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Integrating subjectivities of power and violence in peacebuilding analysis

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ABSTRACT

Over the last 20 years the local domain has gained widespread attention in the analysis of peacebuilding. While this debate has contributed to an important review of many assumptions underlying peacebuilding practice and analysis, the subjective domain of peacebuilding – how actors experience and make sense of these transformations – still needs to be more methodically explored. In particular, while different narratives of peace have been analysed in this literature, much more rarely has there been a systematic discussion linking peace with power and violence and the different understandings and experiences around these two concepts. In this article I argue that integrating violence and power more systematically in the local turn and exploring their subjective domain can greatly benefit this debate, including by contributing to the elaboration of conceptual and theoretical tools more aligned with Southern epistemologies.

Introduction

The idea of investigating subjective aspects of peace, at the heart of this article, was born out of a previous study that focussed on the different narratives about peacebuilding in Mozambique.[1] Indeed, whereas there seemed to be a fairly consensual assessment of the successes and pitfalls of peacebuilding in that country at the policy level, conversations with everyday people in the countryside pointed to very different understandings of these achievements. More than that, they also revealed that some concepts that are inextricably related to peace in academic debates – including violence and power – often have alternative meanings and are experienced differently at the local level.

The concern with the subjective realm is widespread in different areas of the social sciences, notably anthropology, sociology and psychology. In the case of peacebuilding, the subjective world has become a central concern particularly within the 'local turn'. A key point in this literature is the recognition that peacebuilding has failed to engage with local actors, which, in turn, has led to a crisis of legitimacy.[2] To a large extent, this literature has emerged

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as a result of the increasing number of case studies that have shifted the conventional gaze of peacebuilding, highlighting the role of alterity and the views of the actors who are in fact the main subjects of peacebuilding intervention.[3] In this regard, the local turn brings an important epistemological discussion centred on the power involved in the constitution of knowledge.

Conceptually, one of the results of the local turn has been the disentanglement of concepts such as peace, justice and legitimacy, especially through an engagement with the different narratives that frame the international policy discourse on the one hand, and local values in different cultural settings on the other hand.[4] This has been accompanied by studies highlighting the discrepancy between international assessments and local views of peace.[5] Curiously, much less has been written on the experiential dimension of violence and power.[6] Power has been discussed in the local turn mainly within the international/local interface, but how actors experience and perceive power and whether these understandings relate to the overarching theoretical frameworks underlying the local turn still need to be addressed. In the case of violence, this concept has been far less explored in this literature, notwithstanding the existence of a large number of studies in social sciences that engage with this topic, including from a subjective standpoint.

This article claims that to the extent that peace can be understood in opposition to violence, and assuming that peacebuilding represents an attempt, at least formally, to change power in the domestic realm of the country where intervention takes place, both violence and power should be more fully incorporated into the theoretical frameworks used in the local turn. In particular, the subjective domain of these concepts should be more systematically explored. This is because power and violence are crucial elements in the constitution of different social contracts, and peacebuilding is an attempt to (re-)establish a social contract that is based on very specific notions of power and violence, which, nonetheless, are not necessarily congruent with existing social practices and subjectivities.

Understanding alternative conceptions of violence and power and their subjective experiences can benefit from an expansion of the discussion on the different meanings of peace along the lines of the debate on cultural interpretations of peace.[7] These approaches emphasise the different values and philosophical systems that frame different conceptions of peace, transcending the more Western notion of peace as a condition related to the state (and its relation with its citizens and/or other states).

This article is divided into four sections. The first one briefly revisits the local turn in peacebuilding, examining its contributions to the analysis of subjectivities of peace, violence and power. The following three sections are devoted to the discussion of these three concepts, examining how they are treated in the local turn and the alternative ways to engage with them. The conclusion calls for a more systematic inclusion of violence and power in the local turn, focussing especially on their subjective dimension.

The 'local turn' in peacebuilding and the analysis of local subjectivities

By 'local turn' in peacebuilding I here refer to what Paffenholz calls the second generation of local turn (as opposed to the first generation which focussed, to a large extent, on the work of John Paul Lederach).[8] Broadly speaking, this literature provides a critical reading of the international peacebuilding project, highlighting its universalising and top-down

character, while criticising its (neo)liberal agenda.[9] Influenced by post-colonial epistemologies, the local turn emphasises the role of local agency, the power dynamics that shape peacebuilding and the many expressions of local resistance towards this agenda.[10]

A series of conceptual tools in the local turn are useful for the purpose of engaging with local subjectivities. For starters, the centrality of the term 'local' points to the need to critically assess the main positionality driving peacebuilding practice and analysis, i.e. the point of view of the intervener. Therefore, whilst what constitutes the 'local' has been subject to debate,[11] the use of this term has led to the problematisation of the dominant linear understanding of peacebuilding as a process of social engineering. The emphasis on the local has been complemented by the discussion on hybridity and hybrid peace, where peacebuilding is understood as a process embedded in the often conflictual dynamics of the international attempt to export Western governance templates and the alternative forms of governance that exist in local settings.[12] This conceptual framework highlights the agency of local actors, moving away from a view of the 'recipients' of peacebuilding as passive subjects in the constitution of peace. It also stresses the power dynamics embedded in peacebuilding, in particular the ability of local actors to resist the international pressure (and incentives) to impose its specific peace agenda.

