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Mind the gaps: a whole-of-society approach to peacebuilding and conflict prevention

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Mind the gaps. A Whole-of-Society approach to peacebuilding and conflict prevention

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Abstract

External peacebuilding interventions have moved towards comprehensive strategies to tackle the complex problems of peace, security and development. This paper proposes a 'Whole-of-Society' (WOS) approach which seeks to enhance the effectiveness of externally- led peacebuilding and conflict prevention through recourse to the social contexts within which they are implemented. The aim of WOS is to see complexity, both within local society and in the relations between external peacebuilders and local society, as an opportunity to be grasped, as much as an impediment to effective outcomes. A WOS approach adds a practice dimension to debates on ownership, local peace and hybridity, trust-in-peacebuilding and their conceptualisations of local agency and dynamics. It seeks to address the operational gaps that emerge within a societal perspective to peacebuilding, in particular by suggesting ways of achieving appropriate configurations of external and local resources, agency and initiatives.

A recurrent theme in conflict and security studies is the integration of discrete concepts and policy actions in order to achieve a more rounded, and by implication, a more effective response to situations of violence and instability, delivered by external intervention. This has led to pairing security and development, the synthesis of civilian and military capabilities and combinations of global, regional and local

initiatives, as examples of how peacebuilding discourse has tended to bundle together otherwise standalone components.[1] In part this trend reflects a need to deal with the increasing breadth and complexity of current conflict environments. Single approaches no longer seem adequate to the task.[2] Holistic approaches recognise a multiplicity of security needs and competing priorities for external attention, while comprehensive strategies seek to construct overarching programmes out of diverse elements such as administrative and technical experience, combat troops, diplomats and civil servants, judges and lawyers and development economists, all of which may be appropriate, but only some of which may be relevant to the specific circumstances of each conflict, and each intervention, thus setting up dilemmas of selection. The consequence for theory and practice of this trend towards comprehensiveness and the ability to choose from multiple components is that the problematic of peacebuilding interventions is framed in terms of the political and technical difficulties of combination and integration, and how to manage an unwieldy process of many moving parts.[3] Such a challenge suggests a supply-side, or 'inside-out' logic, reinforced by 'self-referential' paradigms that govern the design of external

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[1] Theo Neethling, 'The Security-Development Nexus and the Imperative of Peacebuilding with Special Reference to the African Context', *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 5, no. 1 (2005): 33-60; Shyamika Jayasundara-Smits, *Civil-Military Synergies at Operational Level in EU External Action* (The Hague: Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, 2016); Marco Paulino Serronha, Optimization of Civil-Military Synergies in the Field of Crisis Management, Nação e Defesa, Nº 129 – 5.ª Série, 129-143.

[2] Robert Ricigliano, 'Networks of Effective Action: Implementing an Integrated Approach to Peacebuilding', *Security Dialogue* 34, no. 4 (2003): 445-462.

[3] Cedric de Coning and Karsten Friis, 'Coherence and Coordination, The Limits of the Comprehensive Approach', *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 15, no. 1-2 (2011): 243-272; Michael Zürn and Anna Herrhausen, 'Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: The Roles of Ownership and Coordination', in *Strategies for Peace. Contributions of International Organizations, States and Non-State Actors*, ed. Volker Rittberger and Martina Fischer (Opladen & Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2008), 271-287; Roland Paris, 'Understanding the 'Coordination Problem' in Postwar Statebuilding' in *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*, ed. Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2009), 53-78.

intervention policies,[4] in which intervening states and international organisations

grapple with how to implement their own policy choices and deploy variegated

toolkits.[5] As has been noted, particularly in critical security studies (CSS), this

perspective tends to relegate the needs, wishes and perspectives of conflict-affected

societies.[6]

This special issue frames the challenge posed to external peacebuilding as one

of complex and dense conflict environments. Its aim is to suggest possibilities for

combining diverse elements, actors and processes. Our approach is pragmatic

proposing that the need is for operational guidance as much as theories of change or

new concepts of security. We have attempted to articulate 'Whole-of-Society' (WOS)

as a practice- based approach which seeks to enhance the effectiveness of externally

led peacebuilding and conflict prevention through recourse to the social contexts

within which they are implemented, and with the aim of seeing complexity, within

local society and in the relations between external peacebuilders and local society, as

an opportunity to be grasped, as much as an impediment to effective outcomes.

