 2001: 150-1).

Initially, most organizations focussed on promoting democracy and human rights, supported in this by international donors. Gradually, they also gained a role in the peace process. The Catholic Church played an important role in this (Alvarez and Prado 2002: 41). United in a Civil Society Assembly, in 1994, they participated in UN-mediated talks between the government and the guerrilla fighters. Several of the Assembly’s recommendations were reflected in the final agreements. After 1995, however, the role of the Assembly came to an end. After the peace agreements, Guatemalan organizations found it difficult to define how the envisaged societal changes should be realized, and what should be their role in this. “Fragmentation and division rather than cohesion and unity characterized the civil society of the 1990s” (Pearce and Howell 2001: 158). In the rural areas, civil society was still recovering from the loss of leadership and organizational experience due to the earlier government repression, in which many grassroots leaders, activists and intellectuals had died (Leonhardt et al. 2002: 13).

Confronted with the weaknesses of civil-society organizations, international financial and development institutions incorporated civil society strengthening in their programmes, assuming this would strengthen the peace process and contribute to economic modernization and political liberalization. However, the lack of political strategies of the organizations was not addressed (Biekart 1996; Pearce and Howell 2001). Many organizations failed to make a transition “from protest to proposal”. At the beginning of the new millennium, though still concerned with social and economic equality, movements did not manage to define their role as civil society in relation to the state in accomplishing change. While civil-society organizations often complained about the willingness of the government to include them in dialogue, the government saw civil society often had little to say when given a seat at the table (Sieder et al. 2002: 18). In addition, many organizations had lost political strength. “Many of the new
[civil-society organizations] have been successful at institution building and fundraising, but less so at developing long term strategies and concrete policy proposals” (Sieder et al. 2002: 18). Moreover, civil organizations got severely divided over how to achieve their goals, how to relate themselves to government institutions, and whom they represented. Divisions emerged among popular and cultural civil-society organizations as to the importance of the ethnic dimensions of oppression and exclusion, as well as among cultural organizations that disputed each other over whom represented the indigenous people, and whether to ally with the popular organizations (see Warren 1998; Pearce and Howell 2001: 150-1). The scarcity of resources has contributed to this competition among civil-society organizations (Sieder et al. 2002: 17).

The loss of momentum of civil society in Guatemala after the conclusion of the peace agreements and the ending of most war-related violence is not exceptional. Discussing Latin American social movements, Biekart (2005) notes how a sudden increase of social movement activity is often followed by an equally sudden downfall. Social movements may be able to mobilize large numbers of people to urge political change, but after these changes have been accomplished their support base fades rapidly (Biekart 2005: 90). Organizations that have been strong in demanding change from the government during conflict prove weak in implementing change themselves in post-conflict reconstruction. Conflict may assure a unity of purpose among civil society, which is lost after conflict, when organizations differ on how to accomplish social transformation, are divided by competition for donor funding, or affiliation to particular political parties.

Particularly relevant in the case of Guatemala is that the changing role of civil society is strongly influenced by the societal transformations actually taking place. The impasse in which civil society in Guatemala finds itself is neither an internal or relational issue of organizations, nor a problem of legitimization only. It is also about the difficulty of defining a role and strategy in a political and social context that appears flexible only to a limited extent. I demonstrate this by looking at agrarian conflict and the efforts of Guatemalan civil-society organizations to deal with it.

Conflictividad agraria in Guatemala

Contemporary disputes about land in Guatemala range from disagreements about the legal status of communal land and boundary disputes between communities, to occupations of fincas resulting from demands for land, and labour disputes between landowners and labourers. Among those, disputes about ownership are the most common, representing about half of all cases. Many of such disputes go back over a

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2 In September 2003, CONTIERRA registered 2,077 agrarian disputes (AI 2006: 4), 911 in 2004, and 1,052 in December 2005 (Brown et al. 2005: 3). The number is probably much higher, and may come to light with registration of land in the Cadastre, the processing of land title applications accumulated in INTA, and the registration of vacant land extensions to national farms (AI 2006: 5).

3 Secretaría de Asuntos Agrarios, Unidos, CONTIERRA, Mapa de Ubicación Geográfica de los Casos de Conflictos de Tierra, Según Tipología, Guatemala, C.A, actualizado al 31 de diciembre de 2005.
hundred years. They result from the fact that until recently there was no land registry that was legally binding, or precise in its description of location and extent of land property (Brown et al. 2005: 4). It depends on the region which types of dispute are more prevalent. Conflicts about labour rights and the legal status of land mostly occur in the central part of the country and the southern coastal zones where most fincas are located. Conflicts between (indigenous) communities about boundaries between communities and the use of resources are particularly common in the western highlands. In fact, disputes about land are highly diverse, and of different orders.

Many disputes have a local character. A large number of disputes are an expression of what in Guatemala is called conflictividad agraria. This generic but also highly politicized term refers to the historical and structural characteristics of agrarian conflicts in Guatemala. Conflictividad agraria is about discontent with the unequal distribution of agricultural land, past usurpation of indigenous territories, the system of exploitative labour relationships, as well as with the agricultural policies of consecutive governments to manage societal and political conflict, and the violent responses to those demanding change. Conflictividad agraria refers, for example, to conflicts of communities reclaiming their indigenous properties now occupied by large landowners, or to claims by landless people. It also points to disputes over the prestaciones laborales (labour entitlements), the additional payments that labourers on fincas are legally entitled to, such as bonuses and paid holidays. Often, such latter disputes are not directly about land itself, but land may become an issue in their escalation and resolution. Conflictividad agraria has been an important element in the civil war and the peace agreements, and continues to play a role in present times. It is the subject of this chapter.

A historical characteristic of land tenure in Guatemala is the extremely unequal distribution of agricultural land. In 2000, 18.6 percent of land was in hands of 94 percent of landowners, while 62.5 percent was owned by only 1.5 percent of the population (AI 2006: 4). Large parts of the rural population are effectively landless, as they own too little to make a living. Concentration of land ownership started during the Spanish colonization, when large scale agricultural production was introduced and most land of the largely indigenous rural population was redistributed. The original occupants provided the labour force to the newly formed plantations (Nassar et al. 2003: 24; FAO n.d.: 14). After independence in 1821, indigenous properties were increasingly taken over, and land tenure became closely linked to labour relationships. Liberal governments in the 1870s –eager not to lose their economic and political power– stimulated production of marketable products such as coffee. Therefore, they facilitated cheap acquisition of land, and the registration of fallow land, even if it concerned communal lands (FAO n.d.: 14-5). Laws stipulating compulsory labour guaranteed the availability of free labour (Mauro and Merlet 2003: 8). Indigenous people were expelled from their lands, either because their lands were made available to ladino⁴ and foreign owners, or to assure that they would be available as cheap labour

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⁴ Historically, the term ladino refers to those speaking Spanish and of mixed European and indigenous decent. Currently, though often used to frame social, economic and political differences in Guatemala, the opposition Maya-ladino is a simplification. Many people do not identify themselves
(Nassar et al. 2003: 26). In the early decades of the 20th century, foreign companies such as the United Fruit Company gained ownership over vast properties for banana production. A labour system developed in which indigenous people from the highlands temporarily migrated to fincas on the coast, while landless labourers entered into long-term working relationships, living on the fincas at the mercy of their employers.

Agrarian conflict and the civil war

After a coup d'état and elections in 1944, social-democratic governments intended to break with the unequal division of land and wealth, and the semi-feudal labour relations. In 1952, they implemented a Land reform in which 600,000 hectares were expropriated and redistributed to 100,000 peasant families. This resulted in resistance from large landowners and the Catholic Church. With support from the CIA, the government was overthrown in 1954. In subsequent years, land reforms were reversed and most land returned to its former owners or to the state. In response to the military take-over and the reversal of the land reforms, the first resistance movements developed. Over the same period, various political parties, sindicatos (labour unions) and ligas campesinos (peasant movements) came into existence. The government reacted fiercely towards the resistance, and during the 1970s intensified the repression of the indigenous peasants. Murders and disappearances of those striving for land, labour rights and rural development multiplied. In the context of the Cold War, this civil war was presented as a struggle against Communism, but much of the violence in the 1978-1982 period was directly aimed against the movements for rural development (Nassar et al. 2003: 30).

In the most violent period from 1978-1986, 440 villages were burnt down, an estimated 200,000 people were killed (of which 83% Maya), about 150,000 people fled to Mexico, while between a million and a million and a half were displaced (CEH 1999). Many civil leaders were the direct target of violence, beheading the social movements in Guatemala. Rural communities were further torn apart by forced relocation programmes from areas of suspected guerrilla influence (AI 2006: 2). Many massacres by the army appear to have been directly related to the interest of landowners to terminate occupations of their properties by peasants. The civil war itself resulted in new land problems. From 1982 onwards, the government started to consider land vacated by refugees as abandoned, justifying its occupation by others. Likewise, the policy of aldeas estrategicas (‘strategic villages’, or regroupment villages) that aimed to separate the population from the guerrilla’s resulted in massive relocations and reshuffling of land ownership (Nassar et al. 2003: 31).

The 1996 peace agreements between the government and the URNG (the umbrella organization that since 1982 united the four main insurgency groups)
identified agrarian disputes and inequality in land distribution as central issues in the armed conflict (Mauro and Merlet 2003). Apart from stipulations on democratization, human rights and the rights of the indigenous population, the agreements included detailed policies to restructure the unequal land-holding pattern. The agreements set out to increase land ownership of small peasants through credit systems and registration, improving the access to justice, the establishment of mechanisms for the resolution of land disputes, and recognition of customary management of natural resources. The government committed itself also to the enforcement of labour laws, by improving access to justice, and providing labourers more legal security (Salvesen 2002; CONGCOOP 2004; AI 2006). As such, the peace agreements provided a framework for addressing the fundamental causes of agrarian disputes, and in principle could have constituted a significant contribution to the resolution of agrarian disputes (AI 2006: 4).

The continuation of agrarian conflict after the peace agreements
Nonetheless, at the time of fieldwork, many of the relevant commitments had not yet been properly implemented, not implemented at all, or turned out ineffective. Legislation was neither implemented nor enforced, and structural reforms at the advantage of small producers and labourers had not been realized. Amounts of land transferred to small producers have been relatively meagre. During the 1997-2005 period, only 4.3% of Guatemala’s total agricultural land has been reallocated. Among those applying for credit, less than 20% have received credit, and government institutions have been able to attend only to an estimated 1% of the total demand for land (Gauster and Isakson 2007). Despite commitments to the enforcement of labour laws, many disputes continued to emerge between labourers and employers at the fincas, in particular about labour entitlements. The lack or underpayment of such entitlements was common in rural areas (AI 2006: 8). Only 30% of fincas respected the minimum salary (Garoz 2002, in CONGCOOP 2004).

In 2006, the most visible manifestation of conflictividad agraria was the continuing occupation of fincas. Such occupations resulted from disputes over labour entitlements, or the failure of the authorities to resolve ownership disputes over those fincas. Occupation was also the last option for landless people that had failed to access land through legal procedures. Since 2000, there had been an increase in occupations by groups of landless peasants, either on state owned or on private land. This was likely the result of the global coffee crisis at the end of the 1990s. Thousands of tenant labours lost their jobs and then demanded their due labour entitlements (AI 2006: 5).

Interviews conducted and documentation collected over the course of research points to various reasons why relevant commitments from the peace agreements regarding land failed to be implemented or to be effective.

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6 See in particular Acuerdo sobre Aspectos Socioeconómicos y situación Agraria, signed on 6 May 1996.
Failure of the state institutions established to deal with conflictividad agraria

In the first place, the different state institutions established or restructured in accordance with the peace agreements were not effective. Those state institutions, in particular FONTIERRA and CONTIERRA, did not have budget nor the necessary technical capacities, while inter-institutional coordination was lacking (MINUGUA 2000; CONGCOOP 2004: 25).

The authorities’ core strategy to deal with disputes about ownership and land occupations had been to purchase land, facilitated by FONTIERRA (Fondo de Tierras) or other institutions. FONTIERRA, however, appeared to be slow, inefficient, and corrupt. At times, it had been blamed for aggravating rather than resolving conflicts. Moreover, the institutional capacities of FONTIERRA were insufficient for the scale of the problem (MINUGUA 2000; Baumeister 2005: 105), let alone the financial means available (Gauster and Isakson 2007). The experience of various peasant organizations I interviewed was that often, after peasants had acquired land through credit, resulting debts were so high that they could hardly repay them. FONTIERRA often failed to provide the promised technical assistance, while no credits were available for necessary investments. At various fincas bought through credit schemes, the new owners had no alternative than selling the property so painstakingly acquired. Peasants often found it difficult to find finqueros (finca owners) willing to sell land at the prices stipulated by FONTIERRA. Besides, finqueros did not like doing business when FONTIERRA was involved as such deals would take a long time.

On the other hand, CONTIERRA (Dependencia Presidencial de Asistencia Legal y Resolución de Conflictos sobre la Tierra) aimed to solve land disputes through conciliation and legal advice. The organization was perceived as more credible than FONTIERRA, but lacked funding. CONTIERRA was expected to play a role in defining general political strategies regarding land conflict, but so far was mainly involved in particular dispute cases. CONTIERRA earlier formed part of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA) and was not independent and worked slowly. When in 2005 CONTIERRA became part of the presidential office, many cases were speeded up (Peinado 2006). In practice, CONTIERRA proposed solutions based on existing state legislation, rather than initiating political discussion on this legislation. Moreover, legal and historical investigations of CONTIERRA had no legal value. In case their proposed solution was not accepted, in the court, parties would have to start from scratch.

The national Land Registry that took effect in June 2005 resulted in mixed reactions from civil society. New legislation gave landowners the priority right to claim those parts of their properties not yet properly registered in their name (the so-called exceso). Though many small peasants had started the procedure to acquire titles, they were still waiting for those. Amnesty International observed that authorities often failed to check whether land to be registered was indeed vacant, at the disadvantage of indigenous communities, who often lacked official titles (AI 2006: 12). Civil-society organizations were also concerned about the independence of the institution, which was presided over by the Minister of Agriculture, a conservative landowner.

The question remains to which extent failures should be attributed to the institutions established on the basis of the peace agreements. The peace agreements themselves have been criticized for being incapable of changing Guatemala’s agrarian
structure. As Gauster & Isakson (2007) argue, the agreements were based on a strategy of market-assisted land reform, doing little to redress the deep economic inequalities in the country. Nonetheless, as the agreements were the only shared political agenda existing in the country, civil-society organizations did not want to doubt their implementation.

Incapacities of the juridical system  Further, many people interviewed observed that the juridical system was incapable to thoroughly and evenly address agrarian disputes. Civil courts were slow, inefficient, overburdened and inaccessible, lacked rules of evidence and expertise, and were not perceived as neutral in land issues (see Brown et al. 2005: 7). Agricultural legislation was dispersed, casuistic and incoherent, and little known by ordinary people nor public functionaries (Minugua 2003, in: Nassar et al. 2003). Apparently, finqueros and small land-owners were not treated equally by the juridical system.

As a consequence, many disputes on labour entitlements were not properly addressed. In particular, workers living on the finca as tenant labourers (mozos colonos) found it difficult to claim those rights. Many among them had not received entitlements for many years. According to the law, once a contract had come to an end, a labourer only had a limited time to reclaim due labour entitlements. At the termination of a contract, many land owners failed to pay due entitlements, speculating that few peasants would dare to claim their entitlements, so as not to diminish chances to be re-hired. Few labourers approached the labour inspectorate, which neither could enforce compliance from employers nor had enough resources to visit rural areas (AI 2006: 9). As legal advisors working with various NGOs explained, in case peasants started a procedure, this could take years. Exasperated in the end, groups of peasants then occupied the finca of their former employer. For land owners, however, it was relatively easy to ask the Public Prosecutor for an eviction. In this way, labourers that had been living for years on a finca could be evicted, ending up without any place to go to (cf. AI 2006: 10-11).

Amnesty International (2006) observed how rarely proper efforts were made to establish the legal basis of claims of both parties before proceeding with an eviction, at the advantage of the land owners. It concluded, that in the absence of support from the authorities to enforce judgements and lacking the means for long legal cases, groups of workers with labour disputes had few alternatives than occupying farms (AI 2006: 13). Representatives of several peasant organizations told me of their experience that for many finqueros the juridical system formed no threat at all. If ever convicted for not paying labour entitlements, fines were in no relation to the due amounts.

Lack of political will  To some extent, the national authorities acknowledged these institutional failures. However, in the opinion of many of the representatives of organizations I interviewed, a major reason why land and labour related conflicts were not dealt with adequately was a persistent lack of political will. Over time, a small land-owning elite has maintained strong political influence over whatever government was in place, and has consistently opposed agrarian reforms (see Sieder et al. 2002). Consecutive governments interpreted agrarian conflicts rather as a result of poverty and lack of employment opportunities, to be solved through protecting private
property rights and application of the law (Brown et al. 2005: 8-9). The experience of many organizations I spoke to was that private property was sacrosanct to power-holders. Proposals for expropriation and redistribution had thus always been taboo subjects, while proposals to introduce land taxes had met fierce resistance from the government.

