

Working Paper

The Role of Personal Relationships in Peacebuilding Interventions

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This working paper provides a summary of selected findings of the thesis N°1133, submitted by Vincent Hug to the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva for obtaining the title of PhD of Development Studies.

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Abstract

This paper presents selected findings of a doctoral thesis which contributes to the debate on the everyday practices of peacebuilding by systematically analyzing the role of peacebuilders' personal relationships in the local context in designing and implementing peacebuilding interventions. The research applies an individual actor-oriented approach and builds its analysis on the concepts of social capital and structure-agency. The empirical basis is provided by three complementary case studies: 22 peacebuilding interventions in the Republic of Macedonia, an insider perspective from within a Swiss NGO called HEKS/EPER, and a global online survey.

The research reveals that instead of using their personal relationships freely, peacebuilders face several opportunities and constraints. The most important opportunities are related to an enhanced access to strategically useful insider information, while the biggest constraint is a possible reputation damage in case the use is perceived as illegitimate by others. By analyzing how both local and international peacebuilders use personal relationships as a resource, I argue that power relations along the aid chain are not static but dynamic. Moreover, the holistic perspective of the research enables a look at the perceived comparative influence of personal relationships and other factors on peacebuilding interventions, whereby the findings show that liberal ideology is perceived less influential in practice than claimed by the debate in peace studies.

1

Introduction

Many researchers of critical peace studies have endeavored to increase the effectiveness of peacebuilding by extensively engaging with the dilemmas and shortcomings of the paradigm of liberal peace and its interventionism. Recently, the dominant discourse in critical peace studies has shifted the focus from the controversial effects of the liberal foundations of international peacebuilding to the everyday practices of interventions. The debate on hybridity has examined the everyday experience of peacebuilding by studying local stakeholders' reactions, emphasizing the local resistance toward the international intervention. In parallel, a few peace researchers began studying the everyday practices of the interveners themselves. The thesis upon which this working paper is based aims to contribute to the debate on everyday practices in peacebuilding by systematically analyzing one element of it, notably peacebuilders' personal relationships in the local context. The main research question reads as follows: How does peacebuilders' local social capital influence peacebuilding interventions?

The first objective of the research is to complement the existing debate on everyday practices in peacebuilding with a more systematic analysis founded on a broader empirical basis. The second objective is to offer an analytical framework that focuses on the micro level without neglecting the macro level, thus allowing a more holistic perspective perceiving personal relationships as one of many interacting factors influencing peacebuilding interventions.

2

Local Resistance and Everyday Practices in Peacebuilding

In the hybridity debate, researchers' attention has increasingly shifted toward the agency of the local citizens in the peacebuilding process. Based on a wealth of case studies, researchers have focused on the local resistance to imposed interventions (e.g., MacGinty 2013), local ownership and empowerment in peacebuilding interventions (e.g., Donais 2009), the role of local conflict resolution mechanisms (e.g., Gellman 2007), and the existence of a local peace infrastructure (e.g., Richmond 2012). After Lederach turned theoretical attention toward the local component in the mid-1990s (Lederach 1997), the hybridity debate constitutes the second local turn of peacebuilding (Paffenholz 2015). According to Paffenholz, both local turns can be seen as a reaction to failures of international peacebuilding in practice, and both theoretical approaches focus on the role of local actors in their analyses, but they have different origins and lines of argumentation.

As Paffenholz explains, the local emphasis of Lederach and the conflict transformation school builds upon Curle's work on transforming relationships (Curle 1971), Kelman and Fisher's work on relationship building (see Fisher & Kelman 2003), Azar's research on protracted conflicts (Azar 1985; Azar 1990), and Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1970). The conflict transformation school understands peacebuilding as aiming at a sustainable reconciliation within society, in which insiders at the middle level of the society play a central role and have the biggest peacebuilding potential. From the perspective of the conflict transformation school, these mid-level actors (civil society organizations, community leaders, academia etc.) need to be supported by outsiders, whereby the local and the international peacebuilder have a collaborative relationship. In that reading, shortcomings of international peacebuilding interventions are, as Paffenholz states, not attributed to a 'bad' liberal but a 'misguided' peacebuilder "who overestimates the outsider's ability to alter local realities" (Paffenholz 2015, 3). Assuming that only actors from within the conflict context are able to build sustainable peace, the first local turn put emphasis on the need to empower the local people as key actors in the peacebuilding process (Paffenholz 2015). In contrast, the current turn on the local context has its origins in a critique of the liberal peace paradigm and focuses on the everyday resistance of local actors toward hegemonic international actors. Local actors are perceived as resistant toward the liberal peacebuilding project, and the aim is to give the oppressed a voice and highlight their agency (Paffenholz 2015). The second local turn constitutes a critical reaction towards the further development of the international peacebuilding and statebuilding project despite its failure in Afghanistan and Iraq. Although this local turn started over ten years ago, it has become more prominent with the establishment of a new school of critical peacebuilding research represented by scholars like Roger MacGinty and Oliver Richmond (e.g. MacGinty 2013). According to Paffenholz, this critical peacebuilding research school can be placed aside the conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation schools (Paffenholz 2015).

Paffenholz's main critique within the discourse of the second local turn is the binary opposition of the local and the international (Paffenholz 2015). According to her, this interpretation lies at the heart of many weaknesses in the current debate: the weak conceptualization of the local and international; an emphasis on Western international actors and neglect of BRICS¹ and local actors; a romanticizing of hybridity; a lack of research on the role of local elites; and an overstated resistance in the local citizens' relationship toward the international (Paffenholz 2015). Drawing parallels to earlier post-colonial and cultural studies, Paffenholz claims that advocates of the current local turn tend to romanticize hybridity and present it as a "hegemonic and power-free space" (Paffenholz 2015, 7). Paffenholz advocates building upon the hybridity debate among scholars of African studies such as Chabal and Davoz (Chabal & Davoz 1999) and Bayart (Bayart et al. 1999; Bayart 2000; Bayart 2009), who revealed a path dependency of hybrid governance arrangements from precolonial and colonial times that have persisted in today's hybrid peace governance (Paffenholz 2015). These debates have argued that the concept of hybridity can be misleading (Chabal & Davoz 1999) and that hybridity is similar to the neocolonial discourse that it was supposed to subvert (Kraidy 2002). Along the same lines, Paffenholz argues that the current hybridity debate undermines the claim of radically changing the dominant peacebuilding system. She also criticizes the conceptualization of resistance, observing an overstatement of resistance in the analysis of local actors and a neglect of their apathy and compliance (Paffenholz 2015). Due to the binary opposition of local and international, resistance is mainly conceptualized as a juxtaposition of locals resisting the power of international peacebuilders (e.g., Jabri 2013). This interpretation has shortcomings and is not based on a strong conceptualization of the power and resistance relationship. For instance, this binary conceptualization does not consider the work of Michel Foucault, who theorized about power and resistance, seeing power as circulating and not static (Foucault 1978). Paffenholz argues that more complexity needs to be added to the essentialist understanding of the local and international dichotomy and research needs to consider the different layers of resistance inherent in the power dynamics of peacebuilding contexts (Paffenholz 2015).

Related to the hybridity debate, which focuses on the reaction of local actors to peacebuilding interventions, a debate has emerged that directs attention to everyday practices of interveners themselves. While in the field of development cooperation ethnographers have since long shifted their attention towards the work and everyday practices of aid workers themselves (e.g. Long & Long 1992; Olivier de Sardan 1995; Mosse 2005), the ethnography of peacebuilding is a recent trend. Inspired by observations in the field and the aidnography² discourse, Autesserre introduced the term peaceland and applied the approach of aidnography to peacebuilding (Autesserre 2014).³ Based on the concepts of practices, habits, and narratives, Autesserre demonstrates how everyday elements affect the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions. International peacebuilders share a set of practices (routine activities that dominate the field), habits (automatic responses to the world), and narratives (stories that peacebuilders create to make sense of their role in

1 Acronym used for the five major emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa.

2 Aidnography is a play on words that merges ethnography and aid into one word. The adherents of aidnography study the culture of aidland and the everyday life of its inhabitants, the aid workers (see e.g., Apthorpe 2011).

3 Prior to that, there were only a few attempts to understand the influence of everyday practices on the fields of peacebuilding and peacekeeping (e.g., Rubenstein 2008, Pouligny 2005, or Mitchell 2011).

a given context) when working in conflict zones, which has unintended consequences and ultimately a negative or positive impact on the intervention (Autesserre 2014). Autesserre's argument is mainly that the international peacebuilders' personal and social practices create boundaries between the local population and the interveners. The narrative that the interveners have come to help puts them on a higher moral ground, and is strengthened by the material resources the international actors employ to take a dominant position toward the locals. Security routines, a preference for thematic knowledge instead of local knowledge, visibility, and reporting rituals contribute to a mode of operation that prevents local authorship and consequently reduces local ownership. Autesserre considers peacebuilders from all kinds of organizations but focuses her analysis on international peacebuilders only, examining peaceland exclusively from the perspective of a Western international peacebuilder. Through numerous examples of the divide between international and local peacebuilders in the everyday practice, Autesserre emphasizes the binary opposition between the international and local in general. Autesserre's peaceland marks a milestone in the debate on everyday practices in peacebuilding interventions and can be seen as a forerunner of peacenography which constitutes a relatively new chapter in peace studies, but currently receives significant attention. The studies that examine the everyday practices of peacebuilders shift the focus from the macro level to the micro level and offer many insights into what drives a peacebuilding intervention in practice. The young field of peacenography leaves much space for in-depth studies of particular elements of the everyday practices such as, for instance, personal relationships.

My research can be situated in this trend of examining everyday practices in peacebuilding and aims to make a contribution to the literature by overcoming some of the identified weaknesses in peacebuilding theory. I support Paffenholz's call to add more complexity to the dominant understanding of the local and international dichotomy and argue that the recent trend of examining everyday practices in peacebuilding needs to move from the overstated juxtaposition of international dominance and local resistance to a more differentiated understanding of the power relations along the aid chain⁴ in its entirety. At the center of my research is the individual peacebuilder, local or international, who has agency within several enabling and constraining structural forces prevailing in the field of peacebuilding. This research considers the difference between local and international peacebuilders, but does not set up a binary opposition; both are agents who are subject to a wide range of factors influencing their actions and ultimately the peacebuilding intervention. An in-depth analysis of the role of their personal relationships allows us to go beyond resistance and provides insight into the complexity of a peacebuilder's agency.

4 According to Wallace et al the aid chain describes is the series of actors involved along the donor-recipient chain in international aid (Wallace et al 2006). In my view, this term can also be applied to the field of peacebuilding as in many cases the processes and actors are the same or similar.

