

Building Sustainable Peace

Understanding the Linkages between Social, Political,
and Ecological Processes in Post-War Countries

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Abstract

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Post-war countries are among the most difficult policy arenas for international and domestic actors. The challenge is not only to stop violence and prevent violence from rekindling, but moreover to help countries reset their internal relations on a peaceful path. The indirect, long-term effects of wars further exaggerate this challenge. Many of these relate to political and social aspects of post-war countries. Lasting impressions of human rights abuses committed during wars continue to shape the relations among members of societies for decades to come. Both, socio-economic impacts and political impacts challenge the stability of post-war countries for many years. The challenges to public health have been found to be especially severe and affect disproportionately the civilian population of post-war countries. Environmental and climate change exposes post-war populations further to new risks, exaggerating the human costs of war long after active combat has ceased.

These challenges are not new. The problem, however, is that in practice all these elements are simultaneously happening in today's peacebuilding interventions. Yet, practitioners as well as researchers remain settled in a silo mentality, focusing only on one aspect at a time. As such they are unaware of the unintended consequences that their focus has on other important processes. The four essays that lie at the heart of this dissertation provide new insight into the linkages between the social, political and ecological processes in post-war societies and how the interactions of different groups of actors are shaping the prospects for peace.

The argument drawn out in this dissertation is that to build peace we need to acknowledge and understand this long-term interplay of social, political, and ecological processes in post-war countries. It will be crucial to understand the potential and dynamics of natural resources and environmental issues in this context. As the essays in this dissertation show, the interactions of these processes divisively shape the post-war landscape. It is therefore essential to build a peace that is ecologically sensitive, while equally socially and politically relevant and desirable. I call this sustainable peace.

Keywords: Sustainable peace, peacebuilding, post-war reconstruction, non-state actors, state actors, legitimacy, environmental peacebuilding, environmental security, sustainable development

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To Tanya, Misha, and Leo

List of Papers

This thesis is based on the following essays, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.

- I “Actors in Environmental Peacebuilding - A case study of ownership frames in the UNEP's environmental peacebuilding policy framework.”
- II “The Liberal Trap - Peacemaking and Peacebuilding in Afghanistan After 9/11”. 2013. In M. Eriksson & R. Kostić (eds.), *Mediation and Liberal Peacebuilding: Peace From the Ashes of War?* London: Routledge. pp. 57–75.
- III “Water for Peace? – Post-Conflict Water Resource Management in Kosovo after 1999.” *Cooperation and Conflict* 2016
- IV “Empowering Peace: Service Provision and State Legitimacy in Peacebuilding in Nepal.” *Conflict, Security, and Development* 2016 16 (1): 53-73.

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Do what you love, love what you do!

I spent Easter of 1996 in San Diego, California for a two-week language vacation during the school break. As a sixteen year old I was obviously more interested in the Californian way of life, skating along the beach and surfing, than sitting in a classroom learning English. It was during that trip that I found the business card of a small surf shop in Huntington Beach with the slogan “Do what you love, love what you do!” For several years this card would sit above my desk. I was fortunate to have this slogan guide large parts of my life ever since. Spending the summers in Slovenia to work as kayak teacher, traveling the Balkans and Eastern Europe long before they would join the European Union; volunteering in South Africa and Russia. Eventually this message would bring me to Sweden, to do what I love and live with the love of my life and start a family together. Writing a dissertation is far from being an easy journey. But for the last five years I had the fortune to go to office every day to work on a subject that gives me a sense of purpose to contribute to a bigger good, intellectual stimulation, and interaction with people that share this passion. I am truly grateful and deeply humbled of this privileged experience.

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Florian Krampe
Uppsala, July 2016

Introduction

Post-war countries¹ are among the most difficult policy arenas for international and domestic actors. The challenge is not only to stop violence and prevent violence from rekindling, but moreover to help countries reset their internal relations on a peaceful path. The indirect, long-term effects of wars further exaggerate this challenge. Many of these relate to political and social aspects of post-war countries. Lasting impressions of human rights abuses committed during wars continue to shape the relations among members of societies for decades to come (Kostić, 2012). Both, socio-economic impacts (Gates et al., 2012) and political impacts (Holsti, 1996) challenge the stability of post-war countries for many years. The challenges to public health have been found to be especially severe and affect disproportionately the civilian population of post-war countries (Ghobarah, Huth & Russett, 2003). The reasons for this lie in poor sanitation as well as the lack of access to clean and safe drinking water (Gleick, 1993; Weinthal, Troell & Nakayama, 2014; Swain, 2015). Environmental and climate change exposes post-war populations further to new risks, exaggerating the human costs of war, long after active combat has ceased (Adger, Barnett & Geoff Dabelko, 2013; Matthew, 2014). However, research that acknowledges the environmental linkage to post-war countries has typically overstated these and focused solely on environmental issues, while neglecting important social and political issues. Similar research on peacebuilding has typically ignored the influence of environmental issues on the social and political developments in post-war countries. Consequently, our understanding of the linkages of social, political, and environmental processes remains rudimentary.

The argument of this dissertation is as follows: to build peace we need to acknowledge and understand the long-term interplay of social, political, and ecological processes in post-war countries. As these processes interact and divisively shape the post-war landscape, I argue that it is essential to build a peace that is ecologically sensitive, while equally socially and politically relevant and desirable. I call this sustainable peace.² The use of ‘sustainable

¹ I use the term post-war countries to emphasize that in many peacebuilding situations violent as well as non violent conflicts remain active, yet in most instances the major combat has ceased at least at the beginning of the peacebuilding process.

² This definition and use deviates from other uses of the term in the larger peace and conflict literature. Multiple scholars have used sustainable peace or close derivations thereof without one clear definition, although usually they refer to a lasting, durable peace. The most coherent

peace' here is closely linked to the political debate on sustainability in which it refers to the balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). The same emphasise is visible in the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations General Assembly, 2015)

Until recently a dichotomous approach to the study of peacebuilding dominated. It has vertically separated actors at the international and domestic level, treating both as unitary actors, thereby falling short to account for the multifaceted character of peacebuilding. To overcome this shortcoming and to increase our understanding of today's broader peacebuilding arena in which sustainable peace is built, this dissertation conducts an actor-oriented approach to analyze post-war peacebuilding processes. It thereby makes linkages between social, political and ecological processes of post-war countries. The actor-oriented approach is chosen for two reasons. First, as discussed below, I understand peacebuilding as the process in which a post-war social and political order is (re)built through the interactions of different actors. And, second, an actor-oriented approach provides a more nuanced understanding of the involved actors beyond the ubiquitous dichotomy of global and local actors. In particular it offers insight into important questions of ownership, i.e. which actors design, manage and implement peacebuilding policies. To that end, I disaggregate actors involved in peacebuilding along two lines of delimitation – horizontally between non-state actors and state actors and vertically between international and domestic actors. To that end, the dissertation is tied together by the overarching research question: *How do the interactions between various actors – and specifically their agendas and practices – shape the conditions for sustainable peace?*

