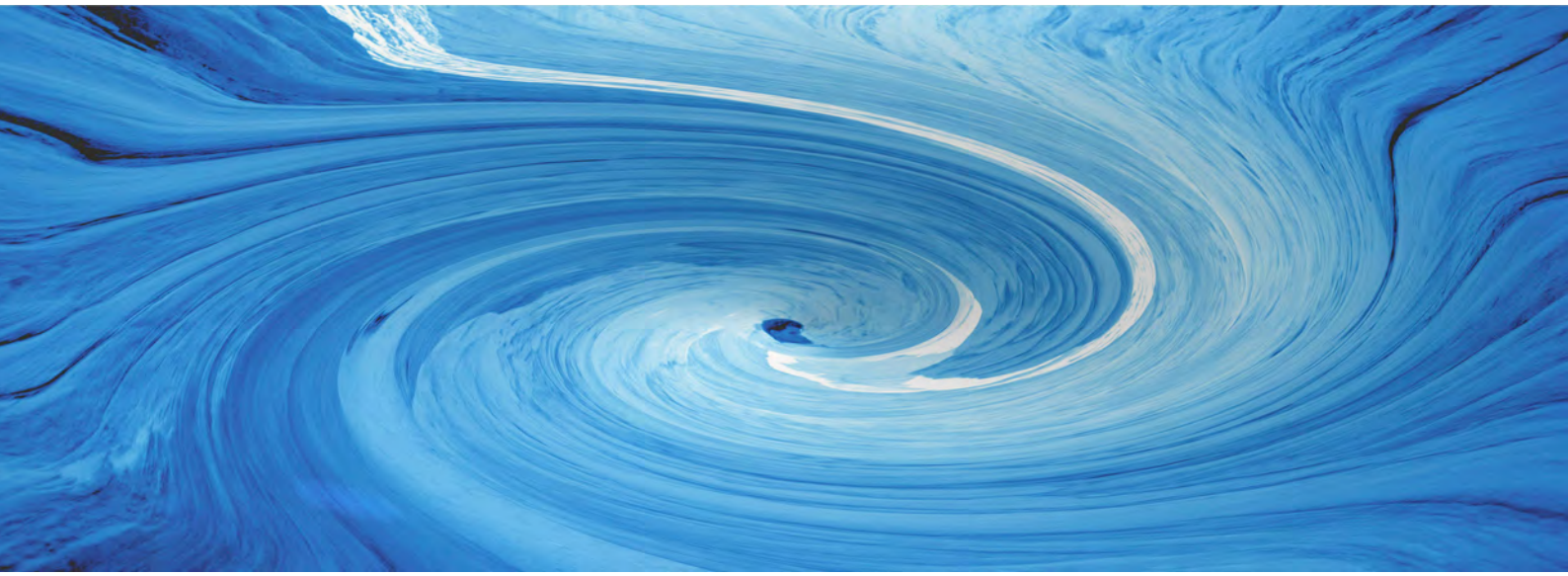

Local-International Relations and the Recalibration of Peacebuilding Interventions

Insights from the 'Laboratory' of Bougainville and Beyond

Volker Boege / Patricia Rinck / Tobias Debiel

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Insights from the 'Laboratory' of Bougainville and Beyond

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ABSTRACT

Boege, Volker/Rinck, Patricia/Debiel, Tobias: Local-International Relations and the Recalibration of Peacebuilding Interventions. Insights from the 'Laboratory' of Bougainville and Beyond. Duisburg: Institute for Development and Peace, University of Duisburg-Essen (INEF Report, 112/2017).

The report addresses the micro-level as a key dimension of post-conflict peacebuilding interventions, with a particular focus on the relationships and interactions of international and local actors. What changes do occur with regard to their perceptions, expectations, attitudes and activities in the course of interactions? Can we identify experiences and mechanisms that lead to a re-articulation of relationships and interactions and, consequently, a recalibration of the overall peacebuilding exercise, e.g. with regard to more (or less) cooperation, more (or less) mutual trust, more (or less) animosities and misunderstandings, and more (or less) legitimacy? These questions are addressed through an in-depth case study, at the core of which are narrative, problem-centred interviews with international and local actors who were and/or are engaged in the peacebuilding process on Bougainville. Bougainville is regarded as a kind of 'laboratory' in which international/local relations and interactions are rather direct, because national institutions play a relatively small role, and external actors are present upon invitation not only by national, but also local actors. The exploration of the Bougainville case is complemented by a plausibility probe in a case with contrasting conditions, Sierra Leone.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Report sieht die Mikro-Ebene des Post-Conflict Peacebuilding als zentrale Untersuchungsdimension für externe Interventionen an. Ein besonderes Augenmerk liegt auf den Beziehungen und Interaktionen internationaler und lokaler Akteure. Welche Änderungen ergeben sich hinsichtlich ihrer Perzeptionen, Erwartungen, Einstellungen und Aktivitäten im Verlauf dieser Interaktionen? Können wir Erfahrungen und Mechanismen identifizieren, die zu einer Neubestimmung von Beziehungen und Interaktionen führen? Kommt es folglich zu einer Neujustierung der gesamten Peacebuilding-Unternehmung, so etwa mit Bezug auf mehr (oder weniger) Kooperation, mehr (oder weniger) wechselseitigem Vertrauen, mehr (oder weniger) Animositäten und Missverständnisse, und mehr (oder weniger) Legitimität? Eine vertiefende Fallstudie zu Bougainville behandelt diese Fragen. Sie basiert wesentlich auf narrativen, problemzentrierten Interviews mit internationalen und lokalen Akteuren, die im entsprechenden Peacebuilding-Prozess engagiert waren bzw. noch sind. Bougainville wird dabei als eine Art "Laboratorium" betrachtet, in dem international-lokale Beziehungen und Interaktionen ziemlich unmittelbar stattfinden, denn nationale Institutionen spielen hier eine vergleichsweise geringe Rolle, und externe Akteure kamen auf Einladung nicht nur nationaler, sondern auch lokaler Akteure vor Ort. Die explorative Studie zu Bougainville wird ergänzt durch eine Plausibilitätsprobe zu Sierra Leone, wo sich in vielerlei Hinsicht abweichende oder entgegengesetzte Ausgangsbedingungen finden.

Content

1. Introduction

Over the last decade, the academic debate about peacebuilding has had its focus on what has been called the 'liberal peace' and its critique (Paris/Sisk 2009; Newman/Paris/Richmond 2009; Paris 2010; Richmond 2011a; Tadjbakhsh 2011; Campbell/Chandler/Sabaratnam 2011; Mac Ginty 2013). More recently, both critiques of the critique and attempts to take the critique a step further, into the terrain of alternatives to the liberal peace, have introduced new aspects into the debate (Chandler 2011, 2013; 2014; Mac Ginty 2011; Richmond 2013, 2015; Richmond/Mitchell 2012; Richmond/Mac Ginty 2015; Mac Ginty 2015; Paffenholz 2015; Kappler 2015; Henrizi 2015; Mac Ginty/Richmond 2016; Finkenbusch 2016; Randazzo 2016). A case for peacebuilding 'post' or beyond the liberal peace is made by referring to notions of hybridity, 'the local' and 'the everyday', adapting them to the peacebuilding field and introducing concepts such as hybrid forms of peace, hybrid political orders, local-liberal peace or everyday peace (Richmond 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Richmond/Mitchell 2012; Mac Ginty 2011, 2015; Boege et al. 2009, Boege/Brown/Nolan 2009).

In this context, a twofold reorientation of the peacebuilding discourse has become particularly prominent: the emancipation from the fixation on 'the state' and the turn to 'the local'. Such a refocussing of the peacebuilding discourse has profound consequences for (the conceptualisation of) the role of international peacebuilding actors (Richmond 2012a). In the dominant liberal peacebuilding approach, peacebuilding was very much supply- (rather than demand-) driven, with the internationals bringing the message and the instruments of peace from the outside into environments and situations which required peacebuilding. Peacebuilding was a project of governmentality and technocracy, an exercise in social engineering and technical implementation (Donais 2009; Mac Ginty 2012; Jabri 2013). This variant of Global Governance led to a 'self-deception' regarding the possibilities of external actors to impact on local realities (Debiel/Lambach 2009). On the one hand, it largely overestimated the power and capabilities of the internationals involved in this 'peacebuilding-as-statebuilding' (Richmond 2011a) project, and on the other hand, largely underestimated or ignored power and capabilities of the locals.

By contrast, the turn to the local is accompanied by the acknowledgement of local agency and resilience as being of major significance for peacebuilding. Through various forms of agency – obstruction, resistance, subversion, capture, re-appropriation, co-optation, adoption, adaptation, mimicry, redirection etc. – local actors are able to appropriate international agendas and resources for their own purposes, according to their own functional logics and political economy. As a consequence, it is acknowledged that the locals are worth engaging with, and that it is necessary to engage with them. This local turn, however, has its limitations and pitfalls, given its potential instrumentalisation for non-peaceful purposes, its rhetorical and legitimising utilisation, its bureaucratic, ideological and epistemological confines, as well as constraints grounded in power relations and power politics (Chandler 2013; Mac Ginty/Richmond 2013). Furthermore, it can lead to the evasion of responsibility and accountability on the part of the internationals, or the modernisation of counterinsurgency strategies (Moe 2014).

Still, the local turn opens avenues for exploring new approaches in the scholarly discourse on peacebuilding. This report contributes to such an exploration. It conceptualises peacebuilding as an interface and a field of contestation and politics. Such a relational approach emphasises interactions, exchange and flows over structures and entities and overcomes linear, cause-and-effect conceptualisations of social processes (in this case: peacebuilding) in favour of non-linear notions of complexity, networks and the emergence of hybrid forms of peace and governance (Urry 2003, 2005; de Coning 2013). It builds on an ontology of relationships and performativity, a relational, liminal and integrative understanding of peacebuilding (Lederach 2005; Albrecht/Moe 2014; Brigg 2014, 2016; Hunt 2017) which can be conceptualised as "working across division and through cross-cultural engagement" (Chadwick/Debiel/Gadinger 2013: 8). As a consequence, peacebuilding becomes a mutual learning exercise – instead of a one-sided implementation exercise (Brigg/Bleiker 2011). Accordingly, the significance of 'relational sensibility' is foregrounded (Brigg 2008, 2013; Chadwick/Debiel/Gadinger 2013).

This report engages with these aspects of the current peacebuilding debate and at the same time steers the debate into so far largely uncharted waters. It digs deep into the local-international friction sites (Schia/Karlsrud 2013) which are so decisive for the emergence (or otherwise) of sustainable forms of effective and legitimate peace and order. Our research takes on board a key message from former research, namely that the presence (or absence) of ´shared mental models' (Denzau/North 1994) influences the nature and success of post-conflict peacebuilding processes at the local/national interface (Debiel et al. 2009), in short: that 'soft' factors matter. We thus assume that different or even contradictory as well as converging local and international understandings of peace(building) are highly relevant for external interventions which are carried out with the intention to support local peacebuilding practices. But we do not know yet in which way exactly. Hence the report aims at filling this knowledge gap by exploring (changes in) local-international interactions and the accompanying narratives. Its findings on this crucial issue can inform future practical attempts of more self-reflective and locally connected international peacebuilding support.

2. Engaging with the Local-International Dichotomy

While our research flows from major assumptions of post-liberal peacebuilding scholarship and the associated 'turn to the local', it also sets out to question the local-international dichotomy that still is prevalent in this debate. We are going to disentangle 'the local' and 'the international' and reveal a polyphony of stories and narratives on both sides of the divide.

We start by stating the obvious, namely that 'the local(s)' are far from being homogenous, neatly delineated or static: among the locals there are differences of power, age, gender, social status etc., and there is a myriad of connections that link the local(s) with the world beyond the locale, while 'locals' frequently circulate across borders, regions and roles. Nevertheless, a significant marker of

being 'local' in fragile peacebuilding settings is, of course, the involvement in the previous violent conflict, of being conflict-affected - as victim or perpetrator, or as victim-turned-perpetrator (or vice versa), as combatant or civilian, as refugee or internally displaced, as directly affected or with close links to directly affected people. Another equally significant marker is the sense of life-long belonging – to a specific place and a group of people bound by kinship ties, shared customs and culture, with a deep connection to 'land' – with 'land' for many people(s) in the Global South not just being a material/physical reality, but imbued with cultural, spiritual, metaphysical qualities. These groups of peoplethink of themselves and present themselves as locals — and are perceived as such by outsiders. Hence it does make sense, as a starting point, to differentiate the local(s) from the realm of the non-local(s). In particular, we have to take note of local actors who do not fit into the Western liberal format of either 'state' or 'civil society' or 'business/economy', acknowledging the relevance of the "local local" (Richmond 2012b: 6), which in particular refers to the customary sphere of local societies and its institutions and actors like chiefs, healers, traditional authorities, religious leaders, customary laws, vigilantes, clan and lineage affiliations.

Not to forget though that being 'local' is not just a natural given, but also actively constructed as "a way of positioning oneself in wider peacebuilding networks […] 'local identity' […] evolves and develops contextually in the networked interplay between a jigsaw of actors who situate themselves in relation to, and differentiated from, other actors in their field of activity" (Kappler 2015: 884). Being local can be a valuable economic and political resource in the context of peacebuilding interventions.

In a similar vein, the report disentangles the realm of 'the international(s)'. This does not only mean differentiating between different types of international actors and their varying approaches to and roles in peacebuilding (e.g. the United Nations (UN) and its various agencies, regional organisations, international financial institutions, and international nongovernmental organisations (NGOs)), but also the diverse layers of international institutions, from the metropolitan 'headquarters' through the 'base camp' in the capital of the intervened-upon country to the 'bush offices' in the field (Schlichte/Veit 2007). We explored how actors at these different levels develop their own sense of belonging and engage differently with the local(s).