3

Conceptual and Methodological Considerations

The research positions itself in the interpretivist paradigm. As the name suggests, interpretivists assume that there is no objective knowledge because it results from acts of subjective interpretation (Gephart 1999). Rather than measurement, interpretivists speak of meaning and take into account the complexity of social processes and the production of knowledge, which is the approach that many ethnographic studies take to analyzing everyday practices in peacebuilding. The aim of the thesis, to which this working paper refers, is not to develop a new theory but to gain a better understanding of the overall influence of relationships on peacebuilding interventions.

Before explaining the analytical framework, I would like to briefly elaborate on a few terms and concepts leading to the main research question: How does peacebuilders' local social capital influence peacebuilding interventions?

The research builds upon a definition of peacebuilding that may be attributed to the maximalist approach. A particularly useful definition is that of Paffenholz, cited below:

“an overarching term to describe a long-term process that covers all activities with the overall objective of preventing violent outbreaks of conflict or transforming armed conflicts into sustainable, constructive ways of dealing with conflict. The scope of peacebuilding covers all activities that are linked directly to this objective within a time frame between five and ten or occasionally more years. Peacebuilding should create conditions conducive for ongoing economic reconstruction, development and democratization efforts, but should not be equated and thus confused with these efforts.” (Paffenholz 2009, 187)

Based on the definition above, the term peacebuilding intervention is understood as a series of logically linked activities, in the form of a project, program, or operation, with the goal of building peace. Similarly, peacebuilders are defined as professionals working in all types of peacebuilding interventions at different levels of society, from high-level diplomacy to community work on the grassroots level. The term does not include other people in society who are important for building peace. Peacebuilder includes both local and international peacebuilders, and where a difference exists I specify the finding concerning local peacebuilders or international peacebuilders. The term personal relationships specifies that it is about relationships between people, and distinguishes it from organizational relationships or 'aid relationships'. I select social capital to conceptualize the peacebuilders' personal relationships and focus on social capital's role in the local peacebuilding context, resulting in the primary concept of local social capital. Choosing an individual actor-oriented approach, my research places the peacebuilder in the center of the research but sees him/her as an individual with agency who is subject to a large range of enabling and constraining structural forces when using personal relationships as a resource for peacebuilding interventions.⁵ To inform the individual actor-oriented approach of the research, I draw on Coleman's

5 See figure 1, listing the other influencing factors on the macro and organizational level which I consider as structural forces enabling and constraining the actions of an individual peacebuilder.

individual and functionalist definition of social capital, which considers an individual's personal relationships as a resource in achieving his/her interests (Coleman 1988).

The analytical framework looks at how local social capital is deployed, how it is built up and how it is interconnected with other influencing factors. Last, I put the focus on the difference between local social capital of international and local peacebuilders. This gives us a more holistic understanding about the influence of peacebuilders' local social capital on peacebuilding interventions and allows to contribute to the debate on the local turn.

First, I analyze how peacebuilders use their personal relationships in peacebuilding interventions. The core of the research's analytical framework is Coleman's three forms of social capital: Form 1: expectation, obligation, and trustworthiness; Form 2: information channel; Form 3: norms through effective sanctions (Coleman 1988). I analyze the created opportunities and constraints of a peacebuilder's personal relationships through these categories and look at eight areas⁶ along the project/program cycle of a peacebuilding intervention in which local social capital was shown to be relevant. Throughout these eight areas, the effects of bonding⁷, bridging⁸, and linking⁹ local social capital are analyzed transversally to elaborate on the role of peacebuilders' network structures.

Second, I analyze how peacebuilders invest in this personal resource and build up their local social capital by applying various strategies. I use the term relationship work to describe efforts to build social capital, and I elaborate on how peacebuilders enlarge their network, how they build relationships of trust, and how local social capital is transferred to successors when personnel changes. Third, I embed the role of a peacebuilder's personal relationships in the larger context. I concretize this holistic view by seeing personal relationships as one of 13 factors that influence the design and implementation of peacebuilding interventions in a given context. These 13 influencing factors¹⁰ have been identified in a literature review¹¹ and are structured into three levels: personal, organizational, and macro. I assess the perceived influence of personal relationships compared to the other factors, and then I analyze the peacebuilder as an individual using and building his/her local social capital under the influence of several enabling and constraining structural forces. The 13 influencing factors all exert an influence on the peacebuilding intervention, are interconnected, and mutually shape each other. The analysis of the interconnectedness of personal relationships with each of the other 12 factors creates linkages between the micro and macro levels, helps to maintain a holistic view, and allows further exploration of the complexity of a peacebuilding intervention. Elder-Vass' realist conception of structure-agency (Elder-Vass 2010), including Bhaskar's theory of multiple determination (Bhaskar 1975), facilitates this analysis and enables the use of both a structural and an agential theoretical perspective.

-
- 6 Areas along the project/program cycle where local social capital is relevant: 1) Information about context, conflicts and needs, 2) Fundraising, 3) Selection of partners, 4) Recruitment, 5) Selection of beneficiaries, 6) Meetings and conversations with stakeholders, 7) Safety & security, and 8) Monitoring & evaluation.
 - 7 Bonding social capital: describes the strong ties between persons within a group. It is characterized by a high level of trust and concerns the ties within a family, community, or ethnic group, for example. (Woolcock 1998)
 - 8 Bridging social capital: describes the crosscutting ties between groups that are generally weaker but give access to other social groups and other networks. It implies social relationships across ethnic or religious divides, for instance, and provides access to resources outside one's own community. (Woolcock 1998)
 - 9 Linking social capital: describes vertical connections across the hierarchy of power, linking people in different positions of power. This may be the relationship with an old school friend who is now a powerful politician. (Woolcock 1998)
 - 10 The clustering and naming of these thirteen factors influencing peacebuilding interventions are based on a review of relevant existing literature in peacebuilding and development.
 - 11 For more information about the literature review I refer to my PhD thesis N°1133 published by the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, 2016.

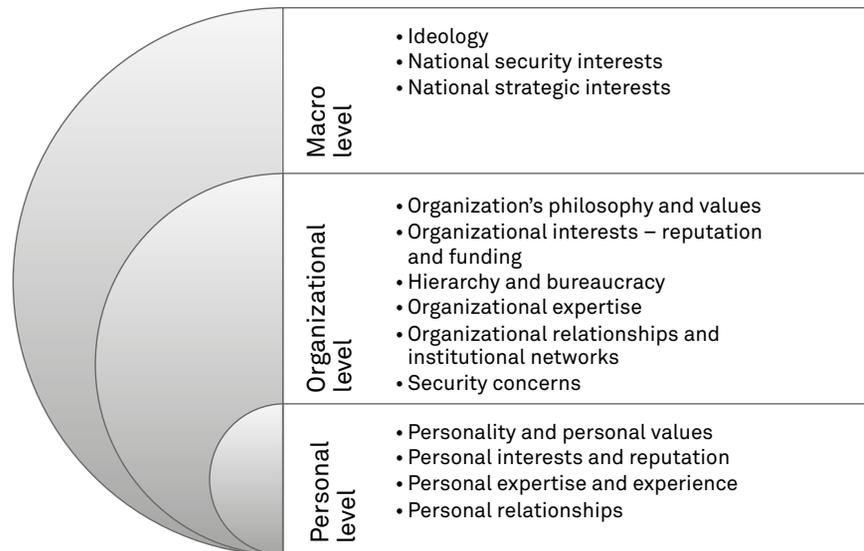


Figure 1: List of influencing factors

The fourth step of the analysis is to elaborate on the difference between local and international peacebuilders in terms of local social capital and its effects on the power relations within the aid chain.

The research uses a mixed method approach consisting of three case studies that are different but complementary:

- Case study 1: 22 peacebuilding interventions in the Republic of Macedonia during the period from 2001 to 2014, based on semi-structured interviews with 55¹² peacebuilders from 16 organizations involved in those interventions.
- Case study 2: Participant observation and semi-structured interviews at the Swiss NGO called HEKS/EPER¹³.
- Case study 3: A global online survey¹⁴ with 107 respondents¹⁵ (including interviewees from the first case study).

12 Of the 55 interviewed peacebuilders were 29 female, 26 male; 34 local and 21 international peacebuilders.

13 See website of HEKS/EPER: www.heks.ch/en/. Of the 8 interviewed peacebuilders were 7 female, 1 male; 4 local and 4 international peacebuilders.

14 The anonymized online survey was disseminated on networks, blogs, social media, and email to reach out to peacebuilders around the world.

15 Of the 107 respondents were 44 female, 58 male (5 no answer) and they have their origins in the following regions: Western Europe: 37, Eastern Europe and CIS: 10, Sub-Saharan Africa: 23, North Africa and Middle East: 4, North America: 8, Latin America: 2, Asia: 16, Australia and Pacific: 0, and 6 no answer.

The merging of the three case studies triangulates the data of a higher number of interventions in a particular peacebuilding context; an organization active in different contexts; and a global online survey of the larger peacebuilder community around the world. The lion's share of the data is collected through the semi-structured interviews of case study 1, which also constituted the basis to design the questionnaire for the online survey. The survey itself serves the purposes to strengthen the methodological basis through triangulation of different methods of data collection, to broaden the empirical base, and to assess the representativeness of the findings from the Macedonian peacebuilding context. The participant observation at HEKS/EPER allowed to analyze identified patterns more in-depth and to explore to complex interconnectedness with the other influencing factors.

4

How Peacebuilders’ Personal Relationships Influence Everyday Practices

The research identified 42 findings and 11 general patterns about the role of peacebuilders’ local social capital in peacebuilding interventions. While some findings strengthen the empirical validity of existing claims in current debates, others reveal new insights into the everyday practices in peacebuilding. This chapter represents a selection of findings and elaborates on them in a shortened way.

4.1 Local Social Capital is Crucial to Understand the Conflict Realities

The most significant opportunities created by local social capital are related to the improved access to information about the context, political situation, and conflict. All interventions from the Macedonian case study, the observation at HEKS/EPER, and 89% of the survey respondents confirm this statement. Case study 1 and 2 further showed that most important is the improved access to insider information. More precisely, information which is not written down but circulates informally between insiders. Often this type of information is highly relevant in designing and implementing peacebuilding interventions. Especially for international peacebuilders, this insider information is decisive in acquiring an understanding about their working context. The opportunity created through local social capital is to be able to understand the heart and soul or the “mentality”¹⁶ of a municipality or a particular group. The insider information collected by drawing upon local social capital is reflected in two examples, one from an international peacebuilder and the other from a local peacebuilder in Macedonia: Establishing relationships and gaining the trust of the local authorities and different stakeholders in Kumanovo was crucial to the international peacebuilder in obtaining an understanding of the power constellations and dynamics between the local actors. Improving relationships resulted in the realization that the communication between the two ethnic groups in Kumanovo is much better than it first appears to an outsider. To outsiders, the Macedonians and Albanians in Kumanovo present a picture of rivalry and non-communication, but in fact they do talk. They have established their own balance of power within the municipality, and by providing a false impression they resist intrusion from outsiders. Thanks to insider information, the peacebuilder also realized that the officially elected representatives were not the real leaders. In this case, it was the relationships of trust with some stakeholders that allowed the peacebuilder to assess the power constellations and see who the real decision makers were.¹⁷

In addition to the access to insider information on the local level, local social capital creates opportunities to access sector-specific insider information, as shown in the second example: For a project in the education sector, a local peacebuilder benefitted from the insider information and explanations of her uncle who had worked in the education sector before. The discussion with him showed her ‘what was really going on’ in the education system in

16 International peacebuilder from Macedonian case study.

17 Source: international peacebuilder from Macedonian case study.

Macedonia. This information was related to the political nature of some reforms, the role of individuals in key positions, and the opinions within the education sector: information that could not be found elsewhere.¹⁸

The two examples above demonstrate how local social capital creates opportunities to access insider information that is not available through secondary sources, either because it is too local, too specific, or too political.

