Agency & peacebuilding: the promise of local zones of peace

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ABSTRACT

International peacebuilding has expanded rapidly in the two decades since the *Agenda for Peace* was published. Alongside this growth of peacebuilding has come the realisation that many peacebuilding projects conceived of and sponsored by the international community have failed to meet their own objectives or, more importantly, failed to have been embraced fully by those they were supposed to help: the individuals and communities attempting to rebuild their lives in post-conflict countries. Critical analysts discuss the current state of peacebuilding and model what they see as the post-liberal peacebuilding paradigm. In doing so, they point to agency as a missing element in local peacebuilding practice. This paper unpacks and theorises agency as a form of human need and proposes the use of zones of peace (ZoPs) as one method for engendering local agency while encouraging good governance, transparency and accountability in local peacebuilding projects.

Introduction: peacebuilding's problems and promise

Peacebuilding was conceived of in the mid-1970s by Johan Galtung as a way of creating environments conducive to positive peace rather than just simply ending conflicts.[1] Later it was popularised in two directions: First by Boutros Boutros Ghali in his seminal work *An Agenda for Peace*; and second by John Paul Lederach in his twin publications *Preparing for Peace* and *Building Peace*.[2] While Galtung focused on creating positive peace, Boutros Ghali was both more specific and more general, calling on the UN to assist in 'rebuilding institutions and infrastructures of nations torn apart by civil war and strife; and building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among nations formerly at war'.[3] This definition is specific when mentioning the repair and rebuilding of institutions, and less so when mentioning repairing relationships, or bonds, between former combatants. By contrast, Lederach's focus

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[1] Patrick G. Coy, 'Conflict Resolution, Conflict Transformation, and Peacebuilding', in *Peace, Justice, and Security Studies: A Curriculum Guide*, ed. Timothy McElwee, et al. (Boulder, CO: L. Rienner Publishers, 2009), 69; Johan Galtung, *Essays in Peace Research* (Copenhagen: Ejlers, 1975); Johan Galtung, *Transcend and Transform: An Introduction to Conflict Work* (Bolder, CO: Paradigm, 2004).

[2] Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking, and Peace-keeping* (New York: United Nations, 1992); John Paul Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995); John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace, 1997).

[3] Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*, 4.

calls for 'an infrastructure across all levels of society … that empowers the resources for reconciliation'.[4] Here, too, there is a twin emphasis on both structure and relationship, but with focus on the need for improved relationships as the foundation for sustainable peace.

Over the past 20 years, these differences have solidified into what Donais describes as two approaches to peacebuilding: liberal and communitarian. The former is focused on importing norms of good governance from the developed world, while the latter stresses the importance of local traditions and culture.[5] Of the two visions, liberal peace has dominated peacebuilding practice despite the many criticisms aimed at it.[6] Critics have challenged its focus and ability to achieve its own goals of promoting peace and setting the stage for long-term sustainable reconciliation – or even at times post-conflict stability. Works by Richmond and his colleagues[7] showcase the many problems that have emerged from what Mac Ginty describes as the application of a flat-pack peace from Ikea.[8]

Views of liberal peacebuilding range from the seemingly benign to the malign. On the one hand are issues with an over-focus on the state and a tendency to over-weight western technical expertise in comparison to local knowledge.[9] On the other, there are those who argue that liberal peacebuilding is largely designed to support the economies of the west while continuing to marginalise and impoverish those whom the programmes are ostensibly designed to help.[10]

Regardless of one's views, it is clear that many liberal peacebuilding efforts have not lived up to their full potential. One source of failure has been the oft-noted conflation of peacebuilding with state-building, in effect substituting the narrow goals of the latter for the often much wider goals of the former.[11] The reasons given for these failures are many. Some point to international financial institutions for perpetrating the same polices partly responsible for the conflict in the first place.[12] Others point to the UN system itself, burdened with too many actors pursuing too many different missions, and with a largely neutered

[4]Lederach, *Building Peace*, xvi.

[5]Timothy Donais, *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership: Post-conflict and Consensus-building* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 5.

[6]For more see Séverine Autesserre, *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Terrence L. Jantzi and Vernon E. Jantzi, 'Development Paradigms and Peacebuilding Theories of Change: Analysing Embedded Assumptions in Development and Peacebuilding', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 5, no. 1 (2009).

[7]Oliver P. Richmond, 'Resistance and the Post-liberal Peace', *Millennium* 38, no. 3 (2010); Oliver P. Richmond, *A Post-liberal Peace* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011); Oliver P. Richmond, 'Failed Statebuilding versus Peace Formation', *Cooperation and Conflict* 48, no. 3 (2013); Oliver P. Richmond, 'Peace During and after the Age of Intervention', *International Peacekeeping* 21, no. 4 (2014); Oliver P. Richmond and Henry F. Carey, *Subcontracting Peace: The Challenges of the Ngo Peacebuilding* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Oliver P Richmond and Roger Mac Ginty, 'Where Now for the Critique of the Liberal Peace?', *Cooperation and Conflict* (2014); Oliver P. Richmond and Audra Mitchell, 'Peacebuilding and Critical Forms of Agency: From Resistance to Subsistence', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 36, no. 4 (2011); Oliver P. Richmond and Audra Mitchell, *Hybrid Forms of Peace: From Everyday Agency to Post-liberalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Oliver P. Richmond and Ioannis Tellidis, 'Emerging Actors in International Peacebuilding and Statebuilding: Status Quo or Critical States?', *Global Governance* 20, no. 4 (2014).

[8]Roger Mac Ginty, 'Indigenous Peace-making versus the Liberal Peace', *Cooperation and Conflict* 43, no. 2 (2008): 145.

