Peacebuilding as a Self-Legitimising System: The Case of Bosnia-Herzegovina

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Introduction

The question of the legitimacy of peacebuilding is a fairly recent one given that the concept of 'peacebuilding' itself has long been assumed to be a-political and bound to be 'good'. Richmond suggests that peace has been assumed to be extraordinarily legitimate by nature, arguing that "almost inevitably thinking on peace has […] followed the Platonic notion of an "ideal form," which is partly why the concept is so often imbued with such mystical legitimacy."[1]

At the same time, the increasingly prominent acknowledgement in both policy circles and academia that peace is in fact 'political' has opened up the Pandora's box of legitimacy concerns around the mechanisms through which and ends to which peacebuilding is being conducted. The more critical literature on peace has therefore increasingly emphasised the power inherent in the policy projects that peacebuilding devises.[2] Academic debates have, at least to a small extent, started to reflect on the need of peacebuilding to be legitimate, not only from the perspective of the interveners and their host societies, but also the societies that 'receive' peacebuilding.[3] There have been debates around the tensions between local and international legitimacy.[4] There certainly also have been attempts to evaluate the success and thus, implicitly, legitimacy of peacebuilding, for instance through its (in)ability to respond to the needs and interests of its recipients.[5] But even the more recent debates on 'hybrid

[1] Richmond, Oliver (2007), "Critical Research Agendas for Peace: The Missing Link in the Study of International Relations", *Alternatives*, vol.32: pp. 247-274, p.264.

[2] Chandler, David (2004), "*The responsibility to protect?* Imposing the 'Liberal Peace'", *International Peacekeeping*, vol.11, no.1, pp.59-81; Kappler, Stefanie (2014), *Local Agency and Peacebuilding. EU and International Engagement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus and South Africa*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Mac Ginty, Roger (2008), "Indigenous Peace-Making Versus the Liberal Peace", *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol.43, no.2, pp.139-163; Stokke, Kristian and Uyangoda, Jayadeva (eds) (2011), *Liberal peace in question: politics of state and market reform in Sri Lanka*, London; New York: Anthem Press.

[3] Cf. Berdal, Mats (2009) "Chapter Two: Peacebuilding Operations and the Struggle for Legitimacy", *The Adelphi Papers*, vol.49, no.407, pp.95-134.

[4] Heathershaw, John (2007), "Peacebuilding as Practice: Discourses from Post-conflict Tajikistan", *International Peacekeeping*, vol.14, no.2: pp.219-236.

[5] Talentino, Andrea K. (2007), "Perceptions of Peacebuilding: The Dynamic of Imposer and Imposed Upon", *International Studies Perspectives*, vol.8: pp.152-171.

legitimacy'[6] or everyday legitimacy[7] have tended to look at the manifestations of legitimacy on the surface rather than the ways in which legitimacy discourses are constructed by the peacebuilding community itself.

Hence, the degree to which peacebuilding legitimacy has been tuned to the societies in which peace is being built has been rather limited in practice, as this chapter will argue. It will show with the example of Bosnia-Herzegovina that instead, peacebuilding has been constructed by its architects as a self-perpetuating system within which legitimacy is assessed by the same networks that are at the very core of designing peacebuilding policies. The peacebuilding system can therefore be considered as closed in itself and not open to external evaluation and challenge. As a result, its legitimacy is constructed through the feedback it produces for itself, which is bound to be positive and reproductive of its own discourses and practices. I argue in this chapter that this represents a mechanism through which the system can sustain itself in the long run, whilst avoiding fundamental critiques that might possibly result in the need to completely rethink the actors, tools and mechanisms through which peacebuilding operates.

Peacebuilding as a system of self-legitimation

Peacebuilding as a system of governance gained prominence in the 1990s, most notably with Boutros-Ghali's 'Agenda for Peace'.[8] If we reflect on the extent to which the system in itself has changed ever since in its confrontation with conflicts in BiH, Kosovo, Timor-Leste, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Rwanda, and many others, it is interesting to note that the changes within the system – the actors that implement it, the organisations that fund it, the goals that are being developed – have remained rather minimal. This is not least due to what Lederach refers to as a 'cookie-cutter' approach, suggesting that "our approaches have become too cookie-cutter-like, too reliant on what proper technique suggests as a frame of reference, and as a result our processes are too rigid and fragile".[9] At this stage, one can ask why peacebuilding has developed such a rigid frame? Why has it not adapted and developed more against the background that it is being used and deployed all over the world?

I want to suggest in this chapter that this is largely due to what we can call an 'autopoietic logic' of peacebuilding. Luhmann has defined autopoiesis as a self-referential system that ultimately intends to reproduce itself.[10] He relies to a certain extent on the work of the biologists

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[66] Boege, Volker, Brown, Anne, Clements, Kevin. and Nolan, Anna (2008), "On Hybrid Political Orders and Emerging States: State Formation in the Context of 'Fragility'", *Berghof Handbook Dialogue No.8*: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, p.10.

