Berghof Foundation

Peace Infrastructures

Assessing Concept and Practice

Barbara Unger, Stina Lundström, Katrin Planta
and Beatrix Austin (eds.)

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Typically, a Dialogue includes one lead article from key experts, and several commentaries from practitioners and others. Rather than presenting a single analysis, these practitioner-scholar encounters stimulate debate, integrating different perspectives, challenging prevailing views and comparing research findings with experiences and insights on the ground. Importantly, Dialogues, as works of broad relevance, are distributed in print version as well as online.

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Introduction

Barbara Unger and Stina Lundström

Peacebuilding practitioners, strategists and analysts are grappling with the question of where exactly decisions about building peace and dealing with violent conflict are made. Who, for example, can citizens call on when ethnic tensions threaten to escalate into violence? Where are decisions regarding early warning or ad-hoc mediation taken? Who is putting into action the state's responsibility for memorial sites or post-conflict reconstruction? In many conflict and post-conflict countries there are institutionalised units, committees, councils, secretariats and ministries under different names mandated with these tasks at different levels and during different phases of conflict. These structures are sometimes linked with each other, forming a part of a country's "peace infrastructure" in the same way that a country's transport infrastructure is formed of its transport ministry, public transport providers, road and rail networks, private businesses and motorists.

The growing number of concrete experiences and practical examples of peace infrastructure over the last few years has generated calls for more systematic thinking about what peace infrastructure means to both academics and practitioners. The terms "peace infrastructure", "infrastructure for peace", "peace and dialogue structures", and "peace support structures" have become buzzwords in the field, steering our attention to *organisation and structure* after the long-standing concentration on peace *processes*. Common examples of peace infrastructure include: the Kenyan and Ghanaian peace committees (initiated by civil society and later formalized by governments); ministries tasked with building peace such as the Ministry for Peace and Reconstruction in Nepal; and high-level peace committees such as the Peace Secretariat in South Africa or the more recent High Peace Council in Afghanistan. There are structures for dealing with the past that can be considered as elements of a peace infrastructure, such as truth commissions and peace museums. There is also a broad range of units within ministries tasked with early warning with some of these elements relating to development cooperation projects under the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) "infrastructures for peace" (I4P) initiatives.

While there is rich diversity in practice, progress on a systematic analysis of these experiences and a shared conceptual understanding lags behind. Up until now, a director of a reparations programme would hardly search for the term "peace infrastructure" when trying to learn from similar experiences, let alone describe her own work in terms of "peace infrastructure", or feel that her experiences could contribute to setting a

peace commission on another continent. This publication addresses the need for a more systematic mapping, conceptualisation and analysis of peace infrastructure, including its practical implications. It does so in the tradition of the Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation and its Dialogue Series: by complementing and contrasting theoretical assumptions with practitioners' insights. By having one lead article setting out the general topic and a number of responses reflecting on the lead article's main ideas, our Dialogue Series attempts to discuss the viability of new concepts and their usefulness for practice. The discussions may not necessarily lead to common ground, but at the very least they provide creative and constructive input for further thinking and development. In the course of preparing this issue, it quickly became clear to us that there is not yet firm agreement among practitioners and academics on what peace infrastructure means. We hope that this dialogue helps to identify conceptual divides and highlight avenues for further debate.

The concept of peace infrastructure is defined and set out by **Ulrike Hopp-Nishanka** in her lead article for this dialogue issue. Hopp-Nishanka has worked extensively on peace infrastructure, both in her doctoral thesis on the impact of Sri Lanka's peace secretariats on conflict transformation and through her work as deputy director of Berghof's Resource Network on Conflict Studies and Transformation in Sri Lanka. Her article outlines the objectives, challenges, and potential contribution of peace infrastructure to peacebuilding in various conflict settings and stages. With a theoretical framework grounded in ideas of John Paul Lederach, Hopp-Nishanka fleshes out the differences and commonalities between different concepts such as peace infrastructures and peace constituencies, civil society networks, infrastructures for peace, and peace support structures. Combining several definitions, she proposes that peace infrastructure consists of "diverse domestic, inter-connected forms of engagement between conflict parties and other stakeholders … at all stages of peace and dialogue processes, at all levels of society, and with varying degrees of inclusion." (in this volume, 4). The objectives of peace infrastructure in turn are to "assist the parties (e.g. through capacity building or advice), the process (e.g. through mediation between the conflict parties or facilitation of public participation), or the implementation of process results (e.g. through monitoring and coordination of agreement implementation)" (ibid.).

Hopp-Nishanka argues that, by emphasising the vertical and horizontal linkages among the conflict parties and stakeholders and making connections between the local and national levels, peace infrastructures can cover all levels of peacebuilding and constitute relevant entry points for peacebuilding support. As sites of collaboration, peace infrastructures can set out to address violence and contribute to settling conflicts and tackling their structural causes through a range of different techniques such as conflict management, negotiations, dialogue, and systemic transformation.

Highlighting the organisational features, foundations and potential of peace infrastructures, Hopp-Nishanka also addresses their challenges and pitfalls, including issues of legitimacy, inclusiveness, political will, and leadership. She concludes, however, that by linking the different parts of society, peace infrastructure can "give peace an address". It can function as an agent of change in itself, and also become a framework for other agents of change.

Oliver P. Richmond, a research professor in the Humanitarian and Conflict Research Institute and the Department of Politics, University of Manchester (UK) and International Professor at the School of International Studies, Kyung Hee University (Korea), offers a perspective on the challenges of defining and conceptualizing peace infrastructures. In his response article, he asserts that peace infrastructure can be legitimate if it stretches beyond formal and public institutions to incorporate the history and culture of its society. Criticising the application of liberal peacebuilding approaches to peace infrastructures, he raises concerns about the instrumentalisation of local actors and processes, the selective use of rational, legalistic and bureaucratic language, the separation between society and state, and the hierarchy of "international" and "local" (in this volume, 22). He calls for a localized approach to achieve legitimacy, and cautions against social engineering by international actors – but he does agree that international actors and elites can be supportive in forming peace infrastructure. Using the example of Cyprus, he suggests

that "peace formations" (the underlying informal local processes and networks for peace) should be the basis for the development of more formal peace infrastructure (in this volume, 23). Concluding that the underlying motive of peacebuilding should be to transform the state into peace infrastructure in its own right, Richmond suggests that we should support agendas of plurality, inclusiveness and reconciliation.

The second response article comes from **Hannes Siebert**, who works as an advisor for both the United Nations and Berghof Foundation supporting the National Dialogue and the Common Space Initiative in Lebanon. With experience of working in and with peace infrastructures in different contexts (Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and South Africa), Siebert focuses on the role of external actors and the pitfalls they should avoid when supporting them. Noting that peace infrastructures have gained ground internationally, Siebert calls for a deeper reflection on their origins, functions, sequencing, evolution and limitations and stresses that each process of building peace infrastructure should be owned by and designed by (or in close collaboration with) the conflict parties and others who have a stake in the peace process.

Using the analogy of a doctor prescribing antibiotics instead of strengthening the sick body's immune system, Siebert points to both the potential of external support for peace infrastructures and the pitfalls of interventionist approaches. He highlights some good practice examples where locally initiated peace infrastructure (in his terms, "peace and dialogue structures") have evolved and been nurtured with external support.

The last response article comes from **Borja Paladini Adell**, a practitioner involved in peacebuilding and conflict transformation activities who during the last decade has been working in Colombia for the UNDP. He is currently a UNDP programme analyst, serving as head of the UNDP's offices in Nariño and Cauca in southern Colombia. In his article, he draws on his experiences of the emerging foundations of peace infrastructure in the Colombian context to discuss its practical and conceptual use for the UNDP and its partners. Noting the weak performance and legitimacy of the national peace infrastructure, the author describes attempts to create peace infrastructure at the subnational level of the Nariño department, one of the regions most affected by Colombia's armed conflicts.

Adding to Hopp-Nishanka's conceptualization and framing of peace infrastructures, Paladini Adell introduces the concept of "innovative social coalitions", which refers to how different actors (community, institutional, public, private, and ethnic) organise informally around the dynamics of the conflict, in most cases supported by different levels of government and external actors, in this case the UNDP (in this volume, 47). These coalitions are, in the author's opinion, intended to serve as a link between individual peace initiatives, peace structures and strategic peacebuilding in short-, medium- and long-term approaches. As such, they could be the platform for peace infrastructures-to-be.

In her closing reflection on the responses, **Hopp-Nishanka** addresses the various inputs and challenging ideas provided by the responding authors, re-connecting to key issues such as sequencing, the non-linearity of processes, the challenge of combining formal and informal elements of peace infrastructure, and the risks of external (liberal) peacebuilding interventions and top-down approaches. She concludes by reflecting on the importance of the self-transformative character of peace infrastructure, which should not only work on the conflicts that take place "outside", but also strive to strengthen and transform itself throughout the conflict transformation cycle.

Although all the authors in this issue agree that the concept of peace infrastructure is worth putting under the lens, there is wide variation in their terminology, definitions, understandings and experiences of peace infrastructures. There are particular differences between the authors over the types of actors that should be in charge of setting up peace infrastructures and over the best way of rooting them in a country's national and sub-national context. The most fervently debated issue was over what "local" actually means. Is it synonymous with "grassroots", "bottom-up", "sub-national", or is it simply the opposite of external or international action, in the sense of being "domestic"? While the domestic character of infrastructure is clear by definition, there is a discussion between the authors about the need for broad inclusiveness with

regard to different actors. Regarding state actors, this discussion is normatively charged and marked by the concern that domestic elites might capture and politicise the peace infrastructure, bypassing civil society efforts. Regarding conflict parties, all response authors agree that they should be part of or have at least links to peace infrastructure. Finally, in terms of external actors, the different contributors to this publication all agree that international exchange and support can in many cases catalyse better set-ups – but only as long as the home-grown character of peace infrastructure and its particular national context is respected.

Other questions remain for future debates: what are the options in cases where the governmental and/ or non-governmental actors are seen as illegitimate by either each other or by the general population? Must all state, non-state and external actors be included in the peace infrastructure, and should all peace organisations be regarded as a part of it? If the answer to those questions turns out to be "no", then we should also consider what alternative roles these actors have. We should also call for more joint reflection on questions of organisation and sequencing – not least, what is the right time for setting up peace infrastructure?

This leads us back to the question that guided the process of putting together this issue: how useful is it (if at all) to create a common understanding of the definition and organisational features of peace infrastructure? Although we as editors agree that it is important to be flexible in both concept and practice so as to be sensitive to different contexts and scenarios, we also believe that in order to learn from peace infrastructures across different contexts, it is helpful to have a joint understanding of what their key aspects are and how they connect to other peacebuilding mechanisms and processes.

While the debate on peace infrastructure has started to gain ground, we are still a long way from having a theory of peace infrastructure. Hopp-Nishanka's lead article stresses that peace should "have an address". As we have seen in some cases, the legally founded peace infrastructure might be easier to find in official documents than on the ground. The Colombian National Peace Council (*Consejo Nacional de Paz*), for example, has only met a few times in the last decade, and is not active in the current negotiation process in Havana between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)*). This tells us that our "address for peace" must be more than an entry in the yellow pages. In order to make a difference, and be legitimate and credible, this address must refer to a house with a solid foundation, with people who live in it, situated in a village – and that village needs to have well maintained roads linking it to other villages. The aim through editing this volume has, therefore, been to learn more about what is actually located at the address and how it is connected with the rest of the peacebuilding's geography.

In the process of finalizing this volume, our thanks go to the Berghof Handbook's editors, Hans-Joachim Giessmann and Martina Fischer, for sharing our curiosity about this topic, and to the authors Ulrike Hopp-Nishanka, Oliver P. Richmond, Borja Paladini Adell and Hannes Siebert for engaging in fruitful discussions over how to name, describe and argue for peace infrastructure. It is sometimes said that being an editor of a publication is a bit similar to carrying and giving birth to a child. During the past year we have gone beyond the analogy. In case you were wondering why it took so many editors to publish this issue, we can share with you that we experienced some changes in our small editorial team, as Beatrix Austin and Katrin Planta withdrew for some time to dedicate themselves to two other fascinating projects: Robin Isabella Rosa and Luise Catalina, both born in 2012.

We would also like to take the opportunity to encourage you to visit the Berghof Handbook website, where we are receiving and uploading more substantial comments on this dialogue series from our readers, starting with a UNDP perspective on the peace infrastructure in Kyrgyzstan by Silvia Danielak.

Eventually, additional key insights will develop from the lessons and experiences of people who have been working in and supporting peace infrastructures. They will have the final say about the usefulness of the concept and its application in practice. As the field is paying more attention to peace infrastructure, our hopes are that the exchange will continue to be a process in the spirit of cumulative peacebuilding, with the same vertical and horizontal linkages that we demand for all other peace efforts.

Berlin, February 2013

Giving Peace an Address?

Reflections on the Potential and
Challenges of Creating Peace Infrastructures

Ulrike Hopp-Nishanka

Content

1 Introduction[1]

In early 2007, community groups in suburbs of Tamale, the capital of the Northern Region of Ghana, clashed over the construction of a water pipeline. Violence and destruction ensued, local businesses shut down, the police had to intervene and several community leaders and youths were arrested. The violence, however, did not escalate further and the conflict was settled outside court with the help of the Northern Region Peace Advisory Council, a group of more than 20 civil society representatives, religious leaders and local authority representatives (Draman et al. 2009). Building on the trust and acceptance forged with traditional chiefs, the group engaged in various forms of dispute resolution around land, religion, and social and political issues, as well as community peacebuilding work. Similar stories are reported from all over Ghana, and their successes are related to the country's national peace architecture that has evolved in recent years (for an overview see Ojielo 2007).

What is special about the example from Ghana is the contribution of government agencies. They play an important role in the peace efforts: the members of the advisory council did not come together on their own, but were appointed by the regional minister; they are supported by the government's peace promotion officers; and different regional and district councils are coordinated by a national government unit. Change agents have been institutionalised throughout the government system of Ghana (see *Box 2* below for more details).

The Ghanaian example seems at odds with many other peacebuilding experiences where government actors are far more marginal. The reluctance other actors feel about engaging them is partially explained by the complicated and compromised role governments tend to play in intra-state conflict, where often the state has been captured by exclusionary elites, state power is abused, and moderate actors excluded. In any event, it is rare to find governments embracing change in the way seen in Ghana.

What can be learned from the Ghanaian example? How can it (and others like it) be described and understood? What are the necessary elements of such national frameworks? Can they be implemented in any country? How can they be supported? These questions are now being explored in the context of the emerging concept of peace infrastructure.

The idea of peace infrastructure is to develop mechanisms for cooperation among all relevant stakeholders, including the government, by promoting cooperative problem-solving and institutionalising a response mechanism to violent conflict (van Tongeren 2011a). The understanding that a dialogue process and its underlying cooperative structure are mutually enhancing is not new (e.g. Ropers 1995); the novel focus here is on the structure – the organisation, connection and interaction – of cooperative mechanisms. While other concepts emphasise synergistic collaboration between peacebuilding interventions, the focus here is on building the structural capacities of the conflict parties and stakeholders. Changing the "hearts and minds" of conflict parties is not enough: organisational and structural capacities are required to achieve conflict transformation.

In principle, peace infrastructure composed of diverse, interconnected organisations at different levels can give peace an address in a social landscape torn by violence. It may either act as a change agent itself, or provide the necessary space for such change agents.

At the outset, I should note that I regard peace infrastructure as a concept that helps us understand the domestic, internal efforts in a conflict or fragile context to create or build on existing mechanisms and organisations that engage in reducing violence and problem solving. The focus is less on the role of

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external assistance to support these peace infrastructures, although insights on capacity building and other means of (external) support are offered "between the lines" (and explicitly in *Box 5*).

The aim of this article is to investigate the promise and potential as well as the challenges of peace infrastructures. It will conceptualise peace infrastructure and highlight some open questions.

The following section defines the term, explores its conceptual background, and offers a taxonomy of its possible elements and forms. In the third section, the concept is discussed with a view to establishing its potential for managing, settling and transforming conflicts. The fourth section will, based on practical experiences, point to some challenges and open questions. The fifth section will conclude and suggest steps for developing the concept further.

2 What is Peace Infrastructure? Furthering the Conceptual Debate

If peace infrastructure gives peace an address, what does this place look like? It could be anything from a rugged shed housing a local peace council in a remote South American village, to the elegantly designed high-rise office of a national truth and reconciliation commission in the capital of an African country. Its organisations could include a ministry dealing with peace and reconciliation in Nepal, the office of a presidential advisor coordinating the peace process in the Philippines, or one of the many district peace committees in Kenya.

All these different organisations represent elements of peace infrastructure. They are parts of a "dynamic network of interdependent structures, mechanisms, resources, values, and skills which, through dialogue and consultation, contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in a society" (Kumar 2011, 385). While acknowledging the relevance of the *process* of peacebuilding in which the actors and organisations in a network engage, the focus in this description as well as in the concept under development here is on the *organisational* aspect of the network (see *Box 1*).[2]

This section offers a working definition, describes peace infrastructures along five key characteristics and then presents several examples as illustrations.

