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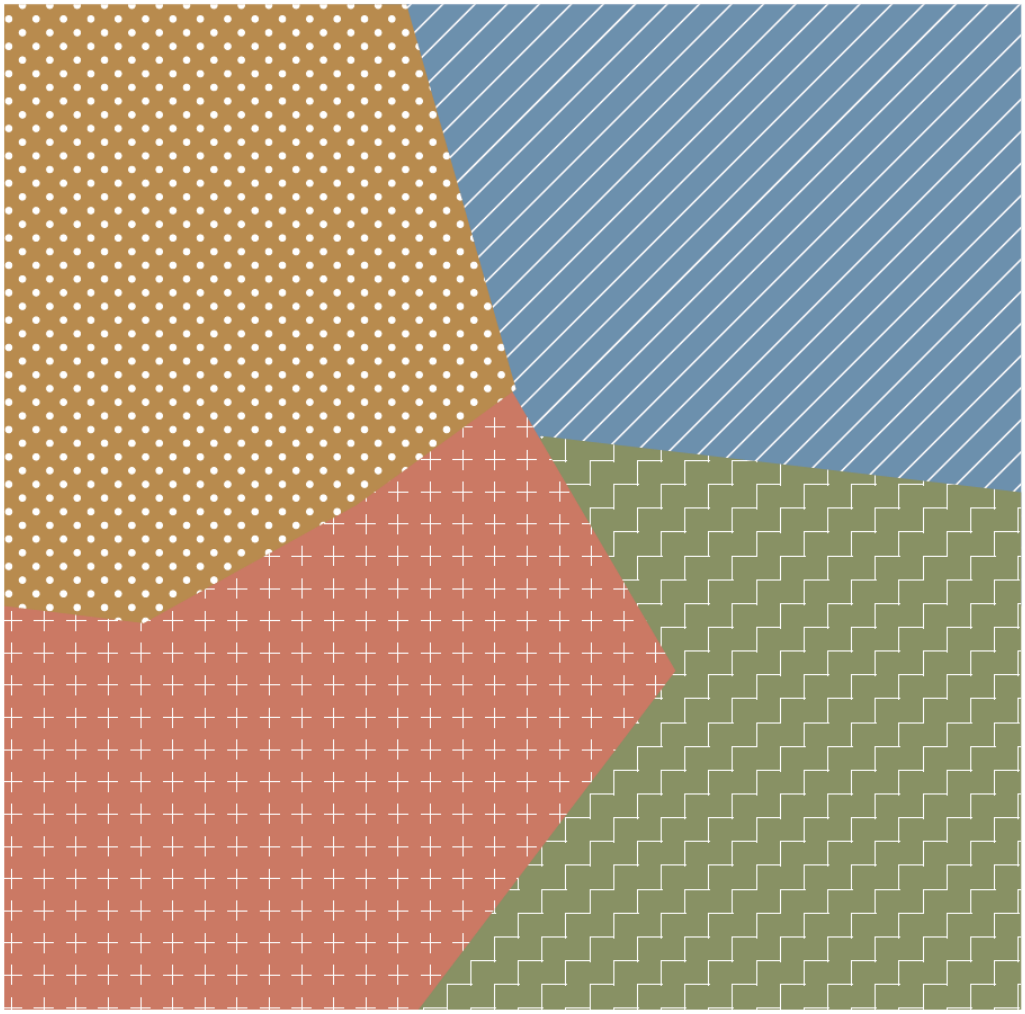

Owning the Peace in International Interventions: a Delusion or a Possibility?

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Colophon

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This scoping study was produced as part of the project "Whole of Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding", which aims to enhance the EU's peacebuilding and conflict prevention capabilities.

This paper is part of the first series of orientation papers that were intended to indicate lines of inquiry and propose research questions, as a basis for discussion and input for the project's Theoretical and Methodological Framework. They seek to provide an overview of scholarly knowledge about the EU's capabilities and means for conflict prevention and peacebuilding in relation to several cross-cutting themes and clusters that the project focuses on. More information at www.woscap.eu

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Executive summary

The interest in local ownership in the peacebuilding scholarship and practice has grown in parallel with the accumulated evidence that suggests a failure of the current practice of international interventions in conflict-affected countries to foster dynamics conducive to sustainable peace. The recognition of locally owned peace for its sustainability has sparked rich academic debate which has grappled with the imprecision of the concept and the implications of it for assessing and rethinking the practice of peacebuilding. The EU upholds the principle of local ownership in its programmatic and policy documents and this paper identifies some of the main implementation challenges related to the tensions, dilemmas, and contradictions associated with the notion of local ownership.