These and other conceptual advances in the local turn have greatly benefitted the analysis of local subjectivities in peacebuilding. Nevertheless, there are several instances of this debate that need refinement, if not expansion, for the purpose of grasping subjectivities of power and violence.

Firstly, there have been several critiques regarding the extent to which the debate in the local turn is framed by binaries, in particular the 'local/international' and the 'Western liberal/ non-liberal other'.[13] This critique has been repeated over and over, notwithstanding the fact that the concept of hybrid peace was developed with the aim to overcome the clear-cut separation between the international and the local;[14] several case studies, many relying on ethnography, have problematised the local domain, showing the plurality and complexity of the local as well as the complex power dynamics within it;[15] and more recent work has been developed in order to conceptually systematise the diversity of the local.[16] The problem highlighted by the critics seems to relate to starting point of the concept – the interaction between the 'international' and 'the local' (notwithstanding the recognition that even those are hybrid) – and its analytical implications. As the centre of the analysis is located in the relationship between the international (and its incentivising and coercive powers) and local agents (and their ability to resist, ignore and subvert the liberal peace), even if the result is hybrid, the dichotomy is the starting point. The paradox noted is that hybridity seems to reinscribe the binaries it tries to overcome.[17] The effect of this in the study of subjectivities is that the international/local is still the main interface analysed in the local turn,[18] whereas, comparatively, there is much less emphasis on the plurality and diversity that exist within these categories.[19]

This article is concerned with the broader theoretical and conceptual discussion in the local turn. The argument is that violence and power, in particular their subjective perspectives, need to be more clearly incorporated into the debate. This further requires problematising 'the local' and 'the international' so that their diversity – and the multiple subjectivities they comprise – come to the surface.

Overall, violence has been downplayed in this literature, as exemplified by the scanty reference to this concept in key texts discussing the local turn and hybridity.[20] Where the

word 'violence' appears, it is often punctual (eg 'violence in country X', 'post-election violence', 'violence reduction', and so forth) and not discussed as a concept. This is peculiar, not least because of the emancipatory claim of the local turn, which entails overcoming structural violence, as well as considering the vast amount of literature discussing violence in the social sciences in general and, less so, but still significantly, in peace and conflict studies.[21] The way violence is understood affects both the setting of the peacebuilding agenda and the responses to it. Because of this, when it comes to the assessment of the changes brought by peacebuilding, it seems crucial to ask what has changed in terms of violence in a very broad sense, including how the meaning and experience of violence and its social role have changed.

Differently from the case with violence, power has been a crucial element in the local turn and has been discussed in key references.[22] The main influence here is the work of Michel Foucault and his understanding of power as circulating, diffused and present at the level of the everyday.[23] This view is complemented by references to Michel de Certeau and James Scott, with special emphasis on the concept of resistance.[24] Notwithstanding this, the debate on how power circulates can benefit from further problematisation and theorisation.[25] Several authors, for instance, criticise the lack of engagement of the local turn with power dynamics within the local.[26] Additionally, the emphasis on dynamics of opposition, in particular resistance, highlights the conflictual dimension of power, as opposed to instances of cooperation and mutual empowerment, which alternative epistemological influences could help explore.

Underlying the discussion on power and violence is the debate on the different interpretations of peace. Within the local turn, several contributions have highlighted how local understandings of peace and experiences of peacebuilding vary across and within societies,[27] as well as how the international discourse itself has many contradictory perspectives of peace.[28] There is, nevertheless, an alternative strand of literature that discusses the concept of peace through the perspective of different value systems and social cosmologies and which, in turn, provides space to think how power and violence are understood and experienced. I briefly engage with these approaches in the next section, before diving into the concepts of violence and power.

Approaches to peace and what they say about power and violence

Following the rationale of the local turn, engaging with the local domain is key to build a peace that is legitimate and in tune with local values. In practice, however, the definition of the terms that frame the dialogue between international and local actors is still fundamentally based on a Western grammar and vocabulary. One of the implications of this, in analytical terms, is that peace has been primarily understood in relation to its opposite – violent/armed conflict – instead of being defined according to its desired content.[29] Consequently, in the policy realm, the 'content' of peace responds to the search for mechanisms to avoid the relapse into organised violence, here understood as the kind of violence that affects the survival of the state. This perspective entails a very specific understanding of violence and power. Here the state is the beholder of the legitimate use of violence, and all other violence (ie direct violence that threatens this monopoly) should be contained. The centrality of the security sector reform in the peacebuilding agenda reflects this

principle. Regarding power, the emphasis is on power as related to the shaping of the political structure of the state. Democracy (as electoral democracy and the balance between civil society and the state) is the arena where power is shaped and designed.