WOS proposes a thicker form of engagement between external policies and conflict-

affected societies, while recognising that in common with all peacebuilding

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[4] Tobias Debiel and Daniel Lambach, (2009) 'How State-Building Strategies Miss Local Realities', *Peace Review* 21, no. 1 (2009): 22.

[5] Damien Helly, Greta Galeazzi, Asmita Parshotam, Cecilia Gregersen, Willy Kokolo and Andrew Sherriff, A. (2015). Stepping up? Best Practice in Joint Programming and Prospects for EU Joint Cooperation Strategies. Maastricht: ECDPM

[6] Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver P Richmond, 'The Local Turn in Peace Building: A Critical Agenda for Peace', *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 5 (2013): 763-783; Vivienne Jabri, 'Peacebuilding, the Local and the International: A Colonial or a Postcolonial Rationality?, *Peacebuilding* 1, no. 1 (2013): 3-16; Tania Paffenholz*, Civil Society and Peacebuilding. A Critical Assessment* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010); .Kristoffer Lidén, 'Building Peace between Global and Local Politics: The Cosmopolitical Ethics of Liberal Peacebuilding', *International Peacekeeping* 16, no. 5 (2009): 616-634; Astri Suhrke, 'The Dangers of a Tight Embrace: Externally Assisted Statebuilding in Afghanistan' in *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*, ed. Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 227-251; Roland Paris, 'International Peacebuilding and the 'Mission Civilisatrice'', *Review of International Studies* 28, no. 4 (2002): 638.

approaches, this does not offer immediate solutions and may indeed raise further challenges and barriers in terms of efficiency and legitimacy. Thicker engagement requires identification of and systematic involvement with the breadth and diversity of actors which operate at multiple levels related to the conflict environment, from states and international institutions, global civil society, to local actors, as well as the existence of numerous relationships at policy level and on the ground. WOS proposes that interventions take account of not only actors in the conflict space, but also of formal and informal processes through which actors relate to each other and respond to conflict. It is through practitioners exploring and exploiting the detail of this dense kaleidoscope of actors and actorness, that WOS envisages the emergence of fresh perspectives regarding working in the conflict space, and the development of improved capacities. As the article on local ownership in this issue highlights, several things are going on here: externals must navigate multiple local dynamics and highly variegated socio-political orders; different perceptions exist of the conflict at every level from the international to the grass roots and the combination of externals and locals create a contested arena of perspectives and interests. Interaction is rarely straightforward, and constitutes a dynamic of its own that adds a further dimension beyond consideration of peacebuilding as driven by (either) external /or local factors. [7]Against this backdrop, partnership and co-operation are not necessarily 'difficult'.[8] There is also the possibility of creative interactions between outsiders and insiders and within each of these categories. Thus the question we consider here is not only how to limit the hazards of complex interaction but how to realise its potential.

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[7] Christian Lotz, ' International Norms in Statebuilding: Finding a Pragmatic Approach. *Global Governance'*, 16, no.2 (2010): 220, 232
[8] Debiel and Lambach, 'How State-Building Strategies', 24.

WOS does not argue for an expansive vision of peacebuilding that implies additional policies, outreach to more actors, or require externals to work with every civil society group. 'Whole' is not synonymous with 'all'. The aim is not to simply increase the scope of intervention in a potentially infinite extension of inclusivity and comprehensiveness. More comprehensiveness and inclusivity may be neither feasible nor effective, and risk diluting rather than improving the appropriateness of external action. Instead, the ability to define priorities and comparative advantages, and work with the fabric of local society based on a more profound understanding of context and changes in context, is proposed as part of a granular approach, which allows external actors to manoeuvre effectively and in a targeted way in complex settings. As Schirch notes, the relationships between peacebuilding actors, the factors driving and mitigating conflict, and activities taking place in different sectors comprise an "ecological relationship" characterised by interdependence. [9] A WOS approach emphasises the importance of understanding the totality rather than discrete elements of conflict and responses to it, but it also problematizes the nature of interdependence, the perverse and positive relational dynamics which are triggered by conflict and its aftermath. This seeks to recast policy design, implementation and adaptation not as technical aspects of realising external interventions, but to ground them in the sociology of conflict and intervention, which is specific to each conflict situation.