The four essays that lie at the heart of this dissertation are individual studies of different aspects of international peacebuilding interventions. However, in sum they provide new insight into interactions of different groups of actors in shaping sustainable peace. Essay I focuses on the United Nation Environment Program (UNEP) as a central actor that works at the nexus of environment and peacebuilding. The focus is on policy frames pertinent to questions of ownership that are embedded in four key UNEP reports on environmental peacebuilding. Contrary to expectations, the Essay finds that non-state actors are grossly absent from the reports and reflects on the implications of this for environmental peacebuilding practice. Essay II focuses on the relations between two sets of international actors and their peacebuilding agendas and peacebuilding practice in Afghanistan. The Essay shows how the actors' differing human rights and transitional justice agendas create tensions between them, about what path is the right one to achieve more

use has been in reference to a post-war societies being able to sustain peace without the help of others. This is also called a self-sustaining peace (Galtung, 1969; Downs & Stedman, 2002; Kostić, 2007; Toft, 2009).

influence over the peacebuilding process. The tensions on the international level reveal how these actors neglect consideration and inclusion of domestic actors, despite rhetoric that these international actors are legitimately representing the Afghan people. Essay III studies the water resource management through international state actors in Kosovo following the 1999 intervention. The Essay illustrates the lack of a coordinated approach and failure to combine social, political and ecological considerations. It argues that this uncoordinated approach has not only missed an opportunity for building peace, but actually exacerbated the division of domestic actors in this post-war society. Lastly, Essay IV moves beyond the international level to look at the often-neglected relationship between domestic actors in post-war Nepal. The Essay investigates how the interactions of state and non-state actors during the implementation and aftermath of service provision projects – in this case electrification through micro-hydropower – effect both socio-economic development and political stabilization. The findings suggest that service provision through community-based micro-hydropower development has facilitated socio-economic development, but impeded the relationship between the state and society. The findings highlight the critical policy challenges and dilemmas that emerge from the interactions of social, political and ecological factors in post-war societies.

The essays in this dissertation account for the complexity of post-war countries and offer insights into the long-term, indirect effects that various environmental, social and political stressors have on building sustainable peace. The essays emphasize that it is pivotal to understand and address these stressors and how they affect and destabilize countries long after major combat has ceased.

In this introductory chapter to the dissertation I summarize the general argument, findings, and contribution of the collection of essays. First, I present previous research on peacebuilding. I show how different disciplines have neglected to consider social, political and ecological linkages and explain the problems of this neglect. Second, I introduce the actor-oriented approach that is used to address our lack of knowledge vis-à-vis the linkages. I provide a disaggregation of actors in four distinct groups and show how the actor-oriented approach relates to crucial concepts that enable study of peacebuilding processes more broadly. Third, I provide a brief reflection on methodological aspects of the dissertation like case selection, data collection and analysis, as well as advantages and limitations of the chosen scope of the individual papers. Fourth, the four essays are introduced. Lastly, I summarize the contribution of the essays to the body of literature on environmental peacebuilding, before concluding by suggesting a path for future research.

International Peacebuilding Interventions

The question how to build peaceful societies and states has been a cornerstone of scholarly debate. Questions about interference and intervention in another state's affairs and the values guiding peaceful coexistence have been discussed for many centuries. The emergence of the Westphalian state in 1648 and its emphasis on sovereignty has further influenced this debate (Doyle, 2015). Westphalian ideas center on the sovereignty of each state and an assumption of non-interference in another states' affairs. Though assumed as universally applicable, these principles have in practice been broken continuously. If at all applied, the principle of non-interference applied only to European states and especially in the post-WWII political order (Tilly, 1992). Nonetheless, the emergence of the United Nations after World War II brought a renewed emphasis on the universal sovereignty of each state, epitomized in the General Assembly where every state, no matter of size and power, has one vote. Interference and intervention in other states affairs would only be allowed under special circumstances, such as 'threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression' and only under the authority of the UN Security Council (United Nations, 1945 Chapter VII). Given the bipolar political order of the Cold War period and the inherent East-West division of the UN Security Council, Chapter VII seldom applied. However, notable exceptions have been UN peacekeeping missions that served as first impartial observers to monitor ceasefire agreements – as such guaranteeing the involved states' sovereignty, than actively interfering in their internal affairs.

The discourse and practices of intervention underwent a massive change after the end of the Cold War when then UN secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali announced his "Agenda for Peace" (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Guided by the hopeful spirit of the early post-Cold War period (Fukuyama, 2006) and new research findings suggesting the peacefulness of liberal democracies (Doyle, 1983a; b; Maoz & Russett, 1993), liberal peacebuilding emerged as a concept to guide the thinking and practice of peacebuilding for the next two decades (Paris, 2004; Newman & Richmond, 2006; Newman, Paris & Richmond, 2009; Paris & Sisk, 2009; Eriksson & Kostić, 2013).

From Liberal Peacebuilding to Broader Peacebuilding

Under the impression of the increasing number of armed conflicts in the 1990s, and the perceived brutality and novelty of these conflicts, especially in the Caucasus, the Balkans, East Africa and Rwanda (Kaldor, 2001),³ practitioners and many scholars began to argue that forceful international peacebuilding interventions are sometimes necessary. The liberal peacebuilding agenda was envisioned as the key instrument of the international community to bring lasting peace to warring nations. Liberal peacebuilding aims at fostering democratic peace by supporting post-war states to establish strong democratic state institutions. They also promote macroeconomic growth through capitalist market economics (Darby & Mac Ginty, 2003; Paris, 2004; Chesterman, 2005a; Jarstad & Sisk, 2008; Newman, Paris & Richmond, 2009; Paris & Sisk, 2009; Pugh, Cooper & Turner, 2010; Eriksson & Kostić, 2013). In the process of liberal peacebuilding, a state's sovereignty would often be de facto suspended and an international trustee – typically in the form of a United Nations mission – would take charge of institutions, until the above goals of economic liberalization and democratization were reached (Krasner, 2004; Chesterman, 2005b).