[9]Autesserre, *Peaceland*, 97, 149.

[10]Jantzi and Jantzi, 'Development Paradigms and Peacebuilding Theories of Change: Analysing Embedded Assumptions in Development and Peacebuilding', 73; Roger Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 117; Michael Pugh, 'The Political Economy of Peacebuilding: A Critical Theory Perspective', *International Journal of Peace Studies* 10, no. 2 (2005): 25.

[11]Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance,* 137; Thania Paffenholz, 'Civil Society and Peacebuilding', in *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Thania Paffenholz (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2010), 47.

[12]Graciana del Castillo, 'When the Fighting Stops: Economic Reconstruction of War Torn Countries: The Role of the International Financial Institutions', *Seton Hall Law Review* 38 (2008).

Peacebuilding Commission.[13] Another critique focuses on the disconnect between the international and the local, arguing that internationals are wrongheaded to pursue top-down policies that require locals to accept their expertise and that locals need to find a better way of influencing peacebuilding programmes than either refusing to take ownership or bending them to their own goals – a result that Mac Ginty labels hybrid peacebuilding.[14]

Overall, it appears that peacebuilding as envisioned and practiced by international actors is largely ineffective in achieving its goals of sustainable peace. It seems clear that the disconnect between peacebuilding elites and affected populations is at the root of the problem; but there may be more to it than that. Why do local populations resist international efforts? Why do they bend them in ways that result in hybridisation and why does the international community have such difficulty in recognising and addressing this problem? To address these questions I next focus on local ownership as being at the heart of the problems facing peacebuilding today. I then discuss agency as a theoretical concept, arguing that the struggle for and expressions of agency by locals – and at times by internationals – are due to its role as a basic need, one that cannot be subverted nor denied, but must be addressed.[15]

Problems of local ownership

One prominent view of peacebuilding sees its failure as resting on the unwillingness of local elites and communities to take ownership of the peacebuilding process and of the projects and services provided by the international community.[16] Richmond's more critical interpretation focuses on what he describes as local resistance to what Mac Ginty describes as situations where the idea of local ownership is lauded, but is little more than lip service hiding the fact that most, if not all, of the power lies in the hands of the international community.[17] Regardless of one's interpretation of the relationship between locals and internationals, the disconnect between the two leads to what Mac Ginty describes as hybrid peacebuilding, wherein international initiatives are altered through their contact with locals, who may incorporate elements, or subvert international initiatives to suit their own goals. On the one hand, this may be beneficial as locals are assumed to have a better understanding of their needs than internationals and should be able to focus resources and address local problems. On the other hand, locals may instead use international resources in order to support personal networks, engage in corruption and subvert both the letter and the intent of peacebuilding by supporting the imbalances that led to the conflict in the first place.[18]

Donais' focus on local ownership begins by quoting two different approaches to the concept. The first is what is termed a maximalist approach, wherein the international community is relegated to being little more than a check-writing 'Daddy Warbucks' for local peacebuilders. The second is a more minimalist approach, wherein locals are expected to buy-in to international programmes and plans, 'owning' them to the extent that they

[13]Rob Jenkins, 'When the Fighting Stops: Organizational Change and Institutional Survival: The Case of the U.N. Peacebuilding Commission', *Seton Hall Law Review* 38 (2008): 1328.
[14]Donais, *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership*; Roger Mac Ginty, 'Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-down and Bottom-up Peace', *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 4 (2010); Richmond, 'Resistance and the Post-liberal Peace'.
[15]John Burton, *Conflict: Resolution and Provention*, 4 vols, vol. 1, The Conflict Series (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).
[16]See Donais, *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership*.
[17]Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance*, 60, 79.
[18]Mac Ginty, 'Indigenous Peace-making versus the Liberal Peace'.

voluntarily follow the dictates of internationals or other outsiders.[19] These definitions have corollaries in Donais conceptualisation of peacebuilding as being either communitarian in nature or stemming from the dominant liberal peacebuilding paradigm. He views the communitarian approach as one where internationals are closer to being check-writers while in the liberal paradigm they would be closer to being 'directors' of the peacebuilding play, with the locals playing the roles of actors under international direction.

Donais argues for the idea of shared ownership in the sense of recognising the needs of locals to be involved in both the planning and implementation of peacebuilding projects as well as the responsibilities of internationals – and in particular donors – to ensure that their resources are used in a responsible manner. Donais calls for this shared ownership, or partnership, to be built upon processes of consensus-building, which needs to take place at all levels of peacebuilding activity.[20]

One key element left out of Donais' examination of ownership is the role that agency plays in determining whether locals accept ownership and responsibility for particular peacebuilding projects. Like many others, Donais recognises the importance of agency, indicating that any examination of local ownership 'necessitates more serious reflections on questions of *agency* in post-conflict processes' but does little to define what agency is or, theoretically, why it is so important.[21] For that, I next turn to agency as a concept and link it to theoretical considerations.

Defining agency: issue or need

Agency is defined by some sociologists as 'the power of actors to operate independently of the determining constraints of social structure'.[22] This stems from Giddens' idea that 'the notion of human action logically implies that of power' in that action can only take place 'when an agent has the capability … to potentially influence their course' of action.[23] We can see that the definition of agency is one that requires that actors have some power or control over their actions and a reasonable chance of influencing the outcomes. This sense of control over one's actions at the centre of definitions of agency is reflected by a number of critical peacebuilding scholars. Richmond describes the actions of locals in opposition to the liberal peacebuilding project as 'resistant agency' implying 'significant agency at the local level, even among supposedly marginalised actors' showing that, unlike conceptions of local ownership, the concept of agency clearly implies influence over the context and outcomes.[24] Mac Ginty argues that hybrid peacebuilding is indicative of the presence of local agency, reflecting the kinds of resistance that Richmond outlines.[25]

Both define agency as a property of actors, though these actors can come in various types. Mac Ginty's discussion of local actors' agency includes corporate actors such as the

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[19]Donais, *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership*, 4.