A WOS approach sits within a scholarly discourse which brings a societal perspective to peacebuilding, regarding it as an activity rooted in political, social, cultural, economic and technological processes, the characteristics of the conflict-

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[9] Lisa Schirch, 'Where Does Whole of Government Meet Whole-of-Society?' in *Conflict Management and 'Whole of Government*, ed. Volker C. Franke and Robert H. Dorf (Carlisle, United States: Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, 2012), 463.

affected society, including indigenous norms and practices.[10] Its premise is that governance interventions based on local realities, traditions and culture are preferable to state-building projects focusing primarily on creating new institutions.[11] WOS adds a practice dimension to debates on ownership, local peace and hybridity, trust-in-peacebuilding and their conceptualisations of local agency and dynamics as significant to the outcomes of intervention.[12] However, rather than arguing solely within these lines of scholarly discussion or even proposing more ethnological perspectives[13] in a bid to improve the authenticity of practice, WOS seeks to contribute to finding for ways of implementing peace and statebuilding as a societal enterprise, and for re-imagining the possibilities created by external intervention.

A societal turn can also be seen in policy discourses which seek to analyse deep-seated conditions within conflict-affected societies and address peacebuilding with mechanisms of social reform, ranging from governance to health, education and environmental management.[14] The idea of WoS emerges from 'Whole of Government' and joined-up government in public administration, which became

[10] Beatrice Pouligny, Civil Society and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Ambiguities of International Programmes Aimed at Building 'New' Societies. *Security Dialogue*, 36, no.4 (2005), 496.

[11] Anna K Jarstad and Roberto Belloni, 'Introducing Hybrid Peace Governance: Impact and Prospects of Liberal Peacebuilding', *Global Governance* 18, no. 1 (2012): 1-6; Michael G Dillon and Julian Reid, 'Complex Political Emergencies, Global Governance and Liberal Peace', *Alternatives* 25, no. 1 (2000): 117-14; Volker Boege et al., 'Building Peace and Political Community in Hybrid Political Orders', *International Peacekeeping* 16, no. 5 (2009): 599-615.

[12] Roberto Belloni, 'Hybrid Peace Governance: Its Emergence and Significance', *Global Governance* 18, no. 1 (2012): 21-38; Roger Mac Ginty, 'Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top Down and Bottom Up Peace', *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 4 (2010): 391-412; Roger Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Sonja Grimm, 'External Democratization after War: Success and Failure'. *Democratisation*, 15, no3 (2008), 537.

[13] Birgit Bräuchler and Philipp Naucke, 'Peacebuilding and Conceptualisations of the Local, *Social Anthropolog*y 25, no. 4 (2017): 422-436.

[14] Institute for Economics and Peace, *Positive Peace Report* (2017), 3, http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/10/Positive-Peace-Report-2017.pdf [accessed 29 January, 2018].

popular during the early 2000s.[15] Here the proposition is that a heterogeneity of stakeholders, collaborative working and the diffusion/reassembling of responsibilities,[16] and 'boundary crossing' initiatives between different practice perspectives can be seen as equally significant as working through classic organisational structures.[17] The supposed benefit is to create space for autonomous, peripheral actions while improving connectivity and co-ordination between diverse components, actors and processes.[18]

In the context of peacebuilding (as distinct from public administration), this definition suggests similarities between the WOS approach and the trend towards resilience building with its focus on individuals at grass-roots (whether beneficiaries or providers of security) and a proposal to transform rather than simply preserve the social status quo through a multilevel, multidimensional and multilateral approach,[19] which joins together all sectors with a possible link to peace and development. Resilience building is also premised on deepening relations between policy makers and a diverse array of civil society institutions including 'cultural organisations, religious communities, social partners, human rights defenders' and the private sector as partners.[20]

In policy terms, WOS is part of a trajectory in intervention which has moved from attempting to pacify conflict societies through military and coercive means,

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[15] Tom Christensen and Per Laegreid, The Whole-of-Government Approach to Public Sector Reform *Public Administration Review,* 67, no.6 (2007),1059.