Scholars in the local turn have questioned the main conceptions of peace that frame peacebuilding activities, as well as the idea that peace may be achieved through a universal formula.[30] Moreover, in the local turn peace begs legitimacy and social justice, which entails addressing structural violence as much as direct violence.[31] Power is given a great deal of attention here and relates extensively to the ability of individuals to have their voices heard, as well as to the interactions between international and local actors and the level of asymmetry that shapes the negotiation of peacebuilding design and implementation. However, and notwithstanding this critical perspective, the discussion on peace within the local turn, as much as in the liberal peace framework, is still largely attached to the kind of social contract that must be (re-)established after the cessation of a violent conflict. As a result, alternative conceptions of peace examined from a more philosophical and cultural standpoint, focussed less on the social contract dynamics that shape the design of the state and more on the basic values of peace and the informal, have been far less discussed.

In peace studies more generally, different authors have discussed the cultural aspects of peace.[32] Galtung, for instance, contrasted the concepts of peace according to the different social cosmologies that prevail in the West and the East.[33] From a Western perspective, peace would be based on the idea of separation between in-group and out-group (us/them) and would present a tendency to universalisation. Conversely, in the East peace would reflect a more self-contained perspective, where 'the ultimate introvert peace planning is the peace in one's own soul, intra-personal peace, harmony of mind'.[34]

Offering a more expanded discussion on the matter, and exploring an enormous literature on different cultural systems, Dietrich[35] has identified four general types of conceptions of peace based on key values. First, there are energetic interpretations of peace, which focus predominantly on the idea of harmony of society, nature and cosmos – the latter seen as responsible for things such as the well-being of the family and the community, the growth of plants and the fertility of domestic animals. Here communities matter more than individuals, and the principles upon which they are built are central to understand the dynamics that lead to harmony or its unbalance.

Second, there are moral interpretations of peace, entrenched in many religions, notably Christianity, Islam and Judaism.[36] The main value here is justice, which is developed through the construction of a duality between good and bad and its opposition. Institutionalisation here is a central aspect, as well as the idea that there is one truth.

Third, there are modern interpretations of peace, which focus mainly on security. These interpretations are connected with more general assumptions related to modernity, including a mechanistic view of the world where science and God are completely separated.[37] Modern interpretations of peace resemble the moral ones, offering a narration that points to one true/correct/good path. Nevertheless, contrary to the former, here this narration is given a rational tone, which means that all assumptions are founded on the manifest world.

Finally, there are postmodern interpretations of peace, which deal with questions of truth. Here there exists no universal and unique truth. On the contrary, 'truth, security, and justice are recognised as constructs and peace thus becomes multiform and in need of definition within each context'.[38] Dietrich identifies most peace research scholarship as falling into this category.

A key point to highlight in this typology is that some of them (moral and modern) present a claim to universality, whereas others (energetic and postmodern) emphasise difference. If we look at the international peacebuilding architecture, we see that the predominant view of peace is largely based on a modern perspective of peace, with an emphasis on peace as security and stability of the state, entrenched in a universalising appeal that also links to the moral interpretation and the provision of a clear narrative of what is 'good' for peace. The critique of the local turn addresses precisely this universalising aspect, as well as the prede-termination of what should be prioritised in a peace agenda aimed at preventing renewed violent conflict, reflecting therefore a post-modern approach.

As for the energetic approaches to peace, these have been far less discussed, even though, as Dietrich observes, these are the most common across cultures. This may be the case because they do not engage with the state or the key elements of the international discourse on peace. But this is precisely why these approaches are valuable: they depart from different principles that are often absent in the peacebuilding jargon and which, nevertheless, affect peace at the level of the everyday, as well as the functionality – or not – of the formal social contract pursued through peacebuilding and statebuilding.

More generally, engaging with energetic approaches to peace leads to the discussion of elements that would seem odd in a more traditional reading of peacebuilding. The idea of 'peace as fertility', for example, leads us to interrogate the nature of the social structure, and the different effects of matriarchal and patriarchal systems in terms of violence and power dynamics.[39] Differently, the idea of 'peace out of harmony' focuses on the relationship between individuals, nature and the spiritual realm. The individual is here an intermediary that needs to balance yin and yang energies to sustain the flow of harmony. From this per-spective, peace is not a finite state, but a constant process of balance.[40] Moreover, the internal domain of the individual is as important as the external, because each is an extension of the other.[41] This is why processes such as meditation and self-transformation are crucial for peace seen as a process of social transformation: there needs to be a change in mindset towards harmony. This perspective has influenced some practical approaches to peace, such as the Gandhian approach to non-violence.[42] Here the congruence between means and ends is crucial, which challenges several of the premises of the functioning of the modern state, including the role of violence for the sake of preserving peace.

There are many energetic approaches to peace, and it is not my intention to offer a sys-tematic analysis of them. The point here is to stress the need to engage with them more systematically in the analysis of peacebuilding and in different case studies. By shedding light on the different ways societies work, they allow for the questioning of how power and violence are conceived and, thus, how they are re-signified after a prolonged violent conflict, and to what extent international intervention influences and is affected by these visions.