The literature surveyed in this paper underscores the ambiguity of the concept in both of its components, namely 'local' and 'ownership' and suggests its utility as a policy idea/ideal rather than as an objective goal of international intervention. Peacebuilding interventions bring together a variety of actors with different mind-sets regarding the meaning of local ownership and how it should be implemented, alongside local actors' understanding of what acceptable peace looks like. The liberal peacebuilding mainstream 'top down' and 'outside in' approach has come under strong criticism regarding its ability to honour the rhetorical commitment to local ownership. This concerns foremost a consensus about 'what to owe' and how this consensus arises, which in its' turn is central to the legitimacy of external intervention. The essence of the criticism is that the state-centric, institution building understanding of the task of building peace in conflict- affected societies is delinked from the fundamental problems of societal reconstruction and deep reconciliation. This has resulted in international interventions' failure to address the needs of local societies effectively and in a sustainable manner which would suggest an alignment with the local ownership precepts. In this context, the question of 'who is to own' is equally controversial. A failure to facilitate mobilisation of different actors, and reach out to those who are excluded from the process has been identified as directly contradicting the quest for and the pursuit of local ownership by the external actors. The third issue that preoccupies much of the local ownership debate is that of 'how' in the peacebuilding interventions, focused on coordination but primarily as it concerns external actors and their mutual relations. This goes against the ideas of emancipatory peace as suggested in the more recent 'local turn' in the peacebuilding literature which has identified local agency and the issues of empowerment as being at the heart of peacebuilding problematique, and thus the centrality of the relationships among a range of stakeholders participating in the peacebuilding processes.

Against the backdrop of the diverse scholarship on local ownership, the paper puts forward a relational perspective on local ownership that centres on the interaction between external actors and their local counterparts as a way of understanding how local ownership can emerge through their shared experience, and how through these relationships the issues of competence, responsibility and power can be worked out to support locally grounded peace. Such an approach affords equal relevance to local and external peacebuilding actors and their concerns, perception, experiences and expectations regarding their engagement, and addresses head on the inherent contradictions of the externally-led peacebuilding interventions.

1 Introduction

The increase in the number of international peacebuilding interventions across the globe since the early 1990s has been paralleled by a shift in their character from the mandates to oversee cease fires and enforce peacekeeping, to those entrusted with executive powers. As the experience of international peacebuilding accumulated, so did the realisation that without the active involvement of local actors, sustainability of any progress remained elusive. Subsequently, (local) ownership emerged as a guiding norm in the international peacebuilding interventions, and a condition for stable and sustainable peace (Rayroux and Wilen 2014). Local ownership is considered a desirable outcome of international engagement in conflict- affected countries whether the primary focus is on development assistance, humanitarian aid or broader peacebuilding and statebuilding missions. The normative assumption that if internationally supported projects/programs or reforms are locally owned, international aid will be more effective and its impact on the rehabilitation of post-war countries sustained, is generally accepted.

Within WOSCAP's whole-of-society approach to peacebuilding and conflict prevention which is predicated on addressing multiple forms and sources of insecurity, and on grounding peace in local experiences of security, the concept of ownership is fundamental. This is the case both in terms of its relevance for all three sets of EU capabilities under investigation (security sector reform; multi-track diplomacy and governance) as well as in terms of providing a conceptual glue for the principles of inclusivity and sustainability inherent in the proposed whole-of-society approach. The EU as all other major international actors with a stake in externally led peacebuilding efforts in countries experiencing armed violence upholds local ownership in its official programmatic documents and evokes it in its policy practice. In doing so, it also strives to impart a distinctive approach reflective of its own origins and values as a community of historically, politically, economically and culturally diverse nations and countries.

However, local ownership is conceptually imprecise and the complex and contradictory internal dynamics of internationally-led peacebuilding interventions where the EU is typically one of many stakeholders mean the EU faces considerable challenges implementing local ownership while assisting the countries to resolve the conflicts and build sustainable peace. The main objective of this paper, intended to inform the development of the WOSCAP research agenda, is to identify those challenges by undertaking an investigation into some of the main issues, dilemmas, and contradictions associated with the notion of local ownership both in scholarly work and in practice.

The paper first provides a concise overview of how local ownership has been defined, conceptualised and operationalized within peacebuilding and statebuilding scholarship and practice which highlights the main critiques of local ownership, dilemmas, and practical challenges. The section after looks into the EU approach to local ownership in peacebuilding interventions. The discussion then moves to examine the linkages between the concept and the practice of local ownership and other components relevant to the WOSCAP research agenda. The concluding section summarises the paper and raises some questions of interest to the development of the WOSCAP research agenda.