[16] Ilona Kickbush and David Gleicher, 'Governance for Health in the 21st Century' (Copenhagen: World Health Organisation 2012).

[17] Simon Chesterman, Michael Ignatieff and Ramesh Thakur, *Making States Work. State Failure and the Crisis of Governance* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press 2005), 1.

[18] Schirch, 'Where Does Whole of', 463.

[19] European Commission, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy* (2016), 25, 27, 28, http://www.mfa.gov.rs/eugs_review_web.pdf [accessed 29 January 2018]; European Commission, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council – A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action* (2017), (JOIN(2017) 21 final).

[20] European Commission, *Shared Vision*, 27.

towards an emphasis on stabilisation and reform measures, and in a further step, the co-production of peace, the creation of resilience, and organic interaction between multiple external and internal stakeholders, including so-called hybrid peace formulations. As part of the cognitive shift from seeing intervention as predominantly externally driven, towards a recognition of the local, the proposition of **WOS** is that peacebuilding and conflict prevention will be more effective if they are enacted as social and relational processes, and when a range of actors, actions and intentions are identified and taken into account. In this vein, the motivation for a WOS approach is to address the practice gaps that emerge from a societal perspective, and suggesting ways of achieving appropriate configurations of external and local resources, agency and initiatives.

Rather than simply following a generalised 'local turn' in peacebuilding with its emphases on the acceptance/ acceptability of externally led reforms, and in gaining a more accurate picture of indigenous agency,[21] WOS proposes a disaggregation of the local into salient constituencies of actor and agency, where their salience is context specific, and prescribes actions informed by strategic combinations of actors and processes. It emphasises a relational dimension, seeing peacebuilding as an inherently interactive process animated by the resources, capacities and perspectives of both local society and external actors. If the motivation for a WoS approach is complexity of the peacebuilding environment, the nature of complexity can be understood as not only comprising multiple agents and forms of agency, but also

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[21] Mac Ginty and Richmond, 'The Local Turn in Peace Building', 766; Oliver P Richmond, 'A Post-Liberal Peace: Eirenism and the Everyday', *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 557-580; Timothy Donais, 'Empowerment or Imposition? Dilemmas of Local Ownership in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Processes*', Peace & Change* 34, no. 1 (2009): 3-26; Oliver P Richmond, 'Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 38, no. 3 (2010): 665-692.

constant shifts in conditions on the ground and the need for continuous review and reshaping of relations and engagements between people and processes.

In terms of policy utility, rather than proposing WOS as a novel concept to reframe the goals and methods of civilian peacebuilding, the premise in this special issue is that it can sharpen and refine what external actors do in applying comprehensive approaches, and engaging in deep-seated interventions which disrupt in profound ways the local social fabric, for example in governance and security reform measures. The aim here is that WOS can offer new purpose and traction to these sensitive and difficult initiatives.

We have used the case of EU interventions in conflict and crisis settings to propose and examine the principal characteristics of a WOS approach; to provide empirical insights into how it could add value by looking at specific examples of EU policies in action, and also to consider critically its limitations. Comprehensiveness is a distinctive feature of the EU's global role in conflict and crisis management, representing 'a [ ] working method and a set of concrete measures and processes to improve how the EU, based on a common strategic vision and drawing on its wide array of existing tools and instruments, collectively can develop, embed and deliver more coherent and more effective policies, working practices, actions and results.'[22]

With the launch of the EU Global Security Strategy (EUGSS) in June 2016, and in its Council conclusions of January 2018, the EU emphasised integration as a core feature of its external action with the aim of improving inclusiveness and efficiency. The Integrated Approach refers to multi-level applications of policies and instruments which 'respect[s] and reaffirm[s] the various mandates, roles, aims and

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[22] Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on the EU's Comprehensive Approach* (2014), 1, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/142552.pdf [accessed 28 January 2018].

legal frameworks of the stakeholders involved.'[23] Both documents (the EUGSS and

the Council Conclusions) signal a desire to go beyond the Comprehensive Approach,

and not only address issues of technical co-ordination but develop a common

orientation towards citizens as the glue for improved coherence between policies.[24]

Thus the social environment is constituted as a focus of external action,[25] although the

practical detail of a citizen orientation remains largely unspecified in EU policy texts.

