Complexity, Peacebuilding and Coherence: Implications of Complexity for the Peacebuilding Coherence Dilemma

by
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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the utility of using Complexity studies to improve our understanding of peacebuilding and the coherence dilemma, which is regarded as one of the most significant problems facing peacebuilding interventions. Peacebuilding is said to be complex, and this study investigates what this implies, and asks whether Complexity could be of use in improving our understanding of the assumed causal link between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability.

Peacebuilding refers to all actions undertaken by the international community and local actors to consolidate the peace – to prevent a (re)lapse into violent conflict – in a given conflict-prone system. The nexus between development, governance, politics and security has become a central focus of the international effort to manage transitions, and peacebuilding is increasingly seen as the collective framework within which these diverse dimensions of conflict management can be brought together in one common framework. The coherence dilemma refers to the persistent gap between policy-level assumptions about the value and causal role of coherence in the effectiveness of peacebuilding and empirical evidence to the contrary from peacebuilding practice.

The dissertation argues that the peacebuilding process is challenged by enduring and deep-rooted tensions and contradictions, and that there are thus inherent limits and constraints regarding the degree to which coherence can be achieved in any particular peacebuilding context.

On the basis of the application of the general characteristics of Complexity to peacebuilding, the following three recommendations reflect the core findings of the study:

(1) Peacebuilders need to concede that they cannot, from the outside, definitively analyse complex conflicts and design 'solutions' on behalf of a local society. Instead, they should facilitate inductive processes that assist knowledge to emerge from the local context, and such knowledge needs to be understood as provisional and subject to a continuous process of refinement and adaptation.

(2) Peacebuilders have to recognise that self-sustainable peace is directly linked to, and influenced by, the extent to which a society has the capacity, and space, to self-

organise. For peace consolidation to be self-sustainable, it has to be the result of a home-grown, bottom-up and context-specific process.

(3) Peacebuilders need to acknowledge that they cannot defend the choices they make on the basis of pre-determined models or lessons learned elsewhere. The ethical implications of their choices have to be considered in the local context, and the effects of their interventions - intended and unintended - need to be continuously assessed against the lived-experience of the societies they are assisting. Peacebuilding should be guided by the principle that those who will have to live with the consequences should have the agency to make decisions about their own future.

The art of peacebuilding lies in pursuing the appropriate balance between international support and home-grown solutions. The dissertation argues that the international community has, to date, failed to find this balance. As a result, peacebuilding has often contributed to the very societal weaknesses and fragilities that it was meant to resolve.

On the basis of these insights, the dissertation concludes with a call for a significant re-balancing of the relationship between international influence and local agency, where the role of the external peacebuilder is limited to assisting, facilitating and stimulating the capacity of the local society to self-organise. The dissertation thus argues for reframing peacebuilding as something that must be essentially local.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie proefskrif ondersoek die toepaslikheid van Kompleksiteitstudies om ons begrip van vredesbou en die dilemma van koherensie te verbeter, wat as een van die gewigtigste probleme vir die toetrede tot vredesbou beskou kan word. Vredesbou word as kompleks beskou en die implikasies van hierdie siening word in hierdie proefskrif ondersoek. Dienooreenkomstig word die vraag na die nut van Kompleksiteitstudies vir die verbetering van ons begrip van die veronderstelde kousale verband tussen koherensie, doeltreffendheid en volhoubaarheid aangespreek.

Vredesbou verwys na alle handelinge wat deur die internasionale gemeenskap en plaaslike belanghebbendes onderneem word om vrede binne 'n gegewe sisteem, wat neig na konflik, te konsolideer om sodoende 'n (her)verval in gewelddadige konflik te voorkom. Die aanknopingspunt tussen ontwikkeling, staatsbestuur, staatkunde en sekuriteit is tans die sentrale fokus van die internasionale poging om sodanige oorgange te beheer, en vredesbou word toenemend as 'n kollektiewe raamwerk beskou, waarbinne hierdie onderskeie dimensies van konflikbestuur in een gemeenskaplike raamwerk saamgebring kan word. Die koherensiedilemma verwys na die voortdurende gaping tussen beleidsvlakaannames ten opsigte van die waarde en kousale rol van koherensie vir die doeltreffendheid van vredesboupogings en empiriese data vanuit die vredesboupraktyk wat hierdie aanvaarde kousale verband weerspreek.

Die proefskrif toon dat vredesboupogings uitgedaag word deur voortdurende en diepgewortelde spanninge en teenstrydighede, en dat daar dus inherente beperkings en stremmings is ten opsigte van die mate waartoe koherensie binne enige spesifieke vredesboukonteks moontlik is.

Op grond van die toepassing van die algemene kenmerke van Kompleksiteitstudies op die vredesbouproses, weerspieël die volgende drie aanbevelings die kernbevindings van die studie:
(1) Vredesbouers moet toegee dat hulle nie daartoe in staat is om komplekse konflikte van buite af bepalend te analiseer en 'oplossings' namens 'n plaaslike gemeenskap te ontwerp nie. Hulle behoort eerder induktiewe prosesse te fasiliteer om ondersteuning

te bied sodat kennis uit die plaaslike konteks na vore kom, en sodanige kennis moet as voorlopig en onderhewig aan 'n voortdurende proses tot verfyning en aanpassing, verstaan word.

(2) Vredesbouers moet besef dat die selfvolhoubaarheid van vrede direk verband hou met, en beïnvloed word deur, die mate waartoe 'n gemeenskap oor die vermoë tot en ruimte vir selforganisering beskik. Vir vredeskonsolidering om selfvolhoubaar te wees, moet die proses wat daartoe aanleiding gee inheems, van 'onder-na-bo' en konteks-spesifiek wees.

(3) Vredesbouers moet aanvaar dat hulle nie die besluite wat hulle neem op grond van voorafbestaande modelle of lesse wat elders geleer is kan regverdig nie. Die etiese implikasies van hulle besluite moet in terme van die plaaslike konteks beoordeel word, en die effekte van hulle ingrepe – bepland en onbepland – moet voortdurend opgeweeg word teen die daaglikse ervaring van die samelewings wat bygestaan word. Vredesbehoupogings behoort gelei te word deur die beginsel dat diegene wat met die gevolge van die proses sal moet saamleef, die agentskap behoort te hê om besluite oor hulle eie toekoms te neem.

Die kuns van vredesbou lê in die vasstel van 'n toepaslike balans tussen internasionale ondersteuning en inheemse oplossings. Die proefskrif se argument is dat die internasionale gemeenskap tot dusver daarin gefaal het om hierdie balans te vind. As gevolg hiervan het pogings tot vredesbou dikwels bygedra tot die presiese swakhede en broosheid in die gemeenskap wat dit veronderstel was om aan te spreek.

Op grond van hierdie insigte sluit die proefskrif af met 'n beroep tot 'n betekenisvolle herbalansering van die verhouding tussen internasionale invloed en plaaslike agentskap, waarin die rol van die eksterne vredesbouer beperk moet word tot die ondersteuning, fasilitering en stimulering van die plaaslike gemeenskap se vermoë tot selforganisering. Die proefskrif bepleit dus dat vredesbou herontwerp word binne 'n essensieel plaaslike raamwerk.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my family: my wife, Eve, and my daughters, Embla and Frida, whose love and support made it possible; to the memory of my father for setting the benchmark and for instilling my curiosity; to my mother for her guidance, example and encouragement; and to my sister and brother, and their families, as well as to my Norwegian family, for their encouragement and support. My brother, who did a PhD before me, offered me valuable advice and encouragement throughout this process. Eve, who is also busy with her own PhD, and I had countless conversations over the years about this or that aspect or approach of our respective studies, and I owe her the greatest gratitude for her support, encouragement, wisdom and love.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What rarely happens, though, is a solid discussion about the underlying assumptions and norms peacebuilding strategies are based on and how they influence the activities and objectives of a programme…implementing agencies, such as the UN or bilateral donors, rarely question their moral frameworks and normative assumptions. Instead, they continue to export a liberal understanding of peaceful coexistence, without considering that their underlying hypotheses on how change can be secured, influence and determine the results of the programme. (Körppen, Ropers & Giessmann, 2011:79)

System Theory's main contribution, to my thinking, is that it shifts our understanding away from static, simplified views of conflict into an appreciation of what Coleman describes as 'the complex, multilevel, dynamic, and cyclical nature of these phenomena'. (Hughes, 2012:108)

Since successful peacebuilding is, over time, inherently organic in nature and driven from within the war-torn society, it is rarely the case that – despite the degree of outside support received – smooth and linear progressions are achieved. (Ponzio, 2011:252)

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Coherence, or rather the lack of coherence, has been identified as one of the most critical shortcomings in international peacebuilding interventions to date (Smith, 2004). There seems to be a persistent gap between policy-level assumptions about the value and causal role of coherence in peacebuilding effectiveness and sustainability, and the empirical record. There is a widely held and acted upon assumption in the peacebuilding policy community that improved coherence leads to greater efficiency and effectiveness, but the empirical record shows that, despite significant attempts to improve coherence, there appears to be persistent and inherent limitations to the degree that coherence is attainable in peacebuilding systems (Smith, 2004). In this dissertation, this gap is referred to as the coherence dilemma.

In this dissertation the assumed causal linkages between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability will be questioned and explored. The intention is that our understanding of the relationships between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability in the peacebuilding context be improved during the process, and to learn more about how system effectiveness and sustainability can potentially be influenced through manipulating system coherence.

Peacebuilding is used here as a collective term to refer to all actions undertaken by the international community and local actors to consolidate the peace in a given conflict system, i.e. inclusive of the whole range of political, security and development actions taken to prevent a lapse into violent conflict. All the agents that pursue the peace consolidation goal in such a conflict are framed as being part of a particular peacebuilding system.

One of the most common explanations offered in the policy and research literature for this lack of coherence is that peacebuilding is 'complex'. There is wide recognition among the research, policy and practitioner communities that peacebuilding systems have so many interconnected agents that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to track the effects a specific programme or initiative may, or may not, have on the sustainability of a peace process. When systems become so dynamic that we are no longer able to keep track of the effects of specific initiatives, they are commonly referred to as 'complex'. What does it mean when we say a particular conflict, or the international response to it, is complex?

In this dissertation, an attempt is made to answer this question by exploring how the study of Complexity, a field of research dedicated to studying complex systems, may assist us in gaining new insights into the peacebuilding coherence dilemma. For the purposes of this dissertation, a complex system is characterised as a system that has the ability to adapt and that demonstrates emergent properties, including self-organising behaviour. Complexity comes about, and is maintained, as a result of the dynamic and non-linear interactions of a large number of elements within a system reacting to the information available to them locally. Some of the elements react to feedback generated by their interaction with their environment, and all the elements are continuously reacting to the feedback they receive from one another (Cilliers, 1998).

In this dissertation, these characteristics of Complexity are applied to the peacebuilding context. It is argued that peacebuilding systems can be understood as being complex in the same way that this concept is understood in the study of Complexity. This characterisation opens up the way for exploring the relevance of Complexity for peacebuilding systems. What do we know generally about how complex systems can be influenced, and how can we apply this knowledge to the peacebuilding context? Could insights from the study of Complexity assist us in improving our understanding of some of the peacebuilding challenges, including especially the coherence dilemma?

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1.2   PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the context of this dissertation, peacebuilding refers to a large number of interdependent short, medium and long-term programmes and activities that simultaneously address both the causes and consequences of a social system in conflict. In the short term, peacebuilding programmes and activities assist the society emerging out of conflict in stabilising the peace process and are aimed at preventing a relapse into violent conflict. In the longer term, peacebuilding programmes, collectively and cumulatively, are aimed at assisting the society emerging out of conflict by addressing the causes of a conflict and in laying the foundations for social justice and sustainable peace.

Peacebuilding is characterised by its multidimensionality and the large number and broad range of internal and external actors engaged in one way or another in pursuing peace consolidation goals. The internal or local actors include all levels of government, political parties, civil society and the private sector in a given conflict setting. The external or international actors include international and regional institutions and agencies, states, the international private sector and international non-governmental organisations. Together, the internal and external actors undertake a range of interrelated programmes and activities that span the security, political, governance, development and economic dimensions of social transformation. Collectively and cumulatively, these programmes and activities are aimed at building momentum towards sustainable peace in the societies in which they operate. Peacebuilding systems are said to be successful when a society can sustain its own peace consolidation process without external support (De Coning, 2005:89).

Peacebuilding is still emerging as a distinct form of international cooperation, but its record thus far has been mixed (Hughes, Hunt & Kondoch, 2010:2). Licklider (1995:685) and Collier (2003) have found that about half of all peace agreements fail in the first five to ten years after having been signed.[1] The rate at which peace processes fail, and the societies involved that relapse into violent conflict, shows that the international community is better at stopping violence than building or consolidating peace. It seems that the challenge is not as

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[1] The approximately 50% figure generally cited has been demonstrated by Suhrke and Samset to be a misrepresentation, with a more correct finding of the Collier *et al*. study being approximately 23% over 5 years, but reaching almost 50% over 10 years (Suhrke & Samset, 2007:199).

much about making peace, as it is about figuring out how to make peace last (Ricigliano, 2012:5).

There are many reasons why some peace processes are not sustainable;[2] some relate to the role of spoilers[3] (Stedman, 1997; Newman & Richmond, 2006; Gueli, Liebenberg & Van Huysteen, 2005:11) and the dynamics of post-conflict settlements (Du Toit, 2001 & 2003:105), whilst others are associated with shortcomings in the support provided by the international community (Stedman, Cousens & Rothchild, 2002; Chesterman 2004b; Fukuyama, 2004; Paris, 2004; Paris & Sisk, 2009). This dissertation is focused on the complex interrelationships among peacebuilding agents, and specifically on the problems associated with the perceived lack of coherence among them. Throughout the remainder of this study, this challenge is referred to as the 'coherence dilemma'.

This study provisionally defines coherence, in the peacebuilding context, as the effort to ensure that the political, security and development dimensions of a peacebuilding system in a particular crisis are directed towards a common objective. The lack of coherence among the development, governance, political and security spheres in most peacebuilding operations to date have been highlighted in almost all the major evaluation studies undertaken over recent years (Dahrendorf, 2003; Porter, 2002; Sommers, 2000; Stockton, 2002).

Many of these studies have identified the lack of meaningful coherence and coordination among the peacebuilding agents as a major cause of unsatisfactory performance and, hence, an important contributing factor to the unsustainability of the peace processes. For example, the Joint *Utstein* Study of peacebuilding, which analysed 336 peacebuilding projects implemented by Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Norway, identified a lack of coherence at the strategic level – what it terms a strategic deficit – as the most significant obstacle to sustainable peacebuilding (Smith, 2004). The *Utstein* study found that more than 55% of the programmes it evaluated did not have any links to a larger country

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[2] For a quantitative analysis of the factors that have influenced the outcome of peacebuilding operations since 1944, see Doyle & Sambanis (2000).

[3] Spoilers are those actors that resist a peace process, typically because they stand to lose power and access to resources if it is successful. They include warlords, organised criminals, business interests and elites, and they may differ in the way and the degree to which they resist the peace process. What they have in common, from the perspective of this study, is that they are not part of the peacebuilding system, because they do not share the peace consolidation objective. However, they are still part of the environment in which the peacebuilding system has to operate.

strategy. For all these studies cited, coherence was thus deemed essential for effective and sustainable peacebuilding interventions.

This study explores the contradiction between the importance assigned to coherence as an essential factor for peacebuilding effectiveness and sustainability, and the empirical record that indicates that there are persistent and inherent limitations to the degree that coherence is attainable in actual peacebuilding interventions. Most studies have responded to this challenge by trying to identify what can be done to improve coherence so that these obstacles can be overcome. The lack of coherence has been identified as a problem that needs to be resolved. In this study, a different approach is attempted. It is directed towards trying to understand why, despite vigorous efforts, peacebuilding systems resist coherence. The question asked is whether there may be some dynamics inherent in the Complexity of peacebuilding systems that limit the scope for coherence.

The coherence dilemma is especially relevant because it reflects and represents many of the underlying assumptions and ambiguities of the larger peacebuilding field and also provides us with a tangible, yet sufficiently wide, subject. As Antonio Donini argues, when addressing coherence, we deal with "…fundamental issues concerning the rationale for peace-making and peace-building efforts as well as the purposes, principles, and functions of assistance in post-ceasefire or post-regime-change settings" (Donini, Niland & Wermester, 2004:3). This also implies that some of the insights we may gain on the dynamics of the coherence dilemma may also be relevant to the larger peacebuilding context.

Particular attention is paid in the dissertation to the relationship between local and international peacebuilding agents and the so-called liberal peace debate. As Donais (2012:153) points out:

> To the extent that liberal peacebuilding is in crisis, it is in many respects a crisis of local ownership, stemming from the failure to generate support, among both the elites and societies of war-torn states, for the key elements of the liberal peacebuilding agenda.

The prevalent post-Cold War approach to peacebuilding is widely referred to as the liberal peace approach, and its overall goal can be described as bringing "war-shattered states into conformity with the international system's prevailing standards of domestic governance" (Paris, 2002:638).

Oliver Richmond (2007:462) argues that the liberal peace approach – which focuses on promoting democratisation, economic liberalisation, neoliberal development, human rights, and the rule of law – has exerted a dominant influence over contemporary peacebuilding policy and practice. The liberal peace debate refers to the prolific and still ongoing debate between those that defend the liberal peace approach, and those that are critical of it (Campbell, Chandler & Sabaratnam, 2011). The liberal peace approach was seen as relevant for this study because it represents the dominant approach to peacebuilding, and it thus has important implications for expectations regarding effectiveness, sustainability and coherence.

One of the aspects of the liberal peace debate that is of special interest in this dissertation relates to the roles and relationships between internal actors and local societies, as this relationship is key to our expectations regarding sustainability, effectiveness and coherence. Of particular interest is the question whether any insights could be gained from the application of Complexity to the liberal peace and local ownership debates and, in so doing, to make a contribution to the larger critical discourse around improving peacebuilding practice.

1.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study is to explore the utility of using Complexity to gain insights into the coherence dilemma in peacebuilding systems.

The research question is informed by the widely held assumption in the peacebuilding policy community that improved coherence results in more effective, and thus more sustainable, peacebuilding systems. On the basis of this assumption, and in light of the poor peacebuilding record in generating sustainable peace processes, considerable energy and time have been invested over the last decades in trying to improve the coherence of peacebuilding systems.

The assumed causal link between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability in the peacebuilding context is therefore questioned and explored. In the process, the study aims to gain improved understanding of the interlinkages between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability, and to learn more about how the effectiveness and sustainability of complex social systems, such as peacebuilding, could potentially be influenced.

The possibility of a casual link between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability in such a system suggests that it should be possible to influence effectiveness and sustainability by increasing coherence. And if this is possible, the study is expected to assist in improving our understanding of how to influence or manipulate coherence in peacebuilding operations. However, if no such link can be found to exist, one of the core assumptions in peacebuilding policy would be challenged and this would have significant implications for the way in which coherence is currently viewed in peacebuilding theory.

To explore this research question, the study will turn to Complexity studies, a field of research dedicated to studying complex systems, in an attempt to determine what could be learnt from applying the knowledge generated by the study of Complexity to the peacebuilding context, and whether insights from the study of Complexity could assist in improving our understanding of the coherence dilemma in peacebuilding systems.

In order to consider these issues, the research questions that will be addressed in the study are:

- What constitutes coherence in peacebuilding systems?
- Is there a relationship between the degree of coherence in a peacebuilding system, and the effectiveness and sustainability of those systems?
- Which factors influence changes (an increase or decrease) in the degree of coherence in a peacebuilding system?
- Can the degree of coherence in a complex system be manipulated, and if so, how?
- What, if any, are the limitations to achieving coherence, i.e. how much coherence can one reasonably expect to achieve in a given complex system?

1.4   METHODOLOGY AND KEY POINTS OF DEPARTURE

This study utilises qualitative, reflective, explorative and conceptual methodological approaches. It consists of identifying, collecting, ordering, structuring, analysing and interpreting the concepts, debates and data relevant to an understanding of the coherence dilemma of peacebuilding systems and of the utility of using Complexity to gain further insights into this dilemma and peacebuilding more generally.

In addressing the available body of literature on peacebuilding, coherence and Complexity, use is made of both primary material (original reports, planning documents, evaluation studies, etc.) and secondary material (the body of analysis and research).

The coherence dilemma of peacebuilding systems is explored by analysing the problem in a number of original ways. The first involves the distinction between coherence and coordination. Most of the literature available to date consists of operational evaluations that focus on specific coordination problems. This focus on coordination has steered these studies to a more practical agent-level analysis of how coordination has been undertaken, and what could be done to improve coordination. This has resulted in these studies being blind to some of the system-level dynamics that explain why most peacebuilding agents tend not to pursue coherence, even when it appears to be in their interest to do so. By emphasising coherence, and by utilising Complexity, the researcher aims to focus on the relationships between peacebuilding agents and the local societies they interact with, and how the dynamic and non-linear interactions among them collectively and cumulatively shape the peacebuilding systems that both these sets of actors operate in.

Although the lack of coherence in peacebuilding interventions has been identified as problematic by many researchers and evaluators, surprisingly little research has been done on what would constitute coherence in peacebuilding systems. There has also been surprising little work done on identifying and improving our understanding of the factors that constrain coherence. The intent with this study is to improve our understanding of what coherence entails and how it contributes to effective and sustainable peacebuilding. Also of interest is the question of whether coherence is indeed attainable, i.e. determining what the limitations of achieveing coherence are.

The second way in which this study makes an original contribution is by framing the coherence dilemma in a complex-systems context. One of the distinguishing features of peacebuilding is that it is a combined effort by multiple independent or autonomous agents. None of these agents can achieve the overarching peacebuilding goal of consolidating the peace process on their own. It is the combined effort of these agents that generates the overall or system-level peacebuilding effect. This perspective implies that, in order to understand the role of coherence in peacebuilding systems, one needs to look at the role of coherence from a systems perspective.

Most studies on coordination frame the problem as an inter-organisational or inter-agent issue, and thus approach it from an agent-level perspective. This study, instead, takes a whole-of-systems perspective. In so doing, the intention is to highlight a different layer of meta-processes and dynamics involved in generating coherence, which is expected to assist us in gaining a new or original perspective on the coherence dilemma.

In order to gain a whole-of-systems perspective, Complexity is used and the insights generated by the study of complex systems will be applied to peacebuilding systems in general and the coherence dilemma in particular. Because Complexity forms such an integral part of this dissertation, the next section is devoted to explaining Complexity in more detail.

1.5   COMPLEXITY

This dissertation makes use of Complexity theory (introduced in Chapter 5) in the search for answers to a series of questions related to the assumed complex nature of peacebuilding systems. There has been a growing acknowledgement of the complexity of peacebuilding systems, both in policy statements and in the research literature. For instance, the emergency relief community has started to use the concept 'complex emergencies' in the early 1990s and the peacekeeping community now use the concept 'complex peace operations' widely to describe the multi-dimensional and multi-functional nature of contemporary peace operations (UN, 2000b).

For the humanitarian community, a 'complex emergency' refers to a situation of such magnitude that it requires a multi-sectoral response that exceeds the mandate of any single agency.[4] For instance, a refugee crisis of limited scope can be managed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), but once the scope of the crisis crosses a certain threshold, it will require the combined effort of several humanitarian agencies.

In the peacekeeping and peacebuilding community, the common-sense understanding of complexity usually refers to two frequently cited factors. The first is the large number of international and local agents involved, and the second is the wide-ranging scope of activities

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[4] Complex and major emergencies have been defined in the "Working Paper on the Definition of Complex Emergencies", Inter-Agency Steering Committee Secretariat, 9 December 1994.

undertaken by these agents. The scale of the interactions among the agents and the interconnectedness and the diverse range of activities they undertake make it impossible to meaningfully track or manage the overall system. The general recognition, among both the research and practitioner communities is that these peacebuilding systems have become so large and interconnected that they are incredibly complex (Körppen, Ropers & Giessmann, 2011:7).

It is thus surprising that the link between the complexity observed in the peace operations and peacebuilding context and the study of Complexity has not been pursued more vigorously.[5] If peacebuilding systems are indeed complex, some of the general insights into the behaviour and characteristics of complex systems that are gained from the study of Complexity could perhaps be used to improve our understanding of how complex peacebuilding systems function.

This dissertation argues that peacebuilding systems are indeed complex (see Chapter 6), in the way this term is understood in Complexity theory, on the basis that they (i) consist of a large number of interdependent agents that demonstrate dynamic and non-linear behaviour, and (ii) that they exhibit self-organising and emergent systems behaviour. This characterisation opens the way for exploring the relevance of some of the research findings generated by the study of Complexity for peacebuilding systems. The implications of Complexity for peacebuilding are explored by contrasting the dominant peacebuilding policy and planning approach, termed the 'determined-design' approach in this study, with an alternative 'complex systems' approach. A number of implications that emerge from the comparison are discussed, including especially the linkages between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability On the basis of the insights gained from applying Complexity to peacebuilding, the dissertation concludes with recommendations for coping with peacebuilding Complexity.

As highlighted in the problem statement and in the previous section on methodology, this study focuses on coherence rather than coordination. To recap, this implies a focus on the function of coherence from a systems' perspective, rather than a focus on coordination from the perspective of the relationships among individual peacebuilding agents. The shift in focus

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[5] In this sentence, and throughout the remainder of the dissertation,'complexity' when not capitalised, refers to the common sense use of the word, which is typically employed when there is so much of something that it is difficult to keep track of it. However, 'Complexity' capitalised, it refers to a specific type of system that is *non-linear*, *self-organised* and *emergent*.

from an analysis of the parts to understanding the dynamics of the whole is a defining characteristic of Complexity studies. Cilliers (1998:5) framed it as follows: "When we look at the behaviour of a complex system as a whole, our focus shifts from the individual element in the system to the complex structure of the system." George Richardson, quoted in Robert Ricigliano (2012:23), offers another perspective; he argues that a system's view of the world allows one to "stand back just far enough to deliberately blur discrete events into patterns of behaviour". Hence, the use of a Complexity theory approach enables this study to assume a whole-of-system, rather than an inter-organisational perspective, on the peacebuilding coherence dilemma.

1.6   STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

The first chapter serves as an introduction by providing the background to the study, identifying the research problem, describing the methodology and explaining the structure of the study.

The substantive arguments of the dissertation are divided into three parts. The first part deals with peacebuilding and the coherence dilemma. The second deals with Complexity and its relevance for peacebuilding systems. In the third section, the dissertation presents a number of recommendations generated for coping with Complexity.

Chapter 2 introduces peacebuilding and the liberal peace debate. Peacebuilding is introduced as a developing concept and different ways in which the concept can be approached and understood are discussed. The liberal peace debate is also introduced and some of its implications for contemporary peacebuilding practice and political debates are discussed.

Chapter 3 introduces coherence and discusses how this concept is used and understood in the international peacebuilding context, as well as its linkages to concepts such as effectiveness and sustainability. In Chapter 4, the factors that hinder or constrain coherence, such as long-term impact versus short-term output, conflicting values, principles and mandates, the influence of conditions conducive to coherence, and the tension between local and international actors are discussed.

In the second part of the dissertation, the focus turns to Complexity. Complexity is introduced in Chapter 5 by discussing some of the concepts and characteristics that are key to understanding Complexity, including non-linearity, emergence and self-organisation. The implications of Complexity for epistemology and ethics are also addressed in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 6 the characteristics of Complexity are applied to peacebuilding and the case for understanding peacebuilding as a complex system is made. In Chapter 7 the relevance of Complexity for peacebuilding is explored, and a number of specific implications that can be drawn from Complexity for peacebuilding coherence are identified and discussed. The implications of Complexity for the problem-solving and stabilisation approaches to peacebuilding are explored, and consideration is given to the assumptions about time and pace, as well as to the positions external or international actors occupy in the liberal peace approach to peacebuilding.

In the third part of the dissertation, the findings of the first two parts of the study are synthesised. In Chapter 8, the leverage points that can be used to influence complex systems are discussed. This chapter considers whether it is indeed possible to influence or manipulate complex systems, and how it may be done, if it should be possible. Fifteen specific recommendations for coping with peacebuilding Complexity are presented in Chapter 9. These recommendations serve as a summary and categorisation of the insights gained through this study by applying the characteristics of Complexity to peacebuilding in general and the coherence dilemma in particular. As such, the recommendations suggest what a complex systems approach to peacebuilding would consist of, and they are offered as a general guideline for coping with peacebuilding Complexity.

The last and concluding chapter, Chapter 10, consists of a summary the findings of the various parts of the dissertation, suggestions for further research, and a discussion of the degree to which the research questions has been addressed.

1.7   CONCLUSION

In this first chapter of the dissertation, the problem statement, background and context, methodology and key concepts related to peacebuilding coherence dilemma have been introduced.

The central focus of the dissertation is the coherence dilemma that challenges peacebuilding interventions. Peacebuilding is a key instrument for the international community to maintain peace and security, but its record has been mixed. Thus there is great interest in improving the effectiveness and sustainability of peacebuilding interventions. The dominant view among the peacebuilding policy community is that one of the ways in which the effectiveness and sustainability of peacebuilding interventions can be improved, is by enhancing coherence. In this dissertation, the causal links that are assumed to exist between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability are questioned.

Complexity is the primary theoretical tool used in this dissertation for critically considering the linkages between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability. The focus on coherence and the use of Complexity enables this study to transcend the inter-agent or inter-organisational level that has dominated the research into coordination challenges to date. The dissertation, instead, is focused on the patterns of interactions among the agents and the macro-level or whole-of-system level behaviour of the peacebuilding system. This dissertation thus presents an exploration of the utility of using Complexity to improve our understanding of the peacebuilding coherence dilemma.

The study now turns to Part I: Peacebuilding and the Coherence Dilemma, and Chapter 2: Peacebuilding, where the concepts and major debates around peacebuilding will be introduced.

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PART I: PEACEBUILDING AND THE COHERENCE DILEMMA

CHAPTER 2

PEACEBUILDING

This is the era that marks the humble recognition that no single recipe stands out to assure peace and stability and that all partners in multilateral endeavours should come together to achieve lasting success. - Mr Ad Melkert, Under Secretary-General and Administrator a.i. of the United Nations Development Programme. (3C Conference Report, 2009)

Creating the conditions for sustainable peace and economic growth in a country that lacks such conditions is one of the most difficult intellectual and policy puzzles imaginable. It has all the features of a 'wicked problem', too complex and indeterminate to be modelled in its entirety and therefore defying straightforward solutions. Indeed, the greatest danger for peacebuilding practitioners and academics alike may be a hubristic combination of overconfidence plus insufficient or unreliable knowledge. (Paris, 2011c)

Each actor contributes only a part of the whole. It is the overall collective and cumulative effects that build up the momentum towards sustainable peace and development. – Ms. Aurélia Bouchez, Deputy Assistant Secretary-General for Regional, Economic and Multilateral Affairs, NATO. (3C Conference Report, 2009)

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores the utility of using Complexity to gain insights into the coherence dilemma in peacebuilding systems. In this chapter, peacebuilding is introduced and contextualised. First, peacebuilding is placed in a larger historical context through explaining what the circumstances were in which the need to develop a specific conflict-management approach, called peacebuilding, became necessary. The peacebuilding concept is introduced through exploring a number of its emerging characteristics. What peacebuilding means in the United Nations (UN) context is discussed and how it is used in this dissertation is explained.

A number of theoretical and political debates around how peacebuilding has been understood and used to date are also introduced and touched on. These debates are ongoing and will influence how peacebuilding is understood in future. This dissertation arose from engagement in these debates and the exploration of the contribution a complex-systems perspective may bring to them. This section serves as a mapping, or overview, of a number of the key theoretical and political debates that are relevant to the focus of this study.

2.2   THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In the post-Cold War era, the focus of international conflict management has increasingly shifted from peacekeeping, which was about maintaining the status quo, to peacebuilding, which has to do with managing change (Eide, Kaspersen, Kent & Von Hippel, 2005:3). The nexus between development, peace and security has become the central focus of the international conflict-management debate (Uvin, 2002:5).

From the way peacebuilding has been used in major UN policy documents, such as *In Larger Freedom: Towards Security, Development and Human Rights for All (UN, 2005a)* and *Delivering as One (UN, 2006b)*, it can be argued that peacebuilding is increasingly seen as the collective framework under which these peace, security, humanitarian, rule of law, human rights and development dimensions can be brought together under one common strategy at country level (De Coning, 2007c:3). These developments culminated, as the centrepiece of the UN reform proposals of the 2005 World Summit, in the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission.

In the early 1990s, the approach to international conflict management, as developed in the context of then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali's 1992 *Agenda for Peace (UN, 1992)*, was to first try to prevent violent conflict (conflict prevention). If that failed, the next step was to make peace by facilitating dialogue among the belligerent parties (peacemaking). If a ceasefire or peace agreement was reached that included a neutral third-party monitoring role, the UN or a regional organisation authorised by the Security Council would typically deploy a peace operation to monitor the ceasefire and to support the implementation of the peace agreement (peacekeeping). Once the conflict had been stabilised, the emergency humanitarian needs addressed and a peace process agreed upon, the international community would shift its focus to post-conflict reconstruction. This phase was focused on rebuilding and reconciliation (peacebuilding) with the aim of addressing the root causes of the violent conflict so as to prevent it from reoccurring (De Coning, 2006:242).

As a result of a series of peacekeeping failures and challenges in the 1990s, especially the experiences in Somalia, Rwanda and Srebrenica, understanding of international conflict management has become more nuanced (Thakur & Schnabel, 2001:14). When this

dissertation refers to a lack of effectiveness and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts, it relates to the fact that, thus far, the record of peacebuilding interventions have been mixed (see Berdal & Wennmann, 2010:7). Whilst some argue that the number of armed conflicts have fallen substantially since the end of the Cold War and that this is linked to the increased effectiveness of UN peace interventions (Aguirre & Van der Borgh, 2010:1), others such as Licklider (1995:685) and Collier, Elliot, Hegre, Hoefller, Reynal Querol and Sambanis (2003) have argued that about half of all peace agreements fail in the first five to ten years after they have been signed. However, it should be noted that the figure of an approximate failure of 50% of all peace agreements that has become widely cited in UN and other reports has been demonstrated by Suhrke and Samset (2007:199) to be a misrepresentation, with the more correct finding of the Collier *et al*. (2003) study being approximately 23% over five years, but reaching almost 50% over 10 years.

As a result of this mixed record, and based on the lessons learned over the period since 1992, there is now recognition that the different elements of the international response introduced in the *Agenda for Peace* do not necessarily follow as neatly, in a linear or chronological progression, on one another as suggested by the *Agenda for Peace*. In practice, these elements seem to overlap, are interlinked, mutually support each other and often take place simultaneously.

The emergence of peacebuilding should thus be understood in the context of an increasingly complex and interdependent international conflict-management system (Thakur, 2006:54). During the Cold War period, the United Nations, regional organisations and independent agencies were called upon to undertake humanitarian relief, and peacemaking and peacekeeping actions at a scale usually manageable within the scope of the independent capabilities of these organisations, or at a level that could be managed with limited cooperative arrangements.

The scale and complexity of the crises faced by the international community in the post-Cold War era has been of a different magnitude and, as a result, it has often been the case that no single agency, government or international organisation could manage them on their own. These organisations were ill prepared to deal with the complexity of the challenges posed by the emerging post-conflict reconstruction challenges of the post-Cold War era (Chesterman, Ignatief & Thakur, 2005:340). As a result of the international community's experiences in El

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Salvador, Cambodia, Namibia, Nicaragua and Mozambique in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a major shift in focus and approach became necessary (Tschirgi, 2004:1; Lederach, 1997:73).

The question was no longer how a situation can be stabilised in order to maintain the precarious Cold War balance; instead, the focus shifted to a new agenda: How can the international community collectively better facilitate and support the implementation of comprehensive peace agreements in countries emerging from violent conflict and civil war? In the context of these developments, peacebuilding was increasingly seen as the collective framework under which the political, security, rule of law, governance, human rights and development dimensions of these international interventions could be brought together under one common strategic framework (De Coning, 2010b:3). As Susan Woodward (2011:316) points out, the solution, as codified in the 2005 Paris Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States, which were adopted in 2007 by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), was that development donors should now "focus on state-building as the central objective" (OECD, 2005:2).

As a result of these developments, peacebuilding emerged as a new form of peace intervention; one aimed at assisting societies emerging out of conflict with managing their peace processes. However, beyond this broad notion, the concept itself remains highly contested. In the next section the focus is on some of the emerging characteristics that, taken together, may assist in better understanding what this concept entails.

2.3   EMERGING CHARACTERISTICS

Whilst no one common definition, approach or model for peacebuilding has become widely accepted, it may be possible to start defining the concept of peacebuilding by discussing a few characteristics that have emerged over the last decade and a half of peacebuilding practice (Berdal, 2009:25). The first is that peacebuilding is primarily concerned with securing or 'consolidating the peace'. This phrase refers to a concern with preventing a lapse, or relapse, into violent conflict. Peacebuilding is aimed at consolidating the peace by addressing those conflict factors that may in the short to medium term threaten a lapse, or relapse, into conflict, as well as addressing the root causes of conflict that may threaten the peace over the long term.

In Liberia, for instance, such short-term conflict factors may be land disputes, youth expectations, political polarisation and a weak justice system, whilst the root causes are related to the structural inequalities inherent in that society (Liberia, 2008:171). For instance, reforming the security forces may form part of the long-term development goals of Ghana, but that is different from pursuing similar goals in Liberia. In Ghana the motivation is governance effectiveness and efficiency, whilst in Liberia security sector reform is primarily motivated by a need to consolidate the peace and preventing a relapse into conflict. There is thus a peace-consolidation aspect that is central to peacebuilding, and that sets it apart from development.

The second characteristic is that peacebuilding is a multi-dimensional or system-wide undertaking that spans several dimensions. There are different models or approaches, but most range from the most basic, which differentiate between three core dimensions, to the more elaborate, which list six to eight different dimensions. The UN Secretary-General's report *No Exit without Strategy* (UN, 2001d) argues that peacebuilding should be understood as fostering the capacity to resolve future conflicts by: (1) consolidating security, (2) strengthening political institutions, and (3) promoting economic and social reconstruction. Barnett, Kim, O'Donnell and Sitea (2007:49) refer to the same three dimensions as: (1) stability creation, (2) restoration of state institutions, and (3) socioeconomic recovery. Others, such as the UN's Integrated Approach (UN, 2006a) model prefers a more elaborate list that includes the following dimensions: political, developmental, humanitarian, human rights, rule of law, social reconciliation and security. The African Union's Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Framework (AU, 2006a) comprises six similar constitutive elements, but it adds gender as a self-standing element, in other words, it regards and treats gender as a separate dimension in the same way that security, politics, governance and economics can be regarded as dimensions of peacebuilding.

Humanitarian assistance should be highlighted as one dimension that is treated differently in the various models. A number of models, such as the *Utstein* Report (Smith, 2004), the UN's Integrated Approach (UN, 2006a & 2008b) and the NEPAD Post-Conflict Reconstruction Policy Framework for Africa (NEPAD, 2005) include the humanitarian dimension. However, the humanitarian community argues that humanitarian assistance should not be included in peacebuilding models because it needs to be recognised as independent, neutral and impartial

(Weir, 2006; Metcalfe, Giffen & Elhawary, 2011). Peacebuilding is about changing the causes and drivers of violent conflict fundamentally so that it does not re-occur, and is thus inherently political. For humanitarian aid to reach its intended beneficiaries in complex emergencies, it has to be recognised as being above politics, hence its principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality. A key issue for humanitarian actors thus is to gain access to their intended beneficiaries and in order to do, so they value their independence highly. They are therefore concerned that inclusion into peacebuilding coordinating frameworks may harm their perceived independence.

Some models, including the UN's Integrated Approach (UN, 2006a & 2008b), nevertheless include humanitarian assistance within their peacebuilding frameworks, based on the argument that the humanitarian dimension needs to be factored into the overall peacebuilding planning and coordination mechanisms. However, it is stillrecognised that the humanitarian dimension has a special status and that it needs to be treated as an independent, but parallel, peacebuilding dimension.

It should be noted that, in this dissertation, the humanitarian dimension is also considered to be one of the dimensions of a broad peacebuilding system, as shown in Table 2.1, with due regard for the principle of the independence of humanitarian action, as also recognised in the UN Secretary-General's Notes of Guidance on Integrated Missions.

Table 2.1: The Dimensions of Peacebuilding Systems

Security & Rule of Law	Providing a Safe and Secure Environment
	Protection of Civilians
	Mine Action
	Security Sector Reform
	Disarmament & Demobilization
	Police, Corrections & Judicial Reform (Rule of Law)
Political & Governance	Support the Peace Process & Oversee the Political Transition
	Political Participation, National Dialogue & Reconciliation

	Electoral Capacity Building and Oversight (Observation)
	State and Government Institutions, Public Administration & Civil Service Capacity Building (Governance)
	Extend State Authority Throughout the Territory
	Conflict Management Capacity
Socio-economic Recovery	Physical Infrastructure: Roads, Ports, Airports; Electricity; Telecommunications
	Social Services: Health, Education, Social Welfare, Population Registration
	Stimulating and Facilitating Economic Growth and Employment
	Strengthening Civil Society
Human Rights	Human Rights Education, Advocacy and Monitoring
Humanitarian Assistance	Emergency and Early Recovery Services in the areas of Food, Water & Sanitation, Shelter, Health, Protection and Return of Refugees/IDPs

The third emerging characteristic of peacebuilding is that, in addition to its multi-dimensional character, it is also a multi-stakeholder system. One of the aspects that set peacebuilding apart is the diverse range of international and local agents that have to be engaged in any particular peacebuilding system, including states such as donors or neighbours, international and regional institutions, non-governmental organisations, local communities and corporations. Their work spans across all dimensions of life: political, security, developmental, governance, economics and socio-cultural. In each specific case, the full spectrum of national actors, including the government, political parties, militias, traditional leaders, civil society, and so forth, are engaged in the peacebuilding process. The relationships and interactions among these many different internal and external agents generate the complexity in the peacebuilding system. Complexity studies are introduced in Chapter 5, and the issue of relationships and interactions will be presented in greater depth in the chapters that follow.

The fourth emerging characteristic relates to our perspective of time. Broad agreement seems to have developed around two time-related issues (Tschirgi, 2004:9). The first is recognition, at least at the policy level, that post-conflict peacebuilding is a long-term process and that a longer and more sustained international commitment is necessary than was believed a decade ago (Lederach, 1997:74). The fact that a longer-term timeframe is necessary for post-conflict

peacebuilding was agreed on at the World Summit in 2005 (UN, 2004a & 2005a) and resulted in the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). The core aim of the PBC was to ensure that the international community, in general, and the UN, in particular, remain engaged in countries in the post-conflict peacebuilding stage.

This was regarded as necessary because the UN Security Council's attention tends to be focused on those crises where the UN has a direct stake, usually in the form of a UN peacekeeping operation. When such operations come to an end, the post-conflict countries in question tend to move off the Security Council agenda. Failure to sustain the international engagement in countries like Haiti, Liberia and Sierra Leone was seen as an important factor in the serial-relapse into violent conflict experienced in these cases (De Coning, 2010b).

The international community now seems to recognise a causal link between sustained international attention and longer-lasting peace processes (World Bank, 2011; OECD, 2011a). However, there is still a large gap between the time period that the UN, World Bank and international donors seem willing to plan around and commit to (which rarely exceeds one to three years) and the time it takes for these transformative processes to take hold. For instance the UN Secretary-General (UN, 2009) has chosen to focus his 2009 post-conflict peacebuilding report on the two to three years comprising the immediate aftermath of conflict, which is an indication of the focus and appitate for peacebuilding in the UN system. In contrast, Pritchett and De Weijer's (2010:13) research shows that the fastest and most exceptional transformers of the 20th century, countries such as Singapore and Malaysia, took 20 to 30 years to attain levels of institutional solidity comparable to present-day Ghana or Vietnam, and their research suggests that it would take the average fragile state approximately 116 years to reach similar levels. Whilst there is no agreed upon minimum period for sustainability, most policy makers and researchers seem share a sense that it takes at least two to three decades for peace to take hold. Another way in which one can express this time factor is to frame it in generational terms, i.e. that it takes at least one generation for a conflict to be resolved, and a few for a conflict to be truly transformed. We will return to this time factor in Chapters 7 and 9.

The second time-related characteristic is the recognition that, although post-conflict peacebuilding requires a long-term commitment, there is also a need for immediate and short-term gains to solidify the peace, build confidence in the peace process and stimulate a vision

of a better future (Wesley, 2008:377; UN, 2009). This has resulted in the creation of the UN Peacebuilding Fund and practices such as the now standard inclusion of a budget for quick-impact projects in UN peacekeeping operations (UN, 2007a). There is thus a tension between the parallel needs for long-term engagement and commitment and short-terms gains, and the co-existence of both these needs, and their respective cultures, approaches and practices, contribute to complexity of peacebuilding.

In this section, a number of emerging characteristics were discussed that, when taken together, may assist practitioners in better understanding why peacebuilding is such a complex matter. These include characteristics such as peace consolidation, the multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder nature of peacebuilding and the various tensions that are brought about by different, and competing, time perspectives. In the next section, the focus is narrowed to how the peacebuilding concept has developed and has been defined in the UN context, as well as to how it is used in this dissertation.

2.4   CONCEPTS AND DEFINITION

Although the term 'peacebuilding' was coined by Johan Galtung in 1975 *(*Smith, McCandless, Paulson & Wheaton, 2011:12; Galtung, 1976), the term only became widely used as part of our contemporary conflict-management vocabulary in 1992 when the then UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, used it as one of the key concepts of his '*An Agenda for Peace'* (UN, 1992). In this policy document, peacebuilding was described as "action to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict" (UN, 1992:21). Peacebuilding was described as the counterpart of preventive diplomacy, where preventive diplomacy was seen as action aimed a avoiding a crisis whilst peacebuilding is aimed at preventing its recurrence (UN, 1992:57).   In the *Agenda for Peace,* conflict prevention and peacebuilding were thus juxtaposed at the opposite ends of the conflict-management spectrum, with preventive diplomacy representing the first or opening stage of an intervention and peacebuilding the last or closing stage.

This original conceptualisation and chronological model has had an enduring impact, and many people at the policy, funding and operational levels still have these original concepts in mind when working with conflict prevention and peacebuilding issues (Paris & Sisk, 2009:5). In fact, the UN Secretariat has to some degree institutionalised the model, with separate

departments responsible for prevention and peacemaking, peacekeeping and, with the new Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), now also for peacebuilding (De Coning, 2008c). Bureaucratic dynamics among these departments ensure that there is a healthy dose of competition for resources and influence among them, and although they cooperate in many meaningful ways, these competitive tendencies also reinforce their different identities along with the very notion that prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding are separate phases or facets of a peace process. However, over the past decade and a half, our understanding of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, as established by the *Agenda for Peace,* has been refined through practice and analysis, and they are now broadly understood to be interdependent and interlinked aspects of the same process, rather than chronological steps or stages in a linear conflict-management continuum (Berdal & Wennmann, 2010:59).

There thus is a tension between how these practices are operationalised in the UN system via different departments and funding mechanisms, and how they are understood to be interlinked in practice. There is a need to revisit and clarify exactly what it is that the United Nations system as a whole means when it uses these concepts. This is not merely of academic interest. Conceptual confusion leads to policy vagueness, duplication, omission and competition. It complicates the mobilisation of resources and causes budgetary confusion. For instance, a major complication in the UN context is that peacekeeping operations are funded from assessed contributions,[6] whilst prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding work has to be funded from the UN's regular budget or through voluntary contributions. This has a perverse effect on the relation between peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, because the UN Security Council has to authorise the deployment of military peacekeepers in order to get access to the assessed contribution budget. As a result, UN peacekeeping missions with military peacekeepers are deployed in some cases when a civilian conflict prevention or peacebuilding mission may be equally meaningful. In others, peacekeeping missions are kept in theatre longer than may be necessary, because this is the only way that a UN presence can be funded by the assessed contribution budget (Martin, 2010:13). The result is that the UN peacekeeping budget for the 2010/2011 period is approximately 8 billion US dollars, whilst

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[6] Assessed contributions refer to the system whereby each Member State has to contribute, against a pre-agreed formula based on GDP, to the peacekeeping budget. Once the UN Security Council approves a peacekeeping mission, there therefore is an automated system for retrieving the cost from Member States. The cost is related to the approved troop strength of the mission and the assessed contribution system, in effect, is therefore directly related to the military component of the mission.

the UN regular budget for prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding is less than 8 million US dollars (De Coning, 2010c). How peacebuilding is understood is thus not merely a conceptual exercise – the ways in which these concepts are coined influence how they are employed in practice. And the way they are employed in practice, e.g. how peacebuilding is financed, influences the way we understand and use the peacebuilding concept.

Peacebuilding, like peacemaking and peacekeeping, is thus not a static concept that can be defined by a committee, endorsed by an assembly and then operationalised, as is, *ad infinitum*. The use of the concept needs to be continuously refined, improved and adjusted, depending on the context within which it is being operationalised. In fact, as the work of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund to date has shown, there is a degree to which peacebuilding will take on a unique meaning in every specific context in which it is applied, and this tension between what is common to different situations and what is context specific, is partly what needs to be captured in a refined understanding of the evolving peacebuilding concept. The UN Peacebuilding Commission is ideally placed to take on the task of developing and refining a conceptual and operational model of peacebuilding for the UN system, and this should be a responsibility that is central to its long-term work plan (De Coning, 2010b).

In the meantime, and for the sake of working from the basis of one official definition, the working definition of peacebuilding approved by the UN Policy Committee in May 2007 can be utilised here:

> Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict, to strengthen national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritised, sequenced, and therefore relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives. (UN, 2007b)

It should be noted that coherence is specifically mentioned as an integral part of what the UN understands under "peacebuilding" in this definition. The definition expands on some of the elements of coherence that are deemed essential for peacebuilding, including the need for a prioritised and sequenced set of activities designed around achieving the peacebuilding objective. The definition also highlights national or local ownership, a concept that will be returned to often in the course of this dissertation.

In broad terms, it can thus be said that peacebuilding aims to consolidate and institutionalise peace by undertaking a range of actions that go beyond merely preventing violence—what Galtung (1985) termed 'negative peace'. It aims to address the underlying root causes of conflict and to create the conditions for a just social order—what Galtung (1985) termed 'positive peace'. However, this broad understanding of peacebuilding becomes muddled when the same concept is used in practice to describe two very different perspectives or approaches—what, in this dissertation, will be referred to as 'programmatic peacebuilding' and 'systemic peacebuilding'. Much of the conceptual confusion comes about when these two distinct approaches to peacebuilding are used interchangeably or confused with one another.

2.4.1   Programmatic peacebuilding

Programmatic peacebuilding refers to specific activities aimed at addressing urgent or imminent risks to a peace process. 'Risks' in this context refers to an assessment that a certain situation or condition may contribute to the increased likelihood of lapsing into violent conflict. These risks can be identified as short to medium-term conflict factors that may potentially impact negatively on the peace process. The programmatic peacebuilding theory of change is that a lapse into conflict can be avoided by addressing these risk factors through specifically targeted programme interventions. One can also think of this as 'preventative peacebuilding' or 'instrumental peacebuilding' in that it refers to specific programme interventions that are meant to prevent a lapse into conflict.

Some donors now have funds specifically earmarked for peacebuilding, and those funds would most likely be used to fund specific programmes in this category. The activities supported by the UN Peacebuilding Fund typically also fall in this category and are aimed at addressing specific peace consolidation needs that have either remained unfunded, or under-funded, or have newly emerged. The Peacebuilding Fund is meant to act as a catalyst that helps to alleviate specific risks through relatively short, focused interventions or helps to jump-start specific processes that will contribute to achieving the given peace-consolidation objectives.

The timeframe for programmatic peacebuilding is necessarily short to-medium term, because it is focused on countering immediate or imminent threats to the peace process. Examples of

such peacebuilding programmes include: conflict resolution training and capacity building; the development of institutional capabilities needed for conflict prevention, such as the Peace Commission in Southern Sudan or the Ituri Pacification Commission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; support for civil society or women's groups to participate in peacemaking initiatives; and support for national reconciliation initiatives, including aspects of transitional justice.

Some donors would also include support for specific programme activities that form part of, or support, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), Rule of Law (RoL) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) in this peacebuilding category. However, in Sierra Leone, Burundi and Liberia, it was noted that some of the activities earmarked in this category appear to be very similar to traditional development categories such as youth employment, infrastructure development and basic social services. This is because frustration with the lack of progress in these areas has become critical in some of these communities. It thus became a source of grievance that could have contributed to a relapse into violent conflict, and urgent action was required to show that some of these needs are being met (Tschirgi, Lund & Mancini, 2010).

Some donors do not earmark funds specifically for peacebuilding, but prefer to encourage a conflict-sensitive approach to development when working in conflict-affected countries. Conflict-sensitive development programmes have a developmental objective—for example, poverty reduction—but are sensitive to the conflict environment within which they operate, in that specific steps are taken in the design and management of the programme to avoid aggravating the situation. In some cases, the design of the programme can also be intended to proactively support conflict-prevention efforts; and, in the latter case, such activities are almost indistinguishable from targeted peacebuilding (Anderson, 1999).

An important prerequisite for a programmatic peacebuilding programme to be effective is an understanding of the risks to the peace process and the conflict factors that characterise the conflict system. It is now common that a Post-Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA), or another form of conflict or risk analysis, is recommended to be undertaken as part of the process leading up to the design of appropriate targeted peacebuilding programmes. A PCIA is meant to assist the peacebuilding agent and key stakeholders to work towards a common understanding of what the conflict factors in a particular context are, from the earliest

planning stages and continuously throughout the life cycle of the peacebuilding system (McCandless, 2008:15). Funding for and capacity building towards effective participation in a PCIA approach could also be regarded as a programmatic peacebuilding activity.