Bringing violence to centre stage

While violence is central to the very existence of peacebuilding – the idea, after all, is to prevent the resumption of violent conflict – violence per se has been little explored in the local turn, particularly in conceptual terms. This may be because one of the main interests of this literature concentrates on the interaction front between international and local actors, as exemplified in the model of hybrid peace proposed by Mac Ginty. In this case,

violence can be one of the elements shaping this interaction, but it is not necessarily a central element of analysis. Violence briefly appears in the discussion proposed by Richmond, when he constructs a matrix of peace and conflict linking state formation, statebuilding, peacebuilding and peace formation.[43] Violence is here a key element of state formation, leading to the enforcement of the social contract. In contrast, because statebuilding and statebuilding are understood as attempts to negotiate a social contract, violence is not a central element of analysis.

A recent literature that has engaged more directly with violence is that on post-conflict violence.[44] This literature addresses the reasons why violence continues after the signing of a peace agreement, even if not in the shape of a new war. The use of the term 'post-conflict' reflects the idea that the violence that follows a violent conflict is somewhat different from the violence that characterised the conflict. While this literature offers interesting insights to understand violence in relation to peacebuilding, there is still an emphasis on direct violence and much less attention is given to its subjective domain.

The main reason why violence should be more thoroughly incorporated in the analysis of peacebuilding is because violence is a key element of the social contract which will be (re)built through peacebuilding and statebuilding. Within the paradigm of the modern state, the latter should be the holder of the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence. In peace-building this is targeted through the implementation of security sector reform. Nevertheless, the implementation of these reforms does not necessarily curb different manifestations of violence that are used as means of social regulation in what can be perceived as a parallel form of governance that often takes place in local settings. This is why it is important to think of violence as a social construct that has different meanings, is experienced in different ways, and leads to different parameters of legitimacy – things which have been discussed at length within social sciences but still little in the context of peacebuilding.[45]

In this regard, two questions seem particularly important. First, how is violence defined, understood and experienced by the different actors that are on the receiving end of peace-building? Second, to what extent does peacebuilding change subjectivities of and attitudes towards violence, and how does this affect the implementation of the new social contract?

The first question has been partly addressed by Lind and Luckham.[46] They note that one of the problems with recent approaches to violence in development thinking and practice is that this concept has been addressed

> within confined and sometimes unhelpful explanatory and policy frames, in which violence is conceptualised narrowly and is seen either as a variable to be explained by social scientists or as a problem to be 'fixed' by the international community and development agencies.

Luckham[47] further questions the assumptions underlying international policies for vio-lence reduction. Stressing the importance of positionality, he argues that the starting point for such policies should be 'the vernacular understandings and day-to-day experience of poor, excluded and vulnerable people, including those living at insurgent margins'.[48] In an effort to dissect expressions of violence, he proposes a framework to identify 'legitimate' force and 'illegitimate' violence, combining expressions of violence with multiple levels of analysis.

Bringing in the discussion on legitimacy and focussing on frames and narratives is crucial for dealing with subjectivities of violence. Besides this, however, it is also important to analyse the vernacular in the context of the constitution of the new social contract that

peacebuilding aims to consolidate. The persistent use of violence for community justice in many peacebuilding settings is testimony to how the state's monopoly of legitimate violence cannot simply be imposed through social engineering. This relates to the second set of questions, ie to what extent does peacebuilding change subjectivities of and attitudes towards violence, and how does this affect the implementation of the new social contract?

An illustration may be useful here. In 2012, while driving to a village in the countryside of Mozambique, I came across the aftermath of a car accident. As explained by a local resident, the day before a drunk man drove to the village in a pick-up truck and hit a child, who died soon afterwards. The driver ran away on foot through the bush, only to present himself at the police station in the district's capital the following day. If he had stayed, he would have been killed by the community. Killing in this context would not be 'violence', but a form of justice. During my fieldwork in this region I heard several similar stories which showed that, notwithstanding the existence of the police, on a daily basis justice was pursued at the community level, often through the engagement of violent means. Interestingly, the state did not seem to have a stake in these cases, which means that, after 20 years following the peace agreement and the process of security sector reform, these local dynamics still persisted.

This does not mean that peacebuilding did not change some crucial dynamics of violence in Mozambique, the most important being the end of the armed conflict in 1992. But to what extent it changed subjectivities of violence is far more complicated. Another example is illustrative of this. While conducting a focus group in a rural community, participants told me they often had their produce stole by thieves. In previous times (before peace), they could solve this problem by capturing the thief and beating him up, thus reducing the likelihood of future thefts. Now, 'because of human rights', if they did this, they would be the ones going to jail. As police action was not efficient, thefts continued to happen regularly, and the community could not find a way to solve the problem. In this case, change did take place, but not because the community thought that that particular expression of violence was 'bad', but because they feared being victimised if they acted as they thought they should.

