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**The dynamic Local: Delocalisation and (Re-)localisation in the Search of Peacebuilding  
Identity**

Stefanie Kappler

## **Abstract**

*This article will challenge the notion of the 'local' as a static identity or set position, and instead argue for a processual understanding of localisation. In that sense, constant processes of delocalisation and (re-)localisation serve as tools in which peacebuilding actors position themselves in the political economy and the social landscape of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding agency and identity are therefore viewed as situated in time and space and subject to constant transformation. Referring to the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Cyprus, I argue that the positionality of local identity is contingent on the ever-changing social context and political economy of peacebuilding. By viewing processes of (re-)localisation and delocalisation as markers of agency, we can overcome the binary between local and international and instead investigate more subtle forms of agency in a fluid peacebuilding environment. To this end, this article identifies the ways in which peacebuilding agency facilitates the creation of a particular set of identities (identification), before investigating the processes of delocalisation and (re-)localisation in detail. The article goes on to argue that, rather than being mutually exclusive, those two processes tend to happen in parallel and thus challenge the seemingly neat binary between local and international peacebuilding identities.*

Keywords: Peacebuilding; identity; agency; localisation; international political economy

Word count: 7,636

## Introduction

In recent years, in both peacebuilding practice and research about it, we have come to realise a growing interest in the ‘local’.<sup>i</sup> Such discourses have developed in a binary form though, from the demonization to the glorification of local agency. Such competing discourses reflect the portfolio of diverse local imaginaries, ranging from the notion of the Western local that needs to be saved, to the local from which the West has to be saved.<sup>1</sup> Such perspectives on the assumption that local actors are either inferior to international actors, or barbaric and a threat to the West.<sup>ii</sup> And yet, perhaps there is more to local identity than this binary approach, which ends up creating an artificial neat distinction between local and international, or even Western, agency. Indeed, as this article will argue, the binary construction of discourses around peacebuilding identity risks simplifying a more complex picture of identity-formation. Against this background, there is a need to challenge the notion of the ‘local’ as static and victim of what is being done onto it. Instead, the article will suggest that peacebuilding agency and the identity categories that actors create for themselves are fluid, transversal and movable, with actors constantly resituating themselves between competing forces of identification. Representing one particular manifestation of agency, *peacebuilding agency* refers to transformative processes aiming to improve the social conditions of everyday life.<sup>iii</sup> This, however, does not necessarily imply that peacebuilding agency is *good* in nature as it refers to the subjective perspective and strategies of the respective actor.<sup>iv</sup> It rather relates to the social practices of actors in the light of their transformative *ambitions*.<sup>v</sup>

The two centres of gravity between which identity formation meanders, particularly in peacebuilding contexts, are the two poles of ‘local-international’. Actors tend to be labelled as part of an ‘international community’ or a ‘local community’.<sup>vi</sup> Interestingly, even in peacebuilding research, we seem to rely on these categories to quickly assess to what extent policies or norms of any particular actor are legitimate, authoritarian, top-down, bottom-up, representative or oppressive. Such observations tend to represent snapshots in time and space. However, what this article suggests is to challenge the primordial notion of peacebuilding identity and instead look at the processes through which actors situate themselves in a particular position in society, taking into account the fluidity of identity-formation as well as the need to rethink our ‘snapshot approach’ in favour of an approach which allows for competing forces of identification to be deployed at the same time as well as the changing nature of processes over time. It is in this complex landscape that peacebuilding actors

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<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to Neil Cooper for pointing this out to me.

constantly navigate and in which they make decisions in terms of which position they occupy in peacebuilding networks and connections. Against this background, this article suggests that rather than acting in a static way, actors constantly reposition themselves vis-à-vis the 'local' and 'the global'. Depending on time and context, they delocalise or (re-)localise their identities and are therefore in constant movement. These processes tend to act in parallel and reflect the complexity of identity and identification in politically contested and multi-layered processes, such as peacebuilding.