The information diversity¹⁹ is of particular importance to peacebuilding interventions and is directly related to the bridging and linking social capital of the involved peacebuilders. Personal relationships across conflict lines (bridging) and across various social strata (linking) allow a peacebuilder to collect a variety of subjective views on the conflict, needs, and opinions of the people. In a divided and polarized society such as Macedonia, this inter-subjectivity is crucial. There is not one conflict reality but several realities, as a quote from the Macedonian case study suggests:

“It gives you another perspective if you speak with them, for example, when you hear something on the news and you try to speak with some Albanians, you will hear the other side and you will see, aha, so if we think like this, maybe they have a good point here, and you will try to see it much more objectively than usual.”²⁰

The results of the online survey confirm this view and 86% of the respondents agree that personal relationship across conflict lines help to have different perspectives on the conflict. For many peacebuilders, information diversity combined with relevant and credible insider information acquired through local social capital is the basis for their understanding of the conflicts and their dynamics, which shapes the way they act in the given context. As an experienced international peacebuilder states:

“It is the personal relationships that give you roots and another perspective, allowing you to verify issues. And it is not only about the locals but about many different people. I would say it [personal relationships] is an absolute central element for how you act in the society and for what you think is possible.”²¹

4.2 Ambiguous Role in Fundraising and Partnership Management

In the competitive market for funds, peacebuilders' relationships serve as a channel for information that is particularly rich in terms of being strategically relevant to the decision of whether to bid for a tender and how to increase the chances of winning. The survey results show that 49% of the respondents think personal relationships improve the access to officially accessible information about tenders and fundraising opportunities (25% undecided, 16% think it does not improve, 9% no answer). In regard to officially non-accessible

18 Source: local peacebuilder from Macedonian case study.

19 For the difference between information richness, volume and diversity see Koka & Prescott 2002.

20 Local peacebuilder from Macedonian case study.

21 International peacebuilder from Macedonian case study; translated from German.

information, 51% of the respondents think personal relationships improve the access to information (15% undecided, 23% think it does not improve, 11% no answer). The semi-structured interviews and the participant observation showed that there are mainly three kinds of relevant information accessed through local social capital:

- Information at an early stage: Time is a valuable resource for applicants in a tender process. Receiving information about upcoming tenders before the public announcement allows an organization to take important preparatory steps beforehand. Besides pre-negotiations with potential co-applicants, an interested organization can begin planning the allocation of its staff members' time resources and start looking for qualified consultants for the proposal writing.
- Information about donor preferences: A call usually provides the larger structure of the intervention and sets some minimal requirements within which applicants can propose various interventions. It is strictly forbidden for the staff of the donor agency to provide any additional information to applicants because this would give them an unjustified advantage. In practice, however, useful insider information is circulating and there are cases where some applicants benefit from small hints communicated through informal information channels. Moreover, an established relationship with donor representatives provides access to information about current debates and trends within the donor agency, such as for instance, what intervention types are currently of particular interest to the key decision makers.
- Information about competitors: Strategically useful information about competitors helps to assess the chances for success and to avoid duplication or direct competition. The information is useful in the context of tender participation, but the credibility of the information varies significantly and rumors sometimes prove to be false or outdated.

The benefit of local social capital for fundraising lies in its channel function for informal and insider information, as demonstrated above. Information richness is decisive, while its volume and diversity play a rather marginal role. The richness is questionable in terms of the credibility and the lack of evidence, but its strategic usefulness and high relevance nevertheless make the information key for strategic decisions about tender participation and design of the application.

The HEKS/EPER and Macedonian case studies showed that first, information access depends mainly on the linking social capital and not on the local social capital in general; and second, access depends on the peacebuilder's ability to deploy linking social capital correctly and with the necessary finesse. Gathering information about a planned or ongoing tender can be a tricky issue. For a representative of a donor agency, there is a thin line between information that can be shared with an applicant and information that would infringe upon the rules, and in practice, not everyone interprets this line in the same way. Despite a well-established relationship, a small discussion between a potential applicant and a donor representative can turn into a minefield, in which one badly chosen word or formulated question crosses the thin line. Thereby, one risks worsening the relationship because crossing the

line can be understood as doubting the integrity of the donor representative. Deploying linking social capital correctly is therefore not as easy as it seems, but is a skill that needs experience and finesse.

From a donor's perspective, close personal relationships to applicants or potential partner organizations are a constraint and rather perceived through the lens of Coleman's first form of social capital, referring to patronage and favoritism. Regardless of its existence, assumptions about a favoritism and patronage leads to questioning of the integrity of the donor representative and damages his/her reputation. For instance, several interviewed peacebuilders from donor agencies in Macedonia felt the need to emphasize that any practice close to favoritism and patronage does not occur within their organization. They explained their position with referring to professionalism but also with the risk of 'bad' partnerships in which the partner does not meet the requirements. In their view, a poorly performing partner organization would have several negative consequences. First, it would hamper the implementation of the intervention. Second, the responsibility for this failure would fall at least partially on the representative of the donor agency that promoted and stood behind this partnership. Any failure would raise doubts about whether the donor representative acted in the organization's interest or put forward personal interests, which would damage the organization's and person's reputation and credibility. Last, those negative consequences would harm the personal relationship that led to the partnership. Eventually, instead of an advantage, a donor representative takes a risk by promoting partnerships based on personal relationships. Alone the suspicion of others about a possible advantageous treatment is ultimately a disadvantage. Such negative consequences encourage donor representatives to keep some professional distance toward representatives of existing and potential partners.

At the same time, donor representatives also see some advantages in knowing representatives of potential partners more personally. A personal relationship with people from potential partners offers a better understanding of the organization's capacities, strengths and weaknesses. In the competitive market, peacebuilding organizations adapt quickly to changing terminologies but sometimes lack the necessary expertise and experience in implementation. The observation at HEKS/EPER showed that some organizations are unskilled in proposal and logframe writing but conduct excellent work on the ground. There are also apparently competent organizations producing quality papers but failing in practice on the ground. Knowing who stands behind an application provides confidence that the proposed intervention does not only look good on paper but also in practice. A former representative from a donor agency in Macedonia describes the advantage of knowing people from potential partner organizations in the following way: "Because you know that this person or this organization really delivers what it pledges. You know how they proceed, what approach they have, what they are really doing, and how they are doing it. This is something that you cannot read out of the dryness of proposals."²²

22 International peacebuilder of Macedonian case study, translated from German.

In addition to open Calls for Proposal, partner selection may occur in a more targeted manner. For small funding amounts or very specific mandates, donor organizations often award the mandate directly to a known organization. For instance, for dialogue facilitation on higher levels in Macedonia, a particular type of organization and peacebuilders was needed. In those cases, donors either base their choice on personal experience or consult their network for suitable candidates. The personality and integrity of a mediator is key for a successful dialogue and those qualities cannot be assessed through documentation only but require direct engagement on a personal level. Another means of assessment consists of consulting credible references, which again depends on the personal network and relationships of trust. Therefore, in a targeted partner selection process, the donor representative's local social capital is an important information channel for him/her and has an impact on the choice, or as a donor representative from the Macedonian case study says: "You select partners because you know they are good, not because you know them."²³

4.3 Networking for Career Development

The conducted survey showed that almost half of the survey respondents (46%) found employment at least once due to personal relationships, and the number of respondents who consider networking and maintaining good relationships important for their career is much higher (76%). The results of the survey are confirmed by data from the Macedonian case study. A small local NGO in the Macedonian case study, for instance, mainly recruits people from its own network, but also in larger organizations opportunities for career development are created through personal relationships:

"I think that in large bureaucracies personal relationships are important when it is about climbing up the job ladder. In large bureaucracies [...] I have experienced that a lot of career planning goes through personal loyalties and personal schemes. You have to invest quite a lot to get into this and deal with this."²⁴

However, the collected data of the case study 1 and 2 also shows that the closer an applicant is to the recruiter, the more the relationship becomes a constraint for the recruitment process, both for the recruiter and the recruited. To avoid potential damage to one's reputation when employing a known person, recruiters apply different strategies:

- a rigorous execution of a formal evaluation procedure in which the recruiter who is related to the applicant has no influence on the outcome;
- including more people into the selection process, resulting in increased objectivity in the decision-making process, and excluding the respective recruiter from the interview committee for the related applicant;
- trusting one's reputation as a person with integrity.

23 Local peacebuilder from Macedonian case study.

24 International peacebuilder from Macedonian case study; translated from German.

In all three observed strategies, the precondition for avoiding negative outcomes was transparent communication about the relationship with an applicant.

The research shows that personal relationships provide valuable information about the personality, soft skills, and political positioning of an applicant. Whether through open announcements or targeted recruitment processes, personally knowing the applicant gives the recruiter more certainty about the suitability of the applicant's personality. These qualities of a person cannot be assessed in depth during a job interview and are only partially visible on a CV, but are an important factor especially in recruiting people for particular positions. This confirmed by the survey resulting which also show that peacebuilders more often opt for recruiting personally known people for positions requiring particular soft skills and personality (51% responded affirmatively), than when they recruit for ordinary positions (34% responded affirmatively).