> **Box 1: The Emerging Concept of Peace Infrastructure**
> In recent years, several practitioners and organisations have developed different terms and concepts that concern the organisation and architecture of peacebuilding. While the terminology is not yet fully defined, the following differentiation emerges:
>
> "Peacebuilding infrastructure" refers to international actors as well as the domestic governmental (judicial, legislative and executive) and non-governmental structures and financial system (Dress 2005). The similar term "peacebuilding architecture" denotes a more focused approach to strategically assessing and designing solutions for violent conflict according to architectural principles (Reychler 2002).
>
> In contrast, the focus of "infrastructures for peace (I4P)" is on the organisational elements and linkages that form domestic "mechanisms for co-operation among all relevant stakeholders in

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2 "Organisation" in this text refers to groups of individuals that are connected by common purpose and rules for a division of labour that define structure, membership and boundaries of the organisation. "Institution" refers to the rules that guide behaviour and ensure social order in a society.

peacebuilding by promoting cooperative problem solving to conflicts and institutionalizing the response mechanisms to conflicts in order to transform them. National, district, and local peace councils are cornerstones of such an infrastructure". This emphasises institutionalisation within a government administration (van Tongeren 2011a, 400).[3]

The similar concept of "peace support structures" highlights the ownership by all conflict parties and includes elements established by conflict parties other than the government, including non-state armed groups. Building on experiences in accompanying Track 1 peace negotiations (Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies 2008; Hopp 2010; Wils et al. 2006), this concept concentrates on individual organisations and capacity building and support for the conflict parties involved in a peace or dialogue process (Berghof Peace Support 2010).

Discussing elements of the I4P concept and Berghof's concept of peace support structures and developing them further, this article uses the term "peace infrastructures" to embrace both discussions without imposing its own interpretation on others.

Bringing different discussions together, I propose the following working definition:

Peace infrastructures consist of diverse domestic, inter-connected forms of engagement between conflict parties and other stakeholders. Their organisational elements can be established at all stages of peace and dialogue processes, at all levels of society, and with varying degrees of inclusion. The objective of peace infrastructure is to assist the parties (e.g. through capacity building or advice), the process (e.g. through mediation between the conflict parties or facilitation of public participation), or the implementation of process results (e.g. through monitoring and coordination of agreement implementation).

2.1 Key Characteristics of Peace Infrastructure

Peace infrastructure can take various organisational shapes and names depending on the cultural and conflict context. The working definition entails five characteristics that help to describe and categorise them in a less abstract way:

1. A key characteristic of peace infrastructures is their *domestic foundation*. The focus is on domestic capacities, not those of the international community and their peacebuilding architecture (as with, for example, the UN Peacebuilding Commission and Fund or the efforts of establishing an African regional peacebuilding architecture). Whereas internationally backed ceasefire monitoring or peacekeeping missions – or perhaps even international Groups of Friends – can be supportive elements of peace infrastructures, they cannot represent the only element.[4]

2. Peace infrastructures are established during *any stage of peace and dialogue processes*, from the height of a violent conflict to the implementation and monitoring of peace agreements. They could extend far into the post-conflict period if incorporating transitional justice and reconciliation mechanisms: truth and reconciliation commissions are a prominent example, but places of memory like memorials and peace museums could also be components of peace infrastructures if they contribute towards creating a common future.

Figure 1 provides an overview of possible organisational forms of peace infrastructure along the stages of conflict escalation. Any of them may be found in combination and would not exclude others.

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3 Van Tongeren (2011a, 2011b) offers an overview of decisive moments in the development of the concept. He highlights how the concept found its way into official documents in the years 2002 to 2006.

4 The concept is also not about networking among external peacebuilding actors, as for example outlined in Robert Ricigliano's networks of effective action (2003). While working groups and other arrangements of these actors will entertain close connections with a peace infrastructure, they do not constitute one on their own.
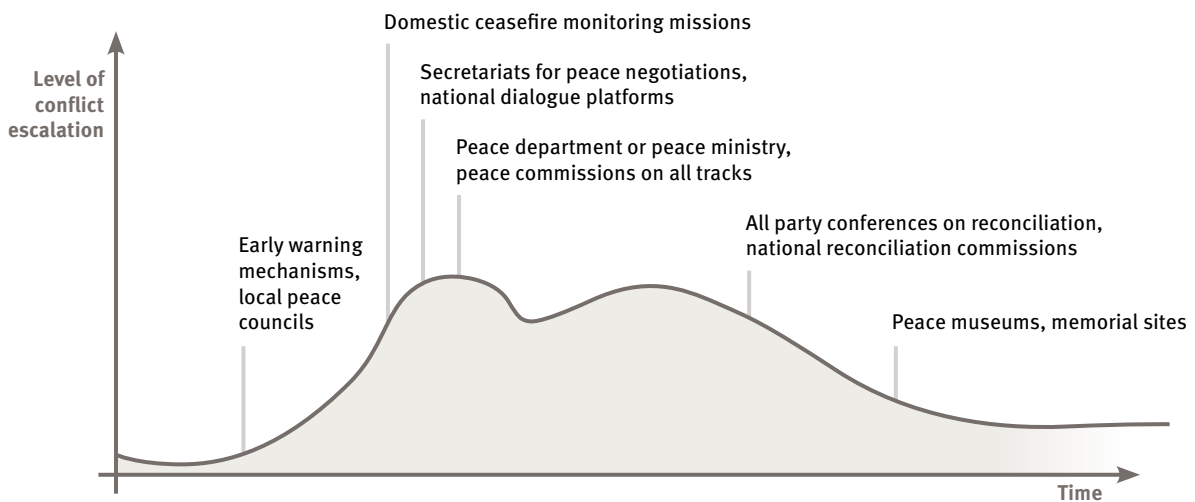
Figure 1: Organisational elements of peace infrastructure along conflict stages.

3.   Elements of peace infrastructure are found *at all levels and peacebuilding* tracks and show various forms of integration:

≡   Vertical integration between different tracks: engaging different societal levels (top, middle, grassroots) and administrative units at local, district, regional and national levels.

≡   Horizontal integration within the tracks: by bringing together all local peace council activities, or by establishing a regional platform for consultation, collaboration and coordination among stakeholders.

≡   Consolidation at national government level: providing a legal foundation and appropriate budget for peace infrastructure; establishing a government department or ministry dedicated to peacebuilding and providing guiding policy.

This characteristic highlights the structured, systematic character of peace infrastructures and distinguishes them from the "naturally evolved" peace constituencies found at different levels in a society (Lederach 1996). This difference is also expressed through a high level of government involvement and intra-governmental coherence that emphasises the commitment of the government to support peace efforts.

Individual elements alone – for example local peace councils – do not constitute peace infrastructure. Successful examples from Nepal, Ghana or Kenya bring various elements together, albeit in different ways.

4.   Peace infrastructures vary in terms of *inclusion*. Two forms of inclusion can be distinguished: those stakeholders who establish peace infrastructure and decide its mandate and functions will *govern* and "own" its elements; others might be invited to *participate* in activities but without a governing role.

Most peace infrastructures include at least one of the conflict parties.[5] Ideally, more than one would be involved in establishing the peace infrastructure; the peace process in South Africa and many other places suggest that inclusivity is a precondition for effectiveness (Kelman 1999; OECD 2007). This will often mean including non-state armed groups. Strengthening their capacities is often a requirement for their participation in peace processes and contributes to reducing asymmetry in negotiations.

Various combinations of inclusion and participation can be conceived. These can range from "conflict parties only" (often found in the context of peace negotiations – peace secretariats or working committees), to "government-civil society" (as in the case of consultative platforms), to "government-all stakeholders" (as found in peace departments or ministries), to "all-party forums" (like local peace councils or truth and

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5   This aspect distinguishes peace infrastructure from anything established by civil society alone. The latter could be part of a peace infrastructure but do not suffice for infrastructure establishment.

reconciliation conferences).[6] While the latter hardly achieve all-inclusiveness, they are at least platforms for multiple stakeholders, not just those engaged in violent conflict.

5. The different elements of peace infrastructure can serve various *objectives and functions*, which include:
≡ Capacity building, advisory services and (internal) consultation for the conflict parties;
≡ Communication, facilitation and mediation between conflict parties and with other stakeholders;
≡ Implementation, monitoring and coordination of activities agreed by the conflict parties and other stakeholders.

The three groups of functions represent increasing levels of collaboration between the conflict parties. Whereas the first function does not involve collaboration between the parties, the second one does: here, organisations often serve as a go-between or a bridge-builder. The third group of functions shows the highest level of collaboration, when conflict parties work together to implement the results of peace agreements or monitor them jointly.

2.2 Organisational Elements and Examples of Peace Infrastructures

Any peace infrastructure involves various organisational elements depending on these five characteristics. The range of possible organisational elements can be conceived according to the level of collaboration between the conflict parties and stakeholders on the one hand, and the level of inclusive participation at the other. Figure 2 presents an overview.

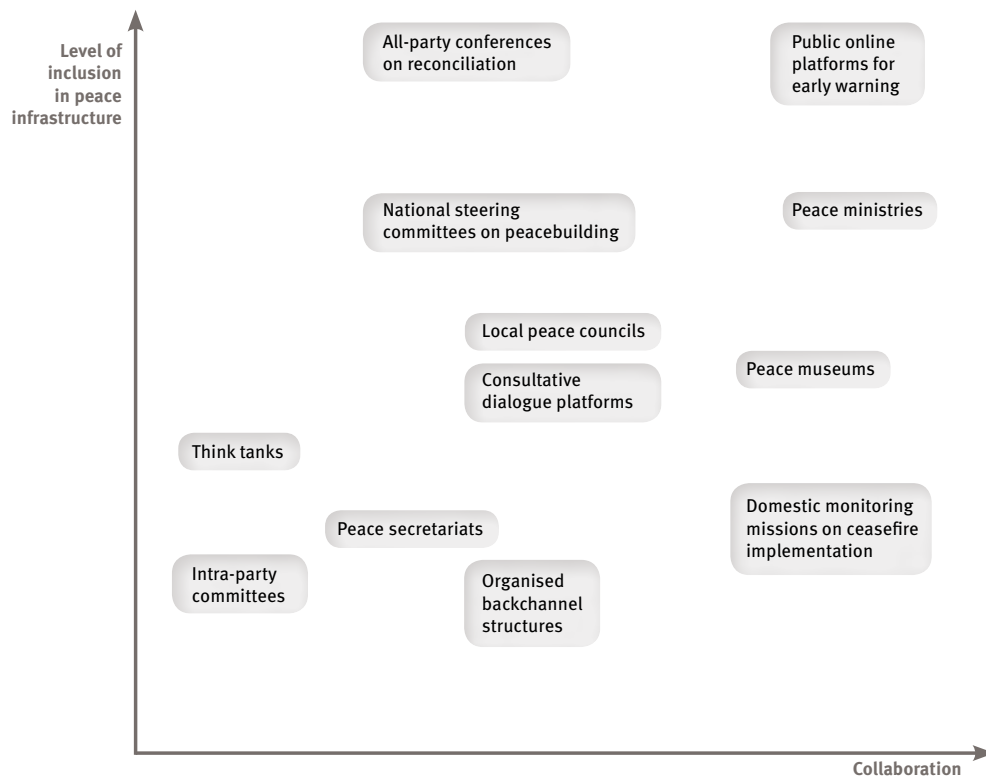Figure 2: Organisational elements of peace infrastructure along axes of inclusion and collaboration.

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6 Not all parts of a peace infrastructure will necessarily be accessible to the public; some will involve a certain level of confidentiality.

The horizontal axis of the graph represents levels of collaboration between the conflict parties. Elements with low levels of collaboration are to the left: examples include intra-party committees set up to prepare and discuss negotiations or think tanks closely affiliated with one side of the conflict. Elements with high levels of collaboration are further to the right, such as peace ministries tasked with implementing a peace agreement (where staff recruitment and governance of the ministry contributes to collaboration).

The level of inclusiveness is represented on the vertical axis and is independent of the level of collaboration. Thus, a very collaborative organisation such as a joint monitoring mission between formerly warring parties might be relatively exclusive, whereas a public online platform for early warning can invite the widest public participation.

The levels of collaboration do not correspond with the stages of conflict in a linear sense. Collaborative peace infrastructures between different non-state stakeholders and the government can be active even in the early phase of latent conflict, for example in early warning mechanisms. Several of the African peace infrastructures established in the context of elections include functions of monitoring violence and early warning systems (for example in Ghana, Ojielo 2007).

While the figure serves to show the scope of different organisational forms, it is of course a simplification. Organisations will evolve over time and under the influence of different agendas. This can happen when, for example, the government becomes involved in a local civil society peace platform and contributes to its formalisation, its diffusion to other districts, and eventually to the development of a national policy: this was the case with the district development and peace committees in Kenya inspired by a women's initiative in the Wajir district that had been built through long-standing civil society networking efforts (Jenner/Abdi 2000; Kut 2007; GPPAC 2010).

This example of bottom-up peace infrastructure is similar to the earlier example of the national peace architecture for peace in Ghana (see *Box 2*).

Box 2: The Bottom-Up National Infrastructure for Peace in Ghana

Despite appearing comparatively peaceful in regional terms, Ghana has seen many kinds of violent inter-ethnic conflict at the community level (Bombande 2007). The first avenues for peacebuilding and inter-ethnic reconciliation were opened by civil society initiatives in the 1990s, but fresh violence in 2003 led to a more concerted peacebuilding effort by the government. Building on the experiences of an all-party advisory council in the crisis-prone Northern Region – a council that intervened in local conflicts to prevent violence and find dispute resolution mechanisms suitable to the cultural context – a national infrastructure was established under the lead of the Ministry of Interior with assistance of UNDP (Ojielo 2007).

The infrastructure comprises: peace advisory councils on the district, regional and national level; government-affiliated peace promotion officers on the regional and district level; and a Peacebuilding Support Unit within the Ministry of Interior (Ministry of the Interior 2006). There are varying levels of implementation across Ghana's 10 regions and 138 districts, but observers note that it contributed significantly to the containment of tension and prevention of violence during the 2008 national elections. The National Peace Council helped mediate the political transition (Kumar 2011). The example of Ghana has inspired other countries like Togo to consider similar arrangements.

In other cases, peace infrastructure builds on commitment at the central government level and thus can be considered top-down. Examples are the peace infrastructures in Central American countries which are based on the regional Esquipulas Process in the 1980s (*Box 3*), and the peace infrastructure that serves to implement Nepal's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (*Box 4*).

Box 3: Diverse Peace Infrastructures Based on the Esquipulas Process in Central America

To encourage national reconciliation processes in Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador and to help stabilise the region without US armed intervention, a group of Central American heads of state started a regional mediation process in the 1980s. While the original effort eventually failed, it helped to lay the foundation for later peace agreements and each country subsequently developed a national peace infrastructure adapted to their own situation. In all cases, this included a national consultation process involving the government, armed groups and the civil society.

The process, although built "from the top down to the people" and embedded in strong regional and UN involvement, went beyond negotiations between the conflict parties only and integrated consensus building on the grassroots level. As illustrated in the case of Nicaragua (Wehr/Lederach 1991), so-called "insider partials" as well as external mediators contributed to this process and helped build trust.

Each of the countries followed their own protracted process towards a peace agreement, or several agreements. In Nicaragua, separate agreements for the different conflicts were negotiated and supported by separate structures including local and regional peace commissions (for an overview see Odendaal 2010). In Guatemala, a number of structures were installed at the national level to support the negotiations, monitor implementation and coordinate civil society participation. Some complemented each other and some did not. The government appointed its own structures for the negotiations; a parallel Civil Society Assembly was established to allow the public to participate in the peace process, although it was criticised in terms of the undue influence of the business sector (Armon et al. 1997; Sarti/Schünemann 2011).

Box 4: Central Government Ministry as Cornerstone of the Peace Infrastructure in Nepal

The peace infrastructure in Nepal was established with the purpose of supporting the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006 after years of armed conflict between the government and an armed insurgency led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). The government's peace efforts centre on the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction that emerged out of the government peace secretariat after the peace agreement was reached. The ministry carries broad functions in monitoring and implementing the peace accord and is expected to support a wide range of elements, including local peace committees with representatives from all societal stakeholders, a peace fund, a truth and reconciliation commission, and a commission to investigate disappearances (Ministry for Peace and Reconstruction of the Government of Nepal, n.d.).

The infrastructure reflects the government's commitment to a comprehensive peace process that would not end with a peace agreement. The local peace councils were established to link the Track 1 peace process systematically to the grassroots level (Odendaal/Olivier 2008). However, centralisation and domination by political elites limit inclusion and responsiveness to local concerns (Dahal/Chandra 2008). Civil society plays a key role in engaging the government as a partner and in monitoring the conflict parties' commitment to the peace accord (Thapa 2007).

Moreover, the infrastructure shows the weaknesses of an artificial design that did not grow out of the local political cultural context. Some of the elements of the infrastructure have not been established yet and, as Ram Bhandari notes, the concept for the local peace infrastructure was "never discussed with local actors, but was designed from the top down, based on political negotiation and donors' recommendations" (Bhandari 2011, 15).

The common feature of these very different peace infrastructures, bottom-up or top-down, is that they were established, developed and maintained with the intention of furthering the peace and dialogue process. Although some originate from specific community experiments, peace infrastructures are more than the organisations that evolve from political processes in a given conflict situation. They consist of a demarcated set of organisations: a designated subsystem for peace within the overall conflict system. This delineation

appears necessary. If everything is part of peace infrastructure, the concept becomes too holistic and loses traction.

