

Infrastructures for Peace:

A Grass-roots Way To Do State-building?

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1 Introduction

After years of state-building and peacebuilding intervention, the peacebuilding community is in the process of reformulating the field, its goal and its methods. The top-down, 'missionary', state-focused liberal peacebuilding intervention is gradually being abandoned to the benefit of bottom-up approaches. This intent of giving agency back to the locals – their culture, history, structures and customs – is described as “the local turn” by Oliver Richmond (2013).

Infrastructures for Peace (I4P), a relatively recent term and set of practices, should be understood as part of this trend in peacebuilding. A peace infrastructure tends to be “illiberal”, because it is supposed to be grounded in values, culture and political order other than the Western liberal peacebuilding project (which centres around rule of law, institution building, market economy, etc.).

The transformation of the I4P project into a state- and nation-building project, especially through formalisation of informal I4P by the state and external actors (international donors, peacebuilding 'experts', international civil society organisations, etc.) requires particular attention. Such a cooptation appears to be linked to the enduring idea that a stable and efficient state is the best guarantor of peace, and that one can build peace through 'building' states. The Accra declaration of 10 September 2013, announcing the intent to develop national infrastructures for peace within the next three years in all member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) can be taken as a case exemplifying this tendency.

This comment explores whether infrastructures for peace can be an alternative entry door for the liberal state-building agenda. It builds upon Oliver Richmond's article in the Berghof Handbook Dialogue No. 10, which stresses that “peace infrastructures bear significant potential as long as they are internally and not externally shaped” (Richmond 2012a, 27), by further exploring the contradictory elements of externally driven I4P.

* The editors of Dialogue No. 10 would like to thank Vincent Verzat for his valuable contribution to the ongoing debate on Peace Infrastructures. First launch 17/4/2014. Proofreading: Carina Huessy. We look forward to further comments by our readers.

2 Liberal Meets Illiberal: Informality, Formalisation and State-building

I4P are often categorised (Kumar/De la Haye 2011; Richmond 2012a) in relation to the liberal view (i.e. as not being liberal, or “illiberal”), revealing an enduring cultural bias. The liberal peacebuilding approach is defined as a “multilevel, multidimensional approach [...] through which peace is built with twin anchors in international norms, law and institutions, and the liberal democratic and ‘marketised’ concept of the state” (Richmond 2013, 381). At the other end, the illiberal framework is defined in negative terms, as not promoting liberal values of human rights, the rule of law and the liberal state, but grounded in other cultures, values and political orders. The illiberal order is also the informal, local one, neither known nor controlled by the state, auto-organised, spontaneous, and supposedly more legitimate, as symbolised by “insider mediators”.¹

I4P appear to make a combination of the two frameworks possible. Indeed, Richmond describes I4P as the potentially appropriate location for an “encounter between the international liberal peace model and local forms of peace” (Richmond 2012a, 25). In the words of Chetan Kumar and Jos de la Haye, both of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), I4P bridge “illiberal and liberal frameworks” (Kumar/De la Haye 2011, 13).

The question immediately arising relates to the *way* these two frameworks could be bridged, in other words *how* liberal actors are supposed to be involved in I4P. According to Richmond, international peacebuilders will have to drastically limit their presence in and influence on informal peace structures in the given society: international actors should assist, not intervene in or use executive power over I4P, being “respectful of local culture, systems of knowledge, legitimacy and authority” (Richmond 2012a, 25). Supportive of this point of view, UNDP repeatedly uses terms such as “UNDP helps”, “assists”, “[provides] advice, training and support” (UNDP 2013a). The organisation recognises that “sometimes development efforts may exacerbate existing conflicts. UNDP’s approach includes ensuring that peace and development initiatives are sensitive to the intricacies of local dynamics and don’t inadvertently exacerbate or contribute to underlying tensions and hostilities” (ibid., 1). In the I4P practitioner literature, major institutions such as the ECDPM, advising the European External Action Service (EEAS), recognise the EU as a value-driven entity, embedded in the liberal peace framework. For this institution, the value compatibility or opposition between the EEAS, whose viewpoint is “underpinned by neo-liberal economic and democratic forms of governance”, and the given I4P must be assessed and will “influence the choice between the options of directly engaging with, leveraging, politically supporting, or funding these institutions” (EEAS Factsheet 2012, 1). If the analysis stays at this level, I4P do appear to offer the possibility of an encounter, with international actors taking into account their own viewpoint, respectfully considering the local context, values and dynamics and declaring that they will remain the humble assistant of a locally-owned peace process.