2 Local ownership in peacebuilding interventions: a state of the art review

Local ownership as a concept has no common meaning or a theory to underpin it. It has been used in myriad of ways by various actors across the academic and policy world. Different terminologies such as: participation, accountability and responsibility are often used as its synonyms. The meaning of the 'local' is similarly imprecise. Sometimes it has a geographical meaning; other times it refers to spatial and or/governmental level at which particular program/projects are implemented (it can be a community level program, municipal or another similar sub-national space, but it also and most commonly can refer to national level). Or it signifies involvement of domestic actors in the form of local elites, non-state actors (typically civil society) or citizens (grass roots). In the recent scholarship on hybrid peace[1], 'local' refers to "everyday acts of a diversity of individuals and communities that go beyond elites and civil society normally associated with liberal peacebuilding" (Leonardsson 2015; MacGinty 2010; Richmond 2012). Even when defined with relative clarity as in specific programmes or reforms, the operationalization of local ownership in the course of implementation tends to be ambiguous. Thus, as a concept local ownership is more intuitive than precise (Lopes and Theisohn 2003:1).

Scholarly work which addresses this shortcoming – focused on issues of ownership of what, by whom, and how – has not produced greater clarity regarding the concept itself or either of its two constitutive parts, namely 'local' and 'ownership', and its operationalization remains difficult (Krogstad 2015; Pietz and von Carlowitz 2012; Martin at all 2012; Donais 2008; Chesterman 2007). From the early debates that focused on technical and procedural aspects, and using different connotations of the notion of ownership (participation, consultation, dialogue, capacity building), the discourse shifted to make issues of control and power over decision making in the context of external intervention, a preeminent question of local ownership and its 'litmus test'. This culminated in a discourse focused on the decisive role of local agency, which is captured in the scholarship on 'citizens based peacemaking', 'peace from below' and ' hybrid peace'[2] (Leondstrom 2015; Richmond and Mac Ginty 2013; Pouligny 2004). This focus on the local agency also signifies a shift in the scholarship from preoccupations with the external peacebuilders' concerns and dilemmas, to those of their local counterparts as 'peacebuilders' themselves, and the relevance of mutual relationships generated through joint action.

[1] Hybrid peace is a form of peace produced by the interplay of international intervention informed by liberal peace agenda of democracy, market economy and human rights promotion and the local approaches to peace.

[2] This is usually labelled 'a local turn' in peacebuilding scholarship associated with the authors such as Richmond and Mac Ginty.

2.1. Different contexts, motives, and meanings of local ownership

Scholars have advanced a number of explanations for increased relevance of local ownership in the contemporary peacebuilding practice. According to some, local ownership is often evoked to legitimise the external presence (Donais 2009; Narten 2008). Despite providing aid, military force and knowledge to support transition to peace, international interventions have lacked internal legitimacy for their effort or the institutions that they put in place. The issue of legitimacy stemming from the domestic state-society relations goes at the core of peacebuilding and its sustainability. International interventions directly interfere in those relations, often in ways that are counterproductive to restoring legitimate governance (Donais 2015). A reference to local ownership[3] which is geared towards generating support for the international involvement is made without questioning its very premise. Namely, that international involvement rests on ideas, assumptions and agendas that often are not in any meaningful way informed by domestic needs, perspectives or interests that ought to be at the centre of reforming state-society relations. Thus, the consensus about 'what to owe' is a contentious one in the interaction between external and domestic actors, and a perplexing issue in terms of prospects for grounding peacebuilding in local legitimacy. In contrast to peacebuilding scholarship which has questioned the 'liberal peacebuilding consensus' most notably through the propositions around the notion of 'hybrid peace', the step-change in the practice of peacebuilding has so far been absent. In problematizing the issue of consensus over the content of peacebuilding-related reforms and policies, the scholarship has emphasized the dilemmas salient to external actors' engagement. Much less attention has been given to internal problems in the receiving countries associated with weak governance as a constraint to facilitating the domestic consensus over policy reforms, beyond those posed by the politics of aid. The broader scholarship on international aid and development has identified the constraints posed by the weak policy making capacity as an important challenge to local ownership (Faust 2009).

Local ownership is criticised for its use as an exit strategy by international actors, to mark the point when the international presence in the country ends and local actors take over full responsibility for governance. But how to assess when that point is reached is unspecified. If the principal criteria for the international actors' exit is a functioning, legitimate local state, how and by whom the state is legitimised are only some of the key questions that need to be addressed before international actors engage in a peacebuilding mission. This has to be done in full recognition that the selection of local actors ('owners') and the authority they may exercise are expressly political questions (Scheye 2008).