Networking proves to be particularly crucial for consultants. Data shows that their personal relationships towards other peacebuilders increase the chance to obtain consultancy mandates. Three opportunities created through an existing relationship explain peacebuilders' preference for selecting already known consultants:

- Selecting known consultants provides certainty about the quality of work: Similar to a recruitment process for hiring new staff members, the consultant's CV and website lack comprehensive information about his/her skills and the quality of work. Of the survey respondents 80% agreed that knowing the consultant's work from previous mandates or other cooperation allows the commissioning peacebuilder to assess his/her qualifications more comprehensively.
- Selecting known consultants for their approach and attitude: Of the survey respondents 61% agreed with this statement (23% undecided, 9% disagreed, 7% no answer). A peacebuilder commissioning an external evaluation or assessment has the potential to influence the result through the choice of consultant. Every consultant has a particular profile, expertise, and approach. Some evaluators are known to be more critical than others. In the case of some local consultants, an assessment may be affected by their political attitude and positioning in party politics. The quality of work may be the same, but the findings and recommendations can differ significantly depending on the consultant's approach and attitude. This information is not fully accessible through CV and websites but flows when a personal relationship is established.
- Selecting known consultants saves time: 70% of the survey respondents agreed with this statement (4% disagreed, 18% undecided, 8% no answer). Known consultants have greater chances of being selected for a mandate because it is less time consuming, in two ways. First, contacting a consultant in a targeted way takes significantly less time than making an open announcement. Second, a consultant who has worked with the peacebuilder or the organization previously already has an understanding

of the functioning and particularities of the organization, thus, the peacebuilder does not need to spend as much time explaining the organization and the intervention.

Similar as in other recruitment processes, selecting a close friend or family member is perceived as a disadvantage.

4.4 Created Opportunities through Relationships with Beneficiaries and Stakeholders

In the field of peacebuilding, peacebuilders' local social capital with beneficiaries is generally perceived in a positive way; however, this does not mean that in the beneficiary selection process there is a preference for acquaintances and friends. Instead of selecting the people from their personal networks, peacebuilders use them as information channels to mobilize new, unknown beneficiaries. Consequently, the peacebuilders' personal networks does influence the field of participants of an intervention thereby increasing the risk of mobilizing mainly like-minded people. In some observed cases, they also use their personal networks to increase the visibility of the intervention.

For a variety of interventions, meeting important stakeholders such as government officials, ministers, members of parliament, mayors, or party leaders are key moments. Usually, the higher in the hierarchy a person is, the more difficult it is to meet the stakeholder in person. While a mayor could let you wait one month, a meeting with a minister would be out of reach for many peacebuilders. Having the necessary linking social capital can change the situation of a peacebuilder to the extent that he/she is able to arrange a meeting with a mayor spontaneously within hours or days, and a meeting with a minister becomes a question of days or weeks. Of the survey respondents 89% agreed with the statement that personal relationships increase the chances to arrange a meeting with important stakeholders.

The meeting opportunities created through the local social capital of peacebuilders could be observed in many different interventions and with different stakeholders of the Macedonian case study: school directors (5 interventions), mayors (3 interventions), members of parliament (3 interventions), ministers (2 interventions), and religious leaders (1 intervention). These meetings are of particular importance in obtaining permission and in gaining the stakeholder's support for an intervention. For instance, community-based peacebuilding activities in Macedonia need the support, or at least the permission, of the mayor in charge. Activities in a school, whether part of the curriculum or extracurricular, need the support of the school director. Activities with religious communities cannot bypass the religious leaders' approval etc. Whether local social capital helps to convince these stakeholders or not is elaborated below, but there is broad empirical evidence that local social capital is decisive in arranging a meeting with the respective stakeholder.

However, there are limits of the role of local social capital: it is an entry point but not a magic bullet. Social capital creates the opportunity to get attention, to be heard through a meeting, but it does not guarantee the stakeholder's support for your demand. The collected data of the research suggests that the needed change of opinion or attitude depends on the stakeholder's political and personal interests as well as on the peacebuilder's quality of arguments and presentation skills. A foreign ambassador puts it the following way: "Personal relationships only lead to something more concrete as long as there are common interests. You don't ignore or neglect your interests only because you know or like a person."²⁵

Besides arranging meetings, local social capital affects the way meetings are held. When asked about how a personal relationship affects a conversation, most interviewed peacebuilders responded that they feel more comfortable with people they know and the conversation becomes comparatively easier and more informative. A personal relationship between a peacebuilder and a stakeholder provide the peacebuilder with valuable information about the stakeholder's personality and viewpoint. This enables better preparation and contributes to a conversation with less formality and in which also contested issues can be discussed. Of the survey respondents, 73% agreed with the statement that knowing a stakeholder facilitates discussion of contested issues. As a local peacebuilder from Macedonia stated: "We disagree but then talk about the disagreement. And with the person you don't know, one statement or disagreement may be the end of the discussion."²⁶ Knowing each other also allows more honesty and outspokenness. Of the survey respondents, 62% agreed with this statement and only 5% disagreed (26% undecided; 6 no answer). The honesty and outspokenness of a stakeholder was often attributed to his/her personality. Several interviewees further referred to honesty in the sense that stakeholders are ready to state their personal opinions and do not simply repeat the official position of their political party or the authorities, as shown in the following quote: "I think what is most important is that you really receive an honest opinion about the situation. The fact that they have the trust to tell you openly their opinion, not the one of their party or the official speech."²⁷

4.5 Local Social Capital is Central in Assessing Security Situation on the Village Level

Survey responses on the usefulness of personal relationships for assessing the security situation showed that peacebuilders ascribed a central role to personal relationships: 75% of the respondents answered positively, and only 6% did not experience better access to security information through personal relationships (12% undecided, 6% no answer). In general, the role of personal relationships in assessing the security situation depends strongly on the context. In the HEKS/EPER case study, in every country of intervention the security situation and the peacebuilder community's security and safety mechanisms had their peculiarities:

25 International peacebuilder from Macedonian case study.

26 Local peacebuilder from Macedonian case study.

27 Local peacebuilder from Macedonian case study; translated from German.

In Colombia, for instance, developments on the national level were analyzed by studying reports and following the media reports. The most relevant part of the security situation was the village-level assessment. The boundaries of the conflict zone shifted constantly and the threats for HEKS/EPER's representatives changed from one village to another.

“It is of utmost importance to know people whom you can trust, because they tell you whether you can go to the village or not. They know the best about the security situation on the spot and you must rely on them.”²⁸

Similarly, for the program in the Democratic Republic of Congo, personal relationships were the most important source of information for the security assessment. Despite existing UN alert systems and information from the local radio networks, the situation was mainly assessed through the network of the local staff, who were often on the phone with trusted people in order to assess the security situation from village to village. Given the highly dynamic and volatile situation, the peacebuilders considered this information channel to be the most up to date and reliable. From these two examples and other similar cases, we can assume that the role of personal relationships in assessing the security situation correlates with the territorial dimension of the threats and their volatility. The more local the threat and the more volatile the situation, the more important personal relationships will be in gathering relevant information for a security assessment.

4.6 Local Social Capital as Information Channel for Monitoring

In the survey, 88% of the respondents believed that the additional information gained through personal relationships is useful and important in monitoring an intervention. Local social capital increases information volume and richness; the former because there is a wide range of information that cannot be found in official reports and the latter because information gained through social capital is often particularly relevant. As the HEKS/EPER case study showed, the reasons that this additional information is not reflected in the reporting are either that it does not match the reporting template and technical language, it is based upon intuition and not hard facts as required, or it is too sensitive to be shared and eventually filed in official documents. For these reasons, such information is often key for strategic decisions and usually receives more attention than formal reports.

Peacebuilders receive more honest feedback about the peacebuilding intervention from beneficiaries they know personally. This was reported by numerous peacebuilders from the Macedonian case study and of HEKS/EPER. The survey results confirm the high level of agreement with this question: 67% of respondents believed that the feedback of beneficiaries about activities is more honest when they personally know the peacebuilder (10% disagreed, 20% undecided, 3% no answer). Thereby, the level of honesty the beneficiaries

28 Employee of HEKS/EPER.

show toward peacebuilders correlates with the quality of the personal relationship. Consequently, peacebuilders in several interventions of the Macedonian case study place much higher value on the informal feedback of beneficiaries whom they know compared to feedback generated by formal evaluation methods. In Macedonia and other countries (e.g., the South Caucasus, Bangladesh), there is a tendency to complete formal evaluation sheets in an uncritical and overly positive manner, making the evaluation useless for the peacebuilder in improving his/her work. In many cases, the participants' honest and critical feedback can only be expected when a personal relationship has been established. As for instance it happened in the case of a dialogue project: "In the aftermath of these talks, I can remember two to three conversations, especially on the Albanian side where the personal relationships were well established, and where we received pretty critical feedback about the talks."²⁹

29 International peacebuilder from Macedonian case study, translated from German.

5

Relationship Work

This chapter elaborates on the efforts that peacebuilders make to invest in their social capital, which I call relationship work. For this purpose, I differentiate between networking and building relationships of trust. Networking concerns increasing the number of personal relationships, whereas to build relationships of trust, peacebuilders strengthen the quality of existing personal relationships and enhance the level of trust. As a third component, I analyze whether and how peacebuilders transfer their local social capital to their successors in case of change of staff.

5.1 Networking

Networking constitutes an important part of everyday practices in peacebuilding and entails the fostering of formal and informal relationships with a wide range of actors in the peacebuilding field and local people, in particular potential stakeholders and representatives of the state and civil society. As an international peacebuilder states, “Networking is part of our work”³⁰.

Networking is either an explicit task for peacebuilders, listed in the job description, or the organization implicitly expects it. In their networking efforts, peacebuilders use different strategies:

- Arranging networking events: One strategy consists of setting up and facilitating networking events that gather representatives of organizations, civil society, academia, stakeholders, etc. in one place. The aim of such events is to meet people, nurture existing ties, exchange information, share mutual interests, and identify synergies, linkages, and possibilities for cooperation. In the event itself, there are various facilitation methods to provide people and organizations with opportunities to get to know each other (e.g. marketplaces, appreciative inquiry), but a substantial part of the networking occurs during the coffee and lunch breaks.
- Arranging bilateral meetings: A second strategy consists of arranging bilateral meetings with selected stakeholders and representatives. The meetings serve mainly to gather information about the context, conflict, and needs; identify possible future partners; and establish relationships with key stakeholders. This strategy is more time consuming but allows a stronger engagement with each of the interlocutors. It enables the peacebuilder to elaborate more on specific topics and to address issues that are not supposed to be discussed at a public event.
- Attending official events: An often used strategy to meet people and to network is attending various official events such as conferences, book promotions, inaugurations, workshops etc. The primary objective of these events is to transfer knowledge or create visibility about a particular topic, but many attendees come for the reason of maintaining a relationship with the organizer and networking with other participants. The incentive of participation is less the topic itself than the people attending the event.
- Participating at social events and happenings: A less formal strategy of networking is participating at social events that are usually attended by people who are relevant to the intervention, or may become relevant in the future. Such events include after-work parties, social happenings at

³⁰ International peacebuilder from Macedonian case study.

