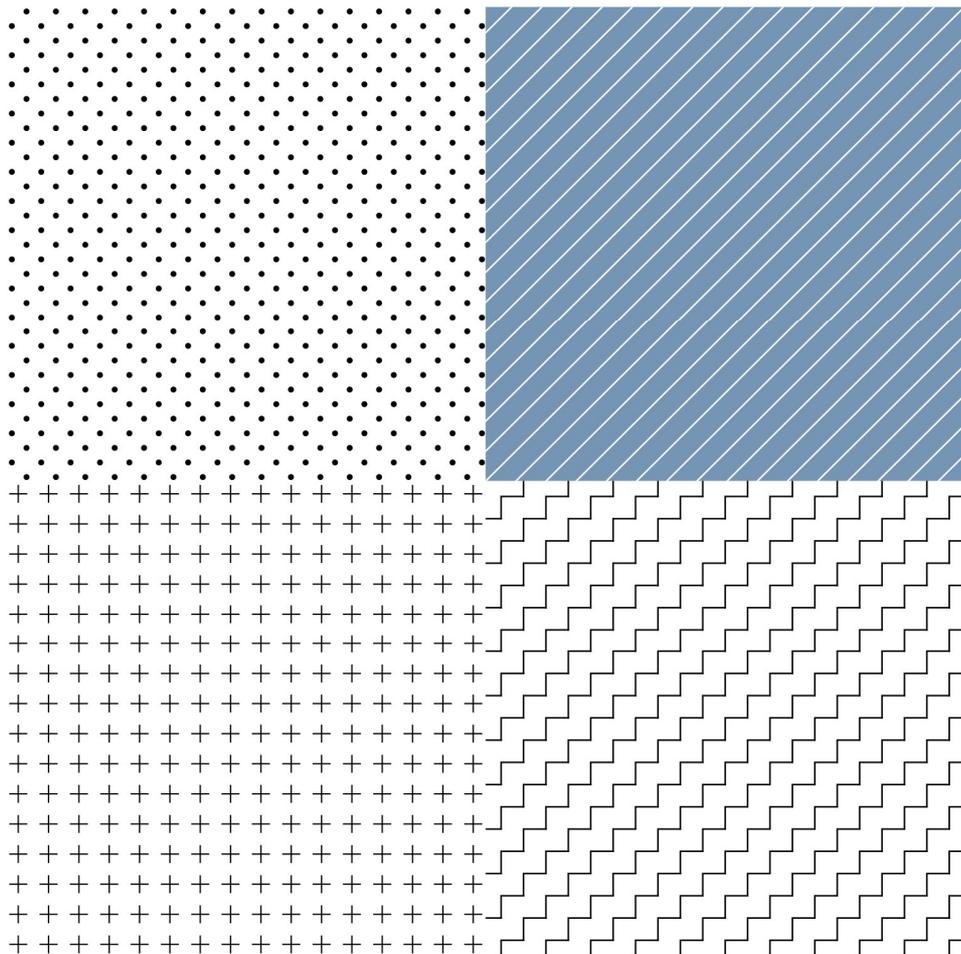


W O S C A P

ENHANCING EU PEACEBUILDING CAPABILITIES



Community of Practice Roundtable on Local Ownership

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COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ROUNDTABLE ON LOCAL OWNERSHIP

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Deliverable D4.1: Community of Practice Event on Local Ownership

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Whole of Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

The *Community of Practice Roundtable on Local Ownership* was aimed at bringing together leading practitioners and policy experts from government institutions, civil society and academia, to debate current trends in integrating local communities in peacebuilding and conflict prevention; how to make external intervention more relevant to conflict-affected populations, and how to improve their effectiveness and sustainability. During the roundtable, the research findings of the scoping study on local ownership, *Owning the Peace in International Interventions: a Delusion or a Possibility?*, were discussed. The roundtable provided an opportunity to share insights and experiences, discuss practice and inform proposals for change. More information can be found at www.woscap.eu. If you wish to be part of the community of practice, or receive updates, please write to the Project Coordinator at g.vogelaar@gppac.net.