Local ownership is also linked to the issue of responsibility – either in the sense of being instrumentally used to deflect the responsibility of international actors, or to frame an outside view of good governance and the responsibilities of local actors. This proposition is controversial because power asymmetries between international and local actors make the actual exercise of responsibility rather circumscribed. Likewise, the asymmetric power relations

[3] Local ownership is often conflated both rhetorically and in practice with related notions of participation, accountability, responsibility, and self-reliance.

between external actors and their domestic counterpart also encumber the establishment of accountability by different parties to peacebuilding efforts. Some scholars have argued that an emphasis on capacity building as the focus of peacebuilding efforts is yet another way of transferring responsibility to the beneficiaries of capacity building themselves for the outcomes over which in fact they exercise little control.

One line of critique concerns explicit or implicit embrace of a logic of compliance in the international approach to peacebuilding at the expense of engagement with the local context and actors, and 'ownership' based on local consensus about values, institutions and practices (Richmond ibid). This is particularly relevant for those EU interventions that are part of the enlargement process which is quintessentially about applying EU norms and standards. But it also ultimately pertains to the broader issue of international aid in conflict-affected countries where conditionality interferes with the essence of local ownership. The logic of compliance also reduces ownership to participation raising this as a central challenge of peacebuilding approaches to ensure they are grounded in local legitimacy (Richmond ibid). The emphasis on participation within which the concept of ownership is embedded and used in policy discourse can in fact be deeply problematic when society is polarized, permeated by inequality and social exclusion as tends to be many post-conflict societies' reality. Increased participation can inadvertently create more opportunity for patronage and clientelism, and hence work at cross purpose with ensuring accountability. Oftentimes, perverse local structures which may be clientelistic in nature and may include criminal elements, are what is most present on the ground and counts as governance in war-affected countries. For the reasons of providing some public goods to some sections of the populace they enjoy a degree of legitimacy. The challenge for external actors is to understand such dynamics of internal legitimation in order to engage effectively in the general interest. Participation of local actors which tends to be implemented in an instrumental, technical and procedural manner via (peace)building of formal institutions, does not necessarily contribute to the establishment of functioning, legitimate institutions. This is because it tends to leave out needs and concerns of important local constituencies lacking a voice. Consultation as a typical mechanism used to foster local ownership, even if sometimes encompasses a broader set of actors can still reinforce existing hierarchies and marginalisation of vulnerable groups or can be manipulated by particular interests. Moreover, according to Reich, there is a structural reason for the current intervention structures being inimical to local ownership, which is to do with their propensity to generate patron-client relations (Reich 2006).

In recognition of the limitations of building peace through external intervention, the critics call instead for hybrid forms of local ownership as a viable approach to support conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Richmond ibid: 371). In this conceptualisation, local ownership is not 'a product', internationally defined, that can be transferred to the local stakeholders (principally local elites) but rather a quality – imbued both in process and the outcome – that is coproduced by engaging the broad range of constituencies. Such notion of local ownership, which rests on a refined understanding of local agency, is key to developing emancipatory forms of peace which are consistent with the empowerment agenda of human security in externally supported peacebuilding (Reich 2006). How local actors are chosen is another hotly debated issue in this scholarship, with the critics highlighting the limitations of a an elite focus on the one hand and civil society on the other with a sparse and indeterminate middle ground between the two poles, an which largely escapes the attention of the international interveners

(Philipsen 2014). Using the example of a widely touted success story of local ownership over peacebuilding agenda in Sierra Leone, Philipsen draws attention to how civil society integration, typically perceived as evidence of local agency and ownership, may be counterproductive in enhancing civil society's role as an oversight and accountability mechanism (ibid: 49). This literature is also critical of the limitations of external interventions which focus on assisting formal institutions, structures and specific actors, for their alleged oversight of the critical importance of the relationships of trust, reconciliation and confidence for (re)building those institutions and their legitimacy, and thus securing their sustainability beyond the international presence.

2.2 Practising local ownership

The critical scholarship concerned with inconsistencies in liberal peacebuilding – a perspective that addresses the issues of how international actors can 'foster' and/or 'nurture' local ownership, has been criticised for its limited treatment of how local ownership is exercised (Krogstad 2015). There is generally inadequate breadth and depth of understanding of the local context and how what is sometimes referred to as 'institutional bricolage' as a result of enmeshment of local institutional forms and those attempted through international interventions, in fact operates. Oftentimes, even when local institutions and processes are acknowledged, they tend to be approached as working against the international agenda and universal values imbued in them. In other words they are perceived as a constraint – in terms of knowledge and capacity – to an international project requiring a local 'buy-in'[4] as a precondition for its successful implementation (Barnett and Zuercher 2009).