[7] Roberts, David (2011), "Post-Conflict Peacebuilding, Liberal Irrelevance and the Locus of Legitimacy", *International Peacekeeping*, vol.18, no.4: pp.410-424.

[8] Boutros Ghali, Boutros (1992), *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, New York: United Nations.

[9] Lederach, John Paul (2005), *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*, Oxford University Press, p.73.

[10] Luhmann Niklas (1986), "The autopoiesis of social systems," in: Geyer F. & van der Zouwen

Maturana and Varela who suggest that

> [a]n autopoietic machine is a machine organized (defined as a unity) as a network of processes of production (transformation and destruction) of components which: (i) through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realize the network of processes (relations) that produced them; and (ii) constitute it (the machine) as a concrete unity in space in which they (the components) exist by specifying the topological domain of its realization as such a network.[11]

This in turn means that the social system in question, that is, the peacebuilding system, is, as an 'ideal type', a closed social system[12] and draws its references from within its boundaries rather than outside of them. It therefore derives both its logic and legitimacy from itself and therefore largely resists challenges from outside. At the same time, the closure of the system also means that it has retained a resilient spatial, temporal and sociological logic that has little need – or interest – to change over time or space. In that sense, the system's main ambition is to steer its knowledge creation and policy practice in a way that enables its stability and continuity, and the self-legitimising logic of the system fulfils exactly this purpose. As a result, feedback on the 'performance' of peacebuilding is provided from the scripts and actors within its logic, that is, those who have a vested interest in the continuation of the system. Therefore, only agents who are in accordance with the underlying logic of peacebuilding are part of its design and feedback processes.

In this context, Barker refers to self-legitimation as "the cultivation of a distinguished identity"[13] as a potential goal in itself and "a feature of all government".[14] In that vein, we can read self-legitimation as a basic and necessary condition of governance, not only on the national, but also on the global level. If we then assume that peacebuilding is a form of governance, we have to acknowledge its ambition to legitimise its own goals, methods and actors. A lack of flexibility within peacebuilding thus does not come as a surprise, but is a logical outcome of this mechanism of legitimising itself through a reference to its own goalposts. The focus on continuity rather than rupture, on stability rather than change[15], the inclusion of a rather small pool of participants, the subcontracting of peace to non-governmental organisations[16] as well as the use of strong conditionality in funding practices, are all indicative of this trend. Even when there has now been a stronger focus on practices of 'local ownership',[17] this has primarily served to further legitimise the peacebuilding system

J. (eds.) *Sociocybernetic paradoxes*, London: Sage, pp.172–192.

[11] Maturana, Humberto & Varela, Francisco (1980), *Autopoiesis and cognition: The realization of the living*, Boston, MA: D.Reidel, pp.78-9.

[12] Cf. Luhmann, *Op. Cit.*

[13] Barker, Rodney (2001), *Legitimating Identities. The Self-Presentations of Rulers and Subjects*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.4.

[14] Ibid., p.6.

[15] Cf. Mac Ginty, Roger, (2012a), "Against Stabilization," *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, vol.1, no.1: pp.20–30.

[16] Cf. Richmond, Oliver and Henry F. Carey (Eds) (2005), *Subcontracting Peace: The Challenges of the NGO Peacebuilding*, Aldershot: Ashgate.

[17] Cf. Lemay-Hébert, Nicolas & Kappler, Stefanie (2016), "What Attachment to Peace? Exploring the Normative and Material Dimensions of Local Ownership in Peacebuilding,"

rather than opening doors for a rethinking of the system from a perspective of its host societies or even challenging the operational goals of the respective mission.[18]

Hence, given that the peacebuilding missions in BiH have been deployed for over 20 years meanwhile, it is a particularly useful example to gauge the extent to which change in the system has remained rather limited and how self-perpetuating dynamics dominate the design and evaluation of peacebuilding in the country and beyond.

The peacebuilding jigsaw in BiH

The 'recent' war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) took place from 1992 and 1995 and has to be seen in the context of the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. The collapse of socialism, symbolised by the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980, increasing degrees of privatisation and internal struggles to fill the power vacuum left behind by Tito all led to the destabilisation of the political, economic and social situation. Followed by the independence of Croatia and Slovenia, the situation of BiH, caught in the middle of these struggles, deteriorated and experienced some of the worst violence during this war. The capital city Sarajevo was under siege from 1992 until 1996 with a number of international attempts at mediation failing until the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995.