As with most of these processes, the real value does not lie so much in the end product – the PCIA report, for example – but rather in the sustained, focused interaction among stakeholders that is necessary to generate it. This is because this process of interaction among stakeholders leads to an improved and nuanced understanding of one another and the situation at hand, and this deeper level of insight will have numerous spin-offs far beyond just the PCIA report. A network is created in the process, and the members of the network can continue to work together, or in smaller hubs, to resolve or manage issues that may emerge subsequently. This concept receives further attention in Chapters 6-9.

2.4.2   Systemic peacebuilding

Systemic peacebuilding, on the other hand, emerges out of the total combined effort of the activities undertaken under the various peacebuilding dimensions introduced earlier (see Table 2.1), and thus exists in the form of a system-wide or holistic process. In this dissertation peacebuilding is referred to as a system because the various dimensions of peacebuilding, and the agents engaged in them, are interdependent. None of these elements can achieve the peace consolidation objective on their own, and neither can any of the agents. Whilst each peacebuilding agent is independent, in that each has control over his or her own goals and resources, they are also interdependent because each agent only represents one or some of the many facets necessary to collectively and cumulatively contribute to achieving the peacebuilding objective.

From the perspective of such a system, a distinction can be made between peacebuilding agents, who represent elements in the peacebuilding system that are bound together because they share this common objective, and other domestic and international actors, who are motivated by interests other than peace consolidation, for instance spoilers (Stedman, 1997), i.e. actors that have a vested interest in maintaining the conflict system and who undermine the efforts of the peacebuilding agents. Such actors, from the perspective of the peacebuilding system, are part of the environment within which the system is embedded. Zartman refers to the environment as "cooperation's outer shell" (Zartman & Touval, 2010:8).

The overall peacebuilding effort may sometimes be anchored in a strategy or vision, for example, an integrated strategic framework such as the 'Lift Liberia' Poverty Reduction Strategy (Liberia, 2008) or the Afghan Compact in Afghanistan. There may be specific processes and structures that facilitate the development, management and monitoring of such peacebuilding frameworks and these may be purposely funded.[7]

In general, however, support for systemic peacebuilding occurs in a highly fragmented manner in that the various agents who participate in and contribute to the overall process each independently designs, manages, monitors and evaluates, and secures funding for his or her own programmes. These activities are not necessarily identified as, or funded as peacebuilding activities at the programme level, although some of the programmes discussed in the previous section on programmatic peacebuilding will be. Instead, they would be considered and funded, for instance, as peacekeeping, development, human rights, job creation, or Rule of Law activities. It is when these activities are considered together in the context of their combined and cumulative peace consolidation effect over time that their contribution to a larger peacebuilding effort becomes apparent.

A strategic or integrated framework that is aimed at an overall strategic vision for the systemic peacebuilding process, such as a conflict-sensitive Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), maps out the overall priorities and objectives of the systemic peacebuilding strategy for a particular country. Examples include the Results Focussed Transitional Framework (RFTF); interim IRSP and RSP in Liberia; the Peace Consolidation Strategy and PRSP in Sierra Leone; and the Integrated Peacebuilding Frameworks in Burundi and the Central African Republic. Individual programmes become part of the systemic peacebuilding process when they contribute to, and are considered as part of, the overall effort directed towards achieving the objectives set out in such a common strategic vision.

In some cases, the individual agencies may be conscious of their role in the overall framework, but in many cases this linkage is drawn only at the systemic level, for instance in

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[7] For instance, the earlier Implementation and Monitoring Committee (RIMCO) of the Results Focused Transitional Framework in Liberia and the more recent UN and Government of Liberia Joint Steering Committee that manages the Peacebuilding Funds grant for Liberia.

strategic evaluations or in annual PRS reports.[8] This does not imply that the connections are artificial, but rather that those at the programme level are not always aware of the degree to which their individual activities contribute to an overall systemic peacebuilding framework.

There is disagreement over the extent to which a development activity such as a programme aimed at poverty reduction or infrastructure development such as the construction of a road, for example, can be regarded as having a peace-consolidation effect and thus be considered to be part of a peacebuilding effort. The confusion lies both in the perspective and the context. An individual donor or implementing agent may not think of, or categorise the funding of, the construction of a road as peacebuilding from a programme level or budget-line perspective. However, from a systemic perspective, i.e. in the context of an integrated peacebuilding framework, the construction of roads may be regarded as an important element of a larger systemic peacebuilding framework. It may create work, also for ex-combatants; it may stimulate local economies and improve livelihoods by providing access to markets; it may stimulate local contractor capacity; it may open up outlying areas previously marginalised because of their inaccessibility and assist in the extension of the authority of the state into those territories; and it may contribute to overall economic growth, all of which are important aspects of an environment conducive to a successful peace process and thus preventing a relapse into conflict.

Any particular system is framed by the observer, and an overall systems perspective is thus required to recognise that a specific programme activity, such as the road-building project in this example, is having a positive feedback effect on peace consolidation and is therefore regarded as being part of the peacebuilding system. It is not necessary for the agent to be aware that it is part of a particular system for it to contribute to the overall system effect.

The two distinct ways in which we tend to think about peacebuilding, namely in either programmatic or systemic terms, has now been explained. Our understanding of peacebuilding becomes unnecessarily complicated when, in a conversation about peacebuilding, some people unconsciously approach the discussion from a programmatic peacebuilding perspective, whilst others approach it from a systemic peacebuilding

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[8] The *Utstein* Study found that more than 55% of the programmes it evaluated did not show any link to a larger country strategy. See Smith (2004:16).

perspective. When this happens, people tend to talk past each other without realising it. This confusion contributes to the lack of coherence in the peacebuilding debate.

In this dissertation, peacebuilding is approached from the systemic perspective, and when the term is used, the reader can assume that it is being used in that sense. When reference is made to instances of programmatic peacebuilding, this will be explicitly stated and explained.

How the peacebuilding concept has developed and has been defined in the UN context, and how it will be used in this dissertation informed the discussion in this section. In the next section of this chapter, some of the theoretical debates that show how the concept is contested and how it has been used and perceived by different geo-political constituencies are considered.

2.5   UNDERLYING THEORIES

How peacebuilding is understood, is influenced by a number of related and underlying theories about society and especially about societal change. Theories about the rise and fall of complex societies and civilizations are particularly relevant to the contemporary understanding of peacebuilding. Another aspect concerns the norms that prevail in our cultures and the question whether it is desirable to interfere in these processes; i.e. should one try to prevent a society's collapse? Should anybody try to assist a society to become more complex? Does anyone have the right to interfere in these developments? A number of different theories are engaged in a debate with one another on these issues in the peacebuilding field. These debates reflect competing worldviews, ideologies and theories of change. Two of the major debates are presented in the next section. The first is about whether state formation occurs along a common pattern or whether each society develops in its own unique way. If there is a common pattern, peacebuilding can be an instrument to modulate state formation along that pattern, but if each society develops in its own unique way, peacebuilding needs to be context driven.

The second is about the degree to which peacebuilding can be an externally or internally driven process. If it can be externally driven, further questions arise: How intrusive should this external process be? It is thus both a functional and ethical question. Who has, or should have, agency over the outcome of a peacebuilding process? Should the agenda and goals of

peacebuilding efforts be determined by internationally agreed upon universal norms like human rights and standards for good governance, for example? Or does each society have the right to determine its own norms, values and rules? In other words, should peacebuilding be a local act, with external support limited to the degree that such assistance is requested and welcomed? Or should peacebuilding be an external act, guided by international norms and standards? Should peacebuilding be a local process, informed by what is in the best interest of the society in question, but supported by the international system? Or should peacebuilding be an international conflict-management tool applied to maintain the international system, but informed by the local context?

These two debates are closely related in that both have an internal-external tension, but the former is concerned with the implications for peacebuilding of the historical patterns of state formation, whilst the latter is concerned with the location of agency. The former can be said to be more concerned about the structure of the world system and the function of the state, whilst the latter can be said to be more normative, i.e. it questions who has the right to decide how a particular society should develop. This dissertation engages both these theoretical debates, and explains whether the application of Complexity to peacebuilding can generate any new insights into these questions (see Chapters 6-9).

2.5.1   Patterns of state formation

With regard to the first debate around the pattern of state formation, the dominant European theory on the rise and fall of civilizations has been that societies develop along a common progressive trajectory (Olsen, 1982). For instance, archaeological historians like Tainter (1988) and Morris (2011) argue that all human societies follow a more-or-less linear progressive development path, i.e. they increase in social complexity over time, following a common trajectory from hunter-gatherers to settled agricultural communities, and from there they develop into feudal systems, kingdoms and eventually the nation state.

Some argue that the next stage in this trajectory is a global government, whilst others argue that we are already operating in a global system, but that governance at this level is not, and will not, develop into formal, state-like governance (Wallerstein, 2000, 2007). Instead, governance at this level takes the form of networked cooperation (Ostrom, 2009). In other words, global governance is a reality, but it does not take the form of 'a government' in the

Westphalian sense of state-hood; rather, it is a web of interrelated international agreements and mechanisms that, taken together, aggregate into a system of global governance (Bartelson, 2009; Krücken & Drori, 2010; Harrison, 2006).

From a cultural-technology perspective a similar progressive trajectory is the one from stone tools, through to bronze, iron, steam, carbon and information-based cultures (Morris, 2010:108). In some cases empires have developed, i.e. nation- or city-states that have gained control or influence over vast areas. Such empires have developed economies, which served as the nodal point for commerce within the areas under their political and/or military control (Morris, 2010:169).

The dominant theory therefore is that there is a natural, almost automatic, linear progression over time, with societies becoming more and more sophisticated and complex. Complexity, in the context of this theory, is understood in terms of the number of specialised roles performed in a society; the number or range of products it generates; and the complexity of the social hierarchy in these societies. By comparing such indicators, archaeological historians make judgements about the relative complexity of different societies, and they then construct arguments about the comparative state of development, or level of civilization, of a given society at a certain point in time.

The linear progressive argument persists despite the obvious examples of the rise and fall of civilizations and empires, such as the Egyptian Pharoahs, the Mayan cultures, the Roman Empire, various Chinese empires, the Ottoman empire, the periods during which Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch explorers dominated the world economy, the British empire and the period which now seems to be coming to an end, during which America has been the sole superpower. The linear progressive theory holds that, whilst specific forms of social organisation, statehood or empire, may stagnate and even collapse, the overall trend in the history of societies as a whole, is progressive (Tainter, 1988; McAnany & Yoffee, 2010).

However, why and how civilizations collapse has been a central question in this field (Tainter, 1988; Diamond, 1997 & 2006). Others are interested in why Europe, or the West in general, has come to assume such a prominent and influential position in the history of state formation (Morris, 2010). Both Diamond and Morris argue that geography is the most important determining factor that explains why complex societies first appeared in some regions and

then spread to others. Diamond (2005) argues that the collapse of complex societies is due to their inability to adapt to environmental changes, especially those changes brought on by themselves. Tainter and Morris argue that social systems collapse when they become too complex – they tend to develop to a point where they overextend themselves, i.e. the cost of maintaining the system increases up to a point where the society can no longer sustain its growth.

An interesting feature of both these arguments, very relevant for our contemporary debates about climate change and sustainable economic growth, is that these societies were not ignorant of the fact that they were overextending themselves or that they were failing to adapt to changes in their environment, but that they seem to have been unable to stop their own momentum, even though they knew it was driving them to collapse (Meadows, Randers & Meadows, 1982). However, Morris (2010:131) argues that the emergence of new technologies (e.g. bronze, steel, steam, carbon, nuclear and information) that have been developed at critical points in history have resulted in some societies being able to transcend the growth/complexity ceilings that had prevented others at the same level of development from progressing any further. There is also an interesting emerging body of work, with particular relevance for peacebuilding, on how societies recover from collapse (McAnany & Yoffee, 2010). The articles in McAnany and Yoffee's edited volume (2010) are positioned against what the authors refer to as the "geographic accident theory" and they argue, instead, "that resilience in the face of societal crises, rather than collapse, is the leitmotif of the human story from the earliest civilizations to the present."

In his now landmark "The End of History" article, Francis Fukuyama (1989) has argued that the neo-liberal model, i.e. political freedoms, democratic pluralism and the free-market economy, represents the zenith of this journey towards increasing complexity and higher levels of civilization. His argument is that the Western neo-liberal state model has, with the defeat of communism, arrived at the highest possible point along this trajectory.

This neo-liberal ideology has dominated our concept of both the nation-state and the international system over the last decades since the end of the Cold War. However, the outcome of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the global financial crisis that started in late 2007 have been widely interpreted as signals that the neo-liberal system is now suffering from the classic problem that most empires experience sooner or later, namely systemic overreach

(Diamond, 2005:15). Wallerstein (2007:77) argues that the crisis in which the capitalist world economy finds itself may go on for another 25 to 50 years, and that the world system is likely to experience wild oscillations during this period. No one is able to predict what kind of system will come next. Some speculate that we are already shifting into a multi-polar world order. Others argue that a new Cold War with America, China and India as the major powers is in the offing. Richard Haas (2008) predicts a world system not dominated by one or several great powers, but rather a nonpolar international system characterised by numerous centres exercising various kinds of power. One trend that does seem irreversibly obvious is a shift in the location of economic gravity from West to East, with China, India and Japan becoming major economic powers in the future. Will such a shift imply changes in the way that the international system has functioned since the establishment of the UN in 1945, and if so, what is the likely impact on peacebuilding?

These developments are relevant for our understanding of peacebuilding, because peacebuilding theory has been deeply influenced by the linear progressive theory of state formation. It has emerged and has been refined into a specific type of intervention mechanism during a period in human history when the neo-liberal ideology was unquestioned and unchallenged. However, this is unlikely to remain the case as we go into the future. We are forced to ask the question: Is peacebuilding inherently linked to the neo-liberal ideology, or can it adapt to the changing world order?

The linear progressive theory of state formation has been the dominant theory in Western philosophy and political theory, and is thus deeply ingrained in the Western political identity and worldview (Fukuyama, 2011). For a variety of historical reasons (see, for example, Morris, 2010), the West has also dominated the development of the international system since the 19th century, and this progressive theory has thus also formed the basis of most theories of international relations in general and of peace and security in particular (Chan, 2010; Nayak & Selbin, 2010).

In this context, the dominant Western, and thus *de facto* international, view of peacebuilding is that it is a tool that is used by the international community to assist societies emerging out of conflict to stabilise, and to replace their out-dated models of governance with modern institutions (Pugh, 2004:40). The modern state model that such societies are being encouraged to adopt is the Western neo-liberal state model, but this model is now presented as the new

universal standard (Duffield, 2001; Paris, 2004). This model of the state is based on the Westphalian recognition of the nation-state as an institution that has monopoly over violence, control over territory and a population, and that is recognised by other states. However, it goes further in that it seeks to establish a particular kind of nation-state based on a specific concept of rule of law, human rights, the separation of powers, multi-party democracy and a market economy (Eriksen, 2009:653). This particular kind of state is often referred to as a liberal market democracy (Lidén, 2009:617).

This neo-liberal model is understood to be the highest form, or the most complex form of social organisation developed by mankind to date, and it is upheld by the West and international organisations like the UN, the African Union and the European Union as the ideal state model (Richmond, 2011:227). By adopting the neo-liberal model, societies become modern, responsible members of the international community (Paris, 2004:40). All states are thus expected to strive for this ideal and are measured against it. Eriksen (2009:653) quotes Gopal Balakrishnan as referring to this neo-liberal model as an "objectively operative fiction", i.e. an "idea that forms the basis for the design of formal institutions, even if the states in question are far from corresponding to it".

The neo-liberal model is thus perceived by the international community to be the optimal model for sustainable peace, justice and development, and thus also as the best guarantee for peace consolidation. Lidén (2009:617) quotes Doyle who, based on Kant's sketch for eternal peace, argues that the role of peacebuilding is to reconstruct "societies in liberalism's divine image". This is why it is more typically referred to as the liberal peace model in contemporary peacebuilding literature (e.g. Lidén, MacGinty & Richmond, 2009; Campbell, Chandler & Sabaratnam, 2011). As Alex Bellamy (2008:4) argues: "The principal aim of peace operations thus becomes … actively contributing to the construction of liberal politics, economies and societies". When peacebuilding is employed to achieve a neo-liberal state, the aim is to establish rule of law, civilian control over the armed forces, protection of human rights, good governance and free-market economic policies (Eriksen, 2009:662). The first argument in support of the liberal peace model is thus that it is the most advanced model for sustainable peace at the domestic or nation-state level.

There is also a further complementary theory – the democratic peace theory – that holds that democracies do not go to war against each other (Paris, 2004:43). Another element of the

liberal peace logic thus is that the world will become more peaceful and stable if more states adopt the neo-liberal model. According to this theory, there is a correlation between the increasing number of democracies and the steady decline in inter-state war since the Second World War. Thus, in order to make the world more peaceful, organisations like the UN need to use tools like peacekeeping and peacebuilding to encourage states to adopt the liberal peace model (Pugh, 2004:42). The second argument in support of the liberal peace model is thus that it is the optimal model for sustainable peace at the international or inter-state level.

A third argument in favour of the liberal peace model is that the international system and the globalised economy are based on neo-liberal principles. Those states that adopt the neo-liberal model at the level of the nation-state, especially in terms of their economic policies, will be the best suited to 'plug-and-play' in the international system and the global economy. They will thus have an advantage over others that are still stuck in more primitive models and will benefit from their national system being more inter-operable with the dominant international system and global economy.

Some also argue that peace processes follow the same linear progressive path, as they are part of the state-formation process. Peacebuilding interventions should thus assist societies to move through a series of linear progressive steps along the path to the liberal peace model. The typical stages of a peacebuilding process are understood to include a stabilisation phase, a transitional phase, and a consolidation phase.[9] In the stabilisation phase a country reaches the first level of liberal statehood by consolidating and monopolising the use of violence. In the transitional phase, it progresses from an arbitrary to a constitutional political order. If there is no existing constitution, or if the existing constitution is unacceptable, the first step typically is to negotiate and draft a new constitution. Next, internationally facilitated and observed elections are organised, and the first post-conflict and constitutionally legitimate new government is elected. This step assures international recognition, and thus satisfies the second level of liberal statehood. In the consolidation phase, the new legitimate state is supported to develop all the liberal peace capabilities it needs to enable it to manage the state and society on its own without relapsing into violent conflict. The peacebuilding period ends

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[9] There are a number of different interpretations of these phases, but most convey the same essential progression. See for instance CSIS, *Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Task Framework* (Washington D.C: Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the Association of the United States Army (AUSA), 2002), in which three stages are identified, namely: the initial response, transformation, and fostering sustainability. For a more detailed explanation of the three stages referred to here, namely stabilization, transitional and consolidation, see De Coning (2007a).

when a country emerging out of conflict has reached the stage where it is able to consolidate its own peace process without external support, i.e. when it has achieved self-sustainable peace, thus achieving the third level of liberal statehood.

There are other schools of thought, however, that represent a deep-seated scepticism towards understanding peacebuilding, or state formation and social development more broadly, as naturally following a linear progressive path from more primitive to more advanced, or complex, levels of political, social and economic development. One of the things that those critical of the liberal peace model have in common is that they argue that the progressive model outlined above is valid only from a Western socio-cultural, historic, political and philosophical tradition (Foucault, 2008; Hardt & Negri, 2000). These critics argue that other cultures have their own histories or legacies and follow different trajectories (Fanon, 1967; Hegre, 2004). For instance, William Easterly (2007), who equates what he calls development ideology with the liberal peace model, argues that:

> The nations that have been the most successful in the past 40 years did so in such a variety of different ways that it would be hard to argue that they discovered the 'correct answer' from development ideology. In fact, they often conspicuously violated whatever it was the experts said at the time. The East Asian tigers, for instance, chose outward orientation on their own in the 1960s, when the experts' conventional wisdom was industrialization for the home market. The rapid growth of China over the past quarter century came when it was hardly a poster child for either the 1980s Washington Consensus or the 1990s institutionalism of democracy and cracking down on corruption.

Wallerstein (2000:416) agrees that all states develop along their own trajectories, but argues that the West has gained dominance over the international system and, as a result of colonialism and Western imperialism, these non-Western trajectories have become influenced by, or contaminated with, Western concepts of statehood and the neo-liberal ideology. He argues that it is thus no longer possible for these non-Western societies to develop completely independently from the Western model, but they may leap-frog, or develop differently from, but influenced by, the Western liberal peace model (Wallerstein, 2007:78). Because they had a different starting point, and because they have different social, cultural and political traditions and trajectories, they will neither blindly adopt, nor directly follow the path of the liberal peace model. They cannot, however, avoid being influenced by it (Wallerstein, 2000:436; Sabaratnam, 2011:248).

In the peacebuilding context, those that argue for a non-linear progression model argue that there are many different paths to state formation and long-term sustainable peace (Chandler,

2009). Not all go through the stabilisation, transition and consolidation phases discussed earlier, nor do they necessarily need an international peacekeeping or peacebuilding intervention (Paris & Sisk, 2009). South Africa's apartheid-to-multi-racial democracy transition is an example of a peace process that has neither required a full-blown civil war, nor external intervention. Some conflicts are resolved internally, and others may lead to the victory of one side over another (Luttwak, 1999; Weinstein, 2005). Many experience relapse or remain fragile for a long period after the initial violent conflict has come to an end (Fukuyama, 2004; Duffield, 2001). In fact, later in this dissertation an argument is made that some societies may never reach a self-sustainable peace, and may have to be supported indefinitely, in one form or another, by the international system. This possibility is not foreseen in the linear progression model that currently dominates international peacebuilding and development policy and practice. The linear progression model assumes that all societies, if given enough time and assistance, can achieve self-sustainable peace and development. This theme is taken up again in Chapters 8 and 9.

Some of the critics of the liberal peace model argue that, in many cases, the imposition of liberal peace, or certain forms of it, actually generates political instability (Paris, 2004) and thus may cause more harm than good (Boege, Brown, Clements & Nolan, 2008). Richmond (2006:121), for instance, argues that peacebuilding generates conflict because it challenges existing entrenched patterns of power and influence, and is thus inherently destabilising – and thus not progressive. Some would even argue that the indiscriminate implementation of the neo-liberal model has, in some cases, caused state fragility to increase even further, in other words, to have had a perverse effect, as in Somalia (Menkhaus, 2009) and in the DRC (Eriksen, 2009).

Many of the critics argue that most of the societies and states that the neo-liberal model would consider primitive-states, do not, in fact, fit into the Western nation-state paradigm. They are not 'states' in the Western-sense, in that they have not experienced a state-formation or national building process of unification, where different societies converged around a specific geographic area, common culture, norms, values and a political identity. Instead, many of the so-called 'states' in the developing world are, in fact, a loose grouping of societies that have been forced together, top-down, by colonial interests and compromises among colonial states, that has resulted in maps being drawn and states being artificially formed. As a result, these societies have, perhaps as a counter-reaction to being forced together by the colonial and post-

colonial experiences, shaped their identities on the basis of their differences from each other. Many, to this day, do not identify themselves, or recognise in their daily lives, that they are living in a 'state' where a central authority has a benevolent impact on their lives, e.g. by providing security and social services. For many in these countries the 'state' is an occasional trespasser in their everyday existence and in many cases a negative predatory presence. For these individuals and families, their primary security and social needs are provided for by their community, often despite attempts by the 'state' to exert central control over their lives, not because of it. The assumptions of the neo-liberal nation-state model simply does not apply to these societies. Susan Woodward (2011:317) argues that neo-liberal assumptions may "blind us" to the ways in which these societies are effective. Indeed, it may be that "the non-Weberian, customary practices" in these "hybrid political orders" are more effective, given their socio-cultural context, for managing their conflicts, than a so-called modern alternative (317).

Woodward (2011:318) quotes Fukuyama as saying that "the neo-liberal model is promoted by public choice economists who believe, wrongly, that there is an optimal model of public administration". Fukuyama's counter argument is that "there is no optimal set of institutions for most aspects of the state, and little if any transferable knowledge … cultural norms and specific country histories are far more important than formal institutions and efficiency calculations in making states effective" (318).

An important related concept in the peacebuilding debate that needs to be noted here is 'fragile states' or 'state fragility' (Newman, Paris & Richmond, 2009:9). The OECD defines the terms as follows: "States are fragile when state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their population" (OECD, 2007b). The OECD definition frames fragility in terms of the failure of the state to meet citizens' basic needs and expectations and to perform basic state functions, such as assuring basic security, maintaining rule of law, and providing basic services. Mcloughin (2009:8) describes state fragility in terms of "a fundamental failure to keep societal expectations and state capacity in equilibrium, which results in non-reciprocal state-society relations and the absence of a binding social contract".

The fragile state concept and approach is also highly contested in the broader North-South debate on peacebuilding (World Bank, 2011:37). For instance, Gérard Prunier, quoted in Berdal (2009:177), argues that the idea of a failed state is a stereotypical category that does more to reveal a Western way of thinking than to reflect the reality. The South, broadly speaking, argues that the concept "implicitly contains normative assumptions of how states should perform and a misguided notion that all states will eventually converge around a Western model of statehood" (Mcloughin, 2009:4). Eriksen (2009:663) points out that, if the liberal peace model is your reference point, it implies that states that "deviate from the ideal tend to be described in terms of what they lack rather than in terms of their actual properties". In this context, those states that fail to imitate the Western norm are labelled failed states or weak states (663).

Thus there are two broad theoretical perspectives on how societies and states are formed and develop, namely the linear-progression school, and those who are deeply sceptical about this approach and who argue that there are many different ways in which societies develop and that these are not necessarily linear or progressive. Peacebuilding theory, policy and practice to date have been largely influenced by the former way of thinking, but more and more critical voices are entering the debate from the latter perspective (Autessere, 2010; Suhrke & Berdal, 2012; Duffield, 2001; Eriksen, 2009; Chandler, 2011b; Mac Ginty, 2010 & 2011a; Menkhaus, 2009; Paris, 2004; Richmond, 2006 & 2011; Sending, 2011; Suhrke, 2011). As the above discussion on the critics of the liberal peace model shows, a growing body of research and critical theory that questions the linear-progressive assumptions that form the basis of the dominant neo-liberal model has emerged over the last decade.

2.5.2   Questions about agency

The second theoretical debate mentioned at the beginning of this section as relevant for our discussion on peacebuilding theory relates to the extent to which it is appropriate for external or international peacebuilding agents to intervene in internal or local peace processes. On the one hand, the minimum-external-role approach argues that it is impossible for external peacebuilding agents to 'build' peace. Peace has to emerge out of home-grown social change processes that are inherently internal. "It is only when societies can deal with their divisions and disputes by themselves that one may be able to speak of a lasting peace" (Berdal & Wennmann, 2010:220).

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From this perspective, the more the external peacebuilders interfere and dictate a liberal peace outcome, the more dependent internal actors become on the direction, support and patronage of the external actors, and the intervention then becomes perverse, or counter-productive, in that it undermines its own stated goals of generating a self-sustainable peace (Eriksen, 2009:663). Sending (2011:55) argues that this could be because both peacebuilding policy and research has tended to downplay the role or agency of internal actors. He argues that "most of the literature on peacebuilding holds as exogenous or treats as marginal the interests, behaviour, and power of local actors" (55).

The counter argument – let us call it the maximum-external-role approach – is that leaving the local actors to their own devices usually implies leaving ordinary people in the grip of powerful elites that have come into that position as a result of previous conflict or exploitation. In other words, the situation is already unjust, and staying neutral to it will just give those that have unjustly gained the upper hand the opportunity to continue their suppression and exploitation and leave the victims powerless to defend themselves. This is what Michael Pugh (2004:51) refers to as the 'solidarist approach'. This approach argues that neutrality typically results in a 'might-is-right' type of imposed stability, which is ultimately unsustainable and which will inevitably result in a lapse into conflict – the Arab Spring revolt against dictatorships in North Africa and the Middle-East is an example here. Not acting is thus merely delaying the inevitable and acting sooner rather than later is likely to be less costly in the long-term.

The maximum-external-role approach also argues that societies that have lapsed into violent conflict has already demonstrated that, when left alone, their systems have collapsed into violent conflict, so they are clearly unable to manage their conflict themselves. It would thus be illogical and immoral to argue that they should have the agency to resolve their own conflict when they have already demonstrated that they cannot do so. Some would go further and argue that these societies on their own will not address important universally agreed upon rights-based concerns such as gender equality. According to this school of thought, the international community has a responsibility to all mankind to introduce a global human-rights based and international rule-based system that will protect all people from abuse. The UN and other agents of the international system thus have a duty to spread the liberal peace model, also at national and sub-national levels of governance. On the basis of the arguments

summarised here, Roland Paris (2011b:159) argues "that there is no realistic alternative to some form of liberal peace strategy."

At the extreme other pole of the minimum external role argument is the so-called 'give war a chance' or the 'let them fail' theories that are based on the premise that peace born out of one side being victorious over the other, or out of a locally-owned sense of failure, has the most sustainable outcomes (Herbst, 2004; Luttwak, 1999). A more moderate version of this argument is the premature-peacekeeping argument, namely that interposing external peacekeepers into a war that is not ripe for resolution leads to a no-peace/no-war stalemate (Richards, 2004). The argument is that such interventions may serve the interest of international or regional organisations, like the UN in the DRC or the AU in Somalia, in that the impression is created that such organisations are meaningfully exercising agency over these crises. However, such interventions do not help in finding a sustainable resolution to conflict because it prevents the parties involved reaching a settlement themselves (Duffield, 2001; Chandler, 2011). The impartiality of the external intervention imposes an enforced equality among the parties, whilst, if they were left alone to find their own settlement, the outcome would be determined by the true power balance among the parties, and this would lead to a more sustainable peace settlement. Such premature interventions end up merely masking the continuation of lower-scale violent conflict, prolonging the conflict, extending the suffering of the local people, and resulting in ongoing political instability and delayed socio-economic development (Suhrke & Berdal, 2012).

Some believe these two approaches can be merged into a 'hybrid-peace' model that is both bottom-up and top-down (Mac Ginty, 2010 & 2011). They argue that it may be possible for externally-driven peacebuilding – i.e. a peacebuilding effort that is aimed at transferring the liberal peace model to the society emerging out of conflict – to be effective, but only if the role and influence of the internal actors in co-shaping the liberal peace can be significantly enhanced (Mac Ginty, 2010; Sending, 2011). This school argues that, in order for such a liberal peace-driven peacebuilding campaign to be sustainable, it needs to be locally owned and context relevant, and this requires much more engagement from local actors in the peacebuilding process than has been the case in the past. Peacebuilding has to transcend its external actor-bias, i.e. the approach that peacebuilding is something that is done by international actors to local actors (Mac Ginty, 2011a:222).

The critics of the liberal peace approach also argue that the negative consequences of imposing neo-liberal models on societies emerging out of conflict is often caused by external actors substituting an externally-driven, institutional-technical approach for what should be a locally-owned, normative-transformative approach. Roger Mac Ginty (2006:3) argues that liberal peacebuilding tends to be a "technocratic exercise of ticking boxes, counting heads and weapons … while the more thorny affective and perceptual issues of reconciliation, exclusion and the restoration of dignity are left unaddressed". For instance, external peacebuilders tend to reduce Rule of Law (RoL) to creating institutions, such as a ministry of justice and a police force, and may simply rewrite another country's laws on the basis of Western models, instead of understanding that RoL is essentially a normative system that is deeply embedded in the culture of a society (Woodward, 2011:319; Carothers, 2006:20). As Ole Jacob Sending (2011:56) summarises: "The critique of the liberal peace has brought out the importance of context-sensitivity, of local ownership, of bottom-up and hybrid forms of peacebuilding."

Despite this growing body of work that is critical of the liberal-peace approach to peacebuilding, the public policy view that dominates political speeches and official policy is that internationally-driven peacebuilding interventions have made an important contribution to bringing liberal peace to countries suffering from conflict. Where problems occur, these are most often seen as being due to lack of resources and/or a lack of coherence, and it is assumed that more resources, better coherence and more sophisticated technical approaches are all that is required to further improve a peacebuilding effort's effectiveness and efficiency (Berdal, 2009; Call, 2008; Caplan, 2005; Paris, 2011b; Tschirgi, Lund & Mancini, 2010).

A variation of this argument is that, whilst the liberal peace is the ideal that peacebuilding should pursue, it must be accepted that, in a complex world, it is not always possible to fully achieve a liberal peace end state. The alternative presented in this regard is the so-called 'good-enough' or 'compromised-peacebuilding' approach (Aguirre & Van der Borgh, 2010; Paris & Sisk, 2009:48). In other words, actors who pursue idealised end states may end up wasting resources and detracting local and international agents from what may be more realistic goals to aim to achieve (Eriksen, 2009:664). By pursuing unrealistic outcomes they may actually end up contributing to the weakening of the very state systems they intended to strengthen (Pritchett & De Weijer, 2010:2). By adopting more realistic or 'good enough' approaches, both internal and external agents can focus their effort on what is realistic and attainable, given the available resources, capacities and context, and in so doing they may end

up achieving more – i.e. making more progress towards an intermediate good-enough peace, and the stability that this good-enough peace may generate, can then be used to pursue more long-term liberal peace objectives (Suhrke, 2011).

In some approaches these various schools are interlinked. Barnett and Zürcher (2009:49) and Roberts (2009:183), for instance, argue that 'good enough' approaches are appropriate when there are large differences in approach between external and internal actors and that pursuing 'good enough' approaches in such contexts may result in more realistic and context-relevant solutions. They argue that the inability of the internal and external actors to agree on a common approach, forces both to be more realistic about what can be achieved, given the context. Oliver Richmond (2011:227) argues for what he refers to as a 'post-liberal' form of peace, which he describes as a 'local-liberal hybrid peace', where "agencies are expressed that contaminate, transgress and modify both the international and the local". In other words, the peace that emerges from the interaction between the local and the international produces a hybrid mix of both local and liberal influences, and it is thus neither local nor liberal, but something new.

This debate about whether the internal or external actors have the ultimate agency to determine peacebuilding outcomes or the degree to which they can come together in some kind of hybrid or post-liberal approach is prominent in contemporary theoretical debates and is likely to start to spill over into the policy arena (De Coning, Jansson, Lotze & Torjesen, 2010). Peacebuilding, also in the context of this dissertation, thus needs to be understood in the context of this disagreement about agency. This dissertation is also focused on exploring whether the application of Complexity to peacebuilding will generate any new insights into this debate.

The way in which the peacebuilding concept has developed and the way in which it has been interpreted and applied has been deeply influenced by these various approaches and schools of thoughts. When the peacebuilding concept was introduced in the *Agenda for Peace,* it reflected a Fukuyama-type optimism that existed in the immediate post-Cold War period about the potential for collective and consensus-based third-party interventions. There was a sense, in the period between the end of the Cold War and before 9/11, that collective, third-party peacebuilding could represent a new era of benevolent international intervention in conflict situations. That sense of optimism has since evaporated, especially in light of the

failures of external intervention in Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Iraq, Darfur, Haiti, Libya and Afghanistan. In each of these cases the international intervention had limited or no success and failed to stabilize the conflict, In each of these cases the interventions failed to protect some civilian populations from further harm, and in many the civilian population were more at risk during and after the conflict as a result of the intervention. These cases convinced the international community that they could not solve all conflicts through international intervention. The optimism of the early-1990s has since been replaced by deeply divided views on the virtue of international interventions and the neo-liberal model that has come to dominate the international system and peacebuilding policy and practice since the end of the Cold War.

An overview of the theoretical debates that are raging over intervention in general and peacebuilding in particular has been given in this section. These theoretical debates are converging with the emergence of a new global political order, an issue that is investigated in the next section. When one considers the theoretical debates and the shifting global political order together, one can foresee that this convergence opens up an opportunity for new approaches to interventions and peacebuilding to emerge. This dissertation should be understood as a contribution to exploring which forms such a new approach to peacebuilding might take.

2.6   CURRENT POLITICAL DEBATES

Some countries in the North, for instance most of the G8 and NATO countries, view post-conflict intervention, including UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding interventions, as a tool for managing failed or weak states. Their policies are aimed at assisting such societies by helping them to adopt neo-liberal values and structures, which those in the North view as synonymous with responsible sovereignty and thus sustainable peace (Paris, 2004).

Some in the South, for instance most of those active in the Non-Aligned Movement and the G-77, are sceptical of international interventions, including UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding. They are concerned that such interventions can be used as new forms of colonialism, which, if unchecked, can result in the neo-imperialist and capitalist exploitation of vulnerable post-conflict societies (Paris & Sisk, 2007:9). These countries believe that each country has the right to self-determination, as codified in international law, and in order to

protect the right to self-determination, they insist on a narrow interpretation of sovereignty. Most of the countries in this grouping have themselves experienced some form of colonialism, and they continue to feel under pressure to conform to the Western-dominated international system. Their insistence on self-determination and sovereignty is one of the ways in which they are trying to protect themselves from the dominance of the neo-liberal ideology, which they are experiencing as a new form of exploitation and suppression by the West/North.

At the same time, it now seems clear that the West, in general, and America in particular, are in decline, and although this is anticipated to be a slow and drawn-out process, the transition is likely to raise a lot of uncertainty (Haas, 2008). As the centre of gravity of the geo-political order is slowly shifting from the West to the East, one of the developments that can be anticipated during this period is the re-negotiation of some of the Western-influenced aspects of the international system (Chan, 2010). It is to be expected, in particular, that emerging powers, such as China, Brazil, India, Russia and South Africa (the so-called BRICS countries), will increasingly challenge internationally-sanctioned interventions that are perceived to be vehicles for spreading the liberal peace ideology, as was demonstrated in the positions they articulated before and after the intervention in Libya in 2011 and with regard to the crisis in Syria in 2012. The emphasis they place on the principles of sovereignty and self-determination in international relations are likely to result in more pressure on internationally sanctioned peacebuilding to become less prescriptive, i.e. not to promote a specific ideology, such as the liberal peace approach, but to rather give societies the space to develop their own, context-specific, approaches.

The interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the rights abuses that occurred during the Bush Administration's war on terror, and the poor track record of the neo-liberal interventions in bringing about development and peace over the last two decades have resulted in a new level of recognition in the public and academic debate that neither the North nor the South have an exclusive claim to the moral high ground (Chandler, 2011; Duffield, 2001; Eriksen, 2009; Suhrke, 2011). Despite billions of dollars of development assistance, most least-developed countries are poorer now than they were decades ago (UNCTAD, 2002) and there is an emerging sense that the neo-liberal model itself has contributed to an overall decline in living standards, weaker institutions and less liberal societies overall (Eriksen, 2009:663).

The argument is that the neo-liberal model has advocated policies that have left the least-developed countries open to resource and trade exploitation and capital flight (Collier *et al*. 2003; Klein, 2008; UNCTAD, 2002). It has also discredited the existing local institutions and replaced them with imported institutional models that have turned out to be empty shells, unconnected with the societies they are meant to serve, and accountable only to the donors on whom they are dependent for patronage – what Pritchett and De Weijer (2010:2) refer to as "isomorphic mimicry". The net result is weaker governance, weaker economies and thus less-liberal societies overall. The critical body of empirical research that has emerged over the last decade amounts to a mounting case against the assumed virtues of the liberal-peace model (Autessere, 2010; Berdal & Suhrke, 2012; Duffield, 2001; Eriksen, 2009; Chandler, 2011b; Mac Ginty, 2010 & 2011; Menkhaus, 2009; Paris, 2004; Richmond, 2006 & 2011; Sending, 2011; Suhrke, 2011). Roland Paris's *At War's End* (2004:151), which is widely regarded as one of the most authoritative studies in the peacebuilding literature, concludes that:

> Some missions were clear successes (Namibia and Croatia); others were obvious failures (Angola and Rwanda). The remaining operations fell in between these two extremes. In most of these eleven cases[10], the process of political liberalization, or economic liberalization, or both, produced destabilizing effects that worked against the consolidation of the peace. In some countries, liberalization exacerbated social tensions, and in others it reproduced traditional sources of violence.

There obviously were no such concerns in the 1990s when there was a strong sense that a global liberal order was imminent. The Bush era, with its war on terror and failed interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the global financial crisis that started in 2007 and which was brought on by American overreach (Hinnebusch, 2007), have resulted in a new, more open debate about the virtues and shortcomings of the neo-liberal model. As David Chandler argues:

> Instead, it appeared that the 'lessons learned' from international intervention over the past two decades was that the global liberal order was not imminent, but rather that the world was as bifurcated as ever – not between a capitalist and a socialist world, but between a liberal and a non-liberal world. As the world became less liberal, so the discourses of liberal internationalism have been recast and rewritten. Whereas Roland Paris was half-right, in his view that they were unable to safely rule themselves, we have since discovered that he was half-wrong, in his assumption that the West had the capacity to direct and control a path to 'enlightenment' in a liberal internationalist teleology. Without a liberal teleology, without a belief in an imminent liberal global order of harmony, law and human rights – without a belief in the transformative capacity of Western states – the right of intervention against the right of sovereignty no longer has any meaningful purchase. Today's discourses of intervention therefore operate without a belief in the linearity of progress. (Chandler, 2011:3)

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[10] The remaining cases Roland Paris refers to are: Bosnia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatamala, Liberia, Nicaragua and Mozambique.

The tensions in this current debate about the nature of interventions came to boiling point in the context of the UN-authorised NATO intervention in Libya in 2011. Whilst some countries in the North, most vocally France, the UK and the USA, openly argued for regime change as an integral aspect of resolving the Libyan conflict, others in the South, most verbally the so-called BRICS, opposed any military intervention in Libya that was aimed at regime change, arguing that only the Libyan people had the agency to choose its leaders and political system and arguing instead for an approach informed by respect for self-determination and sovereignty (Putin, 2012; Sangqu, 2012).

The outcome of the intervention in Libya and the perception that the West has abused the UN mandate, which in UN Security Council resolution 1973 of 2011 was limited to protecting civilians in order to effect regime change, is now seen as a turning point in the international debate about when interventions are justified and how intrusive interventions should be. In subsequent months the shadow of the vastly different interpretations of the North and South vis-à-vis the intervention in Libya has prevented the Security Council from reaching consensus on how to deal with the crisis in Syria. The representatives of the Global South in the Security Council argued that they will not make the mistake again of trusting the North with authority to undertake 'limited action', which can then be used as a justification to launch a liberal peace intervention that amounts to regime change. Some countries, like South Africa, have invoked the UN Charter's articles on self-determination and sovereignty as a legal basis for constraining the scope of interventions authorised by the UN, arguing that UN interventions should not have the agency to impose liberal market democracies. In his statement to the UN Security Council on 4 February 2012, when South Africa voted in favour of a resolution on Syria, South Africa's Permanent Representative clarified that:

> It is important that the Syrian people be allowed to decide their own fate including their future leadership. Fundamentally, no foreign or external parties should interfere in Syria as they engage in the critical decision making processes on the future of their country. Any solution must preserve the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. We were also satisfied that the final draft resolution was not aimed at imposing regime change in Syria, which would be against the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. (Sangqu, 2012)

The position of the South is thus that only the Syrians have the agency to determine their future, and that, whilst such a process can be encouraged and facilitated by the international community through diplomacy and related means, such actions should stop short of imposing on the right of the Syrian society to determine their own future political and economic policies. Russian President Vladimir Putin provided a similar clarification at the close of the

G20's 2012 summit in Mexico, when he was asked about the Russian position on Syria. He explained that "we believe that nobody has the right to decide for other nations who should be brought to power, who should be removed from power" (Putin, 2012).

The point South Africa and Russia, and indeed the Global South more generally, are making in this regard is captured well in the following formulation by Stein S. Eriksen (2009:663):

> …even if one accepts this (liberal peace) model as normatively valid, the prospects of succeeding in creating such a state will be undermined if the nature of the state that is to be built is taken as given, prior to any dialogue between the external state-builders and those whose state is to be built. Such an approach implies that the relationship between donors and recipients becomes one between subject and object.

Robert Jackson (2000:366) goes even further when he argues that,

> [t]here is a greater international good than democracy, and that good is pluralism or international freedom, which itself makes democracy possible by giving people a choice and a space to build democracy in their own country – if that is what they desire and if they have the political virtues to do it.

Kristoffer Lidén (2009:619) argues that peacebuilding missions that are authorised by the Security Council and invited by local authorities cannot be in breach of positive international law, but that it can be argued from Jackson's communitarian perspective that "liberal peacebuilding, in its promotion of universal political standards, violates the right of political communities to self-governance".

The way one understands peacebuilding interventions therefore is informed by how one believes it is being employed in any specific context. Just as there are multiple interpretations of the agreed rules of the international system, there will also be different understandings of what peacebuilding is, or should be. The understanding of peacebuilding cannot be static or universal, but should evolve continuously, partly as a result of the ongoing international debate about the appropriate meaning and role of peacekeeping and peacebuilding in the international system, and partly as a result of the specific context in which the concept may be employed (De Coning, 2010b).

As these debates indicate, there is a considerable gap between how the North and the South view intervention, peacebuilding, and related concepts such as fragile states. The international community in general and the UN in particular will find it difficult to develop a coherent international approach to peacebuilding in the context of such deeply divided South-North

perspectives. At worst, the UN may find itself back in the Cold War loop where contradictory interests and disagreement over the concept, content and process of peace interventions, for instance among members of the UN Security Council, prevents the international community, and especially the UN, from taking coherent action. There are growing signs that these tensions are increasing and may have more of an impact on international relations in the years ahead − for instance the deadlock in the 2011 session of the so-called C-34 Committee, the General Assembly's special committee on peace operations; the tensions between the African Union's Peace and Security Council and the UN's Security Council over the handling of the Libyan crisis in 2011; and the impasse in the Security Council around the Syrian crisis in early 2012.

This dissertation is about the coherence dilemma as it plays out in the contemporary peacebuilding system. The two last sections of this chapter make the point that how the contemporary peacebuilding system is understood has been deeply influenced by the way peacebuilding has been conceptualised, theorised and debated over the last few decades. These debates, and the competing theories of change that influence them, need to be taken into consideration when trying to understand how peacebuilding has been practiced and how it has been perceived by the different stakeholders and agents who have been engaged in some way or another in pursuing coherence whilst undertaking peacebuilding programmes and activities.

2.7   CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced and contextualised peacebuilding systems within both the larger conflict-management field and in terms of its role in a changing global order. The nexus between development, governance, politics and security has become a central focus of the international effort to manage transitions, and peacebuilding is increasingly seen as the collective framework under which these diverse dimensions of conflict management can be brought together under one common framework.

Peacebuilding operations are consent-based interventions undertaken by states and multilateral institutions, like the United Nations, with the aim of providing a safe and secure environment, facilitating humanitarian assistance and supporting the provision of basic

services on the one hand, whilst supporting the implementation of a peace agreement on the other (Newman, Paris & Richmond, 2009:6).

Peacebuilding, at its most basic, is aimed at peace consolidation, i.e. managing the prevention of a (re)lapse into violent conflict. At its most ambitious, peacebuilding is aimed at conflict transformation, i.e. completely transcending the primary and secondary dynamics that gave rise to a particular conflict so that the community in question is beyond the risk of lapsing into violent conflict and is focused on new political, social and economic considerations that are not related to the past conflict (Lederach, 1997:73).

Whilst there is broad agreement on the former, this latter, more ambitious approach to peacebuilding is highly controversial and contested, both in the academic literature on the liberal peace and in the contemporary international political debate on interventions.

Peacebuilding was introduced and discussed in this chapter and the major trends, theories and debates, as well as different ways in which the peacebuilding concept can be understood, were considered. In the next chapter, coherence is introduced, and some of the dilemmas and constraints that pursuing coherence has revealed over the past decades are considered.

CHAPTER 3

COHERENCE

The rate of negotiated peace relapsing into violence shows that the international community is better at stopping violence than building or consolidating peace. The challenge is not making peace, it is making peace last. (Ricigliano, 2012:5)

This leads to a tautology, because liberal peace approaches only support local ownership if it adheres to the basic components of liberal peace and if it does not undermine liberal values. (Körppen, Ropers & Giessmann, 2011:83)

Questioning the central elements of the prevailing peacebuilding culture – notably the propensity to understand and approach violence in a top-down manner and to conceive of local tensions as an unimportant issue – is a first step integral to designing new, more efficient intervention strategies. (Autessere, 2010:272)

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, coherence will be introduced, and the reasons for it becoming such an important concept in the peacebuilding context will be addressed. The assumed causal link between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability is considered. Special attention is given to the gap that has opened up on between the policy community that continues to act on this assumption on the one hand and the practitioners who report that, despite numerous significant efforts over almost two decades, no or little progress has been recorded on improving peacebuilding coherence, on the other hand.

Over the last two decades, many of the prominent reports and evaluations on peacebuilding have identified a lack of coherence as one of its most common critical shortcomings (e.g. Dahrendorf, 2003; Porter, 2002; Sommers, 2000; Stockton, 2002). An aspect that most of these studies have in common is an argument that the lack of coherence among peacebuilding agents has negatively impacted on the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the peacebuilding intervention in the specific cases under consideration (Smith, 2004). The focus in this chapter will be on exploring the assumed causal linkages between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability. The aim is to understand why coherence has assumed such a central role in the peacebuilding context and why it is perceived to be such an important factor for mission success.

The argument in the dissertation is that the way in which the peacebuilding community has responded to this coherence dilemma has been to develop and apply ever more sophisticated or improved strategic planning- and coordination models. In other words, the assumption has been that the dilemma is caused by insufficiently or misdirected application of the policies. An alternative approach is explored in this dissertation in that consideration is given to whether there are inherent constraints in peacebuilding systems that explain why peacebuilding agents persistently and stubbornly resist most efforts to improve strategic coherence. The argument will be made that by viewing peacebuilding coherence from a Complexity perspective, it may be possible to gain new insights into the role of coherence in complex systems, such as peacebuilding systems.

In this chapter, the coherence dilemma is introduced by considering why it has gained such perceived prominence, while a number of factors that constrain coherence in the peacebuilding context are considered in the next chapter. These factors include the tension between short-term and longer-term approaches and perspectives; differences in values, principles and mandates; the degree to which a specific context may be conducive to coherence, and the tensions and power imbalances between internal and external agents. Together, these two chapters introduce and consider the core problem that this dissertation is concerned with, namely the coherence dilemma in peacebuilding systems.

3.2   EFFICIENCY, EFFECTIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

It was stated in Chapter 1 that coherence in the peacebuilding context can be understood as the effort to direct the wide range of activities undertaken in the political, governmental, developmental, human rights, humanitarian, rule of law and security dimensions of a peacebuilding system towards common strategic objectives (De Coning, 2007b:3). Donini explains this prevalent policy view of coherence in the peacebuilding context as follows:

> At its most basic, coherence refers to the attempt to coordinate, bring together, or join political intervention with other relevant types of action, including humanitarian and human rights actions. At its most developed, coherence suggests the harmonization or merging of objectives, strategies, and programming tools within and across relevant actors so that they are all agreed toward the pursuit of a common end goal or are in line with an articulated vision. (Donini, Niland & Wermester, 2004:3)

Peacebuilding was introduced in Chapter 2 and it was explained that one of its characteristics is its multidimensionality. A typology of these dimensions was presented in Table 2.1.

Coherence refers to the policy of pursuing or facilitating a positive synergetic system-wide relationship among these peacebuilding dimensions. It was explained in Chapter 2 that there have been different perspectives as to how best such a positive synergy can be achieved. Some argue for co-existence, others for cooperation, and yet others for integration. However, the prevalent and dominant policy position that has emerged over the last decade is one in which coherence is pursued by aligning these peacebuilding dimensions behind a common strategic objective (OECD, 2011a:13).

In this dissertation it is argued that in the peacebuilding context the common strategic objective, at its most basic, is peace consolidation, i.e. avoiding a lapse into violent conflict. The prevalent policy position is that peace consolidation cannot be achieved without security, a political process, or development (see Table 2.1). In order to consolidate the peace, these different dimensions need to be linked up, integrated and pursued together, so that collectively and cumulatively, they can generate momentum towards a system-wide peace consolidation effect (Berdal & Wennmann, 2010:53).

Antonio Donini argues that coherence has both a normative and an organisational dimension (Donini, Niland & Wermester, 2004:3). He says that organisational coherence lies at the intersection of coordination and strategy, where coordination is a tool to manage the achievement and implementation of the strategy. And he argues that normatively, coherence is presented as a global good that is value neutral. It is portrayed as being "synonymous with the pursuit of greater efficiency and effectiveness, and is touted as desirable both as a process and outcome" (*ibid.*).

The peacebuilding policy and research community have come to share an implicit assumption, namely that peacebuilding missions will be more efficient and effective, and thus have a more meaningful impact, when the different peacebuilding agents have a common objective, based on a common understanding of the problem, a common theory of change, and a common plan for implementing and evaluating such a strategy (Friis & Jarmyr, 2008). The underlying assumption is that "better synergies based on agreed-upon objectives and principled interventions would make for better peace prospects" (Donini, Niland & Wermester, 2004:3).