After an initial honeymoon period and hope that a perpetual peace was in reach, more and more critiques emerged. Roland Paris argued that liberal internationalism focused too strongly on a quick transition towards market democracies, thereby effectively inflicting new conflicts through these inherently contentious processes (Paris, 1997; 2004). Nonetheless, Paris and other critics continued to work within the normative framework set by liberal peacebuilding, as 'there is no realistic alternative to some form of liberal peacebuilding strategy' (Paris, 2010: 340). Fearon and Laitin argue similarly that international assistance is necessary and justified in weak and post-war states, because: while locally built peace would be possible and the most 'natural' pathway to rebuilt states after war, 'the local and international costs and risks of such "natural" processes of state formation can be very high' (Fearon & Laitin, 2004: 43; see also Krasner, 2004).

There is a continuous research effort that follows the argument by Paris and others, putting trust in the liberal peacebuilding framework. However, the normative framework of liberal peacebuilding – notably the liberal-capitalist economy and democracy as the favored regime type – has received criticism. Three foci are relevant in this debate. The first relates to the normative agenda, its content and meaning; the second to the practice of peace-

³ Kaldor identified in the perceived brutality and novelty of the conflicts in the 1990s a new archetype of war, calling it 'New Wars.' However, the concept was challenged, because of inaccurate data and overgeneralizations. For a rebuttal that highlights the perceived rather than factual nature of the new wars discourse see Melander, Oberg & Hall (2009).

building; and the third to the complex and multidimensional relationships of different actors.⁴

Questions about the explicit and implicit normative content of liberal peacebuilding have sparked a lively debate among scholars. Pugh argues that internationally peacebuilding interventions are simply a tool to safeguard western capitalism, because these interventions are ‘not simply about promoting good governance and reducing chaos (...), but also to sustain hegemonic power over the global economic future’ (Pugh, 2006: 271; see also Tadjbakhsh, 2011). Similarly Noam Chomsky argues that the interventions of the 1990s were in fact a form of neo-imperialism (in Duffield, 2001: 32-33). The normative content of liberal peacebuilding thereby aims explicitly at the inculcation of local actors, transcending assumed international norms and values onto the subjects of intervention to integrate them in the new liberal post-conflict order (Chandler, 2010; Kostić, 2011). Scholars have frequently described this relationship as external imposition, because the discourse treats local actors as ‘objects to be transformed’ (Donais, 2009: 19; see also Chandler, 2010: 40). Whereas this critique appears as a rebuttal to liberalism, David Chandler, one of the foremost critics of liberal peacebuilding interventions, has argued that the meaning of some liberal concepts – especially the concepts of sovereignty, democracy, rule of law and civil society – has changed, and thus that the norms guiding today’s liberal peacebuilding policies are anything but liberal (Chandler, 2010).

Multiple studies have illustrated how implicit and explicit normative content of liberal peacebuilding framework have transcended and shaped the practices of actors during peacebuilding interventions (Duffield, 2007; Eriksson & Kostić, 2013; Bliesemann de Guevara, 2014; Chandler & Richmond, 2014; Lemay-Hébert & Kappler, 2016). The strong belief in the normative superiority of the liberal agenda has caused a reliance on international ownership of the practice of peacebuilding interventions. Studies have exposed this top-down character of peacebuilding interventions, and argued that – even though well intentioned (Fearon & Laitin, 2004; Krasner, 2004; Paris, 2010) – these internationally-led practices have suppressed local actors and produced more problems than that they solved (Mac Ginty, 2006; Chesterman, 2007; Donais, 2009; Eriksson & Kostić, 2013). While pacifying active fighting in many cases, these peacebuilding missions contributed to prolonged or freezing conflicts, i.e. leaving post-war societies in a ‘no-war, no-peace’ situation (Duffield, 2007; Mac Ginty, 2010a).

A further critique refers to the complexity of post-war contexts and raises the issue of alternative approaches to peacebuilding. Roger MacGinty’s research in particular has shown that a consequence of the normative imperative and inculcating practice of peacebuilding interventions has been local

⁴ None of these are mutually exclusive and several of the studies reviewed address different elements of the liberal peacebuilding debate.

resistance. This resistance has led to hybrid peace, a form of peace that is neither the liberal peace that external actors intended, nor the peace that local actors envisioned (Mac Ginty, 2006; 2010b). Subsequently, studies increasingly focus on the local actors in peace processes and have shown that despite the strong normative and practical (or social-material) influence through outsiders, local agency exists and perseveres during peace processes (Menkhaus, 2006; Richmond, 2012; Kappler, 2014; Krampe, 2016a; Richmond, 2016). These studies suggest that a more ‘multidimensional’ understandings of peace would serve as an alternative to the liberal peacebuilding framework (Kappler, 2014).

The Problem of the Silo-Mentality

The academic debate on peacebuilding has grown tremendously over the years and expanded beyond the central tenets of liberal peacebuilding and its critique. Transitional justice and reconciliation became early on central for peacebuilding processes (Vinjamuri, 2007; Brounéus, 2008; Kostić, 2012). Similarly, human development and poverty alleviation are today central terminology of the international peacebuilding jargon. Further broadening of the peacebuilding agenda has also taken place in terms of the inclusion of women, youth and community/human security (Richmond, 2006; Paffenholz, 2010; Gruener, Hald & Hammargren, 2015). One of the most recent additions has been in regard to natural resources and the environment (Conca & Geoffrey Dabelko, 2002; United Nations Environment Programme, 2009; Conca, 2015).

The problem, however, is that in practice all these elements are simultaneously happening in today’s peacebuilding interventions. Yet, practitioners as well as researchers remain settled in a silo mentality.⁵ That means, each of these different processes – e.g. transitional justice, public health sector reforms and the implementation of environmental protection – are designed, implemented, and analyzed in post-war countries without consideration of the consequences – both intended and unintended – that result from the links and interactions of social, political, and ecological processes. This is a considerable shortcoming and has potentially negative effects for peacebuilding processes. This silo mentality approach is apparent when looking for instance at the water sector in post-war countries.