Whilst the war, at the point of writing, ended more than twenty years ago, the ensuing peacebuilding mission, which was one of the most comprehensive from its very beginning and is represented through a quagmire of organisations, still shows only little signs of becoming redundant. Powerful international actors including the European Union (EU), the Office of the High Representative (OHR), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and a plethora of middle-sized NGOs continue to highlight the necessity of their ongoing presence in preventing the re-escalation of violence and keeping the country stable. In that sense, it can be argued that the legitimacy of the long-standing international engagement rests largely on the argument that there is a *need* for further engagement in the light of the potential *local* and *national* threats that the system in BiH might produce, with the OHR as the formerly most powerful external institution still present more than twenty years after the end of the war. If one takes a closer look at the types of 'problems' that international actors and donors strive to eliminate and tackle in their engagement in BiH, we can see that these range from security sector reform to education, from economic transformation to demining. And whilst these efforts cover such a vast range of policy and societal sectors, what is interesting is that the overall state structure remains largely untouched. In a way, the political system was created by the Dayton Peace Agreement, that is, a system that subdivides the country into two entities, a self-governing district Brcko and ten cantons creates at times unsurmountable obstacles to political change and can be said to engrain the

Review of International Studies, vol.42, no.5: pp. 895-914.

[18] Von Billerbeck, Sarah B. K. (2015), "Local Ownership and UN Peacebuilding: Discourse Versus Operationalization," *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, vol. 21, no. 2: pp. 299-315.

structures of the war in the post-conflict environment. It also means that the constitution, part of the peace agreement, has empowered nationalists more than moderates and rewards ethnic identification. The famous 'Sejdic Finci' case, for instance, saw a Bosnian Roma and Jew sue the Bosnian state for discriminating against those who do not identify as either Bosnian Serb, Bosnian Croat or Bosnian Muslim and denying them important political offices. Although Sejdic and Finci won the case in 2009 at the European Court of Human Rights, the state structure remains largely unchanged and the majority of international organisations seem to accept the deadlock inherent in BiH's constitutional arrangements.

In that vein, it is interesting to note that very often, when international organisations speak about Bosnian institutions or politics, they refer to them as 'complex' or 'very complicated'.[19] This implies an imagination of the international system, created by the Dayton Peace Agreement, subject to being derailed through the existence of *national* complexity. This is in line with Autesserre's observation that local mechanisms of conflict resolution have often been labelled as illegitimate, while liberal peacebuilding has much more often been labelled as a legitimate device through which change and social transformation can be catalysed.[20] Such a discourse defends international peacebuilding intervention as necessary and long-term, creating a self-sustaining field with very little variance over time. Anecdotally, this is visible through the make-up of the peacebuilding community that tends to mainly socialise with each other rather than more broadly with wider society. The OSCE office in Sarajevo, ironically, has for many years, had an advertisement poster at its lifts by an international moving company – just one anecdote reflecting the fact that employees tend to be kept close to the headquarters rather than their host societies. The policy of job rotation, used at the majority of international organisations, is indicative of this problem. It means that international staff are denied the opportunity to socialise and integrate within the respective host societies and instead ensures maximum loyalty to their organisation. This practice further ensures the continuity of the mechanics at play in the peacebuilding field as well as creating a system that is closed in itself.

Against this background the lack of flexibility and change of approach in international peacebuilding is perhaps little surprising. This became particularly obvious during the 2014 protests across the country that, in very vocal ways, suggested a need to combat corruption. The protests emerged from a medium-sized movement of factory-workers in the small town of Tuzla to a larger social movement against corruption, unemployment and more social justice.[21] Protesters formed 'plenums', smaller participatory bodies that dealt with issues of public interest. Whilst these plenums started hosting debates very relevant for peacebuilding and the future development of BiH as a country, they were quickly brushed aside by the international community and dismissed as undemocratic, not sustainable and sometimes even violent. Whilst

[19] field observations, March 2017.

[20] Autesserre, Severine (2009), 'Hobbes and the Congo: Frames, Local Violence, and International Intervention', *International Organization*, vol.63, pp.249-280.

[21] Cf. Plenum gradjana i gradjanki Sarajeva (2014), "Zahtjevi Plenuma gradjana i gradjanki Sarajeva prema Skupstini Kantona Sarajevo". Available at http://plenumsa.org/zahtjevi-plenuma-gradana-i-gradanki-sarajeva-prema-skupstini-kantona-sarajevo/ (last accessed 08 August 2014).

this is not to say that the plenums represented the population as a whole, it was still striking to see how little strategic attention this movement was given by the peacebuilders who have long claimed to strive to empower Bosnian society. I have argued elsewhere that the plenums were in fact quickly dismissed, both by Western European media as well as international diplomats in Bosnia, as violent or lacking leadership.[22] It has to be said that, specifically within EU policy in Bosnia-Herzegovina, there has ever since been a slightly higher degree of attention towards the material and economic aspects of peacebuilding, which were vocally highlighted by the plenums. At the same time, we have seen only little to no integration of the non-ethnic structures of the plenum into the peacebuilding process. Indeed, when now speaking to international organisation staff in BiH, the overall consensus is still the ethnic division of the political system as an obstacle to the further development of peacebuilding rather than more strategic attention to this strong movement of the plenums (one among others) as evidence of the unifying forces across the country. Peacebuilding in BiH therefore remains in limbo between local and international, between unifying and segregating forces. It tends to take the divided, nationalistic forces as a given and feeds on those structures almost as the country was still in the midst of the war and its associated dividing lines.