The discussion so far has put forth a working definition; it has shown that peace infrastructures can take many different shapes and can change over the course of time. In their ideal form, they represent inclusive and sustained efforts of the conflict parties and other relevant stakeholders at preventing and transforming conflict, building peace, and forging strong linkages between peacebuilding tracks; and finally they imply an empowering, but not overpowering, commitment from the government. According to this vision, they have the potential to strengthen a given peace process by giving it an organisational structure. The following section will discuss this potential in relation to three distinct areas.

3   The Potential of Peace Infrastructures

Peace infrastructures could be conceived as contributing to peacebuilding in three ways:

1.   *Dealing with violence* through conflict management, violence containment or de-escalation;
2.   *Dealing with the process of conflict settlement*, for example through negotiations and dialogue; and
3.   *Dealing with the structural causes and the need for systemic transformation*.

The three areas often overlap, but for conceptual purposes the distinction is maintained here.

3.1   Managing Conflict and De-Escalating Violence

Early warning mechanisms and mechanisms to monitor and implement ceasefires and peace agreements are examples of peace infrastructure that can potentially help to manage conflict and de-escalate violence. Other kinds of peace infrastructure can potentially increase cooperative behaviour at the community level, for example in the context of elections. Organisations working at Track 3, for instance, can help resolve community conflict at an early stage with the help of locally trusted mediators; they can also alert actors at other societal levels in order to increase security in a local environment, coordinate intervention with others, or liaise with neighbouring district level bodies (IRIN 2010b).

With a view to fragile situations, peace infrastructure could potentially help increase government legitimacy, enhancing their accountability and building public trust and confidence in state institutions. By being part of the peace infrastructure, government bodies and their staff can engage in joint problem-solving efforts and less hierarchical, asymmetric relations than in their usual bureaucratic environment. Recognising these efforts and their potential contribution to security as well as development, the latest World Development Report features examples of infrastructures for conflict prevention and risk reduction (World Bank 2011, 188-189).

3.2   Conflict Settlement and Dialogue

Peace infrastructures reflect a growing domestic ownership of peacebuilding and a commitment to building internal capacities for conflict settlement (Kumar 2011). While external support in form of mediation is often indispensable, domestic peace infrastructure can be complementary. Peace infrastructures are of particular relevance in situations without a sufficient internal political consensus for external mediation, or where violence is too dispersed to be dealt with through centralised external mediation.

In this capacity, peace infrastructure provides a space or a forum for dialogue along different tracks. In situations of political transition and regime change, domestic institutions might convene national dialogue or negotiations about governing arrangements. An example is found in Lebanon where a

presidential initiative to create national unity and work towards reconciliation is combined with providing expertise to stakeholders, combining facilitation and capacity building (Common Space Initiative 2011). When accompanying external Track 1 mediation, peace infrastructure can help to broaden the foundation for negotiations by involving the other tracks, like the One-Text-Initiative in Sri Lanka that works on Track 1.5 and reaches out to the grassroots level by connecting to local people's forums (Siebert 2007; Timberman 2007).

In certain situations, structures within peace infrastructures can also perform the function of facilitation if serving as, or assisting, "insider mediators" (Mason 2009). Being close to the conflict parties, these mostly individual actors engage in mediation efforts, often adding credibility and trust to the process as they are more invested in it and more knowledgeable about it than outsiders. Supported by the peace infrastructure, they can establish a "platform for change", which in Paul van Tongeren's words is "a functional network that would span across the divisions and levels of society and that would ensure optimum collaboration between the main stakeholders" (van Tongeren 2011a, 401 referring to Lederach 2005).

With a view to the content of negotiations and dialogue, community-based peace infrastructures can provide Track 1 actors with insights into the situation on the ground and help shape proposals. This could add a collaborative, integrative perspective – rooted characteristically in joint problem-solving approaches – to the negotiations and counterbalance the usual orientation towards bargaining strategies. Think tanks and other organisations that offer policy advice at Track 1 or 2 provide other ways to strengthen negotiation and dialogue capacities. Examples include the Palestine Negotiation Support Unit, the peace secretariats of the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, the Nepal Transition to Peace Initiative, and the Common Space Initiative in Lebanon (Walton 2011).

3.3 Engaging in Conflict Transformation

By building the capacities of conflict parties and encouraging their active involvement in peace processes and other forms of dialogue, peace infrastructures can be said to play a role in conflict transformation. Ideally, they bring together stakeholders and their constituencies, change agents and other parts of society and provide the space for joint problem-solving, and they can help create, consolidate and maintain a network of transformative actors. As Chetan Kumar (2011) points out, domestic infrastructures might be more important than external mediation in many kinds of conflict situation, including in continuous, transformative or even revolutionary processes such as those witnessed in the "Arab Spring".

Local peace commissions present one of the few examples of domestic conflict transformation organisations rigorously discussed in existing literature.[7] These comprise any "inclusive forum operating at sub-national level" that works with methods of "dialogue, promotion of mutual understanding and trustbuilding, as well as inclusive, constructive problem-solving and joint action to prevent violence" (Odendaal 2010, 3).

The literature on conflict transformation identifies a range of possible contributions to the transformation of conflict actors, issues, and structures (Miall 2004). Building trust and improving relationships between the conflict parties lead to potential actor transformation as well as personal transformation. Knowledge transfer and capacity building potentially lead to issue transformation if they help find compromise, or to actor transformation if it contributes to a change of goals of a conflict party. Institution building can lead to structure transformation when affecting the asymmetric power balance between the conflict parties. The example of Ghana, where institution building, reconciliation efforts and

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7 The analysis of conflict transformation actors mostly centres on civil society actors and non-governmental organisations. The role of the conflict parties is seen as either that of spoilers or that of insider-partials and change agents within the parties. These, however, are mostly described as individuals or groups of persons (e.g. Mason 2009). The role of organisations is hardly discussed; one exception at the grassroots and middle level of society are peace commissions (Lederach 1997, 2001), or, as other authors prefer, local peace forums (Odendaal 2010).

working towards a culture of dialogue come together, indicates several avenues of conflict transformation (Ojielo 2007).

This brief discussion has established the possible contributions of peace infrastructure in the areas of conflict management, conflict settlement and conflict transformation. While this potential – derived from the literature and individual cases – appears promising and is attracting interest among donors and third-party actors, more comparative evidence needs to be collected to consolidate the conceptual promise. To this end, the following section presents challenges and open questions.

4 Challenges and Open Questions

Literature on peace infrastructures and their role and impact in peace and dialogue processes is still scarce. Existing reviews are mostly limited to evaluations of external support to the peace infrastructure; those concerning Track 1 (and 1.5) often remain confidential. References in academic literature usually serve illustrative purposes and are anecdotal in character. Very few documents offer detailed accounts of the activities or the organisational design of peace infrastructures.

One noteworthy exception is the case of the peace infrastructure in South Africa. A cornerstone of the National Peace Accord, it is relatively well documented within the vast literature on the South African process (for example Gastrow 1995; Marks 2000; Spies 2002). Building on these experiences, Andries Odendaal is developing a growing body of comparative work on local peace forums and committees, elements of peace infrastructure at the local level (2011, 2010, 2006; Odendaal/Olivier 2008). Finally, the Berghof Foundation has collected material on 20 cases of Track 1 peace infrastructure organisations.

The remainder of this section, based on a review of this literature, raises five general themes. It offers "food for thought" and discussion rather than a comprehensive overview; further examination is needed.

4.1 Political Will and the Ambivalent Role of Government Bodies

The foremost theme in literature concerning peace infrastructures concerns the ambivalent role of government bodies and the problem of dependence on the political will of the top-level leaders. Without an official mandate from the government, a community-based consultation process will remain a civil society effort that does not filter up to the national level. Without the political commitment of the conflict parties, Track 1 (or 1.5) dialogue processes may remain a mere facade or serve to contain domestic or international criticism (Hopp-Nishanka forthcoming).

In his review of local peace forums in 12 different contexts, Odendaal (2010) shows that their effectiveness strongly depends on national-level commitment. Organisations at the local level cannot override national political imperatives and so remain vulnerable to "spoilers". To deal with these challenges, they require a national-level mandate that makes them, paradoxically, even more vulnerable to political manipulation.

Similar impressions can be garnered from the Sri Lankan people's forums, which are active at the community level but seem not to have any wider impact owing to the lack of government involvement or effective linkages to other tracks (Timberman 2007). Government involvement, however, often leads to its domination of participatory processes and politicisation (Brett et al. 2007; Rainford/Satkunanathan 2009).

Political manipulation and instrumentalisation may occur whenever one stakeholder has the power to dominate the design and establishment of infrastructure. Moreover, transformative actors within existing infrastructure elements might not have sufficient space to contribute to the necessary change process. As Chetan Kumar notes, "where public or civic space is largely contested or polarized, widely trusted "change

agents" or internal mediators may either be not available, or may not have the political space in which to facilitate the right conversations or behavioral change" (Kumar 2011, 387).

Whether peace infrastructures remain effective appears to depend significantly on their "dependence" or level of politicisation. At worst, the peace infrastructure does not perform its original functions and becomes an empty shell, or is hijacked by those seeking to manipulate public opinion or international views or gain individual power. The key question is how such infrastructures can move from being "mirrors" reflecting the destructive dynamics of the conflict towards being "incubators" that provide a safe space for sowing the seeds of transformative change.

Involving a wider set of societal actors in establishing and steering infrastructures might be one option; another might be found in principles that guide, for example, the establishment of political think tanks which are often granted a certain level of intellectual independence from their leadership in order to do their job. Peace infrastructure may also need to have its own checks and balances through diverse actors and organisational forms that complement and correct each other.

4.2 Inclusiveness and Legitimacy

Observations from various contexts show that, to be effective, peace infrastructure needs to be seen as legitimate by all relevant stakeholders. To this end, inclusiveness is crucial – but unfortunately it is often unattainable, in particular in the early stages of peace processes. While infrastructure at the local level, for example, might be able to mobilise communities to work together or increase the constructive commitment of influential stakeholders – businesspersons for example – they rarely manage to integrate opposition hardliners.

Some claim that peace infrastructure may sometimes need to be built without difficult stakeholders, for example where so-called "spoilers" have the power to impede or paralyse their functioning and where the organisations have high visibility and symbolic power. One case might be a complicated decision-making process on participation in initiatives to memorialise human rights violations and the victims of violent conflict (Brett et al. 2007). Excluding relevant stakeholders in such a process or emerging organisation, however, usually hampers reconciliation and might contribute to future conflict escalation.

The challenge of inclusiveness and legitimacy is not merely a matter of politics. On a technical level, it is also reflected in the question of who is represented in the governance bodies of peace infrastructure. Studies of national-level organisations as well as of local peace commissions from such diverse conflict contexts as South Africa, Kenya, Nepal, Sri Lanka or Macedonia show that inclusive staff composition is important (Hopp-Nishanka forthcoming; Odendaal/Olivier 2008). Multi-partisan staff within organisations provides an additional challenge for those dealing with conflict.

Finally, the quest for inclusiveness also concerns the integration of marginalised perspectives, such as those of regional or ethnic minorities, poor and low caste communities, women and children, and victims of human rights violations. In the case of recently established memorial sites in Peru, some of the decision-making processes do not sufficiently involve the relevant local stakeholders and concentrate too much on elites (Weissert 2012). Nepal's local peace committees, although inclusive in theory and designed to "address the concerns and complaints of local stakeholders for democratic values, beliefs and a sustainable peace", have been criticised by locals as being dominated by political party ambitions and as not considering the local population's needs (Bhandari 2011).

4.3 Linkages Between Tracks and Levels

Most peace infrastructure requires connections between and within societal levels (vertical and horizontal links) in order to become effective. Multi-track engagement in peace infrastructures is often translated into the spanning of all administrative units from the national level to local communities. The peace process in South Africa, for example, saw a coordinated effort to involve all levels, with distinct roles for each track.

Here, as well as in Nicaragua, regional commissions helped inform national peace efforts and make them more effective. They did this by bringing in stakeholders with regional importance and by communicating diverse local and regional needs and translating them into national priorities (Marks 2000; Odendaal 2010). As with Track 2 engagement, regional capacities have an important role to play in terms of information, coordination and capacity building (Ojielo 2007).

In reality, though, the sub-national, regional level is often the weak link between local and national organisations. The focus is usually either on local, grassroots efforts or on the national level, with regional activities regarded as mere transmission gears, neglected and under-funded. In order to play a transformative role, the regional level needs strengthening. To this end, some peace infrastructures rely on a national "help desk" of sorts: a dedicated support unit, often installed within a government body, is established as the entry point for external capacity building and coordinates the involvement of peace infrastructure with other government agencies. In Ghana, this support has been organised by the Ministry of Interior which appointed regional Peace Promotion Officers based on nominations from the regional governments. The ministry provides further support through a Peacebuilding Support Unit that coordinates with other government agencies (Ojielo 2007; Odendaal 2011).

Such support, however, only fosters integration if there is willingness to engage all parts of society. Peace infrastructures often integrate different levels and tracks on paper only. In practice, there may be severe capacity and coordination constraints that limit the linkage to a one-way flow of information. Sometimes even this one-way communication is not a priority in political cultures dominated by elites. In such a situation, a national help desk alone will not address the underlying problems.[8]

4.4 Capacity Building, Leadership and Integrity

Setting aside the problem of how to enhance capacities if the will to use them is lacking, the question of how best to support emerging peace infrastructures remains. While adequate skills (technical skills, management and topical expertise) are necessary, organisations within the peace infrastructure require more than simply capacity building (see *Box 5*).

Box 5: Options for Assisting Peace Infrastructure

Peace infrastructure is attractive for donor and other third-party assistance since it offers the opportunity to strengthen domestic capacities for peacebuilding. Assistance can be provided in many ways: funding, capacity building, and support for institution building can make meaningful contributions. Three recommendations emerge from the literature and practical experiences:

1. Assistance requires commitment from relevant stakeholders and ownership by beneficiaries

The call to respect stakeholders' ownership of change processes is often made, but experience shows it is difficult to achieve. Who needs to be involved at which stage when establishing peace infrastructure? How can hardliners and potential spoilers be dealt with? How to address marginalisation and exclusion rooted in the political culture that might lead to the neglect of beneficiaries at the local level? These questions should be addressed not only among donors, but also with the main stakeholders and the government.

2. Capacity building should include strategic planning and organisational development needs

An obvious area of support for peace infrastructure organisations is capacity building on content-related issues. Negotiation and mediation training or problem-solving workshops will be useful, but the organisations also often need management, planning and communication skills. Further, the transformative process that the organisations are meant to encourage often needs to start within the

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8   Parlevliet (2011) with a view to the state's role in human rights and conflict transformation, argues for a differentiation of state capacity in ability (concerning technical skills) and willingness (concerning values and culture).

infrastructure itself: accompanied organisational development processes may be necessary in many peace infrastructures in order to come to terms with the effects of the violent conflict on their own organisation and its staff, as experiences in Sri Lanka show (Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies 2008; Hopp-Nishanka forthcoming).

3. Support needs to recognise its unintended consequences and safeguard the legitimacy of peace infrastructures

Problems with legitimacy may arise if external supporters take the lead in ushering their internal counterparts towards desired solutions. Not only might the peace infrastructure lack ownership, but the assistance might also cause harm if appearing biased towards one of the conflict parties. International (often western) approaches to establishing peace infrastructure might result in importing particular cultures of peace, memory and reconciliation into a context in which they are foreign. And very practical issues might arise as well: the Palestine Negotiation Support Unit faced resentment when local stakeholders found the facilities and salaries of the organisation's senior staff inappropriate (Milne/Black 2011).

Beyond capacity building, two other organisational ingredients appear necessary for establishing effective peace infrastructures: leadership and institutional integrity.

The personalities of political leaders and senior staff matter crucially. Illustrative examples include the Central American heads of state (Oscar Arias in particular) who shaped the Esquipulas process, and the heads of the peace secretariats in the 2002 Sri Lankan peace process. Individual leaders form and inform the infrastructures that they head (Hopp-Nishanka forthcoming). The question is how can the "right people" be brought into the job, and who can identify them?

Very often, the nominations for leading administrative staff in political processes are politicised and follow agendas other than that of driving peaceful change processes. Internationally-assisted leadership development programmes like the ones in Burundi and Timor Leste may be an effective way to engage and indeed transform those leaders (Odendaal 2011).

Another option concerns the recruitment of "insider mediators" as leaders. If they bring with them a personal commitment to peacebuilding, international experience, good connections with civil society and a reputation for neutrality or multi-partiality, they could be the right choice for the job. On the other hand, it could be argued that they should stay on the outside in order to maintain their independence and serve the infrastructure as facilitators.

Personal leadership alone is not sufficient. Research on the role of leadership in change and development processes points to the need for "institutional integrity". Such institutional integrity occurs when "the institutional arrangements sustain the integrity of its personnel and its processes and – crucially – when the personnel and processes sustain the institutions because they perceive it to be both legitimate and effective" (Leftwich 2009). In other words, in order to be effective, leaders with transformative skills require a demand for their contribution in an organisational landscape often informed by violence, abuse of power, and patronage.