However, this hopeful view is weakened by several elements which should be addressed if I4P are to develop in practice the way they are meant to on paper. First, helping and supporting locally owned I4P requires relevant knowledge, which implies *learning* about a culture. Currently, the literature simply qualifies I4P as either liberal or illiberal, or both. A deeper understanding of the specific dynamics and ways to support I4P remains underdeveloped. In order to support I4P, liberal “peacebuilders” must assess their own local competencies and, more importantly, foster the institutionalisation of learning needed to develop such competencies. Put simply, liberal peacebuilders still lack critical examination of their own capacities, lenses and approaches, and as yet have to develop an ability to learn. *Learning*, it seems, goes unmentioned in the literature on I4P, let alone the literature on liberal peacebuilding.

Second, in practice the borders between assisting, helping and supporting on the one hand, and implementing, shaping, taking ownership and imposing on the other, are very blurry. The goal might

¹ The European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) defines insider mediators as “trusted and respected individuals who have a high level of legitimacy and cultural and normative closeness to the parties, various links to individuals or institutions driving a conflict, and an ability to influence the parties’ behavior and thinking” (EEAS Factsheet 2012, 1).

not be compatible with the approach external actors such as the UNDP propose to take. Indeed, major peacebuilding institutions aim at formalising informal conflict transformation mechanisms into a national structure. ECDPM advised the EEAS to develop I4P as an “institutionalized platform for mediation, facilitation and dialogue” (EEAS Factsheet 2012, 1). UNDP’s mandate is directed firstly toward national governments, it helps “countries to establish and strengthen national peace infrastructure”, and works to “establish and support community, village, regional and national peace councils” (UNDP 2013a, 1; emphasis added). Both EEAS and UNDP appear to wish to turn informal peace structures into formal institutional mechanisms which will function as a link between peace structures both horizontally and vertically, at the grass-roots and in high politics.²

However, the logic at hand takes the form of a converting exercise of what already exists into a language and format that the state and international actors can understand and deal with, rather than converting the state into something that local traditions, customs and culture can recognise and take ownership of. Agreeing with Richmond, the risks are that informal I4P become “instrumentalized by internationals [by] making ‘visible’ local peace formation processes through a peace infrastructure deemed acceptable to international eyes” (Richmond 2012a, 23). The terms “supporting”, “capacity-building”, “helping” all underscore the idea that these I4P in the making need help.³ There is a paternalistic flavor to such a project, in the so-called support of the North to the local South. According to Richmond, I4P are still missing “a revision of language and architecture through which internationals reinforce global–local inequality” (ibid., 25).

Third, the consequences of international actors’ involvement in I4P may be very similar to their involvement in state-building projects. Richmond warned that I4P “should not be viewed as another possibility for social engineering by international actors because this risks a loss of legitimacy and resistance from participants” (Richmond 2012a, 25). However, the World Bank Development Report (2011) mentions I4P as ways to address “protracted fragility” and highlights “the extended period of time required for meaningful transformation, and the necessity in this context of ‘inclusive enough coalitions’ that can generate the collective political will for reform” (quoted after Kumar/De La Haye 2011, 13). The UNDP issue brief stresses that I4P will provide solutions to political transitions following regime changes, to resolve differences over the conduct and management of political and electoral processes. In practice, UNDP ‘supported’ the development of Ministries for Peace in Costa Rica, Ghana, Kenya and Nepal. In its very name, the idea of developing Ministries for Peace clearly evokes state-building. It aims at developing an *administration* that will specifically deal with issues related to peace. In the case of Nepal, as Richmond predicted, local resistance and cooptation by elites resulted in the I4P’s perceived lack of legitimacy from both the local and international viewpoint. As Andries Odendaal stresses, “in Nepal, political stumbling-blocks have hampered L[ocal] P[ea]ce C[ommittee] rollout. The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, which assists LPCs, has been involved in an ongoing political power-struggle for control” (Odendaal 2010, 11).