This is the background against which this chapter asks how this system that rests on the perpetuation of the dividing structures of the war has ensured its survival for more than twenty years. Analysing where the system draws its legitimacy from, the chapter explores in more detail the mechanics of the peacebuilding system. It asks which actors, spaces, temporalities and logics are evoked to create legitimacy, how the peacebuilding field is structured and conditioned to ensure its continuous reproduction.

The Logics of Legitimacy

The actors that establish peacebuilding legitimacy

Although there is no clear career path to becoming a peacebuilding professional and actors involved in peacebuilding emerge from a number of career trajectories, there is still a particular 'type' of staff who are found in both headquarters and field offices that engage in peacebuilding. In this context, Goetze has conducted a relevant study on the ways in which the peacebuilding field generates power not only through the ways in which it produces knowledge, but also in its mechanisms of expert production.[23] Goetze shows how the world of peacebuilding has long tended to privilege those already privileged, those with degrees from high-ranking universities, thus precluding a rather large pool of the world population from participating in the design and implementation of peacebuilding.[24] Indeed, when visiting

[22] Kappler, Stefanie (2017), "The Securitization of International Peacebuilding", in *Securitization in Statebuilding and Intervention*, Bonacker, Thorsten, Distler, Werner & Ketzmerick, Maria (eds.), Baden-Baden: Nomos.
[23] Goetze, Catherine (2017), *The Distinction of Peace. A Social Analysis of Peacebuilding*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
[24] Ibid.

international organisations in post-conflict contexts, and particularly Bosnia-Herzegovina, it is rather striking how many staff hold higher education qualifications from Western Europe, and mainly the UK. In addition, one can notice a pattern in which responsibilities are usually such that non-locals are given higher positions than their local counterparts, with the latter often serving as assistants. As mentioned above, organisations such as the EU or the OSCE, for instance, often hold policies that are based on the principle of job rotation, a process throughout which an organisation can 'prevent' individuals from associating too closely with the local context and being kept at maximum loyalty to the institution as they tend to stay with the institution, but in different geographical contexts. The wage gap between the 'locals' and the 'internationals' in turn ensures that international staff stay loyal to the institution instead of looking for jobs elsewhere in the country they are deployed in. Lemay-Hebert et al link this to the phenomenon of brain drain during the course of which locals are 'coopted' into the development system, made part of it and thus unable or unwilling to return to the world outside it that has worse working conditions and much lower salaries.[25] This can be considered a strategy through which the central peacebuilding actors are made part of a system that leaves them almost unable to resist. The trainings they go through – often at international elite universities – and the institutional constraints therefore deploy strong centripetal forces and only let those participate who are in favour of the system and its policies to begin with. Green, for instance, points to the particular training that peacebuilders should go through.[26] Not only does she point to the multicultural competences that are to be expected as core skills of peacebuilders, but also a set of 'functional skills' and problem-solving oriented skills.[27] In a sense, she distils some key competencies that are basic necessities for successful peacebuilders and makes the case even for 'an "army" of peacebuilders.[28]

As a result, it could be argued that participating actors will generally be trained in a way that will prevent them from putting the system into question as a whole and criticism will remain within the limits of the system. The selection of staff thus fulfils a self-legitimising promise and serves to hold the system together, even on the very large scale on which it operates. This is further reinforced by a trend to 'bunkerize' peacebuilding, that is, the tendency for those in positions of power in the field to stay in a contained or gated environment.[29] Such developments are not only true for environments with low security ratings for international actors, linked to a lifestyle of what Fisher calls 'defensive living'.[30] At least symbolically, it

[25] Lemay-Hebert, Nicolas, Louis Herns Marcelin, Stéphane Pallage, and Toni Cela (forthcoming), "The Internal Brain Drain: Foreign Aid, Hiring Practices, and International Migration", manuscript under production.
[26] Green, Paula (2002), "CONTACT: Training a New Generation of Peacebuilders", *Peace & Change*, vol.27, no.1: pp.97-105.
[27] Ibid., p.100.
[28] Ibid., p.105.
[29] Fisher, Jonathan (2017), "Reproducing Remoteness? States, Internationals and the Co-constitution of Aid 'Bunkerization' in the East African Periphery," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol.11, no.1: 98–119; Smirl, Lisa (2015), *Spaces of Aid: How Cars, Compounds and Hotels Shape Humanitarianism*, London: Zed Books.
[30] Fisher, *Op. Cit.*, p.191.

can also be observed in contexts such as post-war BiH where international actors are not forced to live in a compound for security reasons, but still tend to socialise in rather closed circles.