Notwithstanding these differentiations within the international 'camp', it is important to understand that the 'locals' see the personnel of all the different organisations which come in from the outside in support of peacebuilding – despite the multiple differences between them – as outsiders, foreigners, strangers, internationals, expats; and these actors themselves know that they are seen that way, and they define themselves as such. They come in from the outside (or some of them actually operate from the outside) and they will leave and go 'home' (wherever that may be) sooner or later. Most importantly, they can leave whenever things on the ground get dangerous, while locals cannot (Hug 2016: 310). Peacebuilders as well continue to "inhabit a separate world with its own time, space, and economics – and, even more importantly, its own system of meaning" (Autesserre 2014: 5) – 'Peaceland' as Severine Autesserre has called it. As inhabitants of this 'Peaceland' bubble the internationals thus

remain distinct from the locals whom they have to deal with in their peacebuilding efforts.

At the same time, however, it has to be acknowledged that the international and the local are not hermetically separated from each other. Rather, in times of all-encompassing globalisation, the local is (and the locals are) linked to the international through a plethora of connections and more or less imbued with international (which means: Western liberal) politics, economics, culture, values and norms. Additionally on the other hand, the international has its own 'local' from where it generates and threads itself into other localities – in our case the local sites of internationally supported peacebuilding (capital cities of intervening countries, UN headquarters in New York etc.), in the process becoming more or less affected by local culture.

The local and the international are constituted, changed and transformed through their relation (Kappler 2014: 22). They are not local or international by themselves, but the local becomes local in relation to the international (and national), and the international in relation to the local (and national). They "are co-constitutive of each other and as such cannot be seen as separate parts of a binary. They are relational concepts [...]" (Mac Ginty 2016: 207). It only makes sense to talk about something (or somebody) as being local (or an insider) in relation to the non-local (or outsider): the national, regional – or international. The same applies to talk about the international.

The boundaries of 'the international' and 'the local' are porous and blurred, with the local infused with the international, and the international with the local (Kappler 2014: 40). There is nothing and nobody purely local (or international). The local(s) and the non-local(s) are enmeshed. The "same place (e.g. an NGO's office) can be local, national and international or global at the same time, depending on the positioning and perception of people" (Henrizi 2015: 88). Locals working for an international nongovernmentalal organisation (INGO) in such an office, for example, remain embedded in their kinship networks, while at the same time taking in the rationale and agenda of 'their'INGO. On the other hand, the internationals can only operate by entering the local, and through being present in the locale, they become part of its social fabric. Members of an INGO who work on the ground in a post-conflict environment remain embedded in its structures and adhere to its rationale, while at the same time adjusting to and having to adjust to the local environment and getting involved in local power struggles etc.

Hence, the internationals cannot be conceptualised (solely) as outsiders apart from the locale and the locals, and the locals cannot be conceptualised as merely local apart from the international (Kappler 2014: 4). The locale as the site of power relations, of contestation about peace and peacebuilding, is co-created and shared by a variety of actors and institutions, and is thus hybrid and emergent in itself. It is further characterised by a complex and fluid mixture of friction, competition, complementarity and collaboration of various actors: state institutions, communities, societal actors and international agencies (Mac Ginty 2015; Kappler 2014).

At the same time, however, "we cannot completely deterritorialise the local. It retains a physical meaning [: homes, food gardens, bus stops, roads, schools,

markets, shops etc.: these spaces] are often very difficult for outsiders to access. They are often zones of informality, yet also the places where important interactions take place [...]" (Mac Ginty 2016: 205) – interactions that not least are important for everyday peacebuilding – beyond the grip of outsiders/internationals.

The internationals have difficulties to access the local. They are "poorly equipped to see the local" (ibid.: 207), not only because of lack of access, but also because of "epistemological biases" (ibid.: 207). They are "likely to attempt to read the local in terms that are familiar to the organisational culture of the aid agency, intelligence agency or international organisation – even though these terms may be meaningless to the local society" (ibid.: 201). Moreover, internationals' access is often controlled by locals who act as gatekeepers and who can use this position for manipulation of who the internationals can get in contact with, which information they get, who they select as partners, staff, or beneficiaries etc. (Hug 2016: 63, 318). At the same time, these gatekeepers are generally close to 'the organisational culture' of the internationals and thus enhance the effects of ´reading the local´ in terms familiar to the internationals. They have the power to pick certain locals (over others) and thus influencing the internationals' reading of the local (Hirblinger/Simons 2015). On the other hand, they of course can also be valuable bridge-builders between the international and the local, as they are familiar with both worlds and capable to translate between them, with translation, however, opening possibilities for manipulation.

3. Research Design

The core of the report consists of an in-depth exploration of peacebuilding in Bougainville. From 1989 to 1998, the island of Bougainville, which is part of the independent state of Papua New Guinea (PNG), was the theatre of a war of secession between the security forces of the national government of PNG (and Bougainville auxiliaries) and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA). After this war, Bougainville has undergone a comprehensive process of post-conflict peacebuilding, which is still ongoing and which has been regarded as relatively successful so far. Currently, Bougainville is an autonomous region within PNG, with its own constitution and its own government, the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG). Political leaders and the people of Bougainville today are approaching a decisive and critical stage in the peacebuilding process, with a referendum on independence scheduled for 15 June 2019.[1]

Given the broadly-perceived crisis in many peacebuilding missions of the past decades, Bougainville stands out as a success story, as both the international discourse and a wide range of local actors agree (Boege 2011, 2013). International peacebuilding support comprised a civil-military intervention of a multinational Truce Monitoring Group (TMG) / Peace Monitoring Group (PMG) in its early stages (1997 to 2003), plus a small UN Observer Mission from 1998 to 2005. After the stabilisation of the security situation on the ground, a considerable number

[1] For overviews on the war on Bougainville and on post-conflict peacebuilding, see Regan 2010; Braithwaite et al. 2010; Carl/Garasu 2002; Breen 2016.

of foreign development agencies, international NGOs and UN programmes and institutions became active on Bougainville in support of reconstruction, rehabilitation and peacebuilding.

Its insularity as well as its smallness[2] as well as the particular role of national institutions and external actors make Bougainville a kind of a peacebuilding 'laboratory'.[3] The notion of 'laboratory' is used here in a metaphorical sense – and certainly not to portray Bougainville as a laboratory for external actors trying to build peace (valid critiques of the peacebuilding 'experiment' in Kosovo come to mind here).[4] More concretely, Bougainville offers rare scope conditions in which certain intervening variables have limited influence so that the processes the project is interested in can be observed in a particularly clear way. To begin with, peacebuilding on the island was and is carried out mostly detached from outside interferences. External influence on Bougainville exists, but is mainly confined to actors who are present upon the invitation of national and local actors and pursue planned and transparent peacebuilding and development agendas. Furthermore, international/local relations and interactions are rather direct, given the weakness of the presence and influence of the central government and of PNG state institutions on the ground.

In addition, the report sheds light on international-local peacebuilding relations beyond Bougainville and explores whether similar processes can (or cannot) be found in other settings. For the purpose of this report, we have chosen Sierra Leone as a contrasting case for comparison. Sierra Leone is one of the best-known cases of international peacebuilding, with massive external engagement and (at least at first sight) comprehensive external control. The national government played a strong role throughout the peacebuilding process and mediated the interactions between international and local actors. The peace processes of Bougainville and Sierra Leone took place roughly at the same time, but while Bougainville peacebuilding was somehow running under the radar, Sierra Leone was much more in the international limelight and under pressure to succeed. Different from Bougainville peacebuilding, the intervention in Sierra Leone followed the typical liberal institutionalist model with a focus on stabilisation and statebuilding as well as governance reforms. It was largely an elite-led process focused on institution building at the national level.

Both cases have remained relatively peaceful after the end of the war and are considered success stories of peacebuilding, but the peace processes and hence the outcomes differ considerably from each other. In this report, we explore in how far the processes and factors identified from the Bougainville case study played a role in Sierra Leone as well, work out differences between the two approaches and reflect on the benefits of a relational approach to peacebuilding.

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2 Bougainville is an island of approximately 9000 sq. km, the size of Cyprus, with approximately 300,000 inhabitants.

3 For similar reasons, Bougainville has also been previously selected as a case study in the context of constitution building, see e.g. Ghai/Regan 2006.

4 Our metaphorical use of the term 'laboratory' is partly inspired by, but not identical with, Law's understanding, who sees laboratories as important in creating and maintaining social structures of meaning, since information "is being created, collected, assembled, transcribed, transported to, simplified and juxtaposed in a single location, a centre, a panopticon, […] where everything that is relevant can be seen" (2003: 8).

4. Methodological and Conceptual Considerations

The Bougainville in-depth single case study is based on interviews with a broad spectrum of internationals and locals who were engaged in local-international peacebuilding interactions, particularly during the immediate post-conflict phase 1997–2005, but also afterwards. The international/local peacebuilding exchanges were explored by tracing the accounts of actors directly involved at the local/international interface. In a first round of research, a combination of narrative and problem-centred interviews was conducted (Scheibelhofer 2008; Witzel/Reiter 2012). In general, both interview types were combined, usually with a more open narrative first part and a semi-structured problem-centred second part (Scheibelhofer 2008). Although it was ensured (by means of topic guides) that all relevant issues were covered, the narrative character of the interviews provided space for the presentation of individual stories. At the same time, interviewees were asked to tell the story of their involvement in peacebuilding and their engagement with other actors.

The aim of the interviews was not to uncover the 'reality' of or the 'truth' about the peacebuilding intervention, but the perceptions, experiences and narratives of the peacebuilding actors. These perceptions, experiences and narratives themselves were supposed to have a major impact on the understanding(s) and conduct of the peacebuilding intervention – they are 'realities' and 'truths' in their own right which might influence the success (or otherwise) of the intervention. Accordingly, interviewees were not treated as 'witnesses' of events and processes detached from their selves, but they themselves – their perceptions, experiences and assessments – were at the centre of research. In other words, the aim was not to get the story 'straight', but to "get the story crooked" (Kellner 1989: vii).

The selection of interviewees followed the logic of purposeful sampling. It was informed by the theoretical-conceptual approach of the research and built on the familiarity of the researcher (and his local research partners) with the situation on the ground. Altogether, 63 interviews were conducted and analysed: 32 interviews with 'internationals' and 31 interviews with 'locals', consisting of around 65% men and 35 % women.

As we have pointed out before, 'the international' and 'the local' were further differentiated – an effort that has seldom been made in empirical research so far. Given that the TMG/PMG was comprised of both military and civilian personnel, men and women, from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Vanuatu, the different experiences, perceptions and assessments of civilians and soldiers, women and men, Australians and New Zealanders and others were recorded. On the side of the 'locals', we captured the experiences, perceptions and assessments of men and women, military and political leaders, traditional authorities and civil society representatives, chief negotiators, and people from different Bougainvillean conflict parties.

The 'internationals' comprised of former members of the TMG/PMG and the UN mission, as well as diplomats, aid workers and members of international

peacebuilding NGOs (25 male and seven female). They were mostly Australians (15 interviewees) or New Zealanders (12 interviewees). Other UN personnel came from Fiji, Vanuatu, Barbados and Belarus. Both civilians and military personnel were interviewed. The latter comprised of a mix of high-ranking TMG/PMG officers (including three commanders) and young officers at team sites, male and female. The civilians interviewed were also a mix of high-level public servants (including High Commissioners) and young officers from the Australian aid agency AusAID and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in the field, and a mix of public servants, police and NGO people.

The Bougainville group of interviewees (17 males, 14 females) was a mix of ex-commanders, politicians, NGO leaders, women's leaders, village leaders, and church leaders. However, it is difficult to put them into these categories: people change roles, or have several roles at the same time (e.g. ex-commanders turned politicians, or village leaders are also NGO representatives).

Interviewees were from the different regions of Bougainville: North, Central and South. There were slightly more people from the former BRA and BRA-controlled areas interviewed than from government-controlled areas, but this is also fluid (for example, quite a lot of people were moving between BRA-controlled and government-controlled areas).

Methodologically, we followed the general procedures of narrative interviewing, albeit adapted to the particular socio-cultural context and the background of interviewees (Jovchelovitch/Bauer 2000). Most interviews were conducted in English; some interviews with locals were in PNG Pidgin or in a local Bougainville language. In the latter case, local research partners acted as translators. Moreover, the local partners were crucial for the preparation of interviews, e.g. with regard to providing access to interviewees, background information on interviewees and their social context as well as formulation of questions for the interviews (translating the 'exmanent' research questions into 'immanent' ones (ibid.)).

Inevitably, the story(-ies) of the peacebuilding interactions were elicited and interpreted by and presented through the eyes of Western academics. This problem of appropriately applying methodological tools from Western social sciences to fields in other world regions cannot be completely controlled. But at least, it can be ameliorated to some extent, due to the anthropologically informed approach of the project (Brown 2013: 138), collaboration with local partners, reflexive awareness of one's own knowledge frame on the part of the researchers, and the fact that the lead researcher conducting the case study/interviews has working experience in Bougainville that stretches over decades, which has resulted in being familiar with the life-worlds and the people on the ground.

In a second round of field research in Bougainville and Canberra, and based on the consent of the interviewees involved, locals' narratives were taken to (selected) international actors, and internationals' narratives were taken to (selected) local actors: they were made familiar with the narratives of the respective other group and asked to react to them. A focus group discussion with Australian interviewees was carried out in Canberra, giving them the

opportunity to discuss locals' narratives.[5] Similarly, a discussion was held with first-round local interview partners in Buka (Bougainville) on internationals' narratives. These meetings were used to discuss antagonistic local-international narratives and to reflect on how they might have impacted on real-world peacebuilding practising.