To conclude this section, whether in the language used or in practice, it seems that international actors’ involvement in infrastructures for peace will have very limited opportunities to fit within a framework other than the liberal peace approach. Agreeing with Mac Ginty’s analysis, I argue that I4P demonstrate that there is “a mutually reinforcing set of institutions to create an increasingly hegemonic system of peacebuilding that is intolerant of alternatives and creativity” (Mac Ginty 2012, 288).

3 Cases of State-building by I4P

To strengthen the argument presented above, this section takes two examples to illustrate how I4P can take the form of a state-building project. It will analyse the Ghanaian peace architecture and the Accra Declaration of 10 September 2013, also called “Declaration on strengthening national, regional and continental co-ordination towards building national peace infrastructures for conflict prevention”.⁴

² “Providing advice and support for the establishment of government departments and institutions responsible for national peacebuilding, dialogue and mediation, and supporting their work with community peace groups” (UNDP 2013, 1).

³ The use of this language (governance, capacity and skills building) can be seen once again in the UNDP job description of the Peace Infrastructure Portal Officer: jobs.undp.org/cj_view_job.cfm?cur_job_id=37818 (accessed 20 March 2014).

⁴ Available at www.i4pinternational.org/files/514/declaration+accra+10-9-2013.pdf (accessed 20 March 2014).

3.1 Ghanaian peace architecture

The Ghanaian peace architecture is often chosen as an example of a nationally mandated infrastructure for peace. According to Odendaal, “as it stands, the conceptual peace architecture in Ghana is a textbook example of a well-designed structure” (Odendaal 2010, 55). After eight years of low level conflicts between 1994 and 2002 (World Bank 2011, 188; Bombande 2007), the regional government established the Northern Region Peace Advocacy Council (NRPAC) as a mediation and conflict resolution mechanism. As we can see, the first impulse was generated from a formal institution, concerned about security issues within its territory of jurisdiction. In 2006, considering the NRPAC a success, the government, through its Ministry of Interior and with the decisive assistance of the UNDP, decided to develop a “National Architecture for Peace” (Odendaal 2010, 15). Again, the decision was made at the state and international level, even though the process followed is said to have “engaged local actors and used local peacebuilding resources to defuse the conflict”, the Government having “noted the distinct methodology applied by civil society in previous conflicts” (ibid., 6). Following a top-down approach, a National Peace Council (NPC) was created, consisting of “representatives of relevant stakeholders as well as individual Ghanaians who enjoy high levels of trust and respect in society.”⁵ The National Peace Council is said to be connected to the Regional and District Peace Councils, however only a selection of districts have their own Peace Councils, as opposed to most regions.⁶ According to Odendaal, “there is no consensus on the precise regional peace council role” (Odendaal 2010, 55). The Ministry of Interior appointed “full-time professional Peace Promotion Officers” based on nominations from the regional governments (ibid.). These officers were connected to the 10 Regional Peace Councils and their equivalents in the selected districts. This architecture for peace will be further developed in the future as expressed in a National Peace Council Act unanimously adopted by Parliament in March 2011 (Act 818).⁷ Inside the Ministry of Interior, efforts were coordinated with other government agencies by a Peacebuilding Support Unit (Ojielo 2007). According to the World Bank 2011 report, this unit was also to “provide *mentoring* and *capacity-building* to government and nongovernment actors” (World Bank 2011, 189; emphasis added).