In analysing the ways in which actors design and legitimise peacebuilding policies in BiH more specifically, Kostic goes even further suggesting that shadow peacebuilders engage in the establishment of narratives that in turn are the result of the strategic networks they are situated in.[31] Kostic's analysis of such networks in BiH suggests that these necessarily include a personal component in terms of who knows whom and who will be consulted within the network.[32] If we assume what I have argued above, namely that the bulk part of socialisation happens between actors who are part of the international community, then we also have to assume that their 'shadow network' is the strongest in terms of the narrative that perpetuates peacebuilding policy. As a result, the type of knowledge that is produced from these meanwhile established connections is the knowledge that will keep reinforcing the necessity of further intervention – not least to ascertain international organisations' right to stay. Bliesemann de Guevara and Kostic situate this problem within a landscape of the neo-liberalisation of knowledge production, which in itself narrows the political space through which the knowledge of peacebuilding we hold can be challenged or even revised.[33] Again, this means that agency within the peacebuilding system faces strict limitations due to the setup of its internal processes.

The spaces of legitimation – where peacebuilding takes place

Peace seems to be confined to particular physical spaces in which it is expected to take place by the international peacebuilding community. Often, such spaces are formal and scripted and bear little surprise. A typical example in BiH is the famous bridge in Mostar which, after the World Bank's reconstruction efforts in 2004, tends to be presented as a major success in reconciling the divided city.[34] At the same time, there tends to be little emphasis on the fact that the bridge does not link the Bosniak with the Croat part of the city, but instead represents a connection within the Bosniak community. In fact, today Mostarians hardly cross the bridge and we can mainly observe tourists, tourist guides and the famous bridge divers on it, ready to jump into the water for a donation. In that sense, whilst the reconstruction of the bridge was important for the city in terms of its symbolic character and symbolises as an important contribution by the World Bank, it has a limited social function in terms of reconciliation. This indeed seems to be true for many of the spaces that are deemed 'traditional' peace spaces: bridges, offices, dialogue fora, reconciliation centres and so on. They are usually closed, in a

[31] Kostic, Roland (2017), "Shadow peacebuilders and diplomatic counterinsurgencies: informal networks, knowledge production and the art of policy-shaping", *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol.11, no.1: pp. 120-139.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Bliesemann de Guevara, Berit and Kostic, Roland (2017), "Knowledge production in/about conflict and intervention: finding 'facts', telling 'truth'", *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol.11, no.1: 1-20.
[34] Björkdahl, Annika & Kappler, Stefanie (2017), *Peacebuilding and Spatial Transformation: Peace, Space and Place*, Routledge, p.26.

contained space with clear boundaries. This also means that particular forms of agency are promoted, facilitated and empowered in those spaces: agency that will, at the end of the day, only challenge the surface of peacebuilding, never its foundational assumptions and principles. They are spaces in which no unpredictable outcome can occur, where the actual setting and physical location set the parameters of interaction and frame what can and will be said. In BiH, this means a strong emphasis on urban, rather than rural, peacebuilding as well as projects within the Federation rather than Republika Srpska, the political environment of which is often deemed more prone to conflict than the one of the Federation.[35] It also means that spaces in which peace formation is happening beyond the public sphere of international peacebuilding are overlooked. As I have argued elsewhere,[36] the sphere of the arts that is often situated 'underground' in BiH has the potential to act as an alternative arena in which political legitimacy is created. Culture indeed has a long history of acting as a unifying factor in Bosnian society.[37] It is therefore at least surprising that there is a lack of engagement with this space as a potential reference to international peacebuilding. This is not least the case against the background that the sphere of the arts has tended to act as one that challenges and critiques international peacebuilding.[38] Using the arts as a sphere of engagement would thus, by its very nature, risk producing a de-legitimising discourse against international peace intervention. Its exclusion, instead, means that the overall peacebuilding discourse can remain stable and avoid facing challenges from the sphere of the arts. The statement that the arts cannot be used as a partner for peacebuilding as they are ethnically divided[39] can therefore also be read as a *justification* of why they are not included, rather than a statement of fact.

Peacebuilding legitimacy and timing – when peacebuilding takes place

There is also always a question of timing, that is, when peacebuilding takes place. This not least contributes to the ways in which it legitimates itself. It has indeed been suggested that peacebuilding is built on the assumption of linearity in terms of following a step-by-step logic, or what Paris refers to as the need to institutionalise before liberalising a post-conflict political environment.[40] 'Time' in the discipline of Political Science has indeed often been analysed in

[35] See, for instance, Chivvis, Christopher S. (2010), "Back to the Brink in Bosnia?", *Survival*, vol.52, no.1: 97-110.
[36] Kappler, Stefanie (2013), "Everyday Legitimacy in Post-Conflict Spaces: The Creation of Social Legitimacy in Bosnia-Herzegovina's Cultural Arenas," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol.7, no.1: pp.11-28.
[37] Zelizer, Craig (2003), "The Role of Artistic Processes in Peacebuilding in Bosnia-Herzegovina." *Peace and Conflict Studies* vol.10, no.2: pp. 62-75.
[38] Cf. Kappler, Stefanie (2014), *Local Agency and Peacebuilding. EU and International Engagement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus and South Africa*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
[39] Confidential source, international community, Sarajevo, March 2017.
[40] Paris, Roland (2004), *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict*, Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

the light of sequencing and path dependencies.[41] This implies that 'peacebuilding' is necessarily a positive intervention and its success is mainly a matter of time. It is therefore no coincidence that the seminal study of Doyle and Sambanis codes peacebuilding intervention to assess the degree of success, but without allowing for a negative outcome of peacebuilding intervention in the coding method.[42]