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Introduction

The aim of the Community of Practice Roundtable on Local Ownership was to bring together leading practitioners and policy experts from government institutions, civil society and academia, to debate current trends in integrating local communities in peacebuilding and conflict prevention; how to make external intervention more relevant to conflict-affected populations, and how to improve their effectiveness and sustainability. The roundtable provided an opportunity to share insights and experiences, discuss practice and inform proposals for change.

The event is part of a Community of Peacebuilding Practice being developed by the WOSCAP project. WOSCAP (www.woscap.eu) aims to improve understandings of how the EU can deliver peacebuilding and conflict prevention policies that are inclusive, sustainable, and innovative, including building a catalogue of good practice and recommendations for policy and practice change.

The project's Whole-of-Society perspective proposes that extending the range of actors and rethinking the nature and focus of their engagement is more conducive to stable and sustainable peace, through enhancing legitimacy, buy-in and the appropriateness of external interventions. As well as addressing the inclusivity of peacebuilding processes, Whole-of-Society deals with issues of poor co-ordination and integration, aims to counter fragmentation within the policy process, promote synergies and make better collective use of resources.

Key questions for the roundtable discussion were:

- How inclusive are current peacebuilding processes – how are participants selected and are key groups of local actors being marginalised or ignored?
- How effective are current methods of engagement between external and local actors? Which examples of positive interactions can we draw on to improve 'best practice'?
- How important is the local-to-local dynamic in conflict prevention and peacebuilding? How can external actors support better local interactions?
- What role do shared experience, competence, responsibility and power play in creating a locally grounded peace?

The meeting was framed as a brainstorming among UK based experts under [Chatham House rules](#). It was also intended to raise topics / challenges for discussion at a subsequent stakeholder Community of Practice meeting on local ownership in Ukraine in September.

Discussion points

Practical barriers to local ownership in the field are:

- Lack of time and capacity to address it;
- Concept poorly articulated in the local (as opposed to international) context, therefore having limited traction in day to day ops;
- No practical guidance;
- Often a tension with 'stabilisation' and 'efficiency';
- Inbuilt bias against locals as where the conflict originated;
- Difficult to know who are relevant and reliable stakeholders;
- Donors unwilling to fund these kind of programmes;
- It is intangible and hard to measure impact and show results in short time frames;
- Enormous difficulty in practice to implement state / society engagement in a meaningful way.

Degree of and enthusiasm for local ownership varies at different stages of the programme – better at the outset, easier to incorporate local views into design of programmes than in adjusting them or responding to opposition. Local ownership is currently conditional. The example of CAR Bangui consultation process demonstrates that reaching an agreement at a fairly general level is not very difficult; but the complications begin when it comes to issues of who is engaged, on what issues and in what ways.

- 'Big bang' consultation exercises are seen as relatively easy, because they deal in generalities – the challenge is to incorporate more detail and manage disagreements and tensions between locals and international over the detail.
- Research and perception surveys are themselves a way to gain legitimacy for the intervention – to include population beyond the elites.
- Need for more evidence based action – more perceptions surveys and canvassing local information would be good, but this rarely happens. No mechanisms or expertise for doing this e.g. by the UN. It has to be outsourced; where they are done, it is with passive assistance of the mission and often in a crude *vox pop* way.

Consultations are unlikely to happen on a regular basis, more as a one-off exercise. They are not used to track evolution of intervention. Yet perception studies can be a test of the 'honesty' of policy, but there needs to be a follow through, and the findings need to be acted upon. There is a potential for ICT usage here – to reach remote locations, canvas more grass roots stakeholders and provide better analysis of findings and design of survey.

Saferworld presented an example of establishing community networks, e.g. a cluster of villages with similarities. Individual representatives within the network are selected through a scoping process to provide voices, which are independent of governments; they are trained to run consultations and provide community feedback; findings can then be checked against government positions and against a broader community constituency.