Since the peace agreements, governments have basically been running pro-business economic agendas, dropping the peace-process related dialogues on agrarian reforms on the way. Rather than through state-led agrarian reforms, they expected that rural poverty would most effectively be dealt with through the market. In December 2002, the government of the FRG (Frente Republicano Guatemalteco, 2000-2004) declared the economic crisis provoked by the collapse of coffee prices a national emergency, and initiated a Plan de Atención Social. It included programmes for food security and credits for temporary leasing of land, as well as access to land through credit, and projects to help small coffee producers. The plan was never implemented (CONGOOP 2004: 16). At the time of fieldwork for this chapter in 2006, the administration of President Oscar Berger (of GANA, the Gran Alianza Nacional) appeared not in favour of tackling the agrarian problem, and was seen by civil-society organizations as primarily representing the interests of entrepreneurs and landowners. Following Berger’s instatement in 2004, there was an increase in forced –and often violent– evictions of rural workers occupying fincas.

It should be added that there were also some more progressive forces within the government, in particular the Vice-President, who considered addressing root causes of land disputes necessary to modernize and develop economically. Over the year 2006, after manifestations of various peasant movements, a special procedure was established within the presidential office to solve selected land disputes, providing credit for land acquisition. Various representatives of peasant movements and NGOs commented that the existence of dialogue was a step forward in comparison to the previous government. Nonetheless, few of them had confidence that the dialogues would result in a change in agricultural legislation.

Further, we should be careful to interpret resistance to societal transformation as a political elite affair only. Hale (2006) describes how common Guatemalans’ respect for indigenous culture and support for equality has definitely increased. However, egalitarian sensibilities do not require ladinos fully to acknowledge ongoing relations of racial dominance and racial privileges, much less to dismantle them (Hale 2006: 19). In the eyes of some interviewees, the finca is a corner-stone of how ordinary Guatemalans imagine societal order. This imagination assumes the natural subordination of the workers to the owner of the finca, and highly values private property and its protection by the state. Many common Guatemalans looked with suspicion at the demands from the peasants and labour movements to transform Guatemalan agricultural production, perceiving those as a threat to order and stability.

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7 In charge of this procedure is the Secretaría de Asuntos Agrarios del Estado
8 Expose by Juan Carlos Mazariegos, AVANCOS, at the presentation by Pastoral de la Tierra Interdiocesano of the report ¿Hacia dónde vamos?, San Marcos, 20 April 2006.
Guatemalan civil society addressing agrarian conflict

Yet, for years, diverse social movements and labour unions, local development organizations, and churches have been working on land and labour conflicts. Their discourses and policies on the agrarian question have changed considerably over time. Before the peace agreements, claims for land were not a separate issue but formed part of demands for respecting human rights or the rights of the indigenous population. One of the first movements that came into being was the Comité de Unidad Campesina (CUC), formed in 1978 as the first indigenous labour organization. It brought together indigenous peasants from the highlands with poor ladino labourers on the fincas (Gálvez et al. 2000, in Nassar et al. 2003: 50). Its struggle was primarily for respecting the rights of labourers. In this struggle, land was a contextual issue. Within the Catholic Church, interest for the agrarian problem was expressed in a declaration by the Bishops of Guatemala in 1988.9 Since then, within various dioceses of the Catholic Church in Guatemala, Pastorales de la Tierra (pastoral land commissions) were established to assist peasants in their productive needs. After 1992, when the organization CONIC (Coordinadora Nacional Indígena y Campesina) was formed as a split-off of CUC, the agrarian movements gradually changed their focus. Rather than labour rights of all rural labourers, CONIC emphasized the political and cultural rights of the Maya population in particular. From this perspective, it highlighted the historical rights to land of the indigenous population. Due to the efforts of those diverse organizations, in the negotiations for the peace agreements, land gained a central place on the agenda.

After the peace agreements, many organizations came to emphasize that land was indispensable for agricultural development. Initially, the peasant movements had high hopes that the agreements would result in a change in land distribution. There was a decrease in the occupations of fincas, which basically had been a response to labour disputes. After the credit and dispute resolving institutions FONTIERRA and CONTIERRA were established, peasant movements concentrated on assisting peasants getting access to land through those institutions. In this period, several Pastorales de la Tierra of the Catholic Church started providing legal assistance to groups of peasants to regularize their land through the state institutions. They also got involved in mediation, conciliation and resolution of agrarian and labour conflicts. To facilitate their work, to exchange experiences and to collectively lobby at regional and national level, since 1997, Pastorales de la Tierra Interdiocesano (PTi) were established, bringing together Pastorales de la Tierra at a regional level.

However, soon the credit and dispute-resolving institutions turned out to be hardly effective, while as a result of the coffee crisis, occupations of fincas again incremented. Organizations increased their activities of legal assistance to groups of peasants in conflict. Disappointing experiences in those cases where peasants had managed to acquire land through credit convinced various movements that more structural solutions were needed to the agrarian problem. Rather than demanding land only, movements now started writing proposals for integrated agrarian policies. The

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9 The pastoral letter El Clamor por la Tierra (‘outcry for land’) was published in March 1988 by the Bishops collectively, and included an analysis of land problems in Guatemala, declaring the unequal distribution of land as the core of the problem.
government emphasized that equal development could best be stimulated through the opening up of the Guatemalan market. The organizations, however, insisted on more direct measures by the government to redress inequalities. Since 2005, government policies on the liberalization of trade (including its joining the *Área de Libre Comercio de las Américas*, or Free Trade Area of the Americas), as well as the concessions given out to mining companies stimulated organizations working on the agrarian question to further broaden their concerns. Supported by international organizations, in particular FIAN (Foodfirst Information & Action Network), several Guatemalan organizations came to discuss the agrarian issue from the ‘right to food’ perspective. This perspective sees food sovereignty (or a person’s possibility to provide in his nutritional needs) as a right to be guaranteed by governments.

**Fragmentation of the organizations**

As I explained above, after the peace agreements Guatemalan civil society became fragmented over the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new Millennium and hence lost much of its political force. Divisions among organizations working on land and labour conflicts appear to result from a variety of factors. Differences between the various streams within the guerrilla movement continue to divide contemporary labour and peasant organizations. Most of the latter had come into being over the same period, often at the vanguard of the guerrilla movement (Warren 1998). Many leaders of those organizations had not yet changed, and divisions had not yet been transcended. The ideological divide between organizations interpreting oppression from a social or from an ethnic perspective was particularly clear between CONIC and CNOC. CONIC had its support basis mainly in the interior and the highlands, and presented itself as an indigenous movement. CNOC was mainly present in the coastal areas and represented the rights of labourers in general. In several organizations, past affinity with the guerrilla was still detectable in the strongly hierarchical way of decision making, providing limited space for dissenting voices, or voices from the communities. Movements were aware of the need for further democratization and participation from their constituents, but the challenge was to do this without falling apart.

Staff of organizations I interviewed also pointed out that part of the divisions among organizations resulted from the need of organizations to legitimize themselves and to survive as organizations. Differences between CONIC and Plataforma Agraria (a platform of organizations, including research institute AVANCSO, human-rights organization CALDH and the Pastorales de la Tierra of the Catholic Church) were often attributed to competition over establishing themselves in particular communities. Noticeable was also the distance various interviewees from the Catholic Church took from the peasants and labour movements. They considered that, because of its local presence in the rural communities, the Church had a special role. They spoke with disdain about initiatives from outside the church, and had little confidence in the effectiveness of organizations operating from outside the communities.

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10 In fact, Plataforma Agraria seems to have been formed precisely with this objective in mind - to establish a more open organization and guarantee grass-roots participation.
Such politics of legitimization and survival (see Hilhorst 2003) made organizations hesitant to align themselves to others, fearing that they might become superfluous. If alliances between organizations were formed, this was out of the need to gather political weight rather than for ideological closeness. The politics of survival were also evident in efforts to de-legitimize other organizations, doubting their effectiveness and intentions in the rural communities, or disclosing their ‘real’ political interests. Movements were accused of being more concerned with gathering ‘constituencies’ than with establishing active community organizations. Stories circulate about fincas that in the struggle for constituencies were first occupied by one peasant movement and later by the other. Another common strategy for discrediting other movements was to accuse them of deals with the government, for strategic or personal reasons.

Fragmentation among organizations working on land and labour conflicts in Guatemala obstructed the formulation of collaborative political proposals. While in their discussions on possible strategies for agricultural development in 2005-6 they reached rather similar conclusions, organizations came up with seven separate proposals. In March 2006, parallel public manifestations were organized by Plataforma Agraria and a consortium of other peasant organizations. While both manifestations demanded land for peasants, legal reforms regarding the management of natural resources, and assistance for the victims of the tropical storm Stan (2005), participating organizations pursued their own individual agendas. While some focussed on the needs of the indigenous population, others manifested for peasants in general. Organizations lobbied and negotiated with different government institutions in parallel, but without coordination.

Government practices further stimulated fragmentation. The government established numerous round-table meetings and invited participants selectively, thereby promoting their competition. The media in Guatemala appeared to have little sympathy for the manifestations and occupations organized by the peasant movements and were keen to highlight their divisions. They disqualified the (possible) political role of certain movements and emphasized the social unrest its proposed policies would result in. The Levantamiento Maya Popular, an initiative by CONIC for restarting negotiation with government, was in various newspapers presented as a new resistance movement.

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11 Examples mentioned include the 2005 participation of CONIC in Plataforma Agraria, the alliance between UASP and CONIC in March 2006, and the proposed alliance between Plataforma Agraria and CNOC in the same year.

12 Stories circulated for example on pre-electoral deals between CONIC and the government. A perceived closeness between CONIC and the government was used to explain support of CONIC to the government reconstruction plans after the tropical storm Stan and their absence in precarious discussions on the Codigo Agraria. Stories also circulated about intentions of the Ministry of Agriculture to make CONIC responsible for the management of funds for credit that are actually administered by FONTIERRA.

13 For example, Prensa Libre, reporting on the March 2006 manifestations, was more interested in the economic damage done by the blockings of the Capital's avenues by thousands of peasants, than in their demands. In 2006, newspapers gave limited attention to the particulars of agrarian conflicts.

14 For example, some newspapers condemned the manifestations in March 2006, and suggested that protestors did not know what they were protesting against, and had been paid for participation.
Civil society and the political context

Many differences between civil-society organizations were a direct result of the current political context. Organizations had conflicting ideas about the appropriate roles for civil society. A central problem was how to address the current power-holders: to confront them through protest, or to stimulate change through proposals. An organization like CONIC often chose for protest. In contrast, Plataforma Agraria hoped to function as a ‘think tank’ on land related issues. It hoped to take advantage of the increasing political space through contributing proposals for change, and thereby gradually transforming political practices. Strategies chosen by organizations favouring one strategy were heavily criticized by those employing other strategies. The activist attitude of various social movements was portrayed as ‘breaking the logic of the peace agreements’, which had resulted from a process of negotiation. Organizations favouring negotiating with the government were criticized for being ‘talking organization’, going along too much with the government. For example, more activist organizations talked with disdain about proposals from the Plataforma Agraria for renting land for landless peasants as a temporary solution for the land problems.

Of course, the selection of strategy was also related to the organizational politics of legitimation and survival described above. Cases in point were the Pastoralets de la Tierra. Dioceses varied considerably in their policies on agrarian conflicts. This depended a lot on the bishop. The Bishop of the Diocese of San Marcos –see the case study below– had become the Catholic Church’s most prominent national level spokesperson on the agrarian problem. Pastoral de la Tierra within his Diocese was actively working on various types of land disputes. In some Dioceses, the bishop had good relations with finqueros and therefore the focus of Pastoral de la Tierra was on conflicts between peasants and the state, rather than between peasants and finqueros. In other Dioceses, bishops wanted to refrain from politics or were not interested in social work. Hence, despite its strong presence in the rural communities, the level of involvement of the Catholic Church in land issues thus varied considerably. The social movements often reproached the churches for inactiveness regarding the agrarian problem, for trouble-shouting only, or for supporting the case of the finqueros.

The tendency of many labour and peasant movements to prioritise protest related also to the need to please their bases. Their members in the rural communities were increasingly disappointed with the slowness of the political solutions for their problems. Movements had to balance efforts for arriving at political change –which was a slow process– with rapid responses to the direct needs of their bases. On the other hand, efforts to approach the government often resulted in much criticism from other organizations. This made organizations hesitant to be seen working with the authorities.

CNOC, for example, was often reproached for participating in the government institutions dealing with the agrarian issue. It had a representative within FONTIERRA, and a good relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food. In 2006, CONIC –a member to CNOC– refused to acknowledge the
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CNOC representative within FONTIERRA as also representing them. Similarly, in 2002, when the Plataforma Agraria participated in the governmental Plan Reconstruction Campesina to address the coffee crisis, CONIC no longer wanted to participate in Plataforma Agraria.

Important in the predisposition towards particular strategies was the extent to which organizations assessed the openness of the government for negotiation, and the willingness to change policies. Many organizations observed that the government was not interested to implement the peace agreements. They witnessed how particular members of the government negated responsibility for their implementation, considering them as compromises without legal basis. In their experience, from an agreed upon agenda, agrarian reform had turned again into a topic for fierce debate. Many social movements thus highlighted the need for an aggressive stand towards the government, including extra-legal actions. As a facilitator of CONIC observed: “We do not believe in the legal approach: whenever CONIC was successful this was the result of occupations”.

Civil-society organizations in Guatemala thus found it difficult to redefine their roles, ten years after the peace agreements. This resulted not only from incapacity, internal problems within civil-society organizations, or competition. It was strongly related to the Guatemalan context, and the slow pace of societal transformation.

To illustrate the difficulties of civil society to define new roles in post-conflict Guatemala, I will now reflect on the case of Pastoral de la Tierra San Marcos (PTSM) and its assistance to a conflict on the finca San Luis Malacatán. The case brings out how PTSM precariously had defined a strategy to assist peasants with land disputes, making the best of the opportunities offered by the legal system and the newly established state institutions. This approach of conforming to the legal status quo, however, had important consequences for how PTSM came to understand the conflict on the finca and its appropriate solution. As a consequence, their assistance did not produce the justice expected by the former labourers of the finca, and the question was thus to what extent it resulted in the justice and peace PTSM aspired.

Pastoral de la Tierra San Marcos and the former labourers of the finca San Luis Malacatán

For long, the Catholic Church in the western Diocese of San Marcos has stimulated that peasants organize themselves. In 1992, a section of Pastoral de la Tierra San Marcos (PTSM) was established within the development bureau of the Diocese, to implement a capacity building programme in those rural communities mostly affected by conflict and narco-traffics. The programme included technical assistance to peasants and strengthening of community organizations (PTSM 2002). After the peace agreements in 1996, together with popular movements and human-rights

15 See Prensa Libre, 9 May 2006. Later that year, discussion evolved about plans of MAGA to transfer responsibility for credit provision for land acquisition from FONTIERRA to CNOC.
organizations, PTSM monitored the implementation of the peace agreements in the Diocese, in particular those efforts to resolve land disputes. From 1998 onwards, agrarian conflict became a central theme in the work of PTSM. The Diocese considered the resolution of agrarian conflict as an important step in the peace process, necessary for justice at the local level. PTSM started participating in a provincial commission of government and non-government organizations on agrarian conflict. PTSM also became part of Pastoral de la Tierra Interdiocesano in Quetzaltenango, and of Plataforma Agraria. Increasingly, PTSM was approached by groups of peasants requesting assistance in resolving their agrarian conflicts.

Agrarian conflicts in San Marcos are diverse and locally specific, with labour conflicts mainly in the lowlands, where most fincas are located, and conflicts about natural resources more prevalent in the highland indigenous communities. PTSM has been dealing with conflicts between peasants and the state and its institutions, conflicts among different communities, and assisted groups of landless peasants demanding access to land. As labour disputes were numerous, those had become the responsibility of a specialized organization, now semi-independent from the Diocese. Though the case of the finca San Luis Malacatán discussed below also involved a labour dispute, PTSM accepted responsibility for this case as their first impression had been that it was a conflict with the state.

In 2001, as part of its strategic planning, PTSM developed a ‘methodology for transforming agrarian conflicts’. Charged with the implementation of this methodology was a small team, including a social worker, a legal assessor, a historian, and an agronomist. The methodology existed of strengthening peasant organizations, advocacy at regional and national level, historical and legal research on land tenure, and legal assistance to groups of peasants with agrarian conflicts. Strengthening peasant organizations had to ensure that peasants would manage to make use of the provisions in the peace agreements for accessing land and resolving their conflicts. Organizational strengthening was done primarily through an association established by PTSM, uniting local peasant organizations and communities experiencing agrarian conflicts. Through this association, eight peasant organizations obtained a credit from FONTIERRA to buy land. In addition, from 2001 to 2006, PTSM provided legal assistance to 12 different groups of peasants having agrarian conflicts. Three of those cases came to a conclusion in 2006, including the case discussed below.