The interviews tried to identify changes in local-international relations and in understandings of core elements of peacebuilding over time so as to capture the influence of experiences of the local-international exchange on the development of the peacebuilding process. This was done using a relational approach, through a cultural lens, in the context of the 'local everyday'.

We understand peacebuilding as relational, an everyday cross-cultural interchange in a specific locality. A relational approach[6] to peacebuilding foregrounds processes, dynamism, fluidity, interaction – in contrast to a 'substantialist' approach which prioritises entities, units and structures that are bound and fixed (Eyben 2008, 2010). In the context of such a relational approach, culture has to be understood as "a relational effect" (Brigg 2014: 15), deriving from relations and "holding difference and sameness together in dynamic relation" (ibid.: 16).[7] "Thinking of culture in relational terms [...] provides ways of respecting cultural difference and recognising that culture is a shared human resource for pursuing cooperation" (ibid.: 7). Talking about cross-cultural interactions makes only sense because of this 'difference and sameness'. Difference makes communication between cultures – the culture(s) of the local(s) and the culture(s) of the international(s) – necessary, and sameness makes it possible. Additionally, the inter-cultural exchange impacts on the cultures engaged in that exchange. They are not bounded and fixed, but fluid and emerge as mutually interpenetrating, mixing and blending. This is why culture is relational, "culture and cultural difference are formed relationally" (ibid.: 17).[8] In most cases, a peacebuilding intervention first and foremost is an everyday encounter between people from fundamentally different cultural backgrounds. Working across cultural difference is thus the overarching feature of externally supported peacebuilding, which is fundamentally relational and procedural, an ongoing cross-cultural interchange, characterised by entanglement and mutual permeation.

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5 This methodological approach, collecting data in the first round and confronting focus groups with these findings in the second round, was inspired by approaches used in social care and implementation research. These studies often use semi-structured interviews, e.g. with organisational leaders, about the implementation of a certain programme to assess their perceptions about the implementation strategy, and then use focus groups to check whether organisational leaders' perceptions about these strategies are likely to be effective in the real world (Jackson et al. 2014).

6 For different types of relational approaches in (the study of) peacebuilding, see Brigg 2016.

7 On the significance of culture in peacebuilding, see Avruch/Black 1991; Avruch 1998, Lederach 2005; Brigg/Muller 2009; Brigg 2010, 2014; Brown 2013; Bräuchler 2015. For a more detailed exploration of "the relatively recent recognition of culture within peace and conflict studies" (Brigg 2010: 342), see Brigg 2010.

8 This understanding of culture differs fundamentally from the conventional liberal peacebuilding approach with its "tendency on the part of international donors to view culture as folklore and thus to reinforce the imagined differences between a progressive notion of the west and a backwards-oriented vision of the 'local'" (Kappler 2014: 52).

Cross-cultural interaction plays out in the context of the everyday as the "realm of contingent relationality" (Randazzo 2016: 1359), "a realm of complex interconnectedness where multiple actors and networks exist, interact and overlay" (ibid.: 1354). Peacebuilding thus means a praxis "beyond the mere realm of 'high' politics and institutional set-ups" (ibid.: 1355), which engages with everyday life, and as such is fundamentally and comprehensively imbued with culture. Its site is the local(e), understood not as another ('lower') 'level' ('beneath' the national and international) of politics, but as

> "[…] a sphere of activity that is constantly being made and remade, sometimes with replication and sometimes with change. It is made, remade and negotiated through the everyday actions of inhabitants, as well as those of exogenous and institutional actors" (Mac Ginty 2015: 851).

The locale/the locality is co-created and shared by a variety of interacting local, national, regional and international actors and institutions, and, accordingly, in the context of the locale, the boundaries of 'the international' and 'the local' become porous and blurred, with the local infused with the international, and the international with the local (see chapter 2).[9]

Following these methodological and theoretical considerations, our research addressed the everyday local/international interactions in the local context, and the presentation of the empirical findings will highlight the significance of cross-cultural exchange, based on a relational understanding of peacebuilding. This is an innovative endeavour, filling a gap in existent research, which so far has remained at the theoretical-conceptual level[10], focused solely on one side of the local/international divide or is confined to limited sub-topics of the local/international interface.[11] By contrast, our focus is on the relationality of peacebuilding, on the everyday relations in the local context, taking the local, relational and cultural turn in peacebuilding scholarship a step further, grounded in our empirical research, which follows an anthropological orientation. The local turn in peacebuilding (research) inevitably necessitates an anthropologically informed analysis and interpretation – addressing history, economic and social structures, culture, worldviews, belief systems, norms and values and politics of (the people of) the place. If 'culture matters', and if '(local) context matters' – then (political) anthropology matters, too. In fact,

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[9] On the concept of the everyday in the context of peacebuilding, see Richmond 2009a, 2009b, 2011a; Mitchell 2011. For a recent critical discussion of the concept, see Randazzo 2016. On the 'local turn' in peacebuilding, see Mac Ginty/Richmond 2013; Albrecht/Moe 2014; Simons/Zanker 2014; Kappler 2014; Mac Ginty 2015; Debiel/Rinck 2016; Leonardsson/Rudd 2015, Schierenbeck 2015; Hughes/Oejendal/Schierenbeck 2015; Paffenholz 2015. A recent critical discussion is offered by Hirblinger/Simons 2015.

[10] See the references in the introduction and chapter 2.

[11] Severine Autesserre has done groundbreaking research on the everyday practices of international peacebuilding (Autesserre 2014, 2017), but her focus is clearly on the internationals. The same holds true for Bliesemann de Guevara/ Kühn (2015), who focus on the internationals' 'urban legends' about peacebuilding interventions. Different authors address selected aspects of the international/local interface: personal relationships, using the concept of social capital as analytical framework (Hug 2016), interactions between professional local and international peacebuilders, with a focus on resources, capacities and legitimacy (Hellmueller 2014), and relationship building between professional expatriate and local staff of international NGOs (McWha 2011).

anthropology's „focus on culture and recognition and appreciation of cultural difference are perhaps the most obvious contributions that anthropology offers peacebuilding" (Brown 2013: 137). Its „active awareness of culture offers an antidote to the naive universalism that continues to characterize much peacebuilding" (ibid.: 138). [12]

The findings from the in-depth Bougainville study are contrasted by a plausibility probe on Sierra Leone. Due to time and resource constraints, this case study is mainly based on literature research, but complemented by 15 interviews and informal conversations conducted in Freetown in December 2016. Among the interview partners were Sierra Leonean academics, employees of local NGOs, INGOs and the UN as well as international staff of INGOs, but also 'local non-elites' like taxi drivers. Even though it was not possible to include former staff of the peacebuilding missions in Sierra Leone (as most of them are not present any longer), crucial dimensions of international-local relations that had been identified by the case study on Bougainville could be assessed in their relevance for Sierra Leone.

5. Findings from the Bougainville Case Study

After a brief overview over war and peacebuilding on Bougainville, we discuss core dimensions of the international-local interface as they evolved in the course of the interviews. The focus is on seven major topics. The first three of these topics relate to (perceptions and interpretations of) the international-local interface proper, the following four address core aspects of peacebuilding – both in the international and local understanding of it.

Within the first cluster, discussing the cultural dimension comes first, because cultural difference and engaging with it proved to be crucial for (the perception of) the intervention in its entirety. Culture imbues an intervention in all its aspects; a peacebuilding mission in our understanding is basically a cross-cultural exchange. Secondly, the importance of building trust and relationships, as embedded in and as a relational effect of the cross-cultural exchange, will be explored.[13] Thirdly, security provision will be presented as an effect of trust and relationships, engaging with the debate about security through fortification or community embeddedness (Duffield 2010; Donais 2012; Breen 2016).

While this first cluster of topics engages directly with the everyday local-international exchanges in the local context, the second cluster addresses issues, which are of core significance in the mainstream liberal peacebuilding discourse and practice, and themes that figure prominently locally. We start this cluster with an exploration of the understanding of main elements of peace(building), using reconciliation and spirituality as entry and focus points, deepening the

[12] On an anthropological approach in peace and conflict studies, see Brown 2013, Bräuchler 2015, Denskus/Kasmatopoulos 2015.

[13] McWha (2011), Hellmueller (2014) and Hug (2016) address this topic confined to relationship building between professional expatriate and local peacebuilders. Our research goes further, including a variety of stakeholders beyond the professional realm, most notably also including 'ordinary' locals.

elaborations on the significance of culture, because here the differences between local and international understandings of peace(building) become strikingly obvious. It will become clear in this fourth section that the marginalisation and/or instrumentalisation of 'soft' aspects of peacebuilding (religion, spirituality, emotions, etc.) as pursued in mainstream liberal peacebuilding theory and practice is inappropriate and not conducive to peacebuilding (Mac Ginty 2016). A brief discussion of the material aspects of the peacebuilding mission follows in the fifth section, engaging with the debate among scholars, policymakers and practitioners about the relationship between peace(building) and development (aid). Finally, the issues of time and gender will get special treatment in the sections six and seven. It will be shown that different understandings of time have an important impact on how peacebuilding plays out in everyday reality. Last but not least, the gender dimension of the intervention will be addressed, highlighting the contribution of female peacebuilders.

5.1 War and Peacebuilding on Bougainville – a Brief Overview

From 1989 to 1998 the island of Bougainville in PNG was the theatre of the longest and bloodiest war in the South Pacific after the end of World War II. The root causes were the negative social and environmental effects of a giant mining project, the Panguna gold and copper mine. When the locals' demands for meaningful environmental protection measures, compensation for environmental damage and a larger share of the revenues were rejected by the multinational mining company and the PNG government, members of local clans brought the mine to a standstill by acts of sabotage and established the BRA. Fighting between the BRA and the security forces of the PNG government, which started in 1988, soon spread across the whole island.

The BRA adopted a secessionist stance and called for independence for Bougainville. BRA fighters managed to over-run and shut down the Panguna mine in 1989, and the mine has remained closed ever since. Even today, it is in the hands of a faction of the secessionists. In its war against the BRA the PNG military was supported by local Bougainvillean auxiliary units, the so-called Resistance Forces. Over time, it became the Resistance that bore the brunt of the fighting on the government side. Moreover, long-standing local conflicts were also fought under the umbrella of the war of secession. Parties entangled in local conflicts either joined the BRA or the Resistance, the war became more and more complex, and the frontiers blurred.[14]

The time of war was to a large extent a time of statelessness. The institutions of the PNG state were forced to withdraw from Bougainville, and the secessionists were unable to build their own state institutions. This opened the space for the resurgence of non-state local customary institutions so that 'traditional' authorities, such as elders and chiefs, became responsible for regulating conflicts and organising community life. Peace negotiations at the political level, involving the PNG government and the various Bougainville factions, commenced in 1997. A formal Bougainville-wide ceasefire came into

[14] For an overview of the war on Bougainville and of post-conflict peacebuilding, see Wallis 2014; Regan 2010; Braithwaite et al. 2010; Carl/Garasu 2002. For the historical, societal and political context, see Regan/Griffin 2005.

effect end of April 1998, and the Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA) was signed in August 2001. It has as its two core political provisions: firstly, the establishment of the 'Autonomous Region of Bougainville' (ARB) as a special political entity within the state of PNG; and, secondly, a referendum on the future political status of Bougainville — either complete independence or autonomy within PNG. The BPA stipulates that the referendum has to be held ten to fifteen years after the establishment of an autonomous government for Bougainville. In 2004, the ARB got its own constitution. The first elections for a Bougainville House of Representatives and a President for the ARB were held in June 2005, followed by two more elections in 2010 and 2015. In May 2016 the ABG and the central government of PNG agreed upon 15 June 2019 as the target date for the referendum.

Although some areas of Bougainville are still controlled by armed groups that have not yet joined the peace process and some sections of the population do not acknowledge the ABG as the (only) rightful government,[15] in general Bougainville is seen as a peacebuilding success story. This success is built on the constructive interactions between international and national formal state actors and institutions on the one hand (the PNG central government and the ABG) and local informal, mostly traditional or customary, actors and institutions on the other. While the first pursue a Western liberal agenda of peacebuilding and state-building, the latter introduce their custom-based ways of conflict transformation and forming political community. In the course of this local-liberal interface hybrid forms of peace and governance are emerging that differ considerably from Western liberal concepts.[16]

It is generally acknowledged that the international intervention – which compared to other endeavours was a 'light intervention' (Regan 2010) – has played an indispensable role for peacebuilding on Bougainville. New Zealand (NZ) took a constructive part in initiating the peace process by offering facilitation services, providing logistical assistance, hosting the initial rounds of peace talks and negotiations, and creating a warm atmosphere for negotiators (Braithwaite et al. 2010: 46-49). Neighbouring states and the UN conducted, with the consent of the conflict parties, a peacebuilding mission on Bougainville. The UN sent a small contingent, known successively as the UN Political Office in Bougainville (01 August 1998 to end of 2003) and the UN Observer Mission in Bougainville (UNOMB; 01 January 2004 to 30 June 2005) (Bowd 2007: 138). Its symbolic value, demonstrating the international community's commitment, its contribution to the weapons disposal process and its role as mediator in negotiations between conflict-parties were of major importance for the peace process.

Furthermore, a regional TMG, which later became the PMG, was on the island from late 1997 to June 2003. It was followed by a small Bougainville Transitional

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15 In particular, one major grouping so far has abstained from joining the peacebuilding and state-building processes. This is the so-called Meekamui movement, a faction of the former BRA. Meekamui is still in control of the area around the Panguna mine in central Bougainville and pockets in the south of the island.

16 On the hybridisation of peace and political order in Bougainville, see Boege 2010, 2011.

Team (BTT) until December 2003. The TMG/PMG was an unarmed force, it comprised of both military and civilian personnel, men and women, from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Vanuatu. NZ lead the TMG and Australia lead the PMG, with Australia providing the bulk of personnel and resources.[17] The TMG/PMG's mandate was to support the peace process "through logistics, monitoring, verification, mediation and confidence building" (Australian Government 2012: 20).