Krogstad calls for a more nuanced analysis and challenges the two key assumptions on ownership in this literature: that local ownership is aimed at reducing international presence or influence, and that weak state capacity is a constraint on local ownership (Krogstad ibid). By using the example of security sector reform in Sierra Leone, he draws attention to the strategies of local elites which support a continuing international presence, to demonstrate how local ownership is exercised. What his analysis reveals is that in reality there is much more local agency than assumed by the mainstream approach to local ownership in peacebuilding and its preoccupation with building absent local capacity. This finding is corroborated by the evidence of strategies aimed at transforming and resisting international intervention such as in the case of security sector reform (SSR) in the DRC (Rayroux and Wilen ibid). This does not mean that capacity building is redundant, but it does mean closer scrutiny of the context in which it is pursued, which aspects of capacity building are relevant and how best to support it. Furthermore, Krogstad suggests a better account of neglected forms of ownership – those that do not fit the stylized image of donors – is required. He proposes to reconceptualise intervention as creating sets of constraints and opportunities that expand or contract the choices facing local actors, instead of understanding international interventions as having discrete goals (Krogstad 2015: 111). His approach throws a critical light on several other

[4] One view is that the international interventions by and large subscribe to the minimalist understanding of local ownership as a 'buy in'. Thiessen, ibid: 3.

important facets of local ownership and their practical implications: that a failure of an assumed linear progression to the local actors' take over from the internationals may be a deliberate choice by the local actors; that local ownership is not homogenous in itself–that it may be present in some respect, and on some level and not the other; or that the 'foreigners'/'locals' dichotomy is not useful as clearly demonstrated by their symbiotic relationship in South Sudan; Liberia and Haiti. Two further examples drawn from UN rule of law missions in Kosovo and Liberia raise an important issue of how to assess local ownership under executive and non-executive mandates respectively (Pietz and Carlowitz 2012). These two cases demonstrate an apparent paradox that local ownership is possible under executive mandate. In Kosovo, where the UN mission had an executive mandate, the emphasis in promoting local ownership was on the transfer of responsibility and local participation in the regulatory process; in a framework of the UN mission's non-executive mandate in Liberia, the emphasis was on capacity building including legal education, as an approach much more narrowly focused on local elites. It is unclear from these examples what the criteria of assessing local ownership are; whether they ought to be the satisfaction of local elites at the participation in reforms, or is local ownership about the majority population having access to the judicial system[5]? (Pietz and von Carlowitz, ibid). Another set of concerns follows in relation to the duration of international interventions; the experience of Kosovo, Afghanistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina for example suggests that local ownership becomes even more of a contentious issue (Martin at all, ibid). A further aspect of how local ownership is exercised is related to a different framework of engagement such as in Afghanistan and Iraq where international actors are de facto occupying force unlike in other countries where their presence is approved by the local governments. Overall, these insights suggest the context specific meaning and manifestations of local ownership in the context of international peacebuilding interventions.

Another important critique related to the difficulties of implementing local ownership concerns a paucity of guidelines across international organizations on when, how to introduce local ownership and to whom. Coupled with the conceptual imprecision of the term, this has arguably led to 'parallel discourses without real dialogue' between external and local actors (Rayroux and Wilen ibid: 25).

2.3. A relational understanding of local ownership

Against the background of diverse scholarly debates, the understanding of local ownership as a relational concept has been recently gaining ground. Pouligny (2009:8) argues with reference to the international aid discourse, that local ownership refers to relations among stakeholders in development. Supporting this view, Donais claims that the key aspects of this relationship concern: who decides, who controls, who implements and who evaluates the outcomes of international engagement (2008: 3). He suggests thinking of ownership as a specific configuration of political authority that emerges from a process of negotiation in which both international and local actors claim legitimacy (p5). This kind of negotiated relationship between

[5] This question is directly related to how local ownership is understood.

international and local actors is context contingent and centred on the norms of accountability and responsibility (Richmond 2012). Martin at all (ibid) suggest that the focus ought to be on how local ownership may emerge from the shared experience of external and local actors, and how through these relationships the issues of competence, responsibility and power can be worked out to support locally grounded peace. Such conceptualisation of local ownership maps on an understanding of peacebuilding as "involving a complex set of interactions among international community, state and society", and consequently a centrality of state-society relations – in other words a renewed social contract – for building legitimate peacebuilding outcomes (Donais 2015b:41).