The approach of PTSM to address conflicts was strongly historical and legal, and reflected the expertise present within the team. Much energy was invested in detailed historical investigation, and the collection of historical and legal documents, to prove claims being made by the peasants. On the basis of this historical and legal documentation, PTSM wrote proposals on how particular conflicts could best be resolved, which they then presented to the appropriate conflict resolving institutions, in particular CONTIERRA.

For PTSM, a legal approach was not a choice but appeared as the only possible strategy. The Bishop of San Marcos was already walking a tightrope with his strong stance for the peasants in his Diocese. Within his Diocese, he was often criticized by influential landowners, many of whom were also his parishioners. At national level, he could not fully ignore the criticism of more conservative Bishops and maintain good relationships with the central authorities. Hence, an important principle of the
assistance of PTSM was to stay within the boundaries of Guatemala law. This, for example, implied that PTSM could not support occupations of fincas by peasants. Confronted with the despair of the peasants, PTSM tried to search for alternatives to violent and extra-legal actions, through legal procedures and capacity building of organizations. This was difficult. Even such a legal strategy did not protect PTSM from the criticism by large landowners in San Marcos Diocese that claimed that the assistance to peasant groups indirectly contributed to occupations, by stimulating peasants to organize themselves.

In addition, the legal approach was also the consequence of the funding practices of international organizations. Most donors were either not interested in agrarian conflicts, or hoped that the agrarian problem would be solved through the regularization and credit practices of the state institutions. Funding for assisting peasants in land disputes was difficult to find, and international organizations prioritized legal assistance, rather than advocacy work.

Nonetheless, legal assistance to peasants with agrarian conflicts also became closely intertwined with advocacy work at national level. PTSM participated in various platforms, including Plataforma Agraria, through which it demanded attention of the government and its institutions for the conflicts from San Marcos. After massive public manifestations in various parts of the country at the end of March 2006, the government announced it would speed up the resolution of agrarian conflicts through high-level negotiations. As the cases assisted by PTSM were well documented in comparison to those in other Dioceses, Plataforma Agraria selected three cases from San Marcos for this new procedure. One of those was the case of the finca San Luis Malacatán, where since 2002 PTSM assisted a group of former labourers having a conflict with the owner of the finca.

The struggle for the finca San Luis Malacatán

In February 2002, in the context of a country wide wave of occupations, the finca San Luis was occupied by a group of 500 families. The occupiers had different demands. In the first place, some occupiers or their ancestors had received land as part of the Agrarian Reform in 1952. As part of that reform, the state-owned finca San Luis had been parcelled out to its labourers. In February 1954 they received title deeds granting them usufruct rights on the land. Nonetheless, when a few months later the Agrarian Reform was reverted after the military coup-d’état, the finca became state property again. Those that had benefited from the distribution were chased away from their plots. Afraid of prosecution, many burnt their 1954 title deeds, others fled to Mexico. Those that stayed became tenant labourers (so-called mozás colonos) again, working for the state. In 2002, the occupiers demanded that they finally be compensated for the loss of their land in 1954.

Among the occupiers, there were also people that had been fired from the finca in various waves of dismissals in the 1980s and 1990s, and claimed that after their

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16 Early 2006, one of the major donors of PTSM proposed to establish a fund for buying land within the Diocesis. For PTSM, this was not an option. Buying land would be a drop in the ocean in the face of the enormous demands within the Diocese. Further, PTSM considered the state responsible for resolving the agrarian problems, not the church.
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dismissal they had never received their due labour entitlements (prestaciones laborales). In 1974, the management of the finca San Luis had been taken over by a private company. This resulted in a harsher labour regime, and made the work of labour unions impossible. In 1981, after various waves of dismissals, dismissed tenant labourers organized themselves and demanded payment of their due labour entitlements. Events were heavily influenced by the context of armed conflict. Though the guerrilla was never able to create a support base among the workers, rebel presence in the area instigated the directors of the finca to organize their own security forces. Between 1982 and 1986, leaders of the dismissed labourers received many threats, and several fled to Mexico. Twelve members of the group were arrested and disappeared, to be found murdered (Peinado 2006). After a second wave of redundancies in 1990-1995, 80 families were compensated with plots of land within the grounds of the finca. Those who were not compensated as well as those discontented with the compensation organized themselves. In 1996 and 1997, supported by national labourers’ and peasant movements, they occupied the finca to demand compensation for the due labour entitlements. This demand reappeared in the occupation of 2002.

To satisfy those two claims, rather than monetary compensation, the occupiers asked for land. The occupiers argued that certain parts of the finca were not properly registered. They thus demanded that the properties of the finca be measured and that the so-called excesos (the remaining, non-registered parts) would be given in compensation for 1954 loss of land and the unpaid labour entitlements. However, in addition to the above two groups of occupiers, the 2002-occupation had been joined by a third group of people, some of which came from outside the community of San Luis. The latter group included people experiencing a more general need of land, many of them having lost their jobs as farm-labourers since the coffee crisis. They speculated that they might be able to get part of excesos on the finca. Their hope that they might get some land was fuelled by the conviction of the other occupiers that the finca in fact was national property, even if it was run by a private company. If indeed the finca was national property, this implied it might be redistributed to landless people.

When the court declared the occupation illegal and demanded the eviction of the occupiers, the occupiers approached the Diocese of San Marcos and asked to organize a round-table meeting at departmental level. This round-table initiated the involvement of PTSM in the case. The meeting resulted in the cancellation of the eviction and the peaceful withdrawal of the occupiers in March 2002. It was agreed that CONTIERRA would conduct a historical investigation to show whether and when the land had indeed been state or private property. The results of this study, presented in 2003, concluded that at the time of the land reform the finca indeed belonged to the state rather than to a private owner. It also concluded that it had not been the mistake of the peasants that they had lost their usufruct rights and that hence a form of compensation was justifiable. However, the study confirmed earlier findings

17 While the finca security force claimed that those arrested belonged to the guerrilla, according to community members they had been among those organizing the protests in 1981, or were still in possession of the land titles received in 1954.
18 Such claims for land to compensate for due labour entitlements are quite common in Guatemala, see also Amnesty International (2006).
of INTA (the predecessor of CONTIERRA) that the finca had been sold to the finquero in 1974, and that its total surface was properly registered.

PTSM became interested in the conflict at the finca San Luis Malacatán as it presented a typical case of the impact of the Agrarian Reform. Its resolution might furnish a precedent for similar cases elsewhere in Guatemala. PTSM thus included the group—which then was registered as the Asociacion Integral de Desarrollo Malacateco, ASIDM— in its organizational strengthening program. It accompanied the association in its many encounters with CONTIERRA to demand follow up of the 2003 study. PTSM also started its own historical investigation, to learn more about how the finca had been legally formed. This research pointed to various irregularities in the creation of the finca – part of it had not been properly registered: existing title deeds did not cover its complete dimensions. Certainly, the peasants had historical rights on the land (see Sanchez 2003). PTSM decided to elaborate the example of San Luis Malacatán as a paradigmatic example of agrarian conflicts in Guatemala, as in their view it clearly showed the disinterest of the state to address the agrarian problem in general, and the failure of its institutions to follow-up this particular type of conflict.

In June 2006, CONTIERRA produced a final proposal for solving the conflict, which was handed over to the Secretaría de Asuntos Agrarios del Estado. Their solution confirmed the rights of those that had lost their lands in the reversal of the Agrarian Reform, this time considering the claims of 17 families as legitimate – those that had been able to produce legal evidence that they or their ancestors had received land during the Agrarian Reform, and pointed to the need for compensating this group. CONTIERRA argued that the time for reclaiming labour entitlements had since long lapsed and that those claiming labour entitlements, as well as those searching land for economical reasons, should access land through the normal procedures with FONTIERRA.19

Different understandings of justice

From my discussions with members of the association on how they perceived the conflict, what they considered as just solutions, and what would be an acceptable compromise if necessary, important differences appeared between ASIDM and PTSM. The members of ASIDM found the final resolution of the conflict hard to swallow. In fact, it was a legal solution that did not take account of those dimensions of the case they themselves regarded as important.

According to the perception of ‘justice’ shared by the members of ASIDM, they had legitimate rights on the land of the finca, and thus demanded that the conflict be solved through distributing part of the finca to them. Almost all members interviewed insisted that the finca San Luis Malacatán was state property (“la finca es nacional”), which implied that the state could decide its destiny. Based on this conviction, the people claiming compensation for the 1954 reversal of the Agrarian Reform argued that the only appropriate solution to the conflict was that the finca return to them, as

19 After I finished my fieldwork, high-level negotiations with the presidential office resulted in the verdict largely being adopted. The presidential office decreed that compensation should be given for the lost usufruct rights, and ASIDM would get a subsidy to buy land to compensate the other claims.
after all it had been taken away from them by the state. The idea that the finca was state property had also motivated people from outside Malacatán to join the association. In their search for land, they hoped the state could provide them with a part of this 'state property'.

In addition, the members of the association argued that as the finquero had failed to pay the labour entitlements in the past, he was responsible for the misery the former labourers had suffered since. Many considered the finca their land – it was the place where they had been born as mozos colonos (tenant labourers), the place where their parents had died, and where they had invested most of their lives’ labour. “Perdimos nuestra juventud en la finca” (“we lost our youth on the finca”), was a remark made to me by many people. Further, they argued that the finquero was directly responsible for their suffering in the past, including their removal by force from the finca and the killing of their leaders in the early 1980s. Though the members of the association no longer experienced direct repression—as had been the case until the early 1990s—many members received threats from unexposed origins. Further, after participating in past occupations, members of the association were refused for wage labour at other fincas in the neighbourhood and found it difficult to make a living. To the members of the association, the finquero should not walk away without punishment, and he should give up part of his land to resolve the conflicts.

However, from a legal perspective, PTSM was not able to accomplish such forms of justice. In the first place, the claims of ASIDM that the finca was state-property were not supported by evidence. On the contrary: research by CONTRIERRA in 2003 and 2005 confirmed that while the finca had been leased to the finquero since 1969, lease had been converted into sale in the 1970s. Despite this evidence, most members of the association continued to consider the finca as property of the state, over which destiny the state continued to have authority. Even those who knew that the finca had been sold argued that this sale had been illegal and should thus be nullified. In their view of justice, the legal status of the finca did not change the ‘rightness’ of their demands to receive part of the finca. Nonetheless, from a legal perspective, PTSM had to take the sale for granted. Even if it had occurred in private, and for a price now considered a trifle, the transfer had been legal.

Acceptance of the private ownership of the finca, however, had far-reaching implications for the legal claims the association possibly could make. For example, if the finca indeed had been state-owned during the labour disputes in the 1980s, the members of the association could demand compensation for unpaid labour entitlements. However, this was an entirely different matter if at that time the finca was private property. Guatemalan legislation stipulated that due labour entitlements should be reclaimed within 30 days after the end of a labour contract. As the labourers had not reclaimed those rights at the time of their dismissal in the 1980s, legal claims so many years later would stand little chance. Regarding the claims for labour entitlements, PTSM could only take into account labour disputes dating from before the sale of the finca, which were limited in number.20

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20 To resolve those cases, the state might redress the past mistake of selling a state property on which had existed due labour entitlements either by compensating the former labourers or by cancelling the past sale. The latter option was improbable —over the year 2006, the finca San Luis Malacatán had
As a result of the interventions by PTSM over 2005 and 2006, the case advanced tremendously. At the same time, the advances implied other compromises on the demands of the members of ASIDM. The verdict of CONTIERRA in 2006 included compensation for those few who could sustain their claims to lost usufruct rights by showing documents, and the acquisition of land through credit for those searching for access to land. This solution did not include the return of the finca San Luis Malacatán in specific. Over this same period, massive public manifestations had urged the government to create a fast solution for a series of prioritized conflicts, through high-level negotiations. The fast procedure created through those negotiations made it all the more unlikely that the members of ASIDM would ever acquire part of the finca San Luis. To guarantee a fast solution of the prioritized cases, rather than negotiating with the finqueros involved in those particular conflicts, the government department responsible for the procedure decided to provide credit for buying land to those groups of peasants with conflicts. Peasants themselves would need to identify landowners willing to sell property.

In the case of the finca San Luis Malacatán, the fast procedure resulted in that those members of ASIDM able to prove claims to lost usufruct rights would get monetary compensation and the other claimants a credit to buy land. As the finquero of San Luis Malacatán was not interested in selling part of his finca, the probability that the finca San Luis Malacatán would become part of compensation was reduced to almost zero. Many of the members did not see this is a just solution. In a meeting of the association in May 2006, there was a lot of discussion. While some acknowledged that it would be better to accept land elsewhere (also considering the bad relationship they have with their neighbours) many voiced their dissent. They repeated the above convictions, emphasized that the only just solution was to be compensated by receiving a part of the finca San Luis Malacatán, and discussed the need for occupation of the finca. In a meeting of the association in July 2006, PTSM explained that this was probably the best offer the members would ever get, which calmed down the situation a bit. Nonetheless, it was a disappointing result for many of the members. Maybe it reflected legal justice; to them it implied that no justice was done.21

At the same time, this solution confirmed the different legal positions of the different claimants in the conflict. While the demands for compensation for lost usufruct rights were acknowledged, the demands for compensation for the labour entitlements were refused. However, members of ASIDM did not want to be divided in groups and had always asked for a solution involving all group members. To the members of the association, the different legal positions of the claims had limited practical meaning. They considered it unfair that people that could not provide legal proof of their claims were not taken into account. After all, in 1954, many people had destroyed their former titles for fear for repercussions, or had lost them in their flight to Mexico. They also considered it unfair that the fast procedure did not take into

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21 It should be noted that some association members after all had come to prefer a solution of the conflict including compensation outside the finca, considering the strained relationships with non-members that had emerged.
account that few had dared to reclaim labour entitlements in the early 1980s, when the civil war was still ongoing.

Further, the verdict on compensation for the lost usufruct rights only considered those plots for which written documentation existed. However, the 1954 land distribution had resulted in a redistribution of the complete finca, including non-registered parts (excesos) on the finca. Self-evidently, people had never received titles for those excesos. The members of the association found this unfair, as the plots distributed in 1954 were significantly larger than what their titles indicated. PTSM acknowledged the existence of excesos, but found it difficult to base a valid legal claim on this. Moreover, state legislation prescribed that in case excesos existed on a property, the owner of the finca was first to make claims on those, which made it unlikely that a claim by others would be successful.

Hence, the fast procedure did not result in the justice the members of the association had hoped for. The solution neither considered all the claims they had, nor met their expectations of what a just solution should look like. In the end, the members of ASIDM accepted the solution, but under protest. Early 2006, the president of the association needed all his leadership skills to restrain some of the members from resorting to medidas de hecho (‘to take firm action’) which meant: to occupy the finca. With the help of representatives of PTSM, he managed to convince those members that another occupation could stall all possibilities for arriving at a solution within a reasonable period.

The challenges posed by a legal, conformist approach

To PTSM, a legal approach appeared as the only possible strategy in individual conflict cases. In its definition of appropriate responses to conflict, PTSM was torn between its commitment to assist the peasants, and the need to protect the Diocese from the criticism of supporting illegal actions of peasants. In their perspective, a legal approach provided the middle road, and was also the approach for which they would get funding from their donors.

However, this legal approach resulted in that PTSM came to frame the conflict in such terms that allowed for legal and organizational assistance, and making the best of the government institutions established to deal with land disputes. In fact, while PTSM had been approached by the association to find a way out of their complex conflict, this legal approach resulted in that the PTSM focused only on claims that could be sustained legally, thereby reducing the conflict to its legal aspects. At the start of its involvement, the PTSM team had been interested in the case of the finca San Luis, because it presented an interesting example of claims concerning the 1954 reversal of the agrarian reform. The labour disputes at the finca had not immediately drawn their attention. Labour conflicts were usually dealt with by another, semi-autonomous office in the Diocese. To PTSM, the labour disputes on the finca were a complication of the conflict whose full dimensions they only came to understand later, and which they were not able to deal with adequately through a legal approach. Further, this legal approach resulted in that a large difference existed between what the members of the association regarded as ‘justice’, and what could be possibly achieved through the juridical system.
Staff members of PTSM were fully aware of the disappointment among the members of ASIDM. However, to them there was no real alternative to the legal strategy to deal with individual conflicts in the Diocese. Through their participation in advocacy networks, in particular Pastoral de la Tierra Interdiocesano and Plataforma Agraria, they hoped to contribute to the legal changes and reforms that might result in better solutions for conflicts such as those at the finca San Luis Malacatán. At this level, at some distance from the Diocese and talking of agrarian conflicts in general terms, staff members of PTSM could be more critical and confrontational of existing procedures and legislation. At a later stage, they hoped to be able to confront the government with the injustice of for example not taking account the violence in the 1980s that had restrained ex-labourers from claiming their entitlements at the appropriate time. Nonetheless, such advocacy activities would not reap results at short notice, certainly not in a case as complicated as the finca San Luis, which existed of several layers. Further, to PTSM a legal approach was also a response to the pressure from the groups of peasants that approached the offices of the Catholic Church demanding an urgent solution to their problems, having waited already for years. They had approached the Diocese for assistance in their particular, individual case. PTSM did not want to let them down, and hence abided by the rules. Finally, it was difficult for PTSM to find funding for advocacy activities.