These examples show that different manifestations of violence are crucial in social contracts that coexist with the social contract designed by international peacebuilding. Which types of violence matter, how they are experienced and how they relate to the changes brought by peacebuilding need to be further examined. In Mozambique, 'peacetime violence' includes violence against albinos, attacks against community leaders and local government posts and officials, violence against nongovernmental organisation workers for trying to add chlorine to the water to fight cholera, violence and threats against intellectuals and practitioners who are critical of the government or contest the official political discourse,[49] and lynching in peri-urban and urban areas,[50] just to name a few.[51] These expressions of direct violence are further linked to dynamics of structural violence, such as the context of extreme poverty and unemployment, as much as they are linked to symbolic violence.

One way to engage with these violences would be to place each of them in a different box and say that they are completely different from the systematic large-scale violence that takes place in armed conflicts. However, taken together, they can be analysed as indicating the complex relationship between society and the state and the constant dispute regarding what the parameters are of legitimacy of the social contract. Some of them can further be seen as extensions of the violence from war times now assuming a new shape, an argument explored by Bertelsen.[52] His starting point is that the state, conceptually, is not a finite entity,

as often portrayed from an institutionalist point of view. Rather, it is an 'always-emergent form of power and control identifiable at multiple societal levels'; it is always 'becoming'.[53] From this perspective, different forms of violence in a society, and particularly in post-violent conflict and post-colonial states, may be analysed as a constant response to, or resistance against, the dynamics of state formation.

This perspective is insightful for peacebuilding analysis. It places violence at centre stage, showing its fluidity and function in shaping (and rejecting) the social contract on an everyday basis, defining (and defying) what is legitimate. From this perspective, violence may be seen as an important instrument of power, used by the state as well as by ordinary citizens. It is the subjective views on violence, its different narratives and experiences, that help make sense of these dynamics.

Expanding the discussion on power

As noted above, power has been a central concept in the local turn, being discussed, sometimes at length, in key texts of this debate.[54] The main influence in this discussion is the work of Michel Foucault and his concepts of power as circulating and governmentality. This approach is complemented with references to James Scott and Michel de Certeau, and their analyses of the everyday and dynamics of resistance. From this perspective, power is perceived predominantly through a conflictual view, where governmentality and structural power meet local agency in the shape of resistance.[55] The specifics of these dynamics are partly captured by Mac Ginty's model of hybrid peace and its four components (the compliance power of the liberal peace, the incentivising power of the liberal peace, the resistance of local actors, and the alternatives provided by local actors to the liberal peace).[56] They are further discussed by Richmond in his more recent work.[57]

This approach to power has been very helpful in resetting the terms of the debate in peacebuilding, especially in light of more traditional approaches to international relations, where peacebuilding has often been portrayed as a generalisable formula.[58] Nonetheless, given the complexity of the debate on power in social sciences, I suggest that engaging with alternative approaches to power could contribute to the local turn, especially by helping explore its more subjective aspects, as well as concrete alternatives on how to change power.

The case for bringing power more clearly into the debate rests on the assumption that any violent conflict is a quest to review power relations across society. However, quite often power does not change substantially, and this may constitute one of the factors that may lead to the resumption of organised violence. At the same time, the experience of power change varies substantially across different actors and their position in society. It is in this context that studying subjectivities of power seems relevant. How different groups of individuals perceive what power is, the power they have and how power changes is crucial for understanding the extent to which peacebuilding brings fundamental changes to society, in particular within the context of the (re)design of the social contract. In this regard, a first step to problematise power in the local turn is by discussing power dynamics within the local. This further entails engaging with two different dimensions: the formal changes that aim to distribute power by creating new spaces for

participation, and the way subjects perceive these changes and their concrete effects in changing power.

Mozambique provides a good platform from which to assess the complex relation between these two dimensions. After the 1992 peace accords, this country has been subject to a series of reforms that followed the (neo)liberal peace package. In the realm of democracy, important changes took place: multiparty elections have been held on a regular basis; the previous rebel group, Renamo, transformed itself into a solid political party taking part in the country's political life; a gradual agenda towards decentralisation has been implemented; the number of civil society organisations rapidly increased, and several spaces were created to enhance the dialogue between state and citizens.[59] Importantly, these institutional reforms opened formal spaces for democratic participation, thus changing the structures of power to a certain extent. But the extent to which they have changed subjectivities of power, and consequently power dynamics, is not straightforward.