4.5 Social Media

The final aspect to be discussed here concerns the use of social media for peace infrastructures and its potential to overcome some of the limitations and challenges discussed above. Social media technologies appear to be widely used in many of the recently developed peace infrastructures around the world, although their use has barely begun to be discussed.

Information technology is often applied in preventing and responding to crises. Government agencies and civil society, for example, collaborate and collect early warning data and provide crisis mapping through crowd sourcing (McConnell/Tsuma 2011). NGOs and local peace councils send violence alerts via

Twitter. This mobilises local information and helps prepare crisis interventions, as the relatively peaceful conduct of the national referendum in Kenya in 2010 illustrates (IRIN 2010a). These activities improve conflict analysis and monitoring systems but in addition add a new dimension of public participation and ownership to the society's response to violence.

Some organisations use the Internet in order to share information, viewpoints and invite dialogue. For example, peace secretariats increase outreach and public participation via Facebook; Track 1.5 initiatives facilitate web-based dialogue among stakeholders; and some organisations communicate within interest-based communities through Internet platforms and discussion groups.

While examples around the world are many, their effectiveness is not always clear (Stauffacher et al. 2011; Timberman 2007). Does the use of social media really help increase public participation and overcome marginalisation? Does it create new lines of exclusion? In what ways are contributions from innumerable individual commentators processed, what gets lost, and who decides?

Sometimes the adoption of these technologies might simply follow a common trend regardless of their appropriateness or the requirements for their maintenance. Understanding the effectiveness of different social media tools is crucial.

It is also important to understand the wider picture. How will the global trends towards web-based, virtual interaction affect traditional, physical organisations and face-to-face interaction in dialogue and problem solving? Will Lederach's original "house of peace", which he described in his thoughts on peace infrastructure (1997), also find a virtual address, and what will the "house of peace 2.0" look like?

A core theme of the five areas outlined above is power and the willingness to engage in transformative processes. While peace infrastructures seem to offer great potential, they are also at risk of being manipulated and face substantial limitations when transformative processes are blocked by those who monopolise power. If these blocking actors hold government offices, infrastructures with strong administrative elements appear particularly vulnerable and weak. The same holds true if non-state actors who oppose peaceful change dominate infrastructures. In the worst case, this can turn peace infrastructures into their opposite and contribute to further marginalisation and violence.

This assessment, however, should not discourage an open debate. There is a potential for peace infrastructures to serve as an address for peace, but they have to be built and maintained carefully. If they are, their contribution can be twofold: their organisational elements can serve as agents of change; and as infrastructure they can provide enabling conditions for other change agents.

5 Instead of a Conclusion: An Invitation for Further Discussion

In this article, I have attempted to delineate a nascent concept. While some might argue that different kinds of peace infrastructure and their very diverse organisational manifestations are not homologous, I have outlined a set of common features and challenges that are worth exploring further.

At the same time, I would reiterate that peace infrastructures do not include all organisations involved in conflict management, settlement and transformation that can be found in a given organisational landscape or conflict setting. There will be diverse sets of international and domestic actors, faith-based organisations, academic institutions, social movements, NGOs and other civil society organisations – all with an important role to play – but they do not necessarily need to be part of the peace infrastructure. On the contrary, some of them will have to stay outside of it in order to play a more critical role, serving as a

corrective and warning voice when necessary. As discussed above, some peace infrastructures might find it difficult to engage opposing groups in peace processes, especially if some of the opposition may come from those very actors that serve as their principals and control them. In such instances, the wider landscape of peace actors will be indispensible for helping it to work.

Establishing a peace infrastructure is of course a long-term political process; Odendaal (2011, 26) notes that "the process to establish an infrastructure in Ghana took 8 years (2003–2011) and is not yet complete. The establishment of such infrastructures should not take place on the basis of hasty, superficial considerations. Its specific design should follow the contours of the country and not that of a template developed elsewhere. Joint political ownership is critical. It is, in other words, a process that must be home-grown, but that will benefit from learning from experiences elsewhere".

The dilemmas, questions and challenges raised here point to a vast agenda for such "learning from experiences elsewhere". This learning should consider the situational context as well as the functional and organisational characteristics of the peace infrastructure.

A starting point is the analysis of peace infrastructures along the five characteristics set out here (domestic foundation, timing, organisational integration, inclusion, and functions). Of particular interest would be a differentiation along functional purposes (capacity building and consultation, communication and facilitation, implementation and monitoring) and along organisational aspects (e.g. governance, levels of inclusiveness and stakeholder participation, composition of staff). This would lead to a deeper understanding of specific infrastructure elements such as truth commissions, memorial sites or domestic monitoring missions and in turn be helpful in further exploring differences and commonalities among different infrastructure elements.

Also required is a differentiation of the situational contexts of peace infrastructure: what are its contributions in contexts as varied as tensions and violence in election processes, peace negotiations, revolutionary moments, or times of reconciliation and healing? How does it operate in the context of fragile states and other less conducive environments?

Our understanding of peace infrastructures and their value for peacebuilding and conflict transformation is still at a very early stage. Considering the experiences and their potential, it is worthwhile taking a closer look.

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Missing Links

Peace Infrastructures and Peace Formation

Oliver P. Richmond

Content

1   Introduction

Local peace infrastructures have recently come to the attention of scholars. They are a phenomena emerging across the world. They may be embedded in existing peace processes, involving governments, donors, and often the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). They have often been missed because they are normally "local" (meaning context-based), often partly informal, and yet they have also been credited with significant achievements. Amid the on-going crisis of the liberal peace and neoliberal statebuilding, they offer some hope for the development of local legitimacy because they appear to rest on local socio-political processes (Richmond 2005). They bring together different groups and promote "change agents" and networks of actors interested in peace and conflict transformation (Hopp-Nishanka 2012; Odendaal 2010; van Tongeren 2011). Though some scholars working on civil society, development, or indigenous matters have long sensed these possibilities (Azar 1990; Lederach 1998), they have never before been so clearly elucidated.

Hopp-Nishanka's lead article offers a balanced outline and discussion of these "new" structures and processes. They are part of an inevitable turn to the "local" (Chambers 1983, 84) in terms of the peace agencies that exist in society and across conflict boundaries. This means putting local actors, processes, needs, identities, and institutions first, while recognising their relationships with state, regional and international actors and processes. It also requires mitigating local–international relations so that they are not determined by external power rather than local peace requirements. Nevertheless, this shift carries a series of potential pitfalls, including the instrumentalisation of local actors and processes, the selective use of a rational, legalistic, and bureaucratic language about peace, the separation of society and state, and a hierarchy that places the international at the pinnacle and the local as its subject. But, as I argue below, progress is being made by scholars and internationals in recognising the underlying processes of "peace formation", their role in the state and international peace architecture, and in unpacking the local–international binary upon which material inequality and hierarchies still rest.

2   Whom and What are Peace Infrastructures for?

The attraction of local infrastructures for international actors is that they appear to increase the local legitimacy of the state. Many local infrastructures for peace begin within society, in informal institutions and spaces, because the state has been captured by predatory elites (Hopp-Nishanka, in this volume, 2). Yet they are also often driven by state or international actors and envisaged in the formal terrain of political institutions. There is also a sense that they need to be strongly connected with local social, political, and culture peace movements and processes, which I call the dynamics of "peace formation" (Richmond, forthcoming).[1] In other words, there is a tension between whether the technical structures of peace infrastructure rest primarily on locally determined peace formation processes emerging from society or on internationally directed and co-opted formal infrastructure (Odendaal 2010). Yet there is a wide agreement that local ownership (Donais 2009; Richmond 2012) and legitimacy are required in the context of local

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[1]   This term is differentiated from concepts like conflict transformation and peacebuilding because the process it describes emerges from society within both its own evolving contextual framework and encounter with international norms. It is not driven solely by external knowledge or ideas.

political institutions that may address the conflict as it has been contextually experienced. This means that as far as possible local institutions need to be the basis for peace, and any reforms to address the causes of conflict have to be locally negotiated in the light of international norms, but not externally driven.

Peace formation processes could be observed in Cyprus in the 1990s, where a long-standing conflict involving identity, sovereignty, and nationalism had crystallised into a bloody division of the state and its two main communities between 1963 and 1974. While internationals focused on maintaining a ceasefire and increasingly circular elite-level talks over the next few decades, long-standing networks of peace actors emerged: some inside formal government, some outside; some transnationally connected, and some locally based. They have long defied mainstream ethnonationalist and secessionist or irredentist impulses. However, they have remained separate to the local state(s) and are often seen by ethnonationalists and international actors as marginal in their attempt to transform political institutions and their reluctance to accept a nationalist logic. Yet their organisations have surmounted many obstacles because they are locally and internationally networked, have local status and legitimacy, know the local historical, cultural and political terrain well, and are comfortable working through both informal and formal institutions in order to further their cause of an intercommunal and regional peace. International support has been crucial, but its waxing and waning and its managerial nature have had many side-effects. Indeed much of the academic and policy attention has been on formal mediation and negotiation, state institutions, sovereignty and legitimacy. This has made it difficult for external actors used to acting on their own authority to understand the significance of what has been occurring within a small quarter of society: the long-term, quiet, and small-scale formation of an influential peace. This now offers an unrealised basis for a more formal peace infrastructure. In order to achieve this, a very significant investment in civil society would be required, a firm push to support local peace formation dynamics to offer both informal infrastructures and create formal institutional platforms in both communities' state frameworks to undercut the continuing legacy and legitimacy of ethnonationalism. At the moment only the bi-communal groups in Cyprus recognise and act upon this obvious possibility for peace, while official and international actors are forever constrained by the dominance of sovereignty over accommodation in formal state structures.

Even standing outside formal processes, such social aspects of peacemaking are capable of carrying political agency, shaping institutions and the state, and making peace. Yet there is also a tension here. There is a risk they are instrumentalised by internationals, making "visible" local peace formation processes through a peace infrastructure deemed acceptable to international eyes (as has been the case with donor support for conflict resolution activities in Cyprus). Further afield, the state–international–local divides have their own bureaucratic logic, which carries with them a bias that any appeal to the local exposes, especially where custom co-exists with significant poverty (as in Timor-Leste). The quasi-colonial habit of reporting back to "headquarters" in the global North on the efficacy of formal institutions in the global South – a *modus operandi* for any type of peace infrastructure – cannot survive such a local turn (Smith 1999). From a local as well as an ethical perspective this is problematic if it is accepted that authority must be locally determined in any democratic context.

Local peace movements and civil society organisations often emerge in a very specific form: representing a set of interests, identities, or institutions in a broader process of externally led peacebuilding or statebuilding. Peace formation often represents a level of resistance to external intervention and the preservation of local institutions, norms or identity (Richmond, forthcoming). It implies contextual legitimacy whereas externally led peace architecture appears to be static, formulaic, and technocratic (and so more easily exportable within the liberal peace model's focus on rights and institutions). Peace infrastructures remain part of the liberal and neoliberal peace project if they are driven by external actors or even state elites, rather than embedded in local peace formation dynamics. This means that external or elite-led peace infrastructures may tend towards replicating the mainstream of society as well as international blueprints. A more contextual peace infrastructure, accruing local legitimacy, would have to rest on the dynamics of peace formation. In Cyprus, this means supporting a small group of civil society

activists, who would provide such infrastructures with local, transversal, and transnational qualities. This would also mean a significant amount of local and international resistance to existing power structures, however.

What this indicates is that peace infrastructures should not be an international creation dependant on external blueprints or simply negotiating and implementing peace agreements (Hopp-Nishanka, in this volume, 4). They should instead also be a local expression of indigenous peace formation agency, and a platform for its encounter with the liberal peace system. Peace formation represents the emergence of the necessary institutions, norms, processes, via local agency, drawing on historical, cultural, and contextual resources. These can be supported but not directed by internationals. Local peace work needs to be seen not as liberal *peace redux* (or a yearning for a neo-colonial order), nor as a contribution to the eventual "achievement" of a neoliberal state. Peace infrastructure necessarily may contribute to hybrid forms of political institutions (Boege et al. 2008).

The choice of the term "infrastructures" is important. Infrastructures implies an "infrapolitical" (Scott 2009) connection within society that reaches deeper than formal and public institutions, especially those driven by external actors. They reach into history, culture, custom, and society, and so raise a range of new dilemmas. However, the fact that they are localised (while also being transversal and transnational) means they are more able to offer local legitimacy. They are thus more than "domestic" (Hopp-Nishanka in this volume, 3) and operate in a completely different register than the one denoted by the traditional domestic–international divide.

Where such infrastructures are pushed heavily from outside or by national elites they may end up being mere subcontractors for the liberal peace (or its unintended authoritarian outcomes, as in Nepal), rather than providing a basis for an encounter in which a new social contract may arise. It is of course necessary that peace infrastructures are not constrained within society or fail to have an impact on structural problems (ibid., 11) as has unfortunately occurred in Cyprus. They do need to have an impact on formal state institutions, as has occurred in Timor-Leste, Ghana, and other cases, and even on international architecture. This raises some of the complex dynamics of local agency, and points to the democratic imperative of inclusivity, and the implications of human rights for the redistribution of material resources. Local peace formation agency often works for improved rights but also often for improved access to institutions and material resources. So civil society work may remain isolated, as in Sri Lanka (ibid.) or Cyprus, but it has been very important in terms of both deepening democracy (as in the Solomon Islands) and highlighting rights, material inequalities between different groups, and the nationalist tendencies of elites (which is why the government attempted to suppress them at certain points in Cyprus).

The dynamics of peace formation suggest that peace transcends Western, Northern, or "modern" notions of what it may entail: i.e. the public, state, rational, and neoliberal. The turn to the local, its legitimacy, agency, resistance, identity, and culture, along with all of its problems – conflict inducing or hierarchical – has long been underway: this turn indicates that peace infrastructures emerge locally, the state and its legitimacy rests on local, social and historical processes of conflict mitigation, and international peacebuilding needs to be seen as assistance rather than intervention.

The idea that local peace infrastructures are driven either by states or internationally is as problematic as the other side of the coin: the romanticised view that the local has no agency or is predominantly driven by unwieldy and unjust power structures, backwards and traditional. Certainly there are aspects of every political system that can be improved. Placing peace infrastructures in the conceptual framework of the state immediately assumes that the industrialised, liberal/neoliberal state, based on individual property rights, is the aim of any post-conflict community. It also tends to assume that "cosmopolitan" norms are absent, when in fact peace infrastructures tend to imply that there has always been a concern with order, justice, redistribution, and rights in any society, in different ways and to varying degrees. It is common to

hear claims from within supposedly traditional institutions around the world that they are in the process of reform, recognise the need for more equality and democracy, or indeed, that they already have democratic processes and are aware of gender issues and environmental sustainability (Hagmann 2007, 2). The Cyprus case therefore illustrates how peace formation as a basis for a peace infrastructure would be in great tension with the existing state and with international policy, even where development is not a significant concern. Peace formation would, when translated into a peace infrastructures, contradict the nationalist mainstream in both societies, and also shed doubt on the international strategy of focusing on nationalist political leadership.

3 The Local as Peace's Address

Peace infrastructures are so important because they are where local consensus is gathered, legitimated, consolidated and made material via "naturally evolved" peace constituencies (Hopp-Nishanka in this volume, 5). This means that "changing the hearts and minds" of disputants is not enough (ibid., 2). Nor is it enough to imagine that one or some of the levels of analysis relevant to formal political organisation or public institutions in the West are the only "address" of peace (ibid., 4). The local turn in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, as well as in social science more generally, warns against such bias.

The local, peace formation, and peace infrastructures are not geographic spaces or formal institutions but instead "discursive formations" involving negotiations over rights, needs, security, representation, and identity. Organisations, movements, and debates form in everyday, informal contexts. They transmit needs and rights requirements through a range of institutions (from religious, customary, social, and political) towards the state or international actors. Both need to be able to understand and respond to how peace formation processes may be translated into local and state institutions, unencumbered by international bias or political preferences, while a society is stabilised. This may occur within a longer-term process that the encounter between the international liberal peace model and local forms of peace imply. Peace infrastructures are effectively a staging point in this process.

The whole of the somewhat orientalist language of intervention and conflict transformation needs to be reconsidered in this light. The formation of peace infrastructures is not new, as it draws on historical local and international resources, and is indicative of long-standing layers of autonomy, agency, and solidarity. These are well-known themes in any emancipatory politics. They should not be viewed as another possibility for social engineering by international actors because this risks a loss of legitimacy and resistance from participants. Thus, as soon as the potential of a local turn is recognised, we need to be careful about reading the local as if it were – or could be – the same as "home". Put simply, peace's address is in the autonomous political decision-making debates and institutional forms that go with emancipatory objectives in specific contexts, and which are constituted both locally and internationally, privately and publicly. It may be that the state and the public is such an address, as peace infrastructures suggests, but this concept is also suggestive of a move beyond Northern, rational-legal institutionalism. Legitimacy and peace have a debt to both the local and the international, and the hybrid forms (Bhabha 1994, 22; Kapoor 2008; Spivak 1988, 75) that result in the wide variety of encounters between peace formation dynamics and the international (Richmond 2009). This possibly points to local solutions, internationally enabled, revolving around an emancipatory understanding of peace determined in local processes. This means external actors need to develop a different set of skills in peacebuilding (once the fighting has been brought to a halt): not "interventionary", not using executive power, and respectful of local culture, systems of knowledge, legitimacy and authority. Peace formation and peace infrastructures need to be seen in this light.