In recent years researchers have produced an impressive collection of empirical studies on cooperation through natural resource management. Studies on water resources in particular have shown that cooperation over water – on

⁵ For previous critiques of the silo mentality in peacebuilding see among others Woodward who criticizes UN peacebuilding missions for not considering the ‘interdependent social, cultural and political processes that cause and end war’ (Woodward, 2007: 163).

the inter as well as on the intra state level – is a recurring phenomenon (Swain, 2004; Jägerskog, Swain & Öjendal, 2014; Zeitoun & Mirumachi, 2008; Tubi & Feitelson, 2016). Subsequent debates have moved further and focus their analysis on the *quality* of cooperation and linking it to power asymmetries and ‘hydro-hegemony’ (Zeitoun & JF Warner, 2006; Zeitoun & Mirumachi, 2008). The transboundary water resource management literature provides abundant empirical examples where environmental cooperation has prevailed between neighbouring nations (see also Earle, Jägerskog & Öjendal, 2013; see the 4 volumes of major works by Jägerskog, Swain & Öjendal, 2014). International rivers have inspired the creation of numerous agreements, treaties, and shared institutional bodies (Yoffe, 1999; SM Mitchell & Zawahri, 2015). Inter-state cooperation over shared water resources has even been shown to facilitate cooperation among states over non-water related issues (Delli Priscoli & Wolf, 2009). Recently researchers have begun to focus on the intra-state level (Weinthal, Troell & Nakayama, 2014; Ide & Fröhlich, 2015; Tubi & Feitelson, 2016; Krampe, 2016a). These studies show that also on an intra-state level cooperation over water resources, rather than conflict, is the prevailing norm (Tubi & Feitelson, 2016). The intra-state focus provided novel insight, especially when it considered the importance of socio-political factors. It thereby showed how local discourses and identities, were the critical ‘drivers of the Israeli-Palestinian water conflict,’ that means identity, rather than physical scarcity of water, determine whether cooperation or conflict over scarce water resources prevail (Ide & Fröhlich, 2015: 668). However, none of these studies of water conflicts focus on post-war countries.

In contrast the edited collection *Water and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding* focuses explicitly on this context (Weinthal, Troell & Nakayama, 2014). This work has produced an impressive array of empirical insight and emphasises that water resource management is an important aspect of peacebuilding processes. Moreover, ignoring water can be counterproductive, because the socio-economic effects impact on livelihoods, which in turn may exacerbate tensions in communities (Troell & Weinthal, 2014). However, while the book provides a good starting point, it remains technocratic and fails to develop a thorough theoretical understanding of post-war water resource management. It rarely explores social processes and at times neglects to mention the political drivers of peacebuilding processes. Moreover, this study, as well as many other works in this field, work outside of the concepts and understandings that dominate in the current peacebuilding debate. This neglect of the special social and political circumstances of conflict-affected countries can be observed both within the academic field, but also among the agendas and practices of international state actors, such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) (Gustafsson, 2016).

This is remiss, because conflict-affected states present the most challenging policy arena for international actors. Aside from the social and political challenges, these countries frequently suffer from poor natural resource management and one of the major challenges relates to the need to re-build water and sanitation related infrastructure (Gleick, 1993; Krampe, 2016b; Swain & Jägerskog, 2016). Among other factors, the poor management of water resources, amplifies the vulnerability of post-war communities on water and may exacerbate or prolong the human costs of war, affecting public health and livelihoods (Ghobarah, Huth & Russett, 2003). Yet, while these challenges are widely acknowledged among practitioners and scholars, both the scholarly debate and policy practice emphasise the need for experts and specialists to address these challenges. However, experts and specialists often favour simplified silo thinking that reduces complexity (Zeitoun et al., 2016), and that fails to acknowledge the political and social processes that shape post-war countries (Aggestam, 2015; Krampe, 2016b).

One of the most notable examples of this silo-mentality in the international peacebuilding arena is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs achieved notable success in decreasing poverty and vulnerability of communities in the developing world (Sachs & A Warner, 1997). However, they failed in conflict-affected states as conflict has a detrimental effect on several of the MDG targets (Gates et al., 2012). The effects of this impact are likely to complicate an already complicated situation, because countries and communities are exposed to both developmental and peacebuilding challenges at the same time. It is therefore important to have a conflict-sensitive approach to the MDGs or their successor the Sustainable Development Goals. Implementing development, environmental and other important processes in post-war countries without attention to the links among the social, political, and ecological processes, sensitivity to domestic needs and norms, can backfire and complicate already complex and problematic situations.

Research Gaps

Scholars and practitioners are slowly becoming aware of the complexity of post-war countries and the fact that a unilateral focus on one area is likely to influence other areas negatively (Geoffrey Dabelko et al., 2013; Krampe, 2016a). Other scholars have been emphasising the interconnectedness of all aspects, and amplifying the chaos and complexity,⁶ rather than emphasising the need for clarity of the nature of the relationships between different factors. Thus, important aspects of this research arena have remained underex-

⁶ Erika Weinthal stressed this argument in her presentation at the roundtable "Defining Environmental Peacebuilding", Roundtable at ISA Annual Convention, March 16-19, 2016, Atlanta, USA.

plored, despite steady progress in the individual understanding of social, political and ecological processes for building peace. Three specific gaps in current research are identified and addressed to differing degrees by the four essays in this dissertation.

First, theoretically the linkages between the social, political and ecological dimensions of post-war societies are poorly understood. The peacebuilding debate has over several decades contributed tremendous insight about the dynamics of post-war societies. Focused centrally on social and political aspects, however, this research has neglected to consider environmental factors as potential drivers of peaceful change. To the same extent those studies on environmental issues in a peacebuilding settings have focused predominantly on the role of ecological, i.e. environmental and natural resource issues, but to little extent looked at the social and often fully neglected the political drivers of the peacebuilding process. As concern for environmental issues and processes in the general peacebuilding debate is virtually nonexistent, the following two gaps relate specifically to the environmentally centered literature.

The second gap relates to the fact that studies of environmental issues in peacebuilding have largely worked outside of the terminology and concepts that are used in peace and conflict research when analyzing peacebuilding. The consequence is that the communication and transfer of knowledge between the peacebuilding debate and the environmental debate is suffering. This conceptual disconnect is further amplified by the fact that environmental peacebuilding is lacking one coherent definition.

Third, since a coherent definition and framework is lacking, the empirical insight of studies of environmental issues in peacebuilding that has accumulated in recent years is a good starting point, but remains eclectic. Therefore, it does not constitute a systematic study and inhibits subsequent theorizing of environmental issues in peacebuilding, because a coherent underlying epistemology is missing.⁷

I address these gaps by focusing on the question *how do the interactions between various actors – and specifically their agendas and practices – shape the conditions for sustainable peace?* In the next section I first introduce the actor-oriented approach that all four essays build on, and define and discuss its core elements: peacebuilding, ownership, and actor groups.

⁷ It is worth noting that some research on international water cooperation is a notable exception of this trend, but tends to focus predominantly on the relationship and security implications between states, less attention is given to intra state conflict as previously mentioned.

An Actor-Oriented Approach to Peacebuilding

To study the interactions of social, political and ecological processes in post-war societies and understand how these interactions influence the prospects of achieving sustainable peace, this dissertation uses an actor-oriented approach to the study of peacebuilding. The actor-oriented approach is characterized by three factors: first, it builds on an understanding of peacebuilding as an actor-driven process that aims to reach a legitimate form of governance. Second, it emphasizes a consciousness of ownership, i.e. who designs, manages and implements peacebuilding processes. Third, it disaggregates actors along four actor groups.