- expatriate clubs, public sporting events, etc. This strategy falls in between the professional and private spheres. The person or activity is in the foreground, and professional issues are only touched upon. In sharing part of one's private life, attending social events helps to network and to strengthen already existing relationships and enhance the level of trust.
- Spontaneous networking: The last way to network consists of the absence of a strategy and represents the spontaneous networking done on different occasions. Spontaneous networking encompasses random encounters or the participation in the above-mentioned events and other social interactions without considering it as a networking activity.

The five strategies help to enlarge and build a personal network. As could be observed in the participant observation and the interventions of the Macedonian case study, a peacebuilder usually uses several or all strategies. The semi-structured interviews further revealed that additional efforts in this kind of relationship work are mostly done at the beginning of an assignment, when a peacebuilder may be new in the country (international peacebuilder), new in the field of peacebuilding (career changers) or new to a particular topic. However, to fulfill its function as an information channel, a relationship must be kept alive. Networking requires significant time and readiness, curiosity, and commitment to engage with people. The amount of effort a peacebuilder expends on networking depends mainly on his/her personality, enabling structural forces from the organization, and an acknowledgement from both the individual and the organization that local social capital constitutes a valuable resource.

5.2 Building Relationships of Trust

Relationship work also implies the building of trust in existing relationships. Instead of enlarging the number of relationships, building trust means increasing the quality of a few important relationships. The aim is to surpass the professional level of the relationship and to talk to each other not only as representatives of an organization or institution, but on a personal level. This connection on a personal level will create new opportunities, as a local peacebuilder suggests:

“It depends a lot on the person. It is much more important to approach them as a person, rather than on some political level. You get much more out of them. If you manage to connect on a personal level at some point, that will open the doors for other things. But it's very slow and it needs a lot of time to establish a trust.”³¹

This kind of relationship work implies an exposure of one's personality, personal preferences, and opinions, signifying the shift from representing a function to being yourself. Not all peacebuilders are willing to expose themselves to that extent, and for some of them, such a shift poses a moral dilemma. They interpret this relationship work as the artificial creation of a friendship for professional purposes and consider it 'fake' and morally

31 Local peacebuilder from Macedonian case study.

doubtful. Building trust in a relationship is also more challenging and less manageable than networking. Enhancing the quality of a relationship is in the most cases unplanned and occurs spontaneously. Most of interviewed peacebuilders described it as something 'natural' that happens with some people and not with others.

"It is that when you are going with the same persons for six months in four trainings in different hotels in Macedonia, you will get close with some people, with some not, because of the nature of their characters. With some maybe, because they're much more open and communicative, they're funny to go out with, to have a nice time. It is inevitable. So it is not so much a decision as it is spontaneous. Like it or not, you get close to some people."³²

The spontaneous trust building reflects the fact that peacebuilders are not only professionals but also people with their own character, humor, and personal preferences, and not all of their actions are guided by the organization's purpose and standards.

5.3 Transferring Social Capital

A peacebuilder's local social capital constitutes a resource for the organization and the intervention, but what happens when he/she changes positions or leaves the organization? Can a peacebuilder transfer his/her local social capital to a successor? In the HEKS/EPER and Macedonian case studies, different practices were observed:

- Goodbye/Introduction letter to the entire network, announcing the departure of the outgoing person and introducing the successor. The notification mainly served as the official communication of the personnel change, clarified new responsibilities, and provided the contact details of the new person in charge.
- Handover note containing all of the relevant information needed for the successor to continue ongoing processes and be operational from the start. This note includes contact details and specific information about relevant people.
- Joint visits of outgoing and incoming staff in which those who have a well-established network arrange and facilitate introduction meetings for new the successor.

Of course, these efforts to transfer the personal network do not transfer all social capital of the outgoing peacebuilder. First and foremost, they provide the contact details that are the basic requirement to maintain the network. Through a joint letter or joint visit, the outgoing peacebuilder has the chance to share some trust-building words about his/her successor, and in a way give the new employee his blessing. This may enable a good start for a relationship, but ultimately the successor has to build up trust and social capital him/herself.

32 Local peacebuilder from Macedonian case study.

6

Personal Relationships: One Piece of a Larger Puzzle

In order to gain a more holistic perspective, this chapter puts the local social capital in relation to the other influencing factors. First, I have a look at the perceived comparative influence of all factors listed in the methodology chapter. And second, I summarize how personal relationships shape and are shaped by the other influencing factors. Although elaborated in a shortened way, the following sections emphasize that personal relationships is only one factor among several which are all interconnected.

6.1 The Perceived Comparative Influence of Influencing Factors

The previous chapters provide a selection of insights into how personal relationships matter and how peacebuilder build up their local social capital, but the question remains, how much do personal relationships matter compared to other influencing factors? A rating³³ of the perceived comparative influence according a mixed method³⁴, followed by a ranking of the factors according their perceived influence, ultimately resulted in the table below (1 perceived as most influential; 18 as least influential factor). This perception-based rating has its limitations and a small difference in rating and ranking should not be over-interpreted, but it allows us to situate the perceived influence of personal relationships in comparison to other factors.

33 Survey respondents were asked to rate the influence of each factor on a scale of 1 (not at all influenced) to 5 (strongly influenced).

34 The survey responses were triangulated with my perception-based rating of the 22 interventions of the Macedonian case study. The semi-structured interview always began with storytelling about the intervention, followed by open questions on which factors influenced the design and implementation of the intervention. Thereafter, I rated the importance of each influencing factor for the respective intervention and calculated the overall average for the Macedonian case study.

Table 1: Ranking of factors according perceived comparative influence on peacebuilding interventions³⁵

	Designing stage	Implementation stage
1	Values, principles and philosophy of organization	Values, principles and philosophy of organization
2	Thematic and technical expertise of organization	Thematic and technical expertise of organization
3	Interests, profile and reputation of organization	Interests, profile and reputation of organization
	Personal assessment of needs of people	Personal assessment of needs of people
5	Personal expertise and experience	Personal expertise and experience
6	Personal values	Experiences in the given conflict context
7	Organizational network and alliances	Personal values
8	Conflict analysis	Personal relationships and network
9	Experiences in the given conflict context	Organizational network and alliances
10	Procedures and processes within organization	Procedures and processes within organization
11	Ideology of democracy & liberal market system	Personal motivation, ambitions, reputation
12	Strategic national interests of back donor	Conflict analysis
13	Personal motivation, ambitions, reputation	Request from the local population
14	Personal relationship and networks	Ideology of democracy & liberal market system
15	Request from the local population	Request from the local authorities
16	National security interests of back donor	Security concerns of organization
17	Security concerns of organization	Strategic national interests of back donor
18	Request from the local authorities	National security interests of back donor

Regarding the role of personal relationships there are three findings we can draw from this table:

- Personal relationships of peacebuilders do influence peacebuilding interventions.
- Their influence is neither a marginal nor a particularly important one.
- A peacebuilder's personal relationships are more influential at the implementation stage than at the designing stage.

³⁵ Light grey = organizational influencing factors; medium grey = personal influencing factors; dark grey = macro level factors; white = contextual influencing factors.

This perceived comparative influence ranking offers food for thought that goes beyond the role of personal relationships. The table shows that in designing and implementing peacebuilding intervention, peacebuilders are apparently most influenced by their organization's values, principles, and philosophy (rank 1/1) and the thematic and technical expertise (rank 2/2). That reflects the value- and expertise-centered discourse among peacebuilders in practice. When representing an intervention to donors or stakeholders, the values and expertise of an organization and individuals are accentuated while interests and bureaucracy are downplayed. Surprising from a researcher's point of view is the low ranking of macro level factors such as ideology, national security interests and other strategic national interests of the back donor. Despite the vast amount of literature in the field of international relations such as the state building-peacebuilding discourse or the fragile state-global security discourse, these factors are not perceived as influential by peacebuilders in practice. The reasons can be found in a difference of perception between a peace researcher and a peacebuilder.

Autesserre (Autesserre 2011) has already demonstrated that liberal values are significantly less influential in the daily practice than the majority of liberal peace literature suggests, my study confirms this finding. Looking at the disaggregated data, my higher ranking of ideology in the Macedonian case study (rank 5, respectively 9) reflects how a researcher perceives the ideology to be more influential than involved peacebuilders do (Macedonian survey respondents ranked it 17, respectively 16). A peace researcher is subject to structural forces within the field of peace studies. These forces are enabling by providing the researcher with awareness, critical distance for reflectivity, and concepts to use in elaborating on the role of liberal ideology in peacebuilding. At the same time, the forces are constraining because arguing against the mainstream of critical peace studies by denying the significant role of liberal ideology in peacebuilding requires a comparatively stronger argument and more solid empirical data. To explain the peacebuilder's perception, the low perceived comparative influence of ideology must be related to its translation into organizational values and philosophy. Under the structural forces of the competitive fundraising market, an organization must emphasize its own identity and distinguish itself from others. Rather than explaining the values driving an intervention with a general paradigm, an organization and its employees thus emphasize the uniqueness of the organization's values and philosophy.

Another difference of perception is found in the peacebuilders' ranking of the influence of national security interests. Most peacebuilders hardly like to see themselves as instruments of the national security interests of foreign states, local peacebuilders even less so than international peacebuilders, and NGO workers less than those from foreign state agencies and international organizations. Most peacebuilders perceive themselves as persons committed to higher values and contributing to a peaceful and just world, not as instruments of foreign states. In their narrative, peace is for the sake of the affected local population, not for preventing potential threats in faraway countries. In

addition, to be suspected as working for foreign actors or even to be suspected of being involved in espionage heavily damages the reputation and credibility of a peacebuilder. Thus, most peacebuilders clearly distance themselves from the thought that their peacebuilding intervention is a small part of a larger strategy of foreign actors to guarantee their national security.

6.2 Interconnectedness with Other Influencing Factors

The analysis of personal relationships' interconnectedness with other influencing factors is a central component in understanding the complexity of building and deploying local social capital. It is necessary to examine the role of personal relationships from a holistic perspective and consider the mutual causal relations with other factors influencing a peacebuilding intervention.