In such linear imaginaries, peace is situated in the future, as an end goal, temporarily distant from war. This in turn also means that peacebuilding is assumed to be successful and thus legitimate as long as it moves along this assumed linear path of progress. As suggested above, this also means that peacebuilding sets its own benchmarks as moving away from whatever the status quo is. This is, for instance obvious with the World Bank's statement on their engagement in BiH, in which they state that "the transition process in BiH, and the Bank's efforts to support transition, had to confront the complex government structure and the unique characteristics of the SFRY system—social ownership and worker self-management".[43] As a result, what the World Bank want is to move away from the 'old' system (independent of its political and economic value) and legitimises its own policies through its ability to transform complexity into a straightforward, linear process. Legitimacy thus derives from linearity and consistency with its own approaches. The latter are devised independent of the context in which they are deployed and thus, again, evidence the closed nature of the peacebuilding system. This is not dissimilar from the European Commission's approach to peacebuilding in BiH, a mission that is focused on transforming BiH into a more EU-like country. In fact, the Commission Staff Working Paper Bosnia and Herzegovina / Stabilisation and Association Report 2004 on 20 pages mentions the word 'progress' 45 times.[44] The benchmark of 'progress' again stems from the peacebuilding system itself and is immune to external challenge. The success and legitimacy of intervention therefore derives from the logic of the system itself and is translated into the host society, usually via project cycles. In this context it is also interesting to note that the actors that are being made part of the peacebuilding system – being funded or empowered by it – are often actors that have had no role in the past of the conflict. Hence, while the former war time leaders were made key actors in the peacemaking process and in the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, the peacebuilding process is keen on empowering 'new' actors. The 'mushrooming' of NGOs, known from various other post-conflict zones,[45] is indicative of this

[41] Pierson, Paul (2004), *Politics in Time. History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*, Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, p.64.
[42] Doyle, Michael W. and Nicholas Sambanis (2000), "International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis", *The American Political Science Review*, vol.94, no.4: 779-801.
[43] World Bank (2004), "Bosnia and Herzegovina. Post-Conflict Reconstruction and the Transition to a Market Economy. An OED Evaluation of World Bank Support", Washington: The World Bank, p.6.
[44] European Commission (2004), "Commission Staff Working Paper Bosnia And Herzegovina Stabilisation and Association Report 2004". Available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/bosnia_and_herzegovina/cr_bih_en.pdf (accessed 24 June 2016).
[45] Cf. Jad, Islah (2007), "NGOs: between buzzwords and social movements", *Development in Practice*, vol.17, no.4-5: pp.622-629.

trend to expect to paint a new peacebuilding image on a new blank canvas.[46] This is linked to the ambition to move to a better future detached from the past, but at the same time labels this past as a state in need of change. Again, there is no space for the past to challenge the vision of the future through the in-built assumption that the externally devised peacebuilding system will be better than what was there in the past. A deliberate ignorance of workers' or women's rights that Yugoslavia was proud of,[47] or the levels of equality that the country can today only dream of, thus becomes part and parcel of the peacebuilding project in its attempt to legitimise itself by delegitimising the past. The frame of reference in peacebuilding discourses is therefore rarely situated in the past of the former Yugoslavia. Instead, this era is often considered as 'backward' or torn by ancient hatreds – a representation that the famous book "Balkan Ghosts" by Robert Kaplan clearly illustrates, thus, perhaps inadvertently, setting the canvas on which peacebuilding paints its own assumptions of civilisation and progress.[48] Peacebuilding therefore assumes to take place *after* situations or even eras of 'uncivility', thus implying that its own policies can bring all but improvement. This assumption inherently claims legitimacy as it foregrounds peacebuilding as a necessary intervention in order to rid a region, country or town from the troubles of its own past. This is indeed in parallel with the ever-postponed proposal to close the OHR in BiH,[49] as the time is never quite considered ripe for the withdrawal of one of the most powerful international institutions in BiH. In that sense, the legitimacy of the continuing cycle of heavy-handed international peacebuilding rests on the assumption that, otherwise, BiH might just go to war again.[50]

The logics of the system – how is the agent supposed to act

The above-outlined factors facilitate a particular logic through which the peacebuilding system is expected to operate. This logic of operating concerns the 'who', 'where', 'when', but also the 'how'. Autesserre outlines in her recent book how the interaction of peacebuilders with 'the field' are shaped by practices, habits and narratives.[51] The everyday politics that result from this interplay of doing and telling things then feed into the very logics through which