[20]Ibid., 13.

[21]Ibid., 7 emphasis in original.

[22]David Jary and Julia Jary, *The Harpercollins Dictionary of Sociology*, Harpercollins Dictionary (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991), 9.

[23]Anthony Giddens, 'The Prospects for Social Theory Today', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 23 (1978): 219.

[24]Oliver P Richmond, 'From Peacebuilding as Resistance to Peacebuilding as Liberation', in *Rethinking Peacebuilding: The Quest for Just Peace in the Middle East and the Western Balkans*, ed. Karin Aggestam and Annika Björkdahl (London: Routledge, 2013), 66.

[25]Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance*, 10, 111.

national government, municipalities, political parties, NGOs and militants to name a few.[26] Richmond's definitions also imply that multiple actors are in possession of multiple types of agencies, from resistant agency to reclaimed agency, critical agency and everyday local agencies; leading to the creation of an 'ethoscape' that can help us understand the fluidity of local interactions with the international.[27]

These views reflect an approach to agency which holds that it can be a property of both individuals and of larger corporate actors, though these act through human representatives.[28] This broader interpretation of agency is extended in Kappler's examination of local agency in Bosnia. Kappler opposes the location of agency as 'within an actor exclusively', defining it 'as a product emerging from the relations between sets of actors' developing in 'imaginary spaces' known as spaces of agency. These are defined as 'spaces that actors create and use to display their agency vis-à-vis other actors' spaces'.[29] Here Kappler seems to objectify agency itself, noting that in Bosnia local agency 'has tended to protect itself by withdrawing from the public sphere' while in Cyprus local agency has tended to be co-opted into the dominant discourses.[30]

As we will see below, one can equate some notions of zones of peace with Kappler's spaces of agency. However, given that my examination of agency is focused on the motivations that result in local resistance to international peacebuilding programmes, it is more useful to focus on human agency rather than on broader conceptions of the term; recognising that both corporate agencies and spaces of agency represent the interaction of individuals and the interaction of their various agencies.

A useful way of thinking about agency is to view it through the lens of human needs theory. In doing so, we should recognise the many different versions of human needs theories that exist. Whether discussing Maslow's hierarchy of needs, any of Burton's interpretations or Max-Neef's development-oriented scale, it is important to remember that the fundamental basis of needs theory is that it represents a universal constant – that all people have basic needs, that all needs are either fulfilled or denied, and that when needs are denied, individuals will struggle to have those needs met, even if those struggles result in antisocial or violent behaviour.[31]

Many theorists have posited different versions of basic needs theory. Most accept Maslow and Burton's terms that needs themselves are ontological and can't be bargained away, but they differ on the number and definition of needs. A development specialist, Manfred Max-Neef postulated a 36-celled matrix of needs based upon categories of axiological and existential needs. The axiological categories of participation, creation, identity and freedom dovetail most closely with the definition of agency given above. These four axiological needs describe a necessity for active interaction and participation, productive work, a sense of

[26]Ibid., 84.

[27]Richmond, *A Post-liberal Peace*, 14, 15.

[28]Martin Hewson, 'Agency', in *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, ed. Albert Mills, Gabrielle Durepos, and Elden Wiebe (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2010), 13.

[29]Stefanie Kappler, *Local Agency and Peacebuilding: Eu and International Engagement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus and South Africa* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 22, 23.

[30]Ibid., 5.

[31]Burton, *Conflict: Resolution and Provention*; John Burton, *Violence Explained* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); Abraham Maslow, *Towards a Psychology of Being* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962); Manfred A. Max-Neef, *Human Scale Development: Conception, Application and Further Reflections* (New York: The Apex Press, 1991).

belonging, elements of autonomy and the ability to exercise choice. Considered collectively, these constitute agency.[32]

But how well do these ideas translate into the real world where peacebuilding efforts take place? In an examination of subjective well-being, Tay and Diener surveyed individuals in 123 countries, finding that subjective well-being was clearly correlated with the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of Maslow's basic needs.[33] Like Sites' examination of needs, Tay and Diener found that Maslow's hierarchy wasn't as static as either he or Burton imagined.[34] They note that county-level conditions correlated the most with physiological and safety needs and that individual-level conditions correlated most closely with the fulfillment of psychosocial needs. However, they found areas where psychosocial needs were more fulfilled than physiological and safety needs, noting that 'people in poor nations may achieve the psychosocial needs before they have their basic needs met'.[35] This may explain why some very poor individuals report positive subjective well-being. Tay and Diener found that physiological and safety needs were most often met on the social level and psychosocial needs were met on an individual level. Liberal peacebuilding seems more directed at meeting the physiological and safety needs of post-conflict societies, but often does so in a manner that deprives locals of their psychosocial needs for mastery, self-direction and autonomy.

Overall needs fall into two broad categories, physical/physiological and psychosocial – those having to do with our bodies and those having to do with our mental well-being and connection to others. If we can postulate that a desire for agency is an expression of one or more basic needs then we can see how peacebuilding efforts that fail to take this into account will result in hybridised results that could be more sustainable for locals, but remain unacceptable to internationals.[36] This lack of acceptability to locals, and their concomitant resistance to international peacebuilding efforts, may appear whether or not the international peacebuilding efforts are designed to effect positive changes for locals or whether they result in the reification of existing power structures and the marginalisation of local voices. The fact that local voices are not present in the assessment of problems and formulation of peacebuilding plans is enough to circumscribe or deny locals' basic needs for agency.