In the EUGSS, the referent environment is mainly European society, although gearing

action towards citizens implies increased accountability and transparency towards

destination as well as European publics.[26] Commitments to use public resources for

peacebuilding and conflict prevention effectively, and tailor policy decisions to (a

broadly defined) public interest add detail to this civic vision of external action, but

practice changes such as new measures for accountability, transparency, and popular

legitimacy will be needed to deliver on this citizen focus. Accountability, (itself a

contested terrain of policy)[27] may in fact add a novel dimension to and thicken the

engagement between external and local societies, for example if the demands of

'sending' populations (such as European publics, particularly to export international

norms as part of external relations) shape interventionist behaviour towards

'receiving' countries.[28]

Such interactions between societies bound up in the practice of external

peacebuilding underline the salience of the idea of using 'Whole of ' to capture how

interventions become a societal enterprise across borders. WOS can also be seen as

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[23] Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises* (2018), 2, https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/2018-01-cnl_conclusions_on_ia.pdf [accessed 28 January 2018].
[24] European Commission, *Shared Vision*, 9, 28.
[25] European Commission, *Shared Vision*, 5, 8, 14, 29.
[26] European Commission, *Shared Vision*, 31, 51.
[27] Perspectives on the Peacebuilding Commission and Mutual Accountability, *International Peace Institute, Issue Brief* , November 2009 , 1-2
[28] Lotz 'International Norms in Statebuilding',228.

part of an enhanced capabilities approach, with interventions aligned more closely to the relative capacities of both external actors and local populations. EU capabilities have been conceptualised as the capability to act, fund, co-ordinate and co-operate. Thus they depend primarily on the availability of European personnel, materiel and experience.[29] A WOS approach proposes that EU capabilities are partly a function of how these resources are deployed in the context of receiving populations and of how they can be integrated with indigenous capacities.[30]

The implications of this shift in emphasis on the ground in conflict-affected societies, are to require continuous and systematic identifications and analysis of context, in terms of actor groups, perceptions and expectations as well as the crafting of shared understandings about the aims and remit of policies as part of policy design and adaptation. An important aspect of an engagement strategy is to access 'inactive publics', namely local constituencies that for a variety of reasons remain out of the purview of EU standard practices. Here again, while the focus is on overlooked elements within target populations in conflict countries, there is a 'feedback loop' to external actors. The idea of inactive and invisible publics came out of a literature which looked at Western societies and their hidden capacities for action within the sphere of democratic politics.[31] In this sense WOS could also be a way of mobilising latent constituencies within intervening countries. It should not suggest that effort is only needed in mining the depth and extent of conflict-affected society. We have

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[29] Richard G Whitman and Stefan Wolff, (2012)*The European Union as a Global Conflict Manager* ,New York: Routledge, 2012

[30] Chris van der Borgh, Mary Martin and Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic, *EU Capabilities in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding: Challenges, Strengths and Opportunities of a Whole-of-Society Approach*, WOSCAP, 31 May 2017, P8;
http://www.woscap.eu/documents/131298403/131299900/Research+Report.pdf/8469fddb-06c5-46c0-aa14-d7a32eb13cc5.

[31] Darren Brunk, '"Whole-of-Society" Peacebuilding: A New Approach for Forgotten Stakeholders', *International Journal* 71, no. 1 (2015): 1-26.

visualised a WOS approach in terms of a grid that includes two axes. The vertical axis represents an actor perspective and here both the normative and practical/operational challenge is to improve inclusivity and engage a wide range of actors in peacebuilding interventions. These actors exist at multiple levels from the international down to the local. They may be connected in different degrees, times and spatial dimensions. They may be active or passive, have highly articulated or implicit interests and agendas. Categories and levels of actors can be further disaggregated to reveal multiple groups and different layers of interests, capacities and power. Networked relations between them are important in assessing not only how relevant they are to a particular field of peacebuilding practice, how they might behave towards issues such as reform and conflict resolution, the multiplier effects to be considered from their interactions, but also how their agency is realised through particular processes, practices and policies. For this reason the vertical axis is not only about inclusivity, but has to be seen in conjunction with the horizontal axis which visualises ways in which groups and individuals, whether local, regional or international, act in the conflict space.