[46] Pugh, Michael (2005), "Transformation in the political economy of Bosnia since Dayton", *International Peacekeeping*, vol.12, no.3: pp. 448-462, p.450.
[47] Cf. Ramović, Jasmin (2017), "Maximum Profit, Minimal Peace: Insights into the Peacebuilding Potential of the Workplace", unpublished PhD, University of Manchester.
[48] Kaplan, Robert (2005), *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York: Picador.
[49] Cf. Tirak, Goran (2010), "The Bosnian Hiatus: A Story of Misinterpretations", *CEPS Policy Brief no.219*. Available at https://www.ceps.eu/system/files/book/2010/11/PB219%20Goran%20Tirak%20on%20Bosnian%20Hiatus%20e-version%20latest.pdf (accessed 18 May 2017).
[50] Less, Timothy (2016), "The next Balkan wars", *The New Statesman*, 6 June. Available at http://www.newstatesman.com/world/2016/06/next-balkan-wars (accessed 18 May 2017); Lyon, James (2015), "Is War About to Break Out in the Balkans?", *Foreign Policy*, 26 Octboer. Available at http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/26/war-break-out-balkans-bosnia-republika-srpska-dayton/ (accessed 18 May 2017).
[51] Autesserre, Severine (2014), *Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

peacebuilding is being conducted. They identify roots and causes of violence, they organise and categorise them and they create 'order' in a complex situation – from the perspective of the peacebuilders. Such practices categorise and structure a 'field' of violence.[52] The structures that emerge from the practices, habits and narratives of the peacebuilders in turn are intended to provide fertile conditions on which peace can 'grow'. Alternatively put, it creates conditions under which peace *has to* grow.

In this context, it is meanwhile well-known that peacebuilding has had a tendency to rely on 'log frames', that is, a highly-structured way of planning, designing, implementing and evaluating peacebuilding in projects rather than on a continuum, and presented in a matrix. This means that policies have to be packaged, given a time limit and be closed in themselves. This potentially risks the sustainability of the programme beyond its life cycle and has been critiqued as a Western way of going about peacebuilding.[53] Indeed, there has been rather limited variance over time in the ways in which peacebuilding is being packaged and organised, with the log frame being the sticky point that has often driven 'alternative' actors away from it. At the same time, the log frame format demands that every project's success can be evaluated after the usual three to four years of its lifecycle. Therefore, projects that do get funding and that do go ahead tend to have measures in place that will guarantee a controlled outcome. Their projects will be set according to what can be achieved – and that can, but does not have to be in tune with the contextual givens in the context in which they operate. Hummelbrunner refers to this lack of flexibility and fixation of the project givens as 'lock-frame' to point to the closed nature of this approach.[54]

This is also why, in order to obtain funding, projects need to demonstrate chances of success before even starting. This means that the probability of engaging with new, alternative and untested approaches is rather low as this might undermine their chances of measurable 'success'. As an indirect result, projects tend to obtain funding if they are in line with the dominant peacebuilding ideology and vision and, in order to obtain funding, the organisations proposing projects will be likely to be in line with peacebuilding's wider ambitions. Performance indicators will be developed accordingly and in line with this. Such practices rarely draw on input from the society in which they are deployed and contextualised. To quote but one example from BiH: Experienced in different types of civil society work in BiH, Savija-Valha and Milanovic-Blank produced a satirical piece in the format of an "absolutely

[52] Cf. Richmond, Oliver, Kappler, Stefanie & Björkdahl, Annika (2015), "The 'Field' in the Age of Intervention: Power, Legitimacy, and Authority Versus the 'Local'," *Millennium - Journal of International Studies,* vol.44, no.1: pp.23-44.

[53] Körppen, Daniela (2012), "Re-Politicising the Strategies and Methods of the Liberal Peacebuilding Discourse", in Janel B. Galvanek, Hans J. Giessmann and Mir Mubashir (eds.), *Norms and Premises of Peace Governance. Socio-Cultural s and Differences in Europe and India,* Berghof Occasional Paper No.32: pp.31-36, p.34.

[54] Hummelbrunner, Richard (2010), "Beyond logframe: Critique, Variations and Alternatives", in Fujita, Nobuko (ed.), *Beyond Logframe; Using Systems Concepts in Evaluation,* Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development, Tokyo, pp.1-33. Available at http://www.perfeval.pol.ulaval.ca/sites/perfeval.pol.ulaval.ca/files/publication_129.pdf#page=8 (accessed 18 May 2017), p.4.

unnecessary guide to civil society building and project management for locals and internationals in BiH and beyond" in which, amongst others, they refer to the log frame as something a layman cannot understand.[55]