The local turn lays bare many of the previous assumptions about peace: that there is a clear local–international divide that maps onto binaries such as war/peace, poverty/development, biased/neutral, traditional/modern, illegitimate/legitimate, or dysfunctional/benign. Even speaking and writing about local processes of peace formation in a dominant language and epistemology distracts us from locating peace's address. For example, the long-standing idea of "recruiting" "insider neutrals" rests on a series of assumptions concerning power relations (Hopp-Nishanka, in this volume, 14).

Hopp-Nishanka writes conditionally about the value of "insider neutrals": "that they may bring with them a personal commitment to peacebuilding, international experience, good connections with civil society... they could be the right choice for the job" (ibid.). The local turn demands we take local agency seriously even where it is critical or resistant or seemingly in a different developmental or normative mode, and that we also consider the "international" dimensions of any conflict: not all responsibility for redressing conflict roots rests with those people who live closest to the violence. Those roots reach much further than is visible from an external perspective.

Peace's "address" may also reside in the history, custom, practices, identities, social organisations (often transnational or transversally networked), which come together to shape politics and its institutions. Shifting to this address implies a range of everyday (as opposed to security, sovereign, and institutional) dynamics. It uncovers the lives that are being played out, often invisibly. But in the context of peace formation and resultant peace infrastructures, these are by definition non-violent, existing in a framework where peace and justice are explicit aims, rather than the preservation of some existing (or new) iniquitous order. In much of the literature discussing the local turn in peacebuilding, statebuilding and development, there is a lot of confusion about inclusivity, regressive customs, gender, identity, and power relations, as if these are all the local has to offer. This is not the case: there is a burgeoning literature that shows how effective local organisations are, partly because they are engaged in their own context and understand their conflict structures (Chambers 1983; Boege et al. 2008; Mac Ginty 2008; Richmond 2011). This has long been known in post-colonial and post-development studies (Escobar 1995). It is also becoming more clearly understood in United Nations agencies such as the UNDP, the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, and the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office.[2]

Local committees and other architecture are the visible face of a "hidden agency" through which societies negotiate and embed order. Rather than adopting a position at the apex of such order from which to criticise, judge, transform, engineer, and ultimately to "intervene", the local turn offers the "international" the possibility that peace formation will enable and carefully augment what is already embedded, embryonic, and contextually mediated. This does not necessarily mean the integration of the liberal-internationalist or liberal-institutionalist or indeed capitalist understandings of peace's address with whatever is locally regarded as peace, but rather a less dominant "encounter" between different approaches to peace.

The danger is that the logic of seeing local peace infrastructures culminating in the modernising and developmental state that then becomes a worthy member of the *a priori* international community, is that this implies that all conflict is local, that there are no international dynamics responsible for its dynamics, and that newly minted states will not have a stake in transforming international order. It also overly simplifies very complex dynamics of power, rights, needs, and identity. The local would perpetuate the international in this case, with all of its hierarchies and inequalities. This is not what peace infrastructure is aimed at. It is more a project of local and international transformation; the legibility of power relations must be dealt with in any encounter between local and international knowledge systems used for developing an understanding of peace.

Peace infrastructure's address emerges not only by establishing a public process in the context of the state, but in establishing a range of informal and formal networks. These reshape political institutions in ways that may negate potential forms of violence. Behind any public meeting of any range of stakeholders

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2   Personal interviews by author, 2012.

are a series of deeper networks and dynamics. These reach right into society, where individuals and groups are already operating (often in "hidden" ways to avoid recriminations) in order to deal with everyday rights and needs, and mitigate violence. They are often thinking long term about reforming institutions and the state, borrowing and adapting from the liberal peace model as well as their own context and history, in order to achieve an emancipatory form of peace, locally and internationally mediated (as in Cyprus). If public institutions can be harnessed to this peace formation process, which in turn may then shape the state, then international and local aspirations for peace and reform may become plausible. Thus international actors should make sure that their support of any formal institutions, whether state or peace infrastructure, are clearly based on a partnership with local dynamics of peace formation. This would stand in contrast to the post-Cold War dynamic of mainly engaging with powerful groups or figures who hold offensive power or control public institutions. Peace infrastructure offers this possibility as long as it is harnessed to peace formation processes (perhaps as in Ghana), and does not become yet another site of bargaining over the prizes of war and the liberal peace between internationals and select local predatory elites (as in Nepal).

Establishing a consensus that runs through society therefore comes before the state, and before any normative improvement in its institutions. The state and Track 1 actors should not just be "guided" by such processes (Hopp-Nishanka, in this volume, 9) but should be representative of them. The polity and state that are produced must rest on both local and international peace dynamics, the problem clearly being that there are also dynamics of violence and exclusion at both local and international levels that need to be mitigated simultaneously. Examples of peace infrastructure from Somalia, Somaliland, Kenya, Ghana, Colombia, and others attest to different aspects of this process. Peace formation, and the fusion of local informal peace processes with the state, culminating in an infrastructure supported by international actors, therefore begins to fill in the missing links that peacemaking, conflict management, resolution and transformation have long aspired to.

4 Concluding Thoughts

Peace infrastructures – across a significant proportion of states – bear significant potential as long as it is internally and not externally shaped. Hopp-Nishanka (2012, in this volume) is correct to see potential for peace to find an address if this is to be a far more socio-political, rather than power-based, geographic or institutional, understanding of a discursive "house of peace". It opens up a range of new avenues for research, some of which will have serious methodological and ethical consequences for policymaking.

While the local move that peace infrastructure suggests is a major step forward, it is just the beginning of a longer process of uncovering the many missing links that exist between peace formation, the nature of the state, and the international system itself. A peace infrastructure still tends to be seen through a top-down prism – as in the Esquipulas Process in Central America (Hopp-Nishanka in this volume, 7) – or through external lenses, and associated with officialdom and statebuilding (as in Ghana or Nepal). The evidence shows it needs to be rooted in local political cultures (ibid.). The dynamics of peace formation indicate its very deep implications for externals as well as local actors. Any local turn should not be a repetition of more subtle forms of external hegemony or power.

Next steps may include: (1) a revision of language and architecture through which internationals reinforce global–local inequality (insensitive phrases like "capacity building" or "good governance" for example, rest on a form of orientalism in which local organisations are rejected even if they are democratic or provide rights, security and law); (2) revising the compound mentality in which internationals use walls and fences to isolate themselves from their "host" subjects in order to reify the hierarchy of liberal peace, neoliberal state, property rights, and "modern" state institutions versus the local; (3) a rebalancing of the legibility of peacebuilding and statebuilding in hegemonic norms, laws and languages; (4) maintaining the

political autonomy and self-determination of subjects without necessarily maintaining territorial notions of sovereignty or rational-legal understandings of the state; (5) re-thinking divides such as public/private, individualism/community, formal/informal.

Practitioners need to refrain from using the executive power they have by virtue of their international status and access to resources; they must also avoid following external blueprints and bureaucratic or professional frameworks unless they have been accepted by grassroots and elites in a representative political process. Instead, it is important to remember that peacemaking is political and relates to issues of power, resources, identity, and culture, and the institutions that emerge locally to manage these. It is vital to seek a wide range of local fora in which consent, legitimacy and societal partnerships can be rebuilt; the state itself has to be locally rooted even if international support is necessary. From this perspective, peace infrastructures offer access to local platforms where emancipatory forms of peace are being negotiated in their historical context, as well as a space where an encounter with international norms and standards may arise. In this way the state may develop from peace formation processes rather than represent an ugly compromise between the interests of predatory elites and international norms.

The local turn implies that each peace process, infrastructure, polity, and its commensurate political, social, and economic institution cannot be uniform. International-local partnerships should be made as soon as possible on the basis of parity. International actors should make decisions independently only when lives are at risk and such relationships have not yet been established; they should not shape laws, agreements and institutions or inculcate norms independently. Peace infrastructures, in the best of cases, may act as a bridge between communities, the state, and internationals. Where they are blocked at the peace formation stage (as in Cyprus) or co-opted by state interests (as in Nepal), this concept offers clear indications about how international actors and communities and CSOs should proceed. Successes in Sierra Leone, Ghana or developments in Timor-Leste suggest that a good start would be far more direct support to and expansion of the peace formation community – supporting their agendas of plurality, inclusiveness, and reconciliation *contra* state strategies of maintaining ethno-nationalism, elite power, and a focus on their sovereignty. Ultimately the state itself should become the peace infrastructure.

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National Peace and Dialogue Structures

Strengthening the Immune System from Within instead of Prescribing Antibiotics

Hannes Siebert

Content

1   Introduction[1]

Having been involved in establishing peace and dialogue structures in a variety of countries and conflict settings, including Sri Lanka, Nepal, Lebanon, Myanmar/Burma, and my own home country of South Africa, I consider Ulrike Hopp-Nishanka's article *Giving Peace and Address? Reflections on the Potential and Challenges of Creating Peace Infrastructures* (2012) to be an invaluable contribution. It captures some essential concepts that can serve as a sound framework for external actors' support for national and local initiatives, for evaluating their own role, and for further developing their thinking on the emerging theory of national peace and dialogue structures (what Hopp-Nishanka in her article refers to as peace infrastructures). Many so-called "national" practitioners and analysts have written and reflected upon their own processes. But at a time when peace infrastructures have become a norm, rather than an exception, I would like to call for more joint reflection and more research to enable us to advance and develop meaningful theoretical frameworks for these essential components of peace, dialogue and change processes. While I am wary of simplifying the complex and constantly evolving approaches of national peace and dialogue structures, I would like to highlight a few issues raised in the lead article and pose some further questions to explore our understanding of these structures, including their contribution to overcoming the current gaps in the theory of conflict transformation.

After briefly discussing the strengths and shortcomings of the emerging theory of peace infrastructures as presented by Hopp-Nishanka, my response will focus on the "ownership" of national and local peace structures. While Hopp-Nishanka (in this volume, 4) has correctly highlighted that peace infrastructures are local mechanisms based on domestic foundations there is a risk that they might become a new technique of international intervention. Hence, I will try to point to the pitfalls of interventionist approaches while at the same time presenting useful roles for external actors in assisting and enabling local activists, stakeholders and participants in their efforts to create (or re-activate) their own mechanisms for change. I will draw examples from four of the countries I have worked in and have firsthand knowledge of, all of which had peace and dialogue structures initiated by local stakeholders. I will conclude my arguments by highlighting the opportunities, potential and limitations of these structures for transforming national violent conflicts around the world.

2   Peace Infrastructures:
Old Wine in New Skins?

As the theoretical debate on peace infrastructures is still evolving, I understand this dialogue series *Peace Infrastructures – Assessing Concept and Practice* as an invitation for joint reflection and continuous learning from experiences, including both failures and successes. I would suggest that the aim of this exchange should not be to develop a universal, homogenous definition of internally developed and locally owned peace and dialogue structures. Rather, the focus should be on broadening and deepening our understanding of structures and mechanisms that strengthen peace from within – structures whose diverse anatomy in terms of process and structure are shaped by local needs, culture and context. The structures that I would call "peace and dialogue structures" are the very structures and mechanisms that constitute the "process" itself. They were created with a mandate from key stakeholders, who themselves participate (directly or through

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[1]   This comment is based on an interview of Hannes Siebert by Katrin Planta and Barbara Unger in August 2012.

representatives). And they were created through formal agreements between the main parties (including non-state actors) to implement and monitor their joint commitments and to manage the peace process and formal dialogue or negotiations as agreed to in a comprehensive peace agreement or ceasefire agreement.

Peace and dialogue structures are by their nature vulnerable and imperfect instruments, straining under the burden of helping a society cross the bridge from war or serious conflict, to a shared space that promises sustainable or acceptable peace. We have seen in both Nepal and Colombia that peace structures have constantly changed as the needs of the peace processes have evolved and the working relationships between the parties have matured. Sadly, we have also seen that when the relationships between the stakeholders erode, as in Sri Lanka, peace structures and dialogue mechanisms become self-serving and destructive of the very process they were supposed to sustain. They are constantly vulnerable to exploitation by either power politics or by external influences.

Although we try to explore and define trends and common approaches from the experiences of different peace and dialogue processes, my most important observation is that – just as Hopp-Nishanka (in this volume, 16) notes in her lead article – you cannot transplant "models" from one country to another. Advisors and national stakeholders in each of the processes I worked on learned the hard way that transplanting "good models" and "quick fixes" often undermined or threatened the processes as these "transplanted models" had been designed in different contexts and were intended to address different conflict dynamics. Nevertheless, I recognise a need for a theoretical framework to better understand the emergence, functioning and reasons for failure or success of peace and dialogue structures. There are several key issues and concerns that are important for this theoretical and conceptual reflection.

Hopp-Nishanka rightly outlined that "…peace infrastructures are established during any *stage of peace and dialogue processes*, from the height of a violent conflict to the implementation and monitoring of peace agreements" (ibid., 4; emphasis in original). Although these structures often fulfill a broad variety of purposes – from assisting the parties to build capacity, to facilitating dialogue processes or the implementation of peace agreements, to facilitating memory and reconciliation efforts in the post-conflict period – this observation alone does not sufficiently capture the essence of these national mechanisms and structures. Her observation that peace infrastructures may either act as a change agent themselves or provide the necessary mechanism for such change agents (ibid., 2) is essential to fully understanding the dynamics of these structures.

Peace and dialogue structures are often complemented by mechanisms that serve as safety nets for ongoing informal dialogue, facilitation, knowledge sharing, conflict transformation, or to create a conducive or catalytic environment for political and constitutional change. Most of these structures, where they are well designed and carefully constructed, use the country's internal "peace assets" and respond to the needs in that particular context. They also have built-in facilitative and deadlock-breaking mechanisms and procedures. It is important to emphasise the non-static, flexible and composite nature of national peace and dialogue structures. These structures not only emerge at different points of time with specific tasks, but they also evolve, transform and take on different purposes over time as they respond to changing contexts and challenges.

So what is really new about peace infrastructures? First are the new forms they have taken over the last 30 years, and second is the growing interest in these structures shown by national and international actors. With regard to the first point, the main difference between traditional and new forms of peace infrastructures is, in my view, that the latter can rely on strong governmental involvement, acknowledgement by national and international political players and decision-makers, and a higher degree of formalisation. The formal dialogue structures, like National Dialogues or National Conferences, are designed and mandated to support constitutional and state reform. Today, governments and political parties increasingly use peace infrastructures, while civil society actors often participate in and organise them. On the second point, there is a risk that external actors might "discover" peace infrastructures as a new mode of intervention in the

light of failing third party mediation, and in doing so they might try to instrumentalise peace infrastructures for their own interests.

3 Concrete Peace Infrastructures under the Lens

In this section I will describe the evolution, sequencing and design of peace infrastructures in the cases I have been involved in, especially Nepal and South Africa. I will also highlight some key mechanisms that in my experience are often forgotten in peace infrastructure designs.

In the **Nepalese case** the same structures were transformed at least four times between 2002 and 2012 as the process unfolded. The first Nepalese dialogue structure was established in 2002 by the government in the form of a Peace Negotiations and Coordinating Secretariat that was created to manage, coordinate and to facilitate the negotiations between the Maoist movement and the Nepalese Government. This structure provided a management and logistical infrastructure for the formal negotiations between the main stakeholders. The dialogue structure also appointed a team of esteemed and credible national facilitators as advisors and chairs, who, where needed, facilitated the talks.

In 2005, the Peace Secretariat was re-activated to prepare for new talks between the government and the Maoists and it facilitated the establishment of the Nepal Transitions to Peace Initiative (NTTP), which was and still is the informal dialogue and knowledge sharing mechanism between all parties. It was established as a safety net for formal talks and as a "common space" for the parties to meet on an ongoing basis. With a team of national facilitators, international experts, and the head of the Peace Secretariat, the NTTP also served as a deadlock-breaking mechanism and catalyst for ongoing talks.

In 2006, following the people's uprising and the stepping down of the King, the Peace Secretariat's staff and party leaders (part of a coordinating peace committee at the Secretariat) jointly drafted Nepal's ceasefire agreement and assisted in the setting-up of monitoring mechanisms. The Peace Secretariat was also the mechanism through which the parties and government negotiated a formal mandate to be presented to the United Nations to monitor elections and to coordinate the monitoring of the management of arms and combatants. In the same year the Peace Secretariat and the NTTP coordinated and hosted both the formal and in-formal discussions on drafting and finalising the Comprehensive Peace Accord and all its implementation mechanisms. The Peace Secretariat functioned as the coordinator and principal implementer of the provisions of the accord. In 2007, as the parties were drafting the interim constitution, the Peace Secretariat was transformed into a formal government ministry – the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction (MPR) – and given direct executive powers.

The additional functions of the Peace Secretariat included: managing and administering the formal multi-party talks (the "National Dialogue") from 2006 until after the formation of the Constituent Assembly in 2010; responsibility for establishing local peace committees; conducting consultations and jointly drafting a Truth Commission Bill in consultation with all the parties and experts; coordinating between governmental ministries on urgent reconstruction and normalisation challenges; addressing missing people's issues and establishing mechanisms to deal with them; hosting and coordinating the special committee dealing with the integration of security forces and combatants; and continuing deadlock-breaking processes in coordination with the NTTP. Both the NTTP and the MPR still function today, seven years after their inception.