This article is based on the experiences I have personally made as a researcher conducting 'fieldwork' (a term which is problematic in itself) in different contexts, including Bosnia-Herzegovina and Cyprus. Starting with the assumption that there is friction or divergence between local and international approaches to peacebuilding, I was inclined to think of the peacebuilding actors I met as either international and thus top-down-oriented; or local and thus knowledgeable of local context and conditions. However, I increasingly realised that this very act of labelling actors as 'local' or 'international' brought with it its own tensions and problems in that actors de facto not only cross neat categories of local and international (in terms of where their loyalties and networks are located), but also that the labelling of one's own and other's identities can change over time, depending on the social, political, and economic context. In that sense, the attempt to label actors as local *or* international was in many instances not a case of neat analytical distinction, but rather a political decision in terms of which biases and authorities to ascribe to those actors, and how to read them academically. This in turn represents the context in which I had to rethink my own categories and labels, in line with the ways in which actors represent themselves vis-à-vis policy actors or academics. These forms of representation in turn shed light on the identity politics of peacebuilding, in terms of which identities are privileged or discouraged, and how the values attached to certain labels shape the discourses and (funding) practices of powerful peacebuilding actors.

Against this background, the article will first briefly outline the complexities of identity formation in peacebuilding contexts more generally, before specifically looking at processes of delocalisation and (re-)localisation more specifically. The article will investigate the extent to which such processes take place in parallel and illustrate how this challenges the binary of 'local versus international', which is often taken for granted, not only in the policy world, but also in academic research.

## Peacebuilding and its mechanisms of identity construction

Only recently has peacebuilding been linked to issues of representation, identity and power, against the background that it refers to a set of policies which represent their agents and recipients in a particular way.<sup>vii</sup> Indeed, there is a growing acknowledgement that building peace in post-conflict societies involves certain notions of ‘self’ and ‘other’, linked to techniques of representation and the creation of specific identities.<sup>viii</sup>

In this context, it is particularly relevant to look at Bhabha’s interpretation of colonial forms of representation, which he considers as characterised by their ‘fixity’ and disavowal of difference, which ‘connote[s] rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition’.<sup>ix</sup> To support this argument, Brown suggests that this is linked to a process of ‘othering’ through the representation of the ‘other’ as fixed and unchangeable to serve ‘the interests of the idealized “self”’.<sup>x</sup> In this context, Said emphasises that representation is always a political choice.<sup>xi</sup> Indeed, classifications cannot be considered to be neutral labels, but are highly contested<sup>xii</sup> as well as based on processes of simplification, exclusion and selection.<sup>xiii</sup> Moreover, Brown claims that the ability to categorise and label things, people or collectivities reflects power and exercises control by ascribing rules and values to the object of representation.<sup>xiv</sup> In such processes of representing and creating labels, the ‘other’ is controlled by the representational creation of difference and distance. In policy-making, this goes hand in hand with an assumption of difference and distance between the knower and the known.<sup>xv</sup> At the same time, this does not only apply to the attempts to label or categorise the ‘other’, but also the ‘self’. Actors situate others, but also themselves, in a relational position, based on the respective context in time and space.

Therefore it becomes clear that boundaries between identities are constructed, open to transformation and social.<sup>xvi</sup> There is no ‘single’ identity, but identities tend to be multiple and contextual. Sen has argued that everyone has parallel identities, so people choose about the importance they attach to each of those identities out of a specific situation.<sup>xvii</sup> Sen indeed suggests that ‘identities are robustly plural’.<sup>xviii</sup> This process of deliberately framing identity in a particular way, can be considered a process of *identification*. Hence, people are not just victims regarding which identities are constructed by the very structures around them, but they play an active part in which identities they consider as salient in any given context. In that vein, Hall points to the discursive nature of identification and suggests a clear link between agency and identity.<sup>xix</sup> He suggests that we need to understand identities ‘as

produced in specific historical and institutional sites'.<sup>xx</sup> We can thus consider peacebuilding as a specific historical and institutional site in the framework of which processes of identification take place, subject to change and transformation over space and time.

In relation to peacebuilding, the extent to which actors label themselves as local or international, or indeed both, is highly variable and connected to one's position as a local or international actor. Peacebuilding identity, that is, the labels actors are positioned with and position themselves with during a process of peacebuilding, is therefore highly time- and space- dependent. Processes of identification can present themselves in the form of resistance as much as of compliance, depending on the strategies that actors choose to use in their search to position themselves in the peacebuilding landscape. This ties in with Bakić-Hayden's 'nesting orientalisms' concept, pointing to the fact that compliance is not just a passive category, but reflects the agency of local actors to appropriate discourses of Balkanism to 'recycle' them for their own benefits.<sup>xxi</sup>