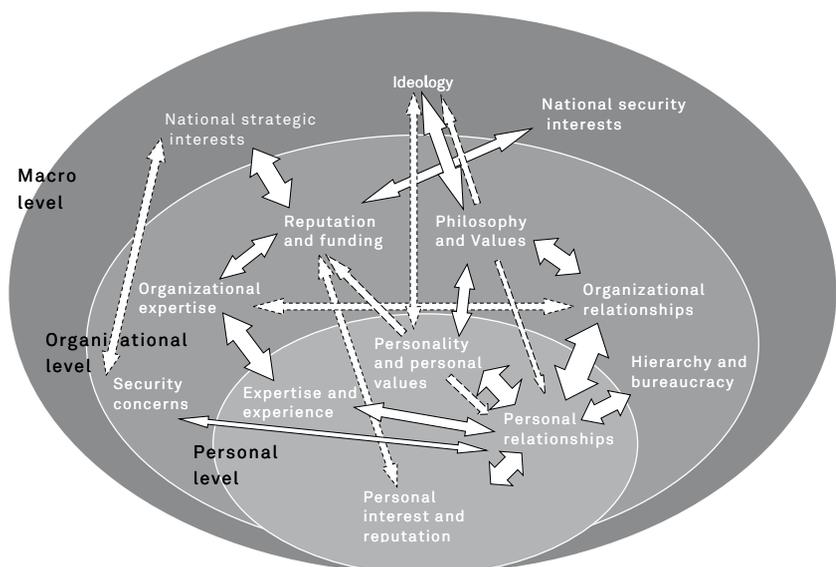


Figure 2: Interconnectedness between personal relationships and other factors

Peacebuilders are enabled and constrained by several structural forces, and so is their way of using local social capital as a resource in achieving the intervention's goal. There are structural forces from the macro level that exercise their enabling and constraining effects mainly through the intermediary level of the organization. There are structural forces from the organizational level that guide and set boundaries on peacebuilders' actions. And last, on a personal level there are other influencing factors that affect peacebuilders' use of local social capital.

6.2.1 Macro Structural Forces in the Field of Peacebuilding

As explained above, peacebuilders do not perceive themselves – and do not want to be perceived – as guided by dominant ideologies and the national security and strategic interests of donor countries. Peacebuilders first and foremost identify themselves with their organization and, aside from those who belong to foreign state agencies, they deny being subject to strong structural forces originating from the macro level. Nevertheless, the macro level factors exert an influence on peacebuilding on the ground and on peacebuilders' local social capital.

In practice the liberal paradigm is often hidden in values, visions, and working approaches that promote the model of a Western state and a neo-liberal economy through less ideological terminology. In the case of HEKS/EPER, this can be observed in regard to the 'human rights-based approach' and the 'making markets work for the poor approach'. In the same liberal spirit, these working approaches also affect peacebuilders' local social capital by promoting relationship work with duty-bearers (state authorities) and market players (e.g., enterprises), with the aim of finding a win-win situation. Promoting these kinds of relationships is at the very heart of the liberal paradigm and promotes state building through a strengthened link between citizen and state, or rights-holder and duty-bearer, and presents the enterprises as business partners providing opportunities and not, for instance, as oppressive capitalists.

In the case of Macedonia, the liberal paradigm is translated into the promotion of a democratic, multiethnic state aiming for Euro-Atlantic integration. The goal of peacebuilding in Macedonia is to become a multiethnic democratic state according to the European liberal understanding and prevailing standards. Impressively, all 16 organizations of the case study are in favor of the pro-European path. With this in mind, it is all the more surprising that Macedonian survey respondents perceived the influence of the ideology of democracy and liberal market systems on their interventions as very low.³⁶ The ranking contrasts in particular with the high perceived comparative influence of organizational values and philosophy, which was ranked 1 twice by Macedonian survey respondents, even though they actually correspond to the very same liberal ideology. My conclusion is therefore that peacebuilders first of all identify themselves with their organization and its values and philosophy and not with a broader ideology. Nevertheless, the liberal paradigm does affect everyday practices in the observed case studies but in translated forms that peacebuilders are less aware of.

The influence of the liberal ideology on a peacebuilder's local social capital depends significantly on the way it is presented to the public. Some organizations take a more active stance in promoting and defending liberal values, for instance, those in the Macedonian case study who openly criticized illiberal tendencies of the government. This clear political positioning has an impact on the organization's reputation within the society and consequently on the local social capital of its peacebuilders. Relationships with the political actors and

36 The disaggregated survey data shows that Macedonian survey respondents rated the influence of 'Ideology of democracy and liberal market system' very low. (Rank 17 at the designing stage and 16 at the implementation stage).

society members who have been criticized will deteriorate and the role of bridge builder cannot be fulfilled anymore due to a lack of the necessary local social capital. Other organizations with the same liberal values may choose a more cautious approach and avoid confrontation to maintain a bridge-builder function or to avoid political exposure. As a NGO representative stated:

“There is the [another organization]. Now they have a widely established reputation that they are simply against the government and for the opposition. And what do you want to change like that? You just face closed doors! To keep [our] neutrality eventually enabled us to include mediation in our activities or led to what we currently do with the ministry.”³⁷

In countries such as Macedonia, where the liberal paradigm dominates the peacebuilding field, it is less the paradigm itself than the way an organization presents the underlying ideology to the public that affects the peacebuilders’ personal relationships.

The other macro level factors national security and strategic interests also exert an influence on the peacebuilder’s local social capital. Their influence is the greatest on interventions designed and implemented by foreign state agencies, and consequently, peacebuilders employed by these agencies experience these structural forces more than others do in their relationship work. A country’s reputation and positioning spills over to the reputation of the organization and the individual, which ultimately affects the relationship work of peacebuilders. How positive or negative this affects the peacebuilder’s local social capital depends on the country’s reputation and how involved it is in the conflict. While national security interests are mostly a constraining structural force, economic and cultural interests are often an enabling structural force for peacebuilders’ relationships. Economic cooperation and cultural ties are positive common denominators and provide a good foundation for building a relationship. For German and Swiss peacebuilders in Macedonia many conversations with local people start with a story about a relative’s life as ‘Gastarbeiter’³⁸ in Nurnberg or Zurich, for instance. Having a common experience or linking element facilitates the establishing of a personal relationship between an international peacebuilder and the local population.

6.2.2 The Enabling and Constraining Impact of an Organization

The research shows that an organization’s general values and religious and political values enable and constrain the use of local social capital and relationship work. These values³⁹ are enabling, for instance, when they promote a bottom-up approach and value relationships with the local people, as in the case of HEKS/EPER; they are constraining for a peacebuilder’s relationship work with stakeholders and conflict groups who hold fundamentally opposed values. However, an organization’s vague articulation of its values can leave the peacebuilder with significant agency and leeway in managing the personal relationships in specific situations.

37 Local peacebuilder from Macedonian case study; translated from German.

38 The term that Macedonians and Albanians use for labor migrants in Germany or Switzerland.

39 HEKS/EPER committed itself to nine core beliefs and principles: justice, self-determination, respect, solidarity, help without boundaries, responsibility, participation, proximity to people, and effectiveness. (HEKS, Our values and Core Beliefs 2010).

The organization's interest in accessing funding and maintaining a good reputation has strong enabling and constraining effects on the peacebuilder's relationship management. Peacebuilders walk a fine line when using their local social capital to gather insider information about potential funding opportunities. The interest in accessing funding acts as an enabling structural force for the relationship work of peacebuilders, while the organizational interest of maintaining a good reputation by respecting values such as transparency, honesty, and professionalism has a constraining effect. The peacebuilders' relationships and the reputation of their organizations affect each other mutually also in other ways. The interest in promoting and maintaining the organization's good reputation constrains peacebuilders' personal relationships in the professional and private spheres, as opinions and relationships could be taken as representing those of the organization. Three interviewees, for instance, who all worked for different state agencies in Macedonia, mentioned that they have felt constrained in stating their personal opinion in private discussion. However, the survey responses suggest that the constraints remain limited to peacebuilders from state agencies. In addition, the peacebuilders' network structure can affect the organization's reputation and consequently its opportunities to reach out to specific stakeholders and target groups. As a local peacebuilder from Macedonia explains:

"I think it is not easy in our culture. Even if they see you drinking coffee with somebody then they start to assume that something might be going on over there. [...] Even if you go to coffee you have to consider, maybe I should also go with this other person."⁴⁰

Although overwhelming in number and scope, internal guidelines and policies remain vague regarding the permitted role of personal relationships in specific situations. Despite the increasing formalization of the peacebuilding field (see e.g., Goetschel & Hagmann 2009), organizational rules and procedures influence but do not determine peacebuilders' management of relationships. Instead, personal relationships help to bypass formal hierarchies and bureaucratic procedures.

Organizational expertise has enabling and constraining effects on personal expertise and personal relationships. More precisely, the organization's promotion of a certain expertise among its employees leads to the promotion of expertise-specific networking in defined areas (e.g. networking with Human Rights experts). Moreover, a peacebuilder with a particular expertise is attracted to organizations with the same expertise, mutually enlarging and renewing the organization's and the individual's expertise-specific network.

Organizational relationships (partnerships, institutional networks) and personal relationships strongly affect each other. Part of a peacebuilder's network is determined by the institutional relationships of the organization, and personal relationships may lead to the creation of an institutional network.

40 Local peacebuilder from Macedonian case study.

The literature demonstrates that relationships between organizations in the form of partnerships and memberships in institutional networks affect personal relationships between involved individuals and are in turn affected by personal relationships (e.g. Lister 2000; Vincent & Byrne 2006; McWha 2011). My research largely confirms this.

The last interconnection with the organizational level concerns the peacebuilders' local social capital and the security concerns of the organization. The increasing formalization of security procedures in the field of peacebuilding (Roth 2011) could also be observed in the case of HEKS/EPER. Although the organization has pursued the acceptance strategy, which implies the promotion of relationship work with local people, the organization has become more risk-averse in volatile contexts with blurry conflict lines. This increasingly undermines relationship work with local people, which in the long-term may reduce the acceptance of the organization.

6.2.3 A Peacebuilder's Personality and Personal Interests Play a Crucial Role

Peacebuilders' trustworthiness affects how successfully they can build relationships of trust and use them for professional purposes. Personality is also a decisive factor in the positive chemistry between peacebuilders and stakeholders and whether a common denominator can be found. Personal values may also hinder the use of local social capital. Despite having significant local social capital, a peacebuilder might decide to refrain from using it because in her/his interpretation it is deemed immoral or harmful to do so. Although the role of personality and values in the everyday practices of peacebuilding has been studied before, previous studies were mainly about the impact of religious beliefs (Deneulin & Bano 2009) or political and ideological values (Yarrow 2011). These values do play a role and affect the role of local social capital, but the use of social capital also depends on whether two people are on the same wavelength and understand each other.

Driven by both personal values and interests, the personal commitment, motivation, and career ambitions of peacebuilders heavily influence how they conduct relationship work and use local social capital. Careerism versus altruism in development and peacebuilding was the subject of several studies (e.g., Lang 1997; Alvarez 1998). My research links this debate to the relationship debate by demonstrating the direct causality between career ambitions and the more intensive use and building of local social capital. For instance, as one interviewee stated: "[The dialogue process] was not based on a strategic approach, but was the result of ambitious people, good networks and opportunity-based acting. The motto was 'We want to do something big, we have an idea and a model, it fits to the context, let's use our relationships'"⁴¹. Moreover, pursuing personal interests is directly linked to the reputation and legitimacy of a peacebuilder. Using personal relationships for the interests of the intervention is well accepted, while using them for one's own interests may harm one's reputation.