A mapping of the Ghanaian architecture for peace based on a review of the literature shows:

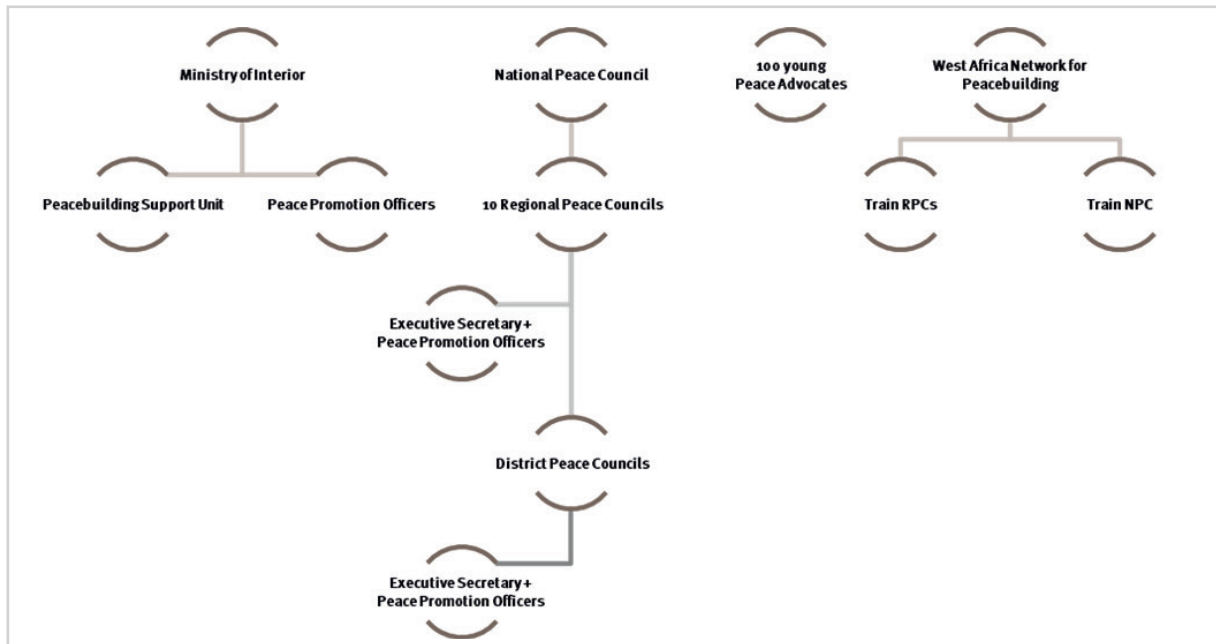


Figure 1: Ghanaian Architecture for Peace

5 Available at www.i4pinternational.org/ghana (accessed 20 March 2014).

6 As of March 2013, Ghana is divided into ten regions, which are subdivided into 216 districts. See: ghanadistricts.com/pdfs/newcreateddistricts.pdf (accessed 20 March 2014).

7 Available at www.i4pinternational.org/files/262/npclaw+2011.pdf (accessed 20 March 2014).

The wording used to describe this architecture and the concrete mode of development of this infrastructure for peace should attract the reader's attention. The logic at hand seems rather far from leveraging legitimate insider mediators and supporting local informal peace dynamics that are otherwise presented in the literature on I4P. The "well-designed structure" (Odendaal 2010, 55) followed a top-down, governmentally and internationally led approach, reflecting liberal peacebuilding strategies almost step for step. Nevertheless, such a design is legitimated by the results it produced: violent conflict has not occurred since the I4P were institutionalised (ibid.). Building upon these results, the UNDP called the Ghanaian architecture for peace a "*model* [that] is being replicated in Uganda and Zimbabwe" (UNDP 2013a, 1; emphasis added).

Of all the West African states, since transitioning to civil democratic rule in 1993 Ghana has not experienced any major national level violent conflict. If Ghana is not a post-conflict "fragile" country, why did the government and international actors invest such efforts in developing a national architecture for peace? The reason could lie in a liberal state-building agenda and the geopolitical need for a stable state in a rather unstable region. Ghana used the development of its architecture for peace as a way to consolidate its democracy, to strengthen a nation-building apparatus⁸ and finally, according to Ozonnia Ojielo, Coordinator for Conflict Prevention and Recovery at UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, to enhance "the capacity of its institutions to be self-regenerating" (Ojielo 2007, 1). In the name of peacebuilding, a managerial administration is slowly developing at all levels of the society, the Peace Councils, its officers and support unit.