At the same time, staff members of PTSM were well aware that their focus on individual cases in fact maintained the existing status quo. Their experience was that the governmental institutions that had been installed after the peace agreements –such as FONTIERRA, CONTIERRA and the new procedure in the presidential office– focused on the resolution of individual conflicts, rather than promoting legal changes and reforms at national level. Bringing forward individual conflict cases to CONTIERRA affirmed this institution in its role of applying existing legislation to evaluate cases. PTSM further realized that legal assistance implied investing time in investigating particular cases, which was at the expense of more general advocacy work. One representative of Pastoral de la Tierra referred to this as the ‘trampa institutional’ (institutional trap): as a result of the conformism of organizations to the current organization of the state, organizations are sidetracked from their objective of reforming those. To PTSM, there was no escape: either conform to the existing rules and procedures and achieve something, or confront at the risk of getting into problems as an organization.

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22 Some representatives of PTSM draw the argument further: by going along with the existing institutional framework of agrarian conflict, organizations underwrote the market orientation implicit in the current solution mechanisms.

23 Another side of this institutional trap is that the procedures of FONTIERRA and CONTIERRA are often so complicated that local peasant groups have become highly dependent on outside legal assistance from NGOs or peasant movements.
Conclusion

This chapter presented a case of peacebuilding as a long-term process of transforming a society, and how civil-society organizations have to adapt their roles, policies and practices accordingly. While the peace agreements in Guatemala are often considered a political turning-point – representing a comprehensive programme for social transformation – they were conceptualized under international pressure, while international enforcement has been limited. Consequently, the pace of change is slow and gradual, and societal conflict is far from over. The Guatemala case demonstrates the continuity that often exists between civil war and post-conflict times.

In debates on post-conflict reconstruction and development it has been observed how civil society often loses political force and gets fragmented after peace agreements have been achieved. A common assumption is that organizations have to make a transition “from protest to proposal”. In the case of Guatemala, international organizations and observers alike have pointed out how many organizations failed to make this transition. The case provides a clear example that civil society does not develop linearly. While in civil war-time Guatemalan civil society suffered great repression, it was united in its struggle for societal transformation, and was increasingly represented in the peace negotiations. After the peace agreements, it became divided by external funding, the politics of legitimization and survival, and internal organizational problems.

However, what the case also underlines is that the changing role of civil society after peace ‘breaks out’ is not just an internal affair of organizations, but is primarily obstructed by the slow pace of post-war societal transformation. Organizations in Guatemala willing to bring justice to the rural population are confronted with the dilemma of either conforming to the status quo and making the best of the limited opportunities provided by the juridical system and the newly established state institutions, or confronting the authorities to continue their demands for change. This puts into a different light the concern with civil society’s capacities for changing roles and strategies. Focussing on the limited transformational capacities of Guatemalan civil society misses the point, if it does not acknowledge the context in which they have to operate.

The difficulty for civil society in defining new roles was illustrated by the case of PTSM, an organization that works primarily from the perspective of proposal rather than protest. PTSM envisaged a strategy of legal support to peasant organizations involved in land disputes, thereby conforming itself to the current status quo. For PTSM, this strategic choice was necessary so as not to compromise the Diocese. Through a legal approach, PTSM hoped not to affront the wider membership of the Catholic Church in the Diocese, which also included the large landowners. This approach was also favoured by funding agencies, which were hesitant to support civil society groups promoting societal transformation through more activist strategies. As the case of the finca San Luis Malacatán showed, this legal approach resulted in PTSM focussing on those claims that could be sustained by legal evidence. Claims and injustices that were important for the members of the association, such as the injustices done to their leaders, and claims regarding labour entitlements were hence...
neglected. Legal assistance thus resulted in a justice that was difficult to swallow by the peasants of San Luis Malacatán, and the question was whether it enhanced the justice and peace PTSM aimed to achieve. The case underlines how intervention strategies are always the result of a balancing of interests, rather than a neutral selection of a ‘best’ strategy.

The case of Guatemala shows that—despite the common conception that peacebuilding is a process—implicitly the idea of a turning point continues to inform how international organizations conceptualize interventions. After the signing of peace agreements it is assumed that it is peace. It is supposed that conflict and political discussion on societal development and change are over, while the implementation of the agreements becomes a technical or juridical affair. After the peace agreements, international development organizations and donors tend to assume that functioning state institutions exist, as well as opportunities for civil-society actors to effectively participate in the democratic process. Interveners imagine that civil society may serve as a countervailing power that in collaboration—or at least dialogue— with governments influences development or proposes alternatives. On the basis of such an imagination, assistance to local civil society focuses on those organizations that correspond to this image of conforming to the state of affairs, and collaboration. Further, such an imagination results in concerns about the difficulties of civil society to transform “from protest to proposal”, as if this would be a problem intrinsic to these organizations that can not adapt to the new realities. This disregards that the new realities may be the problem.

As the case of Guatemala shows, such a strategy is not opportune, and forgets about the long-term process of societal transformation. While challenges to civil society have changed little, international attention for the efforts of civil society fade rapidly. The case urges international organizations to consider more carefully the process of societal transformation after conflict as well as its implications for their local partners. International organizations willing to support civil-society in redefining roles and strategies after conflict should not only be concerned about their partners’ proper functioning as organizations. They should also support them in their role of promoting societal change, and should be willing to support the protest and confrontational roles of their partners.

The case of Guatemala further raises some questions on the overall roles of the international community in realizing peace. The international community is applying double standards if it demands of civil-society organizations to conform to a new status quo, without pressurizing the government to realize the promised political changes. As those promises for change were made under a lot of international pressure, international engagement for their realization would be appropriate. Further, the particular stipulations within the peace agreements bear the strong (neo-liberal) signature of some of those international actors. In case those agreements do not result in the agreed upon objectives of reducing economic inequality and a better life for the Guatemalan rural population, the question is whether those international actors do not also have a responsibility to ensure their revision. The case of Guatemala dramatically shows how global governance and civil society may have an increasing influence on national processes of governance, but that at the same time mechanisms are eroding that would enable the citizens of the nations concerned to demand accountability for
the processes of change initiated. These are the kind of processes that made Chandler conclude that people increasingly turn into ‘non-citizens’. While the significance of nation-states dwindles, people effectively lose their civic rights to hold their government accountable and this is not replaced by means to hold the international community accountable, for example for their negligence of the implementation of the Guatemalan peace agreements. As Chandler concludes his article: “While the non-citizens have gained no more power to influence the policy-making of the major Western states they have lost the right to hold their own governments to account” (Chandler 2003).
Chapter 8
Conclusion
The everyday practices of civi-society peacebuilding

This thesis aims to contribute to a better understanding of civil-society peacebuilding and the possible contributions international development organizations can make to it. Its main argument is that to arrive at such a better understanding requires exploring the everyday peacebuilding practices of civil-society organizations. My research started from the observation that international support to civil-society peacebuilding is often guided by simplified notions on conflict and its relation to peace and development, and the roles of civil society in conflict and bringing about peace. To arrive at better peacebuilding practices, this research argues that analysts and development practitioners need to know more about what civil society is, how it works, and how the assumptions motivating its support work out in practice. This requires looking at the everyday practices of civil-society peacebuilding (cf. Hilhorst 2003). Therefore, in this thesis, I looked at three issues in particular. First, the politics and images of civil-society peacebuilding and how they correspond to civil-society peacebuilding in practice. Second, how peacebuilding practices result from how organizations operate and develop, and from the different meanings attributed to peacebuilding by the diverse parties involved. And third, the practices of framing of conflict situations and the assumptions underlying peacebuilding interventions.
In particular, I explored how general theories, ideologies, and intentions underlying peacebuilding interventions acquire meaning and gain legitimacy in practice. In this, I considered several levels of the ‘aid chain’, looking at headquarters and country offices of international development organizations and their back-donors, local NGOs and other local civil-society organizations, and the communities in which peacebuilding programmes were implemented. In my fieldwork and analysis, I applied an actor-oriented approach, looking at how individual actors use their knowledge and capabilities to interpret and respond to their experiences, and find room for manoeuvre in promoting particular representations of reality (Long 1992). Such an orientation also implies that the policies and interventions of an organization can only be understood by looking at the everyday practices of staff within organizations and the people of the communities where they implement their programs.

A core notion in this book was discourse, referring to collective practices of ordering or ‘framing’ in the minds of actors, who try to organize and make sense of their experiences through coherent schemes. In the thesis, several discourses were discussed, including discourses on peacebuilding and the roles of civil society in this (chapter 2), discourses on the peacebuilding potential of women (chapter 4) or traditional institutions (chapter 6), or the current tendency to frame conflict and peacebuilding from a regional perspective (chapter 5). Among different manifestations of discourse, I looked in particular at policy. Policy is not so much a technical response to a given problem. Rather, it is an ongoing process of interpretation of a problem, which is shaped along the way by participants at different levels within and outside the ‘aid-chains’ with their own interests and perspectives, and different degrees of influence on and dependency of what policy is made. In many instances, what happens in practice is in no way related to policy. Rather than guiding implementation (Long 2001; Mosse 2004), policy may do different things: it may establish routine, create order, make sense of action, or legitimate programmes or organizations (Hilhorst 2003; Nuijten et al. 2004).

In the tradition of Foucault, discourses are often seen as implying power – as dominant traditions of looking at the world which eliminate alternative visions, or as affecting social relations through diverse ways. In practice, what we see is that different discourses may exist at the same time. For example in the Great Lakes Region (chapter 5) regional and national discourses on land disputes and governance problems continued to exist and inform programmes next to each other. In chapter 2 it was analysed how a recent discourse emphasizing the threat of terrorism to global peace may co-exist with discourses emphasizing a diversity of threats to security. Discourses are also seen to imply power in the sense that they affect social relations in diverse ways. Organizations may use discourses strategically to legitimate interventions or to promote particular agendas for development. An interest of my research was to explore how and why particular discourses were adopted by particular organizations.

While acknowledging the powerful attributes of discourse, my book focussed on discourse as a cognitive process to simplify reality, a necessary response to complexity. In situations of conflict and violence, intervening organizations find it often difficult to obtain accurate information, while the outcomes of their interventions are unpredictable. Conflict situations involve a multitude of relationships, and causes and factors underlying violence are constantly changing. Dealing with such complexity
requires organizations to simplify reality in order to be able to function.\(^1\) There are always different interpretations of a situation which nonetheless determine how interventions take shape. Two questions thus repeatedly recurred in this thesis: what are the consequences of simplification and particular representations of reality? How can development organizations better take account of the necessary simplifications they make?  

At the same time, the several case studies in this book underscore that in practice it is often difficult to separate the cognitive or rational exercise of ordering from the politics of ordering. The two often interact or go closely together. For example, labelling activities as peacebuilding may be an effort of legitimizing interventions, while also implying a real change in how organizations interpret their activities. Understanding ordering processes requires giving attention to those several attributes of discourse concurrently.

The following sections bring together what the case studies tell us about the everyday practices of civil-society peacebuilding. To start with, I reflect on the term peacebuilding, and how it has acquired meaning in the practices of international and local development organizations. Then I discuss the three themes identified in the introduction of this thesis. First, I look at policies and images of civil-society peacebuilding, and the roles international and local development organizations attribute to local civil society in governance. What did such assumptions lead to in practice in the case studies? Second, I reflect on the organizing practices of peacebuilding organizations. What do the case studies reveal about how civil-society organizations operate, develop, and how they are influenced by conflict and organizational politics? Third, I analyse the practices of framing and the simplifications that inform peacebuilding interventions. Through which processes do international and local development organizations arrive at the interpretations of reality they apply? The conclusion ends with the implications of my findings for practitioners. How can international organizations that aim to enhance the peacebuilding work of their local partners improve their practices?

What is peacebuilding?

It is sometimes argued that peacebuilding has become a buzzword or a label pragmatically applied by organizations without changing much in their practices (Denkus 2007). However, this thesis has pointed out how peacebuilding discourses have had real implications for policies and practices of international and local development organizations. To understand how the notion of peacebuilding influences practices of organizations, we may distinguish between peacebuilding as pointing to particular activities, peacebuilding as discourse, and peacebuilding as a label.

\(^1\) Of course, dealing with complexity is also an issue for organizations working in less conflictive and violent contexts, where the consequences of simplification and framing development situations may be equally significant.
First, the term peacebuilding may point to particular activities—interventions like organizing local peace conferences or reconciliation activities. Peacebuilding in this sense may also refer to an integrated series of interventions—or an agenda—to contribute to a peaceful society. Second, peacebuilding can also be understood as discourse, pointing to how over the last fifteen years many organizations have come to reflect on how their programmes contribute to peaceful societies. As analysed in chapter 2, what emerged was not a circumscribed and shared peacebuilding agenda. Rather, a shared preoccupation developed with the impacts of different kinds of interventions on peace and conflict, with the need for long-term commitments to countries in conflict, and with certain strategies to achieve this. As discourse, peacebuilding is about a multiplicity of interventions and expertises. In chapter 2, I identified several domains of peacebuilding, each emphasizing particular transformations necessary to arrive at peaceful societies:

- Diplomacy and peace negotiation— to arrive at agreement and official settlement of conflict
- Military actions— to create security and a safe living environment
- Economic reconstruction and development— to enhance economic well-being and prevent future conflict over resources and services
- Reforming governance— to enhance political representation and institutions for dealing peacefully with societal conflict
- Justice and human-rights protection— to enhance legal security and protection
- Restoring the social fabric of society— to heal social relations and address the psycho-social consequences of violence

Although since the beginning of the new millennium peacebuilding discourses were partially replaced by discourses on security, and the seeming peacebuilding consensus shattered, many international development organizations remain keen to contribute to peace. While the review of academic and policy discussions in chapter 2 suggested a sequence of discourses informing the interventions of international development organizations, the analysis of policies and country programmes of international organizations in chapter 3 showed that practices of organizations follow slower and different paths. Rather than that international development organizations change their practices when new discourses come into fashion and replace previous ones, different discourses continue to be relevant in the practices of organizations. This provides room for manoeuvre to organizations which dispose of multiple discourses at the same time. Consequently, peacebuilding discourses have changed politics and interpretations of interventions and remain important. Peacebuilding has become a ‘lens’ (Goodhand 2006), or frame to look at interventions.

Finally, peacebuilding may be seen as a label. As observed in the analysis of peacebuilding mandates and country policies of four international development organizations (chapter 3), many interventions that are now considered as peacebuilding show remarkable continuities with earlier interventions. In southern
Sudan (chapter 4), many so-called ‘development for peace’ programmes consisted of regular development interventions that were now promoted for their contribution to peace. In such cases, the term peacebuilding appears to form part of organizational politics, and does not necessarily imply changes in practices. Highlighting their peacebuilding roles enables organizations to demonstrate their continuing relevance in a changing global context (cf. Guttal 2005; Barnett et al. 2007), and legitimizes the interventions and the organizations implementing them (Cramer 2006: 81). Further, peacebuilding is a mobilizing metaphor that brings together different interests and views into one combined model, thereby facilitating collective action (Goodhand 2006: 174; Barnett et al. 2007).

However, applying the peacebuilding label may also result from a genuine interest of an organization to enhance existing practices within an organization. We should therefore be careful to disqualify peacebuilding only as a re-labelling of activities. Organizations may even decide not to apply the label of peacebuilding, even when working on issues that would be coined peacebuilding in other contexts or organizations. Chapter 3 illustrated, that when moving from general policies to particular country programs, organizations preferred other terms than peacebuilding, which better fit the political context in which they operated. In Burundi (chapter 6) many local organizations considered their interventions as addressing conflict, but did not describe those as peacebuilding, a term they reserved for activities affecting the national peace process. In many examples, the peacebuilding terminology was sensitive anyway, which contributed to its limited use. In Guatemala, few organizations spoke of reconciliation and human rights, though they framed their interventions in the context of the civil war and the need to arrive at a more ‘just’ society. Calling something peacebuilding may thus be for various reasons: it may result from a conviction that particular activities contribute to peace; it may legitimize particular activities or the organization implementing them; it may make sense of interventions and create routine and common understanding among staff of an organization. Different reasons for the use of the term peacebuilding may overlap.