For instance, at a high-level international conference in March 2009 in Switzerland, where more than 300 delegations representing countries, the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and a number of international non-governmental organisations were present, the following principle was adopted:

> A coherent, coordinated and complementary (3C) approach is needed to improve the effectiveness of support to countries and communities affected by conflict and fragility. Coherence, coordination and complementarity require both whole-of-government and whole-of-system approaches. 3C is understood as collaborative and mutually reinforcing approaches by international actors and partner countries, including civil society, to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their support to peace, security, and development in situations of conflict and fragility. (3C Conference Report, 2009:5)

This kind of statement is indicative of the degree to which, among the policy community, there is an assumed cause-and-effect relationship between coherence and effectiveness. The UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence (UN, 2006b:32) explains this causal link as follows: "Through consolidation, priority-setting and the elimination of duplication, a reconfigured development system will improve performance and increase cost effectiveness." The Panel summarises the coherence challenge as follows. It describes the UN's work as

> … often fragmented and weak. Inefficient and ineffective governance and unpredictable funding have contributed to policy incoherence, duplication and operational ineffectiveness across the system. Cooperation between organizations has been hindered by competition for funding, mission creep and by out-dated business practice. (UN, 2006b:1)

In response to these problems, the Panel recommends that by "…overcoming systemic fragmentation" the UN "could deliver better focus on performance, efficiency, accountability and results within the UN system" (UN, 2006b:1). The Panel's central recommendation is for 'One UN' and 'Delivering as One':

> . . . the UN needs to overcome its fragmentation and deliver as one through a stronger commitment to working together on the implementation of one strategy in the pursuit of one set of goals…We recommend the establishment of One UN at country level, with one leader, one programme, one budget and, where appropriate, one office. (UN, 2006b:2)[11]

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[11] It is interesting to note, however, that the Panel does not recommend the creation of a single UN entity at UN headquarters "… because many individual agencies can best achieve their vital role…by operating individually in their specific sectors" (UN, 2006b:3). It seems the pael applies a different logic to headquarters and the field, despite the fact that the Panel identifies the same problem at headquarters as in the field, namely that "…it is clear there are a large number of overlapping functions, failures of coordination and policy inconsistency within the UN system" (UN, 2006b:3). Instead, the Panel recommends that a task force be established that should clearly delineate the roles performed by the various UN agencies, and it should make concrete recommendations for mergers or consolidation of duplicative functions and ensure complementarity of mandates. The only merger that has subsequently been proposed and enacted is the integration of various agencies working on gender issues

Whilst the Panel seems to be motivated by the need to improve the overall effectiveness of the UN system, they do not discuss potential tensions and trade-offs between effectiveness and efficiency. In fact, the report seems to equate effectiveness with efficiency and to focus most of its recommendations on ways in which enhancements in management and operational efficiency can result in cost savings and related improvements in the organisational performance of the UN. In fact, the Panel suggests that "…this exercise has the potential to release significant annual savings possibly in the range of 20% per annum…" (UN, 2006b:3).

The Panel seems to be informed by an overriding assumption that improvements in organisational efficiency will automatically translate in greater operational effectiveness. For instance, the Panel argues that "performance, funding and accountability of UN organizations are integrally linked. Funding must follow performance and reward results…", but it also says that "the purpose of linking funding to performance is to improve outcomes not to reduce funding" (UN, 2006b:4). The Panel seems to believe that it is possible to make this clear link in practice, and it recommends "…system-wide agreement on results-based management as well as independent UN system-wide evaluation and common evaluation methodologies and benchmarking" (UN, 2006b:5).

It should be pointed out that the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence was mandated to look into the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. It was not mandated to address the peacebuilding context. However, the Panel's recommendations is indicative of the way leading states, multilateral institutions and international NGOs assume that there is a causal link between coherence, efficiency and effectiveness.

Although the specific recommendations of the Panel were focused only on the development, humanitarian assistance and the environmental dimensions of the UN system, the UN has also applied the concept of system-wide coherence to the integration of the peace, security and development dimensions of the UN's work, most notably in the formulation and operationalisation of the so-called Integrated Approach.

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into one new agency called UN Women. The Panel does not explain why it thinks that individual agencies can be more effective when they operate separately at the headquarter level, when much of the rest of the Report is focused on the negative effects of system fragmentation, with the main recommendation focusing on the 'One UN' concept at the country level.

The UN's Integrated Approach refers to a specific type of operational process and design, where the planning and coordination processes of the different elements of the UN family is integrated into a single country-level UN system when it undertakes complex peacekeeping operations (UN, 2008b). Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan described the concept as follows:

> An Integrated Mission is based on a common strategic plan and a shared understanding of the priorities and types of programme interventions that need to be undertaken at various stages of the recovery process. Through this integrated process, the UN system seeks to maximize its contribution towards countries emerging from conflict by engaging its different capabilities in a coherent and mutually supportive manner. (UN, 2006a:4)

The notes of the Secretary-General on integrated missions (UN, 2006a & 2008b) establish the Integrated Approach as the guiding principle for the design and implementation of complex UN peace operations in post-conflict situations and for linking the different dimensions of peacebuilding (political, development, humanitarian, human rights, rule of law, social and security aspects) into a coherent support strategy (UN, 2006a:4). UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon has reaffirmed the Integrated Approach as the guiding principle for all conflict and post-conflict situations where the UN has a Country Team and a multidimensional peacekeeping operation, or a political or peacebuilding office, regardless of whether these missions are structurally integrated or not (UN, 2008b). An integrated approach requires:

(1) A shared vision of the UN's strategic objectives;

(2) closely aligned or integrated planning;

(3) a set of agreed results, timelines and responsibilities for the delivery of tasks critical to consolidating peace; and

(4) agreed mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation (UN, 2008b).

The assumption of the Integrated Approach is thus that a more coherent model that manages to produce a comprehensive and coordinated UN system-wide effort will have a more relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable impact on the peace process (De Coning, 2008a).

The two UN examples cited here – the High-Level Panel on System-wide Coherence and the Integrated Approach – should not be seen as isolated developments. As the 3C Conference statement quoted earlier indicates, policy statements at the highest level and across a broad spectrum of international and regional organisations present coherence, often in the form of 'the comprehensive approach', as the key to successful peacebuilding (Donini, Niland &

Wermester, 2004:2). For instance, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, in his very first statement as NATO Secretary General (NATO, 2009), declared: "We need a comprehensive approach, a reinforced interaction between our military efforts and our endeavours with regard to civil reconstruction." Similarly, ex-British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, referring to Afghanistan, has argued that what is needed is a "comprehensive approach including better governance, economic development such as a single financing mechanism, and when necessary appropriate military pressure" (Brown, 2009). In 2001 the UN Security Council stated that it "reaffirms that the quest for peace requires a comprehensive, concerted and determined approach that addresses the root causes of conflicts, including their economic and social dimensions" (UN, 2001e).

These deeply held assumptions about the role of coherence are also reflected in many of the key policy documents relating to international interventions and peacebuilding that have been adopted over the last decade, including:

- The 2005 UN World Summit Outcome document that highlights the interlinkage of peace and security, development and human rights, and emphasises the need for a coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation with a view to achieving sustainable peace (UN, 2005a).[12]

- The 2003 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to support UN Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies (OCHA, 2003a).

- The Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the follow-up Accra Agenda for Action (2008) and the most recent Bhusan outcome document, the Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011).

- The OECD Ministerial Policy Commitment to improve development effectiveness in fragile states (OECD, 2007d: 29).

- The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations (OECD, 2007c:29).

- The OECD Ministerial Declaration on Policy Coherence for Development (approved by Ministers of OECD countries at the Ministerial Council, on 4 June 2008).

- The 2007 European Council Conclusions on Fragile Situations, and the 2007 European Council Conclusions on Security and Development (3C Conference, 2009:33).

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[12] See specifically A/RES/60/1 paragraphs 9 and 97.

All these policy statements and documents share a common assumption, namely that overcoming the fragmented nature of past interventions by pursuing coherence among the political, development, governance, economic and security dimensions of international interventions is one of the most promising ways in which the effectiveness and sustainability of international peace and stability operations can be improved (Stedman, Cousens & Rothchild, 2002:89).

This assumption is also shared by the leading evaluation reports (Cutillo, 2006; Dahrendorf, 2003; Donini, 2002) and research studies (Dobbins *et al.,* 2005; Paris 2004; Stedman, Cousens & Rothchild, 2002) that have analysed the record of post-Cold War peacebuilding efforts. These studies and reports have all identified significant problems with coherence and coordination, and they have argued that this has contributed to the poor rate of sustainability of these operations (Paris & Sisk, 2009:53).

For example, the Joint *Utstein* Study of peacebuilding that analysed 336 peacebuilding projects implemented by Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Norway over the last decade has identified a lack of coherence at the strategic level – what it terms a strategic deficit – as the most significant obstacle to sustainable peacebuilding (Smith, 2004:16). The *Utstein* study found that more than 55% of the programmes it evaluated did not show any link to a larger country strategy.

These panels, conferences, studies and reports thus share a broad consensus that inconsistent policies and fragmented programmes entail a higher risk of duplication, inefficient spending, a lower quality of service, difficulty in meeting goals and, thus ultimately, of a reduced capacity for delivery (OECD, 2003). The logic of the causal argument is thus that a lack of coherence results in inefficient and ineffective peacebuilding, and the impact of the programmatic interventions will therefore not last as long, or they will take longer to take hold, i.e. they will lack sustainability. Before these assumptions around efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability are analysed in further detail, it is necessary to first establish what the current dominant and broadly accepted understanding of these concepts are.

3.2.1   Definitions of efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) definitions of efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability are used in this dissertation, as the OECD's definitions reflect the most widely held understanding of what these terms mean among the international actors in the peacebuilding context.

The OECD defines efficiency as "a measure of how economically resources and inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results". Economy in this context refers to the absence of waste for a given output: "[A]n activity is economical when the costs of the scarce resources used approximate the minimum needed to achieve planned objectives" (*OECD Glossary of Key Terms*, 2002:20*).*

The OECD defines effectiveness as "the extent to which a development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance" (*OECD Glossary of Key Terms,* 2002:20).

Sustainability is defined by the OECD as "the continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed" (*OECD Glossary of Key Terms,* 2002:36).

The OECD is an organisation of mostly developed or Northern donor nations that have made a considerable effort over the years to reach a common understanding around these concepts. This group of countries fund the bulk of humanitarian and development efforts, and they are also the major financial contributors to international and UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. Through the assessed contribution system introduced earlier, America is responsible for 27% of the UN peacekeeping budget, while Europe's combined contribution represents approximately 43%. Together, the OECD countries are responsible for approximately 88% of the UN peacekeeping budget (Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), 2010).

These countries use the OECD definitions to evaluate and compare their support to international humanitarian and development efforts, and these concepts are now also increasingly used in peacekeeping and peacebuilding evaluation contexts. A number of emerging powers, such as India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) are also emerging donors,

but their efforts have not yet matured to the extent that they have influenced new understandings of these concepts (White, 2011).

It should be noted that another initiative is also under way, namely the International Dialogue on Statebuilding and Peacebuilding, which is an initiative aimed at facilitating a dialogue between donors and countries that have hosted international interventions or that are otherwise considered to be fragile.[13] These countries are organised in an initiative that is referred to as the g7+, or the mini-g7, hence the lower-case 'g', in contrast to the G7 grouping of the most powerful Western states. The g7+ initiative consist of 19 countries, including Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste. This group has started to generate interesting alternative approaches, for instance in the form of the 'New Deal' that was adopted at Bhusan (2011), and it would be interesting to track their development and impact. However, at the time of the conclusion of this dissertation, the g7+ initiative had not yet made sufficient inroads to challenge or change the prevailing understanding of these OECD concepts in the international peacebuilding discourse. It can thus be accepted that the concepts of efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability as defined by the OECD have to date been widely adopted and used and have informed the basic assumptions of what should constitute progress in development and peacebuilding initiatives.

The OECD issued a note on "Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities" in 2007, in which the same evaluation criteria that have traditionally been used for developmental and humanitarian interventions were applied to the peacebuilding context. However, in addition to the standard evaluation criteria of the OECD, this guidance note recommends that peacebuilding activities should also be evaluated against the degree of coherence they have achieved.[14] On coherence, the OECD Guidance note says:

> In the conflict prevention and peacebuilding contexts, a policy, programme or project cannot be assessed in isolation. What may seem appropriate from the point of view of one activity may not be appropriate from the point of view of the system as a whole. It is important to consider the degree to which the intervention is consistent with or aligned to the larger policy contexts (national and international) within which it is taking place; the degree to which it forms part of and is connected to a conflict strategy or overall country framework; and the

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[13] For more information on the Dialogue, see:
http://www.oecd.org/site/0,3407,en_21571361_43407692_1_1_1_1_1,00.html [22 September 2011].

[14] In the interest of transparency, it should be declared that the author assisted the Norwegian development agency (NORAD) with the initial drafting of the Guidelines, including work on coherence, and that this initial input may have informed the later work of the OECD team that developed the final draft guidance note.

degree to which it is co-ordinated with other policies, programmes or projects within its conflict environment, thematic cluster or region. (OECD, 2007:44)

In this section it has been argued that there is a widely held view in the international peacebuilding policy community that there is a causal link between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability. In the next section our understanding of coherence is refined further by means of a typology of coherence that distinguishes between four spheres of policy coherence.

3.3   A COHERENCE TYPOLOGY

Coherence can be pursued among a broad range of peacebuilding agents, across various dimensions, and at various levels. The levels, dimensions and agents often get mixed up and this causes confusion. A typology that distinguishes between four spheres of coherence, namely agency coherence, whole-of-government coherence, external coherence and internal-external coherence is proposed in this section. The aim of the typology is to assist in maintaining a meaningful distinction between the agents, dimensions and levels involved in peacebuilding coherence in the remainder of the dissertation.

3.3.1   Agency coherence

Agency coherence refers to consistency amongst the policies and actions of an individual agency, including the internal consistency of a specific policy or programme. Examples include the internal coherence of a ministry of foreign affairs, or an agency such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Consistency in this context refers to avoiding one agency working at cross-purposes with itself.[15] Coherence in this context does not imply that there should not be room for differences and debate during the policy formulation and review process, but it is understood to imply that once a policy position has been adopted, it needs to be implemented in such a way that all the different elements of the agency contribute to the overall objective in a complementary fashion. It is thus understood to be a distinction between implementing an approved policy and the evaluation and revision of such a policy. Whilst there may thus be a process underway

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[15] 'Consistency' in this context is not necessarily ethical, i.e. doing like under like circumstances with respect to any one rule or norm and avoiding double standards. I am grateful to Ramesh Thakur for pointing out this difference (e-mail correspondence, 15 May 2007).

to review a given policy, and such a process may invite critical reflection, the policy is still in place, it is expected to be implemented as approved, until it is replaced or revoked.

Most studies that deal with coordination focus on inter-agency or inter-organisational relations (e.g. Stockton, 2002; Eriksson, 1996; Porter, 2002). However, in this dissertation the view is upheld that internal agency coherence lies at the root of many of the factors that inhibit, constrain and undermine coherence. Of particular concern is the tension between those parts of an agency that set medium- to long-term goals and objectives and that measure achievement on the basis of the effects of such a policy over time, and those parts of an agency that are responsible for managing programming on a day-to-day basis, and that manage results on a short-term basis, for instance those reporting on financial expenditure and motivating for new budget allocations according to annual budget cycles. It is argued that this tension between short-term, mostly internally driven, efficiency-based management processes and longer-term, results-based policy processes aimed at influencing complex systems lies at the root of the coherence dilemma. This distinction, and the tensions between efficiency and effectiveness that flow from it, will be returned to in the next section where the factors that constrain coherence are discussed, and this argument will be expanded throughout the remainder of the dissertation.

3.3.2   Whole-of-government and whole-of-system coherence

Whole-of-government coherence refers to consistency among the policies and actions of different departments and agencies of the same government, e.g. among the ministries of defence, foreign affairs and international development assistance of the United Kingdom. The Canadian Government's so-called 3D (diplomacy, development and defence) concept is the classical example and is aimed at ensuring that its peacebuilding interventions are supported coherently by all the relevant arms of government (Patrick & Brown, 2007:56).

The whole-of-government coherence effort is thus typically a national effort that involves several government departments or agencies. There is a given commonality, i.e. the different departments and agencies all serve the same government, and, once deployed, all share the same national identity. Coordination typically takes place both at the national level and, once deployed, through some kind of in-theatre coordination mechanism (De Coning, Lurås, Schia & Ulriksen, 2009). Various tensions exist, however. The different government departments

and agencies compete for funding and national prestige and do not have a tradition of coordinating international operations or co-deployments (OECD, 2007b). Another important tension is that between national commitments and international cooperation (Picciotto, 2005). The greater the effort devoted to adopting national priorities and plans prior to deployment, the less room there is for these agencies to coordinate and adapt to the priorities and plans of their counterparts in the countries that host international operations and other international partners (De Coning et al., 2009).

At the multilateral level the UN, EU, AU and NATO are each engaged in various initiatives aimed at improving their own internal whole-of-system coherence. In the UN context, as discussed earlier, examples of these efforts include the work of the High-Level Panel on System Wide Coherence and the adoption of the Integrated Approach Model. Integration was also one of the central themes of the Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, the so-called Brahimi Report (UN, 2000b). The Secretary-General, in his comments on the Report, called for a plan that can help the different parts of the UN system to work together to develop country-specific peacebuilding strategies that are coherent, flexible and field driven (UN, 2003c). The UN Peacebuilding Commission is also meant to play an important role in facilitating and encouraging Whole-of-System Coherence in the UN system when it comes to the peacebuilding context, with the specific aim of also enhancing coherence among Member States, and with the country affected by conflict (UN, 2009).

3.3.3   External coherence

External coherence refers here to consistency among the policies pursued by the various international or external actors in a given country context. 'External', in this country-specific context, distinguishes the international agents from the local or internal agents. An example of External Coherence in the peacebuilding context could be the way in which NATO, the EU and the UN each had a defined role in the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) pillar system, and the way in which those combined roles were supposed to generate a system-wide response (Berdal & Wennmann, 2010:54).

External coherence is regarded as necessary and desirable because it is assumed that the various international agents share a common peacebuilding goal in any given context. If they are pursuing common objectives, are relating to the same internal actors, and are reliant on the

same international donors, it makes sense for them to coordinate their policies and actions (Porter, 2002). As argued in the previous section, these external actors also share the same policy assumptions about the role of coherence and its linkages with effectiveness and sustainability (OECD, 2007c). At the same time, however, these agents are in competition with each other for donor funding and international prestige, and whilst they are usually engaged in a range of coordination efforts, they are also typically in competition with each other at other levels (Patrick, 2000).

One area that is particularly relevant for External Coherence is the relationship among donors, both bilateral and multilateral. Coherence in this context addresses the need for donors to harmonise their policies and practices, amongst others, so that they can limit the transaction costs associated with their support.[16] In this context, transaction costs refer to the additional cost or burden that donor assistance places on donor recipients. For instance, a country like Tanzania may have to report to several donors, each according to a different template and time-scale. A different approach may be to have one annual report that all the donors can accept as sufficient for their purposes (OECD, 2003). Despite their cooperation in forums such as the OECD, the UN and the EU, donor countries are also in competition with each other for influence and prestige and, in pursuing these interests, often take decisions that undermine external coherence.

The UN's peacebuilding architecture provides the donor community and other international actors, e.g. major Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs); members of the Security Council; or countries from the region, with an additional meeting place where they can further improve their attempts to foster external coherence (Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), 2007). The added advantage of the UN Peacebuilding Commission is that it provides a forum not only for security-development linkages, and the internal-external debate, but it also brings together donors and others with a special interest in a specific country (UN, 2011). As Kwesi Aning and Ernest Lartey (2010) point out, another important aspect to external coherence, especially in the African context, is the relationship between the UN peacebuilding architecture and regional organisations or mechanisms. This is especially valid in those cases where conflicts that manifest in a specific country have a regional-system dynamic that makes it impossible to

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[16] 'Harmonisation' in this context refers to the harmonisation between donor approaches. Note the *Rome Declaration on Harmonization* of 25 February 2003. See http://www.aidharmonization.org [12 May 2009].

address them in isolation, such as in the Great Lakes, Mano River and Horn of Africa contexts.

3.3.4 Internal/external coherence

Internal/external coherence refers to consistency between the policies of the local and international agents in a given country context. In the context of donor and aid recipient relations, this is also known as alignment.[17] Internal/external coherence in the peacebuilding context typically relates to the perceived need for a clearly-articulated, comprehensive peacebuilding strategy that can provide the various internal and external peacebuilding agents with a common frame of reference (Smith, 2004). Examples here could be an agreed national strategic framework between the international community and host government, such as the 2008-2011 'Lift Liberia' poverty reduction strategy of Liberia (Liberia, 2008).

The importance of an overall strategic process is widely recognised and accepted in policy and research circles (Dahrendorf, 2003). However, as the *Utstein* (Smith, 2004) and other studies cited earlier have pointed out, the lack of a clearly articulated overall strategy has been identified as a critical shortcoming in most past and contemporary peacebuilding operations. The most general response to this finding has been a re-doubling of efforts to increase coherence.

The introduction of this coherence typology is not meant to suggest that coherence is pursued exclusively in one or another of these four spheres of coherence. Quite the contrary; actors are likely to pursue coherence in all the spheres where they are active. For instance, an actor like the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands will be concerned with coherence in connection with its policies towards, for instance, Afghanistan, and is likely to pursue coherence simultaneously at all four spheres foreseen in this typology. Firstly, among the various units within the Foreign Ministry; secondly, in a whole-of-government context with other government agencies; thirdly, in the inter-agency context among donors or as a member state of NATO, the EU, and the UN; and lastly, in the internal/external coherence context in its bilateral relations with Afghanistan and its participation in collective efforts at international-local coherence, such as at international donor conferences. The typology is thus meant as a

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[17] 'Alignment' is a development concept referring to the alignment between the interests of international donors and the needs and priorities of the recipients. Note in this context the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness,* of 2 March 2005. See http://www.oecd.org [12 May 2009].

tool to assist in distinguishing between peacebuilding coherence in different spheres, but it does not suggest that these spheres are not closely inter-connected.

3.4   COHERENCE AND COORDINATION

As was explained in the introductory chapter, one of the ways this dissertation differs from other studies that have looked into similar problems is the way the study distinguishes between coherence and coordination. The decision was to focus on coherence, rather than coordination, because most of the literature available to date comprises operational evaluations that focus on specific coordination problems (Stockton, 2002; Eriksson, 1996; Porter, 2002). This focus on coordination has steered these studies to a more practical- or tactical-level analysis of how coordination has been undertaken, typically between one or more organisations, coupled with suggestions on what can be done to solve coherence problems. This has resulted in these studies being blind to some of the system-level dynamics that influence the reasons why peacebuilding agents tend not to pursue coherence, even when it appears to be in their interest to do so.

Some of the key issues that need to be considered to understand the differences between coherence and coordination and to contextualise the role of coordination in peacebuilding systems will be addressed in this section. Even though this study was designed to frame the dilemma from a coherence perspective, it is still important to understand why coordination is such an important issue from a general peacebuilding policy and practice perspective.

The distinction between coherence and coordination is not widely recognised, and most of the studies cited earlier use the two terms interchangeably. In fact, many have used coordination in the way coherence is used in this study, i.e. to refer not only to coordination as a way to achieve coherence, but also as a synonym for coherence, i.e. as both the way to achieve the aim and the aim itself.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English explains that cooperation means "working together for a common purpose", whilst coordination means making things, people and parts function together efficiently and in an organised way (Crowther, 1995). The Collins (1995) English dictionary provides an insight into coordination that seems even more relevant for our purposes. It defines coordination as "the organization of the activities of two

or more groups in such a way that each may work more efficiently and be aware of what the other group(s) are doing". Both of these definitions are consistent with the way the concept is used in this study. However, whilst coherence and coordination are interlinked, one should not assume a linear or causal relationship between the two, as the one does not necessarily lead to the other, nor does more of the one necessarily result in more of the other. Each needs to be independently considered in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the inter-linkages between the two.

The most commonly recognised processes that are used to pursue coherence in peacebuilding systems are assessment and analysis, design and planning, management and coordination, and monitoring and evaluation. These four processes will be returned to, compared and referred to throughout the dissertation. It has been pointed out that coordination is often directly associated with pursuing coherence in most of the studies cited and is often used as a synonym for coherence; in this dissertation, however, it is argued that coordination is only one of the ways in which we pursue coherence and that it needs to be considered alongside the three other processes mentioned here, namely assessment, planning and monitoring and evaluation.

Coordination describes an activity of exchanging information with the intent to either, as a minimum, 'de-conflict' future activities, or to synchronise future activities so that one can take into account what the other agents are doing and adjust one's actions accordingly. For instance, people may agree on a division of work to avoid overlap or they can agree to concentrate efforts on the same problem to achieve greater leverage, without necessarily taking joint or cooperative action. For instance, in the UN Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), during the 2006-2009 period, the joint working group on protection coordinated the activities of various peacekeeping, development, humanitarian and human rights agents so that, together, but not necessarily jointly (meaning acting visibly together in the field), they could focus their efforts on agreed protection hot spots (De Coning, 2008b). In practice this meant that the peacekeeping force increased its patrols in a specific area, and that independently, certain human rights NGOs may also have increased their work in the same area. The intent was that several agents concentrated their resources on a pre-identified hot spot, with the assumption that the aggregated effort should result in more effective protection in that area. This is an example of a coordinated effort and is distinct

from, for instance, a cooperative or joint effort, which in this case would have meant a joint or combined patrol of UN peacekeepers and NGO personnel.

The most authoritative definition of coordination in the humanitarian community has been coined by Minear and Chelliah (1992:3):

> Coordination is the systematic utilization of policy instruments to deliver humanitarian assistance in a cohesive and effective manner. Such instruments include: (1) strategic planning; (2) gathering data and managing information; (3) mobilizing resources and ensuring accountability; (4) orchestrating a functional division of labour; (5) negotiating and maintaining a serviceable framework with host political authorities; and (6) providing leadership. Sensibly and sensitively employed, such instruments inject an element of discipline without unduly constraining action.[18]

In this definition, coordination is seen as a meta-goal of humanitarian action, because it contributes to efficiency and effectiveness. For Minear and Chelliah, functions such as strategic planning, gathering information, mobilising resources, providing leadership, etc. are thus all seen as sub-elements of coordination. This definition makes sense in the humanitarian context where there is a specific principled position for the various agents to remain independent, and whilst they are willing to coordinate operational activities for the sake of greater efficiency and effectiveness, they would not agree to the notion of pursuing coherence, i.e. pursuing a common strategic objective.

The understanding assigned to coordination in this dissertation is different from the Minear and Chelliah approach in that it views coordination as more or less limited to the exchange of information and the synchronisation of action. Coherence is understood as an aspirational objective and coordination as one of the things we do – alongside assessments, planning, monitoring and evaluation – to pursue that objective. Nevertheless, the Minear and Chelliah definition is useful in many ways, amongst others because it sheds light on additional aspects that can contribute to coherence, such as mobilising resources, ensuring accountability, and negotiating and maintaining a serviceable framework with host political authorities.

One interesting way of distinguishing between coordination and coherence in the UN peacebuilding context may be to compare the role of the humanitarian coordinator (HC) with that of the special representative of the secretary-general (SRSG). Whilst the SRSG is responsible for ensuring that the overall international effort, and especially the UN system-

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[18] This definition is used or quoted in most evaluation studies and related works on humanitarian coordination (see for instance Sommers, 2000; Donini, 2000; Stockton, 2002: Strand. 2003).

wide effort, is coherent, the HC is responsible for ensuring that the various humanitarian actors in a given humanitarian emergency, including the NGO actors, are coordinated (De Coning, 2010a). In this context coordination refers to a division of labour, exchange of information and, in some cases, joint or cooperative action, whilst coherence refers to pursuing common objectives.

In the humanitarian context one can assume that all the humanitarian organisations that ascribe to the principles of the humanitarian code of conduct[19] share a set of common principles. As they are highly independent, however, there is a need to coordinate their actions. Coordination in the humanitarian context is, in fact, based on the recognition of independence, and those responsible for coordination, such as the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, need to provide 'leadership' without impeding the independence of any of the humanitarian agencies that voluntarily participate in the coordination process (Reindorp & Wiles, 2001). 'Leadership' in this context does not imply authority to direct or command and control, but refers rather to a pre-agreed convening and process facilitation role.

Whilst there are similar tensions between independence and leadership in the peacebuilding context, there are two important differences. The first is that there can be no assumption that the peacebuilding agents have shared or common principles. Many peacebuilding agents have values and principles that place them in direct competition with one another. This aspect is considered in greater detail in the next section. However, peacebuilding agents are also, at the same time, interdependent in that none can achieve the overall peace consolidation objective on their own. Each has to contribute their part, but it is only the combined effort that can achieve the overall peace consolidation objective.

Humanitarian actors are not interdependent in the same way. They can achieve their objectives – saving lives and alleviating suffering – without each other. Every life saved and every person assisted is valued. They can thus operate independently from one another, but they may choose to cooperate and, as a result, a certain degree of specialisation has developed among them. This specialisation has made some of the humanitarian actors more interdependent on one another, but the point is that humanitarian action is not fundamentally

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[19] The most widely recognised is the 'Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief', but there are also others such as the Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response.

predicated on an interdependent relationship in the same way that peacebuilding actors are (OCHA, 2003a & 2003b).

Humanitarian action is aimed at saving lives and alleviating suffering. Success is not measured by achieving these aims in a sustainable way. In fact, from a humanitarian perspective, the responsibility for the longer-term resolution of the conflict that causes the humanitarian suffering, in the case of man-made as opposed to natural disasters, lies with the peacebuilding agents. Peacebuilding agents, on the other hand, have as their aim the consolidation of a peace process and the long-term resolution of a conflict. Success, for them, is measured in the sustainability of the peace process. The argument in this dissertation is that it is this distinction that necessitates, in the peacebuilding context, a focus on coherence, rather than on coordination, and that necessitates a system-wide coherence rather than an inter-agency coordination approach.

3.5   CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced and analysed coherence and the coherence dilemma. Coherence, in the international peacebuilding context, can be understood as the effort to direct the wide range of activities undertaken in the political, governance, development, human rights, humanitarian, rule of law and security dimensions of a peacebuilding system towards common strategic objectives.

The coherence dilemma refers to the persistent gap between policy-level assumptions about the value and causal role of coherence in peacebuilding effectiveness, and empirical evidence to the contrary. In this chapter it has been established that there is a widely held and acted upon assumption in the peacebuilding policy community that improved coherence leads to greater efficiency and effectiveness, and that this, in turn, will result in a more sustainable peacebuilding impact.

A number of evaluation studies and reports cited in this chapter have found that the peacebuilding interventions undertaken to date have lacked coherence and that this has undermined their sustainability and ability to achieve their strategic objectives. These findings have further strengthened the policy-level view that if we improve coherence we will also improve the effectiveness and sustainability of peacebuilding interventions.

An analytical typology that provides for four types of policy coherence: agency coherence, whole-of-government coherence, external coherence and internal/external coherence, was proposed in this chapteras a way of looking into some of the unique features of coherence in each of these contexts. However, it was also stressed that all peacebuilding agents are active across most, if not all, of these typologies, so the suggestion is not that specific cases of coherence need to fit neatly into one of these categories.

In the next chapter the aim is to identify and consider some of the factors that limit, inhibit or constrain our ability to achieve coherence. Four factors are discussed, namely the tension between long-term impact and short-term output; conflicting values, principles and mandates; the context-specific scope for coherence; and the power imbalance between local and international peacebuilding agents.

CHAPTER 4

FACTORS THAT CONSTRAIN COHERENCE

What rarely happens, though, is a solid discussion about the underlying assumptions and norms peacebuilding strategies are based on and how they influence the activities and objectives of a programme…implementing agencies, such as the UN or bilateral donors, rarely question their moral frameworks and normative assumptions. Instead, they continue to export a liberal understanding of peaceful coexistence, without considering that their underlying hypotheses on how change can be secured, influence and determine the results of the programme. (Körppen, Ropers & Giessmann, 2011:79)

The current process [*in Afghanistan*] shows with all certainty that international support is inherently problematic as there is always a risk it will end in dependence rather than local ownership of the peace. (Olsson & Jarstad, 2011:103)

The challenge of rebuilding war-torn societies is to nurture and create the political, economic, and social space within which indigenous actors can identify, develop, and employ the resources necessary to build a peaceful, just and prosperous society. (Bush, 1996:86)

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, coherence was introduced and consideration was given to why it has gained such prominence among the peacebuilding policy community. In this chapter, a number of factors that constrain coherence in the peacebuilding context will be considered. These include the tension between short-term and longer-term approaches and perspectives; differences in values, principles and mandates; the degree to which a specific context may be conducive to coherence; and the tensions and power imbalances between internal and external agents. This chapter introduces and considers those factors that constrain coherence and, in so doing, contribute to the coherence dilemma in peacebuilding.

In Chapter 3, it was established that there is a widely-held understanding in the peacebuilding policy community that the lack of coherence among the diverse international and local agents that make up the peacebuilding system has resulted in, among other things, inter-agency rivalry, working at cross-purposes, competition for funding, duplication of effort and less than optimal economies of scale (Fukuyama, 2004:40). It was also established that this lack of coherence and its effects have contributed to an overall poor success rate measured in the lack of sustainability of the systems that have come about as a result of these international interventions (Collier *et al*., 2003; Suhrke & Samset, 2007:199).

As discussed in Chapter 3, various agencies, governments and organisations have started experimenting, independently from one another, with a range of models and mechanisms aimed at improving the overall coherence, cooperation and coordination of their conflict-management systems in order to address these shortcomings and improve the overall success rate of the international conflict-management system. All these initiatives have similar objectives, namely to achieve greater harmonisation and synchronisation among the activities of the different international and local agents. The overall goal is to bridge the security-development divide and to integrate the political, security, developmental, economic and other dimensions assumed to ensure a system-wide response to any specific conflict system (Donini, Niland & Wermester, 2004:3).

The coherence dilemma has been explained as the gap between the value and role ascribed to coherence at the policy level and the limits of coherence experienced at the operational level by practitioners. At the policy level, coherence is viewed as a critically important approach that works to improve effectiveness and sustainability. At the operational level, the feedback from the practitioners is that, despite their best efforts over many years and despite having tried various approaches, models and tools to enhance coherence, it remains an elusive and unattainable goal. This chapter is aimed at improving the understanding of why practitioners find coherence so unreachable by exploring some of the factors that seem to limit, inhibit or constrain their ability to achieve coherence.

There are two ways of responding to the gap between policy and practice. The first approach would be to argue that the gap is caused by poor or insufficient policy implementation (Kaspersen & Sending, 2005). If that is the case, it should be possible to improve the coherence deficit by increasing or improving efforts to implement existing policy, by investing in more and better coordination, by focusing on more and better training, and by improving the organisations, systems and processes that are used to manage and support coherence (Berdal & Wennmann, 2010:67). It is probably fair to say that this has been the most common and prevalent policy response to date and that most of the policy developments and operational experiments discussed in this dissertation are examples of the kinds of efforts that have been invested over the last decades to try to further improve our ability to achieve coherence. However, despite rigorous and sustained efforts over this period, the persistent feedback from the field is that achieving coherence remains as elusive as ever.

An alternative approach could be to argue that the gap is caused by inherent contradictions in the mandates, interests and value systems of the peacebuilding agents. For instance, Paris and Sisk (2007) argue that peacebuilding should be understood as inherently contradictory, with competing imperatives facing the internal and external actors, both between and among themselves, that constitute 'vexing policy dilemmas', that requires trade-offs between multiple mandates, needs and priorities without any obvious solutions. As a result, the agencies that are responsible for programmes and campaigns may often have to settle for 'second best' or 'partially coherent' solutions in order to establish a workable foundation for cooperation (De Coning, 2007c). Paris and Sisk (2009:49) argue that, as a result of these inherent contradictions and the policy dilemmas they create, peacebuilding agents may have to settle for a kind of good-enough or "compromised peacebuilding" result.

Both these approaches may have merit and may, in some contexts, complement each other. In some contexts it may be possible to enhance the level of coherence by working harder to find common ground. However, there may be other contexts where achieving more coherence is simply not possible. To understand these nuances better, and in order to recognise the contexts within which we may have to accept that more effort will not yield more coherence, we need to take a closer look at some of the factors that limit, inhibit or constrain the scope for coherence. Four such factors are explored in this chapter: impact/output tensions; conflicting values, principles and mandates; external-internal power imbalances and the degree to which a specific context is conducive, or not, to coherence. The argument is that these four aspects, which are not meant to be an exhaustive list, are indicative of the kind of factors that inherently constrain the scope for achieving coherence.

4.2   LONG-TERM IMPACT VS SHORT-TERM OUTPUT CONSIDERATIONS

Peacebuilding agents have to manage competing demands and try to balance multiple considerations. When the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India evaluates its engagement in the peacebuilding process of, for instance South Sudan, it is likely to make that assessment at two levels. On the one hand the Ministry will consider the long-term impact that India's engagement has had, or is having, on the peace process, i.e. whether, from an overall and long-term perspective, their contribution has had, or is having, the intended effect. In reality, such assessments are rarely made, except perhaps by historians. It is extremely difficult to make such assessments with any accuracy, except long after the fact. However, the idea that

such a level of assessment can be made is important, because it is the macro theories of change that inform the specific policies of a peacebuilding agent in a given country. It is only by evaluating how these assumptions have played out in specific contexts that peacebuilding agents will adjust their theories of change.

As said above, such evaluations are rarely attempted in reality, especially whilst such missions are still ongoing. However, in some cases—especially when a specific mission or initiative seems to have stalled, seems to be taking longer than anticipated, or is facing some crisis of trust—peacebuilding agents have attempted to undertake strategic assessments that question whether the right strategy is in place and whether the existing strategy is having the desired effect or not. However, in most cases, long-term impact is simply assumed and continuously re-framed as an aspirational goal.

On the other hand, a peacebuilding agent like the Foreign Ministry of India in the previous example, is likely to actively monitor and evaluate the actual programmes and initiatives India is supporting and undertaking in Southern Sudan. These actual programmes typically are assessed on an annual basis when further funding has to be approved. In other words, success is measured in the context of whether a specific budget has been spent, on whether specific programmes are being implemented as planned, in terms of how many people have been trained, etc.

The policy-level approach to coherence assumes that organisations are motivated by the long-term impact perspective, but the empirical evidence suggests that their short-term output considerations are much more important in influencing decisions that impact on coherence. This difference should not really matter if it is assumed that the short-term outputs cumulatively build-up to generate the long-term impact. This aggregated effect is assumed in most theories of change, i.e. that the aggregated effect of all the peacebuilding programmes and activities collectively and cumulatively contribute to building momentum towards the larger and longer-term peacebuilding objectives. However, what the *Utstein* (Smith, 2004) and other evaluation reports cited earlier have found is that there is a significant gap between most of the peacebuilding programmes and activities and the larger strategies they are meant to pursue. In other words, many of those who are implementing the programmes and activities in practice are not aware of, or directed by, longer-term strategies. Instead, their day-to-day decisions are informed by, or overshadowed by, more immediate concerns, namely how best

to achieve the goals and results on which they will be evaluated in the short-term, i.e. on a weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis.

The following quote by Peter van Buren is a good example of the kind of negative consequences that can be generated by this short-term decision-making culture. He was a United States Foreign Service Officer who served in Baghdad during the American occupation of Iraq, and he wrote a book about his experiences entitled "We meant well: how I helped lose the battle for the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people". The following quote is from Carol Jean Gallo's blog:

> We were never able to do things on a large enough scale to make a difference, because the thinking was never long term. Everyone in Iraq was there on a series of one-year tours, myself included. Everyone was told that they needed to create accomplishments, that we had to document our success, that we had to produce a steady stream of photos of accomplishments, and pictures of smiling Iraqis, and metrics of charts. It was impossible under these circumstances for us to do anything long term… We rarely thought past next week's situation report. (Gallo, 2011)

As this quote reminds us, a week or a month can feel like a long time from the perspective of a peacekeeping officer or a peacebuilding programme manager in the field. An annual plan or evaluation, or budgeting for the next year, can feel like long-term planning in the context of the pressures of a results-based management approach and the urgent pace of this kind of field operations. However, considering that many peacekeeping missions are deployed for five to ten years and that most peace processes require decades of sustained engagement before they can be considered to have become sustainable, one can gain a more realistic perspective. In the context of this dissertation, short-term refers to the immediate programme window, perhaps not longer that 12 months, medium-term refers to the current phase of engagement, perhaps not longer than 24 to 36 months, and long-term refers to the time it is estimated to take for a peace process to be consolidated and eventually to be self-sustainable, usually from one to several decades.

The short-term decisions of those responsible for managing specific programmes are informed by the attempt to demonstrate immediate gains that can be used to report that these programmes are producing results within a given reporting period, which is typically quarterly, and annually. They are concerned with spending an annual budget within the allocated time and according to plan. From this perspective, it is often more important to spend all the money that has been allocated than ensuring that it has been spent sustainably.

The short-term incentives encourage spending the money to demonstrate output. Those responsible know that they will be evaluated against whether the budget has been spent and the on the outputs achieved. The question as to whether it has been spent meaningfully can only really be answered in the long term. Programme managers are thus understandably more concerned about those aspects that they know they will be assessed against in the short-term. The longer-term aggregated effect is perhaps assumed to be factored in at the overall programme and campaign designing and planning level and is thus not the concern of the manager implementing the programme in the field. All they have to demonstrate is that they are following the plan, applying the guidance and policy direction, and achieving the immediate goals set for them. The longer-term impact is the responsibility and concern of those making the policies and longer-term plans.

The basic tenets of the results-based management approach are well meaning and have laudable objectives from a public auditing perspective. However, these well-meaning intentions have negative consequences when they result in a management culture that rewards short-term and self-reflective gains that amount to increasing the influence, recognition and market share of their respective agencies. In other words, when not directed strategically, bureaucracies tend to revert to the fail-safe fall-back position of self-preservation – making yourself and your organisation look good – as evaluated in the short term, i.e. within a given reporting period (De Coning, Lurås, Schia and Ulriksen, 2009).

In a peacebuilding context, where the objectives are peace consolidation and sustainable peace, as measured in terms of the given society emerging out of conflict over many years (and not in terms of the success of the external agency), the results of this kind of short-term results-based management approach can often be perverse. In order to spend the annual budget according to plan, the agency is under pressure to forge ahead even if the conditions are not conducive to that kind of programming. For instance, those responsible may realise that, ideally, they should have taken more time to consult their local counterparts or to coordinate with other external actors to avoid overlap, but the pressure to spend the budget in the given timeframe may be such that the money has to be spent now, with the hope that downstream coordination can correct and refine impact. The result may be a well-executed programme that meets all the output deliverables, but that, in reality, is poorly aligned with the needs of the people it was intended to benefit. Some may even have a perverse effect on the very people it is meant to assist. For instance, the net effect may be that the rate of

delivery overwhelms the ability of the local community to absorb the assistance, and this may have unintended negative consequences, such as fuelling corruption.

Thus, there is a significant tension between measuring peacebuilding gains from the perspective of the society emerging out of conflict and in terms of the time it takes for such a society to develop the capacity to manage their own peace process without external assistance, and measuring peacebuilding gains from the perspective of an external agency responsible for overseeing specific programme interventions, and that measures progress on the basis of its outputs and in quarterly and annual cycles. These short-term and long-term considerations, and these external agency and local community considerations do not have to be incompatible; in fact, they are assumed to be complementary, but in reality the short- to medium-term incentives often undermine the long-term objectives.

The overall effect may actually undermine the ability of the society to develop the self-resilience necessary to manage their own peace consolidation process, because the pressure on short-term gains tends to generate dependency on substitution measures rather than invest in long-term local capacity (Eriksen, 2009:663). For instance, in order to achieve the results sought by the external agencies, a large proportion of the educated and experienced local work force typically ends up working for the external agencies instead of for local institutions. Similarly, for the external agencies to show results, the bulk of the foreign assistance is likely to flow through these agencies, as opposed to through local institutions. The end result is a system that enables the external agencies to show that it has carried out a range of activities in country x that show how successful the external agency has been and how much good it has done, while the intended impact, in fact, was to generate local capacity so that the society transitioning out of conflict is able to generate and maintain its own self-sustainable peace consolidation process.

For instance, De Coning, Lurås, Schia and Ulriksen (2009), in a study of Norway's engagement in Afghanistan found that, in the absence of a clear strategy, Norway's diplomats, police advisors and military personnel fell back into a 'make Norway look good' mode. This meant, for instance, that instead of concentrating their efforts on one or two areas where their relatively small contribution could have made an impact, they chose to spread themselves across the widest possible range of activities. This had the desired effect of creating visibility for Norway across the largest possible range of initiatives, but lessened the impact their

actions could have had on the peace process in Afghanistan. Short-term output driven-programmes and activities that are not directed by a long-term strategic vision can thus actually undermine the long-term goal. The long-term aim of making a contribution to the sustainable peace was the stated goal of the Norwegian intervention, but the short-term objectives of making sure Norway was seen to be effective and efficient in making such a contribution became the driving force that determined which activities were engaged in and on what money would be spent. The activities and their immediate outcomes are valued in the short-term and result in measurable outputs and outcomes that can be used to explain and motivate the expenditure to the auditor-general. The long-term benefit is assumed, but in reality it is not considered because the effect is so long-term that it will not have an impact on the decision-making process that directs the funding during this intervention cycle.

In the context or timeframe within which decisions are being taken on a specific programmatic intervention, one can thus conclude that the incentives to generate short-term and self-reflective outputs and outcomes are strong and persuasive, whilst the incentives to act in the long-term sustainable interest of the affected society is weak and unsupported. If this is the effect that this long-term impact vs. short-term output tension has on the actions of one agent, and in the context of one programme, imagine the aggregated effect this tension is having on all the peacebuilding agents and all the programmes they undertake. Is it surprising, then, that these societies remain fragile and risk lapsing back into violent conflict, despite sustained engagement over decades and billions of dollars of foreign assistance?

This tension is further aggravated by the problem that the overall effect of the combined activities of all the peacebuilding agents are observable only from a system-wide impact perspective, and that its sustainability can only be measured over the long term, and in hindsight. The interdependence among the actors and the benefits of improving coherence among them are thus not immediately obvious to the agent at the programme or output level. Those measuring progress at the systems or impact level and those measuring progress at the programme or output level are disconnected. They operate at different levels and in different timeframes. By the time the longer-term impact evaluations are undertaken, those that have had to take the day-to-day and year-to-year decisions about what to fund and how to best undertake their respective programmes have long since moved on to other positions and concerns.

Pursuing coherence thus makes sense in hindsight, and from the long-term, impact-level perspective, but it does not drive the day-to-day decisions of most of the peacebuilding agents. That is why peacebuilding agents may seem to have multiple personalities in that they are able to identify, discuss and lament many of the dysfunctions of the systems they work in and recognise that many of the activities they are engaged in do not make sense from a long-term, local-ownership or sustainable-peace perspective, and yet they continue to carry out those same activities, because that is what they are driven to do by the incentive structure in their organisations and the criteria against which their performance is measured.

Another contributing factor is that even if these agencies were motivated to try to pursue long-term impact strategies, it is extremely difficult to meaningfully measure the effects of any one activity, programme or organisation on a highly complex non-linear and dynamic set of systemic events (OECD, 2007a). It is almost impossible to single out one specific activity or programme and then determine its effect on the outcome of a specific sector or phase, let alone the peace process as a whole (De Coning & Romita, 2009). The further away we move, over time and in terms of the scope of factors taken into consideration, the more complex it becomes to determine impact. This therefore makes it very difficult for organisations to focus on impact and, as a consequence, on coherence (Caplan, 2005:13).

This tension between long-term impact and short-term output is thus an integral part of the internal dynamics of the agencies that undertake peacebuilding. It is one of the factors that are inherent to how our systems function, and it will therefore always constrain coherence. This tension is one of the factors that make it impossible to achieve the kind of high-level coherence that the policy community assumes is attainable.

This finding also means that agency coherence is much more of a significant coherence challenge than generally acknowledged. Whilst most studies dealing with coordination focuses on the relations between organisations, the coherence dilemma caused by the inherent tensions between long-term impact and short-term output resides principally within each agency. There is a lack of coherence between those parts of the agency that control the activities of the agency based on short- to medium-term feedback processes and those parts of the agency that sets long-term goals (Berdal & Wennmann, 2010:70). This tension is one of the important factors that limit our ability to achieve coherence in peacebuilding systems.

4.3   CONFLICTING VALUES, PRINCIPLES AND MANDATES

Another factor is related to the observation that the values, principles and mandates of some of the agents in a peacebuilding system are inherently incoherent (Paris & Sisk, 2009; Fukuyama, 2004). Each peacebuilding agent comes from, or has his/her roots in, a specific discipline and paradigm, be it humanitarian, military, human rights, development, law enforcement, private sector, diplomacy, or something else. They have been educated in and have developed their career experiences steeped in the values, principles, worldviews and theories of change specific to that discipline or profession (World Bank, 2011:25). These different educational and professional paradigms are further reinforced by separate institutional and bureaucratic traditions and approaches.

In the UN context, for instance, the political and security dimensions are associated with the Security Council and the Secretariat, whilst the humanitarian and development dimensions are associated with the UN's agencies, programmes and funds. In the national context, there are typically considerable cultural and professional differences between those working in the military, police, diplomatic and development sectors, and these differences are even more pronounced when we add the private sector and non-government organisations to the mix.

These multiple, parallel paradigms result in different institutions and agents with different values, principles and mandates working side-by-side, but each with their own rationale and theories of change. The result is that the various agents have different approaches with regard to how best a given peace process should be supported, and these differences typically manifest in different ideas about which aspects to prioritise, what forms of coordination are appropriate and how to measure success (Stedman, Cousens & Rothchild, 2002:89).

In general, those that operate in a political and security paradigm may prefer to, or be specifically mandated to, prioritise stabilising a situation before dealing with social justice and human rights issues. This may result in them giving priority, at least in the short term, to regime security and negotiated agreements that are likely to generate stability, rather than to addressing human rights violations and bringing persons accused of crimes to justice. For the same reason, they are typically less enthusiastic, at least in the short term, about dealing with issues such as corruption, black-market trading, racketeering or narcotics, especially if the actors they perceive to be key to stabilising the situation are also suspected of being

responsible for human rights atrocities or criminal behaviour (Stewart, 2006; Chesterman 2002).

On the other hand, agents for whom rule of law and human rights are the primary paradigm are likely to have a directly opposing view. They are likely to argue that enforcing national and international laws and safeguarding human rights will have a far greater stabilising effect and that any delay in introducing and addressing human rights will simply serve to further undermine peace consolidation. Furthermore, they also have a longer-term or system-wide argument, namely that ensuring that justice is seen to be done in any given case will also have a deterrent effect on others in future conflicts in that they will realise that they are likely to be punished, nationally or internationally, for their crimes and abuses (Thakur, 2006).

In Darfur, this fundamental peace-vs.-justice tension has driven the debate between those arguing in favour of the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment of President Bashir on the one hand, and those favouring some kind of arrangement that can give priority to first securing a peace process, on the other (Egeland, 2008). Those that align themselves with the peace-first position argue, for instance, that the UN was on the cusp of negotiating a peace agreement with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and, if successful, this agreement would have saved countless lives and have removed a major destabilising factor in the region where Sudan, Uganda, the DRC and the Central African Republic come together. However, the ICC indictment of Joseph Kony, the leader of the LRA, removed Kony's incentive to enter into a peace agreement, and this has resulted in the LRA returning to the bush, and the continuation of the fighting in that region at a very high cost in terms of human suffering and the stability of the region (Egeland, 2008).

Even among the actors engaged in security there is often a difference in the emphasis that is placed on state security as opposed to human security. The latter is often seen as 'soft' security since it focuses on individuals and the civilian population and has therefore traditionally enjoyed lower priority among peacekeepers or stabilisation forces (Sande Lie & De Carvalho, 2009). Advocates of human security, by contrast, often stress that sustainable peace can be achieved only by focusing on the needs of the population, including their security needs as they perceive them, and that any security operation which fails to take this into account is likely to fail in the end. The security actors may thus agree on the end state, but those that are influenced by a state-security approach will have different theories of

change about how to get there and different measures of effectiveness from those with a human security approach. The former gives priority to stability and the latter to long-term sustainability (Berdal, 2009). One would think that the two should be compatible, but experiences in countries like Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the last decade have shown how the prioritising of the one over the other can easily result in a winning-the-battle-but-losing-the-war syndrome (Stewart & Knaus, 2011; Friis, 2010).

The tension between 'protection of civilians' and 'combating opposing forces' is another case in point and also relates to the impact/output discussion in the previous section. In Afghanistan, fighting the Taliban made sense from an outcome perspective that measured progress against number of combat actions, number of Taliban killed, etc. Measured against this kind of output indicators, the NATO operation in Afghanistan appeared, at first, to be performing well. However, the worsening security situation eventually forced NATO to re-appraise its approach and to refocus on the protection of civilians (Friis, 2010). Very few organisations are faced with such stark feedback, and most are likely to continue unaware that their output-oriented actions are having little impact – or worse, an adverse impact.

In some cases, the timetable of one actor or dimension may be in conflict with the principles of another. One case in point is the elections timetable in Liberia that motivated those responsible for the elections to encourage the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Monrovia to return to their original communities in 2005 to be registered there to vote. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) put pressure on those agencies responsible for reintegration to persuade the IDPs to return and to start offering them reintegration support in their communities of origin. However, these agencies disagreed with the return timetable proposed by UNMIL because their assessments informed them that conditions were not yet conducive to sustainable returns. This situation caused serious tension between the political and developmental/humanitarian actors because their respective mandates and their respective operating values and principles brought them into direct opposition with one another (McCandless, 2008).

The differences highlighted in these examples reflect fundamental differences in the mandates, value systems and principles of some of the actors engaged in peacebuilding. It

would be naïve to assume that these differences can be resolved through coordination on the assumption that all the agents share the same overall goals (Paris & Sisk, 2009:60). In the end, as these examples indicate, such differences will need to be negotiated on and trade-offs agreed to in each specific context (Berdal & Wennmann, 2010:9). These case-specific trade-offs cannot resolve the fundamental underlying differences. In fact, this type of negotiated cooperation often leaves the specific actors less tolerant of each other than before they were forced into the situation that required them to enter into such a transaction, because the outcome typically ends up favouring those with more leverage and political clout and, whilst the outcome may be an agreed way forward, the end result is not greater coherence but increased tension and resentment (Zartman & Touval, 2010:2). And yet, such trade-offs are necessary, in a given situation, to overcome the practical impasse and find a workable solution that will enable the actors to move beyond that point so that they can continue to carry out their respective mandates. Such ad hoc tactical transactions should not be confused with strategic coherence, which aims to achieve a common understanding of a situation as well as a common strategic response to it.