The process of positioning oneself in the wider peacebuilding landscape can be considered as taking on the form of *delocalisation* (the deliberate attempt to avoid one's identity being framed as 'local') or *(re-)localisation* (the decision to frame one's identity as 'local'), or even both at the same time. This points to the situational logic of peacebuilding, which requires actors on the ground to define themselves as part of a certain peacebuilding logic, with the assumption that 'local' and 'international' identities are in a mutual frictional relationship. In fact, the political economy of peacebuilding, that is, the finances tied to certain projects, require that agencies clarify their position. Are they internal or external?<sup>xxii</sup> Are they local or international project partners? Such questions assume that categories of local-international help determine the position of any given actor in the peacebuilding landscape. At the same time, actors not only play according to the rules as dictated by the surrounding structures, but play out their agency in terms of making deliberate decisions in how to present themselves vis-à-vis cooperating and competing actors in any given peacebuilding context. The identities that actors choose to assume in the peacebuilding context can thus be said to impact upon their relationship with powerful actors, such as donors, and thus their potential access to resources. Actors will usually be funded or supported in their particular role and identity vis-à-vis the respective (post-)conflict society. In this context, the cases of Cyprus and Bosnia-Herzegovina lend themselves to further investigation, given the contested nature of identity and identification in these cases. In both of these cases, this is coupled with a political economy of financial peace-related funds coming in, and increasingly becoming scarce. As a result, the peacebuilding economy has had

to strongly rely on international funds, coupled with the presence of a variety of international actors. The interplay between different local and international identities in turn is illustrative of the contested nature of identification in a peacebuilding context.

### **Delocalisation**

Theoretical and policy discourses have long implied the notion of ‘backwardness’ to local identity. Policy documents often connect the ‘local’ to critiques of a ‘lack of progress’, ‘lack of capacities’, ‘problems’, ‘failure’, and so on.<sup>xxiii</sup> Academically speaking, discourses about the ‘local’ in peacebuilding contexts are shaped by Orientalism<sup>xxiv</sup> or, more geographically specifically, ‘Balkanism’, which, according to Bjelić, characterises the Balkans as a backwards-oriented discursive locality in order to establish a hierarchy in which the Balkans and its people are viewed as inferior to the West.<sup>xxv</sup> In a similar vein, Autesserre outlines how local mechanisms of conflict resolution have often been labelled as illegitimate in contrast to liberal conceptions of peacebuilding that stress their own legitimacy in their attempts to create channels through which change and social transformation can be catalysed.<sup>xxvi</sup> To give but one policy example, a UNDP discussion paper on local peace committees clearly implies that conflict is primarily ‘local’ in nature, thus requires local solutions which, amongst others should ‘[e]liminate conditions detrimental to peaceful relations and peace agreements’.<sup>xxvii</sup> This approach implies that the sources of conflict tend to stem primarily from local roots and are thus in need of resolution at that level. At the same time, this denies or at least plays down international dynamics which may, directly or indirectly, have contributed to the conflict in question. Here, international dynamics are thus not addressed as part of a wider picture of the conflict. It is, for instance, quite interesting that the outbreak of the war in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s is often analysed as a local civil war or a result of ethnicised local politics,<sup>xxviii</sup> while there are comparatively only few studies on the international contributions to this war.<sup>xxix</sup>

Interestingly we can observe a tendency of such discourses, blaming local dynamics and identities for the emergence of conflict, to not only be reproduced in the West, but they are often also found in ‘local’ discourses as well. Indeed, when conducting research in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I regularly found Bosnians telling me they thought that their own society needed external help or was incapable of bringing about change themselves. This is often linked to the assumption that the conflict at stake was a result of deficient local structures,

and a lack of local capacity to prevent the occurrence of violence. Such assumptions can be found in different types of research, from both outsiders<sup>xxx</sup> and insiders.<sup>xxxi</sup> In that respect, the ability to build such allegedly missing capacities is seen to lie in the hands of often-internationalised non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as central actors, connected to international agencies and through which progress and modernisation can be brought. At the same time, these discourses serve to defend the top-down implementation of certain policies vis-à-vis grassroots actors. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, the (semi-successful) international intervention to reform the police force, mainly conducted through the European Union Police Mission (EUPM), reflects the need to ‘de-localise’, and thus ‘de-ethnicise’ policing in the country.<sup>xxxii</sup> This is based on the assumption that the implementation of ‘universal’ (or, in this case, European) standards to the local context will lead to an improvement of local conditions and help overcome oppressive or conflictive practices inherent in the ‘local’.