In the case of civil society, for instance, the opening of these spaces has not necessarily been converted into concrete influence on government policies. An example is the case of the Development Observatories. These were created in the context of the poverty reduction strategies in Mozambique in the early 2000s. Meeting annually, they constituted a platform to increase dialogue between civil society and government and to foster accountability. However, while functioning regularly, they ended up as merely consultative bodies, with no channels for feedback and social accountability. More fundamentally, they did not have the capacity to overcome the existence of informal mechanisms of influence, pressure and control that are embedded in the conflictual political context of Mozambique, leading often to a feeling of frustration among some participants.[60]

At the more local level, in the rural districts, changing subjectivities of power and power dynamics seems even more complicated due to the entrenched structures of authority that blend elements of the traditional realm with the historical legacy of a highly centralised state. As an example, one of the institutional changes that aimed (at least formally) to increase spaces for local participation in Mozambique was the constitution of the local councils in the early 2000s. While publicised for their ability to liaise the local with the government, these bodies have been subject to criticism on several fronts, including for being 'politically captured' by the main party,[61] not being representative of the community, and not changing people's perception regarding their ability to influence local politics.[62]

Purposely, these examples do not engage with the international/local interface; instead, they point to the long-term effects of peacebuilding in institutional terms and in terms of power change. They illustrate that changing power is extremely challenging, especially because the conflict around power within the national and local can be extremely high, affecting the potential effectiveness of peacebuilding reform. They also illustrate that institutional changes do not necessarily alter subjectivities of power. On the contrary, sometimes they legitimate the status quo, normalising the perception that power will not change.

These observations reinforce the need for an expanded discussion on power within the local turn. A proper review of the literature on power, even if only in peace and conflict studies, would require an article on its own, but I would like to highlight a few components of this broader discussion. Firstly, a central element of the debate relates to the different connotations of power, the most common one highlighting its expression as domination (or *power over*) through a conflictual perspective, as opposed to its connotation as capacity (or *power to*), which favours cooperative and mutualistic scenarios.[63] While the Foucauldian

conception of 'power everywhere' in the local turn is appealing in that it highlights the possibilities of agency across different sets of actors, its use has emphasised the conflictual dimension of power, where the most relevant form of local power and agency is identified as resistance to the international peacebuilding agenda.

As noted in the case of Mozambique, the conflictual perspective on power is important, including, if not particularly, within the local level. But focussing on opposition minimises creative solutions for change, which can be enhanced by a view of power that focuses also on its connotation as a capacity, leading – potentially – to cooperative outcomes and mutual empowerment.[64] In this regard, a key question to be explored is how to shift perceptions of power. Specifically, how can we change the boundaries of what is possible in the case of subjects that have for too long been at the margins of power? This further requires questioning what are the naturalised discourses and experiences of power and what are the constraints to subjective change. In this regard, more empirical investigation of these processes is needed, within the local realm (identifying endogenous forms of cooperation that lead to power change and the empowerment of minority groups) and from successful stories of international/local interactions that also lead to some form of local empowerment.

A relevant study, in this regard, was conducted by Pearce. Pearce traces the key features of what she calls 'non-dominating power', ie 'a form of power which builds capabilities to act with others in cooperative ways, which embraces conflict, co-constructs trustworthy authority, and enables participation of diverse actors in the search for non-violent solutions to problems'.[65] It would therefore include *power to*, *power with* and legitimate *power over*. Offering examples from community and global activists, Pearce shows how these actors often refute the dominant idea of domination, even when they find themselves in a position that could be used to foster this kind of power. A key point highlighted is that non-dominating power challenges the normalisation of dominating power. This, in turn, opens the possibility of social transformation by changing the subjective domain. Following Pearce's insights, studying different forms of power change in peacebuilding settings could enhance our ability to think of power in different ways than those often depicted in mainstream narratives, paving the way for a broader engagement with the subjective world of power from the vantage point of different local actors.

Integrating power and violence in the local turn

The local turn has constituted an important watershed in the way peacebuilding has been analysed. By placing the 'local' at centre stage, it has questioned the power dynamics involved in peacebuilding, while underlining the fundamental role of local subjectivities around peace and legitimacy. The argument of this article is that the engagement with the subjective world in peacebuilding could benefit from a more systematic discussion of the concepts of power and violence within the local turn.

Power and violence are crucial concepts in the analysis of peacebuilding, especially because they are central pillars of the social contract. This justifies the call for the more systematic and integrated inclusion of these concepts in the theoretical and conceptual approaches to the local turn. In practice, this means that the way power circulates should be further investigated, including by exploring how different actors perceive what power is, its sources and how they experience it. Moreover, existing mechanisms of power change

should be explored in empirical situations. Similarly, how violence is experience and conceived and how the parameters of legitimacy around violence are constructed should be central questions in the analysis of peacebuilding, as they affect the functionality and effectiveness of the social contract designed by peacebuilding.

More generally, a research agenda focussed on subjectivities of peace, violence and power should include the following questions:

- How are violence and power conceived and experienced by different actors in peacebuilding settings?
- What do local cosmologies say about peace, violence and power?
- To what extent does the peacebuilding narrative on power and violence provide space to engage with the vernacular of power and violence of those populations who reside at the margins of the main political stage in peacebuilding settings?
- To what extent do peacebuilding instruments for change – such as security sector reform, democracy promotion, and economic liberalisation – alter existing subjectivities and attitudes towards power and violence?
- What are the effects of peacebuilding in parallel social contracts that are based on different subjectivities of power and violence?

The purpose of these questions is to highlight the relevance of the subjective realm and their influence in altering behaviour or preventing change. They complement the current debates on the local turn, while pushing for the exploration of local, non-Western epistemologies.