Sometimes the mandates of the different partners are inherently irreconcilable and hence significantly limit the potential for coherence. Donini points out, for instance, that there is a deep underlying tension between those agencies that derive their mandate from international treaties and agreements that are universally applicable—such as those on human rights, the rights of the child, refugees and the laws of armed conflict—and those agencies that are mandated to act on the authority of the Security Council in specific cases. He argues that:

> …when the crunch comes, expedient politics nearly always trumps universal principles. It is unlikely that the tensions among the international actors that derive their legitimacy from time-bound Security Council resolutions and those who claim their legitimacy from international treaties and international humanitarian law will evaporate like morning mist anytime soon. (Donini, Niland & Wermester, 2004:4)

Here Donini is specifically referring to the tension between political and security actors like a UN peacekeeping mission and humanitarian actors like the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) or a humanitarian NGO like Doctors Without Borders (MSF). As pointed out in Chapter 2, humanitarian relief organisations constitute one particular set of actors that operate under a different mandate to all the others. International humanitarian law and the humanitarian Code of Conduct (IFRC, 1994) stress the independence, neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian actors. As a result of this principled approach and operational framework, humanitarian actors have resisted attempts to become integrated into a comprehensive or integrated approach.

Humanitarian actors have no wish to be 'coherent' with the political and military dimensions of peacebuilding interventions, both because of their different priorities and because of their need to remain neutral and impartial. A blurring of these distinctive identities and roles undermines the operational framework of the humanitarian community and impacts negatively on their security (Metcalfe, Giffen & Elhawary, 2011). Humanitarian actors therefore resist being made part of a comprehensive or integrated approach arrangement and react strongly if other actors (the military in particular) claim to be engaging in humanitarian activities (Cornish, 2007).

This is not to say that it is impossible for there to be a meaningful relationship between humanitarian actors and peacebuilding agents; however, such a relationship will need to be built on the recognition of each other's different roles, and not on any preconceived notions of the inherent value of coherence. For the humanitarian actors, the humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality are non-negotiable fundamental principles, whilst coordination is something pragmatic and tactical, and therefore context specific. For peacebuilding actors, on the other hand, coherence and comprehensiveness is increasingly becoming a core operational principle because they perceive it to be intrinsically linked to the successful achievement of their end goals. These two different approaches to the value of coherence further contribute to the tension between these two communities.

To conclude this discussion on the role that fundamentally different values, principles and mandates play in limiting the scope for coherence, Bruce Jones is quoted as saying that "managing such trade-offs is an inherent challenge – perhaps the inherent challenge – in managing the implementation of peace agreements or managing regime consolidation in transition" (Donini, Niland & Wermester, 2004:215). There are fundamental differences in the values, principles and mandates of some of the peacebuilding agents, as well as other stakeholders such as humanitarian actors, that act as inherent constraints on the degree to which it is possible to achieve coherence in peacebuilding systems.

4.4   CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO COHERENCE

In Chapter 3 it was established that there is an assumption in the policy community that more coherence leads to more effective and thus more sustainable peacebuilding outcomes. In this section that assumption is challenged and the argument will be made that the correlation that

has been observed between the degree of coherence and the relative sustainability in some peacebuilding contexts is not indicative of a causal link.

Instead, it is shown that contexts where there is a low level of volatility or a low risk of a relapse into violent conflict are conducive to greater coherence (De Coning & Friis, 2011). In other words, the context determines the scope for coherence. In those peacebuilding systems that can be characterised as less volatile—where violent conflict has ended and the likelihood of a relapse into violent conflict in the short- to medium term is low, for instance the 2007-2011 post-conflict 'UNMIL-period' in Liberia—a relatively high degree of coherence has been attained. In contrast, in more volatile peacebuilding systems, for instance, Afghanistan, Chad and the DRC, where some degree of violent conflict is still ongoing and where the likelihood of a lapse into large-scale violent conflict cannot be ruled out, it has been observed that despite significant efforts to improve coherence, the results have been marginal, at best. This is surprising because the pressure from the political and policy level to achieve coherence seems to peak during periods when the peacebuilding systems are most volatile. As a result, these are the periods during which the most effort, in terms of resources, time and political will, seems to be invested in improving coherence at all levels, especially in whole-of-government and inter-agency coherence. The lack of coherence recorded in these contexts is thus not due to lack of effort.

This observation suggests that systemic or contextual influences—the degree to which a system is conducive to coherence—may be a more important factor in determining the degree of coherence that is likely to be achieved than the intensity of the effort or the coherence model that is applied. Simply put, certain contexts may be more conducive to coherence than others. This would imply that in those cases where more coherence has been achieved, for instance in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Burundi, the result is not necessarily linked to the intensity of the coherence effort or the specific model employed, but rather to the favourable environment and the prevailing attitude of the principle stakeholders, including and especially the local actors (Stedman, Cousens & Rothchild, 2002:666).

The tensions caused by differences in mandates, values and principles addressed in the previous section tend to become even more acute when the security situation is volatile. If security forces are engaged in combat operations against spoilers or insurgents, or if insurgents carry out violent attacks, the volatility introduced into the system is likely to have,

at the very least, short-term negative effects for progress in other parts of the system, for instance in the political, governance, humanitarian and developmental domains (Newman & Richmond, 2006:17). If the situation is so volatile that the military component needs to use force to prevent or manage an outbreak of violent conflict, it signals a degree of risk and uncertainty that will impact on all the other dimensions of the peace process. Civilian casualties, displacements that generate refugees and IDPs, and the destruction of livelihoods and infrastructure are all typical consequences of the use of force. Actors engaged in humanitarian relief operations or development programmes may therefore be outraged by the human suffering and destruction generated by the military action, even if those actions are intended to improve the protection of civilians, for instance the actions taken by MONUC in the Kivus in the 2006-2008 period (Autessere, 2010).

The conclusion, therefore, is that coherence will be negatively affected once there is an outbreak of violence, especially if the use of force becomes necessary to prevent or manage such an outbreak of violent conflict. The use of force and violent conflict has a polarising effect, regardless of the motive. A serious lapse into conflict tends to undermine whatever strategic coherence may have been arrived at, and under such pressure the coherence that the peacebuilding system may have achieved is likely to collapse and to be re-configured into smaller clusters or factions that have like-minded values, principles and operational cultures. The levels of coherence in these smaller factions may increase because their positions crystallise for or against the use of force, but the overall or system-level coherence between these sub-systems is likely to decrease. In severe cases, the peacebuilding system may collapse and will thus have to be regenerated once a new peace agreement has been negotiated. A general finding in this regard is thus that violence negatively affects coherence at all levels–agency coherence, whole-of-government coherence, external coherence and external/Internal coherence—in the following ways:

- Agency coherence: There is likely to be a greater degree of disagreement within different parts of an agency about how to respond. For instance, the department dealing with humanitarian actors and those dealing with security organisations in the same foreign ministry are likely to disagree more about what is an appropriate response. Those dealing with humanitarian actors are likely to argue for greater safeguards and for more isolation between the humanitarian and stabilisation actions, whilst those dealing with the peacebuilding mission and the security actors are likely to insist on more coordination and integration.

- <u>Whole-of-government coherence</u>: There is likely to be a greater degree of disagreement among government agencies engaged in a whole-of-government process about how to respond and the civilian agencies of government. Those involved in development and humanitarian work are especially likely to want more distance between themselves and their military counterparts.

- <u>External coherence</u>: There is likely to be a greater degree of disagreement among the different external agencies in a given context, especially amongst those that are security and politically focused, and those that are working on development and humanitarian issues.

- <u>External/Internal coherence</u>: There is likely to be a greater degree of disagreement between the internal and external actors about how to respond to the increased risk of a relapse into violent conflict, and this is likely to be further exacerbated by a higher degree of disagreement among the internal actors in the given context. In the DRC the government would like the UN mission to be more active in directly using force against armed groups, whilst in Afghanistan, the government is increasingly distancing themselves from NATO when the use of force results in civilian casualties (Suhrke, 2011).

A useful example is the action taken by the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the UN Mission (MONUC) to forcefully disarm those militias that did not voluntary join the disarmament campaign and who continued to destabilise and harm civilians in North and South Kivus (Autessere, 2010:187). These militias were not party to the peace process and committed atrocities against the local population. The intention was thus to improve the protection of civilians by removing the threat posed by these militias. However, the government's military campaigns, supported by MONUC, also resulted in the displacement of the local population, and the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo also abused the communities in the areas over which they gained control (Autessere, 2010:188). The net result was more instability, violence and abuse and a greater risk to the civilian community. The UN mission was, at first, taken aback by the negative reaction of the humanitarian community because it found it difficult to accept that their action, which was intended to increase the protection of civilians, had the opposite effect. Over time, however, the negative impact of the armed forces of the DRC became obvious, and the UN Security Council refined the mandate of the mission, and linked UN support to a strict monitoring and

compliance regime.[20] This experience demonstrated, however, that even the well-intentioned use of force has a negative effect on the scope for coherence.

What this example and the feedback from the field in similar volatile situations in Afghanistan, Darfur and Chad suggest, is that the use of force by international security forces and the level of volatility in the society in question have a negative effect on the scope for coherence. Hence, it can be postulated that one of the most important indicators of the degree to which meaningful coherence is likely to be achievable in a given context is the level of risk of a lapse into violent conflict, or the extent of that violence once an outbreak has occurred.

The polarising effect of violent conflict, or the threat of imminent violent conflict, implies that the values and operating principles that guide the various actors are more likely to be in conflict with each other in contexts where some of the international and local actors are hostile to one another. Violent conflicts tend to sharpen distinctions and to bring differences to the fore, also among those that are allies or that may agree otherwise on a broad range of issues.

An important factor that may determine the scope for coherence thus concerns the extent to which violent conflict is part of the system's characteristics. Situations like those in Somalia, Darfur, the Eastern DRC and Afghanistan where conflict is ongoing produce highly challenging coherence experiences. In comparison, in those situations where violent conflict has come to an end, and where there is a low likelihood of a relapse into violent conflict in the short to medium term, as in Liberia, Burundi and Sierra Leone, the scope for coherence is high, as demonstrated by the peacebuilding frameworks and related agreements achieved and the degree to which a broad range of peacebuilding agents are cooperating to implement these agreements.

If the scope for coherence in situations where violent conflict is imminent, or where there has been an outbreak, is more limited than in situations where there is a low risk of violent conflict, this would mean that the degree of coherence that can be achieved in a given context cannot be expected to change independently from the degree to which the system dynamics are conducive to coherence.

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[20] For more information on the mandate of the UN mission in the DRC see:
http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/monuc/resolutions.shtml

The situation in Southern Sudan in 2012 can serve as an example of how this finding can be applied to contemporary and future developments. After nearly a decade during which the peace process between (North) Sudan and South Sudan has generated slow but steady progress, and during which high levels of coherence have been achieved, the situation started to deteriorate seriously in 2011 after the independence of South Sudan was achieved. South Sudan's first major test came in the heavy communal clashes that escalated from August 2011 up to February 2012 in Jonglei State. During December 2011, an estimated 6,000-8,000 Lou Nuer men carried out attacks in Pibor County. Early in 2012, Murle youth retaliated by launching attacks on Lou Nuer and Bor Dinka areas. During this cycle, the UN reported 888 people were killed, with hundreds more injured and over 170,000 displaced between late December 2011 and April 2012.[21] If the finding that links the scope for coherence with the degree of tension and volatility in a given context is applied, a proportional shrinking of the space for coherence in the South Sudan context is likely to occur. The breakdown of coherence among the internal actors in South Sudan, and between the governments of Sudan and South Sudan, is likely to ripple outwards and negatively affect the scope for coherence between the internal/external agents, among the external agents, among those engaged in whole-of-government efforts and within the different agencies engaged in South Sudan.

Tweaking the coherence models employed, or increasing the coherence effort, is unlikely to have any significant effect on the level or scope for coherence in the South Sudan peacebuilding system in the months following such highly levels of violence. The risk of relapse into violent conflict, and the actions that are taken by the internal and external actors to reduce the risk and to address the issues that have resulted in an increase in tension among the internal actors, will determine the scope for coherence.

In other words, if a post-conflict period is relatively stable, the peacebuilding system is likely to be characterised as one with a high degree of coherence. However, if a given situation remains unstable with various factions competing for power and with a moderate to high degree of risk of violent conflict, or with ongoing low-level conflict between competing factions, then the scope for coherence between the internal and external actors, among the

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[21] UNMISS, *Incidents of inter-communal violence in Jonglei State,* UNMISS Report, June 2012 Available at: http://unmiss.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=pY4XSdl8TT8%3D&tabid=4969&language=en-US

external actors, between government agencies and among different parts of the same agency, is likely to be reduced.

This inter-linkage between the degree of volatility in the system and the scope for coherence may thus explain why trying different models of coherence and why intensifying coherence efforts have had little effect in highly volatile environments such as Afghanistan, Darfur and the eastern DRC (Paris & Sisk, 2009:62). In these contexts, attempts to increase the investment in coherence seem to have had little effect on the quality of the interactions among the agents and hence ultimately on the degree of coherence achieved. This may thus be one of the underlying reasons why, despite vigorous efforts, these actions have not resulted in generating a greater degree of coherence.

It would seem that the local and international peacebuilding agents in those contexts that are termed more favourable may be more willing to enter into a longer-term cooperative approach because there have been sufficient momentum and progress to generate confidence in the process under way, and because their assessments indicate that there is low likelihood of a short- to medium-term relapse into violent conflict. As their level of confidence in a peaceful future grows, and as the likelihood of a relapse into violent conflict fades, both international and local peacebuilding agents become more confident in their own ability to prevail and have less to lose in cooperating with each other. Under such circumstances they are more likely to recognise their interdependence and the added value of investing some of their effort in pursuing common peacebuilding objectives. The more likely a successful outcome, the less concerned they are about their core values and principles being challenged, and the more likely they are to be pragmatic about dealing with the remaining challenges. In other words, the less volatile the context, the more confident agents are in their ability to cope with the situation, and the less worried they are about maintaining freedom of movement; they are more likely to recognise the value of their interdependence on one another and more willing to give up some of their freedom of movement for the sake of the benefits of cooperating in a larger community of actors.

In contrast, the more volatile the context, the more likely agents are to value their independence because they feel better equipped to manage the uncertainty if they retain the maximum freedom of movement to make their own assessments and make decisions informed by their own values, principles and approaches. In contexts that are volatile, and

where there is still a likelihood of a lapse into conflict, local and international peacebuilding agents have much to lose and they are therefore likely to be more cautious about entering into relationships that may limit their ability to act independently. They are more likely to group around other like-minded agents and to seek stability and reassurance by sticking to safe and tested principles and approaches and by associating themselves with others who have similar belief systems and operational principles and approaches.

The observation that context may be a more significant determining factor for coherence than the type of coherence model or the intensity of the effort to achieve coherence has important implications for coherence policy. It implies that investing more effort in achieving a degree of coherence that is unrealistic in certain contexts will be wasteful and that more attention needs to be invested in understanding what levels of coherence are realistic in a given context. It is also likely that different types of coherence-seeking tools will be more effective in different contexts. For instance, coherence mechanisms that are based on the recognition of the independence of the participating agents and that are limited in ambition to share information may have more success in volatile situations.

On the basis of these observations, this dissertation argues that the correlation between coherence and effective peacebuilding observed by the policy community has been misinterpreted. The correlation does not imply that there is a causal relationship between coherence and effectiveness, but rather that the systems that have achieved relative stability, and that may thus be associated with effective peacebuilding, are also conducive to greater coherence.

In the next subsection attention is focused on the last of the four factors that constrain coherence to be discussed in this chapter, namely the power imbalance between internal and external actors.

4.5   INTERNAL/EXTERNAL POWER IMBALANCE

As discussed in Chapter 2, there is broad recognition that externally-driven peacebuilding processes are unsustainable (Stewart & Knaus, 2011; Paris & Sisk, 2009). Whilst there are a those that argue that external actors should play no role in peacebuilding (Herbst, 2004; Luttwak, 1999; Weinstein, 2005), most developing and developed countries and most

commentators (e.g. Autessere, 2010; Berdal & Suhrke, 2012; Eriksen, 2009; Mac Ginty, 2010; Menkhaus, 2009; Paris, 2004; Richmond, 2006; Sending, 2011; Suhrke, 2011) favour peacebuilding systems that are informed and determined by local actors and contexts and supported by international expertise and resources (OECD, 2011a:12). From this perspective, local ownership means that peacebuilding activities should be needs-based and the priorities, sequencing and pace of delivery need to be informed by the choices and dynamics of the society that is going through transition, not by those providing assistance and support (OECD, 2011b).

The need to achieve an appropriate balance of power between the internal and external peacebuilding actors is now widely recognised, and the agreed partnership model is one where peacebuilding should be country-owned and country-led (OECD, 2011b). This model has been recognised, at least in high-level policy statements such as 'the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States' agreed to at the end of 2011 in Bhusan (OECD, 2011b), as one of the most important success factors for current and future peacebuilding interventions (Newman, Paris & Richmond, 2009:73).

Implementing the 'New Deal' and ensuring local ownership will not be easy. Thus far, achieving even a modest degree of local ownership has been one of the most difficult and elusive aspects of peacebuilding (Fukuyama, 2004:39). Wilén and Chapaux (2011:532) make the point that it has become common knowledge in peacebuilding practice "that all projects and processes need to be anchored and ideally initiated by local actors to ensure sustainability. Yet, despite this strong insistence on local participation, there are few successful examples that show how this works in practice". Donais (2012) agrees:

> The empirical record of peacebuilding over the past two decades, however, suggests that while the principle of local ownership enjoys broad rhetorical acceptance it has proven inherently difficult to operationalize; modern peacebuilding operations, as a result have tended to more closely resemble externally driven exercises in statebuilding and social engineering than patient, elicitive processes of peace nurturing. (Donais, 2012:1)

The following discussion is centred on why the power imbalance between local and international actors appears to be an inherently locked-in feature of peacebuilding and how this limits, inhibits and constrains coherence. Three aspects of the internal/external actor relationship are looked at in greater detail, namely local ownership, local context and local capabilities.

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4.5.1   Local ownership

Local ownership in this context refers to the principle that the future direction of a particular country should be in the hands of the people of that country, i.e. the transition should be country-led and country-owned. The future of a society should not be determined by external actors (Chesterman, Ignatief & Thakur, 2005:365). Donais (2012:1) argues that local ownership refer to:

> … the degree of control that domestic actors wield over domestic political processes, in post-conflict contexts, the notion conveys the commonsense wisdom that any peace process not embraced by those who have to live with it is likely to fail.

As pointed out in Chapter 2 and in the introduction to this section, this principle is now widely accepted as a guiding principle for peacebuilding; yet how it should be achieved, and what this implies for the ideal internal/external actor relationship is still hotly debated, amongst other things, in the debate over the liberal peace model.

Berdal & Wennmann (2010:220) frames the ideal internal/external relationship as follows: "Conflict resolution and development in the aftermath of war is inherently a locally defined – yet internationally embedded – transformation process." In other words, local actors need to make their own decisions, but they also have to recognise that their local system is embedded in a larger international system. This implies that there is a larger international culture with norms, structures and expected forms of behaviour that acts as a constraint and that will determine the parameters within which the local actors can make decisions about their future (Richmond, 2011:227). International law, such as the UN Charter, and international conventions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as a web of other agreements and arrangements, e.g. relating to trade, the environment and cooperation on international organised crime, create a network of international system governance arrangements that any one country would need to conform to if it wants to also benefit from being part of an interconnected international system.

However, even if we acknowledge that being part of the international system places some limits or parameters on the range of choices that a state can make, states still have ample room to manoeuvre when it comes to deciding on the shape and future direction of their internal political, economic, security and social-cultural systems. Countries in transition have a unique opportunity to re-consider how they wish to structure their own systems. Most established

countries have made these choices at some point in the past and are now locked into a process of slow evolution and adaptation, but countries in transition have the opportunity to radically re-consider their own systems of governance. Naturally, such an opportunity is both exciting and dangerous, because whatever choices are made will have an enormous influence on the lives of the societies and people. Much is at stake, and therefore many internal and external stakeholders will try to influence the choices being made.

The local ownership principle states that these choices should be made by the people who will have to live with the consequences (Mac Ginty, 2011:222).

> The central principle is the ownership and participation of communities. Change needs to be determined and controlled by the people themselves. Participation of affected peoples on all levels of intervention is the key element of restoring dignity and developing trust in transformation. (Körppen, Ropers & Giessmann, 2011:251)

Whilst this principle is now widely accepted, including at the highest policy levels (OECD, 2011b), so much is at stake that it has not been honoured in practice. As discussed in Chapter 2, and as demonstrated in the recent interventions in Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, the major powers in the West tend to impose a specific external state model, namely the liberal peace model, on countries in transition. As Oliver Richmond (2007) argues, "the ideas underlying the liberal peace – democratization, economic liberalization, neoliberal development, human rights, and the rule of law – have exerted a dominant influence over the ways in which contemporary peacebuilding is both conceptualized and practiced" (Richmond, 2007:462).

Although less comprehensively imposed, the same model is nevertheless also the template that is being used to inform UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding interventions in countries in transition, such as Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and South Sudan, to mention a few current examples. The net effect of these interventions is that these countries are under sustained pressure from almost all the external and some internal peacebuilding agents to conform to the liberal peace ideology when making decisions about the future direction of their internal political, economic, security and social-cultural systems. In the liberal peace context, local ownership takes on a new meaning: "ownership exists when they do what we want them to do, but they do so voluntarily" (Donais, 2012:4).

The local ownership principle is partly a normative position that makes claims as to who should rightfully have responsibility for the problem and the solution and therefore the

legitimacy to take decisions that would determine the future course of events (Duffield, 2001:261). And it is now, at least officially, recognised that the internal actors clearly own the problem and should therefore also have the right to own the solution. As they will have to live with the consequences, they should have the right to make the decisions that will determine their future (Call & Wyeth, 2008:380). As Richard Ponzio (2011:247) argues in the context of democratisation efforts:

> It is inappropriate for international peacebuilders to engineer electoral outcomes or even impose a specific voting system on a conflict country. The risks of subverting the development of a sustainable indigenous brand of democracy are too high – and if mistakes are made, they should be local mistakes as this is an inherent part of democratization.

However, questions are raised as to who these local actors are that can rightfully claim to speak on behalf of the local people. As Donais (2012:9) points out:

> Taking seriously the question of which agents matter within the debate on ownership requires a recognition that in any post-conflict society, there is never a single coherent set of local owners, and that post-conflict spaces, almost by definition, are characterized far more by diversity and division than by unity.

In the absence of an internationally recognised elected government – and such elections are typically only held three to five years into a transition – it is unclear which voices truly articulate the needs and preferences of the people, and there is thus much room for interpretation and manipulation during this period (Paris, 2011:162-164). Crucial decisions are being taken about the structure and policy direction of new institutions, such as the security forces and key ministries. In the absence of an elected government, most of these decisions are informed and influenced by those international actors that choose to engage in a given sector and project. These international actors will typically attempt to consult and elicit local input into these programmes and are aware of their own official policies that relate to local ownership, and they will typically be able to explain the steps they have taken to consult and otherwise 'ensure' that the decisions they have taken have been endorsed by the transitional government or otherwise have some claim to local legitimacy.

Olsson and Jarstad (2011:89) argue that the local ownership debate can be understood in the light of two opposing notions of peacebuilding: "[O]ne based on the formation of a strong, central state like Thomas Hobbe's *Leviathan*, and the other resting firmly on the power of the people like in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *volonté generale,* General Will". They argue that the first approach could be interpreted as seeking to strengthen state control over the population, while the second sets out to empower the population to control the state (Olsson & Jarstad,

2011:90). Whom the peacebuilders select as the main 'local owner' – the state or the people – thus has important implications for sustainable peace-building (Olsson & Jarstad, 2011:89).

International peacebuilding agents seem to favour a Hobbesian statebuilding approach that is focused on institution building and governance (World Bank, 2011). However, the institutions that these efforts generate tend to look remarkably like mirror images of the template institution of either the international donor or of the international model (Pritchett & De Weijer, 2010:2). Again, the security forces are an obvious example because their organisational structure, ranks, uniforms, vehicles, etc. are such obvious symbols of the template model they mirror. The end result clearly demonstrates that the external actors had the most influence in the process as there is usually little to distinguish the institutions established in one fragile state from those in another, i.e. little to suggest that there has been any real local-ownership influence. The external actors have the resources and the expertise, and in the absence of strong internal actors with alternative policy options, it is only natural that the external actors will fill the vacuum and end up determining key features of the future direction of the country in transition.

One of the reasons why local ownership is so elusive is thus that, despite the fact that the principle is in place and widely accepted, the choice of who the locals are who should take the lead during the transition period is made by the internationals, at least until the first internationally recognised elections have been held. At that point, however, so many aspects of the new state have already been decided on that the newly-elected government typically has no choice but to simply continue to implement the policies and continue to work with the institutions established under mostly external influence during the transition period.

However, the local-ownership argument also has a functional dimension, namely that local ownership is a prerequisite for sustainability (Eriksen, 2009:663). Lederach (1997) argues that, for solutions to be sustainable they have to be home-grown and have to emerge out of locally-owned processes of reconciliation and social transformation. Regan (2010:159) stresses that "sustainable public sector reform does not occur unless there is a domestic demand for it…there will be little chance of sustainable reform…unless the local populations are committed to and taking a leading role in the design and implementation of reform."

There are not many 'natural laws' in politics and peacebuilding, but the principle of local ownership comes as close to a 'natural law' as can be—we can confidently state that a system cannot be self-sustainable – function on its own without external support – if it is not locally owned. In other words, systems of governance that are externally imposed and with whom the local society and people fail to identify, will not be supported, maintained and utilised once the external influence is removed. "If a significant percentage of the citizenry perceives that their formal state provided justice and security system is foreign, incomprehensible, and contrary to their beliefs, cultural values, and expectations, there is little likelihood that the system can be legitimate, accessible or effective" (Scheye, 2010:270). As Donais (2012:12) warns: "Local ownership may be deferred, but it cannot ultimately be avoided."

This functional motivation for local ownership is powerful in explaining the fragility and weakness of states that have recently undergone, or are still undergoing, transition. These societies fail to identify with externally imposed liberal peace institutions and instead informally govern themselves by using their own resilient forms of social organisation, such as traditional kinship systems and traditional forms of justice. In many of these cases, hybrid forms of governance have emerged, where the informal social practice and formal state models of governance co-exist (Mac Ginty, 2011:217).

Those who believe in the need for strong formal central state institutions as a pre-requisite for strong states frame these hybrid models as fragile and weak (World Bank, 2011; OECD, 2011a). In fact, what is weak and fragile is the prevalent peacebuilding and statebuilding models that fail to recognise and discount the functional reality of the local ownership principle and continue to impose external state and institutional models on societies, despite that fact that this model clearly is not working and despite the fact that these societies are clearly demonstrating their rejection of this approach to peacebuilding.

One of reasons why the external actors continue to persist with this top-down approach could be that they have become locked into a specific type of state-building model (OECD, 2008:13). They choose to focus on the administrative functions and structural dimensions of the institutions, and they have become blind to considerations of how these institutions come into being and what their relations are to the society in which they are embedded. In other words, in the state-building approach, the virtue of the institutions are taken as given – as fully formed, either because they existed before or because they fit the liberal peace model,

and the focus is on making them as administratively effective and efficient as possible. It is assumed that they will best serve the interests of the people. There is no room for questioning whether they should exist in the first place or whether there are alternative ways in which similar needs can be addressed in the local context. For instance, the virtue of the template modern police force is seldom questioned. There is rarely room for questioning whether the needs of the people for what the internationals would refer to as 'rule of law' and 'law enforcement' can be better satisfied in other homegrown ways. And yet, in many countries, it is well known that the official police force is highly corrupt or in other ways experienced as predatory and that local communities instead turn to alternative means of ensuring community safety and security (Andvig, 2010). In these context, further investing in strengthening the capacity of the official police force may actually undermine security, as perceived and experienced by local communities.

Statebuilding is too often narrowly focused on the executive branch, and peacebuilding today is overly associated with security sector reform and rule of law (World Bank, 2011). These areas are popular because the international agencies view them as 'technical' and thus value-free, and reforming these institutions lend themselves easily to the kind of targeted peacebuilding interventions external actors are able to do (Tschirgi, Lund & Mancini, 2010:409). The external actors are so comfortable with the liberal peace model that they fail to grasp that it represents their ideology, and they genuinely think that by imposing it on the local actors that they are simply giving the locals a value-free technical solution to their problems (Mac Ginty, 2006:3). External peacebuilding agents prefer to invest in building institutions instead of investing in the relationship between people and the institutions that are meant to serve them, because the former is something that has tangible short-term results that meet their requirement for results-based reporting, whilst the latter is long-term, vague and complex. As Charles Call points out, "Strategic peacebuilding by international actors requires recognition that the state is not a neutral ground for technical programmes, but a central locus of social conflict." (Call & Wyeth, 2008:385).

The alienation between these state institutions, the elected government and the society at large is further accentuated by these institutions being accountable to their foreign backers, rather than to the politicians and societies they are meant to serve (Sending, 2009). These institutions are designed, financed and implemented by external agents, and they are dependent on the external donors for their continued survival. They are typically too big and

costly to be supported by the normal state budget, and they thus remain dependent on external funding well beyond the transitional phase. As the external actors remain engaged through funding, they will also want to remain engaged in managing those funds and in deciding how the funds are used. They will typically have staff or consultants working in these institutions. Those internal actors running these institutions, to the degree that they can be said to be in charge of and responsible for managing these externally funded and guided institutions, know that for these institutions to survive they need to be accountable to the external agents. In other words, they need to follow the direction of the external advisors and give attention to what they regard as important priorities, even if they personally may assess other aspects as more urgent or important to address. The degree to which they are accountable to their own governments and societies is limited, because their own political government and their own society are not critical in determining their budget or programme of work. The local actors in these institutions are not oblivious to the principles and theatre of local ownership, and they will, typically under pressure and advice from the external actors, engage in rituals of public consultation, engagement with civil society, reports to parliament, etc., but the reality on the ground is that the continued survival of their institutions is dependent on the continued support of the external actors. Thehe internal actors in these institutions understand very well that they need to: (a) continue to serve the needs of the external donor to continue to receive their patronage, and (b) that they need to continue to be fragile and weak to warrant the continued engagement of the external donors.

It is these kinds of perverse effects – effects that demonstrate that the programmes generate the opposite effect to what was intended by generating and perpetuating fragility instead of building capacity for self-sustainable peace – that reveal how the prevalent liberal peace model creates inherent power imbalances between internal and external actors, which undermine and constrain the scope for internal/external coherence. As Donais (2012) points out:

> To the extent that liberal peacebuilding is in crisis, it is in many respects a crisis of local ownership, stemming from the failure to generate support, among both the elites and societies of war-torn states, for the key elements of the liberal peacebuilding agenda. (Donais, 2012:153)

4.5.2   Local context and external legitimacy

Local context means that peacebuilding needs to be informed by local, not international, needs, priorities and contexts (Baranyi, 2008:312). This, again, is an obvious principle that

few will challenge, but in reality it has proven very difficult to operationalise (Wilén & Chapaux, 2011:532). There are very few examples, if any, where this has actually been achieved. Two forces work against this principle: The first is that the local actors are in disarray, i.e. typically highly fragmented and poorly organised in the immediate aftermath of conflict, and their ability to articulate their needs and priorities remain weak for years thereafter. The second is that the external actors have a well-resourced and internationally legitimised system that thinks it is acting on local needs when, in fact, it is overtly influenced by its own interests, by previous experiences and by internationally-generated models and theories of change (Sending, 2009:6).

The local-context notion is easy to grasp but is very difficult to operationalise because it takes time and effort to develop truly collaborative partnerships. Most international actors report that they are under pressure to achieve results within short timeframes, and so they end up surging ahead of their local counterparts by substituting or otherwise finding ways of coping with their inability to engage and collaborate with local actors. Of this, Hughes (2012:100-102) states that:

> The overwhelming tendency of external actors to date has … been to contemplate local societies through a reductionist lens bereft of the rich, multilayered, dynamic interaction that makes up any social context…as such, the realities of the lives of ordinary people are often overlooked (Hughes, 2012:100-102)

However, what they cannot freely admit is that they create a façade of local participation, when in reality their programmes are nearly undiluted by local input (Wilén & Chapaux, 2011:536).

Local leaders and officials are under similar pressures. They would like to have more influence on the kinds of programmes undertaken and the assistance offered, but, more importantly, they do not want to interrupt the flow of goods and assistance because that enables them to maintain their patronage (Chabal & Daloz, 1999). They are, therefore, happy to be co-opted into appearing to lead in the short term, because they believe that they will be able to manipulate the outcome in the medium to longer term, regardless of the compromises they are forced to enter into for the sake of access, privilege and patronage in the short term (De Waal, 2009). As Gelot and Söderbaum (2011:86) remind us, "Having argued that the exclusion of the intervened upon has led to poor peace and security governance, we cannot simplistically assume that their inclusion will ensure the best outcome in all cases."

Another consideration is that the true implications of taking local context into account may be difficult for the external system to accept (Chesterman, 2004b:257). Local needs and priorities may be different from what the international system is willing or able to provide. Promoting norms that have a high priority for the donor community, such as human rights and gender equality, may not be a priority for the local community. The international community may not have the technical expertise or systems to provide support for locally articulated priorities, such as small-scale animal husbandry, electrifying cities and towns, or supporting traditional forms of justice.

At another level, local priorities may result in different timescales to those that the international community is comfortable with. For instance, local leaders may seek an upfront investment in capacity building prior to the implementation of various medium to long-term governance and development initiatives, so that these programmes can be managed by local managers, whilst the international community may be under pressure to launch such programmes earlier in the process. Local leaders may want to prioritise institutions that generate socio-economic rights first and may want to wait with institutions that generate and support political rights, but the international community may disagree with such a sequence. As Donais (2012:12) points out, "While locals may be viewed by outsiders as junior partners in the peacebuilding enterprise, domestic power structures retain considerable capacity to block, circumvent, and/or undermine the most carefully designed policy reforms."

Thus there are a number of inherent constraints, or differences in values and approaches between internal and external actors, that make it extremely difficult to ensure that peacebuilding is informed and guided by local context and needs.

4.5.3   Local capacities and social capital

Local capacities in this context implies the recognition that any society develops a range of coping mechanisms that will be shaped and formed by local context and which can be utilised to manage or support processes aimed at dealing with various social challenges (Berdal, 2009:177). The challenge is in identifying and working with such local capacities without supporting or further entrenching the inequalities in the society that may have caused or contributed to the conflict (Regan, 2010:148). "Local values, traditions, and institutions tend to be dismissed in post-conflict settings as a cause of the conflict rather than as a potential

resource for peacebuilding, as a problem to be eliminated rather than a foundation to built upon" (Donais, 2012:5).

Peacebuilding interventions usually under-value local capacities and tend replace them with external models. For instance, traditional compensation-and-reconciliation models of justice, may be replaced with a crime-and-penalty based justice system based on international standards by which fines are paid to the state or where criminals serve time in jail. However, it may take years to train and deploy the prosecutors, judges and defence lawyers necessary to run such a system, and in the meantime the community is faced with a situation in which the old system is discredited, whilst the new system is not yet operational. This is an example of the many ways in which the imposition of well-meaning external models tend to undermine or destroy the little capacity that exists in a society and replace it with a weak and dysfunctional new model (Berdal & Wennmann, 2010:8). It is necessary to find new and innovative ways of working with existing social capacities and perhaps transforming those that are problematic from within, rather than replacing them outright with new untested systems that subsequently fail to provide an alternative service (Call & Wyeth, 2008:366). It has been pointed out earlier that peacebuilding agents seem to prefer to focus on what they perceive to be value-free technical and administrative aspects of peacebuilding. In this context, Bryn Hughes argues for an engagement with the 'political':

> Effective and sustainable peace support operations do not come from imparting the 'right' institutions, mustering an 'appropriate' level of resources, or honing the technical and managerial skills of interveners and recipients alike. The key, rather, is that the thinking and practices of intervening actors stem from an engagement with the 'political'… Importantly, 'political' herein has a particular meaning: it does not denote the formal workings of government or the power struggles and personal preferences within or between organizations; rather, it refers to 'the socio-cultural value system that determines which behavior, arguments, and actions are (deemed) legitimate… Resistance from indigenous elements is often because the programmes have ignored the cultural, ethical and social (the political, in other words). (Hughes, 2012:100-102)

Statebuilding, especially in the rule of law and security contexts, thus tends to generate new or reformed central state capacities that tend to de-legitimise and sometimes even criminalise existing local social capacities in the form of traditional justice systems and local security arrangements, without ensuring that an adequate alternative is in place (Woodward, 2011:317). The result is a net drop in overall capacity because the introduction of external models weaken the existing social capacity before offering a viable, credible and legitimate alternative. Capacity building should be informed by a recognition that local capacities have been shaped by local historic and socio-cultural contexts that make them uniquely suited to

the local context and thus locally legitimate (Newman, Paris & Richmond, 2009:73). "Truly fruitful engagements entail working with existing sources of power and legitimacy and the social orders they enable rather than dismissing them, with the underlying aim being to achieve the kind of positive change that is 'socially generative'" (Hughes, 2012:100). New untested models need to earn local legitimacy before replacing existing local capacities.

While it may be the case that the existing structures are weak and unsatisfactory, it should be recognised that they may provide some level of service that should not be disrupted until such time as a better alternative is in place. An alternative approach may be to develop new systems that complement and build on existing social systems (World Bank, 2011:18).

> One of the key challenges for contemporary peacebuilders who wish to take local ownership seriously is therefore to better understand the capacities that exist within war-torn spaces – including capacities for peacebuilding – as well as to better understand local perceptions of what peace means and how it might be achieved. (Donais, 2012:145)

Where existing social practises are regarded as inappropriate, they can be encouraged to transform over time, but it is necessary to recognise that social systems cannot be changed overnight and that such change needs to occur at a pace acceptable to the local community for it to be legitimatised and sustainable.

There are thus a number of factors that constrain the degree to which internal-external coherence can be achieved in any peacebuilding context. Despite the fact that both internal and external actors generally agree on the importance of local ownership, local context and local social capital, there seem to be inherent dynamics in peacebuilding systems that make it extremely difficult to achieve this. It would seem that, at its core, the internal/external peacebuilding relationship is inherently unequal, i.e. that external actors have a power advantage that is extremely difficult to discount. As a result, they seem unable to prevent themselves from using this power imbalance to impose their ideology – the liberal peace model – on their internal peacebuilding counterparts. The end result is often perverse, because it undermines the stated goal of peacebuilding, namely to pursue the stability and self-sustainability of the local systems. This creates a culture of dependency that further feeds into the weakness and fragility of these local systems. The fundamental dilemma, as Charles Call has observed, is that our:

> …efforts to consolidate peace and to strengthen war-torn states are fraught with problems that leave war-torn countries vulnerable to weak institutions and to renewed or intensified conflict. Despite the potential to play a positive role, international actions more often tend toward the inadequate, misguided, or perverse… (Call & Wyeth, 2008:365)

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4.6   CONCLUSION

In this chapter some of the factors that limit, inhibit or constrain our ability to achieve coherence have been identified and considered. Four factors were discussed, namely the tension between long-term impact and short-term output; conflicting values, principles and mandates; the context-specific scope for coherence; and the power imbalance between local and international peacebuilding agents.

It was argued that persistent evidence-based feedback from the operational and tactical levels suggest that many of the policy-level assumptions about coherence are flawed. Peacebuilding efforts appear to be challenged by enduring and deep-rooted tensions and inherent contradictions between the various peacebuilding dimensions and among the different peacebuilding agents.

The tension between impact and output, between what is good for the system as a whole as measured over the long term, and what is in the best interest of the individual agent as measured in the short-to-medium term consistently undermines coherence. It was pointed out that some peacebuilding agents have inherently contradictory values, principles and mandates and that these typically manifest in fundamentally different theories of change and result in disagreements with regard to, for instance, prioritisation and how to measure progress. The context within which peacebuilding unfolds, and especially the degree of volatility in the system, was shown to determine the scope for coherence. And lastly, it was also argued that there are fundamental and inherent tensions in peacebuilding systems as a result of the inherent power imbalance between the external and the internal agents.

Based on these observations, the conclusion is that there are inherent limits and constraints regarding the degree to which coherence can be achieved in the peacebuilding context. The exact limits are context specific and have to be transacted on a case-by-case basis. But not recognising and addressing the fact that these limits exist by, for instance, blindly pursuing an idealised or maximum level of coherence regardless of context is likely to result in such efforts ultimately generating perverse effects.

The overall finding this chapter is that, whilst pursuing coherence is an integral part of peacebuilding, the commonly held causal assumption that more coherence will automatically result in more efficient and thus more sustainable peacebuilding operations is flawed. There seems to be a threshold beyond which, at first, pursuing more coherence seems to yield little additional benefit and, beyond that, pursuing even more coherence starts to have perverse effects.

The commonly held assumption in policy circles that coherence can be improved by manipulating the coherence model and/or by increasing the intensity of the effort ignores the very important influence that the context has on the potential scope for coherence. The four factors that limit or constrain coherence discussed in this chapter are examples of the kind of factors that have to be taken into account when considering what an appropriate level of coherence may be in any given peacebuilding system.

On the basis of these findings it is argued that the correlation between coherence and effective peacebuilding observed by the policy community has been misinterpreted. The correlation does not imply that there is a causal relationship between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability, but rather that the systems that have achieved greater levels of peace consolidation and that we may thus associate with effective and sustainable peacebuilding are at the same time also conducive to greater coherence.

Having analysed these four factors, it can be concluded that there are inherent dynamics in peacebuilding systems that limit, inhibit and constrain the degree of coherence that can be achieved in peacebuilding systems. These constraints are not sufficiently recognised and discounted at the policy level (De Coning & Friis, 2011:20). The result is that the policy debate is setting itself overly-ambitious targets for coherence that are impossible to achieve in reality. A more realistic understanding of the limitations of coherence and the inherent contradictions in the system will allow the international community to adopt a more sober approach to coherence and to set itself more humble goals (Paris & Sisk, 2009:64).

Considering the degree to which coherence is attainable in a given context and adjusting expectations and models accordingly should result in more efficient operations, and such an approach should also generate greater sensitivity to potential unintended consequences and

the negative and perverse consequences of pursuing coherence beyond its limits (De Coning & Friis, 2011:21).

In the chapters that follow, the focus is on Complexity and the potential role it could play in improving our understanding of the dynamics of peacebuilding systems. While Complexity is introduced in Chapter 5, its characteristics are applied to the peacebuilding context in Chapters 6 and 7 with a view to generate new perspectives and insights that can further assist in improving our understanding of the coherence dilemma.

PART II: PEACEBUILDING AND COMPLEXITY

CHAPTER 5

COMPLEXITY

I believe we are at an important turning point in the history of science. We have come to the end of the road paved by Galileo and Newton, which presented us with an image of a time-reversible, deterministic universe. We now see the erosion of determinism and the emergence of a new formulation of the laws of physics. (Prigogine, 1996:viii)

Complexity … has radically changed the way we think about science and society, with special reference to notions like fundamental truth, objective knowledge, reductionism and causality. None of these notions have been dismissed, but the perspective from Complexity has necessitated a re-evaluation of their role and status. (Cilliers, 2007:15)

… modern metaphysical knowledge assigns to Reason the task of providing certainty, complexity-based, postmodern knowledge (in a strict Foucauldian sense) tasks Reason with the role of enabling humans to cope with uncertainty and the fundamental element of randomness that is inherent in nature. (Popolo, 2011:210)

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The aim of this dissertation is to explore the utility of using Complexity studies to gain insight into the coherence dilemma in peacebuilding. In Part I of the dissertation, peacebuilding, coherence and the factors that constrain coherence were introduced and discussed. In Part II, Complexity will be introduced, the question whether peacebuilding is complex will be considered, and the implications of insights from Complexity studies for peacebuilding will be explored. The expectation is that in the process of considering peacebuilding from a complex systems perspective new insights will be generated with regard to how we understand notions like problem solving, social change, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and coherence.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce Complexity. It lays the conceptual foundation for the use of a complex-systems approach in the remainder of the dissertation. Complexity will be introduced through exploring a number of its core concepts and characteristics. The chapter starts with a short tour of the origin and history of Complexity to place Complexity within the context of the broader scientific spectrum. Next, three of its key characteristics will

be considered, namely a whole-of-systems approach, non-linearity and self-organisation. In the process, concepts such as emergence, adaptation and feedback will be explored.

In the second-to-last section, the implications of Complexity for epistemology will be considered, and in the last section the implications of Complexity will be applied to ethics. The discussion is summarised in the conclusion by assessing what can be learnt from Complexity about how complex social systems function.

5.2   COMPLEXITY IN CONTEXT

The well-known quote from Aristotle about the whole being more than the sum of the parts reminds us that philosophy and science have been interested in the formation and function of complex systems from the earliest recorded times (Aristotle, Metaphysics, 1045a10). When Europe emerged from the Dark Ages, its science was dominated by an approach that favoured reductionist reasoning (Mitchell, 2009:ix). Complex systems were studied by learning as much as possible about the elements that constitute them and then combining what could be discerned about these individual elements.

In the 1950s, Norbert Wiener and W. Ross Ashby developed a mathematical theory of the communication and control of systems through feedback, which they called Cybernetics (Wiener, 1948). Cybernetics introduced a radical shift away from the preoccupation with physics concepts like mass, energy and force, and introduced new concepts such as communication, information, control and feedback which drew on similarities between information and communication processes in living systems and machines (Mitchell, 2009:296). Cybernetics played a key role in elevating our understanding of information to "an ontological status equal to that of mass and energy – namely, as a third primitive component of reality" (Mitchell, 2009:169). It is thus not surprising that Cybernetics served as the precursor to much that was to follow in fields such as computing, robotics and information technology (Woermann, 2010:94).

In a parallel development at more or less the same time a focus on systems as a subject worthy of scientific study gained new attention when Ludwig von Bertalanffy attempted to developed a general theory around those principles that are common to all systems. In *General Systems Theory,* Von Bertalanffy (1968) writes:

> There exist models, principles, and laws that apply to generalized systems or their subclasses, irrespective of their particular kind, the nature of their component elements, and the relationships or "forces" between them. It seems legitimate to ask for a theory, not of systems of a more or less special kind, but of universal principles applying to systems in general.

Cybernetics and General Systems Theory were largely concerned with gaining control over complexity, and this stimulated a side interest in trying to understand entropy, turbulence and volatility. In the 1970s, René Thom and E.C. Zeeman developed a branch of mathematics that they called Catastrophe Theory. It dealt with bifurcations (sudden shifts in behaviour) in dynamical systems arising from small changes in circumstances. This influenced the development of Chaos Theory in the 1980s, with contributions from, amongst others, Jules Henri Poincaré, David Ruelle, Edward Lorenz, Mitchell Feigenbaum, Steve Smale and James A. Yorke. The development of Chaos Theory significantly expanded our understanding of how it may be possible to scientifically study non-linear and dynamic phenomena. The non-linear and dynamic properties of complex systems are discussed in detail below, but at this point we merely make the point that, before Chaos Theory, the non-linear was by and large excluded from science. Chaos Theory opened up a way for integrating non-linearity into mainstream science, but, as is argued later in this chapter, it also challenges some of our most basic assumptions about our inherent ability to know, control and predict the world.

A further critical contribution came from the biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1980) who introduced the notion of self-organisation. They argued that, because systems are organisationally closed, their ability to self-create or self-renew is due to the system's capacity for self-production through feedback loops – a process which they called Autopoiesis (Woermann, 2010:98). The sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1990) transferred the concept of Autopoiesis to social systems and argued that social systems are autonomous and self-referential and that they use communication to reproduce and maintain themselves, including their specific, and thus self-aware, system/environment distinction (Woermann, 2009:99). The significance of closed vs. open systems, and of self-organisation is discussed in the following sections, but for the moment the development of Complexity is explained by showing how one insight led to another and how Complexity is the product of a wide range of influences and disciplines.

Complexity thus emerged from the interaction of several scientific disciplines, and this cross-

disciplinary nature has remained one of its core strengths and comparative advantages. What we regard today as Complexity studies is a conceptual framework that has emerged from the interaction between these developments in Cybernetics, General Systems Theory, Chaos Theory and Autopoiesis. These insights have been synthesised by, amongst others, Ilya Prigogine (mathematics), John H. Holland (psychology), Harold Morowitz (physics) and Paul Cilliers (philosophy). Paul Cilliers (2007:3) argues that one can probably trace the origin of the early 21st century interest in Complexity to the publication of two popular works on the subject, namely: Lewin's *Complexity: Life on the Edge of Chaos (*1992/2000) and Waldrop's *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos (*1992)*.* These books reflect the degree to which insights from a diverse set of disciplines have been synthesised into a new consensus on what constitutes the core characteristics of Complexity by the early 1990s. Melanie Mitchell (2009:4) summarises this broad consensus when she describes the study of complex systems as

> … an interdisciplinary field of research that seeks to explain how large numbers of relatively simple entities organize themselves, without the benefit of any central controller, into a collective whole that creates patterns, uses information, and, in some cases evolves and learns.

Complexity's influence on the social sciences started to have an effect in the mid- to late 20th century in a range of disciplines and was, at first, mostly evident in sociology, psychology and the management sciences (e.g. Axelrod, 1984; Luhman, 1995; Mayntz, 1997). Many of the core insights about information, cognition and complex organisational dynamics that originated in the physical sciences have proven relevant and transferable to the social sciences and have subsequently been further refined and developed in the social science context (e.g. Cilliers, 1998; Chapman 2002). Apart from those that consciously made use of the theories and concepts of Complexity and complex systems, many others have been influenced by some of the premises and insights derived from the study of Complexity. These influences can be traced, amongst others, by the influence throughout the social sciences of many of the key concepts of Complexity such as feedback, bifurcations and emergence. In some instances, these concepts played a role in the co-development of major new schools of thought such as postmodernism (Cilliers, 1998).

The use of Complexity in International Relations (e.g. Harrison, 2006; Kavalski, 2007; Geyer & Rihani, 2010; Popolo, 2011) and Political Science (e.g. Axelrod, 1984 & 1997; Jervis, 1997; Innes & Booher, 2010) has increased considerably over the last few years. There is now a growing interest in further exploring the implications of Complexity for Political Science

and International Relations. Complexity is also increasingly being applied to related fields such as Development Studies (e.g. Jones, 2008; Rihani, 2002; Ramalingam & Jones, 2008) and International Conflict Management (e.g. Hendrick, 2009; Körppen, Ropers & Giessmann, 2011).[22]

Based on the author's own research experience, and as reflected in this dissertation's bibliography, the size of the Complexity literature relevant to International Relations, Development Studies and Conflict Management, has probably doubled over the past five years. In other words, a considerable amount of the International Relations, Development and Conflict Management-related Complexity literature cited in this dissertation was published while this study was being undertaken. The application of Complexity to the fields of International Relations, Development Studies and Conflict Management is thus a relatively new but fast-growing development. The author has established contact with two researchers who are pursuing doctoral research using Complexity in the peacekeeping context: Charles Hunt at the University of Queensland and Andrea Strimling Yodsampa (2011) at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

After two centuries of growing specialisation and isolation among the different academic disciplines, Complexity has emerged as one of the fastest growing new conceptual frameworks, in part because of the way it was founded in and has encouraged cross-disciplinary and integrating theoretical approaches. It has managed to generate a broad framework of characteristics of complex systems that is applicable to all complex systems regardless of whether they are physical, biological, ecological, neurological, cybernetic or social.

At the same time, it has generated highly specialised insights into specific types of complex systems, for instance, social (Luhman, 1995) and political (Jervis, 1997) systems. The study of Complexity has also uncovered important nuances among different types of complex systems (Chapman, 2002:29) and different approaches to the study of Complexity (Woermann, 2009:100). Some of these differences that are relevant to the current study will be highlighted towards the end of this chapter, but Complexity will first be introduced in more detail.

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[22] See also, for instance, the special issue of the journal *Emergence: Complexity & Organization,* on 'Chaos, Complexity & Conflict', 10(4), 2008.

Paul Cilliers (1998:3-5) describes Complexity as a system that has the following characteristics:

- It consists of a large number of elements.

- These elements interact based on the information available to them locally (none of the elements are able to comprehend the complexity of the system as a whole).

- At least some of the elements also interact with the environment (it is an open system).

- The interactions are rich, non-linear, dynamic and they feed back on each other (recurrence).

- The conditions under which such a system operates are far from equilibrium, i.e. the elements are under sustained pressure.

- The combined result causes such a system to spontaneously organise itself, maintain itself, and adapt (there is no external, controlling agent).

- Over time, this process develops a history, i.e. complex systems evolve over time and the past is co-responsible for the present behaviour of the system, i.e. a complex system cannot be understood as a snapshot of the present, without also taking its evolving history into account.

A number of other thinkers engaged in the study of Complexity have identified similar characteristics, and some have added additional attributes (e.g. Mitleton-Kelly, 2003;[23] Clemens, 2001;[24] Ramalingam & Jones, 2008[25]). When comparing these different sets of characteristics, it is clear that there is great degree of convergence among Complexity thinkers about the core characteristics that constitute complex systems. In this introduction to complex systems three of these core characteristics, namely a whole-of-systems approach, non-linearity and self-organisation, will be discussed. In the process, a number of related concepts that form the basis of our understanding of Complexity, including emergence, adaptation and feedback will also be explored.