3 Local ownership in EU peacebuilding interventions

Among the major international organizations and multilateral donors there is a general consensus that local ownership is important for all of their interventions, especially in the security sector reforms. Nevertheless, there is no clear definition of local ownership and this usually is used to refer to the country or national ownership.

The European Union identifies the importance of local ownership in all its operations, especially in peacebuilding and conflict management strategies.[6] Local ownership as an important norm of EU intervention has been expressed by both the Council and the Commission. The European Parliament for example frames local ownership of peacebuilding as essential to stable peace[7] (European Parliament 2008 in Richmond 2012:369). There are several initiatives that support local ownership although a clear definition on how to encourage it is missing. Under the International Cooperation and Development strategy the EU Commission has identified governance as one of the key issues to support local ownership in its interventions. Within this context support is provided for the projects in areas such as rule of law, and democratisation among others[8]. Local ownership is pursued through dialogue among all relevant stakeholders participating in the reform processes (i.e. government, local authorities, civil society and parliaments) and the European Union. Dialogue is identified as a preferred mechanism of local ownership following the principle of inclusiveness and partnership[9]. It reflects the EC's recognition of the need for a broader approach, especially in view of the shortcomings in applying the conditionality principle. The EU makes explicit reference to the concept of human security as the guiding motive for its engagement in conflict zones grounded in its commitment to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle. Commitment to human security is a way of expressing EU's particular understanding of local ownership that is purportedly sensitive to individual experiences of security, and reflects contextual nuances in areas of EU peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts. It also underlines the importance of conforming to 'the norms and expectations of the citizens of the nation concerned and not the ideals of the interveners' (EC 2008).

Specifically in the security sector, the EU Council takes local ownership as one of the key principles for an ESDP action in support of Security Sector Reform (SSR). In this sense, based on the Council's concept for ESDP support to the SSR, the reforms are deemed only

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[6] Council conclusions on the EU's comprehensive approach. Foreign Affairs Council meeting. (2014). Available from: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/142552.pdf

[7] European Parliament (2008) European Parliament resolution of 18 December 2008 on development perspectives for peace-building and nation building in post-conflict situations (2008/2097(INI)).

[8] EuropeAid. Governance policies. Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sectors/human-rights-and-governance/governance_en

[9] Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Governance in the European Consensus on Development - Towards a harmonised approach within the European Union {SEC(2006) 1020} {SEC(2006) 1021} {SEC(2006) 1022}

possible through local ownership, which is defined as "the appropriation by the local authorities of the commonly agreed objectives and principles".[10] Accordingly, governments should be committed to actively implement and support the SSR's mandate. In the absence of a proper government, the EU will strengthen civil society's involvement to achieve local ownership[11]. However, the evidence on constructive civil society engagement in EU-supported SSR reforms remains weak.

Yet, there continues to be a lack of coordination between the Council and the Commission regarding local ownership as expressed in the respective definitions of local ownership. While for most part the Council uses 'local ownership', it also mentions 'national' ownership, the term that the Commission favours in its own documents (Rayroux and Wilen ibid). The Commission's definition is based on the OECD-DAC strategies and handbooks for SSRs[12] and indicates that all actions should be done under a strong national ownership "to ensure a sustainable and nationally owned process of change."[13] Nevertheless, regardless of these efforts, the EU lacks specific guidelines on detailed activities in programs or projects on how to implement strategies encouraging local ownership.

This is not a general approach towards all EU external activities. The EU has a more concrete approach towards local engagement and ownership in its European Structural and Investment Funds. It has guidance on Community-led Local Development (CLLD) for Member States and Programme Authorities, which suggests the need to implement initiatives, designed, led and carried out by local stakeholders, taking into account local needs[14].

The EU has by now a wealth of experience in SSR worldwide albeit with a somewhat chequered record. In Africa, the EU tries to avoid being seen as imposing comprehensive reforms, which may be criticised as neo-colonialist; it supports reforms under the assumption of a strong domestic government commitment to them. In DRC, where since 2005 the EU has launched three civilian missions to reform the security sector, the lack of coordination among EU institutions and strategies, intra-European rivalries and poor communication among the actors involved has been claimed as damaging to the peacebuilding processes (Rayroux and Wilén, 2012: 33). The three missions differ in their objectives and their set up. While the

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[10] EU Concept for ESDP support to Security Sector Reform (SSR). Note from the Secretariat to the Political and Security Committee. (2005). Available from: http://www.initiativeforpeacebuilding.eu/resources/EU_Concept_for_ESDP_support_to_Security_Sector_Reform.pdf

[11] FN6 ibid

[12] Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting Security and Justice. (2008). OECD DAC. Available from: http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-peace/conflictandfragility/oecddachandbookonsecuritysystemreformsupportingsecurityandjustice.htm