[Figure 1 here]

The horizontal axis comprises multiple actions located in different fields of practice and policy. It represents possibilities for a comprehensive approach, through offering different entry points where an external actor can choose to intervene through engaging with local processes, or by introducing its own policies and initiatives. Context will limit the actual possibilities from a potentially infinite number to a realistic and actually existing number of options which include both those generated

by local actors, those which are part of the intervener's 'toolkit', and those undertaken by other external third parties.

All the studies in this special issue underline the reality of how this conjunction of multiple actors and actions characterise and shape conflict spaces, and determine the practical outcomes of intervention. In the case of European Union interventions, the impression is that complexity is a hurdle to be overcome, and efforts under rubrics such as local ownership, coherence and integration are partly about making the best of a difficult job. Practice and scholarly literature on these subjects tend in similar directions.[32] Certainly the studies suggest that logics of choice about the nature, timing and method of action, or who to work with and include is not clearly conceptualised or communicated. It is against the backdrop of this evidence that the authors propose different ways of using WOS to enhance EU interventions. The studies are based on a two year research project for the European Commission which assessed the EU's capabilities for civilian conflict prevention and peacebuilding, including detailed case studies of intervention policies in Yemen, Ukraine, Mali and Georgia as well as reviewing practice examples in other locations such as Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Kosovo.[33]

The first two papers illustrate the challenges of comprehensiveness and inclusivity from the vantage point of policies on multi-track diplomacy and governance reform, looking at specific examples from EU interventions in Yemen,

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[32] Lotz , 'International Norms in Peacebuilding',231; Isabell Schierenbeck,' Beyond the Local Turn Divide: Lessons Learned, Relearnt and Unlearnt'. *Third World Quarterly* 36, no.5 (2015): 1023-1032; Gearoid Millar, ' Expectations and Experiences of Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone: Parallel Peacebuilding Processes and Compound Friction', *International Peacekeeping* 20, no2 (2013): 189-203; Ole Jacob Sending, Why Peacebuilders Fail to Secure Ownership and be Sensitive to Context." (*NUPI Working Paper 755*. Oslo: Norwegian Institute for International Affairs, 2009).

[33] Whole-of-Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (WOSCAP). Further details and findings from the research are available at www.woscap.eu.

Georgia and Ukraine. Here we can see how a WoS approach can work as both an analytical and operational complement, which makes visible gaps and tensions in working with multi-actor and multi-level policy parameters. In terms of the vertical axis and the benefits of inclusivity, Dudouet et al. in their article on multi-track diplomacy, show how a WoS approach to mediation and dialogue could move away from a reliance on elite bargaining towards interactions with multiple conflict stakeholders and affected constituencies with the aim of improving the sustainability of agreements, and contributing to the democratisation of peace processes. Specifically this requires emphasising the roles of, and relations with local actors beyond the central state level, including civil society organisations, women, youths, religious actors, and minority groups (e.g. regional, cultural, religious, linguistic or ethnic communities), that have been historically excluded or marginalised from this kind of process. Their examination of multi-track diplomacy in Yemen suggests possibilities of the vertical axis to identify outlier groups and improve inclusivity in a field of intervention which historically has been limited to a select group of stakeholders. At the same time, the authors use WOS as an analytical lens to explore issues about increasing the inclusivity of multi-track diplomacy including tensions that arise between increased participation on the one hand and the effectiveness of peace processes on the other. Can a WOS approach help strike a balance between the quantitative levels of participation and the quality of inputs through involving different groups of stakeholders , and identifying and cultivating synergies between points on the horizontal axis (which could affect the timing or nature of action)? An obvious impediment to vertical inclusivity is tension between different groups of local actors, and the spoiler or exclusionary behaviours of constituencies towards those it regards as rivals – for power or external assistance. A WOS approach increases the

likelihood of external interveners having to regulate such encounters and deal with the possibility of embracing one or more groups as collaborators at the expense of others. At the same time, it is possible that a WOS approach may help make such dilemmas visible in order to tackle them, where traditional approaches towards target populations which rely largely on elite contacts, may occlude them.