To overcome the ubiquitous use of the global-local dichotomy in the study of peacebuilding, an actor-oriented approach enables a more nuanced understanding of the actors and their roles in peacebuilding processes. The horizontal distinction of actors is certainly important, and it has in the last decade improved our understanding of peace processes (Chandler, 2006; Eriksson & Kostić, 2013; Mac Ginty, 2014) and in particular has raised awareness of the inherent power asymmetry between international and domestic actors (Jarstad & Olsson, 2012). At the same time the distinction is often unspecific and does not reveal details about the actor in itself. For instance, in research focusing on Security Sector Reform the local actor will be ‘those institutions authorized to use or threaten force’ (Donais, 2008: 5). Yet, depending on the focus of polices the local actor may vary between state and non-state actors. To overcome this shortcoming researchers have used more actor-oriented approaches, because they have the ability to sharpen the analysis of peacebuilding policies ‘beyond the broad categories of conflict between the local and the global’ (Höglund & Orjuela, 2013: 300). Essentially, the actor-oriented framework overcomes the structuralist simplifications that go back to Talcott Parson’s work on social systems. Parson’s social systems and many studies on peacebuilding afterwards inadvertently have treated the state and society as the same social system (Migdal, 2001: 4). This conflation of states and societies in one system favors ‘a singular set of social values and norms’ and thereby negates plurality of actors identities (Migdal, 2001: 5).

Peacebuilding

I conceive peacebuilding throughout the dissertation as focused on the relationship between politics, i.e. the state in particular, and society and how society shapes politics and vice-versa (Migdal, 2001). I define peacebuilding as the *process* through which the structural setup of the state in relation to society in a post-war context becomes renegotiated through the *interactions* of state and non-state actors – with, or without the involvement of external international actors. The stability of this new setup depends on society perceiving it as *legitimate*.

Increasingly scholars focus on legitimacy to study and explain key elements of post-war peacebuilding, both from a domestic as well international perspective (Lemay-Hébert, 2009; Lake, 2010; Kappler, 2012; Ramsbotham & Wennmann, 2014; Themnér & Ohlson, 2014; Karlborg, 2015a; Krampe, 2016a). Building on Kalevi Holsti's work we can conceive of the post-war structural setup as the linkages of the physical, attitudinal, and institutional components of a state.⁸ Holsti argues that in strong states these linkages are strong and reflect a high degree of legitimacy between the state and society (vertical legitimacy), but also among the communities within the state (horizontal legitimacy) (Holsti, 1996). The belief of society in the legitimacy of the state is also central to Max Weber's work on the interlink of society and the state (Weber, 1947; 1968). He famously wrote 'the basis of every system of authority, and correspondingly of every kind of willingness to obey, is a belief, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige' (Weber, 1947: 382). Legitimacy is at the core of a state-society relationship as 'it indicates people's approval of the state's desired social order through their [*individuals*] acceptance of the state's myth' (Migdal, 1988). Indeed, legitimacy highlights the reciprocal agency between states and societies that essentially constitutes a peaceful social and political system. This is important, as it neither excludes nor challenges the existence of the state, as some other post-Westphalian perspectives. Nor does it understate the agency that society has in shaping the rule and rules of the post-war setup.

Focusing on this domestic relationship is, furthermore, important when considering that the aim of international peacebuilding interventions is to move post-conflict states and societies towards a self-sustaining peace, a situation where external support is unnecessary (Stedman, Rothchild & Cousens, 2002; Kostić, 2007; Toft, 2009). While much important work on peacebuilding has discussed the legitimacy of external actors, it is ultimately the internal legitimacy between the state and society that determines the stability of states (Lipset, 1959; Holsti, 1996; Migdal, 2001). Legitimacy thus 'focuses on the agency of social groups and local communities'

⁸ Underlying this is Buzan's threefold conceptualisation of the state as being the idea of the state, the institutions of the state, and the physical base of the state (Buzan, 1983)

(Themnér & Ohlson, 2014). This focus on legitimacy and the domestic relationship between state and society is inherent in all essays in this dissertation.

The relationship of social and political factors to this conceptualization of peacebuilding is self-evident. How environmental factors affect this relationship, however, requires some more elaboration. As Holsti argues, the economic effects of resource extraction are critical: ‘If the state extracts to the point where livelihood is no longer possible, migration, resistance, rebellion, and secession attempts become alternatives to payment. In societies characterized by extensive poverty, ‘virtually any government extraction imposes a severe threat’ (Holsti, 1996: 109). In post-war societies the balance between resource extraction through the state and services provided by the state is a fundamental challenge to the stability of the country - especially in regard to water, food and land resources. Likewise, resource allocation - another key aspect of legitimacy – is equally affected by civil wars (Holsti, 1996; Themnér & Ohlson, 2014).

Like Holsti, Themner and Ohlson operationalize legitimate peace ‘as a relative improvement in the vertical and horizontal legitimacy of a given state’ (Themnér & Ohlson, 2014: 76). Their indicators of ‘legitimate peace’ follow the political science and peacebuilding literature in regard to measurements of political legitimacy (see for instance Weatherford, 1992). This operationalization is explicitly employed and elaborated in Essay IV, but underlies the understanding of peacebuilding in all of the essays.

Ownership

While the issue of legitimacy is crucial in understanding the relationship between domestic state and domestic non-state actors, or the state and society, the legitimacy of the peacebuilding process as such is also critical. In the context of international peacebuilding interventions that means the relationship between international and domestic actors should ideally be based on some agreement and acceptance. Some have named this the host-citizen contract (Karlborg, 2015b). Herein this is referred to as ownership. Ownership in this context is used to determine who designs, manages and implements peacebuilding processes.

As such it serves as an analytical tool that helps to identify who has ownership, rather than a normative, prescriptive standpoint on who *should* have ownership. Generally the literature focuses on two types of ownership. Local ownership (what I call domestic ownership) is generally considered as a communitarian concept that emphasizes bottom up approaches and effective local control and agency in decision-making. International ownership is the direct antonym and typically seen as a capacity building exercise through international actors – both state and non-state. Guided by a liberal agenda

and expectations of local compliance to international, universal norms – international ownership is often labeled local ownership by international actors, even though local control is often only addressed at the end of the peacebuilding process (Chesterman, 2007; Donais, 2009).