Donais' call for consensus-building and vertical integration is a step in the right direction, but does not go far enough in addressing the necessity for local agency. Nor does he identify or propose specific models as to how this vertical integration could take place. It seems clear that foreign peacebuilders cannot force locals to 'own' internationally designed projects. In addition, it is clear that conflict-generated deficits in trust and transparency make it difficult to engender true vertical integration of peacebuilding efforts. Therefore, one is left with a question as to how one might go about designing peacebuilding programmes that could both meet local needs for agency and also produce the deliverable results sought by international peacebuilders and funders. It was this question that led me on this journey and which leads me to posit one potential model for post-conflict peacebuilding that has hitherto remained below the radar screens of many in the international peacebuilding community – the local zone of peace.

[32]Max-Neef, *Human Scale Development*, 32, 33.
[33]Louis Tay and Ed Diener, 'Needs and Subjective Well-being around the World', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101, no. 2 (2011).
[34]Paul Sites, 'Needs as Analogues of Emotions', in *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*, ed. John Burton, *Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).
[35]Tay and Diener, 'Needs and Subjective Well-being around the World', 361.
[36]Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance*, 212.

From sanctuary to peacebuilding: the local zones of peace experience

Although linked to classical and historical norms of sanctuary, the primary usage of Zones of Peace (ZoPs) in the modern era has been to denote physical zones whose inhabitants are generally held to be inviolate against attack.[37] Examples of these types of zones abound, from cantonment zones set up during the implementation of peace agreements to temporary zones created to deliver medical supplies or inoculate civilian populations, to the 'classic' type of zone created during a civil conflict to shield civilians from attack.[38]

ZoPs have typically been examined via the use of a temporal framework differentiating between zones created in the midst of armed conflict, zones used as a part of a peacemaking process and the relative few zones used as mechanisms for post-conflict peacebuilding.[39] The most typically studied type of ZoPs are those created for the purpose of mitigating the effects of violence during a civil conflict. The two main areas where these types of zones have been created are the Philippines, where the idea originated, and Colombia which, arguably, has been home to the widest variety of zones of peace experiences.[40]

The use of ZoPs as a post-conflict peacebuilding device was pioneered by local activists on the southern coast of El Salvador. The Local Zone of Peace (LZP) was formed by 43 communities in 1995 in response to increasing civil violence following the repatriation of Salvadoran youth who had become gang members while living in the US.[41] In the two decades that the LZP has been in operation, it has expanded from its original 43 communities to encompass 146 communities engaging in a variety of social, cultural and economic activities designed to address the needs of its local communities. Current and past activities include their inaugural *culture of peace program*, which set the methods and goals for the rest of their activities, sustainable agricultural programmes, youth Internet and radio programmes, tattoo removal programmes for ex-gang members, disaster-relief and rebuilding programmes, and economic cooperatives for generating products and moving them to market.[42] In some ways, this kind of ZoP is analogous to Kappler's spaces of agency. Although many ZoPs are delineated physically, others are centred on communities, they can equally be described as 'abstract spaces that actors create and use to display their agency vis-à-vis other actors' spaces'.[43] This is because most ZoPs are defined by statements, assertions of agency, in which the inhabitants create rules and processes by which they both attempt to create space of peacebuilding and, at the same time, push back against the violence that hitherto has defined their daily lives.

Like any other community organisation, a zone of peace needs to have a high level of internal cohesion and support for a shared mission, direction and goals. Many ZoPs,

[37]Christopher R. Mitchell, 'The Theory and Practice of Sanctuary: From Asylia to Local Zones of Peace', in *Zones of Peace*, ed. Landon E. Hancock and C. R. Mitchell (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2007).

[38]See Landon E. Hancock and C. R. Mitchell, eds., *Zones of Peace* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2007).

[39]Landon E. Hancock and Pushpa Iyer, 'The Nature, Structure and Variety of "Peace Zones"', in *Zones of Peace*, ed. Landon E. Hancock and C. R. Mitchell (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2007).

[40]Ibid; Jennifer Langdon and Mery Rodriguez, 'The Rondas Campesinas of Peru', in *Zones of Peace*, ed. Landon E. Hancock and C. R. Mitchell (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2007); Graeme MacQueen et al., 'Health and Peace: Time for a New Discipline', *Lancet* 357, no. 9267 (2001); Mitchell, 'Comparing Sanctuary in the Former Yugoslavia and the Philippines'.; Krista Rigalo and Nancy Morrison, 'Operation Lifeline Sudan', in *Zones of Peace*, ed. Landon E. Hancock and C. R. Mitchell (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2007).

[41]Hancock, 'El Salvador's Post-conflict Peace Zone', 107.

[42]Mark Chupp, 'Creating a Culture of Peace in Postwar El Salvador', in *Positive Approaches in Peacebuilding: A Resource for Innovators*, ed. Cynthia Sampson, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, and Claudia Liebler (Washington, DC: Pact Publications, 2003); Hancock, 'El Salvador's Post-conflict Peace Zone'.