After the stabilisation of the security situation on the ground, a considerable number of foreign development agencies, INGOs and UN programmes and institutions became active on Bougainville. Australia's development agency was and is the biggest of these external players. Others involved are the aid agencies of Japan, NZ and the US, the European Union, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, as well as several UN agencies: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Women, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). INGOs are also present, e.g. Save the Children, World Vision, Oxfam. This international engagement is likely to increase even further in the near future, with the impending referendum on independence.

5.2 Everyday Cross-Cultural Interactions – a Source of Misunderstandings or of Relationship Building

What will be shown in this section is that in the context of an understanding of "everyday peace" (Richmond 2009a: 576), as outlined above, 'culture' is not just one 'soft' aspect of peacebuilding, but a peacebuilding intervention in its entirety is a cross-cultural endeavour (and adventure), the success or failure of which hinges on cross-cultural exchange and cultural sensitivity (Brigg 2010). Two examples shall illustrate how misunderstandings or a lack of comprehension can affect missions, and how cultural sensitivity can play out in practice. These examples consist of the sharing of food and welcome rituals.

Sharing of food: Sharing of food is a major feature of Bougainville social and cultural life, of building and maintaining relationships and, most importantly for our topic, of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.[18] The way the internationals handled the food issue was a major talking point for the Bougainvilleans. D. Rovokea[19], who was a young woman during the war and who today is a local women's leader, says that one Peace Monitor from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) called the rambutans, which Bougainvilleans really like, ´monkey food´. "The Peace Monitors did not like Bougainville food. The people really felt offended because of that. When I offer you food and you do not eat it – I feel

[17] For a comprehensive account of the TMG and PMG, see Wehner/Denoon 2001; Adams 2001; Braithwaite et al. 2010; Regan 2010; Breen 2016.

[18] On "the ritual dynamics at play in the act of eating together" (Schirch 2005: 139) and its importance for peacebuilding, see Schirch 2005.

[19] The interviewees were given the choice between staying anonymous and having their names attached to quotes. Some were happy with the latter, some preferred the former. Accordingly, for some quotes names are given, for others only roles and functions of the interviewee, e.g. 'a women's leader', 'a former ex-combatant leader' or 'an Australian high-ranking public servant'.

offended. Maybe they did not understand our culture" (interview 18 March 2016).

The problem was partly due to the fact that the Peace Monitors were not allowed to buy food on local markets or accept local food due to health and safety considerations. This bureaucratic rule sent problematic signals. The food issue is significant for comprehending how in the everyday context of a mission relationships can be built – or not. Sharing forms the bedrock of Pacific cultures, and sharing of food is a fundamental element of that sharing culture. Going to a village and hold an information meeting on the peace process without sharing food with the villagers was seen as disrespectful and offensive by the locals. The peace message brought in was to a certain extent devalued by the concrete behaviour of the messengers, who kept a visible (and culturally significant) distance from the recipients of the message and demonstrated ignorance of and disinterest in local culture. Over time, this changed. When the Peace Monitors on the ground realised the cultural importance of the food issue, they oftentimes bent the mission's rules and regulations, buying local food at the markets and sharing food with the locals. Both international and local interviewees agree that this contributed to the improvement of relations between locals and outsiders.

At the same time, the locals made differences between internationals from different countries. In fact, one can find a hierarchy of internationals according to the assessment of their understanding of and willingness to adapt to Bougainville culture and custom. The Australians always rank last,[20] the New Zealanders are okay or even good, according to most accounts the Fijians are even better, and the Ni-Vanuatu always come out top – they are the Melanesian brothers and sisters. They speak a similar language (Bislama, which is close to PNG Pidgin) and have a similar culture, and they easily fit into Bougainville communities. Bougainvilleans were happy that they were part of the mission.[21]

The Australians soon realised that they had problems in engaging with the locals and building rapport in a similar way as the New Zealanders, the Fijians and the Ni-Vanuatu did. They tried to deal with it by, inter alia, improving the pre-deployment training of their personnel, giving aspects of 'culture' more prominence, and by giving the Ni-Vanuatu more prominent roles in the mission (Breen 2016: 225).[22]

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20 The Australians did not only have a problem because of their cultural ignorance, but also because of their role in the history of the violent conflict. The Panguna mine, as the root cause of the conflict, was run by an Australian mining company, and the Australian government had sided with the PNG government against the Bougainville secessionists during the war.

21 Stereotyping of international peacebuilders according to their nationality is commonplace in peacebuilding interventions. Not only do the locals have more or less deeply ingrained views on how certain nationalities "are like", based on hearsay as much as on own experiences, but the internationals themselves also prioritise national identity as the marker for different styles of conduct within the mission (Higate/Henry 2009: 118-136). On the other hand, the internationals are also stereotyping the locals, and put forward competing claims about who has better insights into local culture (Bliesemann de Guevara/Kühn 2015: 33).

22 The fact remains, however, that some Australian and NZ military were "not only ignorant of Fijian and Ni-Vanuatu culture, but were also antagonistic to their more relaxed, informal and religious Pacific Islands colleagues, attitudes that also applied to Bougainvilleans" (Breen 2016: 225).

Performing the haka: Competition between the participating forces from the different countries also played out in the field of 'cultural understanding'. The New Zealanders took considerable pride in their cultural sensitivity and stressed their closeness to Pacific cultures, at the same time criticising the Australians' ignorance in this regard.

Brigadier Roger Mortlock, the first Commander of the TMG, from the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), introduced the haka, a traditional Maori dance, as welcoming ritual into Bougainville peacebuilding. He let the New Zealanders in the TMG/PMG perform the haka when they went to Bougainville villages or meetings with Bougainvilleans. This made a deep impression on Bougainvilleans, who very positively talked about the haka performances. This was often put into the context that New Zealanders brought their own culture and that they showed an interest in Bougainville culture.

A Peace Monitor from the NZDF made this point:

> "Maori and Pakeha in New Zealand and in the New Zealand Defence Force are close. It is very different from the relationship between white and indigenous people in Australia. Whenever we got off the plane or entered a village in Bougainville, we performed the haka. I have to address my soldiers among whom there are also quite a few Maori soldiers in Maori, in their language – by contrast: show me a white Australian officer who speaks an Aboriginal language. When you give speeches, you start in Maori, and when you finish you sing a song. The Australians do not do that, but this is what connects. We did the haka and the singing of songs in every village. This was extremely well received" (interview 21 April 2016).

Of course, there is an Australian counter-narrative to this. An Australian high-ranking public servant with comprehensive experience in Melanesia, for example, asserted that the New Zealanders carried over some Polynesian-type assumptions to the Bougainville situation, falsely assuming that because they understood Polynesia they also understood Bougainville.

5.3 Building Trust through Building Relationships and Serving the Community

We posit that cultural sensitivity is crucial for forging personal relationships and building trust. Trust is a fundamental peacebuilding resource, and building and maintaining personal relationships is fundamental for the formation of trust.[23] This, in turn, is essential for the emergence of a mission environment in which all sides can feel (relatively) safe.

Bougainvilleans talk about the deep-rooted mistrust that greeted the TMG/PMG upon its arrival. Clarence Dency, a former BRA commander and currently member of the Bougainville House of Representatives for the central region of Eivo-Torau, a former BRA stronghold, explained:

> "We did not trust anyone. During the crisis, the expats had supported PNG with weapons and money. It took time for us to accept them and build trust into them. At the beginning, we hated to see Australians in our communities. Our boys were swearing at the white Peace Monitors. It was good to have the Fijians and Ni-Vanuatu in the PMG, because it was different with them. The New Zealanders were ok, but skin colour was a problem for them too. This took a long time to change" (interview 17 March 2016).

[23] On personal relationships, see Hug 2016; Furnari 2015. On the significance of trust in peacebuilding, see Lederach 2005; McWha 2011.

The first and main avenue for overcoming mistrust was through engaging with the locals regularly – conducting patrols to the villages, frequent meetings, patient explanation of the purpose of the mission, identification of and engagement with the leaders at different levels (e.g. village leaders, church leaders, women's leaders, leaders of political-military factions). The informal everyday interactions – before and after official meetings, in the context of social events like reconciliation ceremonies and church services, music or sports events, invitations to villages or PMG team sites – were seen by both locals and internationals as at least as important for building relationships as the official formal occasions of interaction according to the mission's mandate.

Bending the rules and regulations and leaving Standing Operating Procedures behind proved to be necessary in order to be able to behave in a culturally appropriate manner. Thus it builds relationships and trust in the context of these everyday informal encounters; for instance, going to the market and buying local food, or sharing food (or even illicit drugs – kava, betel nut) with the locals in the villages or at social events.[24]

In fact, the internationals on the ground were able (and willing) to bend the rules and regulations to a certain extent, mainly due to the remoteness of the theatre of operation and the ensuing difficulties in communication between forces on the ground and headquarters overseas. The Peace Monitors showed a considerable degree of flexibility, and the PMG succeeded as a result of this, rather than because of tight management and control from the top (Knollmayer 2004: 229).

The second avenue for overcoming mistrust was by being at the service of the locals on an everyday basis, providing locally much-needed resources – again, not only in the confines of the mission's mandate, but well beyond.[25]

First and foremost, the internationals made it possible for the Bougainvilleans to come together. The PMG and the UNOMB provided the much-needed means of transport, such as vehicles, boats and helicopters, and they provided venues and food etc. for locals' meetings. Most importantly, their presence generated a safe space for former adversaries to come together and talk, and it "provided an enabling environment for dialogue, trust and reconciliation" between Bougainvilleans (Hatutasi 2015: 220). This convening capacity of the internationals is of major significance. Besides the provision of safe space, the Bougainvilleans also acknowledge the importance of the opportunity to move around freely. Enabling communication and the dissemination of trustworthy information were also important. Finally, the locals highly appreciated the medical services that were provided by the TMG/PMG.

The provision of resources and services, in particular transport and medical support, transcended the mandate of the mission – health facilities and helicopters, for example, initially had been assigned to the internationals' use

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[24] On the other hand, there were some rules that were rigorously enforced: no consumption of alcohol, no fraternisation with local women and no pornography (of course, these rules were occasionally broken, too) (Breen 2016: 464).

[25] Bob Breen makes the point that provision of resources had a strategic aspect, it was deliberately used to support the influential peacebuilders among the locals – the 'shapers', whereas the 'spoilers' missed out (see also Breen 2016: 467).

only. Making them available to the locals contributed considerably to building relationships and trust. And so did the "open hospitality approach at monitoring team sites" (Breen 2016: 464). Some quarters of the populace remained suspicious, with regard to some issues, and some outsiders remained more trusted than others (Ni-Vanuatu more than Australians), but in general the gradual building of relationships and trust over time was a success story. This proved to be the most effective means of protection for the Peace Monitors.

5.4 Security Provision through Community Protection

As mentioned before, the peacebuilding intervention on Bougainville was an unarmed mission.[26] At first sight, this is its most striking feature. At the beginning, the Australian military was fiercely opposed to going in unarmed, but the Bougainvilleans insisted on it, and the New Zealanders planned for it (Breen 2016).

The plan got the support of the Australian and NZ governments, so the Australian military had to give in, and it worked. On the one hand, Bougainvilleans speak with high respect of the Peace Monitors who dared to come in unarmed; they say that they felt obliged to protect them. On the other hand, the Bougainvilleans also felt safe because the TMG/PMG was unarmed. A women's leader, for example, said: "The Peace Monitors were unarmed, so we felt safe" (interview 19 July 2016).

There were hardly any threats of planned organised violence against the TMG/PMG. Even the 'hard-core' elements of the BRA (the Meekamuis) under the leadership of Francis Ona, the intransigent charismatic leader of the Bougainville independence struggle. BRA had not joined the peace process and initially were opposed to the presence of the PMG, abstained from threatening the internationals once they realised that these had the support of the majority of the Bougainvillean communities, including their former comrades from the BRA. Over time, tacit unofficial relationships between the Meekamuis and the UN and the TMG/PMG developed, although Meekamui territory remained a 'no-go' zone for the internationals.

The most serious – and rather frequent – threat to the internationals came from disgruntled young men drunk on Jungle Juice, the potent local home-brew. These young men oftentimes had the intention to rob the internationals or to vent their anger towards them, but the communities, including the BRA and Resistance, generally dealt with the drunkards, and no physical harm was done to the internationals, although there were sporadic occasions of theft and threats.

The PMG Headquarters in Arawa, the main logistics base in Loloho and the team sites in the field, as well as the UN sites were protected by paid local security guards, mainly ex-BRAs and ex-Resistance, who were on site unarmed. But the main security was provided by the Peace Monitors' embeddedness in the community. Monitoring teams were deployed "into austere accommodation

[26] Of course, there were emergency protection arrangements in place, such as quick response forces and intelligence capabilities.

amid communities rather than into specifically fortified compounds" (Breen 2016: 464).

Bob Breen, Colonel in the Australian army, working for the Land Commander responsible for the mission and adviser to the PMG commanders, talked about 'force protection' by kids playing volleyball in front of PMG headquarters:

> "[…] children playing volleyball in front of our accommodation houses was our security. We knew: when there were no kids playing volleyball, we had to increase our security. Because the absence of kids playing sent the message that there were some dangerous young men in the vicinity. This type of force protection was unknown and innovative at the time: no barbed wire and sandbags, but volleyballs. All of this was intuitive. I had no training or doctrine that told me that this was the way to do it" (interview 30 January 2016).[27]

All the interviewed internationals said that they felt safe on the ground. Some even made the point that being unarmed was a great advantage, because it made it much easier to engage with the locals. They compared this experience to other international postings they had, for example East Timor, where it was much more difficult to build relationships because of the fact that the mission was armed. Cate Carter from the ADF, who was the senior intelligence officer in the PMG, said: "Being unarmed was helpful to relate to the locals. Being armed like in East Timor puts huge constraints on what you can do" (interview 22 January 2016).