The precise reasons why organizations apply the term ‘peacebuilding’ cannot be read from their mandates and policy documents but require one to look at the everyday practices of the organizations using the term. The same goes for understanding of what peacebuilding does and how it works – what peacebuilding is may be better described by its observed practices than by its policies and intentions. In this, we should be careful not only to look at interventions that are explicitly labelled as peacebuilding. Rather, in particular contexts, we need to explore how international and local organizations define conflict and peace and relate their interventions to those, and how in this they refer to international discourses of peacebuilding. In the case of Burundi (chapter 6), many organizations interpreted ‘peacebuilding’ as a process taking place at the national level which was outside their influence. Though seldom describing their work in terms of peacebuilding, they underscored the need of addressing local disputes and reforming the juridical system to enhance peace and stability at the local level. Though the term peacebuilding is not common in Guatemala, civil-society organizations have identified several issues as highly important to arrive at a peaceful society – exhumation of mass graves and trauma.
Partners in Peace

The different chapters in this book have underscored that how peacebuilding is understood depends on various things. The analysis of peacebuilding mandates of four international development organizations in chapter 3 underscored the importance of the experiential and ideological background in defining peacebuilding. International relations literature and diplomacy is often biased towards formal peace negotiations. Organizations that mainly have experience working at community level may have understandings of peacebuilding that are rather dissimilar to definitions of peacebuilding at the national level, primarily being interested in community reconciliation, mediating local disputes, strengthening institutions for local justice, or trauma counselling. Land disputes at community level were a recurring theme in the diverse case studies conducted. Many international and local organizations working at community level believed that resolving land disputes was a core challenge for arriving at stability, local feelings of justice, and re-establishing sustainable livelihoods in rural communities. At times, the room for manoeuvre for defining peacebuilding is limited by the political context. The peacebuilding strategy of Pastoral de la Tierra was not so much inspired by a perceived need among the peasants for legal assistance, but resulted also from the impossibility of the church to support struggles for land in ways considered illegal by other church members, including large land-owners. Defining peacebuilding is then a careful exercise of political positioning.

Finally, what peacebuilding is in policies and strategies of organizations may be very different from what it does in the practice of implementation. What happens in practice to peacebuilding policies depends on the context in which they are implemented and the ways in which they are shaped by actors within and outside the organization. What is understood as peacebuilding is not only defined at head-offices of organizations, but results from the daily practices of organizing. In this, the personal visions and experiential background of staff members play a role, but also the interpretations and choices by community members and local authorities that redefine peacebuilding to fit it to their live-worlds and perceptions. In the case of southern Sudan (chapter 4), members of a local women group adopted the discourse on women and peace from the Sudanese Women’s Voice for Peace, but imagined rather different roles for themselves to contribute to peace in their communities than those promoted by the organization at large. Peacebuilding acquires meaning locally in ways not foreseen by the implementing organizations concerned. Hence, even if the peacebuilding label is employed strategically by organizations, it might nonetheless—in unplanned and unexpected ways—acquire meaning in the practices of an organization (cf. Hilhorst 2003: 100/211). Even if headquarters of an organization opportunistically adopt the term ‘peacebuilding’, this may nonetheless alert agency staff to the conflict-relatedness of intervention, and change practices accordingly (see chapter 3).

In my view, peacebuilding discourses have thus impacted development thinking and practice. What is important in this is that particular frames of reality are applied that alert development organizations to the relationship between their practices and conflict. Nonetheless, those frames have not resulted in a common peacebuilding strategy. Several domains are considered as relevant for peacebuilding, but there is no...
consensus on their relative importance, nor on the question whether all domains need be addressed at the same time, or whether there is a necessary sequence. Consequently, every organization does its own peacebuilding, working in its own domain of expertise. Further, distinctions exist in what kind of peace to achieve through peacebuilding.

Chapter 3 pointed to differences between international organizations on the extent to which they considered peacebuilding as a technical process or as a process of societal transformation. When talking of reconciliation, for example, organizations may mean bringing conflicting parties together to acknowledge past harm and arrive at settlement. Alternatively, reconciliation may be a wider process of changing societal relations and injustices to prevent harm in the future. Peacebuilding can be interpreted in support of opposing political positions: as an activity requiring neutrality, or as implying taking sides in conflict.

Further, debates on what peacebuilding is about continue to be dominated by international organizations and donors. With all the talking of participatory approaches, the question remains to what extent international organizations and donors adapt their definitions and strategies to local circumstances, taking account of the definitions and priorities locally used. In this respect, the emergence of peacebuilding discourses and their incremental replacement by discourses on security tell us more of the realities of international organizations and donor agencies than of the local contexts where they operate. More attention should thus be given to local actors’ definitions and perspectives of what conflict and peacebuilding are about.

Images of civil-society peacebuilding

For many international development organizations, a central objective of peacebuilding is the fostering of political processes and institutions capable of dealing with societal conflict without resorting to violence but with authority and legitimacy (Cousens 2001). Such a concern has made many international development organizations and donors focus on practices of governance or state-society relations, and in particular on the roles of civil society in this (see chapter 2). This concern of international development organizations with civil-society peacebuilding roles relates to various developments: the observed failures of states to assure the needs of their citizens and their involvement in violence; the expansion of international NGO activity and growing interest in peacebuilding; and the increasing attention for civil society in wider development practice. Civil society is imagined to contribute to peaceful societies in a variety of ways. Civil-society organizations are seen as alternatives to the state in providing development needs. Further, they would contribute to good governance and democracy through playing watch-dog roles or act as a form of political opposition. Finally, they could play roles in healing societies torn apart by conflict, by mediating in local conflict and other reconciliation activities.

But while in the 1990s, civil society was attributed the core role in societal transformation, more recently, attention of international organizations has reverted to the state as the key agent for political change (Goodhand 2006: 183). Peacebuilding roles of civil society are reclaimed by donor governments and multi-lateral
organizations. At the same time, discussion evolved on the character of civil society and the assumptions underlying the promotion of civil-society peacebuilding. While initially the term ‘civil society’ mainly referred to social movements, over the 1990s, the term came to refer to an enormous variety of forms of association, ranging from social movements, to international and local NGOs, and local and traditional institutions (see Kaldor 2003), whose particular peacebuilding roles vary widely. It was increasingly realized that it was difficult to generalize about the political roles of civil society. Many civil society initiatives have no explicit political objectives, or even depend on the maintenance of the political status quo rather than its transformation (Hewitt de Alcantara 1998). Peacebuilding discourses tended to neglect the internal conflicts and ethnic biases of civil society, and the different visions on political options and tactical approaches (Cardoso 2003). The question arose if civil society was representative of the grassroots or speaking on behalf of a constituency at all (Chandler 1999; Crowther 2001). Hence, a pertinent question remains what roles civil society can fulfil in peacebuilding, in particular in improving state-society relations and nurturing legitimate institutions.

The mutual dependency between civil society and state institutions
The cases in this book point out that it is difficult to generalize about the potential and most appropriate roles of civil society in relation to the state. In the first place, the question remains what is the most appropriate balance between state institutions and civil society. Hewitt de Alcantara (1998) has argued that the equation of civil society with ‘the people’ easily leads to the conclusion that the government automatically oppresses civil society, or that a strong civil society requires a weak government. However, civil society may only be able to fulfil its role of watch-dog on the democratic process if properly functioning state institutions are present, and represent a minimum of economic and political power. In southern Sudan (chapter 4), many development organizations were eager to strengthen local civil society but were hesitant to strengthen state institutions. Nonetheless, they increasingly realized that the reconstruction of southern Sudan required the establishment of local authorities. Civil society cannot take over decision-taking from authorities, while democratic and accountable civil society itself may depend on the existence of civil authorities. In a similar way, the discussion of local dispute resolving mechanisms in Burundi (chapter 6) underscored the benefits of the existence of several parallel institutions—resulting in mutual checks and balances—at the local level that people could address when having land disputes. For a strong civil society to develop, the development of a healthy institutional context is crucial. Without responsive civic authorities civil society will not be able to flourish. The role of civil society then is not to weaken the sovereignty of state, but rather support the government to fulfil its functions in a democratic way, by monitoring, correcting, and pressuring state authorities, and imagining alternatives.

The case of Burundi (chapter 6) in particular puts into doubt the idea that civil society could serve as a fairer alternative or even replace the failing formal institutions of the state. At community level, civil society only to a limited extent could fulfill such functions. Local institutions lack legal knowledge and differ in their interpretations of what justice is about. While local institutions might in principle be better adapted to
take care of the local particularities of conflict and local sense of justice, and be less corrupt than the formal juridical system, the case of Burundi shows that this is not necessarily the case. Moreover, precisely such characteristics are lost when local institutions are seen as alternatives to the state juridical system. Supporting local institutions did not always result in strengthening of those institutions but could also end in their formalization. Interventions to build the capacity of local institutions to address conflict with reference to nationally agreed rules and norms may result in that local institutions come to evaluate disputes and access to land more from a legal viewpoint than from local perspectives of what justice is about, thereby moving those institutions further away from the communities. Maybe more important than the proper balance between institutions of civil society and the state is the accessibility of institutions – both local and state. Formalizing local institutions may in fact move them further away from people in the communities.

The development of civil society
Further, the particular roles civil-society organizations may play in peacebuilding and their most effective contributions to governance strongly depend on the particular context, and how this influences organizations. In many instances, civil society is heavily affected by conflict, reducing its capacities for peacebuilding. In southern Sudan, at local level several traditional institutions existed to deal with conflict. However, many of those had eroded significantly as a consequence of violence, or were incapable to deal with the large-scale violence affecting their communities. In Burundi, traditional institutions were no longer by definition the most appropriate actors in realizing reconciliation or guaranteeing the protection of all, even if such institutions had traditionally fulfilled such roles. In Guatemala, after years of not being taken seriously politically, it may be difficult to civil-society organizations to arrive at reform through other means than militancy.

In many cases, local conditions pose limitations for the democratizing roles of civil society envisaged. It is questionable that civil society represents a vision different from government. In the Great Lakes Region (chapter 5), the affinity of civil society with state politics impeded possibilities for regional civil-society peacebuilding interventions. Before civil society could play a role in reconciling governments, reconciliation of civil society itself was necessary. Often, there is much more continuity between civil society and (in)formal structures of governance than assumed by outsiders. In eastern DRC and southern Sudan, for many people with political aspirations, civil society functioned as an alternative to inaccessible government structures. As soon as opportunities arose, civil leaders started participating in state governance structures.

Many civil initiatives established in or immediately after conflict are tainted by a non-democratic and violent past. In both southern Sudan and Guatemala, local NGOs and peasant and labour movements had formed from the vanguard of the resistance movements and often maintained their authoritarian or even military style of communicating and organizing. Those organizations continued to be dominated by their first-generation leaders, as no efforts had been put into training middle cadres. Finally, in both southern Sudan and Guatemala, the question was if such organizations were representative and legitimate, as many of them depended for their continuation
more on external financial support than on a legitimating constituency. As a result, such civil society initiatives had as limited local legitimacy as the authorities of the state, so despised for their undemocratic character.

**Different conditions require different roles for civil society**

Finally, it is impossible to talk of the roles that civil-society organizations should play in peacebuilding. Different conditions require different roles for civil society. This makes it highly difficult for local civil-society organizations to identify appropriate roles as well as for international organizations to define strategies to support them. We may hypothesize that in an autocratic state, the most appropriate role for civil society may be to function as a counter-voice, urging for alternative ways to deal with societal conflict. In a so-called ‘failed state’, maybe civil society should rather aim at providing development needs the government is unable or unwilling to offer. Nonetheless, as the case of post-conflict Guatemala shows, different organizations have adopted different roles and are in constant conflict with each other about what is the most appropriate strategy.

Nonetheless, in this latter case, international organizations apparently had power over the particular roles civil society could fulfil. Many organizations prioritized organizations that conformed to the legal and political status quo and hesitated to support more activist organizations. At the same time, they were not eager to demand that the Guatemalan government abide by the peace agreements. The case underscores that international organizations tend to have particular ideals of what civil society should do and should look like, and are eager to support only those organizations fitting their image. This results also in that international organizations tend to establish their own structures of civil society, rather than building forth on existing institutions (see e.g. the cases of southern Sudan and Burundi), thereby in fact disqualifying local manifestations of civil society. Further, it is striking that in Africa international organizations tend to emphasize the roles of local civil society in service provision and reconciliation, while in Latin America, the more political roles of civil society as watch-dog and oppositional force are acknowledged.

There is a need to review conventional ideas on civil society and governance underlying peacebuilding interventions. It is impossible to generalize on the respective roles of local civil society and state institutions in societal transformation and governance. Without functioning civil authorities, civil society can not fulfil its role of counterbalancing the state. In many instances, the extent to which civil society can replace failing state institutions is limited. The most appropriate roles of and balance between civil society and state institutions strongly depend on local conditions. International support to local civil society need to take more account of prevailing forms of governance and the history and development of civil society in a particular context.
Organizing practices of peacebuilding

Peacebuilding practices are more than a translation and adaptation of policies and strategies into practice. Policy is an ongoing process that is shaped along the way by participants with their own interests and different perspectives. To understand how peacebuilding policies and discourses work out in practice, it is also important to look at the organizing practices of peacebuilding. What an organization is and does is not only the result of its general objectives, but is also a result of these dynamics. In chapter 4, I have demonstrated different dynamics at play within organizations doing peacebuilding. Those were also highly important in the other case studies, and play a role in local as much as in international organizations.

Peacebuilding organizations embody different pedigrees

How peacebuilding organizations operate is very much a result of their institutional history, the histories of their staff members as well as developments in their national, historical and cultural context. Although there was substantial overlap in the mandates of the four international organizations discussed in chapter 3, there were significant differences in their peacebuilding practices. Ideological and experiential backgrounds were an important determinant of which domains and activities they prioritized, their relation with civil society, and the extent to which they considered peacebuilding as social and political transformation. The case of SWVP (chapter 4) shows how this organization and its local chapter in Narus went through several transformations that profoundly changed the character of the organization, but nonetheless continued to have impact on how it operated. From a voluntary organization it became an NGO with a few salaried staff. This implied a revision of tasks that was little discussed within the organization. The voluntary past of the organization nonetheless led to all kinds of problems in the everyday division of responsibilities in the NGO. Many organizations in Guatemala (chapter 7) originate from an activist past or have their roots in the resistance movements. Since the peace agreements, they have had to redefine their roles. This process is heavily influenced by how they have emerged in the past, e.g. their hierarchical way of decision taking and limited participation from their constituents. When dealing with organizations in peacebuilding, one needs to take account of how they developed and where they came from.

Peacebuilding organizations have multiple identities

Organizations are made up of people who have multiple identities, and organizations fulfill different roles in the life of stakeholders. People participating in a peacebuilding organization may be committed peace activists, but may also acquire an income from their work with an organization. Such multiple identities are reproduced in the organization. Organizations are a space where people meet, from which they acquire their social status, and from which they acquire a livelihood. At times, the identity of an organization may conflict with the individual ambitions and objectives of the people participating in it. The dependence of the women of Narus (chapter 4) on brewing alcohol made it difficult for their organization to campaign against alcohol even if alcohol was a major factor in local violence. At times, an organization may be
more relevant for members than at other moments. It was for instance difficult to distinguish the local women's group of the SWVP in Narus from other networks and organizations established by different agencies. Family or ethnic affiliations crossing through organizations may at times provide more meaning, stability and coherence than formal objectives and activities of an organization. This implies that international organizations supporting such initiatives need to gain insight in those multiple identities, better coordinate in supporting local groups, and tone down expectations of what such groups can achieve.

**Peacebuilding organizations consist of multiple realities**

There is no single answer to the question what an organization is, what it wants and what it does. Organizations typically hinge around different discourses that each play a role in the way in which the organization derives its meaning and which are played out differently in different domains. Discourses are used strategically to manage relations, including relations with donors. SWVP was as much a peacebuilding organization as a vehicle to strengthen the position of women. The Narus group was a mutual support group as well as a peacebuilding initiative. Peacebuilding organizations in the Great Lakes Region were simultaneously vehicles for the political ambitions of their leaders who were excluded from the political process. Those different discourses prevailing in NGOs are not necessarily a weakness – they can reinforce or contradict each other. In the case of Guatemala, PTSM needed to be careful in defining its strategy to assist peasants with land conflicts. Though they operated as a development or advocacy organization, after all, they also represented the Catholic Church to which many of the large landowners in the region belonged.

**Peacebuilding organizations are decentred**

Organizations derive their meaning not only from their objectives and work plans. Rather, the meaning of organization results from everyday negotiations of staff-members and stakeholders. All staff members reflect on the meaning of the organization, the context in which they work, and the events that happen around them. Through their everyday practices, they display particular meanings of the organization. In international development organizations (chapter 3), general peacebuilding policies acquire meaning as a result of the negotiations and interpretations of staff members in the regions, who have to take account of local realities of peacebuilding and to manage relations with local partners and authorities. Staff members working at this level may be more concerned with maintaining existing networks of partners than to identify new ones following changes in organizational policies. In this, also outsiders play a role, like funding agencies, who may have a significant impact on how an organization imagines its role in peace. Consider for example the case of Cordaid, whose concern in peacebuilding was heavily influenced by funding practices and the demands of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. In the case of SWVP (chapter 4), Pax Christi had an important role in reshaping the organization, through its direct contacts with the local chapters.

The fact that what organizations are is not determined by their leaders only, but by all stakeholders involved requires supporting organizations to look beyond contact
with management representatives and also take account of perceptions of staff and images of organizations in the outside world.