Box 1: Nepal's Peace Infrastructure

National Dialogue
The *High Level Dialogue Team* (1999) and *National All-Party Talks* (2002/3, 2005-2010) with participation of all main parties and government to resolve the issue of the "insurgency" or "people's revolution", the monarchy, economic discrimination, and the establishment of a Constituent Assembly to redraft the constitution of the new republic.

Peace and Peace Support Structures
The *Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction* (2007-ongoing) was established to manage and administer the all-party talks and peace process, and to provide consultation services, including institutional, procedural and technical support to the government and parties in order to strengthen the peace process and open avenues of lasting peace and development.

The *Peace Secretariat* (2005-2010) helped facilitate the peace process by supporting conflict transformation and by acting as advisory body for the Cabinet on peace and conflict management. It also organised regular dialogues with those with a stake in peacebuilding such as civil society, the media and human rights organisations.

The *Peace Negotiation and Coordination Secretariat* (2002-2005) was formed to institutionalise the efforts for peace negotiation between the government and Maoists and to provide technical, physical and other necessary assistance to the peacebuilding process.

Safety Nets
The *Nepal Transition to Peace Initiative* (2005-ongoing) was a national peace support programme designed in cooperation with the government and political parties to strengthen their capacity to take part in the peace process and to establish an inclusive multi-party dialogue in order to tackle all stakeholders' concerns.

As noted by Hopp-Nishanka (in this volume, 2), different peace and dialogue structures often coexist alongside and complement each other.

A good example is **the case of South Africa** where the national dialogue structure, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), was established to manage, administer and coordinate the formal talks between all the main parties and the government. When the first formal dialogues failed and horrific violence broke out and claimed the lives of thousands of people, the National Peace Committee and the Peace Secretariat were created. The peace and dialogue structures were separate but complementary, in contrast to Nepal where these functions were mostly integrated into one core management and coordinating structure. In South Africa, the same parties were represented in both mechanisms, and communication links were established through the National Peace Committee and the party leaders who served in both mechanisms. The peace structures were created to secure peace, maintain a code of conduct between stakeholders, prevent violence, resolve conflicts, and to establish a relatively stable environment where formal negotiations could be conducted. Once the parties at the national dialogue reached a framework agreement on constitutional change, electoral reform and state restructuring, separate structures were created for constitutional drafting, transitional justice and reconciliation, reconstruction and development, and military integration.

Box 2: South Africa's Peace Infrastructure

National Dialogue

The *Convention for a Democratic South Africa* (CODESA) I (1991) and II (1992) and the *Multi-Party-Negotiations Process* (MPNP) (1992-1993) were a mechanism and a structure for all-party negotiations to reach a constitutional framework agreement and to create a process for the establishment of a constitution-making body and the preparation for free and fair elections.[2]

Peace and Peace Support Structures and Safety Net

The *National Peace Secretariat* (1991-1995) was created to establish, coordinate, service and finance a countrywide network of peace committees with eleven *Regional Peace Secretariats* (RPCs) and over 300 *Local Peace Committees*. Each structure comprised of representatives of political and religious organisations, unions, business and industry groups, local authorities, security forces and other relevant organisations. The structures were responsible for preventing violence, mediation in ongoing conflicts, monitoring, facilitating ongoing dialogue and negotiations between key stakeholders, and acting as safety nets to create a conducive environment for national formal negotiations and local transformation. They made decisions by consensus.

The *National Peace Committee* (1991-1995) aimed at monitoring and making recommendations on the implementation of the National Peace Accord as a whole and at ensuring compliance with the Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Organisations.[3]

The establishment of various structures and mechanisms in all of the cases in this article followed the unfolding of events and specific process, dialogue or implementation needs: a negotiated agreement, political context, the readiness of the parties to commit to specific joint mechanisms, and the anatomy of the conflict. Although one can observe general trends or logic in the sequence of their establishment, the structures and mechanisms are not always the same. Hopp-Nishanka (in this volume) points to a sequencing in some key processes, but the processes in Nepal, Lebanon and South Africa each followed different sequences. The main elements, though, are still the same: confidential and multi-layered negotiations to end the armed conflict; the creation of safety net structures and safe spaces for dialogue; ceasefire agreements and the creation of monitoring mechanisms for ceasefires and the management of arms and combatants; comprehensive peace agreements and the establishment of national peace structures and other relevant implementation mechanisms (land claims commissions, investigation commissions, rapid development support, local peace structures etc.); national dialogues, bilateral dialogues and the creation of support and management structures; transitional governance mechanisms and interim amendments to constitutions; the negotiation of constitutional framework agreements and redrafting of electoral laws accordingly; elections and/or referenda; the setting-up of inclusive and representative structures to draft a final constitution; new elections/referenda once the final constitution is finalised; the integration of security forces; truth and reconciliation programs; state reform; and the rebuilding of social infrastructure and advancement of economic development.

Mechanisms that are seldom mentioned – but in my view should be – are structures that serve to manage arms and combatants during peace negotiations and that manage the integration of security forces and combatants, including addressing former combatants' economic and educational needs. Many processes fail to address this adequately, resulting in endemic crime or remobilisation. Other essential

2   For more information about the Convention for a Democratic South Africa, see "Constitution Making with Reference to CODESA" at, www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv02039/04lv02046/05lv02047/06lv02049/07lv02056.htm .

3   For more information about the National Peace Committee, see "The National Peace Accord and its Structure" at www. nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv02424/04lv03275/05lv03294/06lv03321.htm.

undervalued structures are the ones created for reconstruction and development. These development mechanisms are sometimes included in the infrastructure of formal peace structures to address the needs of communities most affected by the conflict. Failing to do so often leads to the recurrence of conflict – people cannot "eat" agreements or constitutions.

That being said, it is essential that each process, structure and mechanism is authentic, meaning that they are designed by the stakeholders themselves or in close collaboration with all stakeholders. Without the buy-in, agreement and ownership of all key stakeholders, the mechanisms will inevitably fail – maybe not initially, but eventually. Such failures often lead to the breakdown of an entire peace and dialogue process and its structures.

A critical lesson learned from these structures designed by national stakeholders is that they often serve a purpose beyond their explicit objective. We find many cases of national conferences or constitutional assemblies created to draft new constitutions, but it would be a tragic mistake to force them to focus purely on this task, under unrealistic timeframes, when really these structures are also mechanisms for reconciliation, developing joint visions between former enemies, and slowly evolving an understanding of the needs, perceptions and perspectives of the "other".

4 External Actors: The DOs and the DON'Ts

During my years as a practitioner, I have seen many useful roles for external actors, but also common pitfalls that external actors often fall into. The role of external actors should be to strengthen internal processes. In my experience, peace infrastructures cannot be brought in from the outside, but can only be built from the inside with the non-interventionist support of external friends. The difference between external mediation and the role of "inside mediators" working within national dialogue and peace structures can be likened to the use of "antibiotics" and/or natural remedies and "changing lifestyle" in a healing process. The latter is prescribed to strengthen the immune system from within, and this takes time and commitment. Antibiotics, on the other hand, are used when the system is too weak and severe symptoms need to be addressed before healing can take place. Both are sometimes needed, but the continuous use of antibiotics creates dependency and can harm the body.

External actors should also support internal reflection on matters beyond the *symptoms* of a conflict. External mediation and interventions are often by necessity focused on symptoms –severe violence, oppression or war. By their design and functioning, national peace structures and dialogues have to tackle the root causes of existing conflicts, whether they are structural, psychological, value-based, or physical. It is thus essential that external support and facilitation patiently assist processes of joint reflection, offer experiences from other places, help generate options, and strengthen national peace structures. There are committed people in every society capable of doing the deep work, and our task is to walk these difficult journeys with them, enabling collective processes and the transformation of relationships, societies and state structures.

To avoid the common pitfalls, I would recommend that external actors take into account the political, cultural and historical practices and customs in each country. This is essential when creating and developing peace infrastructures. There are multiple examples of ancient conflict resolving mechanisms in the Middle East (Mukhtars), in Asia (Gamshabas), in Africa (Bushmen, Congolese and Ugandan customs), in South America, and in the Balkans; many operate in the same manner as peace infrastructures today (if not in even

more complex and authentic ways). These traditional structures emerged within communities to resolve conflicts at a collective level, and were characterised by representativeness, inclusivity and local credibility.

The first step for an external actor must therefore always be to understand the context, the conflict issues, the culture and dynamics of past processes and dialogues, and possible entry points for a solution – and all from the point of view of the affected parties. Before starting a process it is important to look at what kind of dialogue and decision-making structures or peace structures have existed in a society.

As an example of this, **in the Lebanon case** one of the first things we did collectively in the Common Space Initiative was to study the five major areas of historic dialogues – national dialogues, international dialogues and interventions, economic dialogues, inter-religious dialogues, and civil society dialogues. We looked at their impact, the agendas, decision-making, management structures, collective knowledge sharing, timeframes, context, implementation mechanisms, participation, mandate, and forms of conflict transformation. This exercise gave us a better understanding of the strengths and the weaknesses of previous dialogues in Lebanon.

Box 3: Lebanon's Peace Infrastructure

National Dialogue

The *National Dialogue* (2007-present) includes Lebanon's main political stakeholders who jointly address root causes of conflict and structural challenges outlined in the Taef Accord (the national reconciliation document), as well as symptomatic challenges arising from ongoing tensions and present political conditions. The main objective of the dialogue is currently to develop a National Defense Strategy.

Peace and Peace Support Structures

The *Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee* (2005-present) aims at providing Palestinian refugees in Lebanon with the conditions to live in dignity, prosperity, security and harmony with their environment until they are able to enforce their right of return as stipulated in United Nation's Resolution 194 and the Arab Peace Initiative.[4]

The *National Dialogue Steering Committee* (2008-present) provides advice, knowledge resources and strategic facilitation support to the President of the Republic as convener and chair of the National Dialogue.

Safety Net

The *Common Space Initiative* (2010-present) was created to respond to the needs of the Lebanese National Dialogue(s), the government and the parliament by facilitating structured informal dialogues among policy makers, intellectuals, experts, civil society actors, stakeholders, and individuals in order to create an environment conducive to progress. This is mainly achieved by enhancing public policy debates, building expertise and common knowledge resources on key issues, and promoting collaboration among the national parties.[5]

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[4] For more information about the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, see "Lebanese Republic: Presidency of the Council of Ministers: Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee" at, www.lpdc.gov.lb/About-Lpdc/BackGround.aspx.

[5] For more information about the Common Space Initiative, see: www.commonspaceinitiative.org.

Peace infrastructures commonly serve as the places and spaces where conflicting parties meet to address their differences and explore the common ground. These "common spaces" become over time spaces for ongoing dialogue, building trust and relationships, jointly creating and sharing knowledge, and deepening understanding of each other's positions, interests and needs. These spaces cannot, therefore, serve as mechanisms of intervention by external actors since these are "living spaces" that evolve based on the national stakeholders' confidence, their commitment to common national interests, and their willingness to work together on finding joint solutions. These "safe spaces" often benefit from quiet and confidential external support to build confidence in the process, but they fundamentally rely on the credibility, profile and integrity of the national facilitators and managers, and their access to top-level leadership.

The external facilitator or supporter must therefore be guided by the values, needs, perceptions and understanding of credible and respected change makers and leaders. A process that uses the framework of these stakeholders' own "facts" and perceptions can evolve into deep reflection on the factors and beliefs that divide people – and ultimately into the discovery of common interest and values. A process cannot be based on imposed values, and it needs to reach a depth where the values and objectives come out. Some of the most common areas where external and internal perceptions and values clash are in the areas of economic transformation, traditions and customs, forms of representation (participatory democratic models, consensual or communal governance), and forms of power-sharing based on ethnicity or group identity.

Finally, there are some situations that should be understood as "hands-off" for external actors. First of all, external actors should only provide support or intervene if there is a real and genuine invitation by the main stakeholders or concerned parties. Such invitations should be carefully weighed against an assessment of such actors' capacity, experience and deep knowledge of the substance, context and the design of national processes. If there are adequate, mature, local structures and mechanisms already in place, there is no role for external support other than providing resources that national participants explicitly ask for. And if there are no internal structures and efforts at all, I would discourage external actors from trying to create new ones until there is sufficient and genuine support for them in the country.

5 Concluding Thoughts: Peace Infrastructures as a Universal Remedy against National Violent Conflicts?

As with any conceptual building block applied to challenging peacebuilding and national change processes, one must ask whether peace infrastructures really can make a difference. I think the answer, as unsatisfying as it may seem, is as ambiguous and complex as reality is: in most cases they do, but in some cases they don't. Despite the relative success stories of peace and dialogue from Nepal, South Africa, Lebanon, Ghana or Kenya, there are also failed experiences. As a first reality check, we might want to look at **the Sri Lankan case:**

Box 4: Sri Lanka's Peace Infrastructure

National Negotiations
Negotiations between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were facilitated by the Norwegian Government, resulting in the signing of a ceasefire agreement in 2002.

Peace and Peace Support Structures
The *Peace Secretariat for Muslims* (2004-2012) was mandated by the Muslim parties to act as a resource center and advisor to the peace process and the implementation of the ceasefire agreement. It aimed at facilitating consensus-building among Muslim political parties and other stakeholders to develop cohesive responses on vital issues affecting the Muslim community.

The *LTTE Peace Secretariat* (2003-2010) was established to represent the political wing of the LTTE in the peace process, to promote peace, to monitor human rights violations and to resolve disputes. It also coordinated resettlement, reconstruction, rehabilitation and development work.

The governmental *Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process* (2002-2010) was a coordinating and facilitating body of the peace process. It engaged in extensive and regular consultations with all stakeholders in the South, including the public and private sectors, civil society, donor community and line agencies.

Safety Nets
The *One Text Initiative* (2003-ongoing) provided a confidential multi-party dialogue mechanism and shared knowledge resource for Singhalese, Tamil, and Muslim political stakeholders on the peace process and local structures.[6]

Three national peace secretariats, over a hundred local peace structures and over six thousand local mediation centers were established. Yet the country still plunged back into civil war. The same holds true for Colombia (see more on Colombia in Paladini Adell in this volume) where a plethora of peace structures did not prevent the armed violence. It thus becomes clear that the mere existence of infrastructures is not enough. Accordingly, I do not share the optimism of colleagues that a given number of structures will be enough to help create systems for transforming conflicts. The Sri Lankan case shows that peace structures cannot be measured by quantity alone but instead need genuine commitment from the major stakeholders. The best technical equipment does not help to make a hospital function effectively if its doctors do not speak to each other, do not use the equipment, and if the sick do not get to the hospital.

So what is needed to make peace structures work effectively? Is it possible to determine the success factors? To evaluate peace structures' outcomes, we need to look at a variety of different factors: environmental factors such as the political context, conflict-related factors such as the stages of escalation, but also relational factors – the relationship between conflict actors. We also need to pay attention to the quality of the peace structure itself. Important indicators for quality are the levels of inclusion of key conflict stakeholders, the establishment of clear objectives (oriented towards real needs), the interconnection and interdependence of different elements of peace infrastructure, and their potential for connecting actors on different peacebuilding and dialogue tracks. The strength of a peace infrastructure is in fact deeply related

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6 For more information about the One Text Initiative, see "Sri Lanka: Support to the One Text Initiative and Other Initiatives" at, www.peaceappeal.squarespace.com/sri-lanka/.

to its ability to create direct connections between the participants: top-level political decision-makers in charge of implementing conflict transformation agreements and community members at the local, national and regional level. To summarise, inclusive peace infrastructures offer great potential where they are determined by the common interest of the key actors involved in the change and transition process and are situated in an environment where they can respond to real needs of the people and their representatives.

To return to our analogy, if national and local peace and dialogue structures are authentic and carefully designed, and if they build from the inside and respond to the conflict's context and dynamics, then they can constitute the immune system that protects societies from violence in a far more efficient way than any antibiotic prescribed from outside. As such, they can be commended as a means to strengthen a society against violent conflict – but they cannot be regarded as a universal cure to be brought in from outside, but rather as spaces and processes that need – and are sustained by – committed actors on the ground.

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(All weblinks last accessed 11 November 2012)

From Peacebuilding and Human Development Coalitions to Peace Infrastructure in Colombia

Borja Paladini Adell

Content

1 Introduction[1]

This response reflects on the concept and practice of peace infrastructures from my perspective as a practitioner working for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Colombia. UNDP is providing political, technical and economic support to local level institutional, social, communitarian and ethnic peace initiatives in several war-torn regions of the country. Since 2003, it has supported more than 400 local peacebuilding initiatives as well as peacebuilding networks regionally and in relation to national peace initiatives and dynamics (UNDP Colombia 2010).

This article will start with a short look at the Colombian conflict, briefly reviewing the national peace infrastructures. I will then present the strategy and achievements of UNDP's partners' work in the Nariño region, where UNDP has a local office. Drawing from this experience, I will then introduce some key ideas to enrich the understanding of the concept of peace infrastructure explored in Hopp-Nishanka's lead article *Giving Peace an Address? Reflections on the Potential and Challenges of Creating Peace Infrastructures.*

2 The Conflict Situation in Colombia and Nariño

The armed conflict in Colombia has been going on for more than 50 years. It is a highly complex and multidimensional conflict that involves many actors – both armed (state security forces, guerrillas, paramilitary and self-defence groups, criminal gangs and drug-trafficking cartels) and unarmed.