[43]Kappler, *Local Agency and Peacebuilding*, 23.

especially those created in the midst of violence, come about as a result of some triggering event that shocks the community and brings it together. The transformation from the initial activist impulse into social change requires a great deal of coordination, discussion and agreement from the larger community. In many ZoPs, there is a core cadre of leadership, but decisions are rarely taken without consensus amongst the larger community.[44] The agreement by all members of a community to work for peace and to abide by the rules set by the community – largely focused on ameliorating the effects of direct and structural violence – is absolutely necessary. One of the main goals for any cadre is to ensure that there is sufficient buy-in from the community (or communities) that makes up the zone. In locales as different as Northern Ireland and Colombia, core cadre members used participatory processes to ensure that all members of the community had the chance to discuss and approve of the creation of the ZoP as well as its goals, programmes and general operation.[45]

Using a participatory process can, at times, slow decision-making, but it does have important benefits that provide internal strength to any peace community or ZoP. One of these is the sense of individual agency that involving the community in decision-making processes gives. Consensus decision-making processes help to develop agency because they require unity, increase commitment through 'ownership' of policies, and deliver a form of liberty by giving each individual veto power over decision-making.[46] As noted by Mansbridge, socially driven institutions like ZoPs are typically weak in that they lack the coercive capacity of autonomous institutions like states or international agencies. Because ZoPs start out as institutionally weak, in order to succeed, 'they must draw upon actual sources of unity in the needs and desires of their members'.[47] The sense of agency developed out of these participatory governance processes is one of the characteristics that makes ZoPs more likely to survive, and thrive, as compared to peacebuilding institutions where decisions are made outside the community.[48] To preserve that sense of agency for the largest possible number of individuals in the zone, the goals and programmes of the zone need to accommodate the aspirations of its various constituencies.

This leads to the second important feature for our discussion of ZoPs, the fact that many, if not most, ZoPs engage in a wide variety of locally conceived and implemented peacebuilding activities. The drive for agency, when coupled with the need for intra-communal cohesion and the recognition that their problems often extend far beyond the manifestations of

[44]Christopher R. Mitchell and Catalina Rojas, 'Against the Stream: Colombian Zones of Peace under Democratic Security', in *Local Peacebuilding and National Peace: Interaction between Grassroots and Elite Processes*, ed. Christopher R. Mitchell and Landon E. Hancock (London: New York: Continuum, 2012); Mery Rodriguez, 'Colombia: Fropm Grassroots to Elites – How Some Peacebuilding Initiatives Became National in Spite of Themselves', in *Local Peacebuilding and National Peace: Interaction between Grassroots and Elite Processes*, ed. Christopher R. Mitchell and Landon E. Hancock (London: New York: Continuum, 2012); Catalina Rojas, 'Islands in the Stream', in *Zones of Peace*, ed. Landon E. Hancock and C. R. Mitchell (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2007); Pedro Valenzuela, 'Neutrality in Internal Armed Conflicts: Experiences at the Grassroots Level in Colombia' (Originally presented as the author's thesis (doctoral), Uppsala University, 2009).

[45]Landon E. Hancock, 'Belfast's Interfaces: Zones of Conflict or Zones of Peace', in *Local Peacebuilding and National Peace: Interaction between Grassroots and Elite Processes*, ed. Christopher R. Mitchell and Landon E. Hancock (London: New York: Continuum, 2012); Monsenor Leonardo Gomez Serna, 'Mogotes Municipal Constituent Assembly: Activating 'Popular Sovereignty' at a Local Level', *Accord: Owning the Process: Public Participation in Peacemaking*, no. 13 (2002).

[46]Jane Mansbridge, 'Conensus in Context: A Guide for Social Movements', in *Consensus Decision Making, Northern Ireland, and Indigenous Movements*, ed. Patrick G. Coy, *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change,* (Amsterdam: JAI, 2003), 233.

[47]Ibid., 231, 232.

[48]See Langdon and Rodriguez, 'The Rondas Campesinas of Peru'.

physical violence, is one of the main reasons why ZoPs engage in so many peacebuilding and development-oriented activities. Many authors detail the wide variety of activities undertaken by ZoPs, including educational activities, job training, economic initiatives, public relations campaigns and the creation of parallel governance structures.[49] The Colombian peace community of San José de Apartadó has gone so far as to create its own university in partnership with 15 local communities.[50]

Even in ZoPs there can be tension between local desires for agency and the dictates of national or international agencies and NGOs. Many ZoPs in places like the Philippines, Colombia, El Salvador and other developing countries operate with few funds, and can, at times, become hostage to foreign funders or governmental restrictions. For example, recent Colombian initiatives have attempted to bring peace communities under government control by dictating how they use government-disbursed funds.[51] Additionally, community groups in Northern Ireland have traditionally had difficulties in securing funds unless they focus primarily on inter-communal relationships rather than on the economic development issues they see as important to addressing the underlying causes of conflict.[52] In the Philippines, the designation of several ZoPs as Special Development Areas made them eligible for governmental funding, which positively affected some zones, but proved detrimental to others when the new resources created conflicts over how they should be directed, shattering the ZoP's hard-won internal cohesion.[53]

Conversely, the two post-conflict ZoPs identified in El Salvador and Belfast have made concerted efforts to maintain control over their own funding sources. When the LZP was declared in 1998, it also created its own US-based NGO, the Fund for Self-Sufficiency in Central America, located in Texas and managed by José (Chencho) Alas, a prime mover in the creation of the zone.[54] The FSSCA later expanded beyond the LZP, renaming itself Eco-viva and working on a number of projects throughout Central America. However, it maintains its relationship with the LZP, soliciting funds and overseeing visits from US-based groups seeking to assist the region. Likewise the Suffolk-Leandoon Interface Group (SLIG) in Belfast, Northern Ireland has worked to broaden its funding base from the UK's Community Relations Council, which oversees much of the peace-oriented funding provided to the province by the UK, EU and US, obtaining funds from the Atlantic Philanthropies.[55]