5.5 Ritual and Reconciliation: the Spiritual Dimension of Peace(building)

According to the worldview held by Bougainvilleans, politics and peace cannot be conceptualised, understood and practiced without inclusion of the spiritual, of the non-human, invisible dimension of the world. The reconciliation processes on Bougainville are evidence of the spiritual dimension of peacebuilding, a dimension that, while for the Bougainvilleans a given fact of life, is not easily accessible for 'enlightened' secular international interveners.

Reconciliation as understood in Bougainville is a concept which is deeply rooted in both the Christian faith and local customs (Garasu 2002; Howley 2002). It is a long-term, complex and complicated multi-faceted process in which the wrongs of the past are acknowledged, responsibility is accepted and shared, and the basis for a common future is created.[28]

Ceremonies mark the culminating points of the reconciliation process. The ceremonies vary from area to area, but generally they encompass rituals, such as breaking spears and arrows, drinking and eating together from the same dish, singing and dancing together, or chewing betel nut together. These symbolic activities are expressions of commitment and trust and are more powerful than mere spoken or written words. Finally, gifts are exchanged (e.g. pigs, shell

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[27] This positively compares to the usual strategy of bunkerisation and fortification of internationals' compounds and hiring of paid local guards in most post-conflict contexts (including Sierra Leone), see Duffield 2010; Autesserre 2014.

[28] The Bougainville understanding of 'reconciliation' thus differs from the mainstream conventional approach as represented by 'Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' (TRC) which can be found in many other post-conflict peacebuilding processes (including Sierra Leone, see 6.5.). In Bougainville, a deliberate decision was taken not to have a TRC, because it would not have fit into Bougainville culture and custom.

money, food, cash, or a combination of all these items), with the whole community participating. Church services and prayers are usually an integral part of these activities, as "Christian principles of reconciliation have conveniently found their place in the culture and have, indeed, added a great deal to the process, through the incorporation of prayers and public acknowledgements by priests and church ministers" (Tanis 2002: 60).

Reconciliation ceremonies are loaded with spiritual meaning. A ceremony is a vehicle for cleansing and purification. Mental healing is an important aspect of reconciliation. It is about repairing broken relationships and restoring harmony so that people can live in peace not only with each other, but also with God and the spirits of the dead.[29] Social relations are guarded by the spirit world. If the spirits of the dead cannot be appeased, all kinds of misfortune will befall the communities – illness, accidents, madness, death. So in the course of a reconciliation process, the spirits will be called on to remove any illness that has befallen the community because of the conflict and bring back healing to the sick and the community at large.[30]

This is why proper burials of the dead are highly important. In fact, one major problem for reconciliation after the war was and still is today that many people who were killed have not been buried in a culturally appropriate manner. Relatives do not know where the remains of their kin are, or there are graves with bones which have not been identified. In order to find peace and to reconcile, the dead have to be given a proper burial (UNDP 2014: 12, 32). The unburied dead have an influence on the lives of the living, both the perpetrators and the relatives of the victims. Therefore, finding and bringing home the bodies, burying them properly and grieving at their graves is an indispensable dimension of reconciliation. This is why the topic of 'missing persons' looms large in the current stage of peacebuilding on Bougainville.

Often, the internationals provided the safe space for the Bougainvilleans to come together for reconciliations. Furthermore, they even facilitated the means to come together (transport, a neutral venue), as well as the first steps of a reconciliation process. "Monitors acted as the go-between for people, which was a vital role as the hardest part of the reconciliation process was simply getting it started" (Doyle 2016: 478). Bougainvilleans are deeply thankful to the internationals for facilitating reconciliations; they think of this as a major contribution of the outsiders to the peace process. Often, internationals were invited to reconciliation ceremonies. Bougainvilleans said, however, that they doubt that the internationals really understood the full meaning of reconciliations.

A Bougainville women's leader explained:

> "The Peace Monitors were not spiritual people, they learned about that here. During the conflict, everybody turned to the higher power, to God. We were very strong in prayer during the crisis. We prayed and prayed for peace, and our prayers were answered in the form of the Peace Monitors coming here" (interview 19 July 2016).

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29 Most Bougainvilleans are devout Christians, but this does not replace belief in the spirit world.

30 On the need to include relationships with the nonhuman world into peacebuilding, see Schirch 2005: 148-149.

For internationals, it is often difficult to relate to this religious, spiritual dimension, particularly for those internationals who come from a secular, supposedly enlightened, environment. For them, it is tempting to disregard this spiritual dimension as just a local curiosity, all the more so as 'religion' in their societies of origin is compartmentalised as a (rather marginal and inconsequential) aspect of 'private' life.

For some internationals, the entry point for engaging with the locals was the shared Christian faith. Referring to the shared faith was important for relationship building. The priests in the TMG/PMG therefore played an important relationship building role, and so did church attendance by Peace Monitors.

Peace Monitors were deeply impressed by reconciliation ceremonies. They got a feel for the importance of the reconciliations, even if they did not get their full meaning. And they realised that their presence at the ceremonies was appreciated by the Bougainvilleans. Cate Carter from the ADF provided interesting insights in this regard. She said: "These reconciliation ceremonies [...] also served the purpose to show us that they were capable of providing solutions themselves" (interview 22 January 2016). Interestingly, she related this insight to the issue of disarmament, saying:

> "All the disarmament that took place was not that important. We saw pictures of destruction of rifles. But this was rather inconsequential. The Bougainvilleans wanted to show us: 'you might have taken the lead in destruction of weapons. But that's not really important. What is really important is reconciliation'" (interview 22 January 2016).

In fact, the disarmament/weapons disposal issue was given relatively minor significance in the interviews with the Bougainvilleans. It was not a matter of major concern, nor was there noticeable pride in the 'success' of weapons disposal, or major disappointment about its 'failure'.[31] From a Bougainville cosmological perspective, (spiritual) reconciliation trumps (material) disarmament. This is in remarkable contrast to the importance disarmament was given in the official peacebuilding approach of the internationals and the resources put into it.[32] And, when engaging in weapons destruction, the internationals again missed the spiritual dimension – there was no disarmament of the sorcerers whose immaterial weapons had played an important role in the war. Most probably, the internationals did not even realise that they missed something important here.

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31 Together with the PMG, the UN mission conducted a rather successful weapons disposal process (Breen 2016). This was part of the BPA and it was needed at the political level. Only after the UN declared the weapons disposal process as successfully finalised, elections for the ABG could go ahead in 2005. But this was a political declaration. There are still a lot of weapons around on Bougainville.

32 For a detailed history of the disarmament process on Bougainville as part of the international peacebuilding intervention, see Breen 2016.

5.6 Beyond Monitoring – to Avoid 'Mission Creep' or to Engage in 'Development'?

The focus on the spiritual dimension, on ritual and reconciliation does not exclude an interest in the promotion of material well-being. The war had caused enormous destruction of infrastructure, houses and villages, schools and hospitals, businesses and economic opportunities. Hence expectations regarding the peace process also were geared towards reconstruction and a 'peace dividend'. Accordingly, addressing people's everyday needs and the connection between peace and development was an issue also in Bougainville, as it is in most other peacebuilding processes.[33] Internationals struggled with the question how to address the peace/development nexus.

In the Bougainvilleans' view, the international peace intervention should have provided more in terms of – as they often call it – 'tangible development'. The Bougainvilleans had expected more in this regard and were disappointed when their expectations were not met.

A Bougainville women's leader posited:

> "The Peace Monitors should have helped us with reconstruction of infrastructure. They were here only for monitoring, observing, not doing more, for example development or trauma healing. They always said monitoring, monitoring, but there were engineers and other skilled people among them, they could have used their skills. They should have amalgamated monitoring and their other skills" (interview 19 July 2016).

Standpoints on the side of the internationals are mixed. Interestingly, it was mostly the military people who said that more development assistance should have been an integral element of the mission. The opposite view is presented by a high-ranking public servant from DFAT who had a leading role in the TMG and PMG. He argued that it was appropriate not to get involved in development aid, to avoid 'mission creep', but just be present, to observe and to monitor, not "to do" (interview 28 January 2016).

He also made the point that after the stabilisation of the security situation, a number of development agencies and INGOs came in, which actually engaged in the provision of 'tangible development'. He insisted on the clear division of tasks and responsibilities among different international actors and institutions: peacekeepers or peacebuilders on the one side and development workers on the other one. What might make perfect sense from an international perspective, however, is not easily understood and accepted by locals on the ground. They do not bother about the delicacies of division between 'peacebuilding', 'humanitarian aid' and 'development assistance' – they just expect 'tangible development' as an integral aspect of peace(building). Bougainville experiences in this regard resonate very much with experiences in Sierra Leone (see 6.6).

5.7 The Significance of (Different Understandings of) Time

Time is always a contested issue in peacebuilding interventions, not only due to different time frames and time horizons of locals and internationals within a

33 For a critical discussion of the peace(building)/development aid nexus, see Woodward 2013; Brown/Grävingholt 2016.

shared concept of time, but also because of fundamentally different cultural understandings of time, a fact which is constantly ignored by international interveners.

The Bougainville case demonstrates that culturally different concepts of time can have profound impacts on peacebuilding. The time factor links in with the issue of fundamental differences in worldviews, cosmologies and epistemologies. Again, it would be misleading to see the cultural difference in the conceptualisation of time as just an 'element' that somehow has to be taken into account. Rather it permeates the entirety of peacebuilding endeavours.

The most obvious aspect of this cultural difference is the 'slowness' of the Bougainvilleans compared to the 'rushed' approach of the internationals. Marcelline Kokiai, a women's leader from Central Bougainville, for example, said:

> "The outsiders did not understand why the peace process was so slow. They wanted to rush things. […] Rushing things can have very bad results: uncooked minds, uncooked decisions. You eat the food but it is not cooked. You cannot eat uncooked food. To cook food takes time. So does everything. Everything has its own seasons. That is what peacebuilding is about" (interview 25 February 2016).

Another Bougainville women's leader linked time to culture and reconciliations:

> "The time factor is important. The conflict was extremely difficult, there were deep issues, including killing people. Dealing with such deep issues should not be rushed. Reconciliations in such cases take time. Cultural values were intertwined in the conflict, this had to been taken into account. [...] This made things so complicated. Things are not forgotten. We cannot make peace according to a timeframe as the Peace Monitors thought it could be done. Peace Monitors had their own schedule and timing" (interview 19 July 2016).

In fact, on Bougainville, as in other international peacebuilding interventions, the external actors tried to impose their (tight) timeframes and their own temporal culture onto the locals.[34] But at the end of the day, they had to adjust to 'Melanesian time' or 'Bougainville time'. Overall, the locals largely succeeded in maintaining their pace of doing things and adjusting the international's pre-planned timetables to local needs and customs.[35] All the internationals have stories about meetings starting late, with them having to wait for hours and hours, or meetings being postponed repeatedly. And there are many stories of newcomers or politicians who flew in and wanted to get things done on time. This regularly turned out a total failure.

Short rotations of internationals were a problem. Generally, Peace Monitors were only on the ground for three or four months, the commanders for six months. Bougainvilleans often complained about short rotations.

Clarence Dency said:

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[34] This is in line with the observation that internationals regularly lack "(cognitive and emotional) temporal empathy, or the will and ability to view and feel how the other party conceives and experiences time" (Reychler 2015: 221). See also Lederach 2005: 131-149.

[35] Autesserre emphatically pleads for slowing down peacebuilding interventions, "given how hurtful the current focus on speed is" (Autesserre 2014: 264) for those who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of the intervention. Complaints about constant pressure "to do things quickly" (Anderson/Brown/Jean 2012: 126) are a common and ubiquituos feature of any external interventions. See also Hug 2016: 55.

> "Again and again new people came in and you had to ask yourself: 'Who is this guy?' You had to start over again. The new person was different from the one you just had built relationships with" (interview 17 March 2016).

A Bougainville women's leader made the point:

> "Within three months the Peace Monitors could not really engage with the communities. They could talk to them – yes, but not build sustainable relationships" (interview 19 July 2016).

Some internationals agreed, for example Mike Swan, PMG Commander from March to August 2001, who said:

> "What can you do in six months? It takes much longer to build quality relationships. [...] I would have liked to stay longer, and I expect many of my colleagues would have shared that view" (interview 28 January 2016).

There were also a lot of complaints, both from the internationals and the locals, about the winding down of the mission being too early and too rushed. Gary Stone, a former padre with the PMG, for example, said:

> "The government has this short-term approach, let's try to do as much as we can with as little resources as possible as quick as we can. They think there is a quick fix solution to everything. There are culturally different understandings of time. We have to realise that everything takes time. There is that lack of awareness at the political level [regarding the time factor]" (interview 18 January 2016).

These remarks hint to the fact that time was a contentious issue also within the mission, mainly between the internationals on the ground and their headquarters in their capital cities. There was a constant struggle about the extension of the mandate. Headquarters wanted to wind down the mission as quickly as possible: it was costly, there were other challenges emerging, such as East Timor or 9/11, and some people in the Australian political and military hierarchy did not like the concept of an unarmed peace mission anyway. Most commanders and heads of mission on the ground said repeatedly: we need more time. But they were under constant pressure from Canberra, Wellington and New York.

Finally, it has to be stressed that there is more to the time issue than just the difference between Bougainvillean slowness and international speed. Rather, one has to acknowledge that there is no shared universal concept of time as linear measurable time. Different cosmological contextualisations of time can have profound impacts on peacebuilding, e.g. if past events of linear clock time, the time of the internationals, are still present in the locals' understanding of time (Lederach 2005: 133-138). In Bougainville, the spirits of the dead fighters of the war are fighting today, because their bodies could not yet be laid to rest according to the appropriate customary burial and reconciliation ceremonies. What is past according to a linear understanding of time has immediacy in the context of a different cosmology. There is not only one time, but various times,[36] not least "un-secular time: sacred time" (Reychler 2015: 215).