Similar processes are not least illustrated by the recruitment and employment practices of a number of international agencies, such as the Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) or the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). For instance, according to confidential OSCE sources (international staff), the organisation pays much less for local assistants than for international staff, although these local assistants are indispensable for the day-to-day work of the organisation, not least as they speak the local language(s) and are often deeply embedded in the social networks essential for the work of the organisation. In fact, local assistants are needed as they often act as gatekeepers to information.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Such duties are essential for the ‘field’ presence of the OSCE, but are not considered (that is, financially rewarded) as much as the task of analysis, which tends to be ascribed to international staff. This can be read as a worry of bias of local actors on the part of the organisation, and as international staff are perceived as more neutral in terms of being outsiders to the conflict, local actors are assumed to be more likely to be biased. Their role is therefore often reduced to operational tasks, which may create new dividing lines between these two tiers of staff. Such an approach artificially tries to deny any kind of hybridity and connectedness between local, national and international actors. It equally denies the subtlety of identity, which is not always strictly local or international, but in many cases, a construction between the two.

As outlined above, such discourses are often also perpetuated at local level as well. Often, there seems to be an ambition to represent and deliver ‘international’ - rather than ‘local’ –

skills as part of a larger international (read: Western) toolkit to facilitate conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This is particularly striking in Cyprus, where numerous individuals involved in any peace-related NGO or movement seem to have a degree from abroad, most notably from the US or the UK. Such degrees are seen as high in value, and indeed, even the practice of conflict resolution is, rather than being questioned as such, often seen as an American toolkit and thus in need of such input.<sup>xxxiv</sup> As a result, the education from outside the 'local' context of Cyprus grants the authority to talk about peace and to successfully work in this field, and, as numerous people working in the peace sector in Cyprus, particularly non-governmental, have assured is that without their knowledge from training programmes and academic degrees abroad, they would have found it difficult to find a job in this sector. In fact, it seems to be an open secret on the island that one has to move abroad for a while if one hopes to be employed in this field. This is not least due to the widespread perception (in Cyprus, but also beyond) that local skills are inferior to international (or Western) skills, and the risk of bias outweighs the benefit of insider knowledge.<sup>xxxv</sup>

The need to 'improve' can also be seen as situated in the fact that working for international organisations can lend certain degrees of authority to local actors. An EU official working in BiH who is originally from the Republika Srpska (RS), for instance, outlined issues with being perceived as biased by fellow Bosnians, given their assumption he would support projects in RS more than those in the Federation.<sup>xxxvi</sup> For him, being part of the EU Delegation, and thus the international community as a whole, is a way of regaining some form of neutrality in terms of complementing or replacing his local identity with an international one. Indeed, the official kept stressing the procedural requirements associated with the funding application processes, which, as he stated, mainly come from Brussels and are therefore not subject to local bias.<sup>xxxvii</sup> In that sense, there seems to be a perception that being removed from local 'cooptation', or 'manipulation' lends more authority and legitimacy to peace operations as they can then claim more legitimacy in their attempts to overcome local conflict. International agency is therefore considered as less biased than local agency, thus taking the mandate of intervention and transformation for granted. Delocalising one's identity thus tends to mean an increasing degree of credibility and helps avoid accusations of being biased.

## **(Re-)localisation**

While we can see tendencies of delocalisation as outlined above, we can equally observe processes of (re-)localisation during the course of which local identity is reinforced, often used as an economic and political resource.

Particularly in the context of the local ownership turn, there has been an increasing emphasis on the promotion of the local connection of certain projects, mainly from the perspective of international donors who imply a higher legitimacy of their projects by localising their strategies in different shapes and forms.<sup>xxxviii</sup> In that respect, the legitimacy of peacebuilding activities is directly derived from the local identity of the project, and its rootedness in local networks, almost in the understanding of ‘the more local, the more legitimate’.<sup>xxxix</sup> The localisation of peacebuilding projects, which have often been internationally designed, can happen in various ways, from the consultation of local stakeholders, as is recently the case with a number of projects addressing the redesign of different public,<sup>xl</sup> to the employment of ‘local’ staff. In fact, from various interviews with the EU Delegation in Sarajevo, it became clear that, although they did not act much differently from their international colleagues, so-called ‘local’ employees would often emphasise their local connections to the country as a way of arguing that this grounds the EU’s work in more local knowledge and legitimacy. This can be seen in line with the approach of the EU Delegation in Nicosia, Cyprus, with one of their projects being entitled ‘Going Local’. This programme aims to reach out to the grassroots in a variety of ways and to bring people together outside the capital city.<sup>xli</sup> Such efforts in turn are intended to promote the legitimacy of the respective institution at local level, whilst local identity serves as a gateway to peacebuilding legitimacy. Talentino, for instance, points to the importance of investigating the ways in which peacebuilding policies are perceived by the respective target societies in terms of whether they manage to respond to the interests and ideals of the people.<sup>xlii</sup>