The protracted war – really an explosive cluster of interrelated conflicts – can be characterised by a complex combination of historical, social, economic and political causes. Among the many contributing factors are: the weakness of the state (particularly at a local and regional level); the strength of informal, illiberal and undemocratic regional powers; inequality and exclusion of broad sectors of the population; the illegal economy surrounding drug trafficking; and armed actors' control of other legal and illegal sources of income. This reality has placed Colombia among the principal theatres of war and humanitarian crisis in the world, but it is also one of the most interesting laboratories for understanding local level peacebuilding.

The department of Nariño is located in the southwest of the country, north of the border with Ecuador. The population of 1.6 million people is ethnically diverse and predominantly rural. A mostly peaceful region in the 1980s and 1990s, in the last decade it has become one of the main sites of the war in Colombia. In the last six years, Nariño has also experienced unique peacebuilding efforts in which local actors – led by the regional government and supported by UNDP and other actors – have jointly built alliances and provided the base for peace infrastructures. The example of Nariño can enrich our understanding of how peacebuilding processes can be organised at a sub-national level in Colombia, and how local ownership is one of the main driving forces for peacebuilding. This is important in the light of the peace process launched in October 2012 between the national government and *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP), the biggest and oldest guerrilla group in Colombia.

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3 National Peace Infrastructure in Colombia and the Need for Local Peace Infrastructure

Colombia has a very rich array of local, regional and national peace initiatives and peace infrastructures. With regard to the latter, this section will start by providing two examples of structures at the national level (see *Boxes 1* and *2* below) in order to highlight its limitations in contrast to approaches that combine national, regional, and local level initiatives.

The national peace structures have played a limited role in peacemaking in Colombia and Nariño, and an even smaller role in peacebuilding. There are two main reasons for this. First, the outreach of the peace-promoting bodies is dependent on few people, particularly the Colombian president, who determines the level of any external involvement in any peacemaking effort in the country. The President has assigned peacemaking facilitating roles to individuals who are part of the government (the Peace Advisor) as well as to external ad hoc facilitators with a very narrow mandate (such as Piedad Cordoba, Álvaro Leyva and representatives from the Catholic Church). None have considered the national or sub-national peace infrastructure useful for supporting their efforts. Second, the national mechanisms are primarily aimed at reducing violence, humanising the violent conflict and advocating ceasefires, meaning they are based on conceptions of negative peace and top-down peacebuilding approaches.

Box 1: The National Peace Council *(Consejo Nacional de Paz)*

The National Peace Council was created by the Colombian Congress in 1998 as an advisory committee of the national government with a mission to promote the achievement and maintenance of peace and to facilitate harmonious collaboration between the state's entities, prioritising political and negotiated alternatives to armed conflict and the achievement of social relations that assure a integral and permanent peace. The Colombian president occupies the council's presidency, giving it a clear political profile. The other members are several national government ministers, two representatives of the regions (one departmental governor and one mayor), six members of Congress, several representatives of other power branches of the state, a delegate from the Catholic Church, delegates from other religious confessions, and civil society members representing, among others, entrepreneurial organisations, peasants, ethnic communities, peace and human rights initiatives, universities, and victims of the armed conflict. The law also includes similar regional and municipal councils led by departmental governors and the local mayors. There are no relationships between the national and the local councils.

Box 2: The National Conciliation Commission *(Comisión Nacional de Conciliación)*

The National Conciliation Commission is an autonomous and independent entity convened by the Catholic Church. Since its inception in 1995, it has been one of the principal civil society arenas for attempting to promote, foster and facilitate a negotiated political solution to the armed conflict. The commission has been instrumental in seeking formulas to overcome the difficulties that have prevented the conflict parties from starting negotiations that could open the way for development and reconciliation in the country. It has demanded the conflict parties to respect international humanitarian law and human rights as the foundation of peace. Since 2009 the commission has advocated a series of

guidelines for a permanent National Peace Policy to build peace and promote a transformative agenda for agrarian reform, education, a transparent democracy, inclusive economic development and active citizen participation. The commission has developed regional branches, which have in some cases been able to articulate regional commissions led by local bishops.

The examples of peace infrastructures described in the boxes above have been directed by national actors responding predominantly to national actors' understanding of peace, which are then transmitted to the Colombian regions. From a local perspective, the national infrastructures are weak and have not always sought or received local legitimacy.

My contribution to this dialogue series advocates the promotion of local level and sub-national peace infrastructure as the foundation of any national effort. The key challenge resides in the collaborative relationships and linkages between local and national peace infrastructures, and in creating arrangements for more effective and legitimate peacebuilding processes.

4 From Peace Initiatives to Innovative Social Coalitions and Peace Infrastructure

The Colombian experience shows that local contexts – even those affected by extreme war – contain actors, capacities and constituencies for peace in whom peacebuilding dynamics can be rooted. Some of these local capacities are oriented towards peace while others are oriented to social, political and economic change. In Nariño, the term *sustainable human development* is a driving force for change for many local actors, including the last four regional governments. The existence of peace actors, capacities and forces for change is not enough, however: the main challenge for local leaders and supportive external actors is how these driving forces can be creatively combined to foster more strategic peacebuilding dynamics from below.

Working with local and international actors, Nariño's regional government has supported cooperation between individual peace and development initiatives. In doing so, with the support from UNDP, it made use of some of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness principles: inclusive ownership and citizen participation, alignment to local priorities, mutual accountability, and local partnerships for more effective development. As a result, a wide array of actors has been able to converge around an emerging local human development and peacebuilding strategy. Some of these processes were planned during the participatory process of developing Nariño's Regional Development Plan 2008-2011 and its International Cooperation Strategy (such as the women-led process described below), while others have emerged more recently, stimulated by a critical assessment of good and bad practices. Today, the regional government speaks about a Nariño peace proposal that includes many of the processes described in this article, including those in the new development plan for 2012-2015 and the updated international cooperation strategy. Both policy documents have become a reference point for all actors in the region, including local communities, NGOs, local governments, and international actors working in Nariño.

During the period 2007–2012, the regional government and a large number of grassroots, ethnic and civil society actors promoted a series of territorial, sectorial and thematic processes that generated a plurality of local agendas for development and peacebuilding in the region. These coalitions are consolidating local level platforms, including local alliances, committees, partnerships, roundtables, strategic programmes and capacity development initiatives: all represent a local level understanding of peace and give peace a contextualised "address".

Drawing from the Nariño experience, I believe that the peace infrastructure debate could be enriched if we envision a more proactive role for peace infrastructure as a set of interrelated actors (organisations), processes and outcomes (alliances, platforms, spaces, policies) which give peace a physical address but also a direction defined by non-violent actors (local institutions, grassroots and civil society actors).

Thus, my perception of the concept of peace infrastructures is different to the one proposed by Hopp-Nishanka: I believe the peace infrastructure concept should go beyond the organisational dimension. In her article, Hopp-Nishanka says the "objective of peace infrastructure is to assist the parties (e.g. through capacity building or advice), the process (e.g. through mediation between the conflict parties or facilitation of public participation), or the implementation of process results (e.g. through monitoring and coordination of agreement implementation)" (in this volume, 4). In my opinion the objectives and roles of peace infrastructure are fundamental and necessary, but the structures can only play a role if the legal and illegal armed actors allow them to do so in the different phases of conflict.

Here I would like to advocate innovative social coalitions as a conceptual bridge between individual peace initiatives, peace infrastructures and strategic peacebuilding. The examples described in Box 3 are *innovative social coalitions* through which local actors promote transformative agendas for resistance, autonomy, protection, restitution of rights, and other peacebuilding and human development objectives (Nariño Decide 2012; Paladini Adell 2012).

Box 3: Innovative Social Coalitions in Nariño

Examples of innovative social coalitions in Nariño include territorial coalitions such as the Life Plans of the Rural Territory of Samaniego and the Jardines de Sucumbios region, population-based coalitions such as the youth social coalition *Adelante Nariño, con los Jóvenes Adelante* or the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Innovative Coalition, and the human rights coalition, *Comité de Impulso*. Another is the Nariño Pacific Ethno-Development Plan, in which local institutions (such as the regional government or the Tumaco municipality), in consultation with regional ethnic actors on the Nariño Pacific coast, build their development and peace agenda for the region and invite outside actors to join and promote the plan as a programmatic peacebuilding agenda. The agenda includes concrete programmes to address the problems caused by the war: for example, programmes to substitute illegal crops through rural development strategies, programmes focused on preventing young people from becoming involved in the armed conflict, or protection and rights restitution programmes. The programmes also strengthen local level institutions such as the *Cabildos Indígenas* or the *Afro-Colombian Consejos Comunitarios*.

Before exploring how the concept of innovative social coalitions complements the idea of peace infrastructure, let us then briefly clarify what it means. The concept arises from territorial development studies and can be defined as "a set of different actors who engage in convergent actions around a territorial development dynamic" (author's translation of Berdagué 2012, 88; see also Tanaka 2012). Adding on to Berdagué's work (2012, 89-94), and including a peacebuilding perspective, innovative social coalitions can be characterised by five functions.

First, they include diverse actors (community, institutional, public, private, and ethnic) who coordinate themselves to promote resistance to (and the transformation of) the tensions generated by the armed

conflict and its causes. This coordination is not necessarily formalised through a written agreement; rather, most of the time it constitutes an informal working alliance. Second, with the leadership of the regional government and the support of international actors such as UNDP, the coalitions are capable of promoting convergent objectives, agendas and strategic programmes among their members. Third, the coalitions accept the need to act in the short term, while also promoting medium- and long-term transformational approaches. They also recognise the importance of building peace in ways that reflect the images and views of peace represented by the Nariño's "peaceful but rebellious" population (especially the ethnic and peasant communities and other grassroots social movements). Fourth, the coalitions' diversity enables them to combine the differentiated strengths and characteristics of their constituent actors in order to mobilise a set of tangible and intangible resources. Fifth, the coalitions may be the basis for generating locally driven peace infrastructures and giving it a multi-level dimension. They should be rooted in the territory and be deeply contextualised in the local reality since they generate horizontal relationships between actors in the territory, as well as vertical relationships among regional, national and international actors and peace infrastructures.

One example of a coalition that is turning into base of local peace infrastructure as is the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Innovative Coalition (see *Box 4*). It was formed when a local-level alliance created an innovative social coalition to promote women's rights and women's participation in peacebuilding. The example shows us an ideal-type evolution from alliance to peace infrastructure. It also shows us that local actors and local structures promoted by women are influencing local and national peacebuilding dynamics today.

Box 4: From Local Level Peacebuilding Platform to Peace Infrastructure – the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Innovative Coalition

The regional government and international actors supported this alliance by designing and implementing a strategy of capacity development and women's empowerment. A peace infrastructure is being developed consisting of a number of local, sub-regional and departmental committees in which women from across Nariño participated. Together these arrangements created the conditions for participation in a regional policy for women's rights and gender equality. This policy allows for programmes such as a departmental agenda for the prevention of gender-based violence and armed conflict, a women's rights restitution programme, and a programme to enhance women's participation in peacebuilding in Nariño. The local alliance, the peace infrastructure (departmental, sub-regional and municipal committees) and the policy instrument create a local peacebuilding platform which has been instrumental in promoting women rights in Nariño. The platform is an expression both of a process (alliance, policy, programmes, agendas) and a concrete organisational structure (women's committees with a mandate to represent women's interests, and regular meetings between the regional governments, the committees and the supportive international actors). At the regional level, women in Nariño have been implementing a peacebuilding agenda within the women's policy with short-, medium- and long-term objectives. At the national level, Nariño's women are influencing national peacebuilding, such as the national gender equality policy and the victims law. In this way, local peacebuilders get a voice in national peacebuilding arenas. Furthermore, national peacebuilding (including an eventual peace agreement) encounters a local-level platform where national policies and programmes can get contextualised and rooted by promoting local ownership and a sense of sustainability.

The examples above have generated local governance and development dynamics for peace based on five key elements: structure, vision, action, ownership and roots:

≡ *Structure:* they are expressions of local alliances among diverse actors in the region (local institutions, including the local state, social, community and ethnic actors) with the support of a plurality of international actors (international NGOs and UN agencies with a permanent presence in the region).

≡ *Vision:* they have generated strategic agendas (plans, strategies, policies) based on the differentiated voices and agencies of the plurality of actors in Nariño and the identification of common interests.

≡ *Action:* they are promoting programmes and projects that seek to transform the living conditions and human security of communities, financed with local, regional, national and international resources, and leading to concrete peacebuilding actions.

≡ *Ownership:* these processes have been developed with a very high level of participation by (or representation of) community, ethnic and social actors. Through a series of informal schools certified by local universities thousands of people have participated in these innovative social partnerships and have become advocates for the change processes expressed in the policies, plans and other transformative agendas, thereby strengthening local ownership.

≡ *Roots:* these processes are rooted in local "everyday" views of peace.

Nariño's innovative social coalitions thus combine medium and long-term processes that are expressed in the design and implementation of regional policies and organisational arrangements that are reflected in the wide set of representative alliances and formal and informal structures that have emerged in the territory. Both process and structure are thus fundamental to making peace infrastructures sustainable and transformative.

Innovative social coalitions and peace infrastructures, then, are complementary concepts and approaches. Whereas the former highlights the strategic importance of the coordination of nonviolent local actors in promoting development, peacebuilding and local governance agendas, the latter emphasises the dynamic network of interdependent and multi-level structures that contributes to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. While social coalitions create the local-level peacebuilding agendas and platforms from the wide plurality of agencies in a territory, the peace infrastructure facilitates the vertical mechanism where the locals have the chance to influence national peacebuilding dynamics (and vice versa, as when national peacebuilding dynamics become contextualised in local realities).

The combination of the two approaches can make peacebuilding more strategic and transformative and more firmly based on everyday notions of peace – thus making peace more rooted, durable and legitimate and gives it an "address". The debate around peace infrastructures could be enriched by further reflection on how it is created from local-level dynamics, promoting local peacebuilding processes and structures where national dynamics, processes and infrastructures should be embedded. As a working hypothesis, local structure, vision, action, ownership, organisation and roots constitute the basis for more durable and effective local level peace infrastructures and dynamics.

5 Concluding Thoughts: Building Peace Infrastructures from Below

Peacebuilding as a practical and political undertaking is a relatively recent concept that has been developed within the last 20 years. Originally it was promoted primarily through great international efforts represented by peacekeeping operations and their top-down logic. These efforts have achieved important advances in the conceptualisation of how to build peace, but they have also been resounding failures in practice in the case of Somalia, Rwanda and, more recently, as evidenced by the ambiguous results of the efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. These failures have given rise to a group of critical voices that have questioned not only the effectiveness of peacebuilding as a political undertaking, but also the legitimacy of the effort. With regard to effectiveness, some have questioned the ability of peacebuilding efforts to achieve their underlying objective: a sustainable, just and lasting peace. In relation to legitimacy, others have seriously questioned the morality of peacebuilding, arguing that it has become a new form of control and power exercised by Northern countries over Southern countries and others on the periphery that are affected by war.

In recent years, some authors have injected the debate with more constructive criticism, calling for a bottom-up peacebuilding logic, led from the local level, which understands peace as an emancipatory effort of the people who have suffered from war ("everyday" peace). This peacebuilding logic is driven by local power and agency and aims to build a set of social, community, ethnic and institutional structures that promote peace within a framework of rights. From this perspective, local proposals – with their community and ethnic logic based on custom and tradition, as well as an understanding of peace close to the concept of a dignified life – are combined with a political framework of institutional arrangements and organisational structures based on liberal principles and political values and the logic of representation and democracy inherent in states governed by the rule of law. This combination of local elements, normative frameworks and liberal structures generates a broad set of hybrid arrangements that are enriching state-building and state formation processes in many contexts, particularly at the local level. This does not necessarily reject the contributions that can be made by international actors based on liberal frameworks, but it does demand that these international practices be implemented on the basis of local peace efforts, proposals and agendas, without rendering them irrelevant.[2]

This new vision of peacebuilding not only generates more effective and legitimate peacebuilding processes, but also better reflects the reality of how peace is being achieved in the world. From the experience in Nariño, and in dialogue with Hopp-Nishanka's argumentation (in this volume), a set of conclusions can be drawn for future reflection.

Peacebuilding must be based and rooted in local level peace infrastructures; this gives peace its address and its legitimacy. It also means that innovative social coalitions which can generate peace infrastructures should be promoted by the local state and local civil society and supported by international actors. The peace infrastructures at the national level should recognise these local efforts as the foundations of any peacebuilding effort. Moreover, local level peace infrastructures not only provides opportunities for the management and transformation of conflicts, but can also constitute real peacebuilding efforts in the sense of building the legitimacy of the state from the local level based on the agency, agendas and desires of local state and non-state actors. These efforts are crucial to processes of social transformation based on a democratic logic that promotes peace based on peoples' everyday lives.

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2 For more on this debate see, Newman et al. 2009; Philpott et al. 2010; Richmond et al. 2010; Richmond 2011; Campbell et al. 2011; and Tadjbakhsh et al. 2010.