By operating with no or limited funding, bypassing national funding streams or diversifying their funding sources, several ZoPs have managed to retain a great deal of agency and control over their peacebuilding programmes. These two post-conflict zones – in stark contrast to some of the Colombian zones – have also managed to parlay their agency and cohesion into successful peacebuilding efforts. The success of these zones, as well as the internal successes of many zones in Colombia and the Philippines, leads me to suggest that these communally oriented and communally controlled zones of peace might serve as a strong, innovative model for post-conflict peacebuilding efforts, one that is able to

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[49]Kevin Avruch and Roberto S. Jose, 'Peace Zones in the Philippines', in *Zones of Peace*, ed. Landon E. Hancock and C. R. Mitchell (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2007); Hannah Neumann, 'Reframing Identities and Social Practices Despite War', *Peace Review* 22, no. 2 (2010); Rodriguez, 'Colombia: Fropm Grassroots to Elites'.; Rojas, 'Islands in the Stream'.; Valenzuela, 'Neutrality in Internal Armed Conflicts: Experiences at the Grassroots Level in Colombia'.
[50]This university is known as either the University of the Peasant or the University of Resistance.
[51]Rodriguez, 'Colombia: Fropm Grassroots to Elites'.
[52]Hancock, 'Belfast's Interfaces'.
[53]Avruch and Jose, 'Peace Zones in the Philippines', 61.
[54]Hancock, 'El Salvador's Post-conflict Peace Zone', 109.
[55]Hancock, 'Belfast's Interfaces'.

combine meaningful local agency with effective peacebuilding programme design and implementation.

Frameworks for agency: the ZoPs approach

I argue that many peacebuilding efforts fail because they don't provide meaningful avenues for agency by their participants, what Richmond describes as local-locals, or those at the community level. Agency, rather than just the more limited idea of local ownership, is key because it is a satisfier for a range of psychosocial needs, which include identity, dignity, role-defense, self-determination or self-actualisation.

Agency in these local zones of peace often stems from the transparent manner in which authority is exercised and the highly participatory nature of governance and decision-making. Like Donais' calls for increased consensus building in peacebuilding efforts, governance in ZoPs often requires methods that resemble the kinds of participatory democracy advocated by Leighninger for modern democratic systems.[56] Constituent assemblies, consultative groups and governing boards all represent different models of ensuring that the will of local citizens is incorporated into the decision-making in ZoPs. In addition, because many Colombian ZoPs were created in part to address the corruption that engendered either the conflict itself or the violent response from guerillas or paramilitaries, addressing civic corruption in addition to the other ills plaguing these areas became a high priority.[57] For the post-conflict LZP in El Salvador and in efforts by SLIG in Belfast, the fact that they had been largely ignored by their respective governments meant that locals needed to take up issues concerning the community. In El Salvador, this included police corruption as well as gang violence, while in Belfast problems stemmed from a lack of attention from governmental agencies and a lack of economic development. Claiming agency by taking charge of the situation became a way for the communities to address their own problems. For SLIG, because of the divided nature of the community, the activists on both sides of the sectarian divide needed to be transparent about their goals and processes in order to allay fears that one side might be taking advantage of or benefitting more than the other.[58]

Thus far, we have been examining the internal relationships and structures of ZoPs, but how about their external relationships? If we are to suggest a wider use of ZoPs or ZoP-like structures for post-conflict peacebuilding, then questions about how ZoPs have related to outsiders need to be answered in order to understand potential strengths as well as challenges. The first question is how outsiders have suggested the use of ZoPs to localities and how they have assisted interested localities in creating their own ZoPs. There is no one set model for this kind of interaction, but in each case that has been previously examined, the outsiders in question have all focused on respecting the agency of the locals in both making the decision to establish a ZoP and in the final say regarding its nature and the structure of its institutions. In Colombia, the NGO, REDEPAZ,[59] built on the success of Mogotes by establishing a 100 municipalities of peace programme. In this programme, REDEPAZ supplied materials and training to localities that wished to establish their own ZoPs, but

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[56]Matthew Leighninger, *The Next Form of Democracy: How Expert Rule Is Giving Way to Shared Governance-and Why Politics Will Never Be the Same* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2006).
[57]Rojas, 'Islands in the Stream'.
[58]Leighninger, *The Next Form of Democracy*.
[59]*Red Nacional para la Paz y contra la Guerra* (The Network for Initiatives for Peace and Against War).

only at the request of those localities.[60] Likewise, the work of the Gaston Z. Ortegas Peace Institute and Tabang Mindanaw in the Philippines focused on assisting local communities with their goals and their visions regarding the establishment and maintenance of peace zones. As described by Howard Dee, Co-Chair of Tabang Mindanaw:

> Development efforts can only take root under a culture of peace. The dream of Tabang is to fulfill their dreams. It's not our own dream imposed on them. It must be always, for it to take root, we must be helping people fulfill their dreams.[61]

In establishing the Local Zone of Peace in El Salvador, the leaders of La Coordinadora – the local NGO concerned with disaster recovery – drew upon the work done by UNESCO and the International Center for the Study and Promotion of Zones of Peace in the World in order to inform their own desire to declare a zone of peace in order to more fruitfully address gang violence.[62] Two groups were called upon to provide assistance, Chencho Alas, who provided training in human rights and responsibilities, and members of a training team from the Mennonite Central Committee, who provided elicitive training to assist the LZP in developing its culture of peace programme.[63] Chupp and two other consultants met with key leaders and co-developed the training programme that led to the creation of the CPP; which was built around principles of conscientisation and education, conflict transformation and organisation and participation. The programme was implemented through dialog and reflection circles and a process of invitation and training to spread it throughout the LZP's sphere.[64] Great care was taken by the inhabitants of the LZP and the leaders of *La Coordinadora* to avoid dependency and to ensure the self-sufficiency of the LZP's peacebuilding programs.[65]