Local ownership initiatives are easier in development programmes than for example in more contentious areas, such as SSR, where governments are not prepared to be open and

transparent with their own populations; yet these contentious issues are usually at the top of external mission priorities. The example of SSR in DRC illustrates difficulties of working in the spirit of local ownership. The language of 'ownership' tends to favour political elites rather than grass roots. It also creates a problem in so far as it triggers a backlash from the authorities who then question international engagement and priorities. Practitioners shouldn't discount national elites as sources of information – they tend to have a strong command of what is going on, especially in SSR as it is in their interest. However, there is often a pushback from key government ministries, e.g. defence and interior ministries, whose way of working is militarised and hierarchical.

The international community can do a better job of bringing added value to discussions between stakeholders and in promoting a more balanced view of local ownership. Local ownership has become more mainstreamed into the language of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, e.g. terms such as state-society relations are referred to, rather than state relations (by IOs) but there is still a gap between norms, facts and results.

Good practice ideas

EBRD – the Bank responds to donors who want it as a condition for climate action programmes. From being regarded as an avant garde policy position, it is now seen as part of the Bank's core business, but there is still a perceived trade-off between being inclusive, and being efficient. This could be helped by better training of locals to present and run programmes. Does this amount to 'conditionality' to enforce local ownership – in other words does it reveal a philosophical tension between achieving added value and respecting local aims and processes?

Local capacity and preparedness remain an issue in implementing local ownership strategies, also the fact that locals often speak with fragmented voices.

- In the case of private sector interventions, demands for more engagement with locals is **framed in terms of a 'project risk'**, that the project will suffer if they are not brought on board. Local knowledge is also seen as beneficial to project design (participants compared this attitude to IOs who are less enthusiastic about local participation).
- Another good practice in the EBRD case is the existence of a **watchdog mechanism which includes:**
 - Logging of complaints;
 - Presented as a way of resolving grievances;
 - Independent body which can enforce accountability and transparency;
 - Able to recalibrate power imbalances;
 - Provides an independent source of information and insights.

This function could be done by one body, in the case of the EBRD's Bank Watch they mobilise local NGOs; they also have the benefit of continuity – they stick around for longer than just the life of a project.

- Rethink Fragility made a suggestion to create '**decision points**' at which engagement is actively built into a project, where projects can also be adjusted.

- Local ownership tends to be overgeneralised and underspecified – it is better to build it specifically into **individual projects with demonstrable modalities** and outcomes than trying to apply it across large generic programmes (e.g. on SSR or governance).
- This also offers a chance for **institutional learning** – subsequent implementations learn from previous clear examples.
- Local consultation mechanisms could be built into periodic reporting.
- There is a need to create space in projects for better engagement between IOs and civil society, with improved access to information.
- **The capacity of the Private sector to provide a mechanism** for better quality consultations with locals.

IOs sometimes feel constrained by whom they can work with. Also, governments feel less threatened by interventions of private companies – they feel less circumvented. **Examples:** Saferworld is working with private companies in South Sudan on how to do consultations in a better way. EBRD in Albania negotiated with local communities and the local rail operator to cut down on unauthorised crossings; they used surveys by CSOs of traffic to find solutions.

Practitioners queried whether there are limits to potential engagements with the private sector, e.g. on issues such as human rights and stabilisation; the limitation could derive from either the fact that these kind of issues are not in the normal remit of companies, or because there are issues (for example on human rights) where the private sector may be a cause of the problem.

Follow up

All participants expressed an interest in further expert discussions on the topic. They will be informed when the online CoP forum goes live and expect to contribute to this. The meeting provided valuable input for both a second local CoP event planned in Ukraine and for WP5 on policy recommendations.

Speakers

- Dr Sarah Billerbeck, University of Reading
- Marianna Wiedenbeck, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- Ian Quick, Rethink Fragility
- Doireann Cooney, Saferworld
- Dr Mary Martin, LSE
- Dr Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic, LSE
- Ms Maria Patricia Ponce-Maya, LSE