41 International peacebuilder from Macedonian case study; translated from German.

The analysis of the interconnectedness of the influencing factors demonstrates that a peacebuilder has significant agency within existing structural forces in the field of peacebuilding. There are enabling and constraining structural forces from the organizational and macro levels, they influence but do not determine the management of relationships. The multiple intersecting structural forces may be congruent or contradictory, but they leave the individual peacebuilder room to maneuver. The peacebuilder's agency includes the use of this space and the possibility to adapt structural forces by challenging and changing existing norms and rules. This may not happen in an explicit way, nor is the peacebuilder always acting consciously, but his/her agency in deploying local social capital consolidates or changes structural forces as part of a causal relationship.

7

Local and International Peacebuilders: Differences in Local Social Capital and the Impact on Relations within the Aid Chain

Based on the findings of the research, this chapter shows how local social capital differs between a local and international peacebuilder, and how this results in different opportunities and constraints for both of them. Further, I elaborate on the local peacebuilder as gatekeeper and how the unequal distribution of local social capital affects the power relations within the aid chain. I end by arguing that in the field of peacebuilding the relationship between local and international peacebuilders is not only marked by dominance and resistance, but also includes silent power-sharing agreements, and that the acknowledgment of local social capital as a valuable resource helps to reduce tensions between local and international peacebuilders.

7.1 Different Local Social Capital – Different Opportunities and Constraints

Local and international peacebuilders have a different composition of social capital. The social capital of international peacebuilders is significantly smaller than the one of their local colleagues. Expatriates who stay longer than 2–3 years are able to build up substantial local social capital in the field of peacebuilding, but they lack social capital with the grassroots-level and ordinary people. International workers based abroad own a tiny amount of social capital compared to expatriates and local peacebuilders. The entire quantity of an international peacebuilder's social capital usually remains markedly lower than a local peacebuilder's.

The most substantial difference in regard to the type of social capital is that international peacebuilders lack bonding social capital with local communities in the country of intervention. They are not part of the communities despite sometimes having common religious or political affiliations. They are considered to be outsiders because their citizenship, often in a more developed country, will always provide them with opportunities that local people do not have. Most bonding social capital an international worker has is with the expatriate community. The strength of these ties within the expatriate community varies between people of the same nationality, mother tongue, or type of organization.

The collected data further shows that for international peacebuilders it is comparatively easier to establish relationships across ethnic or religious divides and to build bridging social capital. Their foreign origin allows them to be perceived as more neutral in the local context than local peacebuilder belonging to one of the sides in a conflict. An exception may be international peacebuilders whose home country is directly involved in the conflict, which could not be analyzed in the chosen case studies. Among local peacebuilders, however, only a few manage to escape the 'identity-trap' and succeed in being perceived as objective on issues related to the conflicts. No matter how important or unimportant ethnic affiliation is to the peacebuilder, it does matter and make a difference in the eyes of some stakeholders. It would be wrong to

conclude that international peacebuilders own more bridging social capital than local peacebuilders, as in total they own significantly less local social capital than their local colleagues, but they are in a better position to acquire it.

Both local and international peacebuilders can own valuable linking social capital in different ways. International peacebuilders have linking social capital mainly in the form of a network embracing primarily other international workers, civil society representatives, artists, academia, and local peacebuilding colleagues. In the Macedonian case study, international peacebuilders remained in like-minded circles and had only a little or no linking social capital with different-minded people. Furthermore, international peacebuilders connected mainly to educated and elite circles and hardly established any relationship with lower social classes. In turn, the linking social capital of local peacebuilders is directed toward local people, including civil society representatives, academia, political and religious leaders, representatives of state authorities from the municipality and national levels, and people from the grassroots level. Their network includes people with various mindsets and education levels, ranging from cosmopolitans to ultra-conservative nationalists, from professors to unskilled workers.

This different composition of social capital between local and international peacebuilders is the outcome of a different starting point in building their social capital and different conditions for relationship work. While an international peacebuilder stays in an area for a limited period of time, a local peacebuilder in most cases stays in the country for a lifetime. Their network is the result of several decades of human interaction with people in the given society. On the other hand, international peacebuilders start building their local social capital in a country of intervention at a particular moment in their lives. Their social capital mainly depends on the organization they are working for, especially on the office colleagues who are the main entry point for establishing further social capital in the society.

This difference in social capital leads to different opportunities and constraints for local and international peacebuilders: First, the degree of insidership plays a critical role in gathering insider information. Although in a particular community local peacebuilders may be considered outsiders, they still have more common denominators and stronger ties with the community than international peacebuilders do. As result, the locals have more access to insider information and have the ability to read between the lines and interpret context-specific information in a way that international peacebuilders are not capable of doing. This opinion is underlined by the observed preference of people in the community to first approach the local peacebuilders before addressing the international ones. During field visits international peacebuilders received more attention, but people felt more comfortable talking to local peacebuilders about critical issues. A conversation in their mother tongue with an interlocutor who knew about their daily struggles and worries gave them a feeling of being understood. In general, local people responded differently to

international peacebuilders than to local ones. They were more cautious in their choice of words and did not openly give their opinions on contested issues. As the same Macedonian peacebuilder explained:

“With the foreigners it is much different. With them, people tend to be more polite, more objective, more balanced. With me they don’t have to be more polite and balanced. I know many details about politicians and their opinion, which if I tell them to my foreign colleagues they will hate that person lifelong.”⁴²

Similar observations could be made regarding the relationship with local partners and the access to monitoring information. Based on bonding social capital, a partner assumes that a local representative of the donor has a better understanding of the challenges on the ground. As a result, the partner representatives share more insider information about the actual stage of the process. This makes local representatives and local branch offices, such as the Country Office of HEKS/EPER, an important instrument in monitoring the intervention.

In regard to using personal relationships in the selection processes of partners, staff, or beneficiaries, local peacebuilders’ greater amount of local social capital creates opportunities and constraints. They know more applicants and people than their international colleagues, and the additional information creates the opportunity to make a more solid assessment of the person or the organization. Yet, their international colleagues tend to be suspicious of their personal relationship and possible favoritism. As a result, the local peacebuilder is under comparatively higher pressure to demonstrate professionalism and an objective opinion. Local peacebuilders are usually involved from the inception of selection processes, but that at the end, international peacebuilders who are often higher up in the hierarchy have more decision-making power. The impact of local peacebuilders’ insider information on the selection thus depends on their skills in sharing information with international colleagues without giving any reason to doubt their professionalism and objectivism.

In arranging meetings with key stakeholders, the difference between local and international peacebuilders creates opportunities in different situations. Most of the meetings in the Macedonian case study, and almost all in the HEKS/EPER case study, were arranged by local peacebuilders. Their bonding and diversified linking social capital was decisive, and most of them had personal relationships with people in ministries, political parties, businesses and civil society organizations. The international peacebuilders, in turn, did not have much local social capital but benefitted from more attention due to their status; in particular, diplomats and representatives of international organizations had little trouble meeting stakeholders.

42 Local peacebuilder from Macedonian case study.

Many international peacebuilders value the social capital of their local colleagues for the created opportunities, nevertheless some local peacebuilders expressed frustration in the interviews. The reason lies in some international peacebuilders' lack of awareness that local peacebuilders in particular need to consider several constraints when deploying social capital for professional purposes:

- Every relationship has a history, from which some modes of behavior emerge. In some cases, these histories do not allow one to talk about sensitive or political issues, for instance. In breaking this habit, a peacebuilder may risk harming a friendship and losing social capital.
- A relationship is based upon reciprocity, and a favor is meant to be paid back in the long-term. The same person cannot be constantly asking for a meeting if there is no win-win situation for both sides. One needs to assess in which situation it is appropriate to use connections and regulate the amount of social capital invested.
- For local peacebuilders arranging meetings with stakeholders is a risk when outsiders do not understand the rules of the game; for instance, when they interpret agreeing to meet as a positive response to the actual demand. Eventually, this leads to a deception and unwelcomed surprises. For locals acting as intermediaries, it is crucial to communicate the rules and set the expectations beforehand, as a deception by any side could decrease the trustworthiness of the relationship.
- Collecting information also implies sending out information. Already the fact that one is approaching a stakeholder on a specific issue sends out the message that the organization may consider the option of an intervention in this regard and raises expectations.
- Many international peacebuilders expect local peacebuilders to deploy their social capital at the push of a button, although the intentions may not be very clear, which challenges local peacebuilders to dig deeper for information without knowing what they are looking for.
- International peacebuilders ask their local colleagues to deploy their social capital and at the same time implement a rigorous anti-corruption policy. In some cases, there is only a thin line between regular use of relationships and corrupt practices, and the risk of crossing this line weighs fully on the local peacebuilder.

7.2 Impact on Relationships within the Aid Chain

The unequal distribution of local social capital between local and international peacebuilders, and the different opportunities and constraints created, give local peacebuilders the possibility of playing the gatekeeper role. The most important gatekeeper function that a local peacebuilder adopts concerns the networking activities of their international superiors or colleagues. During short-term visit or the first couple of months in a country, an international peacebuilder's building of social capital is largely influenced by their local colleagues. The latter thus has significant leverage in determining which narrative of the conflict the international peacebuilder will adopt. The local peacebuilder has

the power to select potential partners and stakeholders to introduce to the newly arrived international peacebuilder, thereby significantly shaping his/her future decisions regarding the intervention. Local peacebuilders may give newcomers a short briefing explaining controversial topics and taboos before meeting the stakeholders. In this way, local peacebuilders also influenced the topic of discussion raised by international peacebuilders. However, some international peacebuilders intentionally challenged these taboos to bring stakeholders out of their comfort zones and assess their reactions. By doing this, international peacebuilders bypass the gatekeeper role of the local peacebuilder. The effects are not necessarily negative because the local peacebuilder may be in favor of breaking such taboos, but as a local cannot do so. The international peacebuilders can play the 'trump card' of being a foreigner and hide behind the naivety and ignorance of being an outsider. The gatekeeper function of local peacebuilders is accentuated in contexts in which the security situation is not stable. For security assessments on the village level in particular, their local social capital provides the lion's share of the information upon which security measures are based. This results in a strong power position of the local relative to the international peacebuilder because in questions concerning field visits the former can keep international colleagues away from some areas by referring to security threats.

The local peacebuilders' local social capital provides them with power resources⁴³, which in specific situations puts them into a dominant position over their international colleagues. Therefore, the power relations between local and international peacebuilders are dynamic rather than static. Interestingly, data from the HEKS/EPER and the Macedonian case study suggests that due to this dynamic power relations, silent power-sharing agreements are more frequent in the everyday practices of peacebuilding than the discourse on hybridity and local resistance suggests. The dominant discourse in critical peace studies largely neglects the dynamic nature of power relations and resulting power-sharing agreements. Instead, it refers to a binary conceptualization of locals resisting the power of international peacebuilders. In my opinion, this falls short of understanding the existing complexity in peacebuilding. The juxtaposition of local resistance and international dominance, for example, does not offer a satisfactory explanation for the existence of silent power-sharing agreements between local and international peacebuilders. Even more, it understates the impact of local peacebuilders' power resources and thereby offers a one-sided view on power relations in peacebuilding, actually disempowering the local peacebuilders.