It is important not to forget that local level peace infrastructures are generally not promoted in ideal contexts; rather, they are promoted in contexts in which "war infrastructures" predominate – for example the invisible actors and interconnections that support the trafficking of drugs in Nariño. So it is necessary to develop and support local level peace infrastructures on the basis of a clear conception and political analysis of their importance and potential in opposition to war infrastructures, identifying the risks, dangers and opportunities for peacebuilding. The relationship between the peace-supporting infrastructures and the war-supporting infrastructures is a key point for further inquiry.

Besides being an expression of local agency and autonomy, sub-national peace infrastructures based on innovative social coalitions have the potential to create strategic platforms for peacebuilding (in the sense used by John Paul Lederach 1997, 2005). This is true for four main reasons. First, peace infrastructures have a multi-level dimension by which local actors and national and international actors connect. Second, they have a temporal dimension, connecting the identity, history and memory of local actors (the past, their roots) with short-, medium- and long-term proposals and agendas for change, as well as visions and dreams of the future (as expressed in the Life Plans of ethnic communities, and recognised in the several of Nariño's public policies). Third, the concept and practice of local peace infrastructure can lead to a more legitimate and effective peace provided that it is not forgotten that the infrastructure must constitute an expression of the critical agencies of grassroots, community, social, ethnic actors and the local state, and that it must be based on a concept of peace that does not ignore the everyday dimension of how peace is understood by these grassroots actors. And fourth, local peace infrastructures create the local platform where peace and national peace infrastructures become contextualised. In this way, for example, any peace agreement that may come out of the current negotiations between the Colombian Government and FARC-EP may be contextualised and rooted in local realities, aspirations and agendas.

Local peace initiatives which create social coalitions for peacebuilding and peace infrastructures give peace a local address, bringing sub-national issues and ideas to the national level, and contextualising and rooting local realities, aspirations and agendas in national policies and peace agreements.

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Circularity, Transversality and the Usefulness of New Concepts

Reflection on the Response Articles

Ulrike Hopp-Nishanka

Content

1 Introduction

It has been nearly a year since the first draft of my lead article "Giving Peace and Address?" was discussed. In the meantime, the academic debate as well as the practical development of the concept has moved forward. More research is being planned, and new articles consider the topic.[1] There are efforts to establish internet platforms and databases to promote practitioner exchange and to gather more insights on peace infrastructures and their various elements. Donors increasingly show interest in the nascent concept as a way to implement peacebuilding assistance; at the time of writing this final reflection, assessment missions are exploring the potential of supporting peace infrastructures in situations of acute crisis, for example in Mali, or aim to improve their support to existing ones, as in Nepal and in Afghanistan.

More importantly, however, peace infrastructures in many countries and regions are active on a daily basis, quietly helping to make people's lives safer and mitigating violent conflict without much ado – and without great awareness or interest in the complications of conceptualisation and abstraction. Against this background, tensions between actual hands-on peace work and the more distant reflection and conceptualisation are inevitable and questions arise: does the concept of peace infrastructure really add value to on-going efforts in conflict transformation? Or does it, once again, add to interventionism and the over-simplification of the art and soul of building peace?

The authors of the response articles to my lead article indicate that, yes, the conceptual debate is valuable in helping us to understand and strengthen efforts to build lasting structures that support peace. At the same time, the response articles also underline that it is important not to see this debate as an effort to reinvent the wheel, or to needlessly contrive a new concept from existing ones. I could not agree more with these words of caution, and indeed most of the other comments from the authors of the response articles. I am very grateful for both their practical additions as well as for their theoretical deliberations. Their insights and critical thinking help strengthen the concept.

In my final reflection, I would first like to pick up three suggestions from the debate in this dialogue issue which are useful as additions and clarifications to the concept. Then I would like to comment on two critical aspects that are raised by the respondents in their articles: the challenges of (liberal) peacebuilding interventions and the criticism of a presumed top-down approach. Since these two aspects are common concerns in any peacebuilding discourse, it is important to consider their relevance for the concept of peace infrastructure.

2 Additions and Clarifications

With regard to the three additions, I find some of Hannes Siebert's remarks very helpful for furthering our concept's development. In the following section I will elaborate on the non-linearity of conflict, informal elements of peace infrastructure, and peace infrastructure as a system.

In my discussion of the key characteristics of peace infrastructure, I suggested that their elements can be found at different stages of violent conflict. For purpose of visualisation, I used the well-known bell-shaped curve (Hopp-Nishanka in this volume, 5). The resulting figure in my article might be read as a sequence of peace infrastructure elements and that, of course, would be too simplistic. A circular visualisation would have been more appropriate. Siebert rightly points out the many possible sequences

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[1] For example Dube & Makwerere (2012). Additionally, the Journal for Peacebuilding and Development has announced a special issue on Infrastructures for Peace forthcoming in 2013.

of establishing elements of peace infrastructure (in this volume, 36). Following his lead, I propose an alternative understanding. Based on Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall's discussion of a conflict life cycle (1999, 16), Dudouet develops a *conflict transformation cycle* (2006, 21) in which I would suggest we can situate various elements of peace infrastructure that cover certain stages of the life cycle or accompany the process throughout.

Here I use the same elements of peace infrastructure as in the introduction article; these serve as examples only. The graph shows that there is no fixed sequence for infrastructure elements and that elements might coincide. While some of the elements are established at a certain point in the cycle, e.g. peace ministries mostly after the settlement of conflict, local peace councils and national dialogue platforms can often be found throughout the cycle. Many dialogue platforms, however, are initiated during mitigation or are considered "post-conflict" whereas local peace councils are often meant to prevent further escalation of conflict and violence.
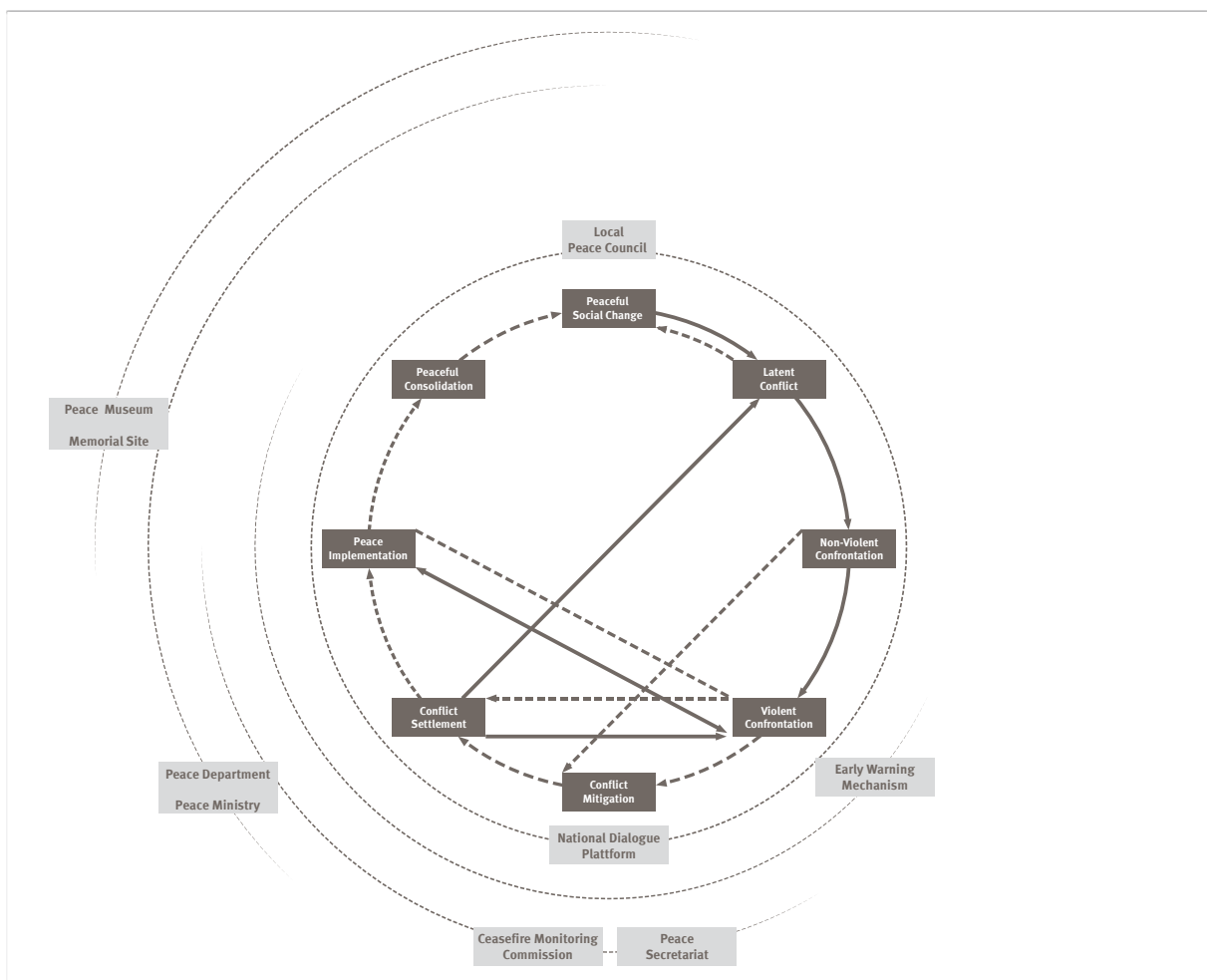

Figure 1: Elements of peace infrastructure along a conflict transformation cycle (adapted from Dudouet 2006, 21).

The danger of using such a cycle might be the temptation to see peace infrastructure as a one-size-fits-all approach. In order to ensure the functionality of the infrastructure and the sustainability of its efforts, it remains important to consider the specific opportunities and limitations that arise at different stages in the conflict cycle. Thus, while some elements like local peace councils might be found at many stages of the cycle, other elements have a distinct role during conflict and so are located in a specific part of the cycle. Again, though, this visualisation is meant to help us understand the general idea rather than prescribe specific timings and sequences for peace infrastructure.

A concept dealing with organisational structures tends to focus on the formal, and we might overlook the informal dimensions of infrastructures that could complement the formal ones and which are often essential for the functionality of the peace infrastructure. Siebert (in this volume, 33) reminds us that these *informal elements*, for instance dialogue networks, are particularly important as safety nets in times of crisis. It might therefore be useful to add to the understanding of key characteristics of peace infrastructure that their elements might be "found at all levels and peacebuilding tracks and show various forms of integration" (Hopp-Nishanka in this volume, 5), but that they are often complemented and safeguarded by informal structures. We should, however, be aware that such informal networks might also compete with and contradict formal infrastructure.

Reading carefully, I note a certain inconsistency in the terminology of peace infrastructure in my own article as well as in the response articles. We meander between structures and infrastructure, its elements and parts. Here, I would like to pick up a metaphor used by Kai Brand-Jacobsen[2] in personal communication that helps dealing with the difficulty of distinction. It is useful to read the term peace infrastructure as referring to a *system* involving the sum of its elements as well as describing *single parts* of that system.

While I have tried in my text to differentiate between the infrastructure as a whole and its organisational elements, readers might find it difficult to understand how the key characteristics of peace infrastructure as a system refer to its elements. In that case, Brand-Jacobsen's comparison with health system, or health infrastructure, is helpful. He points out that we understand hospitals, medics and midwifes as individual health actors that are elements of a health system, but which do not individually have to fulfil the functions and characteristics of the overall system. Thus, a local peace council will be different from a peace ministry since they fulfil different functions as elements of peace infrastructure, but peace infrastructures as systems in different countries and regions will display similar elements. After these additions and clarifications, let me now turn to the discussion of the challenges that the concept of peace infrastructure has to deal with.

3 The Risks of Peace Infrastructure

Oliver Richmond is correct to spell out the dangers of peace infrastructure being just the latest fad of an international peacebuilding industry that all too easily follows the mantras of liberal peacebuilding. He points to risks of instrumentalising the concept or implementing it in a technocratic way, and I fully agree with him. Peace infrastructure must not be externally prescribed, used as a blueprint, or as a tool of domination and manipulation from abroad or above.

I do, however, have one concern. All too often we find in the debate on liberal peacebuilding and its criticism a distinction between "the international" as dominating, hegemonic and quasi-colonial and "the local" as the authentic, indigenous and legitimate. While I exaggerate here, of course, it is important to realise that the lines are not drawn that clearly. Just as some "Northern" or "external" researchers and practitioners are critical of liberal peacebuilding ideas, some of the actors present in and hailing from conflict zones – the domestic or local stakeholders – will subscribe to and benefit from the liberal peacebuilding industry. We therefore have to take a close look at actors and stakeholders to be engaged in peace infrastructure, as well as in any other peace making or peacebuilding effort. This carefulness, however, must not rule out engagement with government.

The conceptualisation of peace infrastructure has seen considerable discussion of the role of government versus the role of civil society, and some readers might find too much mention of the first and

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2   Director of Department of Peace Operations, Peace Action Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR).

too little of the latter. While I have explained the roles of both in peace infrastructure, it seems useful to again reflect on the role of government actors, given the risks pointed out by the respondents.

First, government approaches towards peace infrastructure tend to be top-down. Such an approach led by government bodies at the national level might lead to a disconnection between national-level interests and local needs. As Paladini Adell's (in this volume, 45) presentation of the Colombian peace infrastructure shows, the existing peace infrastructure at the national level is not able (or intended?) to address this disconnection. We should certainly take care to ensure there is sufficient space for local level actors where a strong national level infrastructure exists. Whereas sometimes missing linkages can be created within an infrastructure, in other situations efforts to reconnect the agendas and build connections must take place outside of formal peace infrastructure.

Second, governments might lack the necessary sincerity given the vested interests of the decision makers. Of course, the involvement of government bodies in peace infrastructure requires – at all levels – a minimum degree of political will for engagement, for state actors as much as all other stakeholders. Here, a clear understanding of political economies is required, as well as of the stakeholders' investment in the opposite of peace infrastructure: "war infrastructure" (ibid., 51). Again, though, it strikes me that both arguments do not only refer to government but also to other parts of society. I therefore underline Richmond's notion of the transversality of both peace and conflict: their drivers can be found across the binaries of grassroots–top level, powerless–elite, state–civil society, periphery–centre, or local–international. In the end, our positions might be not that different since Richmond concludes, "ultimately, the state itself should become the peace infrastructure" (in this volume, 28). Building on Richmond's closing remark, I will in the following section spell out in more detail two relevant aspects of my understanding of peace infrastructure: the self-transformative role of peace infrastructure and, on the other side of the coin, the process aspect of establishing or forming infrastructure.

4 Self–Transformation and Combining Process and Structure

Peace infrastructure – as the stakeholders' contribution to conflict transformation – has the difficult task of *transforming itself*. Let me explain what I mean. Returning to the metaphor of the healthcare system, we should not see peace infrastructure's elements as a midwife who assists a birthing mother, but rather as the doctor who performs surgery on himself. Or we could regard it, using the image of metamorphosis, as a caterpillar that emerges as a butterfly from its cocoon – although this image might be too soothing for the painful realities of violent conflict.

In this self-transformative and transcending sense, the Ghanaian government's peace promotion officers and the peacebuilding support unit within the Ministry of Interior not only support peacebuilding or peace formation actors "out there", but also, and perhaps even more importantly, create awareness among their own ranks, focusing on conflict sensitivity, coherence and accountability within the government.

Given the need to enhance the legitimacy of state actors, in fragile contexts this self-transformative aspect within government becomes even more important yet at the same time less likely. This is exactly why it is important, however, to include the state in a comprehensive peace infrastructure. While stressing this point, I agree with those who are cautious about the government contribution: state actors alone should not be responsible for peace infrastructure. And we need to accept that state inclusion might not be desirable in all situations. There are also situations where the state does not act constructively and

other stakeholders are too weak to engage and address the state's shortcomings within a collaborative infrastructure.

Hand in hand with the transformative understanding goes the *process aspect* of infrastructure. Of course a number of forums, councils or secretariats at different levels might well build a network of relevant actors and institutions, but they need to be seen in the context of their interaction. It is not their physical, material presence alone but the very process of their action and interaction that can contribute to conflict transformation. Without that, they remain empty shells, or risk being captured and instrumentalised for partisan interests. Siebert underlines this point by stating that only those organisations and structures that "are the very structures and mechanisms that constitute the 'process' itself" deserve to be part of infrastructure (in this volume, 32). Some will ask, then: Why not focus on process alone and leave aside the problematic organisational aspects? Why focus on infrastructure anyway?

In my view, the structural aspects are relevant since they can impact significantly on the way in which stakeholders engage in the process. In my article I outlined several examples of how organisation matters in terms of inclusiveness, legitimacy and mandate, or leadership. Excluding stakeholders in a dialogue setting, in particular, might well ruin the process altogether. The term organisation, in fact, brings together perspectives of process, function and institution. Returning to the criticism of liberal peacebuilding, however, we need to be aware of the pitfalls of organisation-building and institution-building. All too often externally induced and funded parallel structures and organisations inhibit domestic capacities and ownership. New organisations are established in order to start with a clean slate, or to adhere to donors' funding regulations. This undermines on-going efforts, frustrates invested stakeholders and weakens local capacities for peacebuilding.

In order to engage peace infrastructure appropriately and effectively, it is necessary to pay close attention to the organisation of peace and dialogue processes, to build on existing structures and cultures, and strengthen their organisation. To this aim, we need to understand the potentials and pitfalls of peace infrastructure in detail. This dialogue series is one step in that direction.

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