Short-term results are not guarantees against structural fragilities. In the Ghanaian case I identify many of the pitfalls that frequently attend liberal state-building programmes. If the Ghanaian I4P look static, vertical and technocratic, this is hardly surprising according to Richmond and Mac Ginty: they were primarily designed by an external actor, UNDP. As Richmond contends, "peace infrastructures remain part of the liberal and neoliberal peace project if they are driven by external actors or even state elites, rather than embedded in local peace formation dynamics" (Richmond 2012a, 23). In the case of Ghana it is both; state elites are driving the process alongside UNDP. The National Peace Council (NPC) is said to be independent (UNDP 2013b), however since its formalisation in 2011, the President of Ghana in consultation with the thirteen-member Board (two of whom are directly chosen by the President) may request the revocation of a member (Act 818). Even if current political elites including the President are dedicated to peacebuilding, it is unclear whether the current organisation of the NPC could prevent political cooptation in the future. The NPC itself still lacks legal status and independent funding sources, it is entirely dependent on UNDP (Odendaal 2010, 55). Consequently, NPC and the peace process it fostered are fragile, sensitive to UNDP funding reallocation and, if UNDP's reputation in the region were weakened for one reason or another, NPC legitimacy and independence would become increasingly problematic.

Furthermore, the structures that compose this architecture for peace are not solely focused on dialogue per se, but rather on liberal state-building objectives of stability, the rule of law, representative institutions and order. As Odendaal recognises, "Ghana still faces challenges from ongoing confusion over peacemaking and security roles" (Odendaal 2010, 56). In practice, some Regional Peace Advisory Councils (RPAC) were simply merged with regional security structures, and it is the Ministry of Interior which appoints the Peace Promotion Officers who 'advise' all other lower level structures. Emmanuel Bombande, a key actor in the development of the Ghanaian I4P, who belongs to the civil society that was instrumental in its formulation, explains: "it is important that there is statutory legislation passed in parliament to provide a legal mandate to the National Peace Council as well as the Regional and yet to be established District Peace Councils. A good argument for such a legal backing is that the work of the various councils in the peace architecture will have the necessary leverage that makes them visible to all communities as a *state institution*" (Bombande 2007, 51; emphasis added). What was meant to emerge from the local communities for the communities should apparently be perceived by these as a state institution, thus distinct from

8 Informal interview with the Deputy Permanent Representative of Ghana at the UN, in June 2013.

them. Bombande's quote seems to illustrate Richmond's warning to I4P promoters: "the selective use of a rational, legalistic, and bureaucratic language about peace" (Richmond 2012a, 22). It appears to justify building a state as the best way to build peace – a legal, technical and institution-building endeavor. In this rhetoric, it is only when the Councils will be perceived as state institutions that they will be capable of producing tangible 'peace'. This element contradicts the widespread understanding that the state has perhaps less legitimacy than other structures in traditional societies, especially in Africa.⁹

When the Ghanaian government sought support in 2002 to address the low level conflicts that had been building, "civil society" was called for help. In this case, civil society was the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, a German NGO. This foundation then sought the expertise of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the regional initiator for West Africa of GPPAC, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. Both further sought the involvement of the UN resident coordinator (Bombande 2007). My research thus far has been unable to clearly ascertain whether there was any local grass-roots civil society involved in the I4P process in Ghana, as only vague references to it are made in the literature.

The term "civil society" itself, in my view, has been co-opted by the liberal mindset. On the one hand, there is an organised "civil society" made up of NGOs with well-defined governance structures. On the other hand there is the civil society that is not "organised" in this fashion. It appears easier for donors, UNDP or the state to deal with a similar structure – one which has a president, a board, accounting, etc. Thus collaboration with civil society which is very loosely united or connected and not formalised into a legal structure, has been rare if not entirely absent. In the Ghanaian case it seems that international civil society actors who agree with the liberal peace approach described in the first section of this paper, namely "with human rights frameworks, development, and democratization, as projected by international norms and policy documents", have been preferred over local civil society (Richmond 2012b, 355).