In addition to the log frame as a format, peacebuilding projects, in order to obtain funding, also have to speak to particular key words, again set by the larger funding organisations. These key priorities will direct the way in which the overall peacebuilding landscape develops and will leave little flexibility in terms of adjusting the project to suddenly arising needs. Such dynamics that come with funding streams attached ensure the survival of the peacebuilding system and, at the same time, help defend and legitimise its ongoing presence in the respective host country. The logic of the system makes sure it reproduces itself through its self-appraisal. In that sense, the system is built to perpetuate itself and, by dictating the rules of the game, it sets its own conditions for evaluating its success and ensuring its continuing presence. In this context, Mac Ginty refers to the 'technocracy' of peacebuilding.[56] He suggests that the increasing technocratisation of funding and operating processes within the peacebuilding field risks minimising the agency of a variety of actors,[57] thus shaping what can and cannot be imagined, designed and implemented. In a country that is shaped by long-standing and often heavy-handed international intervention such as BiH, this tendency has wide-ranging repercussions for what type of change is possible. In fact, despite the creative potential in the sphere of the arts in the country, numerous officials working in international funding organisations have made it clear to me[58] that they cannot fund such projects given that the latter tend to not comply with their own funding requirement and matrices.

This is not to say that there is no reflection in the peacebuilding world about such issues – indeed, there is an increasing acknowledgement of the need to develop participatory approaches or involve secondary audiences into the ways in which projects are assessed.[59] Mac Ginty also acknowledges the creativity of individuals and organisations involved in peacebuilding in coming up with innovative approaches to dealing with conflict.[60] At the same time, there is limited attempts to rethink the structure of the peacebuilding system *as a whole*, beyond a mere involvement of wider representative samples. Instead, there is mainly a tweaking of assumed errors that only goes so far as to prevent the system from collapsing whilst reaffirming the necessity to keep it in place. Again, the legitimacy of the system relies on the

[55] Savija-Valha, Nebojsa and Milanovic-Blank, Ranko (2004), "Ubleha za idiote – apsolutno nepotrebni vodič kroz izgradnju civilnog društva i vođenje projekata za lokalce i internacionalce u BH i šire", *Casopis za knjizevnost I kulturu Album*, vol.20: pp.46-73.
[56] Mac Ginty, Roger (2012b), "Routine peace: Technocracy and peacebuilding", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 47(3): pp.287 – 308.
[57] Ibid., p.292.
[58] Interviews between 2008 and 2017.
[59] Lemon, Adrienne and Mélanie Pinet (2017), "Measuring Unintended Effects in Peacebuilding: Innovative Approaches Shaped by Complex Contexts", Special Working Paper Series on 'Unintended Effects of International Cooperation', presented at Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, 16 & 17 January 2017, p.14.
[60] Mac Ginty, Roger (2012b), "Routine peace: Technocracy and peacebuilding", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 47(3): pp.287 – 308, p.301.

mechanics and benchmarks it keep producing itself, in the success indicators inherent in log frames as well as the conditions on which funding hinges. Proposed innovation that cannot be measured in log frames (or at least in a modified version of a log frame) thus stands rather little success of obtaining funding or even policy contacts to the big international players.

Conclusion

These reflections on the ways in which the peacebuilding system in BiH legitimises itself mirror its self-referential nature. The system is so engrained that it offers little flexibility and thus is reliant on a constant reassertion of being necessary and beneficial. At this stage, we could even ask whether we can talk of agents in the PB system? Are they not mainly structurally conditioned by the field? First, if we assume this to be true, then these peacebuilding 'agents' would have limited agency at best as their ability to transform or influence the system itself would be very limited. Second, would that then mean that challenge, criticism and improvement of the field cannot come from inside but has to come from outside? In fact, many of the smaller moves within the system have had their origin outside its normal boundaries – from artists or the activists of the plenums in 2014, some of whom are still engaged in smaller protest actions.

I would suggest that, at least partially, the lack of openness of the peacebuilding system is the result of an underlying global system of inequality, in terms of how chains of accountability are created, how the system is built to perpetuate itself and, to that end, which knowledge counts as valuable. Sassen argues that, although different types of actors work transnationally in the global economy, we still tend to assume a hierarchy between "local < national < global".[61] Such hierarchies are equally mirrored in the peacebuilding economy and policy and reflect the extent to which the assumed global structures of legitimation weigh heavier than the benchmarks of those at the receiving end of intervention.

It is only when the spaces, time frames and logics of peacebuilding are openly put up for a genuine political debate that the mechanisms of legitimation can be rethought and the system can better respond to the needs arising out from its host societies, rather than those political communities operating the system. In that sense, change requires a dialogue between the different stakeholders of the system and is dependent on the input from various sides. Thus, legitimacy is a relational concept that must not be viewed in isolation of neither actor that is part in its construction and reception. If international peacebuilding actors are to build legitimate forms of peace, they are necessarily dependent on local actors translating it into the context in which it is to be deployed. Against this background, it is central to understand transversal representations of and responses to peacebuilding legitimacy. This requires a focus on the agency of a diverse set of actors to transform processes of legitimisation rather than considering host societies as passive recipients of those. Creative and challenging initiatives

[61] Sassen, Saskia (2000), "Spatialities and Temporalities of the Global: Elements of a Theorization", *Public Culture* vol.12, no.1: pp.215-232, p.226.

are already happening, and it is time that international peacebuilders take more notice and are prepared to deviate from their own scripts.

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