The question of ownership has sparked continuous academic debate in peacebuilding between proponents of domestic ownership (Lederach, 1997) and those demanding international ownership (Fearon & Laitin, 2004; Krasner, 2004). Chandler argues that any international involvement is an external imposition and negates the possibility of actual domestic agency. In contrast, Jarstad and Olsson have argued that interventions with full domestic agency may be impossible as all interventions, as well as the roles of interveners, are characterized by a strong power asymmetry between international and domestic actors (Jarstad & Olsson, 2012). In other words, international actors will always have more power and thus greater ownership of the peacebuilding process. Nonetheless, in these interventions ‘liberal and illiberal actors and values coexist uneasily and neither the international nor the local actors have full ownership; they are caught in a partly symbiotic and partly destructive relationship’ (Jarstad & Olsson, 2012: 105). These studies have used ownership as an analytical tool and hence enabled a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of peacebuilding interventions. This has again enabled other studies to highlight the existence and influence of domestic agency and how it effects the outcome of peacebuilding interventions towards hybrid peace (Menkhaus, 2006; Boege, Brown & Clements, 2009; Mac Ginty, 2010b; Kappler, 2012; Richmond, 2012; Kappler, 2014; Hughes, Öjendal & Schierenbeck, 2015; Krampe & Swain, 2016).

Actor Groups

The essays in this dissertation disaggregate post-conflict actors along two lines, creating four ideal types of actors groups. Vertically the distinction lies between international and domestic actors; horizontally between state and non-state actors (see Figure 1). The grouping into these four types has a number of advantages: 1) it provides a more nuanced disaggregation of actors in peacebuilding, without falling into the trap of relativism or reductionism; 2) it enables focus on the relationship of the state and society and by that the legitimacy between them; 3) it allows a more nuanced visualization of ownership. Nonetheless, this categorization has obvious limitations. It places distinctly different types of actors within the same category. This shortcoming is however compensated for by the qualitative approach of the essays. Usually it is clear which actor the analysis is describing. As such it allows differentiating actors and qualifies the reader’s understanding of the elusiveness of the created boundaries (see T Mitchell, 1991).

To that end, this dissertation uses four groups of actors that are of particular interest (see figure 1). The dotted line indicates that the actor groups are conceived of as ideals types, but that in practice the boundaries of these categories are overlapping and inter-related.

Figure 1. Matrix of International and Domestic actors

		<i>State actor</i>	<i>Non-state actor</i>
<i>International</i>	International State Actor	Government actors and intergovernmental organizations that act on the international level across national platforms	International Non-State Actor Organizations or groups that work on the international level across national platforms, but are not state actors
	Domestic State Actor	Domestic actors that are affiliated with or representing the government	Domestic Non-State Actor Domestic actors that are not state actors
<i>Domestic</i>			

Method

This section provides a brief overview of the methodological aspects of the dissertation. The aim is to elaborate on some of the choices that are underlying the individual studies and how they relate to the overall dissertation. First, I explain the data collection and data analysis methods used. Second, I discuss case selection before reflecting on the scope of the essays and the dissertation as a whole.

Data Collection and Analysis

All essays rely on qualitative data that was collected and analyzed by me. Three different data sources were used. Essay I uses written reports of an international state actor, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), whereas Essay II and III rely on elite and expert interviews to establish an understanding of the relevant processes. This allows an analysis of the dynamics and interactions of different actors. Essay IV again uses elite interviews, but in combination with respondent, i.e. household interviews.

In three out of the four essays elite interviews are a critical element. I understand elites as individuals ‘who occupy senior management and board level positions within organizations’ (Harvey, 2011: 433). Interviewing elites serves two purposes. First, they provide an interpretation of people and events as well as decisions that have been taken. Second, they are able to provide information that is otherwise unattainable (Richards, 1996). As in the case of Essay II the historical knowledge about the course of the 2001 Bonn negotiations was only partially recorded. I was able to address this lack of knowledge through in-depth interviews conducted with four of the key diplomats that were directly involved in the setup and conduct of these negotiations. Similarly, in the case of Essay III information about the water resource management through the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was virtually non-existent. However, I was able to interview those four elites involved in the process, including three who were directly designing and implementing the water sector reforms in Kosovo. In both cases, interviewing elites allowed taking a uniquely informed analytical stand on these previously unknown processes, and insights were gained beyond the publicly presented policy discourses (Shore & Wright, 2005; Kostić, 2014).

To overcome the problem of subjectivity of individual responses (Richards, 1996), effort was made to verify all information, especially that about critical episodes of peacebuilding processes, through additional documentation (primary sources such as government documents, reports, resolutions, but also secondary sources such as newspaper articles or other forms of reporting in print and digitally) and interviews (Davies, 2001; Creswell, 2014). There is an ongoing debate about the effects that the interviewer may have on the response of interviewees. These effects are typically concerning surveys asking very sensitive and private accounts from respondents (Krumpal, 2011). The interviews conducted for this dissertation did not ask about such sensitive questions, thereby reducing possible over- or underreporting (Krumpal, 2011; Liu & Stainback, 2013). Nonetheless, it is relevant to reflect on these potential biases. The biases are mitigated to the extent that special attention has been paid to the formulation of interview questions. Especially in the case of household interviews in Essay IV, standard survey questions have been used to guide the semi-structured interviews. These questions increase the reliability of the answers as the questions are standardized and extensively tested, while allowing the interviewer to ask for clarification and further inquires. Possible biases are further moderated as the same researcher has conducted all interviews. While this does not overcome a possible bias, it would keep the bias stable throughout the study.

In Essays II and III elite interviews were used to gain insights into the peacebuilding process. In contrast, Essay IV used elite and household interviews with distinctly different purposes. Elite interviewees served in this case as informants and the interviews were semi-structured, but essentially open-ended to enable learning of previously unknown aspects. The purpose of these interviews was to familiarize myself with the case of Nepal, its context and the domestic social and political situation, but also to establish a network that would be helpful to selecting field locations and conducting further study (see also Björnehed, 2012). Household interviews in contrast served to collect explicit responses to the pre-designed, theory-driven research question and interview guide. Overall, 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted during two field trips to Nepal in July and September 2013.

In all four essays significant attention has been paid to the analysis of the collected qualitative material. Essays I and IV used qualitative content analysis to facilitate a highly structured analysis of the data. Qualitative content analysis is especially well-suited to describe and analyse qualitative data systematically and identify ‘latent and more context-dependent meaning’ (Schreier, 2013: 173). This method for the systematic analysis of qualitative data moreover complements the theory-driven assessment, which was used in both of these essays. The method is elaborated on in Essay I. The interview data for Essay II and III were also systematically analysed as described above through establishing the historical knowledge and sequence of pro-

cesses. For these two essays qualitative content analysis was not used, because of the different scope and purpose of the data.

Case Selection, Scope and Limitations

The individual essays focus on different cases that have been chosen as being most appropriate for the specific research question of each essay. To that extent there are obvious limitations, because the limited scope of each study affects the generalizability of the essays in the framework of a dissertation..