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[23] Self-organisation, emergence, connectivity, interdependence, feedback, far from equilibrium, space of possibilities, co-evolution, historicity and time- and path-dependence.
[24] Fitness, co-evolution, emergence, agent-based systems, self-organisation, self-organised criticality, punctuated equilibrium and fitness landscapes.
[25] Interconnectedness and interdependence, feedback processes, emergence, non-linearity, sensitivity to initial conditions, trajectory in phase space, relevance of chaos and the edge of chaos, adaptive agents, self-organisation and co-evolution.

5.3   A WHOLE-OF-SYSTEMS APPROACH

The concept of Complexity is embedded in a whole-of-systems approach. A system can be defined in a very general sense as a collection of interacting elements that together produce, by virtue of their interactions, some form of system-wide behaviour (Mitchell, 2009:297). In other words, a system is a community of elements that, as a result of their interconnections, form a whole. In complex systems, the interaction is dynamic, i.e. a complex system changes with time (Cilliers, 1998:3-5).

Complexity is not, however, interested as much in the agents as nodes in the system, as in the patterns of their interconnections and how that generates meaning or purpose in the system as a whole (Cilliers, 1998:120). In other words, Complexity is interested in how the elements interact and how this interaction develops into the system as a whole having new capacities that did not exist within the individual elements. Each element interacts with at least one other element, and in complex systems these interactions cumulate in a non-linear fashion—they show asymmetrical properties where the effect of the interactions is not directly proportional to the sum of the inputs.

In complex systems, the whole has properties that cannot be found in the constituent elements or in the sum of their properties. In social systems, for instance, the society as a whole develops and maintains norms and identities that serve the common needs of the community. In some ways this results in suppressing some of the interests and needs of the individual and of special interest groups in the interest in the general wellbeing and survival of the society as a whole. Morin (2005) points out that not only is the whole more than its elements because new qualities or properties emerge due to the organisation of the elements in a whole, but the whole can also be less than the sum of its parts because "a certain number of qualities and properties present in the parts can be inhibited by the organization as a whole" (Morin, 2005:11). In other words, in a social and political context, for the sake of being part of the whole and the benefits derived from that cooperation, the parts may have to give up some of their individual potential, for example in the way that individuals or states give up some of their liberties/sovereignty for the sake of the social/international order.

It is in this context that Morin (2005:11) views the notion of systems to be critical, because "it is through the organization of the parts into a whole that emergent qualities appear and inhibited qualities disappear". Cilliers (1998) explains that organising the parts into a whole is what gives the system meaning, i.e. the meaning of the whole emerges when the parts are no longer understood in their individual context, but rather together with others as patterns of activity:

> Meaning is determined by the dynamic relationships between the components of the system. In the same way, no node in a neural network has any significance by itself – this is the central implication of the notion of distributed representation. Significance is derived from the patterns of activity involving many units, patterns that result from a dynamic interaction between large numbers of weights. (Cilliers, 1998:46)

The concepts 'social' and 'society' conjure up images of systems made up of people that share a common socio-cultural, national or civic bond. When studying people in the context of them being part of a society, as opposed to studying them as individuals, a different side of their being—including aspects related to their role in society as well as aspects related to the restrictions that conforming to the society places on them—is revealed. These are aspects of their being that could not be revealed by studying them in isolation. By studying the society as a whole made up by the patterns of activity of the individuals and the various networks and sub-systems – such as family, clan and tribe that develop out of these patterns – we reveal insights into the way individuals derive meaning from their roles in a community and how the interactions between these individual roles shape, sustain and transform both the society as a whole and the individuals that make up that society. These are insights that could never be identified by studying only the individual.

Cilliers' argument is that, in order to understand distributed representation it is necessary to look beyond the obvious roles that certain elements may appear to play and to focus on the patterns of activity of the system as a whole. Distributed representation refers to the phenomenon that in complex systems the intelligence and decision-making capabilities of a system is not concentrated in one place; it is distributed throughout the whole system. There is no central governing or command and control centre, i.e. no central processing unit with a set of pre-determined rules through which all analysis and decision-making flows. In a complex system each element makes its own decisions. Each element analyses its situation and acts accordingly. However, these elements are also interdependent. By being dependent on each other, their decisions are influenced by each other and their environment. The overall

effect of the decision taken by each element, as a result of the interaction among them, results in the system as a whole adopting behaviour that cannot be explained by merely analysing the behaviour of the individual elements. This behaviour is discussed in greater detail below in the context of emergence and self-organisation, but the point here is that distributed representation refers to this phenomenon in complex systems where decision making is distributed throughout the system. When applying this insight to social systems, one needs to, for instance, look beyond the role certain 'leading' individuals play in order to understand how a society is self-organising. When the focus is only on individuals of prominence, e.g. a chief in tribal societies or a president in contemporary liberal democracies, our analysis is unlikely to reveal how societies are self-organised. Instead, one needs to focus on the patterns of organisation and how these are distributed to grasp how the society as a whole, including the 'leading' individuals, is part of the larger process of self-organisation.

A complex-systems approach is thus not interested in the elements that constitute a system *per se*, but in the interdependent relationships among the elements that make up the system, and how they are organised to form a system or a whole. Morin (2005:11) says that a system is a "relation between parts that can be very different from one another and that constitute a whole at the same time organized, organizing and organizer." For Morin, 'organized' refers to a specific type of system, where the parts are organised in such a way that their interactions gives rise to Complexity. 'Organising' refers to the way in which the interactions among the parts gives rise to new patterns of organisation, a phenomenon dubbed 'emergence' (discussed below). 'Organiser' refers to a type of system that is self-organising, self-maintaining and self-perpetuating. Note how Morin emphasises the linkages and connections between the concepts of system, emergence and self-organisation. Each reflects a facet of Complexity, but none is sufficient to explain Complexity on its own. It is only when they are understood together, as part of the dynamic tension that generates and maintains Complexity, that we gain insight into the function that each contributes separately.

What is the value of a systems approach in the peacebuilding context? Robert Jervis (1997:26) argues that "despite the familiarity of the idea that social action forms and takes place within a system, scholars and statesmen as well as the general public are prone to think in non-systemic terms." He makes the point that this is "because the interactive, strategic, and contingent nature of systems limits the extent to which complete and deterministic theories

are possible" (26). Jervis makes the point that it is necessary to take more seriously the notion:

> . . . that we are in a system and to look for the dynamics that drive them. Very little in social and political life makes sense except in the light of systemic processes. Exploring them gives us new possibilities for understanding and effective action.

Jervis thus argues that a systems approach helps us to understand how things are interrelated and how they form part of, and are mutually influenced by, being part of a larger whole. And he argues that this insight will aid us in our understanding of the behaviour of social systems, including peacebuilding systems.

In moving from the individual to the community and society, we come across organisation. Complex systems cannot do without hierarchy and structure, but in complex systems hierarchy is not hard-wired or externally determined and controlled; the hierarchy of a complex system is emergent and self-organised and thus changes with the system as it adapts and evolves in response to its environment (Cilliers, 2001:143). The vitality of the system depends on its ability to transform itself, including its structure and hierarchy (*ibid.*). Hierarchy thus is a typical characteristic of complex adaptive systems, but in complex systems hierarchies themselves exhibit complex adaptive characteristics (Chapman, 2002:30).

An important feature of hierarchy in complex systems is that different systems interpenetrate each other (Cilliers, 1998:120). An element, or network of elements and their hierarchies may thus form part of more than one system simultaneously. A person can be a member of a religious community, belong to an ethnic group and be a citizen of a state simultaneously. Cross-connections between hierarchies are not accidental but vital to the adaptability of the systems involved. Such alternative routes of communication ensure that hierarchies that become obsolete can be bypassed (Cilliers, 2001:143). They create robustness and resilience in the system. Alternative hierarchies may remain dormant until a specific context makes them vital to the survival or effectiveness of the systems involved.

This is an important insight from Complexity that will be returned to later, because organisations, and especially their managers, tend not to see themselves and their hierarchies as temporary and dispensable. In fact, they tend to view cross-connections as obstacles to efficiency and not as investments in the robustness and resilience of their organisations. They

fail to realise that the alternative communication routes that these cross connections represent provide them with vital information channels that will serve them well in times of crisis when important parts of their formal hierarchy may break down or become inefficient (Cilliers, 2001:144). What is thus perceived as inefficient from one perspective may be viewed as critical for the sustained effectiveness of the system from another perspective.

Another characteristic of hierarchy in complex systems is that it is scalable. This means that one can look at a complex system at different levels or from different perspectives and find the same patterns; one can look at how people organise themselves politically and see some of the same processes at work whether your scale is international, national, regional or local. One implication is that the insights gained on certain patterns of behaviour can be used at many different levels. For instance, insights from known complex social patterns, such as Game Theory, Critical Mass, Tipping Point, or the Dilemma of the Commons, can be applied in all social scales, regardless of whether we are, for instance, dealing with conflict at the family or international relations level (Poundstone, 1992; Schelling, 2006; Zartman & Touval, 2010).

The last aspect of a whole-of-systems approach that should be discussed is the role of boundaries and borders in complex systems. Complex systems are open systems and this implies that interactions take place across their boundaries (Cilliers, 2002:81). These interactions take place with other systems and the environment, i.e. there is a flow of information and/or energy between the system and its environment through its boundaries. Systems consist of interrelated subsystems, and some boundaries can thus fall within larger systems or share borders with them (Chapman, 2002:30). Not all sub-systems are neighbours physically; some are virtually linked – in social systems agents far away from each other may link up via social media, for instance, and collaborate, coordinate and otherwise influence each other's systems and in this way interpenetrate such systems. We have seen, for instance, how ideas and movements in one society influence another that may be physically far away, such as the student uprisings in the 1960s or the more recent contagion of the Arab Spring and the Occupy Wall Street movement.

There has to be a difference between borders that separate sub-systems, and borders that separate the system from its external environment. Borders contain a system or a sub-system like the skin contains the body, but is, at the same time, porous and allows interaction with the

environment. All of these descriptions are helpful in some ways, but they can also be limiting if they lead us into the trap of thinking only of physical or biological borders such as those between countries or cells.

Social systems provide for a much richer and more complex employment of the concept of borders and boundaries. The tendency is to think in biological terms when we think of systems as organisms, but Cilliers (2001:142) suggests that social systems should rather be thought of as systems that exist in virtual space. This makes it easier, for instance, to grasp how one sub-system can be part of more than one system and how the boundaries of such systems can interpenetrate each other. Social systems consist of people, and people are simultaneously part of several systems (family, language groups, professional groups, religious groups, political groups, etc.) and their participation in these various sub-systems creates inter-linkages and cross-flows between these systems. These interactions can be virtual, i.e. they are not necessarily directly in contact with one another, but people and the systems they are part of can be influenced by others far away because information about them is available in virtual spaces, e.g. in social media.

Chapman (2002:29) distinguishes between natural or biological systems, engineered or designed systems and human-activity or social systems. While there are complex systems in all three areas, Chapman argues that it is problematic to assume that human-activity systems can be identified as clearly as engineered or natural systems. He argues that in human-activity systems the framing of the systems depends on the observer. He argues that so-called "hard systems" approaches assume that a system exists in the real word that can be discovered, designed or otherwise manipulated:

> In contrast, the soft systems approach assumes explicitly that systems exist only in the eyes of the beholder and are useful mental constructs for dialogue (29).

Cilliers (2002:81) agrees that the border between the system and its environment is indistinct and framed by the observer, i.e. it is determined by the purpose of the description. However, he further argues that we are constrained in where the frame can be drawn by the function of the system (Cilliers, 2001:141). In other words, framing is not entirely a mental construct free from having to relate in an intelligible and verifiable way with perceived reality.

These are important points to bear in mind when describing peacebuilding systems as either internal/local or external/international, as is done from time to time in this dissertation. There

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will be times when it is useful for our purposes to apply such frames and times when it is not. It is therefore necessary to understand that these are not absolute boundaries or structures, but descriptive frames that are chosen, or not chosen, to be employed to serve a specific purpose.

A system thus has to be 'framed' in a certain way, for instance, by making a distinction between internal and external peacebuilding agents, in order to get a clearer perspective but it is necessary to be aware that this kind of framing will also inevitably introduce distortions (Cilliers, 2001:138). We are constrained by the function of the system, i.e. we cannot impose a random or arbitrary frame; it has to relate to how the system functions for it to make sense. Such constraints thus help to provide a framework that enables descriptions to be built up around it (139).

Cilliers (141) adds an important additional insight when he describes a boundary not only as a constraint but also as an interface between the system and the environment that participates in constituting the system. He argues that boundaries should not be seen in terms associated with physical borders only, for instance national borders that serve to keep citizens in and foreigners out. He uses the example of an eardrum (*ibid.*) to show how a border can also be the interface through which information is absorbed from the environment. And we can thus also choose to see national borders as an interface between two countries through which trade and cultural goods, information and ideas, can flow to and fro.

The boundaries and borders of systems become even more complex when we consider that it is also possible that a particular sub-system could be part of more than one system, which, if so, suggests that different systems interpenetrate each other (Cilliers, 2001:142). For instance, the national staff working for the UN, or for international NGOs in a given peacebuilding context, are local from the perspective of the international staff, but from the perspective of the local authorities they may be seen to represent an international agenda.[26] Depending on the perspective of the observer they thus represent both the local and the international.

It is also possible that parts of the system, especially social systems, may exist in separate physical locations. For instance, in the peacebuilding context, a society that is being assisted

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[26] This is especially the case for young women in societies that have a very conservative view of the role of women in society, and where working for an international organisation may harm their prospects of marriage in that they may be perceived as somehow corrupted as a result of their exposure to international norms and gender values.

to recover from conflict is typically not just located in the geography of the national borders associated with that nation state. Societies emerging out of conflict typically have large diaspora populations that are very influential in the peacebuilding process, both politically and economically. For instance, remittances usually make up an important proportion of people's livelihood strategies. There are also cases where communities in diaspora have been important sources of funding for armed rebel groups in conflicts such as in Sri Lanka, the eastern DRC and in Rwanda.

The point is that caution should be exercised when using spatial concepts—such as inside and outside—when thinking of boundaries and borders in the context of complex social systems. The concepts of boundaries and borders cannot be avoided completely when thinking in terms of systems, but we can recognise that using these concepts can be as misleading as they can be enlightening. It is thus necessary to be very cautious and self-critical when we employ boundaries and borders, and it also has to be understood that when boundaries and borders are employed in this dissertation the meaning will be contextual, i.e. it is done to make a specific point or to illustrate a certain perspective. In Complex systems, describing boundaries and borders should never be understood to imply universal or absolute system boundaries.

Complexity thus builds on and is grounded in a whole-of-systems approach. However, it is concerned with a specific type of system, namely 'complex' systems, and to gain more understanding of that differentiation we turn to another set of important properties of Complexity, namely non-linearity and self-organisation.

5.4   NON-LINEARITY

In the previous section, a whole-of-systems perspective was introduced and it was explained that Complexity is interested in the patterns of interconnections among the elements, and how this dynamic interaction generates properties beyond those that exist in its constituent parts. In this section, the second characteristic of Complexity is introduced, namely that in complex systems the causal patterns of these interactions are non-linear—the outputs are not proportional to the inputs (Hendrick, 2009:6).

Jervis (1997:12) argues that mathematical linearity involves two propositions, namely: (1) that the changes in a system's outputs are proportional to changes in its inputs and thus,

(2) that the system's outputs corresponding to the sum of two inputs are equal to the sum of the outputs arising from the individual inputs. He goes on to point out that we often intuitively expect linear relationships. For example, if a little foreign aid slightly increases economic growth, it is expected that more aid should produce greater growth. However, complex systems often display behaviour that cannot be understood by extrapolating from the units or their relations, and many of the results of actions are unintended (Jervis, 1997:6). "A systems approach shows how individual actors following simple and uncoordinated strategies can produce aggregate behaviour that is complex and ordered, although not necessarily predictable and stable" (Jervis, 1997:77). This is why we cannot predict how complex systems will behave beyond a very limited horizon, but we can usually explain some of the causal patterns that contributed to their behaviour with hindsight.

Thus, an important characteristic of complex systems is that non-linear variables may have a disproportionate impact at one end of its range (Byrne, 1998:14). "Sometimes even a small amount of the variable can do a great deal of work and then the law of diminishing returns sets in, as is often the case for the role of catalysts. In other cases very little impact is felt until a critical mass is assembled" (Hendrick, 2009:6). Non-linearity thus refers to behaviours in which the relationships between variables in a system are dynamic and disproportionate (Kiehl, 1995).

Non-linearity also helps to differentiate between systems that are complex and systems that are merely complicated. If a system appears highly complex but can be completely described and explained, i.e. known, from a cause-effect or linear perspective, we can think of it as a complicated system (Cilliers, 1998:viii). The International Space Station, for example, consists of so many parts and requires so many different technologies that no one person can understand it all. However, it is theoretically possible to fully explain how and why it works, by analysing and understanding the various constituent parts and by describing the causal relations between them and their environment, even if this may require several experts in different disciplines and a truckload of manuals (Cilliers, 1998; Westley, Patton & Zimmerman, 2007).

Complicated systems are determined; i.e. if we have sufficient information and knowledge it would be possible to predict and control their behaviour (Hendrick, 2009:5). This is why it is possible to plan and execute according to plan, within acceptable risk parameters, a mission

that involves using a rocket that blasts off from earth to deliver a payload to a specific point in space, so that, for instance, the crew of the International Space Station can be rotated and their stores replenished. Such an operation requires a highly complicated planning process and the expertise of several scientific disciplines, but it is possible to undertake with a reasonable expectation of success, because the science of rocket propulsion and the movement of a body through space rely on linear causation, and we are thus able to calculate and predict their movements within acceptable limits. In complicated systems we are able to identify a linear causal chain, and this implies that when a specific problem arises it is possible to isolate and identify the problem and to resolve it. And once we have figured out how to solve this particular problem, we can do it over and over again, within a degree of error, which makes the whole process predictable and thus controllable.

Complex systems, on the other hand, are dynamic and non-linear, which means that they do not follow a predictable causal chain or a linear cause-and-effect path (Cilliers, 2001:138). This is why it is not possible to plan and to execute according to plan a mission that involves the transformation of a complex social system, e.g. the peaceful transition from authoritarian rule to a neo-liberal democracy in post-Gaddafi Libya, in the same way that it is possible to plan a mission to the International Space Station. And if Libya were to become a peaceful country in a few years' time, it would not be possible to replicate the specific processes followed in Libya in another setting with the expectation that it will generate the same results.

In other words, in a non-linear system, even where we are able to connect the dots and trace the cause-and-effect path that generates a certain outcome with hindsight, this knowledge will not enable us to replicate that same outcome in future, because even if we were able to replicate the model the circumstances would be different and this will result in a distinctive set of reactions that will generate a new outcome in each setting where the model is applied. If we apply this insight to actual peacebuilding practice, we can see that it is vindicated by empirical research that has found that the same neo-liberal peacebuilding model has been applied to a range of different contexts over the last decade in countries as diverse as Afghanistan, the Congo, Haiti, Iraq, Timor-Leste and the Sudan, with a different outcome in every case (Call & Wyeth, 2008; Suhrke & Berdal, 2012; Brock, Holm, Sørensen & Stohl, 2012).

When we want to express a common-sense grasp of a complex phenomenon, we often jokingly say that "it is not rocket science". However, if we compare complicated with complex phenomena, as we did above with missions to space and missions to build peace, we come to realise that whilst 'rocket science' is determined, and thus knowable and predictable, phenomena that are non-linear and dynamic are unpredictable, unknowable and uncontrollable, and thus, in fact, much more complex than 'rocket science'.

The first characteristic of non-linearity that was introduced was that the outputs it generates are not proportionate to its inputs, i.e. they are asymmetrical. The space station example above illustrates the second aspect of non-linearity, namely that non-linear systems do not follow a pre-determined and thus predictable cause-and-effect path. Nor can such a path, once traced in hindsight, be replicated to generate the same effect.

A third aspect of non-linearity that sets complex systems apart from complicated ones are that they cannot be reduced to something simpler, like a set of laws or rules that can help us to predict the behaviour of the system. Cilliers (1998:4) explains that "a large system of linear elements can usually be collapsed into an equivalent system that is much smaller." For example, the linear sequence 'XYXYXYXYXY' can be reduced to the formula 'XYx5'. However, a non-linear sequence, e.g. 'QWERTY' cannot be similarly reduced. There is value in reducing information and making it more manageable. Reducing large linear data sequences, such as 'XY x 5000', for instance, saves space and enables us to process larger amounts of data. However, non-linear data sequences and non-linear system processes cannot be reduced to formulae or rules that can compress the amount of information necessary to manage them, or to make them otherwise predictable and controllable.

One of the defining characteristics of Complexity is thus that a complex system cannot be compressed (Geyer & Rihani, 2010:37: Cilliers, 1998:10; Cilliers, 2001:138). In mathematical terms, this inability to be compressed can be demonstrated by a series of complex numbers that cannot be reduced to an algorithm that can predict the order in which the numbers will be generated (Morin, 2005:9). Chaitin (1975:49) defines computational Complexity as "algorithmic incompressibility" and describes it as follows: "[T]he complexity of a series is equal to the size of the minimal program necessary to produce that series."

Thus far, three characteristics of non-linearity have been introduced, namely that it is not proportional, that it does not follow a pre-determinable cause-and-effect path that can assist us to predict or replicate its behaviour in future, and that it is not reducible to a formula or rule that can assist us to manage or control it. A fourth characteristic is that linear logic cannot be used to explain the behaviour of complex systems. Non-linearity generates outputs that are not necessarily proportional to the inputs; i.e. in complex systems it is possible for two inputs to generate an outcome that is larger, or smaller, than the sum of the two inputs together. For instance, in complex social systems we often talk of indirect or unintended consequences, for instance, one may organise a peacebuilding training course with the aim of imparting a skill, e.g. conflict management, but then it turns out that the most important benefit that the participants gain from the training is not necessarily the skill, but the team-building and social networking.

Unintended consequences can also be negative. The law of diminishing returns holds, for instance, that one cannot continue to add inputs to a system and expect that there will automatically be a proportional growth in outputs. Economic and other social complex systems often reach a saturation point beyond which additional inputs may have no further benefits or where they may actually start having negative or perverse effects (Case & Fair, 1999).[27]

The African philosophy of *Ubuntu* is an example of this social complexity in that it holds that the individual can only have meaning in the context of a relationship to others and its embeddedness in a specific social system.[28] The social system is made up of individuals and is represented in individuals, but studying only the individual will not reveal their social context, i.e. if you were to separate the individual from the social system and study them in isolation from the system you will fail to understand the essence of their value and meaning.

Four characteristics of non-linearity in complex systems have now been introduced. As these four examples have demonstrated, our common-sense understanding of non-linearity is often closely associated with the concepts of disorder, chaos and randomness because we typically

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[27] In this context, 'perverse' refers to effects that have the opposite outcome to what was intended.

[28] Desmond Tutu explains that "*Ubuntu* says that I am human because you are human. If I undermine your humanity I dehumanize myself. You must do what you can to maintain this great harmony, which is perpetually undermined by resentment, anger, desire for vengeance. That's why African jurisprudence is restorative rather than retributive." (Gibson, 2002:543)

explain non-linearity as the opposite of the linear, the logical and the orderly. It is thus important to emphasise that in the context of Complexity non-linearity is not associated with disorder. In fact, non-linearity is an essential ingredient in the processes of emergence and self-organisation that generate order in complex systems.

Non-linearity has been presented as the element that distinguishes a complex system from a linear-deterministic mechanical system. The latter is fully knowable, predictable and, therefore, controllable in principle. It, therefore, is also unable to do anything that is not pre-programmed or designed if it is man-made system or new in the sense that we could not know of it in advance if it is a natural system. In contrast, the non-linearity in complex systems is what makes it possible for these systems to adapt and to evolve, i.e. to create something new that goes beyond what is pre-programmed in the parts that make up the system. Non-linearity is thus an essential part, in fact a pre-condition, for emergence, self-regulation and adaption in complex systems (Cilliers, 1998:120).

This is why complex systems can be non-linear without being chaotic or random. Non-linearity makes complex systems unpredictable at certain levels or scales, but this is not the same as being random. A system may appear predictable and stable on one scale, but unpredictably complex on another. For instance, we can predict the behaviour of our solar system on a timescale of years and decades, and this gives the system a feeling of permanency and stability. However, we know, at the same time, that our solar system has undergone, and will undergo, radical change on a timescale of hundreds and millions of years (OECD, 2008:8). Similarly, we can predict the weather on a timescale of hours and days, but we cannot predict the weather on a timescale of months and years, except in broad comparative trends, such as monthly average rainfall or temperature, the change of seasons, etc. This does not make our weather or solar systems random, only difficult to predict beyond a certain scale.

The same is true of our political and economic lives. Whilst no one would bargain, for instance, on the current political system in France operating unchanged far into the future, there is at the same time enough stability in the near to medium-term for us to make plans with a certain level of confidence that they are likely to be meaningful – partly also because we are confident that we will be able to adapt those plans when circumstances change. However, enough events have also been witnessed in our known history, for instance in

France over the last 500 years, and experienced in our own lifetimes, for instance by those who may have lived through or witnessed the radical changes in South Africa, to know that totally unpredictable and unexpected changes may occur in a relatively short period of time. Thus, whilst change is a constant reality, and whilst we know that change is inevitable in the long term, we are generally still able to cope with the rate of change in the short- to medium-term range.

A number of complex system characteristics help us to understand why we experience this relative bubble of stability around us in the midst of the larger changes that are continuously under way. This chapter will not go deeply into the individual psychology at work, other than to recognise that we, as humans, have obviously developed a specific cognitive capacity that enables us to cope with our environment. This includes our ability, on the one hand, to create a sense of meaning and an understanding of the present and the past, while as the same time having a capacity to adapt to changes in our environment. Instead, the focus here will be on the systemic or social tools we have developed to manage change.

Lemke (2000:183) argues that our studies of societies reveal that, however apparently free and independent these systems are when viewed on the scale of the individuals that make up the societies, from a broader perspective the systems repeat the same larger-scale patterns and cycles. This is because individual behaviour is influenced and constrained by larger-scale entities such as the family, the community, the culture, the environment, etc. (Lemke). We adapt to other entities that:

> … impinge upon us, and they still to others, in ramifying chains of reaction that bind us together as communities, ecosystems, societies, cultures. As we all strive to adapt to one another, only some self-consistent collective patterns are possible for the whole swarm…. Order forms because there are only a few solutions to the problem of correlated motions, and when contrasted with an ideal of randomness in which all possible states of motion are equally likely, those few solutions stand out as 'orderly'. (Lemke, 2000:182)

An individual in a crowd can theoretically move in any direction, but if the crowd moves in a certain direction, for instance out of a stadium after a sporting event, then the movement of the individual in reality would be facilitated if (s)he moves in the same direction, and constrained if (s)he does not. Mitleton-Kelly (2003:20) argues that the combination of constraints and non-linear dynamics are the "basic mechanisms involved in the emergence" of self-organising systems behaviour. This was also the point Morin (2005:11) made earlier when he explained that a system is not just more than the sum of its parts, but it is also less

than its parts, because the system also requires its parts to abide by certain constraints. For instance, the social contract implies that individuals voluntarily limit some of their freedoms in order to gain some common goods from the social system. Or, internationally, nation-states have to limit some of their sovereignty if they wish to gain some benefits from the international system.

Jervis (1997:7) explains that Complexity does not imply an absence of regularities. He argues that a crucial stabilising factor in complex systems is that structures are powerful, i.e. that the characteristics of the elements matter less than their place in the system. He argues that this is why different kinds of countries often behave similarly, "why the Cold War resembled the rivalry between Athens and Sparta".

One of the ways in which complex systems use constraints to maintain themselves within certain parameters is through the use of feedback mechanisms. When certain thresholds are crossed, positive or negative feedback is used to correct the system back to within the parameters. While complex systems may thus theoretically be capable of a huge variety or range of actions, their behaviour is typically constrained within a fairly limited range of options (OECD, 2008:7). While individuals may thus be theoretically free to choose any action, their behaviour is typically constrained to within a fairly limited range of options by influences such as what would be regarded as legal, moral and appropriate by an individual's society, family and friends. When an individual acts outside of these parameters, feedback is applied through a range of social sanctions that, in most cases, serve to direct the individual back to within the social norm.

According to a deterministic notion of nature, order is the natural state but is constantly eroded through entropy. In contrast, according to Complexity, highly dynamic and non-linear change is the natural state. Order is pursued, but never fully attained, through self-organised and emergent complex systems. Change is thus the natural state, only temporarily constrained by order.

A useful metaphor in this context perhaps is that of a river that appears stable from a distance, but is in fact in constant motion. The path of the river appears stable, but it, in fact, changes continuously over time. Faster parts of the river carve out the embankments whilst sediments settle in slower parts of the river to form new river banks. From time to time the river may

flood, and sometimes the flooding may be so severe that the river radically changes course. If one were to film a portion of a river over a hundred years and then play it back in a few minutes the river would appear to be in a continuous snake-like motion. Thus, what appears orderly from one perspective is constantly in motion from another. In this example, the river, and the dynamics that determine its flow do not change, the only aspect that changes is the scale of our perception.

There may even be rare high impact events such as an earthquake, or volcano, or meteorite strike that change the landscape drastically with a radical impact on the river, e.g. it may become a lake. Rihani (2002:87) calls such major changes 'gateway events'. Taleb (2010:xxii) refers to them as 'Black Swan' events, and he ascribes three attributes to such events, namely that they are rare, their impact is extreme and they can only be explained and 'predicted' retrospectively. He argues that "a small number of Black Swans explain almost everything in our world, from the success of ideas and religions, to the dynamics of historical events, to elements of our personal lives" (Taleb, 2010:xxii). In other words, history emerges in non-linear jumps, and the small routine adaptations – the changes brought about by the sedimentation of the river – pale in comparison with the high-impact events. Taleb (2010) argues that the implication is that day-to-day adaptations and slow evolutionary developments, in both our official and private lives, have much less impact on our history than a handful of these Black Swan events. He argues that the only way to cope with Black Swan events is to ensure that your systems are as resilient as possible to cope with change. Resilience, in this context, does not mean the ability to withstand change, but rather the capacity to absorb change. In other words, the more our systems are able to anticipate, absorb and adjust to change, the more resilient they would be to events that signal change, regardless of whether it is gradual or radical.

The 2007-2012 global financial crisis is a good example of another non-linear phenomenon in complex systems. Systems can change suddenly and dramatically when they reach a certain tipping point (Schelling, 2006:101). Two common examples in nature is when water changes to steam at boiling point and into ice at freezing point. In both these examples water changes instantly from a liquid into a gas or a solid when it crosses a certain threshold. Whilst the influence on the system may be gradual, e.g. the water is slowly brought to boiling point, the shift from a liquid to a gas occurs suddenly when the tipping point is reached. In the global financial crisis, the tipping point came when the United States housing bubble burst in 2007,

which resulted in a liquidity shortfall in the banking system and the collapse of a number of large interconnected global financial institutions. Jervis (1997:12) offers another example of a social tipping point when he says that "women may thrive in a profession only after there are enough of them so that they do not feel like strangers".

In this section, non-linearity has been introduced and four of its characteristics have been discussed, namely that it is not proportional; that it does not follow a pre-determined cause-and-effect path that can assist in predicting or replicating its behaviour in future; that it is not reducible to a formula or rule that can assist to manage or control it; and linear logic cannot be used to explain the behaviour of complex systems. That non-linearity should not be confused with disorder or randomness was also emphasised; in fact, it was argued that non-linearity is an essential ingredient in the processes of emergence and self-organisation that generate order in complex systems. The influence of constraints and Black Swan events was also touched upon. At this point, the first two complex-systems characteristics were introduced, namely the whole-of-systems approach and non-linearity. Let us turn now to the third characteristic, namely self-organisation.

5.5   SELF-ORGANISATION

Self-organisation refers to the ability of a complex system to organise, regulate and maintain itself without needing an external or internal managing or controlling agent. The principle of self-organisation has been widely accepted in our understanding of ecosystems, evolution and the development of language, to list a few diverse examples of systems that demonstrate the ability to organise themselves without a controlling agent. Ecosystems emerge and function without an external designer and without someone controlling the system. Evolution has shaped the emergence and development of biological life on our planet without an external designer or controlling agent. It can also be seen that language develops, is maintained, and continuously adjusts and develops without any one person, or even a group of persons, being in overall control of the process.

However, many still find it difficult to apply the principle of self-organisation to social systems because most of the management and organisational models they have been exposed to are based on deep-seated ideas about hierarchal forms of order and control that are based on leadership, authority and power. The conventional wisdom is that it is great leaders and the

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structures, hierarchies and bureaucracies that they developed have produced great civilizations. As discussed in Chapter 2, many studies characterise societies on the basis of the degree or complexity of their formal political organisation (Morris, 2011; Tainter, 1988).

Although formal patterns of organisation have certainly played an important part in the development of all societies and the formation of states, we are only now starting to understand – as insights from Complexity are starting to have an impact on these studies – how self-organisation has underpinned the emergence, refinement and maintenance of complex societies and how, in some cases, breakdown of self-organisation has contributed to the collapse of societies and civilizations (Morris, 2011; Diamond, 2006; Tainter, 1988). Through insights from the study of Complexity we realize that leadership, structure, hierarchy and bureaucracy do not create social order in and of themselves. Instead, they emerge from the way a society is self-organising; they are shaped by the history of the system, and are employed as instruments to generate, maintain and reproduce these societies and civilizations.

For Cilliers (1998:89), structure refers to the internal mechanisms developed by the system to "receive, encode, transform and store information on the one hand, and to react to such information by some form of output on the other". Self-organisation implies that "internal structure can evolve without the intervention of an external designer or the presence of some centralised form of internal control" (*ibid.*). Self-organisation refers to the spontaneous emergence of organisation and structure in complex systems.

Take for example the economy of any reasonably open economic system, which in our contemporary world excludes perhaps only North Korea and Iran. An economic system is a self-organising system in that it continuously responds to a large number of factors without requiring a controlling agent (Cilliers, 1998:90). The economy is often discussed as if it were an organism, but we need to think of it more as an ecosystem because it is not the economic system as a whole but rather the individuals and organisations that constitute the economic system that individually consider and respond to the factors that matter to them. It is the cumulative and collective effect of their actions that determines the overall behaviour and state of the system. The state of the economy in any given country or region depends on a large number of dynamic factors. As these conditions vary, the individuals and organisations in the system continuously adjust their actions so that they can reap the most benefit from the prevailing conditions. Each individual or organisation acts in its own self-interest, but

sometimes their actions can have significant implications for the system as a whole, especially when a series of individual actions aggregate into swarm behaviour, e.g. where the actions of some trigger behaviour by others that result in large swarm-like fluctuations in the system as a large number of individual agents respond similarly in what appears to be coordinated behaviour. For instance, a large number of people may start fleeing when a rumour spreads that an attacking force may be approaching. Or a large number of investors may start flocking to a certain market or stock as rumours spread of its good prospects.

There are also some economic agents that are trying to influence the system in what they perceive to be in the best interest of their sub-system or even the system as a whole. Governments, central banks, and multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank may, from time to time, try to act in ways that they perceive to be in the interest of the world economy or the economy of a region or a specific country. However, their actions also only constitute another input into the system, and they do not have control over how the system responds to their inputs. We can thus not regard them as controlling agents. At best they are some of the more influential agents in the system.

The organisation of the economic system as a whole thus comes about as a result of the interaction between the various agents that constitute the system and its environment (Cilliers, 1998:90). There is no single agent or groups of agents that controls the economic system, but there are many agents that try to influence the behaviour of the system, and there are many more who simply respond to what they perceive to be the current state or future direction of the economy. The economy self-organises spontaneously, and this is an emergent process that comes about as a result of the cumulative and collective interaction of all the agents in the system.

As discussed in the previous section, this process is non-linear and dynamic and thus cannot be predicted or controlled. So many causal reactions are happening simultaneously that no one agent or group of agents working together can control the system. The economy is a useful example, because it is a sub-system of the complex social system that is the main focus of this dissertation, and, as discussed earlier, complex systems are scalable and many of the general properties of complex systems, such as self-organisation will operate at many different levels.

Although a complex system like the economy is too complex to model deterministically (Cilliers, 1998:90), it is possible to influence it at various levels. As mentioned earlier, many organisations, like central banks, exist explicitly for the purpose of trying to influence the economy. Non-linear causality generates asymmetrical relations, which implies that relatively powerless agents can sometimes have a disproportionate effect on the system. For instance, the 9/11 attacks in New York was an example of how a small group of terrorists could successfully attack the most powerful nation on earth and alter the direction of international relations. Despite the military, political and economic superiority of the USA over al-Qaeda, the organisation nevertheless found a way of dramatically striking America at the heart of its economic power. However, the effects of any such interventions, regardless of the relative power of the agent, usually only influence the system in the short to medium term because the rest of the agents in the system will respond to any new developments, and these responses will impact on each other and result in further waves of reactions. The cumulative and collective effect of these responses will result in the system as a whole responding in unpredictable ways. Even the influence of the 9/11 attacks, whilst they had a significant impact in the immediate aftermath of the attack, has waned significantly one decade later.

Power, in this context, refers perhaps to the relative ability to maintain a sustained influence on the system. In other words, if an agent is able to sustain interference with a system over many generations or iterations, and is thus in a position to continuously interfere with the system through inputs into the system's process of adjustment and evolution, then the agent can be said to have an powerful influence on the system's evolution. The impact of once-off inputs, such as the 9/11 attacks, regardless of how big they were at the time of impact, will diminish over time, but a sustained engagement with a system increases the likelihood of exerting an influence on it. For instance, a central bank may persistently raise interest rates in order to curb inflation, and this may result in a more stable growth pattern than would otherwise be the case. However, it is important to note that sustained influence is not the same as having control over the system. It is merely an example of a more effective influence on, or intervention in, a system. The point is thus that a complex system cannot be controlled by any single agent or group of agents. At best, such agents can exert an influence on a system, but, as the system is self-organising and will respond to any intervention in a non-linear way, no interference—neither a Black Swan high-impact event, nor a sustained intervention—can result in the control of the complex system. This is a key finding of Complexity, and it has significant implications for how we are to deal with self-organised complex systems,

including, as will be seen in the remainder of this dissertation, for how we are to deal with peacebuilding systems.

Most people will probably by now accept that the global economy is self-organising, especially after the global financial crisis that started in 2007 clearly demonstrated that no one agent, including the central banks of the major economic powers, was able to control the global financial markets. The financial crisis also showed that even the most experienced and knowledgeable bankers and economists were not able to understand, let alone predict, the complexities at play in the global financial markets.

However, very few people seem to be willing, as yet, to agree to the notion that our national political systems are equally self-organising, and that in the final instance no one entity, such as the government, or parliament, is in control of the political system of a given country. Perhaps most will argue that if the government is not in control there will be anarchy and chaos. However, when we say that our social systems, including sub-systems like the economy and our political system, are self-organising, we are not saying that these systems are chaotic or random. It is only in extreme cases that our political systems become chaotic, and this occurs when there is a collapse of self-organisation not because of it. For the most part political systems are relatively stable. In fact, it is surprising how volatile political systems can be without collapsing into chaos. Complexity's insight is that this relative stability is not due to the institutions of the state in and of themselves. This relative stability, rather, is an emergent product of the ability of the society to organise and maintain itself, and the institutions of state are the instruments that have evolved over time through which this self-organising process works. Individual leaders come and go, and the institutions are continuously undergoing reform, but the political system as a whole remains relatively stable. The change in leadership and the reform of the institutions are the outward signs of how the society as a whole is continuously adapting and evolving, without the need for an external or overall controlling agent.

In the case of the political system, the point is that the form of government that has emerged in any given society is a product of the self-organising processes at play in that society, and that the continuous development and evolution of the political system is driven by that self-organising process. The political model is a product of, and subject to, the society's ability to self-organise. Contrary to our common-sense assumption that it is the political model that is

organising our society, it is our society that is self-organising the political model and using it as a tool to organise our politics. If our common-sense perceptions were correct, then our stability would depend on the stability of the political model. However, as we can see from even the recent Arab Spring developments in North Africa and the Middle East, political models, like the dictatorships in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt may appear stable for decades, but they are actually temporary, especially when seen in context of a greater span of history. The Arab Spring has reminded us that when these temporary and abnormal models of imposed stability inevitably collapse, their demise results in great social upheaval.

In comparison, those societies that have relatively open political models that allow for greater flexibility and that are able to adjust and evolve over time, may seem to be more 'unstable' in the short-term, for instance in that there is regular change in governments, but they experience greater relative stability over time. From the perspective of those with a tradition of one family or elite group remaining in power for an extended period of time, a democratic model may appear rather unstable, as there are frequent changes of government. However, from the perspective of the citizen, a democratic model is more stable in the long run in that it is more predictable. Predictability in this context does not imply that anyone can predict, with certainty, who will be in power after the next election, but they can predict, with relative certainty, that there will be an election and that the system as a whole will maintain enough stability to allow its members the confidence to enter into contracts with the expectation that those contracts will be honoured and that they will have recourse to a fair legal system if this is not the case. Predictability does not refer to the specific events, but to the behaviour of the system as a whole. And whilst the system as a whole is also changing, i.e. the way we conduct elections and the way we manage and judge contracts evolve over time, these changes occur at a scale and pace that allows individuals to have sufficient predictability in their lifetimes to consider their political system 'stable'. The insight from Complexity is that the relative predictability does not derive from the fixity of the political model but from its flexibility, for example, the democratic model is better able to cope with change and to adapt with minimal disruption to the body politic. The relative long-term stability and predictability of a developed democracy can thus be explained by its ability to constantly change and adapt without losing its overall form or identity. The success of the democratic system thus lies partly in its ability to manage uncertainty, because it is process based, rather than being dependent on a specific individual, dynasty or elite oligarchy. The primacy and legitimacy of

the democratic process gives it the resilience and robustness to survive shocks, crises and sudden high-impact events.

This is one of the reasons why invading empires, with the recent American experience in Iraq being the latest example, have found it so difficult to impose an externally-designed political model on an existing society (Stewart, 2006). Most empires found that they could not just replace the local organisational model with their own, because the indigenous model is deeply embedded in the history, worldview, belief system, culture and value system of the society in question. The political model is not just dependent on these roots within the social system for its credibility, but also for its continuous maintenance, adaptation and development. Foreign empires, from the Romans in Britain to the Mongols in China, and including the more recent colonial experiences and contemporary interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, all found that local political leaders and administrators do not control the political system as much as they operate within it, because the local political system is part of, and embedded in, the local socio-cultural worldview. The political leaders are themselves subject to complex social processes that influence the values and parameters of their behaviour. Thus, when empires co-opt local political leaders to man their new political model, they typically find that what they have achieved is merely a surface-level compliance with a new model, whilst some form of the pre-existing political model survives to manage the real day-to-day lives of the people (Hohe, 2002). The self-organising system survives despite the imposition of the new surface-level model, because it is deeply embedded in the socio-cultural norms and values of the society. It is not possible to replace these in a short period of time by merely exchanging an old political model with a new model, because it is not the political model that orders society. It is the self-organising society that generates and sustains its own political model (Hohe, 2002). This insight from Complexity has significant implications for peacebuilding, which are explored in the next two chapters.

The history of a system, meaning everything that has gone into shaping it into its present form, thus is critical to understanding complex systems. Two similar systems placed in identical conditions may respond in vastly different ways if they have different histories. Imagine how different our contemporary world would have been if, in the American Civil War, instead of one side being victorious over the other, a UN-like body interposed a peacekeeping force and supervised a ceasefire and peace agreement that resulted in the northern and southern states each forming their own independent countries. However, the

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history of a system should also not be seen as determining its future in such a locked-in way that knowing its history can result in being able to predict its future direction. The 'effects' of the history of the system are important in that they place certain constraints on the future development of the system, but these effects are continuously being transformed through the self-organising processes in the system (Cilliers, 1998:108).

Complexity comes about as a result of the competition for scarce resources in the system and in the environment, and it results in the system seeking to optimise its organisation so as to avoid wasting resources (Cilliers, 1998:80). Self-organised criticality refers to the natural tendency of complex systems to seek out a balance between continuity and change far from equilibrium, as that is the state in which it can optimally adapt and self-organise. Complex systems operate under conditions far from equilibrium, i.e. there is a constant flow of energy and/or information through the system that ensures that it is continuously changing in response to developments in its environment, while at the same time maintaining the core-organisation of the system. Complex systems maintain, through self-regulation, a delicate balance between enough continuity to remain organised as a system and enough change to be able to adapt to changes within the system and its environment. The theory of self-organised criticality tells us that a self-organising system will seek a critical point between order and chaos, because such a point would be optimal for efficiency and flexibility, i.e. it will combine a relatively stable state with the freedom to change its state with the least amount of effort when necessary (Cilliers, 97).

A key characteristic of complex systems in general, and self-organisation in particular, is that there is recurrence in the interactions among the agents involved—the effect of any activity can feed back onto itself through loops in the interactions (Cilliers, 1998:4). As explained above, systems consist of a number of elements that are self-organised as a whole. These elements organise themselves through their interactions with each other. Interactions usually have a fairly short range in that information is exchanged primarily with immediate neighbours, but this does not preclude their having wide-ranging influence (*ibid.*). Each element responds to the information it exchanges with the other elements with which it is in touch. The influence becomes modulated along its route and can be enhanced, suppressed or altered in a number of ways (*ibid.*).

Feedback, meaning conveying information about the outcome of any process or activity to its source (Capra, 1997:57), plays a critical role in the process of self-organisation. The flow of information through the system in the form of positive and negative feedback loops, among other things, assists in the establishment, maintenance and strengthening of the Complexity of the system. This feedback can be positive (enhancing) or negative (inhibiting) and both kinds of feedback are necessary (Cilliers, 1998:4). Negative feedback is self-correcting and plays a regulating role that, like a thermostat in a heating system, maintains the stability in the system (Hendrick, 2009:6; Schelling, 2006:81). Positive feedback is self-reinforcing, and has an amplifying effect (Meadows, 1999:11).

It is generally believed, for instance, that the implementation of a peace agreement has a better chance of success if the people affected by the conflict experience peace dividends, i.e. if they can see tangible positive results in their lives as a result of the implementation of the peace agreement. The positive attitude people are likely to have to the peace process as a result of the peace dividends is an example of a positive feedback loop where success begets further success. Activities thus reflect back on themselves after a number of intermediary steps (Cilliers, 1998:6). In complex systems, small-scale perturbations can, as a result of positive feedback modulation, produce large-scale effects (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984:xvi).

It may be useful to introduce the concept of regulating a system by way of negative and positive feedback processes by using the example of the process of homeostasis. Perhaps the example most people would be familiar with is the thermostat device used in heating or cooling systems in buildings. We typically decide on an ideal temperature for our building environment, e.g. 19 degrees Celsius. In the case of a heating system, the thermostat will send a signal to switch on the furnace when it detects that the temperature in the building has fallen below the minimum parameter, so that the heat can be increased. It sends a further signal to switch off the furnace when it detects that the temperature in the building exceeds the maximum parameter. It is important to note that systems that adapt on the basis of an externally-controlled homeostatic process are not complex. Nevertheless, the example is still useful because the thermostat demonstrates how one can regulate a system within certain parameters by making use of use a relatively simple feedback process. In this context, homeostasis refers to the ability of adaptive systems to maintain certain governing variables within defined limits (Schelling, 2006:83; Chapman, 2002:42). If any of the governing

variables in a system approaches or exceeds the set parameters, the system responds by devoting resources to returning that variable to within the limits.

Chapman (2002:43) explains how the concept of homeostasis can be applied to the social policy context:

> Thus if all objectives were being satisfied and a new threat arose in regard to, say social objectives, then the policy process would correctly prioritise social objectives until such time as they were safely within the boundaries or limits regarded as acceptable. In short the prioritisation of policy objectives is entirely determined by context, which is why the process of policy-making, and much else in government, is driven by events (i.e. changes in context or environment). It should be noted that in policy issues, the perception that an objective is close to limit depends on the perspective adopted.

Complex systems differ from an externally-controlled homeostasis process in that they are self-organising and thus do not have an external controlling agent that manages the organisational process or determines the parameters or variables within which the system can operate. Complex systems do not need central control because their organisation comes about as a result of the interaction between the components of the system (Cilliers, 1998:2). Each element in the system responds only to the information that is available to it. None of the elements, including any potential controlling agent, can have all the knowledge that the system has as a whole, because if they could they would have to be as complex as the system itself (Cilliers, 1998:5).

Cilliers (1998:10) argues that, when managing a changing environment, two of the indispensable capabilities of a complex system are the ability to store information about the environment and the ability to adapt its structures, i.e. to self-organise. Complex systems thus need to have the capacity to recall or somehow embody their history, i.e. to have memory. Memory is not located at a specific place; however, it is distributed throughout the system (Cilliers, 2000c:24).

Complex systems may appear stable or constant, but they are in fact continuously in motion. This is because complex systems have a history that co-determines, together with the process of emergent and adaptive self-organisation in the context of a changing external environment, the future direction of the system (Cilliers, 2000c:24). For example, the human body retains its identity as an individual throughout its lifetime, both in terms of its personality and its physical form, but in actual fact the cells that make up the body are ageing, dying and being

replaced on a continuous basis. The whole system is able to retain its history whilst the cells are dying and being replaced. However, it maintains enough history to remain recognisable, both to itself and to external observers, as a unique individual throughout its life-time. The human body is thus an example of how a complex system makes use of self-organisation to regulate, maintain and regenerate itself. It adapts and changes, but at the same time it maintains its own vital characteristics.

Complex systems adapt to problems and find ways to cope with and overcome or substitute limitations and constraints in creative ways that are not pre-programmed in the design of the system. This is what sets self-organising systems apart from externally designed and controlled systems. If a machine develops a problem, it stops functioning as intended. A self-organising system, in contrast, can either fix such a problem itself or find ways of bypassing the problem. For instance, when the Occupy Wall Street movement[29] was prohibited from using loudspeakers or megaphones they developed an alternative system for allowing a speaker to address a crowd. Those persons within earshot would pass the message on to the next group and this process would be repeated until the message reached the periphery. This was not necessarily a very effective means of public speaking, but it is an example of how complex social systems solve problems or find alternative ways of achieving the objective.

It the beginning of this chapter the important role that the framing of the concept of *autopoiesis* played in the development of Complexity was referred to *(*Maturana & Varela, 1980 and Luhmann, 1990)*. Whilst the notion of *autopoiesis* is associated with that of self-organisation, it is important to note that an *autopoietic* system is autonomous and operationally closed, in the sense that every process within it directly helps to maintain the whole. Morin (2005:14) describes a closed system as one where "causes produces [sic] effects that are necessary for their own causation". A social example of such a closed system would be a cult where the members are isolated from the greater society and where everything they need to function socially is controlled within the cult, by the cult members themselves. A complex system differs from a pure *autopoietic* system in that it is open, i.e. it interacts with its environment and influences from the environment help to shape its self-organisation process. It is this ability that enables complex systems to adapt to its environment and to change – to co-evolve - together with it.

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[29] The Occupy Wall Street movement came into being in response to the financial crisis in 2011. For more see: http://occupywallst.org/about/

Chapman (2002:41) applies the concept to the social policy context and argues that many organisations create internal processes that have the effect of reproducing their own organisation over time. He argues that an *autopoietic* organisation is a network of production processes in which the function of each component is to participate in the production or transformation of the other components of the network (*ibid.*). In this way, the entire network is continually re-producing itself. What is conserved is its internal organisation, core values and culture, and these are preserved by the ways in which 'the right way to do things' are internalised by the individuals within the institution" (*ibid.*). Most organisations and bureaucracies have some of these tendencies, but they are most easily identifiable in those organisations that have a very strong identity and ethos that needs to be continuously maintained, typically through organisational rituals, internal training, and strict adherence to organisational protocols. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is probably a good example in the humanitarian context, as one can predict the position of an ICRC delegate on a range of policy issues with a high likelihood of success, even if you have never met the individual before. This process is also somewhat similar to what Poincaré and Prigogine refer to as correlation (Prigogine, 1996:121).

Another important property of Complexity in general, and self-organisation in particular, that has been referred to several times before is known as emergence. Emergence is an important concept for Complexity because it explains how the elements in the system are not just merely interacting with each other in order to maintain themselves, as in an *autopoietic* system. In complex systems, the interactions of the elements generate a new collective effect (or effects) that would not have occurred if the different agents acted on their own. New system characteristics 'emerge' through the process of interaction (Cilliers, 1998:106). Morel and Ramanujam (1999) explain self-organisation as a "process of spontaneous creation of complex structure that emerges due to the dynamics of the complex system", which makes self-organisation an emergent phenomenon.

The dynamic and non-linear relationships among the components in complex systems generate new emergent properties, i.e. properties that cannot be predicted merely by analysing the individual components of the system. Complicated systems do not have emergent properties, and the way in which they work can potentially be fully understood, and predicted, by analysing their components and the rules that govern their interactions (Cilliers, 2000a:41).

In a complicated system, disorder is understood as entropy, i.e. as the loss of energy in the system that, if unchecked, will result in the gradual collapse of the system into disorder. In contrast, non-linearity and dynamism play a critical role in creating and sustaining order in complex systems, i.e. in enabling order to emerge (Cilliers, 1998:118).

Linear systems are the sum of their parts and thus do not have emergent behaviour. A bicycle has several components, and these function together as a system. Complex systems have several additional characteristics to this kind of system, but for the present discussion on emergence, we just focus on the non-linear interaction among the parts of a complex system. A bicycle can have many different shapes, but one essential structure – two wheels, seat, frame, steering and a propulsion mechanism. A designer may adapt a future design based on lessons learned from an earlier model, but any specific model is stuck with its design until a new model is developed. Change in this context thus occurs in the conscious design process and is reflected in the differences between generations.