**Peacebuilding organizations are fundamentally political in nature**

Finally, organizations are fundamentally political in nature. For example, in the Great Lakes Region, civil-society organizations strongly identified themselves with the regional politics of their respective governments. But peace organizations are not just involved in the politics of peace and conflict, but as much in everyday politics of the production of meaning and the reallocation of resources and in the politics of legitimization of their organization vis-à-vis other stakeholders. In Guatemala, organizations were deeply involved in politics of survival, competing heavily for constituents, and being hesitant to work collaboratively, fearing to become superfluous. In assisting local peasants in land disputes, Pastoral de la Tierra continuously needed to convince those peasants of the legal strategies and definitions of justice they applied. Similarly, international development organizations need to convince their donors of their continuing relevance, and thus might get involved in matters of conflict in peace.

Those different kinds of politics intertwine in practice. As part of organizational competition, civil-society organizations in Guatemala, Burundi and southern Sudan accused each other of political dependence or covert support. Supporting organizations need take account of the (ideological) political roles of their partners. At the same time, they need be careful to interpret all organizational politics as stemming from political differences around the conflict.

Peacebuilding organizations are thus entities about which a bewildering number of stories can be told. Within an organization different meanings of the organization exist. To understand what peacebuilding organizations are cannot be read from their mandates and policies, from reading their reports, talking with the director, or organizing a single participatory workshop. Rather, it requires sensitivity to the different dynamics at play within organizations. Likewise, to understand what organizations do requires looking at their organizing practices. Rather than a series of orderly planned and structured activities –applying a sequence of planning, monitoring, evaluation and feedback– what an organization is doing is the result of continuous interpretation and reinterpretation. In the case of southern Sudan (chapter 4), what peacebuilding meant in practice was rather different from what intended in the original project proposal, but was nonetheless in line with the understandings and ambitions of the local women doing the peacebuilding. This is not only the case for local organizations. Similar dynamics are at work within international development organizations. As we have seen in chapter 3, peacebuilding interventions were translated down the line by project staff, who had their own understanding, theories and objectives of how strategies should contribute to peace.

A core issue is that peacebuilding organizations constantly change and have to adapt to changing circumstances. For many organizations this is not easy. The breaking out of peace often results in a breaking up of peace organizations. Changing circumstances may result in a crisis of identity, in which organizations have to redefine their roles and strategies. In Guatemala, ten year after the peace agreements, many
organizations were still struggling to redefine themselves. For many, their struggle was more about organizational survival than about their earlier political agendas. Preceding the peace agreements it was clear for organizations what to fight for or against. However, the outbreak of peace required a redefinition of strategies, while there were also continuities with the period of conflict, and it was a challenge to define the most appropriate strategy. The case points out that in discussions on civil society assistance more attention should be given to changes in civil society. In this respect, it needs to be acknowledged that civil society may not only strengthen, but may also weaken.

**Simplification and framing in peacebuilding**

Discussions about the roles of international agencies in local civil-society peacebuilding often focus on the appropriate types of support, the types of partnership, and the measurability of civil-society peacebuilding interventions. The different cases in this book underscore the importance of looking at assumptions underlying frames and interventions. This thesis started from a constructivist perspective. If knowledge is always partial and socially constructed, it is important to consider the ordering practices and simplifications underneath interventions, and explore their possible consequences. Ordering always implies a loss of detail, and a diversion of attention away from important parts of reality.

This thesis has analysed several examples of how conflict situations are framed, and how framing directs understanding and intervention, by highlighting one side of reality, but neglecting other aspects. In the case of the Great Lakes Region, conflict was increasingly framed as a regional issue, necessitating regional interventions. This regional framing of conflict reflected in efforts of international organizations and donors to promote civil-society peacebuilding, which came to assume that regional cooperation and exchange between civil-society organizations would contribute to peace (chapter 5). In the case of Burundi (chapter 6), land disputes were primarily understood as an issue of returning refugees. Those disputes had to be resolved by local institutions, as state institutions were considered weak, corrupt, and unfair. Such a framing ignored the long-term character of disputes, the involvement of the state, and the fact that many local disputes involved relatives rather than returnees and people belonging to another ethnic group. It also failed to take account of the weaknesses, inaccessibility and ineffectiveness of local institutions. In the case of PTSM in Guatemala (chapter 7), the legal strategy adopted framed how the organization interpreted conflict and possible solutions to it, thereby highlighting particular aspects of conflict and neglecting others. While the focus of the southern Sudan case study (chapter 3) was not on framing practices, it illustrated the importance attributed to civil society in arriving at development and peace at the local level, therein de-emphasizing the role of local authorities in this. How to explain the coming into being of such particular framings? The case studies point to some common tendencies in ordering practices by international and local peacebuilding organizations.
• The tendency to separate emergency from normality

Over the last decade, conflict theorists have come to emphasize the continuities between situations of violent conflict and peace. This thesis underscores such a perspective. Civil war is not only something of warlords that use violence to underline their greedy claims or grievances. It is much more fluid. Civil war also involves the refugee woman returning to her community of origin in Burundi to find her land occupied by her cousins. Her conflict is not over after the peace agreements (cf. Hilhorst 2007). For local women in southern Sudan, their development needs defined as peacebuilding remain as urgent with the coming of official peace. Similarly, for many of the rural labourers in Guatemala, the peace agreements changed little in their livelihoods. Let alone the introduction of neo-liberal economic reforms that adds a new dimension to their struggle against injustices from the past. As a result, in the experience and livelihoods of local people there is lot of continuity between conflict and peace.

In addition, the cases in this book have illustrated that, though dynamics of conflict at national and local level may strongly relate, local experiences and manifestations of violence and conflict seldom run parallel to conflict at national level. In the case of Burundi, local land disputes were indeed related to national issues such as the massive return of refugees, but also had many local dimensions. The way ethnicity manifests itself in the national political process does not correspond to how it plays a role in local community relations and disputes about land. In southern Sudan, the women of Narus had entirely different experiences of what the conflict was about that the women of SWVP living in Nairobi. This also blurs the artificial line between conflict and peace, because it raises the question of whose peace and what level we are talking about.

My research points out that to some extent awareness of such continuities reflects in the work of international and local development organizations. Organizations in southern Sudan and Burundi had done away with the idea of a relief-development continuum, and consider that more developmental activities and more humanitarian interventions often can go side by side, or urged that humanitarian aid would be developmental. It is acknowledged that violence is one strategy to deal with societal conflict, and that such conflict is not resolved with an ending of violence (cf. Galtung 1996/2003). Development may be a continuation of conflict by other means (cf. Cramer 2006). And while direct violence may come to an end, in the heads of people it may continue. In particular, there is increasing acknowledgement of structural violence against women in war and non-war situations (Schirch and Sewak 2005).

Nonetheless, in the practices of many organizations, the idea remains strong that ‘conflict’ and ‘peace’ are two opposing situations. Many development organizations continue to consider the context of conflict-related and peacebuilding work as fundamentally different from ‘regular’ development co-operation. The case studies in this book point out the risks of focussing on conflict as if it can be separated out, as if it is a situation of abnormality. In Guatemala, assuming that a new order had emerged since the peace agreements made international organizations forget about continuities in inequality and limited political representation. In Burundi, responses focussing on land disputes from a perspective of crisis forgot about the long-term and structural character of land disputes, and made organizations neglect the development needs of
the rural populations they were addressing. Interventions came to focus at the local dimensions of conflict, emphasizing how communities would be torn apart by conflict, forgetting about the involvement of the state in their conflicts.

Such framing in terms of crisis reflects a more general tendency of organizations – and academics2 – to categorize and to split up the contexts in which they work. This splitting up of reality makes it possible to identify separate tasks and responsibilities, each of which can be addressed individually, by particular organizations with particular experiences. This splitting up forgets about the interrelatedness and continuities of different processes and tasks. By separating peacebuilding from development, it can be separately addressed. At the same time, attention is turned away from the fact that development is always a process of conflict and re-establishing new relationships of power. It also forgets about the fact that many of the processes described in fact do not have clear beginning or endings, and often even no commonly understood objectives (cf. Lederach 1997/2004).

• The tendency to focus on techniques
In several case studies it was pointed out how particular framings highlighted the technical dimensions of conflict and its resolution. In the Great Lakes Region, international interventions to promote regional civil-society peacebuilding basically interpreted the coming together of civil society as a process of exchange and collaboration. Little attention was given to the problem of reconciling those organizations. In Burundi, many organizations interpreted land disputes as originating from contradictions in or the absence of proper legislation, and the malfunctioning of the juridical system. This urged them to focus on the development of new legislation, re-establishing formal institutions, and enhancing the knowledge existing in local institutions of state legislation. Thereby they forgot about the accessibility and fairness of all institutions, both state and local ones. In Guatemala and Burundi, many civil-society organizations applied legal approaches to deal with conflict at the local level, at the neglect of mediation as a strategy. In those two cases, this also resulted from the fact that many staff of local NGOs had a legal background. This ‘legal reflex’, the belief that law is the most effective and perhaps only form of protection against conflict is not uncommon in human-rights work (Gready and Ensor 2005: 9).

• The tendency to interpret reality according to one’s own frames of reference
Several case studies pointed to how the (ideological) background of an organization and the particular experiences of its staff members play an important role in how conflicts are interpreted. In the Great Lakes Region (chapter 5), regional analyses strongly reflected the background of organizations, with human-rights organizations highlighting the regional character of human-rights violations. As staff members with a legal background tend to be overrepresented in civil-society organizations, the interpretation of conflict as a failure of implementing legislation is quite common, as is the promotion of legal expertise in local institutions and communities.

2 Consider for example the differentiation made in the literature between ‘new’ and ‘old’ wars, or ‘inter-state’ and ‘intra-state’ conflict.
In a similar way, background plays a role in what intervention strategies are imagined. When exploring opportunities for civil-society peacebuilding, international relations literature is often biased towards the national level and is thus concerned about how civil society can participate in formal peace negotiations. To organizations that have more experience working at the local level, civil-society peacebuilding may be a process that is rather independent of what is happening at the national level. Civil-society peacebuilding is then about community reconciliation, mediating local disputes, strengthening institutions for local justice, or trauma counselling. In chapter 2, I presented different domains of peacebuilding, each prioritizing particular processes necessary for arriving at peaceful societies. The prioritization of some domains above others depends very much on the particular experience of organizations, as showed in chapter 3. Further, chapter 3 also pointed out how experiential and ideological background of international organizations played an important role in the extent to which they considered civil-society peacebuilding as a technical exercise of strengthening organizational capacities of civil society, or as enhancing local organizations’ capacities to contribute to societal transformation.

The politics of ordering

Much analysis of discourse emphasizes how particular discourses exclude alternative visions of reality, or regulate and legitimate particular interventions. In contrast, this thesis underscores the cognitive aspect of discourse, seeing discourse as a necessary practice to simplify reality, to order the work of organizations and create routine. At the same time, the different attributes of discourse interrelate, and can often not be fully separated – framing is a cognitive process as much as a process of establishing power-relations, and legitimizing an organization and its intervention. For example, the notion of peacebuilding often refers to a more or less coherent set of ideas on what conflict is about and what can be done about it. Peacebuilding as a framing of interventions implies a process of ordering as much as a process of power. Peacebuilding orders reality by presenting the resolution of conflict as a process of societal change to which international actors can contribute through diverse interventions. At the same time, labelling activities or programmes as peacebuilding may legitimize those, and attract the attention of funders. Simplification and framing may be both opening up possibilities for intervention and restricting them. On the basis of the case studies, various tendencies can be identified in the politics of ordering.

- **Legitimizing intervention**

  Practices of ordering and framing get closely intertwined with organizing interests and processes of power and legitimization. The above described tendency to interpret context and possible interventions in terms of the response modalities available to an organization (see Warner 2008: 223 ff.) may often relate to a concern to be relevant and create opportunities for intervention. In the Great Lakes Region, the impossibility
of organizations to arrive at shared interpretations of regional conflict dimensions was not only the result of a lack of analytical power, but also of deep political cleavages and an unwillingness of organizations to arrive at interpretations that highlighted regional inter-linkages between problems. In framing regional conflict, local civil-society organizations focussed on the consequences of conflict rather than its causes, thereby limiting the need for collaboration. The ordering practices of legally oriented development organizations in Burundi to interpret land problems mainly as resulting from failing institutions and improper laws legitimized a focus on legal training, civic education, and advocacy for legal reform. As observed in chapter 2, framing conflict in terms of intra-state or informalized conflict legitimizes limited diplomatic involvement of the international community that leaves responsibility for peacebuilding with local actors. In the case of southern Sudan (chapter 4), framing interventions in terms of international discourses on women peace makers offered a starting point for intervention, facilitated lobbying, and made the achievement of peace more visible. Various ordering practices thus legitimize organizations to intervene but also not to intervene.

- **Enabling intervention**
  Framing practices also help organizations to conceive reality in such a way that intervention is possible. In the case the Great Lakes Region, the concern of international development actors with regional approaches for peacebuilding is an effort to present conflict in such a way that it could be addressed effectively. An interpretation that inherently emphasized that conflict situations can be compared makes it easier to intervene. It decreases the importance of specific and local knowledge, thereby enabling the use of general models and strategies. In practice, however, this case showed how regional approaches indeed were able to provide a rough sketch which suggested that comparison was possible, but failed to provide the necessary details at national level. Regional approaches thus seemed to facilitate the work of organizations, but lost their significance in their application in everyday practices in the different countries. More in general, framing conflict situations in terms of complexity may have many advantages. Complexity in itself may legitimate intervention as well as inaction: ‘we do not know how it works, but we need to do something nevertheless’, but also, ‘as we do not know how it works, we cannot take a decision yet’.

- **Political positioning**
  Politics of ordering were clear in the work of Pastoral de la Tierra in Guatemala, where the existing political space put limits to what kind of strategies the organization could apply to deal with conflict. Its ‘neutral’ legalist approach assured that the organization could address the highly political issue of agrarian conflict. However, the framing of agrarian conflict in legalistic terms resulted in that land disputes were reduced to the legal conflicts they included, thereby ignoring dimensions of conflict that could not be solved by the law and the state institutions established to deal with land disputes. Hence, the interventions did not achieve the type of justice expected by local actors and hence the intention of pastoral to contribute to ‘justice’ and peace was only
realized to a certain extent. In the latter case, it was clear that the politics of framing are not just about opportunistic actors cunningly promoting particular organizational or private interests, but also result from the efforts of agency staff that desperately want to assist their constituents but at the same time need assure the political survival of their organizations.

- **Depoliticizing intervention**

  Finally, an important tendency in ordering is interpreting interventions in a-political terms. In particular Duffield (2001) has strongly criticized current peacebuilding discourses for implicitly promoting a neo-liberal development agenda. My findings underline the need for critical reflection on the political choices implicit in peacebuilding interventions. In several of the case-studies, organizations tended to translate political choices into technical problems that could be solved through collecting more information and rational decision making. It is easy to forget that such technical interventions may be highly political by maintaining the status quo.

  Unlike Duffield, I am not so much concerned about the geo-political agendas cunningly underlying peacebuilding, but rather about the everyday politics of peacebuilding. De-politicization is also feeding into organizational needs. Many organizations prefer non-political interventions. In southern Sudan (chapter 4) many international organizations were reluctant to get involved in activities they coined as ‘political’, for example the establishment of local authorities and co-operation with the resistance movement in the process of decentralization. In the end, the focus in most peacebuilding programmes was on development of infrastructure. In a similar way we may understand the ‘legal reflex’ of organizations in Guatemala and Burundi to support organizations involved in legal assistance rather than political activist organizations. In Guatemala, despite the fact that international organizations knew better, they supported civil-society organizations as if it was peace. It was easier for international organizations to frame the Guatemalan situation as a ‘normal’ situation of development and focus on capacity building of local civil-society organizations and leave them the responsibilities for change than to confront the government and demand implementation of the peace agreements. In a similar way, the regional approach was also a framing which helped international development organizations to see their interventions as a-political. By focussing on the region, there was no more need to deal with individual capricious governments, leaving responsibilities for political transformation to civil society. To civil-society organizations from the region, regional approaches legitimized a focus on the effects of regional dynamics rather than causes and the prevention of regional conflict dynamics.

  Where does this tendency towards non-political interpretations of peacebuilding come from? Current emphasis on results (which may be related to the neo-liberal discourse) makes development organizations tend towards the techniques of intervention, rather than to their politics. De-politicization is the result of ordering-mechanisms that interpret interventions primarily in terms of effectiveness. The question then is whether the problem is the implicit promotion of particular political agendas or rather its functionalism, and its tendency to consider political and social problems in technical terms only. As a result, the emphasis on civil society
strengthening is then on enhancing the technical functioning of organizations rather than their political choices and the social alternatives they offer. This raises the question whether international NGOs lose their relevance, if their focus of intervention is not on political agendas (see various contributions to Bebbington et al. 2008).