Against this background, the EU’s ‘Going Local’ programme in Cyprus evokes a sheen of legitimacy for their engagement as it implies a connection of the institution with its surroundings. At the same time, it has been acknowledged that this programme is only effective on the Greek Cypriot side.<sup>xliii</sup> Such an approach of course points to the contested nature of the ‘local’, which is never homogeneous, but complex and contested. In that sense, it is no secret that the EU’s programme may not be able to cross the divide on the island, not least due to legal reasons, but is also situated in a contested Greek Cypriot community.<sup>xliv</sup> Yet

in its institutional reception and engagement, the local is, not always, but often seen as ‘one’, and thus a central input factor to peacebuilding programmes. The lack of reflection on who is ‘local’ and how the ‘local’ can be represented then certainly raises questions of authenticity due to the multiple claims to what the ‘local’ includes and excludes.<sup>xlv</sup> Again, this mirrors the complexity of local culture that is produced by a variety of competing, conflictive and mutually reinforcing processes, while ‘local subjects engage in the social activities of production, representation, and reproduction.’<sup>xlvi</sup>

At the same time, international organisations pick and choose the actors that they feel comfortable working with, that is, organisations which are local on the one hand, but speak the language of international organisations on the other hand. For instance, it has been suggested that the UN has shaped the bi-communal movement in Cyprus (which has been the main conflict resolution tool on the island since the 1990s) as an elitist NGO network, which has often created suspicion among the wider local communities<sup>xlvii</sup> as it is only ‘the usual suspects’ who come together.<sup>xlviii</sup> Such debates tie in with the local ownership literature, which discusses the notion of authenticity, that is, the question as to whether the inclusion of local key actors into the peace-or state-building process enhances their legitimacy through the provision of authentic local values and norms. Such a problem-solving perspective, however, has often been considered to cement external intervention on a deep societal level and to create a gist of legitimacy, while not necessarily overcoming the power dichotomies between local and international actors.<sup>xlix</sup> It has been criticised as a rhetorical tool rather than deep transformation of power relations.<sup>1</sup> Against this background, being ‘local’ becomes a political resource as actors who are ‘most local’ act as gatekeepers to communities and to the political legitimisation of projects of intervention. We can therefore observe a commodification of local identity, which operates in a market-like environment. ‘Local’ NGOs emerge where donor money is available, and donors pass the money to such local partners to cover themselves and ensure the lowest possible degree of local resistance.<sup>li</sup> This, however, is not merely a one-way process during the course of which donors dictate the conditions of local ownership by themselves. Through the same process of labelling a project as local, local actors obtain authority, not only vis-à-vis their own communities, but also vis-à-vis the doors themselves as they are able to communicate local needs according to their own perceptions and needs. The risk of such processes of gatekeeping have indeed been well-addressed in literature around participatory action research.<sup>lii</sup>

This problematique is particularly evident in the context of war tours and dark tourism.<sup>liii</sup> In Mostar (Bosnia-Herzegovina), for instance, one can observe an ever increasing number of tours on the famous bridge, which was bombed in 1994 and has been rebuilt in 2004, mainly funded by the World Bank. Such tours raise questions around an authentic, local version of history, as well as who would be entitled to represent that history to outside visitors. Similarly, the walking tours popularly offered to visitors not only in Mostar but also in other (post-)conflict zones illustrate the extent to which their local identity gives the tour guides the authority to represent the history of the city in question, as Wiedenhoft Murphy has described with the example of Northern Ireland.<sup>liv</sup> Indeed, the tour guides' very local identity and previous involvement in the respective conflict serve as political and economic resources to give them the authority to do this job. At the same time, the ambition and decision to act as 'local' representative of a particular historical narrative reflects the tour guides' agency to develop strategies that maximise their access to resources and income. In that sense, it can be argued that local identity can become a business factor as well as part of the shaping of the position of individuals and organisations in the peacebuilding landscape. It situates actors in networks (of tourism, of donor relations, of community positionality) and further determines the social links arising out of this jigsaw of local-global networks.<sup>lv</sup>