[36] Acccordingly, peacebuilders have to be "more fully aware of and embrace the multidimensionality of time rather than reduce it to its narrowest configuration" (Lederach 2005: 148).

5.8 The Gender Component: Female Peace Monitors and Local Women

Marcelline Kokiai told the following story:

> "On one occasion we had a meeting in the village and I decided that the women should just go out and sing a song. I made a song up ("the more humble we are, the stronger we are [...], the more united we are"). The Peace Monitors were in tears. The Ni-Vanuatu Peace Monitor had tears streaming down his face. He said: 'Allow me to cry'. He stood there for a moment, crying. And then he said: 'Go, go forward you Bougainvilleans, no turning back!'" (interview 25 February 2016).

This event can easily be interpreted as a sweet and sentimental thing: women singing a song, people crying. But it is an indication of the power of women – and emotion and song – in peacebuilding. Of course, the role of women in peacebuilding has drawn considerable attention in the scholarly discourse and in political thinking over the last decades, with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 as a watershed moment, and in theory, it is acknowledged today that the gender dimension and gender-specific needs are of major significance for peacebuilding.[37] 'Gender mainstreaming', however, is still a problem in peacebuilding practice. This is most obvious when looking at the (generally tiny) numbers and (usually subordinate) roles of women in peacebuilding interventions. Peacebuilding interventions still "are masculine spaces" (Higate/Henry 2009: 137). Male domination has had extremely negative effects in many missions, most shockingly, sexual exploitation and abuse of mainly women and children by male peacebuilders, perpetuating gender-based violence perpetrated during the previous violent conflicts (Simic 2012). An overwhelmingly male intervention can cause a perpetuation of insecurity for local women (Pankhurst 2008; Porter 2016). Moreover, understanding for and engaging with cultural differences with regard to the position of women is usually poor. Peacebuilding interventions thus often fail to engage appropriately with the local women, and this in turn can negatively impact on building relationships and trust in general.

By contrast, the peacebuilding mission in Bougainville was exceptional, not only as an unarmed mission, but also as a mission in which female Peace Monitors (though still by far too small in numbers) figured prominently.

It is conventional wisdom today that the women played a crucial role in Bougainville peacebuilding; mention is made of the matrilineal structure of most Bougainville communities, the relatively strong societal position of women, their crucial role in initiating the peace process and steering it through difficult stages (Havini/Tankunani Sirivi 2004; King 2009; George 2016).[38] And in hindsight the inclusion of female Peace Monitors is seen as a crucial element of the success of the mission. It is said today that the presence of female Peace Monitor was

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[37] See Boege/Fischer 2005; Pankhurst 2008; Greenberg/Zuckerman 2009; Vaeyrynen 2010; Porter 2007; Schnabel/Tabyshalieva 2012; Cohn 2013; O'Reilly 2013; Myrttinen/Naujoks/El-Bushra 2014; Naraghi-Anderlini 2007.

[38] On the problems and limitations of women's peacebuilding agency in Bougainville, see George 2016. On the problematique of the construct of 'local women', see Vaeyrynen 2010: 147-149.

"absolutely mission-critical" (a high-ranking DFAT public servant; interview 29 January 2016). But this insight only developed over time.

The (masculine) military hierarchy was very reluctant to bring (civilian) women in, with safety concerns given as the reason. Initially, there was a lot of arguing about this topic. Only over time, the attitude changed and the significance of the women's presence in the PMG was appreciated. Bringing the women in was a sign of trust. Sarah Storey, a high-ranking female DFAT official, who was a Peace Monitor explained:

> "We used the presence of women in the conversations with the Bougainvilleans, saying: The fact that our governments have sent women, putting the safety of our women into your hands, shows that we trust you" (interview 19 February 2016).

In fact, when "in Melanesia you go to a village unarmed you'll be protected by the locals, and if you come to a village unarmed **and** with your women then there is an even stronger cultural obligation to protect you" (Bob Breen, interview 30 January 2016).

It were the female Peace Monitors who often established the initial contact with the locals. They had specific entry points for engaging with the local women, at times against the initial opposition of the male hierarchy. Sarah Storey stressed this unplanned dimension of their presence:

> "We female Truce Monitors also went to the market, buying food there and talking to the women. This was not planned for, but was significant for building relationships. The market women, for example would help us to identify women's leaders who we would then have meetings with" (interview 19 Februar 2016).

For the female Peace Monitors, talking to Bougainville women was much easier than for their male colleagues, given that the social spheres of males and females in Bougainville are to a large extent separated (Gehrmann/Grant/Rose 2015: 59). The TMG/PMG leadership soon realised how important it was to involve the Bougainville women and how important the female Peace Monitors were for this task, tapping into the strengths of "women's relational skills" (Porter 2016: 221). However, there was a downside to this:

> "Many female monitors became *de facto* female representatives dealing with any and all women's issues. Some of them felt that a number of patrol commanders marginalised and limited female peacekeepers to this role. There was also a sense that women's issues generally were marginalised by the mission and not given as high a priority as discussions involving key male stakeholders" (Doyle 2016, 474).

Bougainville women appreciated the special support they were given by the PMG as well as the presence of female Peace Monitors. A Bougainville women's leader said:

> "We felt secure and safe, particularly because there were female Peace Monitors. Female Peace Monitors talked with the women and the children. That was important. It is the men who fight and the women who suffer. So it was good that the female Peace Monitors were engaging with the women" (interview 19 July 2016).

Female Peace Monitors also served as role models: to see women as soldiers, as truck drivers, in uniform, even commanding men – this was new to the Bougainvilleans. Young Bougainville women felt encouraged, and Bougainville men were also impressed.

Both the internationals and the locals share the view that it would have been good if there had been more female Peace Monitors, and if they had been given

more prominence. However, in comparison to the miniscule numbers and the under-representation of women in other peacebuilding missions, Bougainville still stands out as an encouraging example, also compared to the case of Sierra Leone.

5.9 Summary

When looking at the assessment of the peacebuilding mission as presented by the locals on the one hand and the internationals on the other, we can find striking similarities, but also some significant differences.

The Bougainvilleans generally said that it was good to have the internationals supporting the peace process. For the Bougainvilleans, the main positive aspects of the internationals' contribution to peacebuilding were the following: opening a safe space for the Bougainvilleans to come together, enabling freedom of movement, disseminating trustworthy information, bringing the outside world in, providing transport support and medical support, being on the ground as a neutral force, contributing to a peaceful and relaxed atmosphere after years of conflict and tension (through sports, music, socio-cultural events).

The main critical points made by the locals regarding the internationals were: too little understanding of custom and culture, too little engagement with locals, too rushed, too little tangible development, too little listening, too egoistic (e.g. the impression that Peace Monitors and others only come for the money), too little information about the outside world, monetisation of Bougainville reconciliation.

The internationals in general had a very positive view of the peacebuilding process and their role in it. They thought they have built very good relationships with the Bougainvilleans. They posited that they helped a lot: with transport, providing space for coming together, information and communication, medical facilities, enabling freedom of movement, creating an atmosphere of safety, weapons disposal. They said all this could not have happened without their presence. They also explained that it was because of their presence that the isolation Bougainvilleans´ had lived in during the crisis, was broken. Finally, they believed that they adapted well to Bougainville life and custom, and that they were open to learn from Bougainvilleans. By contrast, quite a few Bougainvilleans were skeptical with regard to the capability and willingness of the internationals to learn.

Hence, there are broad areas of agreement between Bougainvilleans and internationals, e.g. with regard to provision of safe space, transport, creating a relaxed atmosphere. On the other hand, there are also areas where views differ, e.g. with regard to the level of understanding Bougainville culture and custom or the building of sustainable relationships.

At the same time, Bougainvilleans and internationals agreed that building personal relationships is key for the success of a peacebuilding intervention.[39]

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[39] This resonates with Schirch's finding that building relationships – relational transformation – "is the heart of peacebuilding" (Schirch 2005: 151); see also Lederach 2005: 61-62, 75-86.

Self-critically (some of) the internationals said that they indeed should have learned more about custom and culture, should have engaged more with the communities, should have been more culturally sensitive and more patient, should have listened more and should have engaged more in development work.

Internationals were more inclined to draw generalisable 'lessons learned' from the Bougainville experience, while the Bougainvilleans themselves are much more reluctant in this regard. Rather, they point to the uniqueness of the Bougainville situation and Bougainville culture.

A former BRA commander said:

> "It is difficult to draw lessons learned from Bougainville peacebuilding. What we do on Bougainville can only be transferred to other situations of peacebuilding if there are similar social structures – clan structure – and a similar culture – one custom and one religion" (interview 12 March 2016).

Accordingly, they were critical of outsiders who come in with (only) general peacebuilding expertise. They complained that internationals often come culturally unprepared and ignorant, and they demanded: "People who come in should learn about Bougainville history and custom before they come". (Marcelline Kokiai; interview 25 February 2016). They therefore would like to see better pre-deployment induction and training, with a focus on culture and custom.

A crucial change over time definitely was in the field of trust building. Most Bougainville interviewees talked about the enormous suspicion that was prevalent amongst Bougainvilleans at the beginning of the mission, and how this suspicion was gradually overcome. Relationships were built at various levels: firstly, between the leaders of the mission (Commanders and Chief Negotiators of the PMG, Head of the UN mission, Australian and NZ High Commissioners in PNG) and the military and political leadership of the Bougainville factions, secondly, between the Peace Monitors and the Bougainvilleans they cooperated with, and thirdly, between the TMG/PMG at team sites and the people in the communities. This even holds true for the 'hardline' elements on the Bougainville side: Meekamui interviewees, for example, spoke very positively about the Peace Monitors. Some quarters of the populace remained suspicious, with regard to some issues, and some outsiders remained more trusted than others (Ni-Vanuatu more than Australians), but in general the gradual building of relationships and trust over time was a success story.

Bougainvilleans also talked about negative changes. Mention has to be made first and foremost of the monetisation/commercialisation of the peace process. Interviewees were very critical of how money was spent on reconciliations and also on the buy-back of weapons – the Bougainville Ex-Combatants' Trust Account (BETA) programme (an AusAID programme) was seen very negatively, particularly by the women. Bougainvilleans on the one hand appreciated the resources the outsiders brought in (and say it should have been more), on the other hand they criticised that the outsiders brought in too much, in particular too much money, thus jeopardiing the self-reliance of the Bougainvilleans. They also complained that over the years too many outsiders have come in, in

particular all sorts of NGOs, and that there is a widespread feeling of 'too much' and a feeling of loss of control.[40]

6. Sierra Leone as Plausibility Probe

We have chosen Sierra Leone as a plausibility probe, because this case is at the opposite pole of the spectrum of international-local peacebuilding interaction. Peacebuilding on Bougainville has drawn relatively little international attention. The international intervention there was modest and small in size, and locals had considerable control of what was going on. By contrast, Sierra Leone is one of the best-known cases of international peacebuilding, with massive external engagement and (at least at first sight) comprehensive external control. Both cases have remained relatively peaceful after the end of their wars and are considered success stories of peacebuilding, but the peace processes and the outcomes differ considerably.

On the one hand, Bougainville's success in achieving peace is attributed to the important role of local actors and local approaches throughout the process. Sierra Leone, on the other hand, is considered a success story with regard to the typical goals of liberal peacebuilding: In the first post-conflict period, the focus was clearly on achieving formal institutional stability, and improvements were made concerning security, democratisation and economic development. It was largely an elite-led process focused on institution building at the national level. As a result of this different approach, the root causes of the conflict have still not been addressed.

6.1 War and Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone – Brief Overview

Sierra Leone is a small West African country bordered by Guinea, Liberia and the Atlantic Ocean. From 1991 to 2002, the country suffered from a brutal civil war, during which approximately 70,000 people were killed, over two million people were displaced, thousands suffered atrocities such as (gang) rape, sexual slavery, torture, forced enlistment, forced labour, starvation, amputations, cannibalism, the destruction of their livelihoods and the looting of their homes etc. (Binningsbø/Dupuy 2009: 88; TRC 2004: 3). The root causes are generally seen in a package of 'bad governance' issues in the post-colonial decades, among them an increasingly authoritarian rule, endemic corruption, a centralisation of power and resources in the capital and marginalisation of rural areas, which were ruled by chiefs in often abusive ways (TRC 2004). In March 1991, some 300 fighters of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) invaded Sierra Leone from Liberia and started a guerrilla war to overthrow the government, which it accused of being centralised, corrupt and negligent of the countryside (Adebajo 2002: 82-83; Binningsbø/Dupuy 2009: 89; Mitton 2009: 172).

The 11-year armed conflict was fought between successive civilian and military governments of Sierra Leone on the one side and the RUF rebels on the

[40] This is in line with more general findings on "growing aid dependency over time" (Woodward 2013: 329) in post-conflict situations.

other. In practice, however, the actor constellation was more complicated, and each side in this internationalised conflict was supported by several external actors. The civil war was characterised by shifting alliances: in the beginning, the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and Civil Defence Forces (CDF, a paramilitary organisation composed of several ethnically-based community defence militias) fought together against the RUF. Later the SLA/AFRC (Armed Forces Revolutionary Council) and RUF fought the CDF, and in the end, the AFRC even fought the RUF together with the CDF (Sesay/Hughes 2005: 3).