Essays I, II, and III are single case studies of either a specific policy within one individual organization (Essay I) or of a specific process in individual countries (Essay II and III). This clearly limits the generalizability of the essays (Gerring, 2006; Brady & David Collier, 2010). According to King, Keohane and Verba, the reason for this is twofold. First, single case studies often suffer under selection bias, because it is difficult to find truly representative cases. Second, single case studies may suffer from very limited observations and therefore a lack of variation, challenging their explanatory power (King, Keohane & Verba, 1994). To that end, single case studies are always problematic. However, depending on purpose and design of the respective study, these limitations can be turned into advantages. It is therefore important to be transparent about the scope of the conducted case studies (George & Bennett, 2005).

In regard to Essay II and Essay III, the choice of the single case study is justified by the specific focus and purpose of the essays and offers several advantages compared to other approaches. Both essays are process-oriented studies that aim to collect knowledge about the specific process and set the respective process into focus (Eisenhardt, 1989). Through an inductive approach the single case method allows for unique insights into the peacebuilding process in Afghanistan and water resource management in Kosovo. Despite some limitations, the use of single case studies for these two essays is worthwhile, as it reveals the hidden policy discourses and highlights insights about these peacebuilding processes that previously had not been recorded in the literature on these cases. Thereby it enables uncovering the normative peacebuilding agendas, the politics and motivations of actors behind these agendas, and how these shape peacebuilding practices in the field (Chesterman, 2007; Chandler, 2010; Eriksson & Kostić, 2013).

The design of these single case studies inevitably requires a trade-off between generalizability and 'context-dependent knowledge' (Flyvbjerg, 2006), while allowing some leeway for theoretical development (George & Bennett, 2005; Bennett & Checkel, 2012). Both essays aim to gain a deeper understanding of the tensions and dynamics between actors in peacebuilding processes to understand the conditions for sustainable peace in these cases. Accordingly, the research process for both essays focused on gaining and

providing in-depth knowledge about the respective peacebuilding processes. The focus on the peacebuilding processes in these single cases allows the essays to provide often unique insight into ‘complex social processes’ (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007: 26). It also allows a deeper analysis than a comparative, journal-length study would often be able to provide.

In addition, there are several specific aspects of the two essays that – to some extent – offer learning beyond the single case study. None of the essays exists in a theoretical vacuum. The limitations of the single case study are thereby partially overcome, because the studies are situated within the existing theoretical framework of international peacebuilding interventions. To a limited extent this allows for comparison with other studies, but moreover allows follow-up studies if the same analytical framework is applied (George & Bennett, 2005). This is because the inductive approach of the study is not open-ended or ‘grounded’ (Glaser & Strauss, 2012), but is starting from an established theoretical backbone that prevents arbitrary drifting to irrelevant process elements. Recent studies in peacebuilding (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2014; Björkdahl et al., 2016) have shown the usefulness of the in-depth focus of the single case study and how it can be used to accumulate knowledge and generalize based on this growing body of evidence, and thereby provide opportunities for theory development.

Essay I is a single case study of different design, as it focuses on an actor, the UNEP, and one specific policy, environmental peacebuilding, rather than a process. While similar limitations apply, these shortcomings are mitigated in this essay by the fact that the four reports analysed in Essay I represent the full scope of possible studies on this particular issue by this agency. While other agencies could have been analysed (e.g. Adelphi, Wilson Centre, or International Alert), none of these has the same reputational standing, as the UNEP, and neither of them is an international state actor. An extended analysis of these would in the future be interesting and add to our understanding of the broader environmental peacebuilding framework. However, this lies beyond the scope of the presented essay. Methodologically, the limitations of the single case study are overcome in this essay through qualitative content analysis and theory-driven analysis.

As elaborated on in Essay IV, this single country study is designed as a comparative case study (George & Bennett, 2005) to compare the socio-economic and political effects of micro-hydropower development in Nepal. From the study itself it is difficult to generalize beyond Nepal but it allows careful generalizing within Nepal and careful comparisons to cases with similar contexts and features. The research also identifies dynamics between domestic actors that could be the subject of further study. As the essay relies on a well-established framework to assess state legitimacy, future studies would be able to test the results through a structured focused comparison (George & Bennett, 2005) and hypothesis-based process tracing of the un-

derlying mechanisms (Bennett & Checkel, 2014). This would increase the generalizability of the findings but is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Presenting the Essays

This dissertation is composed of four individual studies. The findings of these essays address to varying degrees the three research gaps identified at the start of this chapter. Their contribution to the research gaps is outlined in the subsequent conclusion.

Essay I: “Actors in Environmental Peacebuilding – A case study of ownership frames in the UNEP’s environmental peacebuilding policy framework”

In contrast to international peacebuilding interventions, global environmental governance is characterized by the inclusiveness of international and domestic non-state actors. Consequently, it may be expected that the UNEP policy framework on environmental peacebuilding would promote a strong for of non-state actors. This article examines the roles of various actors in this policy framework. It analyzes policy frames pertinent to questions of ownership that are embedded in key UNEP reports on environmental peacebuilding. I consider ownership here as an indicator of which actors design, manage and implement environmental peacebuilding policies. The findings suggest that UNEP, which I consider an international state actor, prefers international ownership (as opposed to domestic state or domestic non-state ownership) in their strategy for the sustainable management of natural resources in post-war settings. However, contrary to expectations, the reports showed a notable absence of international non-state actors. This is surprising in light of the global environmental governance discourse, which stresses the importance of involving international non-state in environmental governance. This article discusses characteristics of the reports that may explain the absence in this framework of international non-state actors, as well as domestic state and domestic non-state actors.

Essay II: “The Liberal Trap – Peacemaking and Peacebuilding in Afghanistan after 9/11”

By examining the negotiation of the Bonn Agreement for Afghanistan and its implementation, this paper argues that adding a reconciliation or transitional justice agenda to external statebuilding efforts does not resolve the problem of top-down imposition and regulation. Analysis of the pre-negotiation phase showed that the Afghan parties were controlled and regulated from the outset by the external actors, led by US diplomats. The external agenda was heavily driven by Western security and statebuilding concerns, but in order to uphold an image of an intervention as normatively liberal, the concepts of national reconciliation and human rights were included in the Agreement. As shown in the study of the implementation phase, these concepts became a source of tension between Western statebuilders and the Western transitional justice community. My investigation reveals that each party is seeking to impose their own agenda on the elected Afghan government, and are neglecting locally driven solutions.