One of the trickier sets of relationships for ZoPs is their relationship with external funders. As noted by Rojas and others writing on Colombian ZoPs, few funds had been provided by outsiders. With the exception of the work of REDEPAZ, it appears that the ZoP that has received the most outside funding has been San Jose de Apartado, whose efforts to maintain their status as a peace zone have run into direct opposition from both the government and from left-wing guerillas.[66] SJDA has side-stepped relationships with larger international donors, most of whom favour relationships with national governments, instead seeking direct help from humanitarian peacekeeping organisations such as Peace Brigades International and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, both of whom provide unarmed peacekeepers to accompany members of the community under death threats. In addition, SJDA has cultivated sister city relationships in order to cut out national level actors and has received minimal funding from organisations like Peace Direct, who do not direct the specific use of their funds, but focus on a philosophy of supporting local nonviolent action to reduce conflict.[67]

[60]Catalina Rojas, 'Practicing Peace: The Role of Ngos in Assisting 'Zones of Peace' in Colombia', in *Subcontracting Peace: The Challenges of the Ngo Peacebuilding*, ed. Oliver P. Richmond and Henry F. Carey (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).
[61]'Mindanao: People Making Peace', (The Philippines: Tabang Mindanaw, 2007).
[62]Hancock, 'El Salvador's Post-conflict Peace Zone'.
[63]Chupp, 'Creating a Culture of Peace in Postwar El Salvador'.
[64]Ibid., 111.
[65]Ibid., 110.
[66]Luke Finn, 'Colombia: Peace Community of San José De Apartadó', in *Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns*, ed. Andrew Dey (War Resisters' International, 2014).
[67]Chris Brown, 'Supporting a Radical Peace: Reflections on the Peace Community of San Jose De Apartado', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 11, no. 1 (2016).

As mentioned above, El Salvador's LZP maintains a relationship with a US-Based NGO, now known as Eco-viva, acting as a clearing house for US partners and ensuring that assistance to the LZP, now just known as the Mangrove Association or La Coordinadora, does not hamper the ability of the organisation's members and communities to exercise their agency. Eco-viva works to create grassroots support for the LZP's work in El Salvador and have, more recently begun to work with communities in Honduras and Panama, showing that this kind of partnership, while limited in resource base, can effectively provide support while assisting communities to retain their sense of agency.[68]

More problematic has been the relationship of Suffolk-Lenadoon to funding agencies in the United Kingdom. Part of this is due to the fact that, unlike ZoPs in developing countries, there are well-established channels for funding in the UK, and that many of these funding sources – like the larger international donors – have both extensive reporting requirements as well as many mouths to feed in terms of the number of funding requests that they receive. This leaves smaller organisations – like SLIG – at a disadvantage when compared to more professionally oriented service provision agencies, who tend to hire professional staff rather than use local community members and have full-time staff members allocated to writing both grant proposals and reports. The fact that SLIG was able to garner support from the Atlantic Philanthropies set them apart from their local competitors, but it also had somewhat of a negative effect in that governmental funders may have then felt pressure to spread the wealth to other organisations. Furthermore, when the world recession hit in 2009, local communities like SLIG found themselves in competition not just with larger, professional service providers, but also with universities and other organs who got into the game of social development as their own budgets suffered. All of this was coupled with a marked tendency on the part of governmental funders to keep looking for 'the next new project' rather than to continue funding existing works. As a result of this, and the expiration of SLIG's AP grants, the organisation shrunk from a 13-member staff in the late 2000s to just two staff in 2016.[69]

All of this suggests that a different model for funding may be necessary for sustaining the agency of ZoPs and groups like them. Part of this has to do with typical models for reporting requirements and, often, the limitations put on how funds are spent by local agencies like ZoPs. Alternative models for reporting, such as those advocated by Galtung and Tisné, focus on communal accountability mechanisms as methods for 'countering corruption' that have 'a good track record in postwar countries'.[70]

The main goal for any such funding mechanism is to find ways for funders to allow for and nurture local agency while ensuring transparency in expenditure and accountability by those managing the peacebuilding processes. Work by groups like the accountability labs of Nepal and Liberia to the State Accountability and Voice Initiative in Nigeria has argued that there has been an increase in the use of what is known as 'downward accountability' mechanisms in both the aid and development sectors.[71] Downward accountability may be the answer to the problem of how to balance international funders' needs for proper use of their monies with local elements of agency, with Galtung and Tisné arguing that

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[68]See http://ecoviva.org/about-us/mission/.
[69]Interviews with author, summer 2016.
[70]Fredrik Galtung and Martin Tisné, 'A New Approach to Postwar Reconstruction', *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 4 (2009): 102.
[71]Rosie Pinnington, *Local First in Practice: Unlocking the Power to Get Things Done* (London: Peace Direct, 2014), 29.

accountability down structures enable 'the local population to act as accountability agents for more than just the projects they are directly responsible for implementing' noting that communities 'may hold to account any institution that plays a role in the allocation and impact of public resources at the local level'.[72]

Overall the main argument of this paper is that the zones of peace model of post-conflict peacebuilding can help to address the primary problem resulting in the underperformance or failure of many peacebuilding efforts, namely a lack of sufficient local agency to encourage locals to take ownership of their projects and to work hard to ensure their success. As we can see, issues of funding and the relationship between local actors and international agencies can still create problems for developing agency at the local level while allowing international actors to meet their needs and requirements. The examples given here may be exportable to other cases, or they may be the product of special circumstances in specific cases; but they do provide enough evidence that there are alternatives to the traditional dichotomy of either wholly local peacebuilding efforts or wholly dictated international efforts. The question of how this model and these examples might fit into current debates about peacebuilding and its problems will be explored next.