The Ghanaian infrastructure for peace, primarily as a consequence of being internationally- and state-led, did in my opinion evolve into a top-down liberal state-building project. The approach, even though it is not consistent with the rhetoric on I4P developed by its most prominent proponents,¹⁰ is promoted by UNDP and other donors as we will see in the following section, and justified by the current level of stability Ghana enjoys compared to other African countries. However, as discussed above, the peace architecture presents elements of structural fragility stemming from the approach itself.

3.2 Accra Declaration

On 10 September 2013, in a meeting held by UNDP, the African Union Commission (AUC) and the ECOWAS Commission, participants including government officials, non-state actors, regional, international and civil society organisations signed the Accra Declaration which declares that "stakeholders in Member States shall establish national infrastructures for peace within three years" and that "the primary responsibility for establishing, developing and sustaining national peace infrastructures belongs to stakeholders in Member States, especially governments, civil society organizations, the private sector and the media."¹¹

Held in Ghana, this meeting takes Ghana's infrastructure for peace as an example to be reproduced in other West African states. A similar meeting, focusing on Southern Africa, was held on 17 September 2013

9 To contrast the critical stance I take on state-building throughout this comment, I believe that if 'locally' determined, I4P may offer possibilities in terms of alternative forms of state-building. Hybrid and adaptive I4P, from the bottom-up and based on radically different models than the Western liberal one, would indeed deserve further exploration. However, for the sake of highlighting the consequences of hidden or unconscious liberal state-building through I4P, this scenario will not be further developed here.

10 This rhetoric insists that I4P are grounded in the local, legitimate, solely dedicated to peace processes, etc. (Richmond 2013a; Hopp-Nishanka 2012; Odendaal 2010).

11 Accra Declaration on strengthening national, regional and continental co-ordination towards building national peace infrastructures for conflict prevention; Accra, Ghana, 2013. Available at www.i4pinternational.org/files/514/declaration+accra+10-9-2013.pdf (accessed 20 March 2014).

in Maseru, Lesotho. The outcome was almost identical.¹² The very idea of reproducing a model somewhere else is itself indicative of a liberal peacebuilding approach. As discussed in the previous section, the Ghanaian peace architecture, even though it is presented as a “local peacebuilding process” (Odendaal 2010, 56), presents many characteristics of a liberal state-building project, including its flaws, rather than a more effective approach to building peace. Thus, using it as an exemplar for future I4P development in other countries will only reproduce a model that is “fragile by design”. The appeal of such a proposition is primarily that it transforms peace into a technical and institution-building endeavor, allowing the use of ready-made tools and ‘good practices’ that international actors and ‘developing’ states are used to (national, regional and local peace councils, peace officers, capacity-building and training, etc.). It also allows states and institutions such as the UNDP, currently in a power-holder position, to preserve and reinforce that position. UNDP is here to stay, even though its own I4P rhetoric is challenged in the Accra Declaration: if the I4P in Ghana have indeed emerged, as UNDP argues, from the grass-roots on which the I4P’s legitimacy is based, their exportation is strictly impossible and would be incoherent with their rationale. By extending the Ghanaian I4P as a model to be reproduced elsewhere in such a short period (three years), the actors involved in this project are thus moving away from the rationale behind I4P to the well criticised approach “what worked here must work there”.

Considering the leading role of the government and UNDP in the case of the Ghanaian I4P, the Accra Declaration will potentially foster the development of top-down infrastructures, with a strong governmental role as well. One cannot build peace or allow local peace formation processes (Richmond 2013) to slowly develop into more formal peace infrastructures in a three year timeframe. However, one can build state-designed and state-controlled structures in the name of peace in a three-year period. The necessary care in the design of the I4P to fit the specificities of the local context is absent from the project described in the Accra declaration. When interviewed in September 2013, Most Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Asante, Chairman of the National Peace Council of Ghana, clarified that these three years were not meant for ECOWAS member states to achieve a fully established I4P, but that they had “at least to do *something*.”¹³ This lack of precision related to the “what, how and why” is problematic, a potential open door for all kinds of state-building programmes in the name of peace, rather than letting local contexts and actors determine their I4P’s form. The signatory states (Ghana and Kenya for instance) and the international organisations involved (African Union, ECOWAS) clearly stated in the declaration that they are interested in I4P to provide stability, social cohesion, national reconciliation, early warning and security, to create and reinforce the nation, the interface between state and society, through these structures for dialogue. This is not a mere peacebuilding description of planned activities; this is much closer to a state-building agenda.