[13] A Concept for European Community Support for Security Sector Reform. (2006). European Union Commission. Available from: http://www.initiativeforpeacebuilding.eu/resources/EC_A_Concept_for_European_Community_Support_for_Security_Sector_Reform.pdf

[14] Guidance on Community-led Local Development in European Structural and Investment Funds. (2014). European Structural and Investment Funds. Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/guidance_community_local_development.pdf

EUSEC mission focusing on anticorruption in the DDR process was initiated by the Congolese government, in the case of EUPOL which was set up under the UN mission mandate, to support a newly established Integrated Police Unit, the DRC government exercises a significant oversight and control (Rayroux and Wilén ibid: 33). The Congolese government has resisted structural changes and defended strongly its sovereignty, unencumbered by other societal actors such as civil society which have been left out of the process. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, and other interventions, the EU has failed to include local actors in the process (Kappler and Richmond, 2011). Resistance to EU reforms has come from local agencies traditionally ignored in mainstream spheres, which use cultural and religious forms to create their own peace strategies away from visible processes. The European Union's interventions in Bosnia from 2002 until 2008 are often singled out for their lack of coherence (Tolksdorf, 2014)[15] particularly in regard to the parallel deployment of its ESDP and Enlargement instruments. Furthermore, the EU has received criticisms for its overambitious promises, which have created high expectations in its military interventions in Africa (Norheim-Martinsen, 2013). The EU has faced difficult trade off-s and brokered compromise solutions in terms of accepting partial and superficial reforms for the sake of stability, and thus foregoing aims of local ownership based on broad participation and inclusiveness.

Across different interventions, the lack of sufficient understanding of local context has been notable despite the EU playing a prominent role supporting issues of civil society and local community development especially in reconciliation, gender equality and children's rights. This poor knowledge and understanding of cultural, socioeconomic and historical conditions has weakened the potential for EU operations to facilitate and mobilise local consensus building over the objectives and process of peacebuilding initiatives.

[15] The argument has also been made that more broadly international involvement in Bosnia- Herzegovina is the text book case of a gap between nominal commitment to local ownership and its actual implementation (Donais 2012).

4 Centrality of ownership to other peacebuilding concepts and norms

Governance and local ownership: The link between governance and local ownership in the context of comprehensive peacebuilding is an organic one and it manifests itself in the notion of democratic participation. Development of accountable, transparent and impartial institutions as a framework for good governance is contingent on an active engagement of all relevant actors in a society. In its turn, governance plays a decisive role in fostering local ownership. This two-way link between governance and local ownership has been made explicit in the EU approach to governance policies;[16] the EU Commission has identified governance as one of the key issues to support local ownership in peacebuilding interventions. One of the foremost questions for external peacebuilding interventions is how to facilitate positive synergies between the two against the manifold challenges and constraints to both in conflict-affected societies.

Security sector reform and local ownership: The principle of local ownership takes a centre stage in the EU interventions in support of the security sector reforms following the logic that only those institutions that command societal legitimacy are likely to endure. In operational terms, it is pursued in various forms of participation of the key local stakeholders. As this paper has illustrated, the contradictions and tensions of local ownership in the context of external peacebuilding interventions are particularly evident in the security sector, given the repercussion the proposed reforms have on the domestic power relations which are shaped by the war-time experience. Although the EU has long and diverse experience of supporting security sector reforms worldwide, its ability to better respond to the diverse local context remains constrained.

Multitrack diplomacy and local ownership: Multitrack diplomacy has been disproportionately a state (elite) centric instrument and a strategy deployed by the external actors engaged in conflict mediation, usually under the pretext of engaging with the representatives of legitimate local authorities. This has been particularly contentious in the context of contemporary conflicts in which political authority is challenged by various groups contesting the state. In view of an evident shift towards a more balanced approach and a need to reach out to various local constituencies with the EU's multitrack diplomacy toolkit, the application of the local ownership principle in planning and implementation remains inadequate.