In contrast, complex systems can adapt and change in their own life-time, without the aid of an external designer. And complex systems can also adapt radically over many generations, without the aid of an external designer, as the evolution of life from basic cells to complex life forms demonstrates. This change over time – the way in which a system adapts on the basis of its own internal processes as well as its interaction with its environment and the way in which it generates new structures, forms and functions – is what is meant by emergence.

Melanie Mitchell (2009:13) proposes a definition of complex systems that is indicative of how central the notions of self-organisation and emergence are to understanding Complexity. She says a system is complex when it "exhibits nontrivial emergent and self-organizing behaviours" (*ibid.*). A key characteristic of complex systems is thus that they emerge and maintain themselves spontaneously, i.e. without the intervention of an external designer or the presence of some form of internal or external controlling agent (Cilliers, 1998:89). This is why Complexity is potentially so relevant for complex peacebuilding systems, because, as stated in the introduction, one of the aspects of particular concern in this study of the coherence dilemma of peacebuilding systems is the observation that peacebuilding systems seem to lack a central command or management structure.

Three of the core characteristics of Complexity, namely a whole-of-systems approach, non-linearity and self-organisation have now been introduced, and key concepts such as feedback and emergence have also been discussed. In the next section the focus is on the implications that non-linearity, self-organisation and emergence have for our understanding of epistemology.

5.6   COMPLEXITY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

This chapter commenced with a discussion about the context within which Complexity thinking has developed, and we mentioned that, when Europe came out of the Dark Ages, its science was dominated by an approach that favoured reductionist reasoning. The reductionist approach has been the dominant scientific approach since the 1600s (Mitchell, 2009:ix). This analytical approach holds that if something is too complex to be grasped as a whole, you identify and divide its constituent parts and study each separately (Cilliers, 1998:2). The process of sub-division is repeated until the problem is simple enough to be analysed and understood, and the original entity is then reconstructed by putting the parts together again. "Reductionism is the most natural thing in the world to grasp. It's simply the belief that a whole can be understood completely if you understand its parts and the nature of their sum" (Hofstadter, 1979:312). René Descartes explains his reductionist approach as follows:

> … to divide all the difficulties under examination into as many parts as possible, and as many as were required to solve them in the best way. [And] … to conduct my thoughts in a given order, beginning with the simplest and most easily understood objects, and gradually ascending, as it were step by step, to the knowledge of the most complex. (Descartes, 1637:17)

Whilst this reductionist approach has been very successful in advancing many aspects of science, others still remain a mystery. We understand how the brain and the rest of the body are physically connected, but we still do not know enough about how the brain and the body function together as a whole. We understand that the political, security and economic dimensions of a society are closely interlinked, but we have not with the methodologies available to us in the reductionist approach been able to generate enough understanding about how changes in one of these dimensions influence the others to predict or control these processes.

Complexity requires a different approach. Chapman (2002:26) asks:

> What if the essential features of the entity are embedded not in the components but in the interconnections? What if its complexity arises from the ways in which its components actually relate to and interact with one another? The very act of simplifying by sub-division loses the interconnections and therefore cannot tackle this aspect of complexity.

Cilliers (1998:2) argues that by "cutting-up" the system, the analytical method destroys what it seeks to understand. Morin (2005:10) points out that in order to understand complex systems, one needs to grasp the relations between the whole and the parts. Geyer and Rihani (2010:38) say that looking for regularities is useful but observing elements of the system individually, i.e. in isolation, does not help much in understanding how the whole system operates. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Aristotle formulated this core anti-reductionist insight in his *Metaphysics* (1045a10) when he said: "The whole is more than the sum of its parts."

The reductionist method can be used to analyse complicated things like the International Space Station or the rockets and shuttles used to reach it. They can be taken apart and put back together again, and we can explain how the parts relate to each other through a series of laws or rules. Complex systems, on the other hand, cannot be understood by using only such an analytical method, because the behaviour of complex systems comes about as a result of the non-linear and dynamic relationships among their constituent parts (Cilliers, 2000a:41).

Complex systems also have to be understood in the context of their history, the ever-changing present and the potential future. We cannot understand a complex system without taking the dimension of time into consideration. We cannot fully understand a complex system by analysing a frozen sample or by analysing a two-dimensional map of its structure; we have to study it in motion. Cilliers (1998:122) explains that "the history of a complex system is not an objectively given state, it is a collection of traces distributed over the system, and is always open to multiple interpretations".

One important distinction that needs to be made is that between Critical Complexity and Determined Complexity (Woermann, 2010:100). Mitchell (2009:22) notes that, even with today's highly complex meteorological computer models, weather prediction can at best be reasonably accurate only for approximately a week into the future, and she states that "it is not yet known whether this limit is due to fundamental chaos in the weather, or how much this limit can be extended by collecting more data and building even better models". The

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Determined Complexity school believes that we should be able to increase our capacity to understand, predict and control complex phenomena with more data and computational capacity. The Critical Complexity school, on the other hand, believes that complex systems are fundamentally non-linear and dynamic, and therefore emergent in ways that are inherently unpredictable and uncontrollable, no matter how much relevant data or computational capacity we have.

Determined Complexity thus refers to an approach that holds that the study of Complexity will improve our understanding of, and therefore our control over, complex systems (Cilliers, 2001:136). Mitchell (2009:14) points out that "neither a single science of Complexity nor a single Complexity Theory exists, yet". However, the Determined Complexity school continues to pursue a general theory of complex organisations and believes that such a theory is ultimately attainable (Mitchell, 2009:303). Critical Complexity differs from Determined Complexity in that it does not pursue a general theory of complexity. Paul Cilliers (2001:136) argues that, "[a]lthough we can say a lot of important things about complexity in general, it is not possible to develop a general model for complex systems", because of the historical and radical contingent nature of complex systems. Furthermore, "[c]omplexity theory underscores the importance of contingent factors, of considering specific conditions in a specific context at a specific time. No general model can capture these singularities" (Cilliers, 2001:145).

Critical Complexity thus holds that the study of complex systems may assist us in improving our understanding of complex systems, but it cannot help us to predict or control the behaviour of a specific complex system. Critical Complexity reminds us that any insights or knowledge that may have been gained about any given complex system is provisional, because the non-linear and highly-dynamical nature of complex systems implies that the system will continue to change in unpredictable ways.

Complex systems exhibit so many simultaneous non-linear interactions among their constitutive elements at the micro-level that we are unable to keep track of all the causal relationships among the agents at the macro-level (Cilliers, 2001:138). This is because the complexity continuously emerges from the interaction among the various elements, and between them and the environment (Cilliers, 1998:ix). All our interpretations of what is happening in the system are contingent and provisional, and relate to a certain context and time frame (122). New feedback can arrive at any point and alter our understanding of the

system. Being continuously open to new feedback thus plays an important role in the process of generating knowledge, adjustment, adaptation and self-regulation in a critical approach to Complexity.

The point is that, whilst the study of Complexity has been able to identify and describe some of the general characteristics of complex systems, it is not possible to reduce a specific complex system in a way that would allow us to predict its behaviour. With hindsight we may be able to connect the dots; however, we are not able to predict future events, even if the circumstances appear similar, because complex systems are non-linear and dynamic. In other words, we can trace causality looking back, but we cannot use it to project forward, or to predict the future, at least not beyond a very short horizon. This does not mean that there is no causality, but that we cannot predict where it will lead beyond a very short horizon. "The presence of emergent properties does not provide an argument against causality, only against deterministic forms of prediction" (Cilliers, 2000c:24).

Kemp (2009:92) reminds us that "there is a range of levels of predictability, rather than a simple contrast between completely predictable and totally unpredictable". Making the case for a complex systems approach thus does not imply a rejection of the value of the reductionist or analytical method. Certain types of problems are best addressed with the analytical method, whilst others are better suited to a complex systems approach. If the challenge is to electrify Monrovia, we could use the reductionist approach, but if the challenge is to assist Liberians with laying the foundations for sustainable peace, we have to turn to a complex systems approach.

Geyer and Rihani (2010:7) argue that "if one accepts the conclusions of complexity, one must accept that the natural and social worlds are symbiotically intertwined and that they exhibit orderly, disorderly and complex phenomena". In this context it may thus be more useful to think of order and disorder as representing two extreme but conceptually useful poles on the opposite ends of a spectrum, and to think of complex systems as existing somewhere on the spectrum between these two ideal states.[30]

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[30] I am grateful to Prof. P.v.d. P. (Pierre) du Toit for suggesting that I present the difference between complicated and complex systems as "continuous variables, located at the opposite ends of a spectrum, each one representing an ideal model. Between these two points a variety of models may be located, each containing more or less of the attributes of each model, the closer or further it is located to each of the outliers". See also Geyer and Rihani (2010:8).

Chapman (2002:28) reminds us, that whilst it may be useful to improve our understanding of complex systems by contrasting it with complicated systems, this comparison should not be understood in a sense of these two approaches being in competition with one another. In fact, they are complementary. "In practice most problems lie between the two extremes . . . and some combination of holistic and reductionist thinking will prove most useful" (*ibid.*). Morin (2005:25) furthermore argues that our education

> . . . taught us much more to separate than to connect, our aptitude for connecting is underdeveloped and our aptitude for separating is overdeveloped… knowing is at the same time separating and connecting, it is to make analysis and synthesis.

The complex systems approach may be better suited to helping us understand complex problems, but it is important to understand that Complexity does not generate problem-solving solutions in the same way that the analytical method does.

Complexity does not generate definitive answers to policy problems. In fact, it helps us to understand why, in the context of complex phenomena, the search for definitive answers and the pursuit of imagined definitive solutions are flawed. Geyer and Rihani (2010:7) argue that:

> . . . adopting a complexity framework enables decision-makers to interpret what goes on in the social, economic and political arenas in a new way that recognizes the limits of knowledge and prediction and the consequent need to adjust policy-making and actions accordingly.

In this context, Complexity can be understood as "an explanatory framework that helps us understand the behaviour of a complex social (human) system" (Mitleton-Kelly, 2003:2).

A recent Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) study that looked into how Complexity science can be applied to public policy argues that Complexity offers new ways of thinking about policy making: "It focuses attention on dynamic connections and evolution, not just on designing and building fixed institutions, laws, regulations and other traditional policy instruments" (OECD, 2008:13). The report suggests that, in addition to control and causation, Complexity highlights the importance of influence and likelihood. It argues that a complex systems approach focuses on identifying and analysing trends and probabilities, rather than seeking to predict specific events. In the context of control, which was traditionally understood to be achieved by identifying cause-and-effect chains and then manipulating the causes to achieve certain effects, the study argues that policymakers need to become comfortable with strategies that aim to influence rather than control (*ibid.*).

The point of this section was, firstly, to make the reader aware of the tension within Complexity between those that believe that Complexity is ultimately determined and those that maintain a critical approach to Complexity, and to note that this dissertation falls in the latter school. Secondly, the aim was to underscore that a complex systems approach is not an alternative problem-solving method. Complexity problematises the status of the findings that may result from the use of any method. In other words, Complexity reminds us to be sceptical of results and findings regardless of the method used to obtain them, because all methods are limited when considering highly dynamic and non-linear phenomena.

5.7   THE ETHICS OF COMPLEXITY

Our general understanding of how complex systems function has important ethical implications for our interventions in social systems. Complexity reminds us of the limits of our ability to completely know or predict the behaviour of complex systems. Woermann (2010:121) argues that our models of complex systems are always incomplete, and may introduce further uncertainties. This means that we cannot make the case that a particular model will result in or guarantee a particular outcome. Complexity suggests that we need to be more humble about our claims about the degree to which it is possible to apply general deterministic models to specific contexts. This insight has significant implications for any model that claims to have 'the solution' to a problem and implies that the only way in which a particular model can be known to have value is after the fact, i.e. in its results.

It also implies that the degree to which such knowledge is transferable is severely limited because the fact that it has worked in a certain context does not guarantee that it will have the same effect in another. One insight from Complexity thus suggests that we should apply an evolutionary approach to knowing, i.e. generate, refine and adapt what we know in an iterative and ongoing process, without ever expecting to arrive at definitive conclusions. This also means that our focus should be on 'a process' of generating knowledge, rather than on seeking definitive solutions or answers, i.e. a specific theory, scientific law or solution that, once and for all, is the definitive answer to a complex problem. The history of science is scattered with the corpses of solutions that were once thought to be definitive, until new insights exposed their limits and shortcomings.

Critical Complexity holds that our ability to fully know complex phenomena and thus to fully solve complex problems is inherently and fundamentally limited. Not only because our abilities are lacking—because, if that were the only limitation, we should be able to increase our knowledge of complex phenomena in proportion to the improvement in our methods and computational power—but because complex phenomena are non-linear and dynamic, and thus inherently unpredictable, unknowable and unsolvable.

Critical Complexity does not claim that we cannot generate meaningful knowledge, but it does claim that we cannot generate ultimate knowledge, i.e. a grand theory that explains everything. Critical Complexity holds that we cannot predict the future and therefore cannot control future behaviour, but it also argues that this does not mean that we are somehow powerless or without agency. Woermann (2010:121) explains that a Critical Complexity approach implies a shift away from trying to discover the truth to a process of making choices and developing strategies for living and for dealing with the often unexpected outcomes of these strategies. We can meaningfully anticipate, influence, adapt and engage with an uncertain future, but such engagement needs to be informed by an awareness of the limits of our ability to ultimately fully know and that awareness has important implications for the ethical status of our interventions.

Because we know that we cannot, beyond a short horizon, predict what the effects of our intervention in a given context will be, there is an important ethical dimension to our interventions, namely that we have to take responsibility for the consequences of our interventions (Cilliers, 2000c:29). We cannot claim moral superiority on the basis of absolute scientific knowledge; nor can we hide behind ignorance, because we do know that complex systems are non-linear and dynamic. We therefore need to be careful, cautious and self-critical when we consider and reflect on the choices we make, because the actions we take may have negative consequences for the people affected by our decisions and actions (Preiser & Cilliers, 2010:274; Woermann, 2010:124; Aoi, De Coning & Thakur, 2007).

Cilliers (2000c:29) argues that ethics, in this context, "refers to the inevitability of choices that cannot be backed up scientifically or objectively". All knowledge claims must be accepted as provisional claims because, as formulated by Preiser and Cilliers (2010:270), "[w]e know that we cannot get it right". We thus have an ethical duty to proceed with caution, and to monitor carefully the effects that our experimentation with our theories of change are

having in any given situation. To make this point explicit, Woermann (2010:124) quotes Morin (2007:28), who argues that the problematic of complexity necessitates "an autonomous strategy" which obliges us "in the field of action . . . to reconsider our decisions like bets and incites us to develop an adequate strategy to more or less control the action".

Woermann (2010:127) identifies three implications of a Critical Complexity position for ethics, as formulated by Preiser and Cilliers (2010:283):

- A critical position informed by complexity will have to be *transgressive*. It can never simply re-enforce that which is current. Transformation takes place continually, despite all efforts to contain it.

- A critical position will, in the most positive sense of the word, be an *ironical* position. There is no final truth which operationalises our actions in an objective way. Irony also implies, in a very systemic way, a self-critical position.

- In the third place, a central role for the imagination is indispensable when we deal with complex things. Since we cannot calculate what will or should happen, we have to make a creative leap in order to imagine what things could be like.

Acknowledging that international actors do not necessarily have a known and proven solution to a given peacebuilding problem, and that the 'solutions' they offer, such as the liberal peace model discussed in Chapter 2, may not, in fact, have any claim to superiority, has important ethical implications for the relationship between international and local actors in such situations. Critical Complexity suggests that competing theories of change cannot be rejected on the basis that one theory of change can be proven to be the best in all contexts or in any given one (although it may be possible to challenge some of the claims made by competing theories of change). The dynamic and non-linear nature of complex systems implies that competing theories of change need to be contextualised before their validity and applicability can be judged. Choices will thus have to be made by taking a range of factors into account, and the selection of a given approach ultimately would need to be a local and context-specific informed choice.

The acknowledgement that the decisions we make when choosing a given peacebuilding model is the product of a deliberate local choice, as opposed to a choice based solely on an objectively scientifically-proven model, represents a significant shift in locating ethical responsibility squarely with those exercising such a choice. Political choices are generally

acknowledged to be influenced by what is perceived to be in the best interest of the agents making the choices, and it is generally accepted that the preferences of those who hold the most power in a given context typically are the preferences that prevail. Political choices thus are generally acknowledged as not necessarily being based on what is perceived to be in the best interest of those who will be directly affected by such choices, or on whose behalf such choices are made, but by what is in the best interest of those who have the power and influence to hold sway over such decision-making processes. The ethical responsibility thus clearly shifts from the perceived objective virtue of a scientifically-proven model or theory of choice to those that have the agency to choose which model or theory of change will be applied in a given context.

Some, like Feldman (2004:69), argue that the local actors should have the right to choose and control the experiment, as they would have to live with the consequences of the intervention. Feldman (*ibid.*) argues that "one of the critical elements of any argument for autonomy is that people tend to know themselves, better than others, how they ought best to live their lives". One can add that, as they have to live with the consequences, they are in the best position to assume ethical responsibility for their own choices. As discussed in Chapter 4, the notion of local ownership also raises several concerns, such as that local societies are not necessarily well informed about their options and that there seem to be persistent and challenging questions about who can legitimately speak on behalf of these local societies (Donais, 2012 & Ishizuka, 2012:12). Some of these issues have been discussed in the earlier chapters, and these dilemmas will also be addressed in the remaining chapters. The point here, however, is that despite these difficulties the ethical implication derived from a Complexity perspective remains. The fact that it is challenging to apply the principle of local ownership does not reduce the relevance of the ethical implication that it is the local society, not international actors, that should have the agency to take decisions about their own future. This does not exclude the internationals from having a role in assisting local societies with understanding their choices and otherwise supporting and facilitating their transition, but it does imply that such international actors offering assistance should stop short of taking decisions on behalf of local societies on the basis of superior claims to knowledge about what is in the best interest of those societies.

Critical Complexity thus implies that the peacebuilders, local and international, have to take responsibility – ethically – for their choices and actions. Taking responsibility means that

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peacebuilders need to think through the ethical implications of both their macro theories of peacebuilding and their specific choices and actions in any given context. They cannot base their decisions on the claimed superiority of one or other theory of change, because no one model, e.g. the liberal peace model, can necessarily argue that it is superior. They have to understand the choices they make and the potential consequences of their actions, and take responsibility for them. Paul Cilliers (2000c:30) argues that "the ethical position is not something imposed on an organization . . . it is an inevitable result of the inability of a theory of complexity to provide a complete description of all aspects of the system".

5.8   CONCLUSION

This chapter was set out to introduce Complexity. First, Complexity was situated in the history of science and some of the general characteristics of complex systems were explained. Three of these characteristics were focused on in particular, namely a whole-of-systems approach, non-linearity and self-organisation. In the process, concepts such as emergence and feedback were also discussed.

The implications of Complexity for epistemology and ethics were also considered. It was shown that the non-linear and dynamic nature of complex systems places inherent limitations on our ability to know, predict and control complex systems. It also limits our ability to generate knowledge that is transferable from one context to another.

Complexity thus reminds us to be sceptical of results and findings, regardless of the method used to obtain them, because all methods are limited when considering highly dynamic and non-linear phenomena. From an ethical perspective, this implies that we have to acknowledge that we are acting on the basis of our own chosen theories of change, not on the basis of some ultimate form of scientifically-proven knowledge. We thus have an ethical duty to proceed with caution and to carefully monitor the effects that our experimentation with our chosen theories of change is having in any given situation, especially because we know that these experiments will affect the lives and livelihoods of people.

In Chapter 6 the question of whether peacebuilding systems are in fact complex will be addressed, and in Chapter 7 the general characteristics of complex systems introduced in this chapter will be applied to the peacebuilding context. The expectation is that this process will

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generate insights that will help us to improve our understanding of the coherence dilemma of peacebuilding systems.

CHAPTER 6

PEACEBUILDING AND COMPLEXITY

As post-modern philosophy illustrates, knowledge never exists independently of the observer but always in relation to the context in which the observing subject itself is situated … social systems do not exist per se but are the results of processes of description. (Foucault, 2000 in Körppen, Ropers & Giessmann, 2011:77)

Interveners and intervened upon are bound together by complex relationships that extend beyond the temporal limits of any particular intervention. (Gelot & Söderbaum, 2011:80)

Problems arise in the peacebuilding world when we use a linear mind-set to address a systemic problem. (Ricigliano, 2012:24)

6.1   INTRODUCTION

Part I of the dissertation dealt with peacebuilding in Chapter 2, coherence in Chapter 3, and the factors that constrain coherence in Chapter 4. In Part II of the dissertation, Complexity was introduced in Chapter 5. Chapters 6 and 7 will be devoted to the consideration of the relevance of Complexity for peacebuilding, including the coherence dilemma. The overall aim of the study is to explore the utility of using Complexity to gain insights into the coherence dilemma in peacebuilding systems. It was argued in Chapter 1 that, if peacebuilding is indeed complex, then it should be possible to use some of the knowledge generated by the study of Complexity to further increase our understanding of peacebuilding. The purpose of this chapter is thus to establish whether peacebuilding can be considered to be complex in the same way that this concept is understood in the study of Complexity.

It is known that many, if not most, social scientists would regard all social systems, including peacebuilding systems, as complex. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, common-sense understanding of complexity differs from how Complexity is understood among those that study complex systems. Complexity was introduced in Chapter 5 by using the characteristics of complex systems formulated by Paul Cilliers (1998). Referring to these characteristics again each one will now be discussed in the context of peacebuilding. To recapitulate, Cilliers (1998:3-5) described Complexity according to the following characteristics:

- A complex system consists of a large number of elements.

- These elements interact on the basis of information available to them locally (none of the elements are able to comprehend the complexity of the system as a whole).

- At least some of the elements also interact with the environment (it is an open system).

- The interactions are rich, non-linear, dynamic and they feed back on each other (recurrence).

- The conditions under which such a system operates are far from equilibrium, i.e. the elements are under sustained pressure.

- The combined result causes such a system to spontaneously organise itself, maintain itself, and adapt (there is no external, controlling agent).

- Over time, this process develops a history, i.e. complex systems evolve over time and the past is co-responsible for the present behaviour of the system.

The present objective is to consider whether these general characteristics of Complexity can be meaningfully applied to peacebuilding systems. If they can, it will be assumed that peacebuilding systems are indeed complex in the way this concept is used and understood in the study of Complexity. Such a finding would facilitate generating new insights on the peacebuilding coherence dilemma by applying some of what is known about Complexity to the peacebuilding context. Peacebuilding systems will now be viewed by considering each of the characteristics suggested by Cilliers (1998) individually.

6.2   LARGE NUMBER OF ELEMENTS

One of the reasons why peacebuilding is widely regarded to be complex, in the common-sense use of the word, is because peacebuilding involves so many different actors. Not only are they numerous, but they are also involved in a wide range of activities that span several different dimensions. One way in which scientists have distinguished between social systems that are more complex and those that are less complex is by comparing the number of elements in a system. For Tainter (1988), an archaeologist who studied why complex societies collapse,

> [c]omplexity is generally understood to refer to such things as the size of a society, the number and distinctiveness of its parts, the variety of specialised roles that it incorporates, the number of distinct social personalities present, and the variety of mechanisms for organizing these into a coherent, functioning whole. (Tainter, 1998:23)

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In the context of Tainter's (1988) description, a specific peacebuilding system can be considered complex if it involves many different actors, if these actors perform a large variety of specialised roles, and if there is a variety of mechanisms being employed to organise the overall effort. Chapters 2 and 3 highlighted the wide variety of actors that are involved in peacebuilding systems and the range of specialised roles they perform. Some of the mechanisms that are employed to coordinate and organise the actors in an attempt to generate a coherent approach among them were also discussed.

In Chapter 2, a number of dimensions were introduced according to which the work the various actors engage in can be classified and organised, and these were summarised in Table 2.1. Each of those dimensions requires the involvement of people from a wide range of professional disciplines. Because peacebuilding requires us to work with almost every aspect of a society, it requires the involvement, in one or other form, of expertise from many of the major academic and professional disciplines. The coherence dilemma that this study is focused on derives, in part, from different perceptions about how these roles, dimensions and disciplines relate to one another, as discussed in Chapter 4 in section 4.3 on conflicting values, principles and mandates.

It is possible to distinguish between peacebuilding agents—i.e. those that are part of the peacebuilding system—and other actors in the larger environment by considering whether they share a common peacebuilding purpose. It was stated in Chapter 2 that all activities and programmes that contribute to peace consolidation in a given context can be understood as being part of a peacebuilding system, which is tied to that context. Therefore, all the organisations, in the broadest possible understanding that this concept implies, that pursue peace consolidation in a given context can be regarded as peacebuilding agents.

The notion of agents is important in the sense that they represent the smallest identifiable elements in the system that have independent agency. Social agents can be compared to elements in complex systems because they can act independently from one another. They have authority and control, and thus 'agency', over how they use their own resources and they control their own actions. This does not mean that they are not influenced and constrained by others and the environment, but it means that they ultimately have the agency to make

decisions about how they act, including about how they will respond to the influence exerted by others and the environment.

Organisations in the peacebuilding context typically refer to various United Nations agencies, including a peacekeeping mission or a special political mission, development agencies like UNDP, humanitarian agencies like UNHCR; regional organisations, such as the African Union; governments, including neighbours or others that have a special interest in a given peace process, including donors; international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs); and local community organisations, including organised traditional societies represented by traditional leaders and more modern civic organisations such as trade unions, and women's organisations.

In the peacebuilding context, which is dominated by organisations like the United Nations and prominent NGOs like Word Vision or Oxfam, individuals would not normally be thought of as peacebuilding agents. Specific individuals may be very important in a given context. In some cases a specific mediator, like Richard Holbrooke, Martti Ahtisaari or Kofi Annan, may play a major role. Or a specific leader, may make a significant contribution to the outcome of a specific peace process, as was the case with Nelson Mandela and the transition from Apartheid to democracy in South Africa in the early 1990s. However, in this study the focus is on how such individuals play a role in mobilising groups of people, in the form of communities or organisations, and in that sense the study is more interested in the overall behaviour of the community or organisation than in individual leaders. In some cases, however, it is very hard to make this distinction, for instance in communities where influential individuals have amassed enough power and resources to have established a patrimonial system (Chabal & Daloz, 1999). In other contexts there may be communities that are under the protection and patronage of a 'warlord' who has amassed the political, economic and security means to control a certain territory (De Waal, 2009). There have been some cases where entire societies or countries are organised around powerful or influential individuals. Hussein's Iraq or Muammar Gaddafi's Libya were contemporary examples. Thus, while it may be important to take individuals into consideration when developing an understanding of all the actors or agents involved in a particular peacebuilding system in some contexts, organizations, understood in the broadest possible terms, are generally regarded as the main elements in peacebuilding systems.

As introduced in Chapter 2, two large groupings of peacebuilding agents, namely internal and external agents, can be broadly distinguished. 'Internal agents' here refer to the local communities, government, political parties and political movements, civil society, private sector, the media, and other parties that are embedded in the conflict system. In contrast 'external agents' comprise all those actors that are foreign from the perspective of the local actors in a given peacebuilding context, and these typically include interested states, international and regional organisations, international NGOs, the International Financial Institutions, i.e. the World Bank, the IMF and the relevant regional financial institutions, e.g. the African Development Bank in the African context. The external peacebuilding agents intend to help the internal agents to prevent a relapse into violent conflict, i.e. what is referred to in Chapter 2 as peace consolidation.

As discussed under the topic of boundaries and borders in Chapter 5, making categorisations such as 'external' and 'internal' when dealing with complex systems needs to be understood as in the specific context within which such a categorisation is meant to have meaning and should not be thought of as real or hard categories that exist in some objective, material or static sense. Complex social systems are framed by the observer. There are many potential agents at different levels, from local to international, that one may consider as part of a particular peacebuilding system, depending on the way one chooses to frame a particular peacebuilding system. Most observers will probably agree on who the agents are at the core of a particular peacebuilding system. However, the identification of agents on the periphery is likely to depend on one's particular perspective. It is thus possible to have many different perspectives on the boundaries of a particular peacebuilding system. For instance, the list of invitees to a peacebuilding coordination meeting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will differ depending on whether it is the government, the UN, the EU, the AU or the donor community that is organising and hosting the meeting. The core group is likely to be the same, but beyond that the constellation of participants is likely to differ considerably. For instance, the AU is likely to have an African perspective and will make a point of inviting African Ambassadors, African NGOs, etc. The EU is likely to do the same from a European perspective. Or a particular meeting may be called by a minister responsible for development and will thus mainly involve agents working in that dimension or discipline.

As also discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, there are some actors that may prefer not to be associated with peacebuilding, such as many in the humanitarian community. And there are

other international and local actors who may not share the peace consolidation objective, e.g. warlords or conflict entrepreneurs who profit from the conflict and instability, and the identity of some of these may not immediately be apparent. For instance, you may have a local official or an international company that appears to be supportive of the peace process but who, at the same time, is actively undermining it.

The agents, and the ways in which they are organised, will also be continuously in flux. Over time several different international agents may be deployed and withdrawn. The humanitarian actors may only be active during the humanitarian emergency and recovery phases. An initial military intervention may be withdrawn once a certain level of stability has been achieved and replaced with a UN peacekeeping mission. Those specialising in elections may only be present in the run-up to and during the election. In such a highly dynamic environment, it would thus not be possible to have one definitive description of who all the agents in a particular peacebuilding system are.

It has already been established that these peacebuilding agents act independently, i.e. they have 'agency'. However, they are at the same time also interdependent, as they can only achieve the peace-consolidation objective collectively. It is not possible for any one of the internal or external peacebuilding agents to achieve the peacebuilding objective on their own. It is their collective and cumulative actions that contribute to the peacebuilding system developing its ability to manage and maintain its own peace process. It is this interdependency that informs the framing or the boundary of the peacebuilding system, because without it these agents may act without regard for each other. In other words, if an agent shares the peace-consolidation objective, and if it is mutually dependent on others to achieve that objective, then it can be thought of as part of a particular peacebuilding system. It can thus be said that peacebuilding systems consist of a large and diverse number of agents – the elements in the system – that are part of a common system because they are all ultimately pursuing the same peacebuilding objective, namely consolidating the peace.

As discussed in Chapter 2, many of the agents that we, from this perspective, would frame as peacebuilding agents may not be aware that they are part of a peacebuilding system, nor would they necessarily identify themselves as such. The 'peacebuilding system' is a frame imposed by us, the observers, from the perspective of how we understand peacebuilding and, in particular, in the context of how peacebuilding, coherence and complexity are being

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presented in this study. It is not necessary for agents to be self-aware of their role in a system or even of their interdependence on others for them to contribute to achieving the overall objective of the system, or for them to be regarded as being part of the system. They merely have to have an active role in the collective functioning of the system and thus contribute to its emergent behaviour.

It is also important to note, especially in the peacebuilding context, that the agents that make up a particular peacebuilding system are not determined by a common geographical space. For instance, the Sudan peacebuilding system does not consist of all those agents that are physically present in Sudan, but rather by all the agents that contribute to its peace consolidation regardless of where they may be located geographically. There are many Sudanese who live outside Sudan, but who nevertheless have an active interest in, and influence on, what happens in Sudan. Sudan is also a good example of how several different sub-systems can co-exist within a larger conflict system, e.g. South-North, intra-South, Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, etc. (De Waal, 2009). Many of these conflict systems overlap and most are interconnected. The Sudan conflict system and the constellation of agents that make up the different peacebuilding systems involved would look somewhat different from the perspective of someone embedded deeply in each one of these sub-systems.

However, whilst they are all contributing to the overall peacebuilding objective in a given context, each agent can only have a limited effect. These peacebuilding agents are thus both independent, because they act according to their own mandates, resources and decision-making processes, and interdependent, because they depend on one another and the system as a whole to achieve their respective and collective peacebuilding objectives. This tension between the independence and interdependence of peacebuilding agents contributes to the Complexity of peacebuilding systems, and it will be revisited often throughout the rest of this discussion.

6.3   DYNAMIC INTERACTIONS

The peacebuilding agents interact with one another and their interaction is dynamic. A system is dynamic if its states or behaviours change with time (Samoilenko, 2008: 39). The peacebuilding agents interact with one another in a number of ways, and the ways they interact change over time. Some are formal, for instance via meetings of their principals or

through formally participating in joint assessments, joint planning or other coordination forums. Others are informal in that the agents communicate and exchange information with those within their personal networks.

Physical systems are dynamic when energy flows through them, and in social systems the same dynamic effect can be observed, but these systems are dynamic when information instead of energy flows through them (Cilliers, 1998:3). Both formal and informal interactions consist of the transfer of information. In this sense the agents in a peacebuilding system can be thought of as nodes in an information system. The study of Complexity is not interested in analysing the role of nodes *per se*, but rather in the patterns of their interconnections and how that generates meaning (120).

The way in which the flow of information is organised conveys meaning. The structure and hierarchies in the system influences what kind of information is shared with whom, who are included and excluded, and what kind of narrative is created—in other words what kind of 'history' is being constructed. The way in which the flow of information is managed in any system is thus an indication of the power relations within that system. This is why coordination is usually a controversial subject in humanitarian, development and peacebuilding systems. Whilst some see coordination as a means to improve the overall functioning of the system, others see it as a means of imposing the will of the core, which is typically political and security driven, over the periphery. Some of the criticism against the UN's integrated approach derived specifically out of these kinds of concerns. Whilst those in power find it difficult to understand the reluctance of others to be integrated, those on the periphery have a clear sense that the coordination system – what in Complexity terms can be referred to as the patterns of interconnections – that is imposed on them via the integrated mission structure generates a certain meaning in the system that gives primacy to the peace consolidation objective. In other words, the structure of the interrelationship among the agents contributes to how humanitarian, development and other interests become secondary to the peacebuilding objective (Metcalfe, Giffen & Elhawary, 2011:55). For instance, under the UN's integrated approach, the Secretary-General's special representative, who is typically tasked to take the lead on the political aspects of the peace process in question, also has the authority to convene and coordinate the whole UN system. From a peacebuilding perspective, as discussed in Chapter 3, the aim is to ensure that all the dimensions of the peacebuilding process are pursuing a common set of objectives. However, from the perspective of some of

the humanitarian actors this arrangement may be seen as giving the political dimension precedence over the humanitarian dimension. In Chapters 2 and 3 some specific examples were given of where conflicting values, mandates and principles have served to undermine the scope for coherence. The point here is that the relationships between peacebuilding agents are highly dynamic. Peacebuilding systems are not static or in equilibrium; they are highly dynamic and constantly in flux.

The relationships between the agents are asymmetrical and this further contributes to the highly dynamical and non-linear nature of peacebuilding systems. Agents are vastly different in size, identity and structure, but their role and influence in the system is not directly related to their relative size, status or resources. The role and influence of the agents also change over time, depending on how important their specific contributions to the peace consolidation objective may be at any given point. Because of the non-linear nature of complex systems and the dynamic interaction among agents, a small local organisation, like Viva Rio in Haiti or the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), may have a considerable impact on how a large international agency, like a UN peacekeeping operation, acts in a particular context. For instance, a small but credible organisation like the AREU may release a report that analyses the role of the UN in overseeing a specific election in Afghanistan that may be highly damaging to the UN and thus result in it changing the way it operates in that and other contexts. Similarly, relatively small (compared to the UN) NGOs, like Viva Rio in a context like Haiti, may be critical for the success of the UN in that they are able to engage with local communities in ways which the larger UN agencies seem unable to achieve. The point is that all these agents, large and small, have important contributions to make and that any of them may, at a critical moment, make a crucial contribution to achieving the peacebuilding objective. This further explains why they are all interdependent on one another. Some may seem more powerful or influential than others at first, e.g. donors as opposed to recipients. However, you cannot be a donor without implementing partners and without recipients and your success as a donor depends on the success of your implementing partners and on the experience of the recipients. The dependency is thus mutual, and over time it is the cumulative and collective effect of this dynamic interaction among the agents that builds momentum towards the peace consolidation objective.

6.4   RICH INTERACTIONS

The interactions among the different actors in a peacebuilding system are rich in that they influence, and are influenced by, many others in a vast array of different capacities and contexts (Cilliers, 1998:120). The same agent, for instance the UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia (UNMIL), is connected to several different networks. For instance, through the Deputy SRSG RC/HC that is responsible for development and humanitarian coordination, the mission interacts with the local and international humanitarian community, international donors and development agencies. At the same time, UNMIL, for instance through the Deputy SRSG Rule of Law and Governance, interacts with the Government of Liberia's criminal justice system at various levels and is also connected to Liberian civil society, political parties, traditional leaders and local communities. UNMIL thus participates in, and may in fact lead, various coordination processes at many different levels. A peacekeeping mission like UNMIL thus has a rich degree of interaction with a large range of agents in, and beyond, Liberia. Not all the peacebuilding agents in Liberia have such a wide network of interactions as UNMIL does, but they all have their own respective networks that ensure that they have a rich interaction with the other agents in their networks (McCandless, 2008).

In any social or peacebuilding system, some agents are more densely interconnected than others. Some process more information or are more richly connected than others. This is partly because some peacebuilding agents are highly specialised. Compare for instance an NGO such as MERLIN, which specialises in medical care and is likely to operate in only a few hospitals or clinics in a given country, with a UN agency like UNICEF, which operates throughout the same country and across various disciplines. The medical NGO in this example is likely to participate only in the local health cluster coordination process, whilst UNICEF, which operates nationally, will be connected at many different levels, from the national to the local and across several disciplines. This explains why some agents have a larger effect on the flow of information through the system than others.

Although all the agents are interconnected, some are more richly connected than others, and those that are can be very influential in the system because they can become conduits for information among many other small networks or subsystems. They can modulate the information and can exercise some choice about what information to pass on. However, as was stressed in the previous section, all these agents in a peacebuilding system are ultimately

interdependent and their relationships are asymmetrical, so even a richly-interconnected agent like UNICEF may, at times, be critically dependent on an NGO like MERLIN to provide it with information on a specific situation, such as an outbreak of cholera in an IDP camp, for example.

Some agents will be poorly connected; for instance, local communities and rural-based or small local NGOs may be marginalised because they do not have the resources or connections to invest in networking, and as a result they remain on the periphery of the system. Whilst this may be of concern to the marginalised agent, it is not necessarily a concern for the functioning of the system as a whole because the system is not dependent on all agents being equally densely connected. The non-linear nature of the system results in asymmetrical dynamics that could see an otherwise marginalised agent having a disproportionate influence on a specific decision or process.

If a system loses the overall richness of its interactions it breaks into smaller networks or subsystems where such rich connections remain intact. This is what happens when societies lapse into violent conflict—the primacy of the larger cohesive identity is lost to, or replaced by, a smaller group identity where a sufficient level of rich interactions have survived. Tainter (1988:31) refers to this process as a decline in complexity. People may fall back to smaller ethnic, language, religious or clan networks. One of the ways in which peacebuilding can be framed thus is to think about it as a process aimed at facilitating the re-establishment or the emergence of new complex or composite networks. In other words, the aim is to reconnect these smaller networks and re-establish the rich interactions among different groups of agents so that they can once again regain their former levels of interconnectedness. Alternatively, the aim may be to establish new patterns of rich interactions that will allow the self-organisation to emerge and thus provide these systems with the internal capacity to manage their own peace consolidation. Peacebuilding systems, like other complex systems, thus emerge and are maintained as a result of the rich interactions among the agents within the system.

6.5   NON-LINEAR INTERACTIONS

The interactions among the agents in peacebuilding systems are non-linear and asymmetrical. The relationships among agents in peacebuilding systems and their ability to influence each other are not necessarily dependent on their size, resources or position in the international or

local system. The UN does not necessarily lead the other external agents, nor is any given government always the most influential voice among the internal agents. Whilst some agents may appear to have more power than others because of their mandates, size and resources, this does not mean that the smaller agents will always follow their lead or that the more powerful agents will always be more influential regarding the outcome in a given context.

Sometimes smaller agents have a comparative advantage and are able to achieve objectives that some of the larger agents are unable to achieve. This could be related to their ability to specialise and focus on a specific issue, or their ability to be more flexible and thus to be able to adapt more quickly than a larger, more bureaucratic counterparts. Perhaps the most stark contemporary reminder of the non-linearity in peacebuilding systems, and the asymmetric relationships that can come about as a result, is the billion-dollar-a-week stabilisation campaign in Afghanistan where more than 130,000 of the best trained, equipped and supported NATO and American soldiers supported by millions of dollars of foreign assistance were unable to pacify a loosely organised and low-tech insurgency (Suhrke, 2011:226).

Non-linearity also explains why it is impossible to predict, and therefore control, the behaviour of complex systems. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, non-linearity does not imply randomness or chaos. Complex systems are ordered but not necessarily in a predictable way. Instead, the order emerges from the dynamic and non-linear interaction among the elements in the system. Causation can only be traced in hindsight. Thus it cannot be predicted how a complex system like a particular peacebuilding system will develop into the future, at least not beyond a very short horizon. For instance, we may know that lowering the interest rate will inject cash into the economy, and we may anticipate that it will stimulate growth, but we have no way of knowing exactly how a specific economy in a specific context will respond, nor can we know before-hand which effect, including negative or side-effects, such an interference with the system will generate. Similarly, in the peacebuilding context we may anticipate that broadening political participation may stimulate the democratic process, but we cannot know if, in a particular context, this will lead to the further consolidation of the peace process, or to a greater risk of political instability. In other words, the non-linearity of complex systems means that we cannot assume that the cause-and-effect relationship we have observed in one context can be replicated in another context. This insight has profound implications for peacebuilding, and our perceived ability to design, plan and execute

peacebuilding interventions, and this will also be revisited often in the remainder of the dissertation.

6.6   SHORT-RANGE INTERACTIONS

The interactions among the agents in a peacebuilding system usually have a fairly short range, in that information is exchanged primarily with 'neighbours' in the immediate range of the agent. In today's highly connected and social-networked world, however, one should not think in terms of physical or geographic 'neighbours' only but also in terms of social and institutional proximity. Agents will primarily exchange information with other agents that share the same geographical, institutional, thematic and functional spaces.

A humanitarian agent, for instance, is more likely to be exposed to information passing through the humanitarian network and is thus more likely to be informed about developments in their immediate environment generated by a another humanitarian agency, even from further away, than through interactions with agents from another professional grouping in the same location. They may be located within a few hundred yards of, for instance, their peacekeeping counterparts or the local political actors, drive past each other daily, meet socially occasionally, and interact with the same local community, but their information networks, and thus their perception of the situation they find themselves in, are likely to differ considerably.

This also implies that the information they are most exposed to, via their e-mail, websites, social and professional networks and daily interactions, will be pre-filtered to select the kind of information the humanitarian community is likely to be interested in. This also implies that a lot of information on other aspects of the situation never reaches the average member of the humanitarian community. The information is also likely to be presented and framed according to the humanitarian culture, using the language and concepts and framed in the values and ethos of that particular group. This will further enhance the group identity and their separate sub-culture and make it less likely that they will be exposed to the views and perspectives of other such groupings. Thus there is a certain echo-chamber effect that results in the pre-selection and re-framing of information within like-minded groups and that results in most of the information being exchanged among them because of being within a relatively narrow range.

However, complex systems are also open systems, and this means that networks interact with each other and individuals tend to belong to several networks simultaneously. Another network link may imply, for instance, that those working in the same functional area, e.g. water and sanitation, may be more richly connected with each other, even if they are from different organisations, than with others working in a completely different field, e.g. de-mining, even if they are working for the same organisation. In other words, a water and sanitation expert in Oxfam may be more closely linked to a water and sanitation expert in UNICEF, with whom there is frequent contact, than to a colleague in Oxfam, with whom an office location is shared, but who works in a completely different field, such as de-mining. Such connections that cut across the formal hierarchy of organisations allow information to pass among peacebuilding agents in multiple ways and create resilience in the system. It means that even when information is not formally shared among organisations, or where the formal structure may result in such information taking long to be disseminated, such informal connections usually result in the information being shared among critical nodes in these organisations anyway. Cross-cutting connections like these also create new flows of feedback, further enriching the quality and representativeness of the information that finds its way back to the source.

While most interactions among agents in complex systems thus occur within a relatively short range, there are multiple networks that interact with each other at any given time, including cross-cutting, small group-network connections, that add additional layers of rich and non-linear inter-linkages among networks in complex systems. This complex network of connections results in information flowing not just according to the formal or designed hierarchies in the system but also informally across their boundaries. Such un-designed, small-world network connections allow short-range information to be exchanged between networks, and this kind of information flow is probably as important for the overall functioning of the system as the formal or designed hierarchies in the system. This is because it creates additional opportunities to obtain feedback and to do so from outside the limitations of the relatively 'predictable' flow of information within a specific network. It may thus lead to new insights or generate new opportunities that the network may not have been exposed to otherwise. Furthermore, at times when the system is under pressure and when the normal channels of communication may have broken down or are overwhelmed, such cross-cutting connections may be useful to open up alternative routes of communication. For instance,

during the Arab Spring uprising in Egypt, the 'informal' communications between generals in the United States and Egypt, who knew each other because they had been together on the same training courses, were perhaps as important as the official communication via diplomatic channels, for exchanging information between Cairo and Washington D.C. about what was happening, and how the two formal systems were likely to react to each other during this critical period.

However, whilst such crisis periods may help to expose such phenomena and provide us with a momentary insight into their importance, what may be more interesting for us is the 'normal' but unintended effects that such interconnections have on our daily work and lives; 'normal' because all of us have many such multiple-network and informal cross-cutting connections that inform our daily lives and work, and 'unintended', because those connections are not part of the acknowledged hierarchies and flow charts and thus usually are not taken into consideration when peacebuilding interventions are designed, planned and executed. We tend not to be aware of them, and we may think that we act mostly on the basis of the information we exchange within our formal or designed hierarchies, but in reality our informal information-sharing networks and unintended spur-of-the-moment information exchanges with persons representing other networks may turn out to be as important to us as our formal networks.

It is this potential for a wide combination of mostly short-range connections that generates the asymmetrical and non-linear flow of information in complex peacebuilding systems. Peacebuilding agents often generate organisational charts that reflect how they think information flows through their organisations or between organisations, but real information flows rarely follow these artificial two-dimensional representations. The real flow of information takes place across multiple tracks and is much more informal, dynamic, non-linear and asymmetrical than can be represented in any two-dimensional official hierarchal plan or flow-chart. In fact, very few agents would even be aware of, or would be able to explain, all the ways in which they send and receive information, even if such an enquiry were to be focused on a specific incident.

The point is that the informal, cross-cutting and multiple-network aspects of our information exchange experience are all critically important aspects of coping with Complexity. It may thus be 'abnormal' from the perspective of someone who thinks that information will and

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should only flow according to the designed hierarchy, but it is 'normal' for someone who grasps the functional creativity of non-linearity in complex systems. The influence of the information shared in these ways is modulated along the route and it can be enhanced, suppressed or altered in a number of ways. This creates an important opportunity for coordination, because it implies that the flow and content of the information can be potentially influenced along the route.

6.7   FEEDBACK

There are various forms of feedback in complex peacebuilding systems. Positive and negative feedback processes, as discussed in Chapter 5, play a critical role in enabling and empowering positive drivers or in limiting and inhibiting negative drivers. Some feedback processes are formal or conscious efforts to obtain or generate feedback, but most are unconsciously part of our day-to-day interaction with peers. Feedback takes place at all levels, and it plays a critically important role in adjusting both the most specialised programme and the overall peace process or peacebuilding intervention itself.

Many external agencies will undertake some form of needs assessment before they launch activities in an attempt to obtain information from the internal agents on their needs, and this is often one of the first opportunities, in the context of a specific programme, for the internal agents to provide feedback on the expectations and future planning of the external agents.

Once activities or programmes are under way, a monitoring process would typically be in place with the aim of collecting and analysing information that can assist those managing the programme with assessing what effects the programme is having on the intended beneficiaries. This thus is a further example of feedback, i.e. information on the effects that the programme is having and that can be used to adjust the programme.

Most donor-funded programmes are normally externally evaluated, either roughly in the middle of the programme period or at the end, or both. Peacekeeping missions are regularly reviewed by the UN Security Council, and the Secretary-General may also from time to time commission a specific evaluation of a mission, for instance to determine whether it is still warranted in its current form. These kinds of major evaluations are opportunities to obtain feedback on the purpose and value of the programme or mission.

Feedback, of course, is also shared much more informally through the daily interactions among peacebuilding agents. There are frequent management meetings within organisations and coordination meetings among agents, and all of this activity is further supported by a range of informal social exchanges, both in person, via e-mail or other forms of communication or via social-networking sites. Reports, studies, evaluations and a whole range of written or electronic information further serves as means to generate feedback in the peacebuilding system. Thus many forms of feedback are simultaneously at work in any peacebuilding system.

Feedback is also one of the major tools used by external peacebuilding agents when trying to influence the behaviour of societies emerging out of conflict. Most peacebuilding activities are feedback-generating activities that are intended to steer or influence the behaviour of the society emerging out of conflict. Negative feedback is used to sanction undesirable behaviour, whilst positive feedback is used to encourage desirable behaviour. The goal of the peacebuilding system is to consolidate the peace process, and the theory of change is that peacebuilding activities or programmes contribute to this process by encouraging and supporting those forces or drivers in communities that consolidate peace, such as the Rule of Law, Security Sector Reform (SSR), democratisation and good governance, whilst discouraging those forces and drivers that may result in a resumption of violent conflict, such as armed groups, organised crime, corruption, and so forth.

From this perspective, the external peacebuilding intervention acts like a giant thermostat in that it uses feedback to regulate the behaviour of the local society within certain parameters. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, systems that are externally controlled are not complex. For a system to become self-sustainable it needs to be able to self-organise. External peacebuilders should thus guard against interfering so much in the local societies that they undermine the ability of such societies to self-organise. Another way to frame peacebuilding is thus to think about it as being about stimulating the creation of local institutions and processes that enable local feedback to be modulated so that it can become meaningful inputs for local self-organising societal processes. Feedback is thus one of the primary tools that enable one system to influence another, as well as a critical ingredient in self-organisation, and this discussion on how complex systems can be influenced will be addressed in Chapter 8.

6.8   OPEN SYSTEMS

Peacebuilding systems are open systems in that they interact with other systems and their environment. In fact, the purpose of the peacebuilding system is to interact with and influence the local society with the aim of assisting the society in developing the robustness and resilience needed to enable them to withstand pressures, shocks and crises that would otherwise result in a (re)lapse into violent conflict.

It is impossible, however, as discussed in Chapter 5, to draw neat boundaries between systems that interact with one another. In some contexts it may be useful to think in terms of an external peacebuilding system and the local social system it is trying to influence, and many forms of analysis do use these terms. However, the international and local systems in reality are intertwined, e.g. with local staff working for international organisations or international advisors embedded in local ministries, or jointly managed common strategic frameworks, or a globalised economy.

Peacebuilding systems can be seen as a conduit for international interaction, in the peace-development-security context, with local communities, and vice versa. It is open both to the local, on one end of the spectrum, and to the wider regional and international communities, on the other end of the spectrum, and information flows both ways through the peacebuilding system. Peacebuilding systems are thus open systems.

Whilst most system analyses are framed in terms of a system and its environment, this study is interested in the interaction between two systems (the internal and external peacebuilding systems) that are closely coupled and interconnected, yet also distinct, depending on the purpose of the description and analysis presented at a specific point in time and the larger environment within which these two systems operate.

The environment can also be scoped to fit the analysis. At times the environment is referred to from the perspective of the local system, and from this perspective local and regional factors loom larger than global considerations like climate change or global trade. At other times, the international context that drives and shapes the behaviour of the external peacebuilding agents

is of more interest. The framing of the system, and its environment, is thus determined by the observer and the purpose of the observation.

This study frames the peacebuilding system in such a way that it includes all agents that share the peace-consolidation objective, regardless of whether they are internal or external. However, at the beginning and towards the end of a peacebuilding system's life cycle, there is a need to be able to identify the separate internal and external parts of the system. For instance, we say that the success of a peacebuilding intervention is ultimately measured in terms of self-sustainability, i.e. the ability of the local system to withstand pressures and shocks that threaten relapse into violent conflict on its own strength. Thus, at some point in the process there is a need to be able to separately identify what is internal and what is external and to design the intervention in such a way that the influence of the external becomes less and less critical to the stability of the system.

As discussed earlier, the framing of the peacebuilding system and what is regarded as external and internal to the system will depend on the context and the purpose of the framing. The openness of the system therefore is one of those aspects that make peacebuilding systems complex. It would have been much easier if it were possible to make clear distinctions, draw neat boundaries around the various parts of the peacebuilding system, and plan and act according to these. In fact, many do, but when they do the imposition of such artificial distinctions will have consequences, many of which are likely to be unintended, and they are likely to further contribute to the complexity of peacebuilding systems.

6.9   FAR FROM EQUILIBRIUM

Peacebuilding systems are likely to operate under conditions characterised by a high degree of turbulence in the system. The local social system is likely to be under pressure as a result of the conflict, and it could potentially develop along many different potential future paths. The aim of the peacebuilding system is to help the local social system to reduce the number of paths it is able to take, so that the range of options ultimately is reduced to a relatively safer range of options. The primary aim is to help the local system to avoid those options that may lead to a (re)lapse into violent conflict.

However, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 5, and as further explored in this chapter, the aim of the peacebuilding system is not to achieve order, if order is understood, in complex-systems terms, to mean a stable state or equilibrium. A stable state in this context would imply a system where all the agents are locked into specific roles and where all are in agreement with one another about the function of the overall system and their place in it. Although it is possible to think about such a rule-based or mathematical system as a thought experiment, such a stable state cannot exist in any social or biological system. For complex social systems to survive and thrive without (re)lapsing into violent conflict, they need to be vibrant, robust, resilient, flexible and adaptive. They need to be vibrant in the sense that they need to generate multiple options for responding to emerging challenges. They need to be robust in withstanding such challenges and flexible in responding to them. And they need to be able to adapt to changes in their environment. Peacebuilding systems, and the social systems they are meant to assist, operate in highly dynamic and non-linear environments.