There are thus different processes through which organizations arrive at particular framings of the reality in which they operate. Those involve cognitive processes of ordering and creating routine, as much as organizational politics. Organizations tend to split up reality into parts, to focus on techniques of interventions, and to frame contexts and peacebuilding interventions according to their particular expertise. At the same time, organizational politics –intentionally or unintentionally– play a strong role in ordering. Organizations promote particular representations of reality that are in line with their possibilities for intervention, and that legitimate them to intervene. Further, organizations promote representations of reality that either underscore the politics of their interventions or rather that de-politicize them – again this is part of organizational politics.

What are the implications of my findings for practitioners?

Many development practitioners are interested in the peacebuilding potential of civil society and the effectiveness of international support. However, discussions on this topic are often highly theoretical and ideological, at the neglect of actual experiences in practice. This book has underscored that to understand what civil-society peacebuilding is and how it works requires looking at the everyday practices of civil-society peacebuilding. It underscores the importance of implicit assumptions in contemporary peacebuilding work, in particular on the potential roles of civil society, and the effects of such assumptions on intervention policies. It also underscores how peacebuilding practices are the result of organizational processes, and that to understand peacebuilding, more attention need to be given to the organizing practices of peacebuilding organizations. This has several implications for international organizations aiming to enhance the peacebuilding work of their local partners.

- Reconsider images of civil society and its roles in peacebuilding

Analysts and development practitioners need to reconsider current ideas on civil society and governance underlying peacebuilding interventions. It is impossible to generalize about the most appropriate roles of local civil-society organizations in societal transformation and governance. There is a need to take more account of local political context and the opportunities it provides to civil-society organizations, as well as of the organizing practices of peacebuilding organizations.
• **Take account of organizing practices of peacebuilding organizations**

This thesis has underscored the importance of organizational processes for everyday peacebuilding practices. In supporting peacebuilding, international development organizations need to give more attention to different perspectives on the organization and peacebuilding that simultaneously exist within organizations. What an organization is doing is the result of continuous interpretation and reinterpretation within organizations. Grasping the organizing practices of peacebuilding requires looking beyond the contacts with management representatives. It needs a more in-depth or even ethnographic methodology. Considering that organizations exist of multiple identities and mean different things for different people implies that there is no single truth about organizations, but that insights depend on particular interpretations. Methodologies for assessments, implementation and evaluation must be adjusted to this insight and rely more on multi-stakeholder dialogue than on so-called expert knowledge.

International organizations have to realize that capacity building of local organizations is a long-term process that needs serious commitment. International organizations should be more concerned about how organizations are affected by conflict, or change as a result of their interaction with international organizations. This is especially the case in (post-) conflict situations, where civil society tends to break down. The depletion of local resources, a lack of organizational capacities and the environment of suspicion in which civil-society organizations have to grow makes organization building in conflict or post-conflict situations complicated. International organizations must also be cautious in the kind of support they extend to local peacebuilding processes. Supporting peacebuilding requires recognizing and respecting indigenous notions, processes and time frames for organizational development. Finally, considering the slow pace of institutional change, rather than exploring how strengthening local civil-society peacebuilding works out now and then, organizations and their back-donors should practice patience to see results.

• **Express assumptions and agendas underlying peacebuilding**

Various authors observe the limited reference to theory in peacebuilding strategies (Smith 2004; Reimann and Ropers 2005: 33; Tschirgi 2005; Goodhand 2006: 178-9). However, this does not imply that organizations do not think through their interventions. Rather, peacebuilding policies and interventions are often based on a series of strong ideas, perceptions, assumptions, ideologies, and experiences. Organizations should take more care in making those more explicit, to unearth the simplifications they represent.

Organizations necessarily frame and simplify to make reality workable. Peacebuilding practice might advance from better models of the complexity of conflict situation. However, better understanding of complexity does not offer strategies to deal with this complexity, as the case of the Great Lakes Region underscored. As this thesis has pointed out, more important is the need to take more account of practices of framing and simplification. What is needed is motivated simplification, in which theories of change are made explicit, and in which opportunities for learning are built in from beforehand. In this, it is also important to look at the organizing practices and
politics of organizations. Understanding how development organizations operate and deal with the challenges posed by their complex environment may clarify the rationale behind their interventions (Smith 2004).

• **Acknowledge the continuities between conflict and peace**

If there is so much continuity between situations of conflict and peace, does it make sense to maintain a distinction between peacebuilding and regular development cooperation? Some have argued that maybe indeed international organizations should stop peacebuilding and finally start seriously with development (e.g. Barakat 2005). I maintain that peacebuilding should remain a special concern. In a context of violence development practitioners easily forget about the political, social and economic transformations that are also required in those situations. As the case of Guatemala demonstrates, for local people a focus on development is not enough. So far this has resulted in a focus on economic reform that has not contributed to reconciliation and addressing the injustices of the past.

At the same time, peacebuilding should be more concerned with institutions and their contributions to conflict and peace. Hence, rather than seeing peacebuilding only as an urgent issue in the context of (post-) conflict situations, a focus on peacebuilding may potentially contribute to better development, by taking better account of the conflict that development always involves. At the same time, there is a need to draw lessons from regular development cooperation to peacebuilding. The case of southern Sudan shows that for better peacebuilding practice there is an urgent need for better co-operation, participation and specialization among local civil society and international development organizations – concerns already mainstream in regular development cooperation.

• **Be concerned about the everyday politics of peacebuilding**

Finally, there is a need to take more account of the fact that peacebuilding is a political process and is about making political choices. Cynical interpretations have pointed out how international peacebuilding has become part of an international policy agenda to promote neo-liberal democracy. Unwittingly, development practitioners would contribute to this. Such a perspective does no justice to those development practitioners who consciously reflect on such global processes and whose agency has already resulted in changes to revert such trends (O’Brien 2005). However, as this book has pointed out, politics is not only in the grand scheme of promoting neo-liberal economic reform, but also in the smaller practices of supporting particular local manifestations of civil society, prioritizing particular target groups, and choosing to work through the existing status quo or to take a more activist approach. This thesis in particular argues for the need for institution building rather than civil society building.

On the other hand, the question is whether international organizations that explicitly aim to change power relations in society may achieve this. The case of southern Sudan showed how limited the actual impact can be of interventions composed from outside, as a result of the limited possibilities to direct interventions. Peacebuilding comes about locally, rather than that it is planned from outside. At the same time, various cases underscored the limited presence and thus limited impact of
international organizations at the local level. Finally, as the case of Guatemala shows, a shared international concern with political transformation is not necessarily translated into efforts to realize this or stick the government to its promises. Such experiences do not narrow options for politically engaged intervention. However, they limit expectations about the impact international development organizations might have.

- **Observe modesty and connect to local agendas**

Several authors warn for too high expectations of the peacebuilding potential of outsiders (Rieff 2003: 333; Goodhand 2006: 176/193). Underlying many peacebuilding interventions is still the assumption that outsiders have a moral responsibility to bring about the peaceful change that international diplomacy has failed to bring, or that outsiders have a moral authority over local parties after the latter have apparently failed to accomplish peace. In conflict situations outsiders consider to have the legitimate and far-going rights to stir in societal relations. The paradox is, however, that in practice international efforts quickly fade away at the local level. Considering the limited impact on the ground of such interventions, such far-going claims should be looked at with prudence. Instead, international organizations should connect and enhance local agendas. Rather than taking the lead in societal transformation, they should attempt to be partners in peace.
Bibliography


Partners in Peace


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Summary

This study looks into images, and assumptions, of civil-society peacebuilding and its support by international development organizations, and how this relates to politics and practices of peacebuilding on the ground. It is built principally on a series of case studies of peacebuilding interventions and organizations working in southern Sudan, Burundi and the African Great Lakes Region, and Guatemala. This study underscores the importance of implicit assumptions in contemporary peacebuilding work. International support to civil-society peacebuilding is often guided by simplified notions on conflict and the potential roles of civil society in bringing about peace. To arrive at better peacebuilding practices, it is necessary to know more about what civil society is, how it works, and how the assumptions motivating its support work out in practice. This requires exploring the everyday peacebuilding practices of civil-society organizations. In particular, attention needs be given to the organizing practices of peacebuilding organizations, how they operate and develop, to the different meanings attributed to peacebuilding by the diverse parties involved, and to how understanding peacebuilding is part of organizational politics.

In fieldwork and analysis, I applied an actor-oriented approach. Such an approach helps to clarify how policies and interventions of organizations result from the everyday practices of organizations and the people and authorities of the communities where they implement their programs. A core notion in this study is discourse, referring to collective practices of ordering or ‘framing’ in the minds of actors, who make sense of their experiences through coherent schemes. Discourses are often seen as implying power: as dominant traditions of looking at the world which eliminate alternative visions, or as affecting social relations through diverse ways. Organizations may use discourses strategically, for example, to legitimize interventions. Discourse can be highly political, promoting particular agendas for development.

While acknowledging the power of discourse, this study focuses on discourse as a cognitive process. To be able to operate and to respond to the complexity of conflict and peacebuilding, development organizations simplify reality. But simplifying reality always implies that parts of reality are lost or remain underexposed. In the case studies, I reflect on the consequences of simplification, and explore how development organizations can better take account of the necessary simplifications they make. In practice, it is often difficult to separate the cognitive exercise of ordering from the politics of ordering - the two often interact or go closely together. Simplification always implies political choices by prioritizing certain problems and interpreting particular interventions as the most appropriate. The study argues that to understand ordering requires giving equal attention to the several attributes of discourse. This research approach is elaborated upon in chapter 1.

Chapter 1 also reflects on my experiences with an interactive research approach. Through such an interactive approach, I aimed to develop a sense of ownership over questions and recommendations by the civil-society organizations involved in the
research and so enhance their peacebuilding work. In my experience, an interactive approach enhances the depth of ethnography and analysis of findings. Carrying out research with (instead of only on) organizations facilitates relations of trust and witnessing organizing practices from within organizations, and enables discussing findings with research partners. It stands out in this study that rather than a research methodology, the interactive character of research should be seen as an intention. The extent to which research becomes interactive cannot be planned, nor assured by the adoption of particular interactive methodologies. Rather, the interactive character of research develops with the advancement of collaboration. Crucial to this process is mutual commitment, which depends on the flexibility of the research and research partners, the expected benefits for the participants, the extent to which expectations are satisfied along the way, and the enthusiasm of individual participants. The interactive character of research is also affected by organizational changes and changing interests. Practically, this means that a researcher needs to ensure that space for participation and non-participation is maintained throughout the process.

The subsequent two chapters analyse international discourses and policies of peacebuilding, and look at a general level at how organizations make sense of conflict. Chapter 2 analyzes how over the 1990s, peacebuilding discourses developed that attributed a major role to civil society in realizing peace. Though seeming consensus on peacebuilding evaporated with the anti-terrorist policies after 9/11, and peacebuilding roles taken on by international NGOs and local civil-society organizations were reclaimed by donor governments and multi-lateral agencies, many international and local organizations continued to be involved in peacebuilding. Nonetheless, consensus on what peacebuilding should look like remains absent. Development actors differ considerably in prioritizing particular domains, and do not agree on the sequencing and interdependence of particular interventions. Moreover, practices of civil-society peacebuilding implicitly build on strong assumptions about the roles civil society, the state and international actors should play in peacebuilding and governance.

Chapter 3 analyses how those policy trends and emerging discourses regarding peacebuilding and civil society are reflected in the work of particular international development organizations. The chapter demonstrates that peacebuilding is not just an opportunistically applied policy label but has acquired different meanings in practice. Definitions of peacebuilding in policy strategies reflect the different backgrounds of organizations. At the same time, local conditions set limits and pose specific opportunities for peacebuilding. The chapter illustrates that rather than that international development organizations change their practices when new discourses come into fashion and replace previous ones, practices of organizations follow slower. Newer and older discourses continue to be relevant in the practices of organizations. This provides room for manoeuvre to organizations who find in this multiple grounds to legitimize a large range of intervention strategies. Policies are an ongoing process, and are shaped along the way by diverse participants, a theme that is elaborated upon also in the next chapters.

The remainder of the study discusses case studies of the everyday practices of civil-society peacebuilding in a variety of countries. Chapter 4 analyses the organizing practices of a local women’s peace organization in southern Sudan. The case
underscores how the practice of policy making and implementation is more related to the internal dynamics of an organization than to the planned objectives of the intervention. The chapter highlights that to better understand civil-society peacebuilding we need qualitative approaches that give central attention to dynamics of peace organizations. These include the history of an organization and the context in which it develops, the way conflict is experienced in the every day life of local people, the way how actors in and around organizations give meaning to the organization and its practices, and the politics of organizations. The chapter outlines such an approach, presenting five properties of local peace organizations that need be taken into account when supporting local peacebuilding.

The next two case studies look in particular at how the framing of conflict situations works through in interventions. Chapter 5 analyses how conflict and peacebuilding in the Great Lakes Region are increasingly framed in regional terms. In practice, however, local and international organizations have difficulty in analysing the regional character of conflict and arriving at collaborative regional strategies. Moreover, local civil-society organizations are deeply embedded in the politics of regional conflict. Consequently, the shift to regional peacebuilding approaches remains more theoretical than practical. A regional framing of conflict helps to understand conflict, but fails to inform intervention practice.

Chapter 6 discusses the consequences of understanding land disputes in Burundi as short term problem, resulting from the massive return of refugees and displaced to their home communities. This particular framing of land disputes urged international and local organizations to initiate programmes for strengthening the capacities of local conflict resolving institutions. The case material shows that though the return of refugees was a factor in disputes about land, there is a lot of continuity between conflict-related and regular land disputes in Burundi. Many land disputes require first and foremost solutions at the political level, rather than at the local level. Moreover, the question was whether the strengthening of local dispute resolving mechanisms would enhance their legitimacy and accessibility, and could guarantee the protection of vulnerable people. While a framing of local land disputes in terms of an emergency helped to define interventions, this framing neglected the long-term, structural character of many land disputes.

Chapter 7 tackles the question of what the official ending of violence implies for the roles, policies and practices of civil-society organizations. It discusses how Guatemalan civil-society organizations deal with agrarian conflict, ten years after the 1996 peace agreements. The case study shows how international organizations tend to assume that the peace agreements implied a switch to a peaceful situation, in which state institutions function, and civil society can effectively participate in the democratic process. This imagining makes them to assume that civil society now has to switch from protest to proposal, and to neglect the slow process of societal transformation in a post-conflict setting. The chapter argues that the pace and extent of societal transformation has a strong influence on how organizations can develop. It also illustrates that framing conflict and intervention is a continuous process, in which organizational politics play an important role. Finally, the chapter raises some questions on the overall roles of the international community in realizing peace. It argues that the increasing global influence on national governance processes
effectively diminishes the power of local citizens to demand accountability from their governments for the processes of change initiated.

Chapter 8, the conclusion of the study, argues the importance of looking at the everyday practices of peacebuilding. It points out how international discourses on civil-society peacebuilding have resonated in the policies of international development organizations. Over the last fifteen years many organizations have come to reflect on how their programmes contribute to peaceful societies. What emerged was not a circumscribed and shared peacebuilding agenda, but a shared preoccupation with the impacts of diverse interventions on peace and conflict. The precise reasons why organizations apply the term, what peacebuilding does and how it works cannot be read from mandates and policy documents. It requires one to look at the everyday politics and practices of organizations. The meaning of peacebuilding results from everyday negotiations of staff-members and stakeholders at different levels in the aid-chain, each with their own interests and perspectives. To understand peacebuilding, one needs to understand the history of organizations and individual staff members, and the multiple identities and realities organizations represent to the people participating in them, and explore the roles of both organizational politics and conflict politics in defining interventions.

The conclusion also poses pertinent questions on the assumptions underlying contemporary peacebuilding work, in particular on the roles of civil society and governance. The particular roles civil-society organizations may play in peacebuilding and their most effective contributions to governance strongly depend on local conditions, and on how those influence organizations. International development organizations tend to have particular images of what civil society should do and look like and are eager to support only those organizations fitting their image. International support to local civil society needs to take more account of prevailing forms of governance and the history and development of civil society in a particular context.

Finally, the conclusion lines out different processes through which organizations arrive at particular framings of the reality in which they operate. Such framings simplify reality in ways that create possibilities for intervention or restrict them. Framing involves cognitive processes of ordering and creating routine, as much as organizational politics. Organizations tend to separate emergency from normality, to focus on techniques of intervention, and to interpret contexts and peacebuilding interventions according to their own frames of reference and particular expertise. At the same time, organizational politics –intentionally or unintentionally– play a strong role in ordering. Organizations promote particular representations of reality that are in line with their possibilities for intervention, and that legitimize them to intervene, and that present their interventions in a-political terms.