Local ownership as a principle and as a strategic guideline for EU peacebuilding interventions is premised on inclusion. The EU expressly states that the involvement of local communities is key to sustainable peace. However, the practice gaps in the EU peacebuilding interventions have been common as a consequence of an overt (national) state focus, underdeveloped strategies of civil society mobilisation and insufficient attention to supporting other types of local actors and societal arenas (Yong Lee and Ozerdem 2015). There has been strong criticism of EU-supported governance reforms that fall short of producing inclusive

[16] EuropeAid. Governance policies. Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sectors/human-rights-and-governance/governance_en

institutions. In the context of external intervention, an inclusive approach to policy reforms is important both in terms of relations between external and local actors, as well as between various local actors. In its main documents the EU accentuates gender mainstreaming as a particularly important facet of inclusion in conflict-affected societies and calls for women to be recognised as 'having a vital role to play in promoting peace and stability'[17]. However, EU's approach is insufficiently attuned to the specific problems and demands of women in conflict-affected countries, which are distinctly shaped by local cultural context. It also falls short of provisions for meaningful participation of women at various levels of decision making, and thus weakens local ownership. Among policies to improve inclusion of women in peacebuilding activities, the EU identifies the need for multilevel engagement which includes a support for transnational forms of activism. This is an aspect of the EU support to domestic non-state actors which has received comparatively less attention in the context of peacebuilding, and yet is of vital importance given the regional and transnational character of contemporary conflicts. The EU also makes a note of the use of ICT in the context of supporting local ownership through strengthening the involvement of national parliaments, including mutual interaction and capacity building between the European Parliament and the parliaments of partner countries (including besides ICT support systems, technology capacities to create state-of-the-art voter rolls, the provision of ID cards where birth registrations and other citizenship supporting documents are unavailable etc.).[18] ICT is also relevant in the context of the external actors communication strategies towards the general public about what their goals, roles and expectations are as a way to generate interest in and a commitment to the peacebuilding effort. And lastly, the principle of ownership is also linked to the principle of coherence in complex international interventions. This paper has repeatedly noted how the ambiguity of the concept of local ownership itself and its differentiated use by various 'stakeholders'- in particular how external organizations and donors display competing mind-sets regarding its meaning - can have ambiguous and even counterproductive consequences in terms of peacebuilding outcomes (Leonardsson 2015). In fact, the drive towards greater coherence among external actors in an attempt to improve the effectiveness of international peacebuilding interventions, can directly undermine local ownership by reinforcing its instrumental use. Attempts for greater coherence and coordination which requires better inter-organisational harmonization of practices and procedures and more standardisation, may in effect further restrict flexibility for a more contextually-attuned approach to peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Scholars have argued for a broader approach to the issues of coordination that would enable practices that engage both external and local actors in complimentary relationships (Thiessen ibid: 33).

[17] EC 2008

[18] EC 2008

5 Conclusions

Local ownership is a fundamental concept in the context of EU external intervention to peacebuilding which has so far been more of a rhetorical device than an effective overall guide for its policy action. Based on the review of academic scholarship and policy practice in this paper, it is better understood as a guiding philosophy and a policy ideal rather than a tangible goal or outcome of international intervention. This paper has proposed that WOSCAP follows a relational understanding of the concept as a contextual and dynamic perspective that focuses on how local ownership may emerge from the shared experience of external and local actors, and how through these relationships the issues of competence, responsibility and power can be rebalanced to support locally grounded, 'societally-owned' peace (Mccandless, Abitbol and Donais 2015). At the core of this conceptualisation is a quest for a more meaningful engagement of various types of stakeholders operating at multiple levels which is premised on their adequate grasp of shared goals and their respective roles in externally supported peacebuilding intervention. Our approach resonates the finding by Mccandless at all, suggesting that theoretical and empirical knowledge about the relational dynamics that bridge top-down and bottom up approaches to peacebuilding is rudimentary and yet critical for understanding the challenges of internationally supported peacebuilding (ibid: 2).

6 Research agenda and methodological consideration

Given the diverse theoretical perspectives on local ownership and the paucity of empirical evidence on how local ownership is exercised in the context of EU peacebuilding interventions, it is proposed that WOSCAP research on local ownership in peace interventions proceeds at two interconnected levels: by exploring a range of relevant themes identified in this scoping study; and by pursuing detailed case studies of policy reform/intervention episodes across the three capability clusters in all four research sites. The proposed conceptualisation of local ownership which foregrounds a relational perspective requires a combination of qualitative research methods suited to capture the experiences and perspectives by a range of stakeholders. Alongside a standard set of qualitative methods, we propose to also use a 'dialogic method' developed by Kostovicova at all 2012 to investigate the nature of relationships between external actors and their local counterparts.

Tentative research questions:

- What is the evidence that the EU has implemented a local ownership principle across its peacebuilding instruments deployed within the country missions?
- How is local ownership defined within a framework of the EU country missions and across discrete areas of intervention?
- Are there variations in how local ownership is pursued across: Different issues areas? Different levels? Different stages of intervention? Different mandates? In different countries?
- What types of mechanisms are used to engage with various local actors? How are these mechanisms deployed?
- Are there cases of best practice and how those best practices can be scaled up?

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