4 Conclusion

Scrutinising the discourse of UNDP, the World Bank or European think tanks, Mac Ginty’s critique seems to resonate in I4P. He argues that peacebuilding is experiencing a “technocratic turn”. Indeed, if led by international actors, I4P may be one of the “homogenized conflict remedies that feature heavily technocratic ‘solutions’ that often coalesce around the ‘good governance’ and State-building agendas” (Mac Ginty 2012, 288). The Accra declaration seems to illustrate Mac Ginty’s point by advocating a one-size-fits-all solution: the Ghanaian peace architecture.

This comment made the argument that if internationally- or state-designed, I4P tend to follow a liberal peace approach; building a state in order to build peace, rather than the other way around. I4P could also constitute a comprehensive alternative framework for state-building with the same logic at reverse: building peace (structures) in order to build a sustainable and legitimate state. If the rhetoric of

¹² See the Maseru Declaration on a Framework for Peaceful Development in Southern Africa, Lesotho, 2013. Available at www.i4pinternational.org/files/516/declaration+on+framework+for+peaceful+dev+in+sadc--cvs5.pdf (accessed 20 March 2014).

¹³ Informal interview conducted during the Sixth GAMIP Summit in Geneva, September 2013.

international actors were actually put into practice, or if peace formation processes formed the basis of I4P development, I4P could be an interesting opportunity for a more legitimate state-building process, i.e. political structures emerging from the bottom-up, based on the specific society's values, norms and rules. In that case, the 'state' may not resemble the Western 'modern' state and even generate a degree of tension with it, as its base and building process will be radically different. However, this paper has shown that I4P is often promoted by international actors as an alternative framework for top-down state-building projects in the name of peace.

A reassessment of international actors' understandings and practices related to I4P is both timely and necessary, since I4P as a peacebuilding approach has just started to develop. As Richmond argued with regard to peace formation, I4P can provide an interesting framework to build and sustain *peace*, which is a term that relates to practices other than those of the *state*. If this comment pointed out the shortcomings of the liberal I4P project, it also recognises I4P development as part of a broader process of trial and error that peacebuilding is experiencing in its willingness to slowly move away from liberal perspectives. I do not seek to question the good intention behind the promotion of these less-than-perfect approaches, but rather want to emphasise the need for self-assessment and learning by external actors.

Even though phrased and understood in very technocratic ways, I4P show that peacebuilders are slowly focusing explicitly and consciously on the specific capacities and structures needed for peace. It appears an improvement to conceiving of peace as either a mysterious and fortunate result of the functioning of other state structures, or as an inevitable result of an individual's own innate good or evil tendencies. Peace, understood as the capacity to transform conflict with empathy, without violence, and creatively, is a never ending process which requires sustained efforts (Galtung/Fisher 2013). Structures dedicated to facilitating this process and to promoting a culture of peace add value to peacebuilding if they are designed to function as the implementing mechanisms or enabling environments of peace, rather than as part of a state-building apparatus.

About the Author:

Vincent Verzat is a second year master student at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, in Geneva, Switzerland. He is currently writing his master thesis, entitled "Infrastructures for Peace: Unpacking a Discourse", articulating the theory of change of I4P practitioners and scholars. After finishing a bachelor in international relations at the University of Geneva, he travelled for a year in South America, doing internships in various conflict transformation NGOs as well as advocating the development and integration of conflict prevention strategies within the climate change policy agenda discussed during the Rio +20 environmental conference. In 2013, Mr. Verzat co-organised an international conference on Infrastructures for Peace for the United Network of Young Peacebuilders and the Global Alliance for Ministries and Infrastructures for Peace. Mr. Verzat is currently being trained in Restorative Systems (cf. Barter) and Nonviolent Communication in order to facilitate conflict transformation processes in the future, along with mobilising youth for peace.

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