The chapter underscores the high expectations international organizations often have of their intervention. The study points to the need to observe modesty and connect to local agendas. Rather than to work on grand schemes of peacebuilding and taking the lead in societal transformation, they need to be partners in peace.
Samenvatting

Dit onderzoek gaat over ideeën en veronderstellingen over vredesopbouw door organisaties uit het maatschappelijk middenveld ('civil society') en hun ondersteuning door internationale ontwikkelingsorganisaties. Het kijkt daarbij vooral naar hoe deze ideeën en veronderstellingen zich verhouden tot vredesopbouw beleid en praktijken in het veld. Het is voornamelijk gebaseerd op een serie casestudies van vredesopbouw interventies en organisaties werkzaam in zuidelijk Soedan, Burundi, het Afrikaanse Grote Meren Gebied, en Guatemala. Dit onderzoek benadrukt het belang van impliciete veronderstellingen in hedendaagse vredesopbouw. Internationale ondersteuning voor civiele vredesopbouw is vaak gebaseerd op versimpelde noties over conflict en de mogelijke rollen van maatschappelijke organisaties om bij te dragen aan vrede. Deze studie argumenteert dat om te komen tot betere vredesopbouw praktijken het noodzakelijk is meer te weten over wat maatschappelijke organisaties nu eigenlijk zijn, hoe ze werken, en hoe de veronderstellingen die hun ondersteuning motiveren in de praktijk uitpakken. Dit vereist aandacht voor de dagelijkse praktijken van maatschappelijke organisaties. Hierin moet vooral aandacht gegeven worden aan de organisatorische praktijken van maatschappelijke organisaties, hoe ze werken en ontwikkelen, hoe diverse betrokken partijen verschillende betekenissen geven aan vredesopbouw, en hoe politieke processen binnen organisaties bepalen hoe vredesopbouw begrepen wordt.

In het veldonderzoek en de analyse gebruikte ik een zogenaamde ‘actor’ benadering. Een dergelijke benadering helpt duidelijk te maken hoe beleid en interventies van organisaties het resultaat zijn van zowel hun eigen dagelijkse praktijken als die van mensen en autoriteiten in de gemeenschappen waar ze hun programma’s uitvoeren. Een kernbegrip in dit onderzoek is ‘discours’ (vertoog), wat verwijst naar collectieve praktijken ordenen of ‘framing’ (inkaderen) van de werkelijkheid, waarmee actoren hun ervaringen betekenis probeerden te geven en te vatten. Discoursen worden vaak verondersteld ‘machtig’ te zijn doordat ze een dominante manier van naar de wereld kijken vertegenwoordigen die alternatieve visies uitsluit, of doordat ze op verschillende manieren sociale relaties beïnvloeden. Organisaties kunnen discoursen strategisch gebruiken, bijvoorbeeld om bepaalde interventies te rechtvaardigen. In het promoten van specifieke agenda’s voor ontwikkeling kan discours enorm politiek zijn.

Hoewel dit onderzoek erkent dat discours autoriteit kan uitoefenen kijkt het in eerste instantie naar discours als een cognitief proces. Om te kunnen functioneren en om te gaan met de complexiteit van conflict en vredesopbouw moeten ontwikkelingsorganisaties de realiteit wel versimpelen. Maar deze versimpeling betekent altijd dat delen van die realiteit onopgemerkt blijven of onderbenadrukt worden. In de casestudies kijk ik naar de gevolgen van versimpeling, en probeer uit te vinden hoe ontwikkelingsorganisaties beter rekening zouden kunnen houden met de versimpelingen die ze noodzakelijkerwijs maken. In de praktijk blijkt het vaak moeilijk het cognitieve proces van ordenen te onderscheiden van de rol die politiek speelt in orderning – de twee zijn vaak aan elkaar gerelateerd. Versimpeling betekent altijd ook dat politieke keuzes gemaakt worden, door
bepaalde problemen te benadrukken en bepaalde interventies als de meest toepasselijke te zien. Dit onderzoek argumenteert dat ordeningsprocessen alleen begrepen kunnen worden als aan beide kenmerken van discours aandacht gegeven wordt. Deze onderzoeksbenadering wordt uitgewerkt in hoofdstuk 1.

Hoofdstuk 1 reflecteert ook op mijn ervaringen met een interactieve onderzoeksbenadering. Door middel van een interactieve benadering hoop ik zeggenschap over vragen en aanbevelingen te stimuleren bij de maatschappelijke organisaties die meededen aan het onderzoek, en zo een bijdrage te leveren aan hun vredesopbouw werk. In mijn ervaring kan een interactieve benadering bijdragen aan de grondigheid van etnografisch onderzoek en de analyse van bevindingen. Onderzoek doen met (in plaats van alleen over) organisaties draagt bij aan vertrouwensrelaties, maakt het mogelijk organisatiepraktijken van nabij mee te maken en bevindingen te bediscussiëren met de onderzoekspartners. Mijn ervaring is dat het interactieve karakter van onderzoek echter niet zozeer als een methodologie gezien moet worden maar eerder als een intentie. De mate waarin onderzoek interactief is kan niet gepland worden, nog verzekerd door gebruik te maken van bepaalde interactieve methoden. Het interactieve karakter van onderzoek ontwikkelt zich gedurende de voortgang van samenwerking. Cruciaal in dit proces is wederzijds toewijzen, wat weer afhangt van de flexibiliteit van het onderzoek zelf en de partners in het onderzoek, de verwachte voordelen voor de deelnemers, de mate waarin voldaan wordt aan de verwachtingen gedurende het onderzoek, en het enthousiasme van individuele deelnemers. Het interactieve karakter van onderzoek wordt erg beïnvloed door organisatorische veranderingen en veranderende interesses. Praktisch gezien betekent dit dat een onderzoeker ruimte moet ophouden voor zowel participatie als non-participatie gedurende het proces.

De daaropvolgende twee hoofdstukken analyseren internationale discoursen en beleid over vredesopbouw, en kijken naar hoe organisaties conflict proberen te begrijpen. Hoofdstuk 2 analyseert hoe gedurende de jaren 90 vredesopbouw discoursen in opgang kwamen waarin maatschappelijke organisaties belangrijke rollen toegewezen werden in het realiseren van vrede. Als gevolg van antiterrorisme beleid na 9/11 verdampte de schijnbare consensus over vredesopbouw weer. Vredesopbouw taken die international niet-gouvernementele organisaties en lokale maatschappelijke organisaties op zich genomen hadden werden weer teruggeclaimd door donor regeringen en multilaterale instellingen. Toch bleven veel internationale en lokale organisaties doorgaan met vredesopbouw. Echter, consensus over wat vredesopbouw nou eigenlijk in zou moeten houden bleef achterwege. Ontwikkelingsorganisaties hebben zeer verschillende opvattingen over welke domeinen van vredesopbouw prioriteit hebben, en kunnen het niet eens worden over de noodzakelijke opeenvolging of wederzijdse afhankelijkheid van specifieke interventies. Verder is civiele vredesopbouw impliciet gebaseerd op een aantal belangrijke veronderstellingen over de rollen die maatschappelijke organisaties, de staat en internationale organisaties zouden moeten spelen in vredesopbouw en bestuur.

Hoofdstuk 3 analyseert hoe deze beleidsonderlingheden en discoursen over vredesopbouw en maatschappelijk middenveld doorschemeren in het werk van specifieke internationale ontwikkelingsorganisaties. Het hoofdstuk laat zien dat de term vredesopbouw niet alleen een label is dat om opportunistische redenen gebruikt wordt, maar dat verschillende betekenis van vredesopbouw krijgt in beleid is de achtergrond van organisaties
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duidelijk terug te zien. Tegelijkertijd houden lokale omstandigheden beperkingen in of bieden specifieke mogelijkheden voor vredesopbouw. Het hoofdstuk laat zien dat wanneer nieuwe discoursen in de mode raken internationale organisaties deze niet onmiddellijk overnemen, maar dat hun praktijken zich langzaam aanpassen. Nieuwe en oudere discoursen blijven relevant voor het werk van organisaties. Dit biedt bewegingsvrijheid voor organisaties die hiermee beschikken over uiteenlopende motiveringen om verschillende interventies te legitimeren. Beleid is een voortdurend proces, en wordt onderweg vormgegeven door diverse deelnemers; een thema dat ook ter sprake komt in de volgende hoofdstukken.

Het overige deel van dit onderzoek bediscussieert casestudies van alledaagse vredesopbouw praktijken van maatschappelijke organisaties in diverse landen. Hoofdstuk 4 analyseert de organisatie praktijken van een lokale vrouwenredesorganisatie die in zuidelijk Soedan werkt. De case benadrukt dat de praktijk van het maken en implementeren van beleid meer van doen heeft met de dynamiek binnen een organisatie dan met de geplande doelen van dat beleid. Het hoofdstuk laat zien hoe belangrijk kwalitatieve benaderingen zijn om civiele vredesopbouw te kunnen begrijpen en het belang aandacht te schenken aan de dynamiek van vredesorganisaties. Daarin speelt bijvoorbeeld de geschiedenis van een organisatie een belangrijke rol, en de context waarin een organisatie zich ontwikkelt, de manier waarop conflict ervaren wordt in het dagelijks leven van mensen, evenals de manier waarop mensen in en rondom een organisatie betekenis geven aan die organisatie en haar praktijken, en de politiek van organisaties. Het hoofdstuk werkt een dergelijke benadering verder uit, en presenteert vijf eigenschappen van lokale vredesorganisaties waarin het ondersteunen van lokale vredesopbouw rekening mee gehouden moet worden.


Hoofdstuk 6 gaat over de gevolgen van het interpreteren van geschillen over land in Burundi als een korte termijn probleem dat het gevolg is van de massale terugkeer van vluchtelingen en ontheemden naar hun oorspronkelijke gemeenschappen. Deze specifieke interpretatie van land geschillen zette internationale en lokale organisaties ertoe aan programma’s op te zetten om de capaciteiten van lokale instituties voor het oplossen van conflicten te versterken. De data laten zien dat hoewel de terugkeer van vluchtelingen een factor was in geschillen over land er veel continuité was tussen geschillen over land die het gevolg waren van de burgeroorlog en meer gangbare geschillen. Veel geschillen over land vereisen in de eerste plaats oplossingen op politiek niveau in plaats van op het lokale niveau. Verder is de vraag in hoeverre het ondersteunen van lokale mechanismen voor het oplossen van conflicten hun legitimiteit en toegankelijkheid vergroot en de bescherming van kwetsbare mensen garandeert. De
interpretatie van geschillen over land in termen van een noodsituatie resulteerde erin dat het lange termijn en structurele karakter van veel geschillen over land over het hoofd gezien werd.

Hoofdstuk 7 behandelt de vraag wat het officiële einde van geweld betekent voor de rollen, beleid en praktijken van maatschappelijke organisaties. Het bediscussieert hoe Guatemalteekse maatschappelijke organisaties omgaan met de landproblematiek, tien jaar na de vredesakkoorden van 1996. De casette laat zien dat internationale organisaties geneigd zijn vredesakkoorden te zien als een keerpunt naar een vredevolle situatie, waarin staatsinstellingen niet meer functioneren en het maatschappelijk middenveld effectief in tegen de democratische proces. Deze voorstelling van zaken doet hen veronderstellen dat maatschappelijke organisaties een overgang moeten maken ‘from protest to proposal’, van protesteren naar constructief meedenken. Al te gauw wordt daarbij over het hoofd gezien dat de transformatie van een samenleving na conflict een langzaam proces is. Het hoofdstuk beargumenteert dat de voortgang van maatschappelijke verandering sterke invloed heeft op hoe organisaties ontwikkelen. Het laat ook zien dat interpretatie van conflict en interventie een continu proces is, waarin organisatie politiek een belangrijke rol speelt. Tenslotte werpt het hoofdstuk vragen op over de algemene rollen van de internationale gemeenschap in het realiseren van vrede. Het benadrukt dat door de toegenomen internationale invloed op processen van almuist bestuur de invloed van lokale burgers beperkt wordt, en het voor hen steeds moeilijker wordt rekenschap te vragen van hun overheden voor de gestarte veranderingsprocessen.

Hoofdstuk 8, de conclusie van het onderzoek, beargumenteert het belang van het kijken naar dagelijkse praktijken van vredesopbouw. Het laat zien hoe internationale discoursen over de rol van het maatschappelijk middenveld in vredesopbouw door elkaar in het beleid van internationale ontwikkelingsorganisaties. Over de afgelopen vijftien jaar hebben vele organisaties nagedacht over hoe hun programma’s kunnen bijdragen aan vredzame samenlevingen. Dit resulterde niet in een vastomlijnde en gezamenlijke vredesopbouw agenda, maar wel in een gedeelde preoccupatie met de gevolgen van verschillende soorten interventies voor vrede en conflict. De precieze redenen waarom organisaties de term vredesopbouw gebruiken, wat vredesopbouw is en hoe het werkt kan niet afgelezen worden uit mandaten en beleidsdocumenten. Het vereist te kijken naar de dagelijkse politiek en praktijk van organisaties. De betekenis van vredesopbouw is het gevolg van dagelijkse onderhandelingen tussen stafleden en met belanghebbenden op verschillende niveaus in de hulp-keten, elk met hun eigen belangen en perspectieven. De geschiedenis van organisaties en individuele stafleden is erg belangrijk hierin, evenals de verschillende die worden toegekend aan organisaties door mensen erin en eromheen. Zowel organisatie politiek als conflict politiek spelen hierin een belangrijke rol.

De conclusie stelt ook vragen over de veronderstellingen die ten grondslag liggen aan de huidige praktijken van vredesopbouw, in het bijzonder over de rollen van het maatschappelijk middenveld in bestuur. Specifieke rollen die maatschappelijke organisaties kunnen spelen in vredesopbouw en hun meest effectieve bijdragen aan bestuur hangen erg af van lokale condities, en van hoe deze organisaties beïnvloeden. International ontwikkelingsorganisaties neigen naar bepaalde ideaalbeelden van wat maatschappelijke organisaties doen en hoe ze eruit zouden moeten zien en zijn geneigd
vooral die organisaties te ondersteunen die binnen hun ideaalbeeld passen. Internationale ondersteuning aan lokale maatschappelijke organisaties moet meer rekening houden met heersende praktijken van bestuur en de geschiedenis en ontwikkeling van maatschappelijke organisaties in hun specifieke context.

Tenslotte beschrijft de conclusie verschillende processen waardoor organisaties uitkomen op bepaalde interpretaties van de realiteit waarin ze opereren. Zulke ‘framings’ simplificeren de realiteit op een zodanige manier dat interventie mogelijk wordt of mogelijkheden juist beperkt worden. ‘Framing’ is zowel een cognitief proces van ordenen en het creëren van routine, als onderdeel van organisatie politiek. Organisaties hebben de neiging om een indeling te maken in noodsituatie versus normaliteit, te focussen op technieken van interventie, en lokale context en vredesopbouw interventies te interpreteren in termen van hun eigen achtergrond en specifieke expertise. Tegelijkertijd speelt organisatie politiek daarin bewust of onbewust een sterke rol. Organisaties benadrukken voornamelijk die representaties van de werkelijkheid die in lijn zijn met hun mogelijkheden voor interventie, die hun interventies rechtvaardigen, en die hun interventies in apolitieke termen verwoorden.

Het hoofdstuk wijst op de hoge verwachtingen die internationale organisaties vaak hebben van hun interventie. Het onderzoek laat de noodzaak zien om bescheidenheid te betrachten en aan te sluiten op lokale agenda’s voor vredesopbouw. In plaats van ambitieuze programma’s te willen realiseren en de leiding te nemen in maatschappelijke verandering moeten internationale organisaties proberen om ‘partners in peace’ te zijn.
Author biography

Mathijs van Leeuwen (1973) was born in Haarlem, the Netherlands. He took his MSc in Rural Development Sociology at Wageningen University. He graduated with distinction in 1999 on a thesis on irrigation water management in Pakistan, and another one on villagization programmes in post-genocide Rwanda. After his graduation he worked as a researcher at the Conflict Research Unit of the Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael’. In 2001, he assisted a local women and peace NGO in Kenya and Sudan, and conducted research on local peace initiatives. In the following years, he was a research fellow at Wageningen Disaster Studies, and worked as a consultant monitoring and evaluation, and as a researcher with local development organizations in Guatemala and Bolivia.

In January 2004, he started a PhD at Wageningen Disaster Studies. His research formed part of a collaborative research programme between Disaster Studies and the Dutch development organization Cordaid to investigate views and practices of peacebuilding of Cordaid and its partners. From September 2004 to September 2005, he carried out research on land disputes and local conflict resolution with CED-Caritas Burundi, and on regional approaches for peacebuilding in the Great Lakes Region. From January to October 2006, he lived in Guatemala. There, he participated in the programme of Pastoral de la Tierra in San Marcos, while doing research on the efforts of civil society to address land and labour conflicts. He also conducted an assignment for SERJUS in Quetzaltenango, on the influence of party politics and decentralization on local development organizations.

He published on the following issues:
- Peacebuilding practices in southern Sudan and the African Great Lakes Region
- Resettling returning refugees and villagization in Rwanda
- Power-sharing arrangements and conflict resolution
- Dutch policies and interventions in civil wars
- Party politics and local development organizations
- Participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation
Completed Training and Supervision Plan, Mathijs van Leeuwen

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