Essay III: “Water for Peace? – Water Resource Management and post-conflict reconstruction in Kosovo after 1999”

Water resource management is increasingly considered in the context of peacebuilding. Studying the role of the United Nations Mission to Kosovo (UNMIK) in the management of Kosovo’s surface and groundwater resources, this paper suggests that UNMIK’s approach has created three interconnected challenges for Kosovo’s peace process. First, it consolidated the separation of actors by allowing separate water governance as well as physical structures. Second, UNMIK avoided conflictive issues instead of actively engaging in conflict resolution in the water sector. Third, water resource management in Kosovo disempowered locals by giving ownership to external actors. The study stresses the complex political nature of water resource management in post-conflict contexts.

Essay IV: “Empowering peace – service provision and state legitimacy in Nepal’s peace-building process”

There is growing demand for an understanding of peace beyond the absence of violence. As such research focuses increasingly on the issue of state legitimacy as a way to assess and understand peace processes. In this paper the relationship between service provision and state legitimacy is studied to as-

sess whether the provision of services such as electricity to rural communities of war-torn countries through state actors contributes to consolidating the post-conflict political system. The qualitative analysis of two localities in post-conflict Nepal highlights that service provision in the form of micro-hydropower yields tremendous positive socioeconomic effects for rural communities. However, the socioeconomic development in combination with interactions among villagers has strengthened local autonomy by emphasizing alternative local governance structures. This suggests that the relation between service provision and state legitimacy is more complex than previous research anticipates. The absence of a positive effect on state-legitimacy brings into question whether or not service provision is conducive to the broader peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict Nepal, because it stresses the divide between state and society.

Towards Sustainable Peace

The essays in this dissertation have highlighted that the linkages of social, political and ecological processes in post-war countries shape peacebuilding processes and outcomes. Studying these links is important to overcome the silo mentality problem that currently dominates research and policy practice in this field. To reach a better understanding of this broader peacebuilding arena, and especially of the natural resource management in post-conflict countries, the four essays stress how the interactions of different actor groups involved in the management of these processes shape the conditions for sustainable peace. The focus on actors supported the study of peacebuilding beyond the ubiquitous dichotomy of global-local. To that end, the findings address three critical gaps in current research.

First, the theoretical linkages between the social, political and ecological dimensions of post-war societies are poorly understood. The essays in this dissertation contribute to the study of peacebuilding processes by exploring and understanding the important relationships between social, political and ecological dimensions in these processes. Until now these have largely been considered in isolation of each other. Essays II, III and IV in particular provide important insight into the dynamics between different processes and how they shape the prospects for sustainable peace. Essay II highlights the tensions that arise between the political and social aspects in peacebuilding in Afghanistan and how this effects ownership as well as the legitimacy of international actors. Essay III on Kosovo, highlights how the sectoral approach among international actors is causing unintended problems and thus contributes to ethnic conflict, rather than utilizing potential synergies for building peace. Essay IV addresses this gap most comprehensively by highlighting the dynamics among social, political and ecological processes in Nepal. The Essay finds that ecologically sensitive policies can have great social success for local communities, but at the expense of moving the process of political integration forward.

The second gap concerns the conceptual lack regarding terminology, and especially the use of concepts from peace and conflict research in studies of environmental issues in peacebuilding. Not only does this gap frequently lead to misunderstandings regarding the relationship between environmental and climate change conflicts, but it also inhibits translation of research findings between the different disciplines. All essays in this dissertation address this gap through a clear epistemology. By focusing on actors, ownership and

a broader understanding of peacebuilding in terms of legitimacy, the essays contribute new insight on the ecological processes in post-war countries by relating them to well-established frameworks within peace and conflict research. This not only allows a better understanding of the research findings across disciplines, but also provides the opportunity to develop more comprehensive theoretical insights into peace processes and addresses the conceptual void discussed above.

The above problems lead up to the third empirical gap. Since a coherent definition and framework is lacking to study environmental issues in peacebuilding the empirical insight accumulated in recent years is a good starting point. Yet, these insights do not add up to a systematic study and subsequent theorizing of environmental issues in peacebuilding. The essays, especially Essays I, III and IV provide a coherent epistemology to study peacebuilding processes. This allows conceptual dialogue across disciplines, which in turn paves the way for more robust theorizing. But these essays also provide a strategy to empirically study various aspects of environmental peacebuilding. Essay I in particular addresses an area that has so far been largely neglected; the normative aspects of environmental peacebuilding. Disaggregating the actors across horizontal and vertical lines provides new insight in the different roles of actors in these processes and reveals the plurality of concerns and interests that exist across different levels. While not designed as a systematic comparative study, Essays I, III and IV stress the empirical breadth that can and should be studied to increase our understanding of the linkages between social, political and ecological dimensions in post-war countries.

In sum, this dissertation highlights the problems that arise when research and practice remains centered on a silo mentality that fails to see the relationships between complex and interrelated problems of post-war countries. Thereby, these findings highlight the critical policy challenges and dilemmas that can emerge after conflicts. In many ways this is reflective of the ever more complex nature of international politics and the constantly broadening scope of the peacebuilding agenda itself. As argued, the peacebuilding agenda expanded first towards liberal peacebuilding that stressed democratization and economic liberalization. Later it expanded further to incorporate more social questions of international aid, state and human development, the inclusion of civil society, as well as transitional justice and human rights. Other notable additions have been in regard to youth and children, gender, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) rights. The broadening in terms of natural resources and ecology has followed suit and highlights the link between environmental issues, sanitation, public health and other societal challenges. These will increasingly become relevant as the effects of climate change continue to manifest in complex and unpredictable ways across scales and domains.

The expansion of the academic and policy discussion reflects a greater understanding and acknowledgement of the complex nature of societies – especially in post-war countries. However, the debate still suffers from a limited understanding of the linkages of various complex processes that are ongoing in post-war countries, on different levels and among different actors. On the one hand this complexity makes it more and more difficult to assess the success of peacebuilding policies. When different interventions interact and produce unintended and uncertain outcomes, as in the cases exemplified, the dilemmas for practitioners to decide which policy to implement in what context becomes virtually paralyzing.

To develop sustainable peace, which I define as a peace that is ecologically sensitive, while equally socially and politically relevant and desirable, it will be crucial to understand the potential and dynamics of natural resources and environmental issues in post-war societies. More research is needed to better understand the complexity of the broadening post-conflict landscape. The essays in this dissertation stress that social, political and ecological processes interact and divisively shape the post-war landscape. Future research should develop this research agenda and would benefit from using well-established frameworks and concepts that exist in peace and conflict research. This would enable the systematic study of how ecological processes influence and relate to more social and political processes and to understand what synergies emerge that enable peacebuilding. In my opinion, that entails breaking down some barriers that currently maintain the silo mentality in this field, but moreover it means embracing cross- and trans-disciplinary research, and using existing and functioning concepts and frameworks to understand how to build sustainable peace.

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