Similarly, one challenge posed by the use of the horizontal axis could be disjunctures between different policy goals. Moreover integrating multiple actor constituencies with the deployment of diverse forms of action may bring intervention closer to the actual nature and operational reality of local society but at the expense of creating clear lines of accountability and responsibility.

In his paper on EU support for decentralisation in Ukraine as an example of governance reform interventions, Dressler also uses WoS as an analytical device, to look at linkages between multiple actors affected by and able to affect the outcome of a contentious process. Here the vertical axis serves to reveal salient connections between diverse stakeholders, and the horizontal axis to highlight potential synergies and co-ordination between different policy fields relevant in the reform process. Contacts and working relationships were critical for mobilising local support, to reform and developing a sophisticated database and understanding of key actors and processes which supported the capabilities of external actors to act in this area. Dressler shows that WoS is not just about illuminating opportunities for policy effectiveness in multi-actor, multi-process environments. It has a critical – constructive value, leading us to question the assumption that increased co-ordination and inclusivity by themselves will necessarily deliver improved outcomes, and as a device for reviewing what these attributes actually look like in practice.

The next two papers zoom in more closely on the normative aspirations implicit in EU interventions, including attempts to improve citizen participation in reform processes as well as encourage greater inclusivity as part of the outcomes they deliver. Papers on local ownership by Bojicic-Dzelilovic and Martin and on EU-led security sector reform (SSR) in Mali by Jayasundera provide examples of the limitations of norm implementation in EU policies. Both papers provide a critical assessment of what the EU has been able to achieve, and gaps between its normative claims and actual practice. In the case of local ownership, the authors look at the possibilities for accessing outlier constituencies, such as business and faith groups, to improve local participation, and leveraging indigenous initiatives and forms of association. In the case of Ukraine, highly fluid forms of mobilisation and activist networks, assisted by social media began with the Maidan revolution. Whether undertaken by NGOs, business networks or religious movements, these citizen initiatives are connected to wider networks of activists and victims than are typically accessed by EU policies or funds. Small and sometimes informally organised groups track the rapidly changing dynamics and shifting public attitudes towards the conflict, which are at odds with more static EU strategies. Through these groups, we can see the benefits and outlines of a thicker form of engagement, which could translate 'local ownership' from an ideal into a constructive system of collaboration between externals and locals.

Jayasundera's analysis of the EUCAP-Sahel mission to Mali is another example of the EU's tendency towards functional interventions where a normative edge has been blunted by a perceived tension between effectiveness and norms, as well as the EU's choice to emphasise the technical nature of the mission, in order to play down its political implications. Here we see a possible contradiction in the priorities of EU

external action, between 'principled pragmatism' which is explicit in the case of the EUCAP-Sahel mission and the EU's historic adherence to norms such as local ownership and gender equality. In the Mali case local ownership and inclusivity were limited in both the training and outreach activities of the mission, yet excluding cadres who interact with populations at community level, those in the North of the country and women's groups meant missed opportunities to learn from their knowledge of local security needs, and map onto local processes, to the detriment of both the relevance of the mission and the achievement of normative outcomes such as building trust, confidence and legitimacy of security institutions. A similar tension was evident in the case of the EU's multi-track diplomacy in Yemen where pragmatic engagement with elites risked overshadowing its explicit support for gender equality.

The final two papers move from individual policy examples to country-wide interventions in conflict where the EU attempts to deploy a range of tools from diplomacy to justice and trade. The examples of Kosovo and Sri Lanka show the constraints on comprehensiveness where both effectiveness and normative ambition become compromised by the EU's inability to manoeuvre strategically despite having recourse to multiple different instruments. In Kosovo, these included specific initiatives on governance reform through the EULEX Mission, the Stabilisation and Association process and political dialogue. As Van der Borgh states, there is no other country where the EU has played such a central role in the process of state building and stabilisation. Despite an apparently strong capability to act, and even its readiness to adapt interventions and shift between policies in order to react to the changing situation in the country, the EU was hampered by an inability to diversify ownership of the statebuilding process and its unsatisfactory relationship with unco-operative

state elites. Van der Borgh uses the case to show the relevance of capabilities in context rather than as an abstract set of resources, where the ability to act, adapt, co-ordinate and fund could be reinforced through a more explicit WOS approach in order to contextualise relationships and policy options and include a broader range of stakeholders beyond the government level.