### **Delocalisation and (re-)localisation in parallel**

It may now seem as if actors make a choice between delocalisation or (re-)localisation, depending on which option makes more sense in the respective political economy, or that these processes happen in a chronological shift. In contrast, I suggest that such processes are intertwined and are not mutually exclusive. In the case of Cyprus, such processes seem particularly intertwined, where local actors are considered actors who are originally from the island, while, as mentioned above, most locals active in peace work have a university degree from abroad. The constant redefinition of identity and self-positioning in the network between 'local' and 'international' is thus situated in a space in which different positionalities are linked to different social, political and economic outcomes. The question as to whether actors position themselves in a local context or not, is subject to a number of factors, such as the respective interlocutors and audiences to which they present themselves in one way or another.

While they are not diametrical opposites, I suggest that both delocalisation and (re-)localisation are deeply rooted in an Orientalist world view.<sup>lvi</sup> Local identity is either seen as a label of traditionality or even backwardness, or, alternatively, as an idealised, perhaps romantic state to be achieved in a particular socio-political context.<sup>lvii</sup> At the same time, the choice to identify oneself as more or less local can also be read as a manifestation of agency and a deliberate positioning in the politics of hybrid peacebuilding.<sup>lviii</sup> To quote but one example: I came across an NGO in Bosnia-Herzegovina which can hardly be put in the categories of local or international as they operate across spheres. The NGO clearly speaks an international language in the sense of professionalisation, which helps represent the organisation as internationally legitimised in the field. On the other hand, the organisation is keen to emphasise the ‘local’ nature of their projects, which deal with rural communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to communicate to their donors that their work has local legitimacy and relevance.<sup>lix</sup> The positionality as ‘international’, on the one hand, seems to go hand in hand with a notion of authority and competence. Local identity, which is, on the other hand, performed in parallel, suggests local ownership and legitimacy of projects and facilitates access to funding. Delocalisation and (re-)localisation therefore deploy networks, which operate at the same time and reinforce different aspects of peacebuilding, including credibility, authority, legitimacy and connections to other actors in the field.

### **Local and international: Beyond the binary**

Against this background, we can assume that the notion of ‘local’ can be read as an ideal type at best, a type of identity which is discursively constituted in the search for peacebuilding identity and agency. Rather than a natural given, being ‘local’ can be a rhetorical device, or, in a more profound way, a way of positioning oneself in wider peacebuilding networks. Identity can therefore become an economic and political resource and is inherently contested and fluid. That, however, does not mean that identity is not meaningful. Instead, the position, and constant repositioning, of an actor in the networks of peacebuilding reflect not only the needs of the actor itself, but also the values and labels associated with being ‘local’ and ‘international’. In this context, it becomes interesting to ask which label matters most under what conditions. This can be seen as particularly relevant in the context of the 2014 protests in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with masses of people openly protesting against the economic and political situation in their country. Indeed, many Bosnians have become politically active,

citizens' plenaries have emerged, politicians have been forced to make concessions and some of them have even had to resign. This has perhaps come as a surprise to a number of local, national and international actors and academics alike who had largely been in agreement about the alleged political apathy of (local) Bosnian citizens.<sup>lx</sup> Along this line of argumentation, intentionally or not, 'local' Bosnians had been considered as apathetic and not involved in politics, often voiced as criticism against Bosnian society. Yet the protests that we were seeing in 2014 openly reject this notion of the apathetic local and can instead be seen as a reversal of representations. As Jansen shows, the emergence of a civic movement in the country seems to have come closer to what almost twenty years of international intervention and tutoring has not achieved, namely the construction of democratic structures that are locally owned and accountable to the host society rather than international institutions.<sup>lxi</sup> In that respect, the Bosnian movement clearly reflects the need to reconsider the labels attached to local identity and reflects an understanding of local politics, which is less binary in nature, but instead finds its own responses to the contextual challenges posed by the socio-political environment of the state and the region. In that sense, 'local identity', just as much as international identity, can never be fully and comprehensively established. Instead, it evolves and develops contextually in the networked interplay between a jigsaw of actors who relate themselves in relation to, and differentiation from, other actors active in their field of activity. The self-representation and framing of one's peacebuilding identity can thus only be understood contextually, in the bigger picture of the politics and economics of peace at a given point in time. Hence, through their protests, local actors are teaching international actors about citizens' democracy and completely reverse the notion of the local as either backward or romantic and point to the need of rethinking seemingly neat categories. Such dynamics obviously raise the question of what the West can learn from actors who are deemed local and to what extent the locality of the West has to give up its claims to international legitimacy.<sup>lxii</sup>