Neither of the sides could win the war with military force, and there was strong international pressure to come to the negotiation table. From 1996-1999, several ceasefires and peace agreements were concluded (Rinck 2015). Throughout this phase, Nigerian Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) forces supported the Sierra Leonean government, and since June 1998, the first UN missions were present in Sierra Leone. However, fighting continued and culminated in a crisis in May 2000 when the RUF kidnapped about 500 UN peacekeepers. This situation was ended with the help of a strong British military intervention, which the Sierra Leonean government had invited. The war was declared over in January 2002 and multi-party elections were held in May 2002.

International actors were strongly involved both in ending the war and the subsequent peacebuilding process. There were several UN missions: First, the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) from July 1998 to October 1999, with a maximum of 200 military observers from over twenty countries that had the mandate to monitor and advise disarmament and restructure the security forces. UNOMSIL was followed by the stronger peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) (October 1999 to December 2005), which had a maximum of 17,000 military and police personnel from 39 countries. UNAMSIL had the mandate to disarm combatants, assist in holding elections, help to rebuild the police, and to contribute towards rebuilding the infrastructure and the government's service delivery to local communities (UN n.d.). UNAMSIL is generally regarded as successful and, in the UN's view, "may serve as a model for successful peacekeeping, as well as a prototype for the UN's new emphasis on peacebuilding" (ibid.). To consolidate peace in Sierra Leone, the Security Council established the United Nations Integrated Office for Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL 2006, 2008). Sierra Leone was the first country to host an Integrated United Nations Peacebuilding Mission (UNIPSIL, 2008–2014) and has received assistance from the UN Peacebuilding Commission as well as the Peacebuilding Co-operation Framework.

6.2 Everyday Cross-Cultural Interactions

In terms of everyday interactions between international and local actors, the situation in Sierra Leone was different from Bougainville, since there was not the same degree of direct interactions with local people. Mission personnel stayed in armed compounds in the 'sectors', i.e. the Freetown peninsula, the Lungi/ Port Loko area, the Makeni/ Magburaka/ Koidu area and the Bo/ Kenema/ Kailahun area (Yabi 2009). Of course, there were interactions as part of the various

programmes, e.g. in the area of disarmament or security sector trainings. While the Bougainville case highlights how important a similar cultural background between external and local actors can be, this is not always necessarily helpful. UNAMSIL could use West Africans' knowledge about the Sierra Leonean context in the mission, but this closeness also involved problems, especially due to Nigerians' collusion with the RUF. Importantly, context matters here. Due to its history and geographic setting in the Mano River region, Sierra Leone is much more internationalised than remote Bougainville.

Misunderstandings resulting from everyday cross-cultural interactions between international and local actors do not come up in the literature on Sierra Leone. Sometimes, interview partners refer to the internationals and especially the UN as a protection from their own elites.

6.3 Building Trust through Building Relationships

With regard to building trust, the peacebuilding approach chosen in Sierra Leone differed starkly from the Bougainville one. The peace process was, as is typical for international peacebuilding processes, mainly elite-driven. International actors had good working relations with Sierra Leoneans at the elite level, and development assistance had continued even during the war. These relatively stable elite relations certainly played an important role in ending the war, since there was enough international pressure on both sides to negotiate peace agreements. In the peace- and statebuilding process, personnel of multilateral organisations and state agencies mainly worked with the central government and especially the Presidency, and much less with local elites such as Paramount Chiefs, let alone non-elites at the community level.

However, this aspect of building trust via relationship building did play an important role in Sierra Leone peacebuilding as well, albeit not in the official UN peacebuilding programmes. Local actors involved in peacebuilding work stress this point in particular. Below the elite level, other actors took this role – not the UN peacebuilders or personnel from state development agencies, but personnel from international or local NGOs, e.g. Civil Peace Service staff who stay in the country for at least three years and work with local partners in various peace-related areas. Building long-term relationships is a central part of their work and self-understanding. Local NGOs or Church organisations, often with international support, are involved in relationship building work as a part of peacebuilding, often focusing on families and the communities (e.g. Don Bosco Fambul or AMNet, both based in Freetown).

6.4 Security Provision through Armed Peacekeeping, DDR and SSR

Different from Bougainville, Sierra Leone followed the typical model of security provision, with an armed peacekeeping mission, with internationals providing security for locals, and training locals in Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR). It is at least difficult to imagine how sending an unarmed mission could have worked: unarmed UNOMSIL observers, who had been protected by ECOMOG, had been unable to

prevent the attack on Freetown in 1999. And even the armed UNAMSIL mission was unable to stop the rebels and stabilise the situation, which was openly demonstrated when RUF rebels kidnapped some 500 UN peacekeepers in May 2000, who were supposed to supervise their disarmament process.

This situation was ended with the help of a British military intervention, which the Sierra Leonean government had invited. External actors played an important role in security provision in Sierra Leone, providing security for locals from armed combatants, both from the government and rebel side. Stabilisation and security were given high priority in the peace- and statebuilding process, with an emphasis on DDR programmes and SSR. Supported by the British-led International Military Advisory Training Team (IMATT), the British started a pilot project in SSR, which was generally regarded as a success story (Gbla 2006).

Because of this different approach, relations between locals and peacekeepers were not as close as in Bougainville. International actors focused on reforming national institutions, refraining from getting involved in local security issues and working with the most important local security providers: the chiefs. As a result, capacities to ensure security in the countryside are still limited (Denney 2013).

6.5 Ritual and Reconciliation: the Spiritual Dimension of Peacebuilding

For Bougainvilleans, the 'informal', ritual side of the peace process in the form of local reconciliation ceremonies was a crucial factor in the overall peacebuilding exercise, and it was given the necessary space in the international peace monitoring mission. This is one of the most important differences between the international peace missions of Bougainville and Sierra Leone. International peacebuilding in Sierra Leone included the issue of reconciliation by setting up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC),[41] in parallel to the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), which was established to try those "who bear the greatest responsibility", namely the leaders of the RUF, the AFRC, the CDF and then-Liberian President Charles Taylor.

The TRC was set up after the South African example, and operated from November 2002 until October 2004. The fact-finding phase and especially the final report with the recommendations are generally considered important and helpful (local INGO staff, interview 06 December 2016; local NGO staff, interview 05 December 2016; local academic, interview 05 December 2016).[42] The reconciliation part, however, has received much criticism. The hearings have been described as disconnected and culturally inappropriate (Shaw 2007: 195). Those testifying before the commission were coached on the how to testify, on how to remember and on what emotions they should feel (Millar 2014: 9). Kelsall

41 By contrast, no TRC was established in Bougainville (see 5.5.).

42 During the fact-finding mission, local staff members would spend several months in one part of the country, talking to people about their experiences in the local language. Local people prepared the TRC hearings, and traditional leaders, i.e. Interreligious Council members, women's leaders, elders – not the chiefs, though – played an important role by bringing both sides together before the hearings (local academic, interview 05 December 2016; local NGO staff, interview 05 December 2016). Since many recommendations of the TRC were never implemented, it was largely ineffective.

(2005: 363) describes these public hearings as quite emotionless; only the staged ceremony of repentance and forgiveness on the last day, that involved Christian, Islamic, and traditional religious elements, moved the participants emotionally and thus resulted in a reconciliatory moment.

The hearings did not bring reconciliation, and the local reconciliations carried out as part of the TRC were not helpful, since they were limited to mere reconciliation ceremonies as opposed to long-term relationship building. Perpetrators were supposed to live with the communities again afterwards, where they were often not accepted any more. Many former combatants moved to the cities. So, after the TRC process, "there was truth, but no reconciliation" (local INGO staff, interview 06 December 2016). In the early post-war period, there was almost no international support to carry out local ceremonies. While international peacebuilders focused more on the TRC and the SCSL, local people rather relied on elders and secret societies, who carried out purification and reintegration rituals (Kelsall 2005: 390). After some time, local NGOs started supporting grassroots peacebuilding initiatives, working with traditional practices like cleansing ceremonies and sacred bushes, truth-telling bonfires, and establishing local peacebuilding mechanisms such as peace committees, peace trees, peace/palava huts, court barrys or 'peace mothers' farms (local INGO staff, interview 06 December 2016; Tom 2013: 251-252). Some of the local reconciliation measures were later supported under the reparations programme by the Peacebuilding Fund, which was highlighted as a positive example for international-local peacebuilding activities (local staff of regional peacebuilding network, interview 08 December 2016).

6.6 Monitoring vs. Development

Besides the small UNOMSIL monitoring mission, international actors in Sierra Leone, including the UNAMSIL peacekeepers, were actively involved in peacebuilding and development work. The developmental aspect of international support was very strong, and anything else would arguably have been difficult given that Sierra Leone was one of the poorest countries worldwide, where most of the infrastructure was destroyed and people were not self-sufficient in the immediate post-conflict phase.

The Bougainville experience, where peacebuilding and development were separated from one another in terms of the actors involved, opens up the question whether this makes sense more generally. Some NGO personnel, both Sierra Leoneans and international staff of different organisations, emphasised that their small budget is often helpful because they only have a facilitating role and it is the content of the peacebuilding work local actors engage in that matters (international NGO staff 1&2, interview 05 December 2016; local INGO staff, interview 06 December 2016). At the same time, in the eyes of locals in rural communities, it may not make any difference who is doing what, as became apparent in our Bougainville interviews, and as Millar's (2013) evidence from TRC interviews suggests: Local people did not only confuse the TRC with the SCSL, which took up their work at the same time, but also mixed up the goals and processes of the TRC with those of various other parallel peacebuilding processes such as, for instance, DDR measures or activities by NGOs like Doctors

without borders. This raises some doubts as to whether it makes sense to keep peacebuilding separated from development work from a local point of view.

Peace clearly has an everyday material and developmental side to it. There is still a lot of disappointment in Sierra Leone that the victims of the war, especially the amputees, have not been taken care of while the combatants were given benefits in the DDR process (Shaw 2007; Millar 2011, 2013; local NGO staff, interview 05 December 2016). The more important question is therefore maybe not whether to separate peacebuilding from development work, but one of 'ownership' and peacebuilding priorities.

6.7 Concepts of Time

In Sierra Leone, the time frame for the peacebuilding process was also a contested issue. After it had taken several years until both sides came together to negotiate, the peace agreements were negotiated under a lot of time pressure (six weeks of negotiations for the Lomé Peace Agreement), and the agreed time frames were tight. National elections were held in May 2002, only four months after the official end of the war. At that time, there was widespread disagreement with these rushed elections by local newspapers and opposition groups, which called for a national consultative conference that would bring together a wider range of people than just the old politicians and military leaders (Hanlon 2005: 461). However, the incumbent government as well as the US and UK were in favour of early elections, which did then take place. President Kabbah was reelected in a landslide victory with 70 per cent of the vote (ICG 2002: 1; Kandeh 2003: 207).

Another example of this rushed approach concerns the government's local governance reform, which was also contested: In 2002, the government quickly reintroduced elected local councils, which had been abolished in 1972, and also restored the ambivalent traditional hereditary chieftaincy system, which had broken down during the war (Thomson 2007: 21). While UNDP and the World Bank supported the government, Department for International Development (DFID) and other donors had argued for a slower and better planned approach towards local government reform (Kaldor/Vincent 2006: 29). Both cases, rushed national elections and rushed local government reform, benefited the national government to restore its power across the country. Given that many of Sierra Leone's structural inequalities that were outlined as root causes for the war are still present today, one can argue that it would have been better (from the view of ordinary Sierra Leoneans) to take more time to have a more inclusive peace process and build a more inclusive political system.

The various UN missions were prolonged several times and stayed in Sierra Leone for over a decade in total. Before UNIPSIL left in 2014, people were anxious about the future, and in the light of the Ebola outbreak in 2014/2015, one can certainly wonder whether its departure came too early. With regard to relationship building, short rotations of international staff are a problem in Sierra Leone as elsewhere (Denney 2013). In the Sierra Leonean case, however, the time factor may not be so much a problem of different cosmologies as in Bougainville. It rather seems that the short time frame of the peace agreement (rushed elections etc.) suited the government quite well because it allowed them to consolidate their power over potential opponents in the immediate post-conflict phase.

6.8 The Gender Dimension of Peacebuilding

In Sierra Leone, there were relatively few female Peace Monitors or peacekeepers and gender issues did not feature prominently in peacekeeping mandates in the 2000s. Still, UNAMSIL was one of the first missions where gender specialists were employed, after the UN Security Council had adopted Resolution 1325 in 2000 (Rehn/Sirleaf 2002). In practice, this meant that the mission, which consisted of more than 17,000 personnel, had one full time gender adviser (from 2003–2005). Compared to other Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) peacekeeping missions at the time, UNAMSIL also had a relatively high number of female staff – about 30 per cent at the peak of the mission.[43]

UNAMSIL supported the Sierra Leonean Women's Forum in their sensitisation campaigns, and some local taboo subjects like domestic and sexual violence were now openly discussed, for instance on UNAMSIL Radio (Date-Bah 2006: 34; local NGO staff, interview, 05 December, 2016). Rural women had their own peacebuilding activities such as women's complaint desks, some of which were supported by the Peacebuilding Fund (local staff of regional peacebuilding network, interview, 08 December, 2016).

Nonetheless, donors could certainly have put gender equality higher on the agenda. Under Sierra Leone's post-independence authoritarian rule, women had been marginalised in political life for three decades (Castillejo 2009). During the war, women's groups were crucial in preparing the early steps of the peace process, supporting the peace process and facilitating the transition from military to civilian rule by making a negotiated settlement a real option. Many of the women's recommendations were adopted at the first national consultative conference, Bintumani I in 1995 (Jusu-Sheriff 2000: 48). Despite this, women were marginalised in the formal peace process and in the post-conflict public political space. Thus, there were almost no female participants at the peace negotiations and women's issues did not play a prominent role either in the peace agreement, the subsequent peacebuilding process or the post-conflict phase in general (Abdullah/Ibrahim/King 2006: 5; GNWP 2010: 96, 103-104; Jusu-Sheriff 2000: 49). The TRC had recommended a 30 per cent quota for women at all levels of political decision making but this has been strongly resisted by the political elite so far (Castillejo 2009: 4; local NGO staff, interview, 06 December, 2016).