Striving for alternative epistemologies is a complex exercise, especially in the context of disciplines and practices that have their origins in Western settings. The increase in the number of studies engaging with the local domain and offering a strong reflexive approach has provided important new perspectives through which to assess peacebuilding. Questioning power and violence and integrating these more clearly in the local turn seem to be additional steps to take in this challenging exercise.

Disclosure statement

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Roberta Holanda Maschietto is a post-doctoral researcher at the Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra. She has a PhD in peace studies from the University of Bradford. Her current research focuses on understanding local subjectivities of peace, violence and power in Mozambique and Timor-Leste. She has previously investigated the dynamics of empowerment promotion in Mozambique in the context of peacebuilding, leading to the publication of the book *Beyond Peacebuilding. The Challenges of Empowerment Promotion in Mozambique*.

Notes

1. Maschietto, *Beyond Peacebuilding*.
2. Richmond, *Post-Liberal Peace*; Roberts, "Beyond the Metropolis?"; Mac Ginty and Richmond, "Local Turn in Peace Building"; Lee and Özerdem, *Local Ownership in International Peacebuilding*; and Debiel et al., *Peacebuilding in Crisis.*
3. Nordstrom, Different Kind of War Story; Autesserre, Trouble with the Congo; and Millar, *Ethnographic Approach to Peacebuilding*.
4. Richmond, *Transformation of Peace*; Bräuchler, *Cultural Dimension of Peace*; Millar, *Ethnographic Approach to Peacebuilding*; Roberts, *Liberal Peacebuilding and the Locus of Legitimacy*; and Roberts, "Beyond the Metropolis?"
5. eg Roberts, "Surveying South Sudan"; Robins, "Empirical Approach to Post-Conflict Legitimacy"; Millar, *Ethnographic Approach to Peacebuilding*; and Mac Ginty and Firchow, "Top-Down and Bottom-Up Narratives."
6. Notable exceptions in the case of violence are Pearce, *Violence, Power and Participation*; Autesserre, *Trouble with the Congo*; Roque, *Pós-Guerra?*; and Luckham, "Whose Violence, Whose Security."
7. Such as Galtung, "Social Cosmology"; Dietrich, *Interpretations of Peace in History and Culture*; and Pynn, "Dao De Jing on Cultivating Peace."
8. Paffenholz, "Unpacking the Local Turn."
9. Ibid.; Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance*; Richmond, *Post-Liberal Peace*; Mac Ginty and Richmond, "Local Turn in Peace Building"; and Hughes, Öjendal, and Schierenbeck, "Struggle Versus the Song."
10. Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance*; Mac Ginty and Richmond, "Local Turn in Peace Building"; and Paffenholz, "Unpacking the Local Turn."
11. eg Kappler, "Dynamic Local"; Debiel and Rinck, "Rethinking the Local in Peacebuilding"; and Bräuchler and Naucke, "Peacebuilding and Conceptualisations of the Local."
12. Boege et al., "Building Peace and Political Community"; Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace," and *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance*; and Mac Ginty and Richmond, "Fallacy of Constructing Hybrid Political Orders."
13. Sabaratnam, "Avatars of Eurocentrism"; Paffenholz, "Unpacking the Local Turn"; Debiel and Rinck, "Rethinking the Local in Peacebuilding"; and Bräuchler and Naucke, "Peacebuilding and Conceptualisations of the Local."
14. Kent et al., "Introduction"; and Mac Ginty and Richmond, "Fallacy of Constructing Hybrid Political Orders."
15. eg Autesserre, *Trouble with the Congo*; Nilsson, "Peacebuilding and Local Ownership"; Maschietto, *Beyond Peacebuilding*; and Bräuchler, *Cultural Dimension of Peace.*
16. Paffenholz, "Peacebuilding Goes Local"; and Bräuchler and Naucke, "Peacebuilding and Conceptualisations of the Local."
17. Kent et al., "Introduction," 5.
18. eg Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace," and *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance*; Mac Ginty and Richmond, "Fallacy of Constructing Hybrid Political Orders"; Richmond, *Post-Liberal Peace*, *Failed Statebuilding* and "Paradox of Peace and Power"; Roberts, ed., *Liberal Peacebuilding*; and Lee and Özerdem, *Local Ownership in International Peacebuilding*.