In such examples, we can see a multidimensional space opening up between international and local actors, in which identity categories are not fixed, but in constant transition. According to Ley, the local and the global are never separable, but are linked together in the everyday, in which we draw on both local and global identities.<sup>lxiii</sup><sup>2</sup> Actors are therefore never just local or

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<sup>2</sup> What Ley refers to as 'global' is what I refer to as 'international' in this paper. A conceptual differentiation requires more nuance than what this article can achieve. See, for instance, Brühl and Rittberger, "From International to Global Governance." In this context, it should suffice to say that peacebuilding has, up to date, remained dominated by state-led policies and has therefore been framed as 'international' rather than 'global' in this article.

international, but move along the spectrum between them, with economic, political, social and cultural forces constantly (re)defining their position in the light of the ‘audience’ to which identity is defined. The audience can be local or international communities, donors, politicians, or any other key stakeholders in the peacebuilding process. Moreover, as particular forms of identification (the local-international range being one dimension of many) have a political and/or economic value attached to them, such processes facilitate self-identification as ‘local’, or ‘less local’, under the respective circumstances. It is especially in the field of international peacebuilding where the need to identify oneself along the spectrum of local-international identity is essential as far as access to funding, networks, communication, legitimacy and authority are concerned. As outlined above, the political economy of international peacebuilding is determined by such forms of identification and the resources attached to them.

## **Conclusion**

This article has challenged the notion that peacebuilding identity is stable and can be strictly divided into a binary representation of ‘local’ versus ‘international’. It has suggested that identities are not primordial, but need to be read in the political, social and economic landscape of peacebuilding, which represents the canvas on which actors position themselves along multiple lines of identification. This is neither to argue that local actors are predetermined by the peacebuilding landscape, nor that they are ‘unruly’ or in need of intervention. In contrast, this article has suggested that processes of identity-formation reflect the agency of actors to position themselves vis-à-vis the interveners, while also acknowledging the complexity of such processes. In that sense, actors legitimately delocalise and (re-)localise in different contexts and vis-à-vis different audiences, while such processes can even happen in parallel or in chronological shift. Delocalisation supports claims to authority and neutrality, while (re-)localisation serves as a way of acting as gatekeepers and translators between international actors and the communities intervened upon. As a result, we can read the fluidity of peacebuilding identities as a challenge to the notion that peacebuilding identities are binary – that is international/local; conflictive/ peaceful; interest-driven/altruistic. In contrast, what this conceptualisation highlights is the need to acknowledge the fact that identities do not remain in neat categories, but transgress

boundaries. 'Local' identity is therefore not merely a victim of international intervention, but it sets its own conditions and by itself re-shapes international agency and the associated categories of meaning. The positioning in one way or another is driven by a variety of factors, and is linked to security concerns as well as political, social and ethical questions in terms of one's position in society. In this vein, this article calls for the need to investigate identity and agency as processual categories and helps understand the competing understandings and usages of the term 'local', which is semantic, political, economic, cultural, but also strategic, in nature.

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<sup>i</sup> Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013, "The local turn,

<sup>ii</sup> Richmond, "The Romanticisation of the Local".

<sup>iii</sup> Kappler, *Local Agency and Peacebuilding*, 38f.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vi</sup> Devic, "Transnationalization of Civil Society" and Hellmueller, "International and Local Actors".

<sup>vii</sup> Cf. Pouligny, "Civil Society and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding".

<sup>viii</sup> Kappler, "Liberal Peacebuilding's Representation".

<sup>ix</sup> Bhabha, "The Other Question", 18.

<sup>x</sup> Brown, "Cultural Representation and Ideological Domination", 662.

<sup>xi</sup> Said, "Representing the Colonized", 224.

<sup>xii</sup> Bourdieu, "The Social Space", 734.

<sup>xiii</sup> Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths", 10.

<sup>xiv</sup> Brown, "Cultural Representation and Ideological Domination", 658.

<sup>xv</sup> Fabian, "Presence and Representation", 754.

<sup>xvi</sup> In the context of ethnicity, Barth claims that boundaries of ethnic groups are social boundaries. Barth, "Introduction", 15.