Although I argue that silent power-sharing is more frequent than one assumes and there are more compromises in peacebuilding, I do not negate the frequent occurrence of relationships in which there is a dominant international and a resistant local peacebuilder. Based on the analysis of case 1 and 2, I argue that these tensions between local and international peacebuilders occur mainly when the distribution of power resources and, consequently, the power relations have been disturbed, and local social capital plays a cen-

43 For an overview on power resources within the aid chain I refer to Lister (Lister 2000).

tral role in this. Amongst other factors, power relations between the local and international peacebuilder can be disturbed in the following cases:

- First, when international peacebuilders' language skills and previous experience in the country allow them to be less dependent on their local colleagues as gatekeepers, they may use the social capital that they have built and begin challenging the legitimacy of the local peacebuilder as a partner. In effect, they may start challenging the power resources of the local peacebuilder in terms of access to local information, links to the grassroots level, and access to communities.
- Second, the balance of power is disrupted when resources are not valued appropriately, for instance, when the international peacebuilder ignores the opportunities that are created as a result of the local social capital deployed by the local peacebuilder. This happens regularly when strategic decisions, in which local contextual information is crucial, are made behind closed doors or by the international peacebuilder alone.
- Last, such tensions are reinforced when, due to prejudices or misbehavior, no relationship of trust can be established between the local and international peacebuilders in an intervention. The lack of trust undermines a power-sharing agreement and leads to an inappropriate level of control and dominance by the international peacebuilder and the local peacebuilder's resulting resistance. This does not necessarily result in a loss of power for the local peacebuilder, but leads to a detrimental use of power in the relationship with the international counterpart, instead of both peacebuilders using their resources in a complementary way to improve the intervention's effectiveness.

A differentiated understanding of power relations builds upon the acknowledgement that both local and international peacebuilders have power resources, whereby local social capital makes up a significant part of the power resource of a local peacebuilder. Local social capital is at the heart of local peacebuilders' gatekeeper function, and the distribution of local social capital strongly affects power relations between insiders and outsiders. Many of the power resources of the local peacebuilder depend on his/her local social capital, and if ignored or sidelined, the international peacebuilder could become too dominant, causing local resistance.

My results showed that local and international peacebuilders have complementary local social capital, which creates the most opportunities when it is acknowledged by both and is jointly deployed on the basis of mutual trust and harmonious cooperation. In contrast to Anderson and Olson's recommendation for international peacebuilders to build up local social capital to avoid manipulation by local peacebuilders (Anderson & Olson 2003), I argue in favor of fostering a relationship of trust between local and international peacebuilders to make the best use of their complementary composition of local social capital in peacebuilding.

8

Conclusion

A major contribution of my research to the existing debate on everyday practices in peacebuilding is the focus on the numerous opportunities that personal relationships can create for collecting rich information about the context and conflicts, the security situation, the course of intervention, fundraising opportunities, potential partners and staff members, and beneficiaries and stakeholders. Although other researchers have touched upon the role of personal relationships in information gathering, this component has been largely neglected in previous studies on relationships.

I argue that in the everyday practices of peacebuilding, local social capital's function as an information channel outweighs Coleman's first form of obligation, expectation and trustworthiness, explaining the role of personal relationships without relating them solely to the practice of patronage. The analysis further revealed that Coleman's third form of social capital does not apply to peacebuilding. The phrase 'norms through effective sanctions' describes the achievement of interests through the establishment and maintenance of norms within a group based on the social relationships between the group members. Hardly any of the data collected in this study confirm such a practice in peacebuilding. Rather it suggests that a peacebuilder knowing a stakeholder is not necessarily successful in changing the latter's opinion. If social capital has no impact on the attitude of an individual, how can it have an impact on the norms within a group?

The study demonstrates that in the field of peacebuilding there are several influencing factors that directly and indirectly exercise structural forces on the behavior of a peacebuilder, including on his/her way of using relationships as a resource for the purpose of the intervention. On that basis, I argue that it is too simplistic to look at peacebuilding through only one influencing factor on the micro level without considering the other forces within which a peacebuilder acts. When analyzing a specific factor such as personal relationships, it is of the utmost importance to consider the other influencing factors on all levels and not look at personal relationships as an isolated component. The research further shows that every single actor involved in peacebuilding has agency towards these structural forces – not only local stakeholders or local peacebuilders. The latter do have agency, as shown in the existing studies on hybridity, but to obtain a differentiated understanding of power relations, peace studies should consider the agency of all actors along the aid chain.

An interesting finding of the research is that the liberal paradigm is perceived less influential than the policy discourse and the debate in peace studies suggest. Although I elaborated on the limitations of the mixed method and the differences in perception between a peacebuilder and a peace researcher, the results still stand in stark contrast to the predominant role of the liberal paradigm in critical peace studies. I argue that this is, first, due to the significant agency of peacebuilding organizations and individual peacebuilders, and second, due to a neglect of the other influencing factors in peace studies and an overly dominant focus on macro level factors. Such a structural

approach assuming that peacebuilding is determined by macro level factors ignores the agential moments of various actors in peacebuilding. Several existing studies have elaborated on the agency of local actors, but when considering the agency of all actors along the aid chain – as it is the case in my research – the limits of the liberal paradigm’s influence become even more obvious. Agency on several levels leads to everyday practices that are still to some extent influenced by liberal ideology but also by many more factors, of which some are comparatively more influential. This results in peacebuilding practices that cannot be explained satisfactorily by the liberal paradigm. Critical peace studies still pay too little attention to the dynamics within an organization, but also the factors on personal level are neglected. The findings of my research challenge the established perceptions in critical peace studies, and with a holistic framework, I offer a way out of the overly dominant focus on ideological factors. In my opinion, this is a precondition for reaching a more complex understanding of peacebuilding.

Based on these reflections around agency and the dynamic power relations elaborated previously, I argue that the recent trend of examining everyday practices in peacebuilding needs to move from the local-international dichotomy and the overstated juxtaposition of international dominance and local resistance to a more differentiated understanding of the power relations along the aid chain in its entirety. The results of my research support Paffenholz’s call to add more complexity to the dominant understanding of the local and international dichotomy and to consider the different layers of resistance inherent in power dynamics (Paffenholz 2015).

The analytical framework based on the interconnectedness of factors on three levels allows for a systematic holistic view on what influences peacebuilding. Applying such a framework to every influencing factor reveals the complexity of a peacebuilding intervention. The ultimate challenge of peacebuilding will be to merge the analysis of all these factors into one line of argumentation, or more precisely, to simultaneously understand the complexity of a single factor and of the entirety of all influencing factors. Metaphorically, this translates into understanding the complexity of a single tree and the complexity of a forest at the same time. Whether the field of peace studies can deal with this complexity remains an open question.

Policy Implications

I argue that an enhanced awareness of personal relationships as resources and a differentiated understanding of the created opportunities and constraints form a foundation for the improved use of local social capital, and may ultimately lead to a more reflective peacebuilding practice. A better understanding of how to use the valuable personal resource of local social capital contributes to improving access to information. An increased volume, richness and diversity of information makes peacebuilders better informed which is a precondition for a reflective and responsible practice in peacebuilding and can increase the effectiveness of an intervention.

However, building and deploying social capital for the purpose of an intervention is neither a technical nor thematic matter – it is a personal matter. A peacebuilder's responsiveness to any kind of policy about using his/her personal relationships would depend even more on his/her personality than in case of other policies. The goal of any kind of policy promoting local social capital as a resource should therefore be modest and not require everyone to become a strategic networker building and deploying local social capital according a guideline. Instead, I suggest fostering more awareness of the created opportunities and constraints through local social capital in order to benefit more of this valuable resource in peacebuilding.

Awareness raising should emphasize the main function of local social capital as an information channel in various areas. In order to make peacebuilders more confident in using local social capital as a valuable resource in this regard, a discussion about the difference between allowed and prohibited practices is required. An organization may have committed itself to values of transparency, professionalism etc. and use code of conducts and anti-corruption policies, but the allowed use of personal relationships in specific situations remains often unclear. An open discussion on do's and don'ts in using one's social capital as a resource for the intervention creates more confidence among peacebuilders and reduces the risk of misuse.

Equally important, is to raise awareness and create an understanding of the constraints in using local social capital in peacebuilding, which is a measure that mainly targets international peacebuilders, some of whom behave ignorantly toward local colleagues in this regard. As explained, local peacebuilders own more local social capital than their international colleagues do, but they encounter more constraints in deploying it. If international peacebuilders became more aware of local peacebuilders' valuable resource of local social capital and the constraints they encounter when deploying it, then local peacebuilders' frustration would decrease. Thus, an international peacebuilder's differentiated understanding of the local peacebuilder's local social capital can ultimately improve the relationships within the aid chain. The same holds true for local peacebuilders, who need to acknowledge the added value and complementary nature of an international peacebuilder's local social capital. Although international peacebuilders own significantly less local social capital, the particularities of their local social capital can be very useful for the intervention. Acknowledgement from both sides about each other's local

social capital and the constraints in its use provides a foundation for a relationship of trust that allows local and international peacebuilders to optimize the use of their complementary local social capital for the purpose of the intervention.

A few interviewees identified the harmful effects of using excessively local social capital to achieve certain ends in peacebuilding. When raising awareness of local social capital as a resource, it is thus important to point also at the negative side effects of achieving goals through personal relationships. Do we support a system of patronage and a culture of favoritism when using our local social capital to arrange meetings with representatives of state authorities? Do we legitimize these systems of dependencies through our actions, and what are the long-term effects on the political culture and accountability of the state? We should reflect upon the unintended effects, which vary among contexts, and avoid doing harm.

Of utmost importance is to refrain from any kind of formalization of relationship. The reason that local social capital serves as an information channel, especially for insider information, is its informal character. People communicate delicate and political information only in personal discussions with people they trust because using a formal information channel bears risks for them. A formalization of local social capital would decrease the access to insider information. For instance, if the information gathered informally in a chat with a representative of the partner organization were systematically written down in a formal and accessible monitoring document, the information channel would lose its informal character and become part of the formal reporting. Such a formality without a guaranteed confidentiality risks the closure of the informal information channel between two organizations through which important insider information used to circulate. Local social capital would basically lose its main function, and the peacebuilder's access to information would decrease. Therefore, one policy recommendation of this paper paradoxically consists of urging policymakers to refrain from formalizing the use of local social capital in peacebuilding.

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