External peacebuilding systems aim to assist local social systems to develop the capacity to survive and thrive in such environments, and this implies a capacity to self-organise, and to continuously adapt, adjust and co-evolve, in response to how their peers are developing, and to changes in the larger environment within which the local conflict system exists. The aim is thus not to develop stability if that is understood to mean static or a controlled-stable-state system, but rather to develop a system that can adapt and respond to the complexity it is anticipated to face, so that its stability is derived from its ability to adapt to change without losing its essential form, and without collapsing into violent conflict.

The peacebuilding system itself is also constantly in flux. It is by definition temporary in that the system is brought about for the specific purpose of consolidating the peace in a given context, and it will at some point cease to exist – once that purpose has been achieved. New agents join or leave the system depending on the perceived phase of the process. There may, for instance, be an emphasis on the security and humanitarian dimensions in the immediate aftermath of the crisis, but the emphasis is likely to shift to state building and economic and social recovery once the situation has been sufficiently stabilised. Different peacebuilding agents come and go over time, and new agents may take the lead in different phases. Many peacebuilding interventions may experience a time period dominated by preoccupation with Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants. In another time period all the agents may be preoccupied with preparing for an election. During the build-up

to these periods new agents flow into the system, and once these periods have passed, they leave again.

The point is that these peace processes are fluid, and the result is that those that are engaged with them are also continuously adjusting and adapting to the changing situation. This has implications not only for the various organisations that are involved, but also for the conceptual and theoretical tools that are used to interpret each of these phases, as well as the process as a whole.

As discussed in Chapter 3, there will always be some tension between local and international agents about who should lead specific aspects of the peacebuilding activities or programmes and among the local agents there will be a political process under way to determine who, at any time, should be the leading local political agents. The external peacebuilding system, the local social conflict system and the local, regional and international environments within which they all function are all highly dynamic, non-linear and far from equilibrium. This dynamic environment has important implications for coherence, some of which have already been highlighted in Chapter 3, and this chapter returns to and considers these implications from various additional perspectives.

6.10   HISTORY

In the peacebuilding context we not only have to take the specific history of the country or region into account, but also the history of the international engagement with the particular social system affected by conflict. Although the recent history may have brought about a specific peacebuilding intervention, there is likely to be a longer history of pre-conflict international engagement with the specific social system, and there may even have been previous peacekeeping or peacebuilding interventions. The current conflict cycle may not have come about as the result of a new, unique set of circumstances; there may have been a history of violent conflict, and the current outbreak may be a relapse following an earlier peace agreement. Haiti, Liberia and Sierra Leone are recent examples of countries that have gone through several cycles of conflict, followed by international intervention, followed by a relapse of conflict, and by yet further interventions (UN, 2000b, 2001d, 2003b, 2004b, 2008a & 2009).

The peacebuilding system is also defined by the potential futures of the post-conflict social system, because it is the ideas or theories of what potential future peaceful social systems may look like and how they could come about that informs the design and operations of the peacebuilding system. The peacebuilding system thus continuously experiences the ever-changing present, as informed by its past and its potential future.

Peacebuilding is ultimately about social systems, and social systems need to have a history for them to generate a commonly shared identity and to have developed common norms, values and cultural processes. This implies that time is required for change to emerge, and this has implications for the speed at which any social change process can take hold. At a minimum it is probable that meaningful social change will require several iterations – several evolutionary cycles of adjustment – in order to generate a new state that can be said to be embedded in the shared social norms and behaviour of a society. The shorter this period, the more unstable, in terms of the likelihood of reversal or relapse, the change is likely to be, because the new norms would have had less time to be deeply embedded in the social fabric of the society. It would have had less time to be widely disseminated through society. It would have had less time to become embedded in the institutions of the society, and the society would have had less time to build up a rich body of precedents, experience and established practices with the new norms. In other words, for new norms and values to be established, a society must build up a rich experience of engagement with such norms. It is only when a body of knowledge about how such norms have been useful in a wide range of scenarios have been developed and integrated into the common history of the society that one can regard such norms as being an integral part of the culture. The longer this period of change is sustained the more lasting and self-sustainable it is likely to be, because the new norms, values, structures and processes will have had more time to become deeply embedded into the social fabric of the society. For instance, although South Africa adopted a new constitution in 1996, it will most likely take several decades for it to be fully reflected in the laws of the country and in the culture of the society, as these new norms and values have to be lived, tested and contested (in the Constitutional Court and in the public debate), for the body of laws and the country's institutions to adapt accordingly. This perspective on the need for history and on the time it takes for social change to take hold is an important factor to take into consideration when analysing complex peacebuilding systems. It will be revisited often.

At the same time, peacebuilding as an internationally agreed-upon form of action to consolidate peace in countries emerging from conflict has a history, a current set of experiences, and an envisioned future to which this study aims to contribute. As discussed in Chapter 2, peacebuilding as a practice is constantly undergoing change and the history of its past experiences, including its successes and failures, influences what it is able to do, and how it is perceived in any given context.

6.11   LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Each peacebuilding agent responds only to the information that is available to it locally. As discussed earlier, many of the agents in a peacebuilding system may not be aware that they are regarded as being part of a peacebuilding system and that the successful achievement of their objectives depends on others also making their respective contributions so that the overall peacebuilding effect can be achieved. They thus act only on the basis of their own context and perspective and in their own interest.

Herbert Simon (1962) has coined the term 'bounded rationality' to explain that although agents may act rationally, that rationality is based on their own cognitive space. This means that their actions may be rational from their own perspectives, but may not be rational from the perspective of the commons or the wider system. For instance, a local contractor engaged in a World Bank road building project will not necessarily be conscious of the fact that he is making a critical contribution to consolidating the peace in a country emerging out of conflict. Such contractors will probably perceive their own action purely in the context of a profit-seeking commercial venture. Some of those working for the World Bank agency responsible for funding the road-building project may also not necessarily see the project as part of a larger peacebuilding system. They may approach it purely in the context of investing in the infrastructure necessary for long-term, pro-poor development. Those World Bank planners and managers participating in the development of the integrated strategic peacebuilding framework for the country in question, probably in the form of a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), are more likely to see the various programmes and activities supported by the World Bank as contributing to such an overall peacebuilding system.

As this example demonstrates, it is not necessary for an agent to be aware of the system of which they are part in order to be considered part of it. It is enough for them to act on their

local knowledge, because the self-organisation of the system as a whole comes about as a result of the overall effect of the dynamic and non-linear inter-relationships among the peacebuilding agents.

Those engaged in peacebuilding interventions are generally impatient, so they try to modulate specific change processes so as to achieve the fastest possible change. One way in which this is done is to facilitate the exchange of information among the agents by increasing coherence. The theory of change is that the more the agents are aware of the common undertaking and their respective roles in it, the more they will adapt their respective actions to each other and to the perceived change of the system as a whole. The idea is that this should ultimately result in the whole change process taking place faster than if it were just left to its own natural cycles of mutual influence. Some of the limitations inherent in this coherence theory have already been pointed out in Chapter 3, and the implications of complexity for coherence will be discussed in Chapter 7.

The application of Cilliers' ten characteristics of complex systems to the peacebuilding context has now been discussed. On the basis of the issues considered and presented in this section, it is found that peacebuilding systems can indeed be considered to be complex in the way this concept is understood in Complexity science.

6.12   CONCLUSION

In this chapter it was suggested that peacebuilding systems are complex in the way Complexity is understood in the study of complex systems. The characteristics of Complexity, as introduced in Chapter 5, were applied to the peacebuilding context , and it was concluded that peacebuilding systems are indeed complex in the way this concept is understood in Complexity.

In this study the aim is to explore whether using a complex-systems approach will be useful for generating new insights into the peacebuilding coherence dilemma and so improve our understanding of how to cope with complex peacebuilding systems. In order to do so, it was necessary to establish whether peacebuilding is indeed complex. Having done so, the implications of Complexity for peacebuilding in general, and the coherence dilemma in particular, will be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

IMPLICATIONS OF COMPLEXITY FOR PEACEBUILDING

Creating the conditions for sustainable peace and economic growth in a country that lacks such conditions is one of the most difficult intellectual and policy puzzles imaginable. It has all the features of a "wicked problem," too complex and indeterminate to be modelled in its entirety and therefore defying straightforward solutions. Indeed, the greatest danger for peacebuilding practitioners and academics alike may be a hubristic combination of overconfidence plus insufficient or unreliable knowledge. (Paris, 2011c)

For every complex problem, there is a solution that is simple, neat and wrong. Attributed to H.L. Menken. (Berdal & Wennmann, 2010:7)

The idea of a universal and common history of mankind, with European societies as a benchmark, can be traced back to the Enlightenment. It was shaped by Descartes' rationalistic philosophy and the separation of mind and matter. As a consequence, this so-called 'modern view' considers social processes as being measurable and controllable. (Körppen, Ropers & Giessmann, 2011:82)

7.1   INTRODUCTION

At this juncture it may be useful to summarize the argument up to this point. So far in this thesis peacebuilding, coherence and the factors that hinder coherence were discussed, Complexity was introduced, and it was established that peacebuilding is Complex. In this chapter, a number of implications of Complexity for peacebuilding will be considered. Methodologically, these implications will be generated by comparing the prevalent, dominant approach to peacebuilding – what will be termed the 'deterministic-design' approach – with a 'complex-systems' approach. 'Deterministic-design' will be used to refer to the theory of change most widely used and applied by the contemporary peacebuilding policy community, namely one where policy makers and practitioners are confident in:

(i)   their ability to analyse and identify 'the problem' in a given situation;

(ii)   their ability to design an intervention in response, i.e. 'the solution' that will solve the problem; and

(iii) their ability to implement remedial programmes that administer these solutions with a view to solving these problems.

Susskind (2010:367) refers to this approach as "instrumental rationality", as it reflects the belief that the conflict systems we are dealing with are rule-based linear systems that are open to manipulation once the causes of the conflict have been identified.

The 'complex-systems' approach differs from the 'determined-design' approach in that it questions the linear assumptions underlying the problem-solving approach when dealing with complex peacebuilding systems. This scepticism is based on what has been learnt about complex systems in Chapter 5, namely that the behaviour of a complex system cannot be predicted beyond a very short horizon because the behaviour of a complex system emerges as a result of the nonlinear and dynamic interactions among the agents in the system. In complex systems, causality is emergent, rather than determined.

The implications of Complexity for peacebuilding will be discussed under four different themes. The first looks at the implications of a complex systems approach for approaching peace from a problem-solving perspective. The second considers the implications of approaching conflict with a stabilisation bias. The third looks at considerations of time, pace and positioning from a Complexity perspective, and the fourth looks at the implications of a complex systems approach for coherence.

7.2   RELEVANCE OF COMPLEXITY FOR PEACEBUILDING SYSTEMS

As explained in Chapter 2 and discussed in the preceding chapters, the dominant peacebuilding theory among the contemporary peacebuilding policy community is the liberal peace theory that posits that societies achieve sustainable peace once they have arrived at a level of development where their norms and institutions reflect and maintain multiparty democracy, a free-market economy, individual human rights and the rule of law. Donais (2012:5) describes the liberal peace model not only "as the gold standard of good governance, but also as the most secure foundation for sustainable peace".

Those that support a liberal peace theory of change believe that societies that have not yet reached this level of development can be assisted through peacebuilding interventions to adopt these norms and to build these institutions (Lidén, 2009:617). Eriksen (2009:662) points out that the liberal peace theory is a 'deterministic-design' model, i.e. a causal model

where the outcome is more or less guaranteed if the design is followed, and Körppen et al. (2011:82) elaborate:

> It is assumed that social change is a linear process based on a set of certain developmental stages aligned on a linear timeline. The development of a society is seen as a chronological procedure in which specific criteria need to be fulfilled . . . . It is assumed that the more developed and civilized a society is, the less violence will be used for solving problems . . . . Conflict-prone societies are characterized by chaos and disorder, while the democracies in the West are symbols for order and stability.

Liberal-peace policy makers are confident in their agency to diagnose the problems affecting a society emerging from conflict, and currently it is popular for that diagnosis to essentially boil down to finding that states are fragile because their institutions are weak (World Bank, 2011). Frauke de Weijer (2011) argues that "the field of international development is still based on the presumption that institutional change can be planned, directed and managed according to a predetermined plan." Astri Suhrke (2011:118) agrees and adds that the liberal peace advocates had developed a hubristic sense of confidence:

> The international aid community had by this time developed significant confidence in its ability to assist statebuilding in post-war situations. It had, after all, been done before, most ambitiously and recently in the Balkans and East Timor. A professional cadre of international civil servants with experience from earlier post-conflict situations and a large number of NGO workers had developed. Their role was enhanced by a growing body of empirically based statebuilding literature which extolled the possibilities of social engineering.

In fact, the very concept of peace 'building' suggest an engineering model—it suggests that peace is something that can be 'built', which implies that it can be designed, engineered and planned. The assumption is that such a plan can then be executed with a reasonable expectation that the end product will look like the original design, in the same way that an architect can design a building and oversee its construction according to the design. The creativity resides in the design; the rest is just logistics – the process of matching resources and capacities:

> The international community is assumed to be highly likely to succeed, provided only that it has the right strategy, resources, and confidence. In the words of an eminent British general, intervention "is doable, if we get the formula right and it is properly resourced" (Stewart & Knaus, 2011:xviii).

It is thus also not surprising, as discussed in Chapter 3, that when things go wrong the problems are most often considered to be due to shortcomings in the implementation of the design or plan. The problem is most often assumed to lie with the technical aspects or the 'logistics' of the implementation (De Coning, 2011). The solution offered is most often a redoubling of efforts to make the design work, hence the emphasis on coherence as a critical

tool to ensure that the effort to execute the design is coordinated, sequenced and synchronized, as planned. The following quote from Gelot & Söderbaum (2011:77) is illustrative of this approach:

> The literature on intervention from the outside often focus on the constraints on strategy or implementation, be they the lack of political will, the under-financing of missions, insufficient force, poor logistics, coordination problems between actors, or the dilemma of civil and military forces interacting, which in turn lead to legitimacy and authority problems, and undesirable outcomes. Good outcomes, it is assumed, follow from getting the technical or operational side of things right…. By focusing on cases, typologies or mission-specific operational and institutional constrains, the analysis is rarely embedded in the local and national context and rarely considers those intervened upon as acting subjects. The aims are to explain what went well or less well and to improve the instruments for intervention.

What, then, is the alternative to the determined-design approach? The remainder of this chapter, and indeed of the dissertation, is dedicated to answering this question by providing one possible alternative approach, namely a complex-systems approach. In the previous chapter it was established that peacebuilding systems are complex. In this chapter, some of the characteristics of Complexity will be applied to the peacebuilding context and the implications discussed.

The complex-systems approach rejects the notion that a peacebuilding intervention can set in motion and control to any degree of certainty a causal sequence of events that will result in a predetermined outcome. A complex system continuously evolves in response to both external interferences and feedback generated by the system itself. The way the system will respond to external interference can thus not be predetermined with any certainty beyond a very short horizon. The creativity of the system, i.e. the ability of the system to respond in ways that cannot be predicted or controlled, resides in the ability of the system to self-organise. It is therefore able to adapt and evolve on its own in response to changes elsewhere in the system and its environment.

The critical difference between these two approaches lies in the locus of the agency in each system. In the determined-design model the agency resides in the design process and thus with the external designer. In the complex-systems approach, the agency resides in the self-organising capacity of the local system. When the interactions among the agents achieve a certain level of intensity and interconnectedness, self-organisation starts to emerge and through this process local context-specific institutions and social processes emerge that help

the society to maintain itself through adaptation to and co-evolution with its environment. From the perspective of the internal agents, the external agents are part of the environment with which they are in continuous interaction. They are stimulated and constrained by various influences in their environment.

Before proceeding, a note on the use of the concept 'interference': This concept is introduced at this stage because the comparison between a deterministic-design model and a complex-systems approach is essentially about two different theories of interference. By using the word 'interference', the fact is highlighted that the theory of change adopted in the peacebuilding context assumes that there is a 'local' or 'internal' system that is the subject of an intervention by an 'international' or 'external' system. As discussed in Chapter 2, the aim of a peacebuilding process is peace consolidation, i.e. the purpose of the interference is to manipulate the internal system so that it does not relapse into violent conflict.

Using the term 'interference' also reminds us of the moral and ethical dimensions of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is about purposefully interfering in the social system of a society emerging out of conflict. It takes place in an international system that values sovereignty and the right to self-determination, and such interventions thus need to be recognised as extraordinary. As discussed in Chapter 2, these interventions are controversial because many in the Global South argue that the North is manipulating the UN and other institutions, through their donor assistance, research and technical expertise, to promote a specific Western agenda, namely the liberal peace theory (Lidén, Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2009; Newman, Paris & Richmond, 2009). In addition, there has also been a 'do no harm' debate within the peacebuilding community (Anderson, 1999), as well as an argument that peacebuilding interventions can generate perverse and unintended consequences (Aoi, De Coning & Thakur, 1997; De Weijer, 2011). By using the term 'interference' we are thus reminding ourselves of the moral concerns and ethical responsibilities that taking on this extraordinary task imposes on the peacebuilders. The ethical dimension of peacebuilding is addressed in Chapter 9.

For now, the implications of Complexity for peacebuilding are explored by discussing the four themes introduced earlier, and the first theme to be considered is the relevance of the problem-solving approach when dealing with complex peacebuilding systems.

7.3   SOLVING THE PEACE PROBLEM

Chapman (2002:26) differentiates between two types of social problems, namely 'difficult' ones and 'messy' ones. Problems in the 'difficult' category have some similarity to the characteristics of the kind of problems referred to in Chapter 4 as 'complicated', whilst problems in the 'messy' category can, for the purpose of this comparison, be regarded as similar to what is meant with 'complex' phenomena in this dissertation. With 'difficult' problems, there is usually broad agreement on the nature of the problem and some shared understanding of what a solution to the problem would look like, and the problem-solving process is bounded in terms of the time and resources required for its solution. Problems in the 'messy' category, on the other hand, are characterised by a lack of clarity or agreement as to what exactly the problem is and by uncertainty as to what any solution may look like. For example, establishing and maintaining an electricity grid in Monrovia is 'difficult', but building sustainable peace in Liberia is 'messy'.

What Chapman refers to as 'messy' problems is also known in the public policy planning literature as 'wicked' problems. Innes and Booher (2010:9) explain that wicked problems are problems that have no right or best solution. Rittel and Webber (1973) first coined the term in the context of social policy planning and have suggested ten characteristics of wicked problems. Jeff Conklin (2005) and Kenneth Menkhaus (2010) further refined this list of characteristics. A combination of these, using descriptions that the writer regards as best to illustrate how wicked problems can be understood in the peacebuilding context, follows:

1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem. The problem is not understood until after it has been resolved, if ever. Wicked problems have no stopping rule. A stopping rule refers to a specified limit of options in probability theory. In this case, since there is no definitive 'problem' there can be no definitive 'solution'. Thus the problem solving never stops. Some analysts have, however, suggested what amounts to a new stopping rule for wicked problems, namely 'good enough' outcomes. ('Good enough' options were introduced in Chapter 2 and are discussed in more detail again later.)

2. Solutions to wicked problems are not right or wrong, but they may have better or worse outcomes. It is difficult to objectively determine what is better or worse, as these are judgements made in a social context and differences in values and goals will lead to different choices (Menkhaus, 2010:86). (This phenomenon is discussed in Chapter 4 in

the context of the inherent limitations to coherence caused by competing values and goals.)

3. There is no immediate, and no ultimate, test of a solution to a wicked problem.

4. Every wicked problem is novel and unique, and every solution to a wicked problem is a 'one-shot operation', i.e. it only works in that particular context and there is thus no opportunity to learn by trial and error. This has specific implications for the 'lessons learned' and 'best practices' approaches that are commonly followed in the peacebuilding community to assist in organisational learning processes and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

5. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem.

6. A wicked problem can be explained (analysed) in numerous ways – there is no one correct way of explaining or assessing it. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem.

The purpose of identifying and recognising some problems as messy is not to suggest that they cannot be meaningfully addressed. The purpose is to make policy makers, planners and practitioners aware of the pitfalls of the determined-design model when dealing with complex problems. It is meant to caution them to not treat complex phenomena with the same tools they use to treat difficult problems. The message is that, to meaningfully address complex situations, they need to develop policy responses that are appropriate for the context (Chapman, 2002:26). Hughes (2012) argues, however, that the international community "continues to plan, implement and evaluate peace operations as though they were about tame problems – somehow afforded with well-defined stopping points, solutions that could be 'objectively' arrived at and evaluated, and existing in stable and thus predictable environments" (110).

Kenneth J. Menkhaus (2010) specifically applies the concept of wicked problems to fragile states. For him the opposite of 'wicked' problems are 'tame' problems, and his description of what constitutes a 'tame' problem also serves as a good description of what is referred to as the 'deterministic-design' model:

> Contrast this (wicked problem) inventory with a portrait of a tame problem, which possesses a well-defined and stable problem statement; has a well-defined stopping point, where the solution has been reached; has a solution that can be objectively evaluated as right or wrong; belongs to a class of similar problems that are all solved in a similar way; offers solutions that

are easily tried and abandoned; and comes with a limited set of alternative solutions (Menkhaus, 2010:86).[31]

Chapman (2002:27) states that when a problem is difficult, "an individual claiming to have the solution is an asset, but when the problem is a mess that individual is usually a large part of the problem." Chapman is referring here to one of the first important implications for peacebuilding we can draw from Complexity and the work that has been done on messy and wicked problems, namely an awareness of the limits of our ability to fully understand complex systems (De Coning, 2011; De Weijer, 2010).[32] This is what Michael Barnett, quoted in Benner, Mergenthaler and Rotmann (2011:225), refers to as cultivating "a spirit of epistemological uncertainty". Hughes expands on this notion and specifically applies it to the peacebuilding context when he says:

> An explicit, reflexive awareness of the incompleteness of our understanding is therefore vital so that decisions are taken with a large degree of caution (and humility) while at the same time demanding that we think through the possible ramifications (Hughes, 2012:116).

Popolo (2011:209) places particular emphasis on uncertainty being an intrinsic quality of nature. He argues that Foucault, Bergson and Prigogine sought to offer an epistemic-based understanding of Complexity as a knowledge framework that relies on time irreversibility (thus undermining one of the axes of modernity, that is, linear time) and on a notion of open systems (thus undermining the other axis, that is, analytical finitude) in order to produce 'uncertain knowledge', where uncertainty is regarded and accepted as an intrinsic quality of nature, and not as a result of imperfect knowledge.

Innes and Booher (2010:10) argue that, because "causality cannot be definitively established and because the system is constantly subject to unanticipated change, the idea of a best solution is a mirage." It is not possible to find the 'right', 'true', or 'correct' solution to a complex problem. In fact, the very use of the terms 'problem' and 'solution' is problematic in the context of complex systems. While Chapman, Rittel, Webber, Conklin and Menkhaus chose to use these concepts in their descriptions of messy and wicked problems, the aim in this dissertation is to go beyond the problem-solving trap. In order to truly transcend the

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[31] It should be stressed that identifying some problems as messy, wicked or complex does not give policy planners the right to be wrong. As discussed in Chapter 5, Complexity is not an excuse for the policy choices being made to address wicked and messy problems. Planners should be accountable for the consequences of their designs, and the purpose of identifying some problems as messy or wicked is to alert planners to the nature of these problems so that they can adjust their policy responses accordingly.

[32] The implications of Complexity for our ability to fully know or understand complex phenomena was introduced in Chapter 5, and specifically discussed in section 5.6 on Complexity and epistemology

determined-design paradigm and its underlying assumptions, including its problem-solving approach, one must make a conscious choice to use alternative concepts when describing the phenomena addressed in a complex systems approach to peacebuilding.

In effect, one should not see peace as a problem to solve. It is necessary to recognise that peace is not something in the tame or difficult category. Beyond negative peace, i.e. beyond the absence of violent conflict, there is no right or wrong peace. Positive peace does not, in any given context, have a stopping rule. From a complex-systems perspective the argument will be that peace is emergent and thus has to be context specific. Making choices about a 'good enough' peace, about whether specific policy choices have resulted in better or worse outcomes, can thus ultimately only be made by those that are embedded in that context.

From a subjective policy perspective, i.e. from the perspective of a self-interested peacebuilding agent, one can perhaps talk about an undesirable state, based on the negative impact such a state is perceived to have on, for instance, a society or parts of that society. One can also talk about better or worse approaches, i.e. a scale of policy responses that range from having improved the situation from the perspective of what the policy set out to achieve on the one end of the scale, to policy approaches that made things worse on the other end. But one cannot talk about problems and solutions as if there are right, correct or best solutions to a problem that are just waiting to be discovered. The second implication for peacebuilding from Complexity is thus that one cannot have a definitive 'problem' or 'solution' in a complex peacebuilding system, and one should thus not attempt to 'solve' it with design methodologies aimed at identifying and applying such problems and solutions.

The complex-systems approach is sensitive to how complex systems process information, self-organise and adapt. In contrast to the reductionist approach, a complex-systems approach needs to be systemic, i.e. its analysis of the causes and triggers of the conflict should aim to be comprehensive and holistic. The reductionist approach seeks to reduce all possible causal influences to a few most significant causes that can then be prioritised, given assumptions regarding time and resource constraints. A complex-systems approach seeks to understand how various conflict factors are interconnected and interrelated.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the argument is not that the reductionist approach is redundant, but rather that it is not sufficient. In addition to analysing the most significant elements, it is also

necessary to understand how the elements are interconnected when dealing with complex systems and to be particularly interested in their emergent behaviour. As discussed previously, emergence and self-organising behaviour cannot be detected, considered or understood by analysing the elements of a system in isolation from one another and the system of which they form part. Thus, the reductionist approach needs to be complemented and augmented with methods that seek to understand the patterns, trends and processes that indicate how the system works as a whole, as well as with recognition of our inability to comprehend the complexity of the system. And this implies that we can never generate one definitive analysis of a situation. Instead, the analysis needs to be a continuous and iterative cyclical process of analysis, adjustment, experimentation, feedback, analysis, readjustment, etc. Bryn Hughes (2012:108) refers to Peter Coleman who says that the main contribution of a complex-systems approach is "that it shifts our understanding away from static, simplified views of conflict" and helps us to appreciate the "complex, multilevel, dynamic, and cyclical nature of these phenomena."

Owen Barber (2011) argues that wicked problems are solved by evolution, not by design and that a complex system continuously adapts, through experimentation and feedback. It is a never-ending process of adaptation to a dynamic environment. In contrast with the deterministic-design model, the complex -ystems approach recognises that change is an emergent process. If one wishes to influence a complex system one needs to work with its ability to adapt by trying to stimulate the system, and this requires an evolutionary and experimental approach. Instead of trying to design a problem-solution causal chain, the complex-systems approach may experiment with multiple parallel interventions so that it can consider which of these works better. This is essentially the way natural selection works in evolution and, as Owen Barber (2011) points out, the two key factors are variation and selection. There needs to be variation among the multiple parallel interventions, and there needs to be a selection process that replicates and multiplies successful interventions and discontinues those that do not work. For instance, a donor may choose to support a number of programmes that have more or less the same aim, such as reintegration, for instance, but each programme may have a different approach as to how the aim can be achieved. The donor may also recognise that, as the system will constantly change and adapt to the programmes, it may be necessary to invest in a capacity to proactively monitor for feedback and adapt the interventions that are supported accordingly. The donor needs to have a process for abandoning those programmes that have no effect or negative effects and a process for

modulating those that seem to generate the better outcomes. Those that appear to have the desired effects should be replicated, but also varied so that there is a continuous process of experimentation with a range of options, coupled with a continuous process of selection and refinement. This is an iterative process that never ends. It can never arrive at 'the best' or 'the correct' solution, because the conflict system is constantly changing and adapting to its environment, including to the interventions.

A complex-systems approach also needs to cultivate an awareness that those interventions that are showing results today will not continue to do so indefinitely, and it thus needs to be sensitive to signs that indicate that these interventions are no longer having the desired effect. A complex-systems approach also needs to be aware that complex systems will not only respond in predictable ways to external interventions, but they will also respond in many unpredictable ways. One thus needs to monitor for unintended consequences and be ready to take steps to try to deal with the perverse effects that may come about as a result of the intervention.

This is a significantly different approach from the deterministic-design model, where the aim is to monitor whether the intervention is having the desired effect, i.e. one knows what effect one intends to stimulate with the intervention, and one focuses the monitoring effort on determining whether that effect is achieved. The determined-design model tends to be blind to unintended consequences or emergent behaviour that may be totally unrelated to the intended effect of the intervention. The determined-design model also tends to create false feedback in that agents, once they know how their results will be monitored, tend to alter their programming so that they can 'hit the targets', i.e. alter their activities in such a way that they can best influence the measurements that will be used to monitor the results. The focus thus shifts from trying to achieve a desired goal to trying to influence the way the results will be measured. In some cases this may be the same thing, but in others such a shift in focus is likely to generate unintended consequences (De Coning & Romita, 2009). The third implication for peacebuilding from Complexity is that the reductionist approach needs to be complemented and augmented with a complex-systems approach that seeks to understand the patterns, trends and processes that hint at how the system works as a whole. It does so, in part, by experimenting with multiple parallel interventions and by being open to a broad spectrum of feedback.

Strand (2007:196) suggests another useful perspective on the tension between complex and complicated problems in the governance context. He distinguishes between 'practical problems' defined in terms of ultimate purpose questions such as how best to stimulate human welfare, and 'technical problems' defined in terms of specifications, such as measuring growth in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). He argues that modern societies are characterised by the strategy of trying to reduce practical problems to technical problems.

The pattern Strand describes can be clearly observed in the peacebuilding context, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, where the focus has shifted away from nation building, national reconciliation and support of constitutional processes, towards 'technical problems' such as Security Sector Reform, Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and Rule of Law (De Coning, 2011). This is probably because policy makers have started to realise that their ability to shape practical problems, by using the deterministic-design model is limited. In response, they have chosen rather to refocus on those aspects that they have more agency over when using the determined-design model, namely the technical aspects of their own interventions (Hughes, 2012). This shift in the focus of the policy-planning community has meant that, instead of concentrating on understanding the system they are trying to influence, the policy planners have chosen to direct their efforts to the tactics, techniques and practices of how they undertake their own interventions (De Coning, 2011).

For instance, instead of working with a society to assist them in the process of developing an indigenous judicial system that is based on local culture, custom and institutions, contemporary peacebuilding interventions have been focused on reforming local judicial systems and police functions through providing advice on the formal structure, management processes, training and equipment of the ministries of justice and the police services. Strand (2007) refers to the former as 'practical' problems, and to the latter as 'technical' problems, because contemporary peacebuilders are primarily concerned about the logistics of delivering training and consultancy services. They regard the substance of their advice as value-free, or technical. He and others, such as Hughes (2012), argue that the technical solutions the peacebuilders offer have little or no practical value for the ordinary people. The ordinary people observe lots of activity, but it does not seem to affect their daily practical experience. Donais (2012:149) refers to this point when he draws attention to the relationship between contemporary peacebuilding practice and "the everyday":

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> The inability of the liberal peacebuilding project to deliver on its promises of stability and prosperity is felt most acutely – and most bitterly – by the citizens of war-torn states, many of whose lived experiences continue to be marred by chronic insecurity, grinding poverty, and diminishing hopes for the future.

The 'technical' approach seems to have resulted in a closed-loop or eco-chamber effect where the policy makers, planners and practitioners have become preoccupied with the constant redesigning of their own planning and monitoring techniques, and with trying to monitor whether their plans have been implemented in accordance with their own standards. Oliver Richmond (2009:558) agrees and points out that local perceptions of the liberal peace project in many post-war environments "indicate it to be ethically bankrupt, subject to double standards, coercive and conditional, acultural, unconcerned with social welfare, and unfeeling and insensitive towards its subjects".

It thus seems that when the external actors realized that they are not able to generate the kind of short- to medium-term tangible change in the societies that they were working with, they shifted their attention to those aspects they could change – using the determined-design model, namely their own organisational structure, mechanisms, tools, tactics, techniques and practices. By constantly reorganising themselves and the way they operated, they created a sense of meaningful engagement that matched the determined-design model, i.e. they could identify problems within their own organisational structures or practices, design solutions, and implement those solutions and show real results over time in the form of new structures, policies, tools, handbooks, guidelines, and so forth.

The 'technical problem' approach has gone so far that some external actors have all but given up on trying to monitor the impact they are having on the societies they are trying to influence (De Coning & Romita, 2009). Instead, they are focusing on those things they have agency over, such as monitoring whether their outputs are delivered against standards and specifications. The underlying theory of change remains unchanged, but the focus is now on perfecting the implementation of the design, with the belief that the more accurately the implementation matches the design specifications, the more effective the intervention will be. Monitoring standards and trying to ensure and improve the quality of outputs are meaningful, but not sufficient. Peacebuilding is essentially about influencing the behaviour of the internal actors, and that is where the focus has to be. Bryn Hughes argues that:

> Effective and sustainable peace support operations do not come from imparting the 'right' institutions, mustering the 'appropriate' level of resources, or honing the technical and

> managerial skills of the interveners and recipients alike. The key, rather, is that the thinking and practices of intervening actors stem from an engagement with the 'political'. (Hughes, 2012:100)

The 'political' has a specific meaning for Hughes in this context. He is not referring here to the formal workings of government. He is referring "to the sociocultural value systems that determine which behaviour, arguments, and actions are legitimate" (*ibid.*). He argues that the international community should recognise that meaningful interventions entail working with existing sources of power and legitimacy, with the aim of achieving 'socially generative' change (*ibid.*). His point is that, currently, the "political has been circumvented by those who have maintained that there is only one set of universal values (liberal, Western)" (103):

> The overwhelming tendency of external actors to date has instead been to contemplate local societies through the reductionist lens bereft of the rich, multi-layered, dynamic interaction that makes up any social context (Hughes, 2012:100).

From a complex-systems perspective, the 'technical problem' aspects of the external intervention, i.e. its tactics, techniques and practices, are of peripheral interest, because they are not critical to achieving self-sustainable peace consolidation. If the goal is self-sustainable peace, then the core focus has to be on what Hughes refers to as the 'political', i.e. on how the internal system is able to generate and maintain its own capacity to self-organise, and how it can develop the resilience to adapt and evolve in the face of shocks and crises without lapsing into violent conflict. The external intervention is only of value to the degree that it is able to support this self-organisation process. The fourth implication from Complexity is that the focus of a peacebuilding intervention has to be on the political dynamics of the internal system that one is trying to influence, not on the technical aspects of the external intervention.

In this section the relevance of Complexity for the problem-solving assumption in peacebuilding has been explored and four implications of Complexity for peacebuilding were identified:

- The highly dynamic and nonlinear nature of complex systems constrains our ability to fully understand complex peacebuilding systems, and thus we are inherently limited in our ability to design predetermined outcomes.

- One cannot have a definitive 'problem' or 'solution' in a complex peacebuilding system. Peace, in fact, is not a 'problem' to be 'solved'. Peace is an emergent property of a complex system that is able to self-organise without lapsing into violent conflict.

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- The highly dynamic and nonlinear nature of complex systems results in the reductionist approach being limited in its application. It needs to be complemented and augmented with a complex systems approach that seeks to understand the patterns, trends and processes that provide clues as to how the system works as a whole.

- The focus of a peacebuilding intervention has to be on the internal political dynamics of the system experiencing change, not on the technical aspects of the external intervention.

7.4   STABILISING CONFLICT

Understanding and coping with change and instability has been an important subject of philosophy and science since the earliest recorded history. Chapman (2002:50) quotes Schön (1971) who argues that we tend to "presume that the disruptions and change currently causing distress will settle down at some point in future", to make the point that we assume that the world is inherently orderly, but we actually never arrive at this 'stable' state. Under the influence of the determined-design approach, we tend to train and educate people by providing them with ideal models, standards and specifications, and we instil in them the belief that they have the agency to design and execute programmes that will result in these models and standards being achieved. They then pursue these models in their careers with the expectation that they will actually arrive at these ideal states at some point in the future.

When they are unable to replicate the ideal models and fail to achieve the standards, they are frustrated and disappointed. In the face of failure, our first reaction typically is to redouble our efforts, as our initial reaction is to assume that there was something wrong with how the design was implemented. Later we may consider that there may be something wrong with the design itself. It often takes us half a lifetime of trying to improve the implementation before we start challenging the ideal-order assumptions underlying the determined-design model itself. These beliefs and assumptions have a significant influence on our policy expectations of what peacebuilding can achieve. Astri Suhrke (2011:220-221) describes how these 'ideal model' expectations have influenced the international community's policies towards the intervention in Afghanistan and how it sustained their commitment to continue their approach, and in fact intensify it, long after they should have become aware that it was not having the effect intended in its design:

> Its promise of peace and security, human rights and representative government, relief assistance and economic reconstruction had a powerful legitimizing effect in Afghanistan . . . The idealist element of peacebuilding was particularly potent because it contrasted so starkly with Afghanistan's recent history . . . It was buoyed by a solid dose of confidence in social engineering, and sustained by fears and hopes.

The determined-design model thus assumes that our social world is stable and peaceful and views conflict as a deviation from the norm. Hence peacebuilding is used as a tool to restore societies to their 'normal' peaceful and orderly state. The value of Complexity is that it offers an alternative perspective through which we can view the same conflict-peace phenomenon, and this alternative view helps us to see aspects of it that we would not otherwise have considered. Complexity recognises that complex systems are dynamic and nonlinear and therefore always in a process of transformation. Change is not a 'rough' period that has to be traversed in order to arrive at some better stable state in future. Change is the 'normal' state that we always find ourselves in. Change, in this sense, refers to what is meant when we say that complex systems are dynamic, i.e. energy and/or information flow through them constantly and they are thus continuously in flux. The implication for peacebuilding from Complexity is thus the recognition that change and conflict is normal and necessary and that peacebuilding should not be so much about restoring order and stability, as it should be about facilitating and stimulating particular aspects of the change process.

If complex systems reach a state of stability – which is referred to as equilibrium in the Complexity literature (Cilliers 1998) – they are no longer dynamic, and thus no longer complex. If it had been a living system, then this loss of Complexity would have implied death. However, as also discussed in Chapter 5, the fact that complex systems are highly dynamic does not imply that they are chaotic, because being dynamic is just one part of their character. There are also other characteristics at play that ensure that the dynamism of a complex system does not spin out of control. Complexity refers to a particular type of system that is emergent as a result of the dynamic and nonlinear interactions of its elements with one another and the environment, but it regulates and maintains itself through a process of self-organisation.

In fact, as discussed in Chapter 5, Complexity suggests that there is an optimal mix of change and order, namely enough dynamism to drive the system to the edge of chaos and enough self-organisation to prevent it from tipping into chaos. This state is optimal because it means that, when a system is 'far from equilibrium' it is under heightened pressure to survive, and in

this state it is stimulated to be sensitive to changes in its environment and to be alert to its own performance in relation to the environment. The various elements of the system are responding in multiple ways to what it perceives as changes in the environment, and the accumulated effects of the feedback generated in the process, coupled with the nonlinear ways in which this information is processed, generate a process of self-organisation that continuously optimally positions the system to take full advantage of the current conditions in its environment. Self-organisation thus emerges from and is at the same time driven by the need to continuously adapt the system so that it strives to be optimally positioned to gain the most from its environment, i.e. the most gain for the least expenditure of energy. This is also recognisable as the primordial driver in economics and evolution, and both indeed are also examples of complex systems.

From a determined-design perspective, order is the steady state, and peace and harmony suggest the ideal. For any system to be in harmony, i.e. perfectly balanced like a Swiss timepiece, it would have to be locked into a completely predictable order, which implies that it has to be an externally controlled mechanism. It would have to be externally designed and manufactured, and it would have to depend on an externally supplied source of energy, like a battery. Even then entropy implies that it would be necessary to intervene from time to time to replace or repair parts of the system. It would thus, per definition, exclude any living organism or complex system. For peacebuilding, the implication from Complexity is that a harmonious stable or orderly state is an ideal model that cannot exist in real or material terms. It is an idea that cannot be operationalised.

From a Complexity perspective, peace, in a social context, is brought about by a continuous process of social evolution and adaptation, i.e. a process of optimising social justice by continuously adapting our cultural concepts and practices of what we regard as social justice to serve the needs of the society in the context of its changing environment. What we interpret as peace, i.e. the absence of violent conflict and the presence of social justice, is not a result of an ordered or harmonious state, but of a continuous process of interaction, adaptation and convolution.

A peaceful society is constantly at odds with itself; there is lively debate and people and institutions are continuously competing for power and resources. Societies that have been able to organise themselves in such a way that these internal dynamics do not result in violent

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conflict or otherwise threaten the survival of the system, have developed norms, values and practices – and the social institutions to manage them – that self-regulate these disputes, e.g. through arbitration, mediation, the justice system and elections. What makes such a society 'peaceful' is the fact that it is able to self-regulate its internal conflicts so that they do not turn violent or manifest in other ways that are so negative for the society that it breaks down its ability to maintain itself.

We may thus look at a 'peaceful' society, or at what appears to be a well-balanced ecosystem in nature, and we may get a sense of peace and harmony. But if we consider how such a 'peaceful' society functions from a complex systems perspective, we will recognise that the 'peace' and 'harmony' that are observed are not a 'solid' or 'final' state that can be arrived at, and which then remains in that 'static' state forever. Peace and harmony are mental concepts that encapsulate an understanding that the peace and balance that are observed comprise a whole-of-system effect perspective. It is a 'snapshot' or frozen impression, of an otherwise highly dynamic system. A complex-systems approach grasps that, in order to maintain a 'peaceful' society, thousands of processes are hard at work to self-regulate and self-organise what is, in reality, a system in which the elements are continuously in conflict with themselves and their environment.[33]

A complex-systems approach will also recognise that this self-organisation process may be fragile. It may take only a relatively small loss of self-regulating capacity or perhaps a significant change in environment, like a Black Swan event (Taleb, 2010), for a society to be overwhelmed and to lose its ability to self-organise. As the studies of the collapse of complex societies referred to earlier demonstrate, none of the major civilizations or particular forms of government that have emerged in human history has endured indefinitely (Diamond 2006; Morris 2011; Tainter 1988). Their findings thus suggest that all political systems collapse sooner or later, and this further underlines the Complexity insight that the essential nature of complex systems is that they are continuously in flux.

However, as McAnamy and Yoffee (2010) argue, the history of man is not so much about social collapse as it is about social resilience and survival. Particular forms of social order

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[33] The way in which 'conflict' is used here refers to the tensions and disputes among different stakeholders and constituencies in society that have to compete with each other in order to pursue their own best interest. It does not imply violent conflict.

come and go, but human culture is resilient. They argue that most of the stories that are typically associated with collapse can also be interpreted as stories of resilience and adaptation. For instance, they point to the influence the Greek and Roman civilizations had, and still have, on Western culture, language and philosophy and argue that, despite the fact that these civilizations collapsed, their culture has survived and lives on into our present times:

> An important part of the "science of the long view" is the concept of resilience, or "the ability of a system to absorb disturbance and still retain its basic function and structure", albeit in a altered form… Resilience means that some kinds of change, especially political change, can be quick and episodic, whereas other kinds of change, for example, changes in kinship structures and belief systems, can be slower moving. Also, both kinds and different paces of change can coexist. (McAnamy & Yoffee, 2010:10)

Thus there is a fundamental philosophical difference in approach here between a school of thought, which in this dissertation is associated with the determined-design model, that sees nature and society as fundamentally or ideally ordered and regards instability as a deviation or interruption of the ideal, and a school of thought, which is associated with the complex-systems approach, that presents an alternative or opposite thesis, namely that the 'normal' and in fact optimal state of nature and society is that of being complex, highly dynamic, nonlinear. The implication for peacebuilding from Complexity, therefore, is that the 'normal' and in fact optimal state of societies is to be complex, i.e. highly dynamic, nonlinear and inherently competitive.

Whilst complex systems are highly dynamic, their self-organisation processes transform this energy into a process of evolutionary adaptation. At times, this process may unfold so slowly, or it may go through periods of such near repetitive cycles that it may give the illusion of being in a stable or ordered state. Such patterns are explained in Complexity as pockets of stability (see Cilliers 1998 & 2001, as discussed in Chapter 5). However, these patterns are not permanent or predictable in the way in which order could be understood to imply a determined pattern. These pockets of stability are temporary, context specific, and always subject to change.

The illusion of stability is often caused by significantly different scales in the pace of change in the systems that are being compared to each other. In order to measure change we need to have a baseline or a benchmark; we need to compare it with something else. As humans we tend to think in terms of change as measured in terms of how it affects our lives, including the

pace at which the human experience unfolds. Some may use a further level of abstraction, e.g. change in terms of what we know about human history. Others may go even further and think of change in terms of what we know about the history of our planet and the universe. The point is that it is these time and space comparisons between change indicators in different systems that often result in the illusion of one system being stable in contrast to the perception or timescale of the other. For instance, the paths of the planets in our solar system are slowly changing, but from a human perspective the scale of this change has been so slow that the path of the planets was thought to be predetermined and orderly for centuries. In fact, the sun and other forces exert influences on our solar system that limit the degree of change to within a certain pocket of stability, and that makes our solar system appear relatively stable from a human time perspective. However, the mass of the sun is changing and the universe is expanding and, therefore, what may appear to us as stable, may, from the perspective of another timescale, represent a system undergoing radical change.

Political systems may similarly appear stable and lasting from one perspective, and as changing radically from another. One can imagine that there were times when the people of ancient Egypt and Rome or contemporary America (Fukuyama, 1989) thought their political systems would last forever. However, sooner or later the dynamics in any complex system change significantly enough to disturb any given pocket of stability. Once disturbed, such systems seem to go through a period of instability until a new (temporary) pattern emerges. Climate change and planetary-scale environmental sustainability are contemporary examples of how something that takes place slowly over thousands of years, and that has been not been a major element in human politics until fairly recently, has now rather suddenly emerged as a major issue in international relations and domestic politics.

In our common-sense view we tend to think of democracies as stable, and in the relatively short period of human history in which we have been able to observe democratic political systems, they do seem to be more lasting than comparable political systems, because they, in macro terms, appear to settle into more lasting pockets of stability. However, whilst they may appear stable at the surface, i.e. whilst their overall effect may create a sense of enduring and predictable stability, they are in fact highly-dynamic and nonlinear complex systems that are self-regulating a large number of simultaneous and interlinked change processes, such as the economy (nationally and internationally), politics (domestic and international relations), rule of law, security, social-cultural, and so forth. Politically speaking, for instance, democracies

change governments more often than most other forms of political organisation, and this comes at a considerable cost to the system, at least as seen from a short- to medium-term perspective.

For instance, many contemporary democracies shift between major theories of governance every eight to ten years, most often in the West between social-welfare approaches (such as represented by most Social-Democratic parties in Europe, the Labour Party in the UK or Democratic Party in the USA) and liberal approaches (such as the Christian-Democratic parties in Europe, the Conservative Party in the UK or Republican Party in the USA). Such frequent and fundamental changes would be unthinkable in less complex systems, and although the adaptation costs are high, these changes are rarely so fundamental that they threaten the overall stability and survival of the system as a whole. This is because they have developed complex systems of self-organised negative and positive feedback processes that ensure that the overall system is maintained, even as specific political, social and economic experiments come and go. Complex social systems thus represent an intricate combination of processes, typically in the form of institutions that endure whilst at the same time having the capacity to handle a high degree of change, usually in the form of information and patterns of social organisation. The constitutional order endures, e.g. the way political parties are elected and the patterns of governance are predictable, but the programmes they introduce and the policies they implement change.

The point is that, from a complexity perspective, change and competition are normal, even optimal, but we sometimes need a different time-scale perspective in order to understand the context within which that change has meaning. Looking back, we can appreciate the important changes that were brought about by periods of instability in Europe, such as the Reformation and the French revolution, but these, of course, were brutal times for the people who lived through them (Tilly, 1992).

Thus the distinction we need to draw is not between stability and change, but between acceptable and unacceptable levels of conflict. In our contemporary international system violent conflict is not recognized as a legitimate means of affecting political change. Conflict, perhaps better described as competition, is accepted as part of the natural change processes in domestic and international politics, but violent conflict is not. Our public and parliamentary debates can at times by quite conflictual, and it is accepted that workers can strike or that

people can protest. However, when protests become violent it is seen as legitimate for the state to step in to restore public order. There are domestic and international standards and norms governing both legitimate protests and legitimate law enforcement. As the recent events in the Middle East have demonstrated, peaceful protest can topple even strong dictatorial regimes, but we have also seen that suppressing peaceful change with disproportionate violence results in loss of international legitimacy. In both Libya and Syria the violent suppression of peaceful protest has resulted in violent rebellions and civil war. The resulting international debate about what constitutes legitimate forms of political and social change and the role that the international community should play when such internal conflicts become violent, reminds us that these questions are never fully resolved. Each specific case requires a reappraisal of the validity of our assumed standards, norms and practices.

International peace interventions are mandated to prevent violent conflict or to try to stop violent conflict where it has occurred. However, it is not meant to stop or prevent conflict and change *per se*, i.e. we need to recognise the difference between violent conflict that is not acceptable, and 'normal' conflict, e.g. peaceful public protests, strikes, civil disobedience, etc. which is a necessary or normal part of change and development. Peacebuilding is about facilitating the change process that a country emerging out of conflict has to go through. Change generates conflict, and the process will result in winners and losers. The core peace consolidation mandate discussed in Chapter 2 is aimed at preventing such change from resulting in a lapse into violent conflict. This does not only imply 'negative peace', i.e. the use of external or internal security means to prevent violent conflict, but also 'positive peace', i.e. the full spectrum of complex social processes employed by a society to self-organise itself in such a way that conflicts are absorbed without lapsing into violent conflict (Galtung, 1985).

In an established complex society various interest groups compete with each other in order to have their interests satisfied, but these conflicts are managed on a continuous basis by a wide range of formal and informal self-regulating processes. These can range from the formal legal system that can be used to enforce contracts or seek redress of wrongs, to political representation, to informal norms and standards upheld by social custom and practice. The presence and active engagement of all these processes and institutions in managing the competition among interested groups is what brings about positive peace and prevents a lapse into violent conflict in established complex societies. It is the presence and active interaction

between all these competing interests that create the vibrancy in these societies, and it is the ability of the system to self-organise that prevents such competition from becoming negative, or resulting in violent conflict.

One can thus think of societies that do lapse into violent conflict as societies that have experienced a loss of complexity, or as societies that have experienced a regression in their ability to self-organise. For some reason, the level of internal tension and conflict in those societies has overwhelmed their ability to self-organise and self-regulate, and this has resulted in these conflicts spiralling out of control and eventually into violent conflict. In this context, peacebuilding can thus be understood as a process of assisting societies to regain the capacity to organise themselves, i.e. as a process of developing the capacity to manage a higher degree of Complexity.

In most cases, however, such a loss of complexity is not total. It is more typical for systems to lose control – the ability to self-organise – over part of a system whilst still maintaining control over others. Stewart and Knaus point out that:

> [e]ven the poorest, most fragmented and traumatized nations – such as postwar Kosovo or even more dramatically Afghanistan – are densely patterned with functioning local forms of security, administration, and dispute resolution. (2011:xxiii)

A political or security system may collapse, but the social cultural system may still be in place (McAnamy & Yoffee, 2010:10). In Timor-Leste, for instance, the political and security system that Indonesia imposed during the occupation of East Timor may have collapsed totally in 1999, but the societies remain organised around traditional leadership and kinship structures and have used those parts of the system to regroup and cope with the aftermath of the violent conflict (Hohe, 2002). A complex system experiencing a regression in its ability to self-organise is thus likely to shed control over parts of its system, typically first on its peripheries. As it regains the ability to self-organise, this is likewise likely to be an outward expansive process, whereby more and more parts of the system on the periphery are brought into the self-organising influence of the core of the complex system. These dynamics have implications for both how complex societies lapse into violent conflict and how they recover from violent conflict.

An approach to peacebuilding that is based on a conflict-stabilising theory of change, and that is aimed at 'restoring order', such as the US occupation of Iraq and the NATO-led

counterinsurgency war in Afghanistan, is likely to lack sensitivity towards the need for societies to experience 'positive' conflict and change. Their preoccupation with stabilisation is likely to result in them also wanting to control the political process. As seen in both Iraq and Afghanistan, the preoccupation with stabilisation has resulted in policy choices that interfere with the internal political system in order to achieve short-term security gains. These, however, have turned out to be short-sighted gains because they have undermined the ability of these societies to self-organise. In both these recent examples, it has resulted in the occupying forces having to remain much longer than they planned to, and ultimately failing in their overall stabilisation objectives, because they failed to allow enough room for these societies to develop their own self-organised systems of social and political governance. If peacebuilding does not allow enough space for self-organisation to emerge, it will fail to achieve its objective of bringing about a self-sustainable outcome.

In both Iraq and Afghanistan the occupying forces believed, under the influence of the determined-design model, that they would be able to control the outcome, i.e. that by taking certain planned actions they would achieve a specific predesigned end result. In both cases these actions resulted in a level of interference that left the local systems dependent on external political and security guarantees (Suhrke, 2011; Stewart & Knaus, 2011). From these experiences, the core lesson for intervention is that an external system cannot aim to achieve self-sustainable peace and stability and wish to remain in control of the internal system at the same time. The interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan represent a thermostat-style model of interference – they attempted to regulate the internal system with a high degree of external control. In contrast, a complex-systems approach would be sensitive to the need for societies to self-evolve and this necessarily includes processes that entail 'positive' conflict and competition. A complex-systems approach would need to invest in helping such societies to develop the resilient self-organisation capacities they need to self-regulate their own change processes and to manage their own conflicts.