From ZoPs to peacebuilding: integration, hybridity or conflict?

In defining hybrid peacebuilding, Mac Ginty has done a thorough job of describing the situation as it exists. Liberal peacebuilders create and implement programmes in various post-conflict countries and expect locals to implement these programmes. Locals tend to resist the implementation of these programmes to a greater or lesser degree, with the result being a form of hybrid peacebuilding where some programmes may work out better, but it is more likely that both parties will remain dissatisfied to a certain extent and some programmes could be considered abject failures.[73] The point of hybridity isn't whether or not it is positive or negative – though Mac Ginty argues that it tends to be the latter more often than not – but that hybridity as an outcome stems from the failure of international peacebuilders to recognise the necessity for local agency and to modify the liberal peacebuilding approach that tends to subvert it.

If we take as a given that hybridity is the outcome of the current vision of liberal peacebuilding, then we must also visit Donais' arguments about the need for increased local ownership and whether or not vertically integrated peacebuilding efforts might lead in that direction. Donais critiques liberal peacebuilding as stifling necessary local ownership while admitting that, at times, locals may engage in resistance to internationally driven peacebuilding efforts. Donais' remedy of vertical integration calls for increased use of consensus-building processes to allow more voice for locals in the peacebuilding project, which would then translate into increased willingness by locals to take more ownership of individual projects.[74] Vertical integration requires participants at different levels of governance and implementation to coordinate with one another and calls for local priorities to drive local-level peacebuilding efforts.[75] However, when addressing vertical integration,

[72]Galtung and Tisné, 'A New Approach to Postwar Reconstruction', 103.
[73]Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance*.
[74]Donais, *Peacebuilding and Local Ownership*, 148.
[75]Ibid., 149; Timothy Donais, *Towards Vertically Integrated Peace Building: Bridging Top-down and Bottom-up Approaches Workshop Report* (Waterloo: The Centre for International Governmental Innovation, 2014).

one element that is advocated by peacebuilding evaluators is to ensure that all elements of peacebuilding in any setting connect to what is described as 'peace writ large' by contributing to larger social goals of stopping destructive conflict and building a just and sustainable peace for society as a whole.[76]

The call for increased local ownership and for a consensus-building process to assist in increasing local ownership of peacebuilding processes is clearly a call for increased agency for locals in post-conflict peacebuilding settings. However, it is not clear how much agency Donas' call for increased ownership entails. When put next to Collaborative Learning Project's (CDA) call for peacebuilding projects at all levels to contribute to peace writ large, the possibility remains that calls for increased local agency and ownership could be more rhetorical than substantive. Even though CDA has found that it is unrealistic to expect that all peacebuilding programmes will be able to support peace writ large, they still support the idea that local programmes should contribute to some form of national impact. However, this requirement may impinge upon the agency of local actors, limiting their ability to decide what kinds of programmes would have the most benefit for their communities. One suggestion would be to focus on the overall goals of stopping violent conflict and building sustainable peace without imposing a requirement that such programmatic goals have impacts on the larger society at first. The larger social level could then be addressed when established zones begin to network with one another to share their successes, assist one another or engage in projects at the regional or national levels, based on the requirement of equality of agency, collaboration and transparency of decision-making and governance processes.

Finally, Richmond's vision of post-liberal peacebuilding is based on the creation of institutions that engage with the security, rights, needs and identities of local actors in a liberating manner.[77] I would tend to argue that these principles are embodied by the practices associated with local zones of peace. Like Donais, Richmond is calling for post-liberal practices at the international level that are more accommodating of local peacebuilding efforts, but he is searching for models of local peacebuilding that can meet some priorities of international peacebuilding – essentially that local peacebuilding efforts do not recreate the problems that led to the conflict in the first place. Again, the local zones of peace model is one way that the need for agency on the part of locals can be met while creating mechanisms and processes that have the capacity to both improve relationships among the local population and deliver the good governance and substantive improvements that the international community feels are a necessary part of the peacebuilding process.

A notable dimension of indigenously oriented models like ZoPs is that unlike the 'flat-pack' peacebuilding described by Mac Ginty, the ZoPs concept is flexible enough to be adopted by different localities and to have a range of expressions in each locality. Some of the first zones created in the Philippines in the 1980s were called 'zones' but others in Colombia were described as 'communities' or *experiencias* in order to reflect their orientation around the people. The zone in Pikit, Cotobato in Mindanao was created as a 'space' for peace because its inhabitants felt that the word 'zone' denoted a very strict boundary

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[76]CDA, 'Why Be Accountable to "Peace Writ Large?"', CDA: Collaborative Learning Projects.
[77]Richmond, *A Post-liberal Peace*, 214, 215.

while the idea of 'space' was more flexible in terms of boundary but could emphasise the condition that no fighting was allowed in such a space.[78]

The key element when evaluating zones of peace as a model for post-conflict peacebuilding is the fact that agency in peacebuilding has been shown by most critics of the liberal peacebuilding paradigm to be why liberal peacebuilding is resisted by local participants. If we accept these analyses, then we need to be open to the argument that agency represents an aspect of basic human needs, something that individuals require and something that they will struggle to obtain if it is denied. When one considers agency as a basic need, and recognises that successful peacebuilding efforts are constructed on a foundation of agency, then the next logical step is to find models for peacebuilding that are also built upon local agency.

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Disclosure statement

Notes on contributor

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[78]Mitchell and Rojas, 'Against the Stream'; Pushpa Iyer, 'Peace Zones of Mindanao, Philippines: Civil Society Efforts to End Violence', in *Steps Toward Conflict Prevention Project* (Cambridge, MA: CDA-Collaborative Learning Projects, 2004).