In complex contexts, such as Sri Lanka and Kosovo the difficulties in applying a WOS approach may be considerable. One of the aims of this special issue is to not only demonstrate how WOS can add value to what is already being done, but also be critical about its proposition. In their paper, Frerks and Dirkx show how the shrinking space for civil society in Sri Lanka reduced the visibility and impact of the EU's intervention and undermined its goals of bringing a range of policies to bear on the humanitarian, political and economic challenges of the conflict. Despite an extensive and increasing involvement in the country since 2002, the influence of the EU and other external parties involved diminished as local actors and dynamics, particularly government policies, squeezed out both civil society and international engagement, resulting in what the authors describe as 'an unpredictable and volatile experience leading to setbacks and outright failures' including the internationally supported peace process itself. Despite a large repertoire of instruments, the EU found itself overwhelmed by the intractability of the conflict, the lack of local buy-in, the spoiler behaviour of important constituencies and of the protagonist parties. Both comprehensiveness of action and engagement with local actors were stymied, while the EU lost traction with the government. Only after a change of government was the EU able to regain leverage, especially through its use of trade conditionalities. At the national level the EU's inclusivity and use of civilian space were seriously affected by the adverse conditions, although individual NGOs and CSOs found EU support very

valuable, if not essential for their continued operations. This points to two conclusions – the first about the difficulties of applying a WOS approach in the face of resistance and restricted opportunities, but secondly about the need for a strategy which would allow the EU to deploy and manoeuvre under adverse conditions more effectively, applying its tools such as funding, trade and diplomacy in a targeted way, and adapting to setbacks in policy objectives.

The findings of the individual papers suggest issue-specific as well as collective lessons for peacebuilding theory and practice. They are not conclusive about how a WOS approach might work, or even its ultimate value. In presenting them our aim is to offer an initial conceptualisation which can be reviewed in the light of further empirical evidence. The studies provide different perspectives on current practice debates about external assistance for peacebuilding, illustrating some of the challenges faced in complex actor environments. They highlight the ways in which even an actor that directs its strategy towards delivering comprehensive solutions and seeks to promote global norms, as publicly as the EU does, and engages actively with local society to enlarge civil spaces, still can fail to achieve some of its principal objectives. By reviewing a range of policy interventions, and highlighting strategic goals such as ownership and inclusivity, we hope to suggest why and how a WOS approach might address some of the shortcomings encountered in the EU case. Common patterns emerge across the papers, such as tensions between the technical functionality of interventions compared with the deeply political nature of particular policies such as decentralisation in Ukraine, the justice reforms of the EULEX Kosovo mission and efforts at gender inclusivity in the Yemen National Dialogue. Inclusivity also has its limits as the evidence from EU actions in Yemen, Kosovo, Mail and Ukraine suggests, with the EU either failing to go beyond a superficial

engagement with local actors – the problem of 'usual suspects' or finding it difficult to sustain inclusivity over time and under pressure whether from the acuity of conflict or exclusionary behaviour on the part of local elites. The aim here is to be constructively critical of external interventions, hence the suggestion to see WOS as an immanent capability of EU actorness grounded in what it already does. The examples in this issue suggest that there is will and resource on the part of the EU for an authentic engagement, with among others, women peacebuilders and small civil society groups and for striking a better balance between these elements of society and the dominance of elite voices, but that practice in this area can be refined, sharpened and embedded.

This special issue also attempts to supplement a wider research agenda that engages with and illuminates the societal dimensions of peacebuilding. As such we present preliminary ideas for further investigating the multi-faceted nature of conflict society, and how externally led state and peacebuilding can engage with it, which we hope others will follow.

Whole-of-Society Approach

Actors (Inclusivity)

International

Regional

International policies

Local practices

Context-Specific Intersections between Actors + Processes

National

Local

Policies + Practices (Comprehensiveness)