The biggest constraint to more gender equality seems to be the informal patronage system, from which women have traditionally been excluded. Donors seem to have been uneasy to interfere with the national policy agenda as well as to become involved in overtly political issues. Working on gender equality would also involve working with customary institutions, which are extremely powerful in Sierra Leone. Local NGOs or Civil Society Organisations (CSO) like AMNet or Fambul Tok are nevertheless engaging with customary institutions on gender issues but donors tend to refrain from this and rather work with the formal

[43] These were not in top positions, most of them civilian, and very few among military staff. There are no official numbers for the whole period, but in November 2005, for instance, from the 2085 military staff, only 13 were women, most of them Nigerian (Date-Bah 2006: 21).

institutions with which they are comfortable (Castillejo 2009: 19-20; see also Denney 2013).

6.9 Conclusion: International – Local Interactions and the Role of the National Government

The intervention in Sierra Leone was strong in that international actors, intervening with thousands of peacekeepers, set the model of how peace should be built – meaning that international peacebuilders on the ground were less flexible compared to Bougainville. Local-international interactions were not as direct as in Bougainville, but mediated by the strong national government, which was and is the main contact point and partner for international actors. Sierra Leone was before the war, and is again, a highly centralised state, in which most power is held by the President. The various Sierra Leonean governments have traditionally had good relations with international donors, and the international community has been strongly involved in Sierra Leone, which is presented as the success story of UN peacebuilding internationally.

However, foreign state agencies tend to mainly work with the national government and ministries, rather than with those actors that matter to locals, such as chiefs, elders, mammy queens or members of the secret societies. Many international actors are based in Freetown, live in the richer western part of the city, and because international actors mainly talk to the State House, "they don't see the realities on the ground" (local NGO staff, interview, 06 December, 2016). Of course, there are others, usually international NGO personnel, who get deeply involved, who have lived there for a long time or keep coming back, who stayed during the Ebola outbreak to help although they could have left. These internationals are very critical about what other international agencies are doing in Sierra Leone (international NGO staff, interview, 05 December, 2016).

When asked about their perceptions of internationals, several Sierra Leonean NGO/CSO staff members were generally positive, highlighting internationals' role in bringing peace and maintaining stability in Sierra Leone. There are also other voices, critical of the UN and state agencies which are seen as "just ticking off their boxes", and not caring about the effects on locals (local INGO staff, interview, 06 December, 2016). Most importantly, donors and especially UNIPSIL were lauded for trying to hold the government accountable, which is difficult for Sierra Leonean citizens and organisations. However, there are clear limits to what international actors can do in this regard, especially when the national government is strong: For example, in the run-up to Sierra Leone's third post-conflict national elections in 2012, President Koroma wanted the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, Michael von der Schulenburg, out of the country – supposedly because he had been too intrusive in national politics, more likely because he had tried to create a level playing field for all political parties in the run-up to the elections. After he was not backed up by UN headquarters but removed from Sierra Leone, there was little resistance from UNIPSIL because nobody dared to voice any critique anymore (local UN staff, interview, 06 December , 2016; see also von der Schulenburg 2012).

Peacebuilding-as-statebuilding with its focus on stabilisation, governance and formal institution building was successful in establishing negative peace and

security as well as formal democratisation. But many Sierra Leoneans – whether taxi driver, hotel staff, NGO staff, academics or staff in senior positions with the UN – do not agree with the official story painted of Sierra Leone as a democratising country on its path towards sustainable peace and development (e.g. local INGO staff, interview, 06 December, 2016). Today, there seems to be a gap between what international peacebuilders are doing and what is relevant to local actors, and many Sierra Leoneans feel frustrated with the priorities and decisions made in the peacebuilding process (local NGO staff, interview, 06 December, 2016; see also Bøås/Tom 2016).

Most importantly, as a consequence of the 'substantialist' approach to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, the structural problems identified as important root causes of the war have remained unaddressed. Even more, the political structures underlying the socio-economic exclusion in Sierra Leone have been recreated in the post-conflict phase[44], with the result that elites, both at the national and the local level, have benefited most strongly from the post-conflict process, while non-elites, and especially vulnerable groups such as women and youths, have been marginalised again. Understanding peacebuilding as ultimately relational helps to problematise this outcome, and a more relational approach and a focus on relationship building is needed to overcome this situation in Sierra Leone.

7. Conclusion

Our research offers promising potential for addressing significant problems in the political-practical dimension of peacebuilding. Internationals can learn about the locals' perceptions and assessments of their (the internationals') performance, and vice versa; and this might become the starting point of (self-)reflection on inter-cultural listening and learning, on acknowledgement of different ways of knowing and, flowing from this, planning for changes in international-local interaction in peacebuilding exercises in the future.

There are fundamental – perhaps insurmountable – boundaries for international interveners (as well as for external researchers) with regard to comprehending what is really going on on the side of the locals and understanding (the reasons for) their behaviour in and their perceptions of the local-international interactions. To see and read the local context needs to be (and can be) improved but it always will inevitably be confronted with limitations – it only can be seen through one's own lens. Outsiders should not have the illusion to know and understand what is really going on – they should be humble, should accept their own ignorance (Donais 2012: 146). This could be a good starting point

[44] This is a result of decentralisation and local government reform processes. Especially the reintroduction of the chieftaincy system was very controversial (Jackson 2005, 2006; Thomson 2007). Critics suggest that by supporting the restoration of the chieftaincy system, international actors helped to recreate the preconditions for war in Sierra Leone (among others: Hanlon 2005; Tom 2013).

for mutual learning processes, based on the willingness to listen and to engage in true dialogue.

In fact, a core criticism voiced by the Bougainvilleans (and to a certain extent Sierra Leoneans) with regard to the internationals' behaviour is that they should have been more open to listening to the locals, should have shown more willingness to learn from them, should have tried harder to understand local culture – like to be able to sit calmly under a tree, take your time and listen to the stories that you are told.[45] The art of listening seems to be considerably underdeveloped and underestimated on the side of the internationals. What is missing in mainstream peacebuilding is "the ethic of attention" (Brown 2013: 143).[46]

At the same time, the Bougainvilleans and Sierra Leoneans are also keen to hear stories from the internationals, to learn about the outside world and from experiences other people(s) have made elsewhere. Bougainvilleans say the internationals could have done more in this regard. Exposure to the outside world, facilitating exchange with the outside world – this is what Bougainvilleans after years of isolation during the crisis were hungry for (and still are today).

In other words: The chance for cross-cultural exchange does exist. One just has to be willing to engage in it. This requires for actors to be prepared to listen, to appreciate local knowledge, to be self-reflective, to be open to challenges to one's own values, norms and worldviews.

Accordingly, the entirety of an intervention has to be imbued with cultural sensitivity. Pre-deployment 'language and culture' trainings for internationals are necessary und useful but they might not be sufficient. Rather, the main challenge seems to be to provide enough space for intuition, flexibility and incremental adjustments, and at the same time to avoid 'mission creep', unwanted uncertainty and erratic activities.

In the Bougainville case, there was considerable space for such intuition and flexibility, particularly due to the distance and the ensuing communication problems between the peacebuilding theatre on the ground and the political and military headquarters in the sending states: a lot could be done 'under the radar'. There was space to bend the rules, and personnel on the ground did bend the rules when they realised that this was what was needed for the mission's success, in particular for building relationships and trust.[47]

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45 See Lederach 2005: 103-106 on the importance of stillness in peacebuilding. Lederach laments "the lack of the discipline of stillness by those who come from outside with good intentions" (ibid.: 105).

46 An anthropological orientation can sensitise peacebuilding for such an ethic: "Underpinning the awareness of culture and context that anthropology offers peacebuilding is a basic methodological pillar and an ethic: an ethic of attention" (Brown 2013: 143). See also Lederach 2005: 175.

47 It has to be acknowledged though that there is a downside to this openness and flexibility: On the one hand, a more flexible framework can be very helpful in enabling different agendas and sets of values to engage in a respectful way. On the other hand, and depending on the interests and intentions of interveners, this can make it very difficult to hold interveners to account, depending on who these interveners are and what intentions they have. Thanks to Louise Wiuff Moe for alerting us to this.

In Sierra Leone, on the other hand, the peacebuilding intervention followed a prescribed model, was much more under international scrutiny, and as a consequence, there was much less space for flexibility. International-local relations were also not as direct, as external actors focused on the state level, and mainly worked with the government and the presidency in particular. Most importantly, as a consequence of the 'substantialist' approach to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, the structural problems identified as important root causes of the war have remained unaddressed. Understanding peacebuilding as ultimately relational helps to problematise this outcome, and a more relational approach and a focus on relationship building is needed to overcome this situation in Sierra Leone.

The "organic", "intuitive", "fluid" (Bob Breen, interview 30 January 2016) character of the Bougainville intervention, which was so crucial for its success, in turn was due to the fact that initially there were no structures and procedures in place to deal with a task like the Bougainville mission – an endeavour like this was totally new, and people and institutions were rather unprepared for it. This allowed for and necessitated an incremental and adaptive approach. One had to be flexible, to go with the flow. This is not what institutions like ministries, development bureaucracies or armed forces usually do. They do not like uncertainty, complexity, messiness – they want to be prepared and be capable of operating in a formalised and standardised manner. But perhaps it was exactly what was lacking or could not have been done that contributed to the success of international peacebuilding support, because that very gap or 'deficiency' provided the space for flexibility, adjustment and change – despite the "cultural ignorance and arrogance that could also be detected in some officers in the military chain of command in Sydney and Canberra" (Breen 2016: 312), or, for that matter, in New York, Wellington or Port Moresby.

In the course of the interaction between international interveners and local stakeholders interventions changed. What took place on the ground was not just the 'implementation' of a pre-planned international peacebuilding intervention, but a multi-faceted and complex international-local exchange. What we are dealing with in peacebuilding interventions are fluid and dynamic relations. Peacebuilding is fundamentally relational, with locals and internationals "engaged in processes that are mutually conditioning and transformative", with locals and internationals "transformed through relations" (Brigg 2016: 59). Individual peacebuilders and peacebuilding institutions are being changed by their experiences in inter-cultural interaction, and the interaction itself changes over time because of the actors' changes.

Everyday exchanges were cross-cultural undertakings, they made it possible and necessary to work with and work through difference, e.g. with regard to concepts of time, gender or spirituality, which are of fundamental importance for peacebuilding. Just taking the last point: Peacebuilding in places like Bougainville or Sierra Leone is relational also with regard to the invisible world; the visible and the invisible world are closely connected and affect each other. Relationships that emerge in peacebuilding (and let peacebuilding emerge) also comprise the actors of the invisible world. Peacebuilding is thus not confined to the visible world. Internationals conceptualising it in such a secular manner miss a decisive dimension.

Peacebuilding interventions, first and foremost, come to life as everyday interactions between people. Relationships matter. They are at the core of peacebuilding interventions. While acknowledging that both locals and internationals are "subject to a large range of enabling and constraining structural forces" (Hug 2016: 19)[48] when shaping their relationships, our cases provide ample evidence that both international and local peacebuilders have "significant agency within existing structural forces" (ibid.: 328). Stories about how this agency played out in everyday interactions abound.

It is these stories which allow us to capture the relationality of peacebuilding, and these stories are constitutive elements of peacebuilding's relationality. The stories which do not make it into official documents, resolutions and reports that constitute the formal official narrative of an intervention nevertheless shape the actual everyday relational praxis of the intervention.[49]

This relationality, however, plays out in an unplanned manner, behind the backs of the actors so to speak, for the most part independent from their intentions and assumptions, and not officially acknowledged.[50] But one can go a step further by giving the relational approach a normative twist, building a case for a deliberate planned policy of 'relational peacebuilding' (Brigg 2016: 58), as opposed to mainstream liberal peacebuilding.[51] Acknowledging relationality is the basis for prioritising relationships in peacebuilding. Such a deliberate, planned relational approach would go well beyond today's mainstream international liberal actors' notions of local participation and ownership, which still "regard the local as something that can be used" (Mac Ginty 2016: 200), "a means to an end" (ibid.: 207) (if not an obstacle to peace). By contrast, it would pave the way for conscious dialogical peacebuilding, which does not privilege one set of worldviews, values, norms and practices (the liberal international) over the other, but allows for genuinely "unscripted conversations", accepting "the risks involved, including the inability to predict or control outcomes – a situation that a security mentality continually tries to avoid" (Duffield 2007: 234).

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48 On the internationals' constraints when they try to use personal relationships as a resource for peacebuilding, see at length Hug 2016.

49 On the gap between what internationals do and what they officially report, see Eyben 2010.

50 Eyben (2010) speaks about "the contradiction between the substantialist plumbing and the relational practice" of international aid.

51 See Porter, who is promoting "a 'gender-relational' feminist approach" to peacebuilding (Porter 2016: 213).

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9. List of Abbreviations

ABG	Autonomous Bougainville Government
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
ARB	Autonomous Region of Bougainville
BETA	Bougainville Ex-Combatants' Trust Account
BPA	Bougainville Peace Agreement
BRA	Bougainville Revolutionary Army
BTT	Bougainville Transitional Team
CDF	Civil Defence Forces
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DFID	Department for International Development
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
IMATT	International Military Advisory Training Team
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organisation
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
NZ	New Zealand
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force
PMG	Peace Monitoring Group
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SCSL	Special Court for Sierra Leone
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TMG	Truce Monitoring Group
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIOSIL	United Nations Integrated Office for Sierra Leone
UNIPSIL	Integrated United Nations Peacebuilding Mission
UNOMB	United Nations Observer Mission in Bougainville
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone

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