19. Bräuchler and Naucke, "Peacebuilding and Conceptualisations of the Local."
20. For instance, Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace"; Richmond, *Post-Liberal Peace*; Mac Ginty and Richmond, "Local Turn in Peace Building"; Hughes, Öjendal, and Schierenbeck, "Struggle Versus the Song"; Paffenholz, "Unpacking the Local Turn"; and Debiel et al., *Peacebuilding in Crisis*.
21. eg Galtung, "Violence, Peace and Peace Research," and "Cultural Violence"; Pearce, *Violence, Power and Participation*, and "'Violence Turn' in Peace Studies and Practice"; Autesserre, *Trouble with the Congo*; Roque, *Pós-Guerra?*; and Luckham, "Whose Violence, Whose Security."
22. Richmond, *Post-Liberal Peace* and "Paradox of Peace and Power"; Mac Ginty and Richmond, "Local Turn in Peace Building"; and Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace."
23. Mac Ginty and Richmond, "Local Turn in Peace Building"; and Richmond, "Paradox of Peace and Power."
24. See detailed discussion in Richmond, *Post-Liberal Peace*.
25. Krause, "Reforming the Security Sector."
26. Hughes, Öjendal, and Schierenbeck, "Struggle Versus the Song"; Paffenholz, "Unpacking the Local Turn"; and Debiel and Rinck, "Rethinking the Local in Peacebuilding."
27. Mac Ginty and Firchow, "Top-Down and Bottom-Up Narratives"; Maschietto, "What Has Changed with Peace"; and Roberts, *Liberal Peacebuilding and the Locus of Legitimacy*.
28. Richmond, Transformation of Peace.
29. Ibid.; and Mac Ginty, *No War, No Peace*.
30. Richmond, Transformation of Peace; Mac Ginty, *No War, No Peace*.
31. Richmond, *Post-Liberal Peace*; and Mac Ginty and Richmond, "Local Turn in Peace Building."
32. Galtung, "Social Cosmology"; Dietrich, "Farewell to the One Peace" and *Interpretations of Peace*; Pynn, "Dao De Jing on Cultivating Peace"; and Rummel, *Understanding Conflict and War*.
33. Galtung, "Social Cosmology," 184.
34. Ibid., 191.
35. Dietrich, *Interpretations of Peace in History and Culture*.
36. Ibid.
37. Dietrich, "Farewell to the One Peace," 152.
38. Dietrich, *Interpretations of Peace in History and Culture*, 274.
39. Ibid., 20.
40. Ibid., 40.
41. See also Pynn, "Dao De Jing on Cultivating Peace."
42. Bose, "Gandhian Perspective on Peace."
43. Richmond, *Failed Statebuilding*, 185.
44. eg Suhrke and Berdal, eds., *Peace in Between*; Boyle, *Violence after War*; and Kurtenbach and Wulf, *Violence and Security Concerns*.
45. Key references in the social sciences include Das et al., *Violence and Subjectivity*; and Scheper-Hughes and Bourgoius, eds., *Violence in War and Peace*. In the case of peacebuilding, see discussion in Pearce, "'Violence Turn' in Peace Studies and Practice"; Roque, *Pós-Guerra?*; and Luckham, "Whose Violence, Whose Security."
46. Lind and Luckham, "Introduction: Security in the Vernacular," 90.
47. Luckham, "Whose Violence, Whose Security," 99.
48. Ibid., 99.
49. A notorious case was the assassination of Gilles Cistac, a Franco-Mozambican constitutional lawyer and professor who was murdered in 2015, after publicly acknowledging that Renamo's claim to create autonomous provincial governments in the provinces where it won the general elections was not unconstitutional.
50. Serra, *Linchamentos em Moçambique*.
51. More recently, the very conflict that ended in 1992 was resumed in 2013, when Renamo called off the peace agreements and engaged in a series of attacks in central Mozambique. The conflict was labelled as low intensity, and a peace deal was signed in August 2019, ahead of the forthcoming presidential elections. The resumption of arms brought back to the table the many unresolved issues since 1992. Adding to this, a recent facet of violence, starting in 2017,

has been the series of attacks from a militant Islamist group in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.

52. Bertelsen, *Violent Becomings*.
53. Ibid., 3.
54. Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace"; Richmond, *Post-Liberal Peace* and "Paradox of Peace and Power"; and Mac Ginty and Richmond, "Local Turn in Peace Building."
55. See discussion in Richmond, "Paradox of Peace and Power."
56. Mac Ginty, "Hybrid Peace."
57. Richmond, "Paradox of Peace and Power."
58. As the famous 'institutionalisation before liberalisation' proposed by Paris, *At War's End*.
59. For critical analyses of these processes see Morier-Genoud, "Mozambique since 1989"; Maschietto, *Beyond Peacebuilding*; and Weimer, *Moçambique: Descentralizar o Centralismo*.
60. See discussion in Adalima and Nuvunga, "Participação da Sociedade Civil"; Francisco and Matter, *Poverty Observatory in Mozambique*; and Maschietto, *Beyond Peacebuilding*.
61. Forquilha and Orre, "Conselhos Locais."
62. Maschietto, *Beyond Peacebuilding*.
63. Carroll, "Peace Research: The Cult of Power"; Boulding, *Three Faces of Power*; Karlberg, "Power of Discourse"; Francis, *From Pacification to Peacebuilding*; and Pearce, "Power and the Twenty-First Century Activist."
64. See discussion in Boulding, *Three Faces of Power*; Francis, *From Pacification to Peacebuilding*; Carroll, "Peace Research: The Cult of Power"; and Karlberg, "Power of Discourse."
65. Pearce, "Power and the Twenty-First Century Activist," 661. See also Pearce, *Violence, Power and Participation*.

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