<sup>xvii</sup> Sen, *Identity and Violence*, 19.

<sup>xviii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xix</sup> Hall, "Introduction", p.2.

<sup>xx</sup> Hall, "Introduction", p.4.

<sup>xxi</sup> Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms".

<sup>xxii</sup> Kusow, "Beyond Indigenous Authenticity".

<sup>xxiii</sup> Kappler, *Local Agency and Peacebuilding*, 165.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Said, *Orientalism*.

<sup>xxv</sup> Bjelić, "Introduction: Blowing Up the "Bridge"".

<sup>xxvi</sup> Autesserre, "Hobbes and the Congo".

<sup>xxvii</sup> UNDP, "An Architecture for Building Peace", esp. p.36.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Oberschall, "The manipulation of ethnicity"; MacDonald, *Balkan holocaust?*; Bozic-Roberson, "Words before the War"; Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts*; Sekulić, Massey and Hodson, "Ethnic intolerance"; Slack, "Population Dynamics and Susceptibility".

<sup>xxix</sup> Ramet, *Thinking about Yugoslavia*.

<sup>xxx</sup> See, for instance, Doyle and Sambanis, "International Peacebuilding".

<sup>xxxi</sup> See, for instance, The East Timor National NGO Forum, "ET NGO paper".

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<sup>xxxii</sup> International Crisis Group, “Bosnia’s stalled police reform”.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Paffenholz, “Designing Transformation and Intervention Processes”, 7, 8.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Shammas, Costas, Peace Centre Cyprus, personal interview, Larnaca, 22/09/12.

<sup>xxxv</sup> See Kusow, “Beyond Indigenous Authenticity”.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Confidential source, EU official, Sarajevo, 22/03/10.

It is important to be aware that BiH has, since the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995, been divided into two entities (the Federation and Republika Srpska) as well as one self-governing district (Brcko). The division between the entities is deep in that they have separate political systems (with one overarching structure at national level).

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Cf. Donais, ““Empowerment or Imposition?”, 6.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Cf. Gifford and Kestler, “Toward a theory of local legitimacy”.

<sup>xl</sup> Confidential source, architect, Nicosia, 08/07/14.

<sup>xli</sup> Political analyst, EU Delegation to Nicosia, personal interview, Nicosia, 20/09/12.

<sup>xlii</sup> Talentino, “Perceptions of peacebuilding”.

<sup>xliii</sup> Political analyst, EU Delegation to Nicosia, personal interview, Nicosia, 20/09/12.

<sup>xliv</sup> Papadakis, “Greek Cypriot Narratives”.

<sup>xlv</sup> Spencer, *Anthropology, Politics, and the State*, 63.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 178, 179, 185.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Trimikliniotis, Nikos, University of Nicosia, personal interview, Nicosia, 09/07/14.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Soezen, Ahmet, Eastern Mediterranean University, personal interview, Famagusta, 10/07/14.

<sup>xlix</sup> Richmond, “Beyond Local Ownership”, 362.

<sup>l</sup> Chandler, “The Liberal Peace”, 87.

<sup>li</sup> Cf. Kappler, *Local Agency and Peacebuilding*.

<sup>lii</sup> Cf. Cooke and Kothari, “The Case for Participation”.

<sup>liii</sup> Naef, “Touring the *Traumascapes*”; Bjorkdahl and Mannergren Selimovic, “Spaces of Appearance”.

<sup>liv</sup> Cf. Wiedenhoft Murphy, “Touring the Troubles”.

<sup>lv</sup> Latour, *Reassembling the Social*.

<sup>lvi</sup> Said, *Orientalism*.

<sup>lvii</sup> Richmond, “The Romanticisation of the Local”.

<sup>lviii</sup> Mac Ginty, *International peacebuilding and local resistance*.

<sup>lix</sup> Project officer, personal interview, Sarajevo, 24/03/10.

<sup>lx</sup> Jukic, “Report Highlights Young Bosnians”; Warshauer Freedman and Abasovic, “Growing Up During the Balkan Wars”, 69; Council of Europe, “THE CONGRESS / RECOMMENDATION 339”.

<sup>lxi</sup> Jansen, “Can the Revolt in Bosnia and Herzegovina”. See also Chandler, *Bosnia: Faking democracy*.

<sup>lxii</sup> Jansen, “Can the Revolt in Bosnia and Herzegovina”.

<sup>lxiii</sup> Ley, “Transnational spaces and everyday lives”.