If we accept that change is normal, even optimal, in complex systems, it would make sense to invest in developing improved capacities to cope with change and to make adaptation and evolution integral to our systems, our institutions and ourselves (Chapman, 2002:50). Change is feared when we are not able to cope with it. In the peacebuilding context, the determined-design interference approach attempts to cope with change by trying to improve our ability to control change through external intervention, i.e. our ability to predict and manage the

outcome of change. In contrast, the complex-systems approach attempts to cope with change by developing the system's ability to self-organise. In anticipation of change and in recognition of its necessity and positive potential, the complex-systems approach invests in building robust and resilient capacities to self-regulate, i.e. the internal capacity to cope with change.

A complex-systems approach accepts that there will be change, including change that comes rapidly in the form of shocks and crises and prepares for it by investing in robustness and resilience. A successful post-conflict society is a society that has weathered several such shocks and crises without relapsing into large-scale violent conflict. A sustainable post-conflict society is one that has demonstrated its ability to do so without, or with less and less external support.

A key insight from Complexity for peacebuilding is thus that there is a meaningful difference between thinking of change and conflict as an abnormal problem that needs to be stabilised, so that the system can return to its ideal steady state and thinking about change as something normal and optimal that needs to be encouraged and facilitated. This difference in approach has important implications for how we think about influencing and interfering in peacebuilding systems.

In this second section the relevance of Complexity for the stabilising conflict assumption in peacebuilding has been explored and a further eight implications of Complexity for peacebuilding identified:

- Change and conflict are normal and necessary, and peacebuilding should thus not only be about restoring order and stability, but also about stimulating change and facilitating constructive conflict.

- Peacebuilding is about peace consolidation, and whilst avoiding a lapse into violent conflict is important, it should be recognised that a preoccupation with controlling the political and social space in order to ensure security and stability is likely to constrain the space and pace for the emergence of self-organisation. The best way to ensure sustainable peace consolidation is to encourage and facilitate the capacity of a society to organise itself.

- A harmonious stable or orderly state is a conceptual construct, i.e. it is an ideal model that cannot exist in real or material terms. It is an idea that cannot be operationalised.

- The 'normal', and in fact optimal, state of states and societies is to be complex, i.e. highly dynamic, nonlinear and inherently conflictual.

- An international intervention cannot aim to achieve self-sustainable peace and stability, and wish to remain in control of an internal system at the same time.

- A complex-systems approach needs to be sensitive to the need for societies to self-evolve, including through conflict and competition.

- If we accept that change is normal, even optimal, in complex systems, it would make sense to invest in developing improved capacities to cope with change and to make adaptation and evolution integral to our social systems.

- This represents a shift in focus from trying to ensure that you arrive at a predetermined result, to trying to ensure that the system has the robustness and resilience, i.e. the capacity and processing ability, to manage its own emerging outcomes without lapsing into violent conflict.

7.5   TIME, PACE AND POSITIONING

In this section, the relevance of Complexity for three aspects of peacebuilding, namely time, pace and positioning will be considered. 'Time' refers mostly to the pace of change and the implications of different approaches to what are considered desirable rates of change are considered. With positioning the reference is to the relationship between internal and external agents, and in this section this relationship is related to the different perspectives that internal and external agents have about the timing and pace of social change processes. Time, pace and positioning are closely interrelated, and the discussion of the one often requires reference to the others, and this is why they are being discussed together in this section.

The potential pace of change that has to be coped with is closely linked to our approach to time. One can perhaps think of this rate of change as a scale of possibilities, where what would be considered a normal rate of change would determine the middle or anticipated range against which the likelihood of also having to cope, from time to time, with faster or slower rates of change could be contemplated. Whilst managing change at the 'normal' level may be anticipated most of the time, we also have to be prepared to manage faster or slower rates of change. It is necessary to develop the capacity to deal with those possible heightened or reduced levels of change, including occasional high-impact events that bring with them

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radical change (Taleb, 2010). Robustness, in this context, refers to the ability of the system to deal with a broad set of possible rates of change.

Under the determined-design approach, peacebuilding programmes are typically designed to be relatively short, fast-paced events. The sense of urgency is linked to external, often domestic, political and budgetary time pressures. Donor funds have to be spent according to externally determined budget cycles and levels of interest, and certain milestones have to be reached in the interest of, for instance, the domestic election cycles of the external actors. These external or supply-side considerations generate a sense of urgency. They create a policy environment in which there is a sense that these interventions need to achieve as much as possible in the shortest period possible. This stress is caused, in part, because there is a policy perception that international and domestic attention will soon wane or move on to the next new crisis, and this implies that there will then be less funding available for a particular crisis. This is also referred to as the so-called 'CNN-effect', namely that media attention creates public interest and thus, in democracies, pressure on politicians to be seen to be responsive to the crisis. However, the downside of the CNN-effect is that public, and thus political, attention shifts away from the crisis in question as soon as the media's attention moves to the next major media event. Whilst the CNN-effect could probably be seen to be at work when it, for instance, comes to press statements issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of a given donor country, those engaged with policy responses to a given conflict are less likely to have such an extremely temporary focus. The point is, however, that the overall effect that is created in the process is one in which there is a premium on speed of delivery, matched with an expectation to effect equally rapid change. Some peacebuilding experts will readily admit amongst themselves that such rapid change is not possible. However, they equally believe that it is not possible to convince the external media, public and politicians of the need to have a more patient approach, so their approach is to try to get the most out of the system while the going is good.

In fact, as discussed in Chapter 2, in the context of the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, one of the peacebuilding meta-narratives was the need for longer-term engagement in post-conflict interventions. One can argue that the work of the Peacebuilding Commission to date has, in fact, resulted in a more sustained international engagement with those countries on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda (De Coning, 2010b). However, the degree to which the sense that peacebuilding is understood as something urgent has

persevered can be seen again in the focus of the 2009 UN Secretary-General report on peacebuilding, in which the UN Secretariat seems to focus its main attention on the two to three years in the immediate aftermath of conflict (UN, 2009).

Military units that are deployed as part of peacekeeping missions are under even tighter pressures. They are typically deployed for six-month periods, and they tend to have an intensive programme aimed at achieving as much as possible during the short time that they are deployed. All in all, there is a range of pressures and stresses in the determined-design interference context that results in these missions and programmes being assessed, planned and executed at a fast pace and under stress. The point is that the rate of change is predetermined by the design. It is externally determined on the basis of the theory of change of those that came up with the design, and the factors that influenced the anticipated rate of change during the design were mostly external factors, i.e. time factors that matter for those that did the design, not time factors that are necessarily relevant for the system that is being engaged. The pace is thus dictated and informed by supply-side stresses, not by the dynamics of the societies affected by conflict. As a result, the external actors have an inappropriate influence on the pace of the conflict transformation process – inappropriate because it is not informed by the dynamics of the conflict system itself but by external considerations.

Although conflict systems are typically in need of assistance, the scale of the need does not automatically require a fast-paced, urgent and large-scale intervention, i.e. there is not necessarily a linear relationship between the scale of the need and the pace with which those needs can be met. If the objective is positive and lasting change, a more important consideration may be the ability of the local community to absorb the assistance. Any assistance being delivered that cannot be absorbed meaningfully by the society – in terms of both the rate of absorption and the degree to which that offered is relevant to the need and compatible with local systems – will overflow, i.e. it will be wasted, or worse, it will feed dysfunctional forces like corruption and organised crime (Stewart & Knaus, 2011; Suhrke & Berdal, 2012). Thus the point is that, if your consideration is to affect sustainable change in a recipient society, the pace of your assistance should be determined by the rate of change that can be absorbed by the community in question. Veit and Schlichte make a similar argument:

> External statebuilding cannot replace state-formation. While the former suggests that modern rational statehood can be installed by huge investments within a few years, the latter concept, derived from historical sociology, stresses that often century-long processes of centralization of power means the later encroachment of state domination into every nook and cranny of the

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social space. Statehood as it is embodied in modern capitalist states is the late result of century-long social conflicts. (Alex Veit and Klaus Schlichte quoted in Bliesemann de Guevara, 2012:168)

Societies need social institutions that can absorb their change processes in order to create sustainable outcomes. Without such local interpretation, the external assistance just passes through without being integrated into the local society. A society emerging from conflict typically has an oversupply of undesirable institutions, e.g. armed groups and criminal gangs, and an undersupply of desirable institutions, such as civil-society organisations committed to facilitating social justice, community development, and so forth. At a minimum, the pace of delivery should thus be influenced by the capacity of the desirable institutions to absorb the assistance offered. The undesirable institutions will gladly absorb the overflow. Part of the assistance should, in fact, be aimed at facilitating the development of the desirable social institutions or should be directed at the expansion of their capacities, where they exist. Earlier assistance should thus be invested in building the capacities necessary to absorb later flows of assistance. In other words, apart from emergency assistance, early recovery should ideally be aimed at assisting in the development of the kind of social institutions that would be needed to facilitate the integration of downstream peacebuilding assistance. This suggests a model that slowly develops the capacity to absorb greater flows of assistance, like a person rescued from a desert that needs to take in small amounts of water first, even if the thirst is great.

Social institutions develop through an evolutionary process; they cannot be imported and they are not developed overnight or fully formed. The inherent dynamics that are present require social change to take place at a pace related to the rate of change the society can absorb. The dynamics of the assistance offered by the determined-design approach, which is to pour in as much assistance as possible whilst there is international political attention on the problem, thus seem to be in direct contrast with the dynamics of systems emerging from conflict, where the capacity to absorb more assistance is a gradual and incremental process and thus requires a slow build-up in the scale of assistance offered.

A critical lesson that needs to be learnt in the peacebuilding context is that consolidating the peace is not only about dealing with dramatic change, it is also about dealing with change that takes place at a much slower rate. Rihani (2002:95), in the context of development, argues that culture, society, economics and policies evolve towards increasing Complexity and that it takes time for that build-up to occur:

> Many layers of interconnections and adaptations have to come into being at a pace that cannot be accelerated appreciably . . . there are no shortcuts to sustainable evolution (Rihani, 2002:95).

The 2011 World Development Report (World Bank, 2011:10), based on the research of Pritchett and De Weijer (2010:09), argues that the 20 fastest-transforming societies have taken between 20 and 30 years to raise their institutional performance from, for instance, the levels of Haiti to those of Ghana in 2011. And these represent the exceptional cases; the average is anticipated to take approximately 116 years (10).

Another consideration is that the rush-against-time approach fails to take into account that, for progress in any one sector of society to be sustainable, other aspects of society need to be simultaneously developed so that the system as a whole matures together. If not, such uneven developments tend to distort the system and maintain or further weaken its fragility and thus make it less, not more, sustainable. For instance, under the determined-design approach it is typical to prioritise reforming and rebuilding the security sector in an attempt to first ensure stability. The security sector is often perceived to be one of the 'difficult' rather than 'messy' areas of peacebuilding, because the process of identifying, training and equipping soldiers and police officers in a given timeframe and budget is seen as more or less a technical and logistics exercise, given enough resources. In contrast, facilitating the development of a new social contract or stimulating national reconciliation is 'messy', because success is not based on your resources, planning and effort but on the political will and mood of the local society and its leaders.

The result in an otherwise still fragile conflict-prone society thus is often that the security sectors are the first to be reorganised and they end up being the element in the society in transition that has the most capacity. The obvious danger, as the history of military coups in Latin America and Africa suggests, is that the security sector, if developed disproportionately to other sectors, is likely to become the primary source of governance. Or worse, that the security agencies in a system that lacks adequate checks and balances may use their newly developed capacity negatively, by becoming a source of predation on society, through corruption for instance. This is the kind of side effect that peacebuilders should be highly sensitive to. However, it seems that their bounded rationality (Simon, 1962) results in them being driven by the devil they know (the need to address instability, and the pressure to

reduce their own external security presence and cost), rather than the devil they do not (the potential for side effects and unintended consequences).

One does not need to have above normal foresight to understand that it may not be a good thing to make your military the central focus of external capacity building, or for it to become the most organised part of the executive arm of government in a fragile society emerging out of violent conflict. The legacy of military coups in the post-colonial era is probably in part related to this imbalance, and if current peacebuilding practice perpetuates this imbalance, we may end up with a new legacy of statebuilding coups, such as seem to have recently been the case again in West Africa.

Often these external institution-building programmes are rushed and thus generate what seems to be, for instance, a functioning police force, because they have the external trappings (uniforms, cars, ranks, buildings, badges, bullets, budgets) of what is recognisable, typically from a Western perspective, as a police force. Pritchett and De Weijer (2010:15) refer to this phenomenon as 'isomorphic mimicry'. In reality, however, such institutions typically are created and sustained by donors outside the regular budget and political process. As discussed in Chapter 3, they therefore often are more accountable to the external donors than to their own society (Barber, 2011).

Perhaps a useful metaphor is organ transplantation. The new institutions are foreign to the local social immune system, because they have not been generated out of processes embedded in local social norms, values and state formation. They have not emerged in relation to the local society's needs for stability and security or their expectations of the role and function of a police service that is meant to serve their needs. Instead, these institutions have emerged out of the expectations and theories of change that the external peacebuilders hold regarding the role that a police force may play in generating rule of law in the local society. They have been externally designed, as a result of the predetermined neo-liberal assumptions of what is best for the local society and then imposed on, or implanted into, the local social system.

In the same way that a local biological system may reject an organ transplant, the local social system may reject such implanted institutions. However, in post-conflict peacebuilding systems the rejection is much more subtle and takes place over a longer period of time. There are many other reasons, as discussed earlier, why local elites want to maintain good relations

with the external actors and why such foreign institutions are tolerated but not integrated into the local social system. In general terms, one can say that the internal elites, and the local society in general, want to maintain the patronage of the external peacebuilding actors because they acquire resources from the external actors that they can use to further maintain and expand their own patronage networks (Chabal & Daloz, 1999).

When it comes to the security sector in particular, one can say that those in government benefit from a strong security sector because it helps to maintain the status quo and absorbs a lot of ex-combatants. In the absence of any alternatives, it is in their interest to support the reformed police and armed forces. As a result, they tolerate the foreign models, probably with the belief that they will, in time, transform these institutions to better serve their local needs. In the short- to medium-term they are probably concerned with ensuring that these new institutions do not interfere with their own domestic political and social institutions, and in so doing they are perhaps more active in isolating and quarantining the new institutions than they are in integrating and accommodating them. Some researchers argue that a new kind of hybrid institution emerges in these contexts (Mac Ginty, 2011; Richmond, 2011). They argue that institutions that accommodate both international expectations and standards and local needs, identities and culture, come about when external actors have influence but are forced to take local ownership into account.

The 2011 World Development Report (World Bank, 2010:41) defines institutions:

> …as the formal and informal 'rules of the game', which include formal rules, written laws, organizations, informal norms of behaviour, and shared beliefs – as well as the organizational forms that exist to implement and enforce these norms.

It is obvious from this definition that external agents cannot 'build' local institutions, or that this is not something that can take place in the space of a few short years. External actors can impose formal 'rules of the game', but only local societies can generate the informal norms of behaviour and shared beliefs that are essential for institutions to be locally owned and embedded. Societies need time to develop, absorb, test, adapt and integrate their own formal and informal norms and shared beliefs and to build trust in their own institutions that are developed in the process.

For institutions to be self-sustainable, they have to be generated by local social processes, and these processes take time to produce, test, refine and develop institutions. Each context is

different, and an important factor would be the degree of collapse or disruption of the complex social system that existed prior to violent conflict. If a completely new social system needs to emerge, the process is likely to take several generations. It is rare for societies to completely collapse, however. In most cases some aspects of the culture, norms and social identity survive (McAnany & Yoffee, 2010). If so, it would make sense for peacebuilding to capitalise on existing social resilience and to use that as a springboard for accelerated peacebuilding. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case. Most contemporary peacebuilding programmes assume that local social norms and practices are part of the problem, and work actively to de-legitimize local institutions and advocate their replacement with new central government controlled liberal peace model institutions. The insights from Complexity discussed in this chapter suggest instead that peacebuilding should be the catalyst that facilitates the re-emergence of the informal norms of behaviour and shared beliefs that are essential for institutions to be locally owned and embedded.

Despite the WDR definition for institutions cited above, and despite the various other ways in which the 2011 WDR report tries to accommodate the fact that institution-building takes time and tries to be sensitive to the fact that institutions tend to be externally imposed, the 2011 WDR report remains trapped in the determined-design paradigm and is written from a perspective in which peacebuilding ultimately is something the internationals do to the locals. The 2011 WDR report and contemporary liberal peacebuilding in general try to accommodate the local ownership imperative without giving up ultimate control over the outcome of the peacebuilding process. Stewart & Knaus (2011:xxi) argues that:

> The international policy-makers seem often unable to recognize or use the real strengths in local society and, therefore, are reluctant to delegate. They underestimate the intelligence and competence of local politicians and overlook their ability to compromise with their armed opponents. A sustained intervention, therefore, often prevents local leaders from taking responsibility; it does not put pressure on politicians to settle with their enemies, or broaden the kinds of deals they could offer.

Contemporary liberal peacebuilding best practice is to be seen to be trying to accommodate local elites by pushing them to the front, for instance, by pretending to others, and partly to yourself, that by having certain local elites prominently displayed in visible roles, one is genuine about local ownership. This occurs, for instance, by asking them to co-chair peacebuilding coordination mechanisms and by making a show of entering into framework agreements with them, so that they can become the face – the poster child – of local ownership. In reality, however, the core neo-liberal features of peacebuilding interventions

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(democracy, human rights, the free-market economic system) are externally designed before the locals are consulted about their implementation, driven ultimately by external considerations of pace and time, and the external actors still maintain control over the core outcome of the process. Even if they allow some degree of hybridity for the sake of local ownership, they still maintain enough influence to intervene if the process does not produce the liberal peace outcomes they expect. Pressure is brought to bear on elites and others when they stray too far off the path, and as the externals often represent a significant resource for patronage, this pressure is usually sufficient to maintain control.

Those countries that have a significant local source of revenue, for instance oil, present a slightly different case. Whilst they are still sensitive, especially to Western pressure when it comes to international recognition and roles in the international state system, they usually show much more autonomy when it comes to choosing local models. In such cases, like Angola, where the country represents a significant supply to the West, or where they have a prominent client relationship with a major power such as China, even the international recognition card seems to have very little power of influence. Western nations also seem much less enthusiastic to insist on the liberal peace model in their relations with countries that effectively control resources that these nations are keenly in need off. Their actions thus undermine their own arguments about the universal applicability of human rights and the liberal peace model in general and gives rise to criticisms about the hypocrisy and selectiveness in their foreign policies.

Even where contemporary peacebuilding does make an effort to achieve what it perceives as 'local ownership', it usually comprises an attempt to co-opt the locals to accept an externally designed solution, i.e. an attempt to convince the locals to be enthusiastic implementers of the liberal peace model. Donais (2012:4) argues that local ownership, from this perspective, exists "when they do what we want them to do, but they do so voluntary [sic]". The locals are allowed to introduce some hybridity to the periphery of the model, but the core liberal-peace tenants are sacrosanct, i.e. free markets and some semblance of democracy and human rights.

However, from a Complexity perspective one can argue that accommodating the local is not enough. Only systems that are truly free to self-organise can develop self-sustainability. Systems that are regulated by external feedback interventions cannot develop the internal complexity necessary to self-regulate. It is not enough to get the locals to take ownership of

an externally-designed model. A radical repositioning of the local-international relationship is necessary, with the local agents clearly in a position to take responsibility for both identifying their own needs and deciding on what they want to do about it, including taking the responsibility for the outcomes of their decisions. A complex-systems approach requires a radical repositioning of our understanding of peacebuilding, namely as something that needs to be essentially local. Peacebuilding needs to be reframed not as something done for them, but as something they have to do for themselves. The essential ingredient for self-sufficiency and self-sustainability is local emergent self-organised complexity, i.e. the society needs to develop its own capacity to manage itself without lapsing into violent conflict.

Donais (2012:5) refers to this kind of argument for a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding as a 'communitarian approach'. Such approaches normally "stress the importance of tradition and social context in determining the legitimacy and appropriateness of particular visions of political order, justice, or ethics (*ibid.*). Donais refers to Bell (2009), who argues that legitimacy must "derive from and resonate with the habits and traditions of actual people living in specific times and places". Brown (1992) similarly argues that "the ultimate source of moral value lies within specific political communities." Donais (2012:5) thus concludes that "peacebuilding communitarians uphold, consequently, the right of societies to make their own choices, regardless of the degree to which such choices correspond with emerging international norms, which are viewed from this perspective as more Western than universal."

These insights from Complexity also speak to the appropriate positioning of the internal and external agents in the process. The prevalent peacebuilding narrative places the international agents at the core, and the local people are relegated to being the object of the intervention or, at best, having a peripheral role. Concepts like 'host population' and 'beneficiaries' identify the internal actors in terms of their relationship with the external actors. However, if the aim of peacebuilding is to generate self-sustainable peace consolidation, and if Complexity implies that the local society needs to be able to self-organise, the local system has to be at the centre or core of a complex systems approach to peacebuilding. This implies a radical repositioning of the international peacebuilding agents from the centre to a supporting role.

The role of the external actors may be necessary in some cases, but their role is not sufficient to achieve self-sustainable peace consolidation. In those cases where external actors could make a useful contribution, their role should be limited to providing an initial safe and secure

environment and/or to act as a catalyst by stimulating and facilitating processes that generate social regeneration. The external agents need to support, complement and augment the internal system, in such a way that they do not undermine the local society's present, or future, capacity to self-organise. This obviously requires a delicate balance.

The determined-designed peacebuilding approach acknowledges this dilemma, and has tried to find ways to address this tension, hence the focus on local ownership (Donais, 2012). However, despite all the rhetoric, contemporary peacebuilding efforts have been unable to enact the local ownership principle, because in the determined-design model the power to lead the design process lies with the international peacebuilding agents. The complex-systems approach provides the peacebuilding community with the theoretical rationale for understanding why this repositioning of local and international roles is critical for achieving self-sustainable peacebuilding and why it is ultimately also in the best interest of a more stable international system.

It may seem obvious to a detached observer that the internal actors need to be given the space and time necessary for their own internal institutions to develop and evolve, but this is not recognised in the contemporary peacebuilding experience. Institutions are created by external design and under pressure from donors, and then often prematurely operationalised. Pritchett and De Weijer (2010:15) refer to this as 'premature load bearing'.

As discussed in Chapter 4, in the context of local ownership, local context and local capacities, finding the right balance between external support and local ownership is extremely tricky. What is clear, however, both from a Complexity perspective and from the logic of sustainability, is that complex systems need to be free from external control to develop the ability to self-organise. There is thus a degree of interference and intervention that is incompatible with self-organisation and sustainability. External peacebuilding interventions need to develop a much more refined understanding of how to limit and minimise interference for self-organisation to develop in those areas that are critical, whilst at the same time providing technical assistance and support in areas where it is needed. Such support furthermore must stop short of substituting the capacities the locals need to develop themselves in order to self-organise.

Most external actors, and donors in particular, seem to be blind to how their decisions regarding the timing and pace of their interventions and programmes, and their own position at the core of the process, have the perverse effect of undermining self-sustainable peace consolidation (Aoi, De Coning & Thakur, 2007). Whilst they are often, with hindsight, able to identify the perverse effects others have generated, they seem especially blind to how their own decisions to prioritise certain of their own domestic driven themes impact negatively on the institutions they are trying to generate. The critical liberal peace literature contains countless examples and case studies of such perverse effects. In Liberia, for instance, one donor's well-intentioned attempt to address the high levels of sexual violence resulted in well-equipped specialised police units set up to deal with violent sex crimes. However, it caused systemic distortions that would, for instance, result in a police station where the small specialised violent sex crimes unit has a car and an air-conditioned office container, whilst the station commander and the rest of the police officers have to operate without either. The ensuing tensions and distortions seem obvious in hindsight, but it did not seem to occur to the donors during the design process that building up a specialised unit that is much better resourced than the rest of the police force, of which it is an integral and interdependent part, would have negative unintended consequences.[34]

External donors do not always consider the degree to which the coherence of the formal and informal norms of behaviour and shared beliefs of, for instance, a police service, is dependent on the degree to which it emerges out of a process owned, controlled and financed by the society itself and how important it is for such processes to coevolve with other institutions, in the context of the larger systems, for instance the larger criminal-justice subsystem of which it is part. They seem to think that the 'formal' institution can be created first and the 'informal' wiring-up to the norms and culture of the larger social system in which the institution is meant to be embedded is something that can be done later, when there is time. They do not seem to grasp that they are in fact imposing a foreign institution by trying to short-circuit emergence and that, in so doing, they are perpetuating dependency and fragility, thus generating the very instability they are trying to address.

This is not how the liberal state and its institutions emerged in the West (Tilly, 1992). In fact, it seems that a part of the reason why these perverse effects occur is that the external actors,

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[34] Interview with Kari Marie Kjellstad, Norwegian UN Police Officer deployed to Liberia, 13 January 2011.

and Western donors in particular, have forgotten their own state-formation history, i.e. how their own institutions emerged through years of bottom-up evolution, revolution, adaptation, trial and error. Perhaps they do not realise that their own institutions are still emerging, and the sense that they have already arrived at the ideal state (Fukuyama, 1989) blinds them to the option that the liberal peace model is just one paradigm among many. The European experiment and the global financial crisis are contemporary reminders that the liberal peace model is still very much under construction. If the Western history can give us any clues, it is likely to suggest that the liberal peace norms and institutions that are so highly regarded today will someday be looked upon as outdated and uncivilized, in the same way that we look back today at the political models of the past. Being able to see the liberal peace model as one paradigm among many requires recognition that it has developed in a specific context, within a specific history, and that this specificity limits it transferability to other contexts. Perhaps there was a greater degree of a shared cultural and historic paradigm that made the liberal peace model more transferable to Eastern Europe and the Balkans. However, the further away societies and cultures are form the Western core, the more unlikely it is that the context-specific models generated by the Western experience can be transferred meaningfully into these local contexts.

If ignorance cannot be a defence, then a more cynical argument would be that external peacebuilding agents, especially those from the West with a liberal peace agenda, may be aware of how long and arduous their own state-formation and institution-building processes were, but this knowledge is inconvenient because it does not fit the expectations of their contemporary domestic political context. The perception has been created over several decades that the West has the responsibility to export peace and development to the rest of the global community. In order to maintain the perception, it is necessary to demonstrate the agency to do so at a pace that can be clearly observable for domestic political consumption. Why has this perceptions been created and why it is necessary to maintain it? What goals or interests are being served? These critical questions lead to a consideration of the larger or deeper motives behind the willingness of Western states to invest resources and blood in peacebuilding interventions, but that debate is beyond the scope of this study. The point is that peacebuilding is driven by external domestic political expediency. The tragedy is that the cost is borne by the already vulnerable and fragile societies emerging out of conflict, and this amounts to a double burden—the combined cost of their own crisis and the cost of the Western peacebuilding intervention (Pritchett & De Weijer, 2010).

The international peacebuilding community's ability to reform the physical aspects of, for instance, the security sector—e.g. by training and equipping police and military forces—has outpaced their ability to understand how such capacities need to be embedded in local social, cultural and political systems. The ability to effect technical influence has thus outpaced the ability of these same actors to fully understand the implications of their interventions. The development of such sensitive institutions, when poorly linked with the social, cultural and political elements of the societies they are meant to serve, results in a dysfunctional security sector that adds risk, rather than stability, to a society emerging out of conflict. In other words, the perverse effect is that, although the motive of the intervention was to counter fragility, the way in which it was carried out has increased fragility and vulnerability.

In the contemporary peacebuilding experience, external peacebuilders have prioritised security sector reform because they are motivated by a determined-design theory of change, which holds that the sooner there is internal security capacity, the sooner the external security forces can be reduced and eventually withdrawn, and this is an obviously attractive prospect to those responsible for the treasury (Suhrke, 2011). However, it seems more likely that the imbalance introduced in the local system by developing strong security forces without developing the counter-balancing civilian institutions is likely to require the external peacebuilders to provide that counter-balancing guarantees themselves. As the need to return and intervene again and again in Haiti, Liberia, Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone has demonstrated, such actions are likely to result in perverse outcomes that actually prolong the duration of the external intervention and thus the cost. The determined-design approach to peacebuilding thus results in delaying, inhibiting or blocking a locally-owned and self-sustainable outcome.

The dilemma is caused, in part, by the fact that the cost of future interventions will be borne by future governments, whilst the decisions on current interventions are made by the government of the day, based on the immediate concerns and interests in that given context, including domestic considerations. The long-term argument, i.e. looking back and calculating the total number of years, and the total cost of, for instance, America's peacebuilding efforts in Haiti over the last 30 years, may make sense from a systemic perspective, but the decisions to intervene in reality are political and will be driven by the politics of the day. Every administration is only responsible for the decisions it takes during its relatively short term in

office. There is no incentive to take a long-term view. The democratic process incentivises decisions that discount the cost of taking action in the present against short- to medium-term political gain. No one takes responsibility for the longer-term impact a country like America may have on a country like Haiti. This tension between long-term impact and short-term, more pressing immediate political considerations is, as discussed in Chapter 3, an inherent tension in peacebuilding systems. It is also a further argument as to why peacebuilding has to be local, because no external system can be expected to genuinely act in the best long-term interest of the local.

External peacebuilders recognise that the ultimate goal is self-sustainable local systems, and their theory of change argues that they should reduce and withdraw their interference as this internal capacity develops, until they eventually are no longer needed. However, Complexity leads us to understand that this sequence is illogical, because the local system will not be able to develop the capacity to self-organise for as long as the external peacebuilders occupy the space, i.e. provide external support to sustain critical sectors and processes, and as long as they externally control the parameters within which the system can exercise choice. International agents will need to reduce their influence and withdraw at a pace that anticipates, not waits for, the emergence of the internal system's self-organising processes. The last few steps to true self-sustainability can only develop in the absence of external control. Therefore the external actors should not benchmark their own drawdown and exit on the degree to which full self-sustainability has been achieved, but rather on the capacity that exists for self-sustainability to take hold after external support has been withdrawn.

Another way of thinking about complex societies that have experienced serious conflict is to think of them as complex systems that have gone over the edge into chaos, losing their ability to self-organise in the process. When complex societies collapse, they experience a decline in complexity, and they often break up into pre-existing subsystems, for instance, ethnic, language or religious subsystems (Tainter, 1988:31). In this context, the post-conflict transformation phase can be considered to be a period during which a society is reconstructing or more likely building up a new complex system, i.e. it is re-establishing, or newly establishing the connections and networks needed for self-organisation to (re)emerge within the larger national or country-level reconstituted social system. As discussed earlier, this process may require a considerable period of time. National-level social organisation may, for instance, collapse into regional and ethnic social formations and in the post-conflict period

need to be reconstituted at the national level. As discussed earlier, such a process requires time for the new national social system to evolve, for a new national identity to form, for new national institutions to be tested, to adapt, and to further evolve through several iterative cycles until the new national social system has arrived at a level of social organisation sufficiently complex to constitute a self-organising system that is resilient enough to manage its own societal change processes without lapsing into violent conflict. Many of the perverse effects described earlier will have the effect of undermining and delaying such a delicate process.

In fact, when considering the magnitude of the undertaking, we may have to recognise that many of today's most fragile and least-developed countries may never regain, or in those cases where it had not developed it in the first place, gain, the ability to become self-sustainable 'states' in the contemporary global political and economic system, because they simply lack sufficient internal socio-economic capacity to sustain themselves as national state systems. In Complexity terms, too many of the factors necessary for such a state to develop into a self-organising complex social system are determined externally – in this context by the global political and economic system – for these countries to be able to develop self-sustainable self-organising systems. Countries like Haiti, the Central African Republic, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau may need indefinite international support to maintain the minimum levels of stability and development that can be tolerated by the international system, so as to prevent them from lapsing into violent conflict. They may continue to exist, for the foreseeable future, as a collection of communities that exist in the same geographical space externally recognised as a state but that are internally unable to reach the level of complexity necessary to self-organise into a nation. If so, this observation, based on the implications of Complexity for peacebuilding and International Relations, would seriously challenge the prevailing peacebuilding model and development ideology (Easterly, 2007) and especially its premise that the international community is made up of self-governing sovereign states. It would suggest that there is a certain category of 'states' not currently recognised as such in the international system, which are sub-sovereign—they are unable to achieve sovereign statehood measured in terms of their capacity to self-organise. These sub-sovereign states are dependent on a larger regional or international system.

For these countries, at least, we have already arrived at a form of global governance. The implications are that we have a part of the international system made up of sovereign states

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that relate to one another and voluntarily cooperate to manage a global system, and others that are sub-sovereign and are, at least in part, regulated and maintained by the same global system. In this context, peacebuilding is a tool of the global system that assists countries that have lapsed into violent conflict to re-establish self-organised sovereignty, or failing that, to sustain them at a level necessary for them to participate as a quasi part of the global system of governance.

In this section the argument has stated that it is necessary, from a Complexity perspective, to recognise that social change processes take time – typically generations – and that trying to compress the social learning and adaptation process into a short, intense period of time is likely to fail (Rihani, 2009). Complex social processes cannot be compressed beyond a certain minimum period. They require time for their iterative feedback processes to generate emergent behaviour, and they need time to adapt, evolve and learn.

In this sense, peacebuilding is metaphorically closer to an intervention in a biological ecosystem, e.g. gardening, than to an engineering process like building. For instance, trees and plants take a certain number of years to grow to maturity and the process cannot be hastened beyond a certain minimum period determined by the internal biological function of the trees and plants in question. The gardener can, at best, try to ensure optimal conditions in terms of water and nutrition, but the biological process unfolds at its own pace. Similarly, social systems need time to develop new or adapt existing institutions. The post-conflict transformation process typically requires that societies have to change how they are structured and how resources and power are distributed among different sub-parts of that social community. Such changes are fraught with tensions and require adjustments in the collective identity and culture of the society. Therefore, they typically require change measured in generational cycles for it to truly take hold.

The generations that were in conflict with one another may accept and tolerate a new post-conflict dispensation, but they typically struggle to internalise such change completely and continue to harbour some of the prejudices, identities and cultural values that contributed to the conflict in the first place. Typically, it is only when the generation born after the conflict has ended, has grown to maturity and has taken over the leadership in society that such a society has adapted sufficiently for it to have transformed itself into a new reality, by integrating new post-conflict values, identities and culture. Even then, as demonstrated by the

South African and other experiences,[35] some of the economic and geo-spatial structural inequalities in that society are likely to remain and may require several generations to be transformed. In the meantime these inequalities will continue to cause tensions in the system, although such tensions are likely to be different and to generate different outcomes compared to during the period of violent conflict. In the interim, the society may have developed more resilient processes for dealing with those stresses than those that were in place before.

The overall implication of the discussion in this section is that there is a certain virtue of slowness related to the time and pace of change that is needed for societies emerging out of conflict to develop new processes of self-organisation (Cilliers, 2006). Social systems need time and space to process the information generated by the interactions among their agents and to distil from it a new, common, shared identity. Societies, like the complex systems they are, need time to develop a history. It takes time for a system to build up a collective memory and for such a common knowledge to be processed into new, agreed-upon norms and values.

Based on what we know about how complex systems emerge, what is suggested in this study is a new complex systems approach to peacebuilding that values slow-maturing, long-term engagement and that is aimed at allowing societies the time and space they need for internal, home-grown self-organising processes to emerge and to mature. In the complex systems approach, progress is measured over the long-term in the ability of a system to withstand a number of serious challenges without a lapse into violent conflict.

From the insights gained from applying a Complexity perspective to the time, pace and positioning considerations of peacebuilding, we can thus find that:

- When the determined-design interference approach to peacebuilding results in situations where communities are under pressure to adapt faster than their collective ability to absorb change, the external peacebuilders are in effect delaying the ability of such communities to become self-sustainable.

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[35] Although the end of apartheid has brought about political equality, South Africa still suffers from deep-rooted socio-economic inequality. It was possible, literally overnight with the adoption of a new constitution, to make all South Africans legally and politically equal, but it will take generations to change the socio-economic inequalities in the society. This inequality also has spatial dimensions, both rural-urban, as well as township-city tensions, and although there are no longer laws that keep people of different races from living together legally, people do not uproot themselves and move at a whim. The changes that do occur in the socio-economic sphere thus take place at a much slower pace than those in the political and legal spheres.

- The rate of change has to be matched to the society's capacity to absorb change for it to be sustainable. Imposing more change than can be absorbed results, at best, in overflow and waste and, at worst, in pollution (corruption, breakdown of social systems and values, a culture of winner-takes-all, short-term self-enrichment, and so forth.).

- A complex-systems approach requires a radical repositioning of our understanding of peacebuilding as something that needs to be essentially local.

- The role of the external actors may be necessary, for instance, to provide an initial safe and secure environment and to act as a catalyst by stimulating and facilitating the processes necessary for social regeneration, but it is not sufficient to achieve self-sustainable peace consolidation. International agents thus may have a role to play, but need to position themselves in such a way that they do not harm or delay the internal system's self-organising processes.

- The essential ingredient is local, emergent, self-organised complexity, i.e. the society needs to develop its own capacity to manage itself without lapsing into violent conflict.

- The external actors should not benchmark their own drawdown and exit on the degree to which full self-sustainability has been achieved, but rather on the capacity that exists for self-sustainability to take hold after external support has been withdrawn.

7.6   IMPLICATIONS OF COMPLEXITY FOR COHERENCE

From what has been discussed thus far in Chapters 5 and 6, it is clear that, from a Complexity perspective, diversity contributes to the resilience and robustness that systems need in order to be able to evolve and adapt to highly dynamic change processes in the environment in which they exist. In contrast, the most common understanding of coherence in the peacebuilding context drives in the opposite direction – it is an attempt to get a diverse set of peacebuilding agents, each with an own set of interests and mandates, to cohere around at least a common objective, but preferably also around a common strategic framework that speaks to a division of tasks, an agreed set of priorities and perhaps even an agreed work plan. There, thus, seems to be some tension between the stated objectives of the coherence imperative and the important role that some level of diversity plays in complex systems, and this inherent tension may explain why the coherence dilemma has proven to be such a persistent feature of the peacebuilding experience.

As discussed in Chapter 5, Paul Cilliers (2002:77) argues that the study of complex dynamic systems confronts us with the limits of human understanding. His position is not that there is not much to be learned and new advances to be made, but that our knowledge will always be contextually and historically framed. Cilliers (1998:114), using Lyotard's post-modern narrative approach, for instance argues that there are many equally valid local narratives that co-exist, and this makes it impossible for one grand narrative that unifies all knowledge to emerge. These narratives or discourses are in constant interaction, battling with each other for territory (Cilliers, 1998:116; Lyotard, 1984:16-17). A key attribute of this philosophy of knowledge is that it is based on the recognition of the virtue of dissent as opposed to consensus (Cilliers, 1998:118). The relevance of the dissenting voices is determined dynamically through competition and cooperation in terms of the history, as well as the changing needs and goals of the system (Cilliers, 1998:119). Lyotard refers to this process as the 'agonistics of the network' (Lyotard, 1984:61). The implications for coherence in peacebuilding systems are that variation and diversity are critically important for the 'agonistics of the network', i.e. for the health, fitness, robustness and resilience of the system's ability to cope with the complexity of its environment.

Rihani (2002:81) makes a related and important point, namely that in complex adaptive system simulations, "selection pressures for adaptation came from activities by other coevolving entities. The physical environment . . . was the junior partner in that struggle". In other words, it is not only adapting to changes in the environment that is important, but what seems especially important is adapting to changes in the behaviour of your peers and competitors, as you all co-evolve in an overall changing environment. Interestingly, this is also something Tilly (1992:7) stresses in his analysis of state formation in Europe, namely that the influence of other coevolving states and societies was a critical influence on how specific states in Europe developed.

In a highly dynamic and nonlinear environment it may thus be important to create opportunities for exchanging information among peers and, to the extent possible in a given context, among competitors so that the peacebuilding system has access to the widest possible range or variety of options from among which it can choose, on the basis of the best available information, its preferred course of action. Systems that over-emphasise the importance of coherence may be limiting their choices. By blinding itself to the information options

generated by a likeminded network of peers, it risks limiting the variation or robustness of the system, thus isolating it from potentially critically important information about alternative options that could otherwise have assisted it in adapting, or adapting more optimally, to changes in the environment.

Chapman (2002:31) points out that a key feature of messy policy problems is that "there are valid different perspectives on the issue or situation, which interpret information quite differently . . . because the precise formulation of the whole depends upon the perspective of the person making the observation." Another way of stating this is that different people will have different perspectives on 'the system' and this will result in the system being attributed with different boundaries, different purposes and perhaps even different properties, none of which can be said to be wrong, as they all coexist as valid narratives, given the unique perspective of each of these agents. In fact, as Chapman (2002:33) points out, the existence of significantly different perspectives on a problem is a key characteristic of a policy mess.

One of the structural causes of intractable policy dilemmas, like the coherence dilemma, is the existence of different frameworks or discourses used by different policymakers to make sense of the world. In conflict negotiations, one can often observe that evidence that one party regards as devastating to a second party's argument, is dismissed by that party as irrelevant (Schön & Rein, 1994, quoted in Chapman, 2002:33). This shows how very difficult, if not impossible, it is to establish an objective rational model of decision making or analysis that would satisfy all frames of reference or all the possible narratives and discourses (Lyotard, 1984:16). Thus employing an approach that recognises that different perspectives and different frameworks can co-exist "is not a luxury; it is essential if the proposals that emerge are to have anything approaching widespread support" (Chapman, 2002:33).

This description would be familiar to anyone who has had to deal with the way in which different networks of peacebuilding agents, for instance those who have specialised in security sector reform, pro-poor development and good governance, to name a few examples, use different narratives to describe the same phenomenon, for instance, the conflict in Afghanistan. The security agents are likely to frame the situation as a counter-insurgency war; the development agents may frame it as a problem caused by poverty; whilst those in the governance dimension may frame it in terms of state fragility (De Coning, Lurås, Schia & Ulriksen, 2009). And all these views differ from the multiple ways in which ordinary Afghans

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would make sense of their own situation. None is necessarily wrong, and consensus, or a unifying grand narrative, is probably not possible. Instead, these narratives have to continuously compete with each other for policy space, resources and political support. At various points in the process specific decisions have to be taken and compromises are negotiated or transacted on the basis of the perceived needs or stresses of the system and the respective strengths of the various narratives or interests at that specific point in the history of the system.

Stepputat (2010) argues that ". . . security, development, and other means, such as conciliatory measures and local conflict mediation, should be managed to allow for a situation to emerge in which differences, including the irreducible ones, are dealt with by discursive means." The difficulty raised in Chapters 3 and 4, which was discussed again in the previous section, is that most peacebuilding agents only act locally and from a short-term perspective and thus tend to be unaware of their interdependence on others and their role in and contribution to the larger and longer-term system of which they are part. As discussed earlier in this chapter, this is not a problem for Complexity *per se*, because agents do not need to be conscious of their part in a larger system for that system to exist and function, but the recognition that most peacebuilding agents only act locally and from a short-term perspective does help to explain why the coherence dilemma has been, and will remain, such a persistent part of the peacebuilding experience.

However, in social systems there are many contexts in which it is beneficial for people to cooperate with each other. And there are instances where it may be harmful to the self-interests of peacebuilding agents if they fail to take into account how achieving their own interests is interdependent on others achieving theirs and on the system as whole making progress towards achieving its overall objectives (Ramalingam & Barnett, 2010:6). For instance, for a specific programme, like a voter registration programme, to be successful, other programmes aimed at improving livelihoods, for instance, need to be successful enough for voters to remain in the districts in which they need to be registered, as opposed to moving to cities where they cannot be registered or vote (assuming, for the sake of this example, that the electoral law requires people to be registered in the constituency where they are legally domiciled). And the system as a whole needs to be making sufficient progress for people to feel confident enough in the future to feel safe to participate in such a voter registration

progress and to see it as meaningful, in other words, that investing time and effort into the process would have a reasonable chance of success and would improve their lives.

In some contexts, it may thus be beneficial for the overall functioning of the system to make agents aware of their interdependence on others and of their role in and contribution to the larger system. Robert Axelrod (1984 & 2006) studied cooperation, using game theory, and he proposes various ways in which cooperation among agents can be encouraged. One way is to 'enlarge the shadow of the future', i.e. making the future cost of not cooperating in the present more apparent. Another is to change the reward system, i.e. reversing the pay-offs by creating incentives for long-term cooperation and disincentives for going it alone. Some of these options for manipulating cooperation will be discussed again in Chapter 8 when we discuss influencing complex systems.

Social systems are held together by asymmetrical relationships of power, and therefore the solutions to social challenges – such as those posed by a system emerging out of conflict – do not lie in a potential harmonious or symmetrical space where power is balanced evenly (Cilliers, 1998:120). The hope that such spaces can be created is false (*ibid.*). It is not possible for all the agents in the peacebuilding system to have one common understanding of the challenges faced or how best to address them. Each agent's understanding is framed by his or her own history, perspective, interests, needs and goals.

Closely related is the insight from Complexity that dissent, competition for resources, and the tension between different approaches and policy choices are not only normal, but necessary in order to ensure the optimal functioning of a complex system. As discussed earlier in this chapter, for evolutionary adaptation to take place we need variation and selection. An approach to coherence that reduces variety is harmful to the ability of a complex system to cope with Complexity, but the kind of coherence that helps to share information about selection, i.e. that modulates feedback and learning, facilitates adaptation.

Rihani (2002:81) states that average complexity increases in complex systems, and the highest complexity stands to gain the most. The implication is that the kind of coherence that encourages and supports the development of higher levels of Complexity is desirable, whilst those that do not are not. In other words, those systems that can accommodate a higher degree of diversity and can invest in a greater degree of robustness and resilience, should be better

off than those that can accommodate less. Such a statement obviously would need to be qualified because it is likely that there will be a certain threshold where an even greater investment in resilience does not yield any further benefits, and if one were to simply increase diversity without taking any other considerations into account, one would ultimately end up with a chaotic or random system. One should thus take a range of cost-benefit and other functional considerations into account, but the core point is that pursuing the kind of coherence that modulates a diverse range of feedback, and thus organisational learning facilitates adaptation.

On the other hand, coherence that seeks equilibrium and reduces complexity is not desirable in a highly dynamic and nonlinear environment. When this kind of coherence results in a suppression of dissenting views and reduces the variation in the system, the overall effectiveness of the system – its ability to identify and adapt to changes in the environment – will decrease.

When the pressure to cohere develops into a culture of agreement, it leads to groupthink or a herd mentality, e.g. decision-making cultures where disagreement is discouraged and where conformity is rewarded. This results in a closed positive feedback loop, where the participating agents convince each other that they are on the right track. In fact, in such circumstances the group is closing themselves off from feedback, and they are thus dumbing down and limiting their own ability to learn and adapt, i.e. they are self-inhibiting the collective intelligence of the group.

Such a group would be poorly attuned to changes elsewhere in the system and the environment; they would be slow to adapt and would thus be likely to become more and more isolated from the rest of the system. When this kind of herd mentality exists among a particularly influential subsystem or among the core members of a particular peacebuilding system, it is likely to negatively affect the whole system as well as the peacebuilding process, with negative consequences for the society emerging out of conflict. These insights will have important implications for how the relationships among peacebuilding agents are managed and for how coordination and coherence are valued, and thus for the design of our internal management and coordination structures and processes and external interface mechanisms and tools.

Another perspective on this negative dimension of coherence is to think of it as a system that is so tightly connected that it almost becomes a closed system. Such a closed system has at least two negative characteristics. The first was touched on in the previous paragraph, namely that without sufficient variety, and thus negative feedback, the group is likely to be trapped into a groupthink or herd-mentality mode. Rihani (2002:83) and Taleb (2010:316) both express concern about this kind of overzealous coherence and explain that when systems shed variety, they become fit for just one set of conditions. "Studies have repeatedly shown that excessive connectivity often leads to *Complexity catastrophe,* at which point progress grinds to a halt due to repeated local failures" (Rihani, 2002:83). Unchecked or overzealous coherence can thus lead to a system shedding variety, and this implies that it becomes more and more specialised in one specific approach or one specific environment. If that environment changes, which is bound to happen sooner or later in complex systems, the system will be slow or unable to adapt.

For instance, the NATO military alliance's strength lies in the fact that the various members of NATO have invested considerable time over the years to standardise procedures and equipment, and this means that the various member nations are able to be highly interoperable with each other. The negative aspect of this standardisation has been the loss of variety that has, for instance in Afghanistan, resulted in the NATO forces being unable to adapt fast enough to local conditions. The NATO herd mentality meant that all its elements needed to have a common understanding of the situation they were facing, and this meant a common enemy and a common narrative to make sense of the enemy's motivation. NATO needed to simplify it all down to one problem, a Taliban insurgency, with one solution, a counter-insurgency (COIN) operation. The result was that the various member nations of NATO were so closely connected to the collective narrative about the phenomenon they were facing that they were unable to make sense of the local behaviour of the various communities and groups they were encountering on a daily basis. Everything they experienced was influenced by the common narrative of the group, even if that meant ignoring the feedback generated by their own local observations and experiences at times. This kind of highly connected group think thus tends to impose such a strong common narrative on its elements that they are unable to make sense of the local variations of, or discrepancies with, the common narrative. The group tends to become only interested in observations that reinforce the common narrative. New information that does not fit the narrative, or that challenges it, is likely to be ignored.

The second negative characteristic of overzealous coherence is that too little variety implies a vulnerability to contagious events. If the system is very closely connected, that same connectedness can result in the system being vulnerable to negative contagious events. Just as we tend to view coherence as inherently positive, a systems approach also tends to view connectedness as inherently positive. However, as Rihani (2002) and Taleb (2010) point out, this is not necessarily the case. Another characteristic of system resilience and robustness thus is the ability of a system to withstand and survive negative contagious events.

An important insight from Complexity thus is that achieving an ideal type of coherence, as defined in Chapter 1, is not achievable, nor desirable in a complex context. In Chapter 1, coherence is defined as the effort to ensure that the political, security and development dimensions of a peacebuilding system in a particular crisis are directed towards a common objective. In this chapter, however, the argument is that it is not possible to establish one meta-narrative that can accommodate all the different perspectives that the different peacebuilding agents bring to the table. Nor is it desirable, because there is virtue in maintaining some level of diversity, robustness and resilience when coping with complex systems.

This does not mean that pursuing some degree of coherence does not have value. On the contrary, pursuing coherence does have value to the degree that it stimulates the discourse among narratives and facilitates self-organisation. However, it is important to recognise the limits of coherence, and it is important to recognise that pursuing overzealous or ideal type coherence can have perverse effects.

A more realistic understanding of coherence in the peacebuilding context would thus be one where coherence is understood as an aspiration towards a degree of interdependency or self-organisation that is optimal for the given context. In some contexts more coherence may be appropriate, in others less, thus there is a scale or range of possible states of coherence that is context specific (De Coning & Friis, 2011). For instance, and as discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, section 4.4, in a peacebuilding context that is still highly volatile and where violent conflict is still occurring, such as in Darfur or the eastern DRC, less coherence may be likely and indeed desirable, whilst in other peacebuilding contexts where violent conflict has come to an end and where the risk of relapse is low, such as in Liberia, more coherence may be likely and desirable. In highly volatile situations, peacebuilding agents want to retain a greater

degree of independence so that they can adapt their behaviour rapidly without the transaction costs associated with first having to get the agreement of a large number of other agents. In less volatile situations, agents can rely more on cooperation because the cost and risk of cooperation is lower and the benefits derived out of burden sharing, coordination and accrual are higher than the benefits of independent action.

Coherence is thus not necessarily a good in and of itself, and more coherence is not always better. There is a tipping point where more coherence does not result in improved system performance. In fact, beyond such a tipping point the system may start losing variety, resilience and robustness, and overzealous coherence may result in perverse effects, ultimately affecting the overall performance of the system negatively.

Interrelatedness should also not be confused with sameness. The fact that we recognise that the peacebuilding agents are interconnected does not imply that all the peacebuilding agents involved have the same objectives, mandates, principles and values. Nor does it follow from having interrelated problems that it is necessary to have one common understanding, common objective and common response. Interconnected problems call for interconnected responses, not necessarily for one common response. This implies that the different agents, and subsystems, need to interact with each other and inform and educate each other about their respective understanding of the situation, as well as their respective theories of change, plans and actions. They should not do so under pressure to conform to one commonly agreed-upon approach, but they should be encouraged to engage with each other and to exchange information with each other, so that each of them can act on the best possible knowledge of how the other agents in the system view the situation and how they intend to act.

Higher levels of information flow among agents should lead to more optimal co-evolutionary adaptation and self-organisation in the system. In this sense, coherence is about facilitating the interdependencies and thus self-organisation of the system. It is important, however, to also recognise that Complexity values the role of dissent, competition for resources, and the tension between different approaches and policy choices. It sees these tensions not only as normal, but as necessary to ensure the optimal functioning of the system.

Based on these insights from Complexity for peacebuilding, coherence could be redefined as a process aimed at achieving an optimal level of self-organisation among interdependent

agents in a given context. Coherence, in this context, can be understood as a process whereby agents engage each other with a view to understanding each other and the environment better. The degree of coherence in a given context can be enhanced by facilitating the exchange of information and modulating feedback among the agents so that the decisions that the various agents take independently are better informed and can thus contribute to more effective system-level adaptation and self-organisation. In this new definition, coherence is aimed at pursuing the most effective and efficient level of self-organisation, taking into account the nature of the participating agents and the environmental context, including the pace at which the system is likely to have to cope with, and adapt to, change.

The definition requires an understanding that an optimal solution implies the need to take the specific context into account and that what is thus regarded as optimal will differ from context to context. Each context is also subject to change and an optimal state is thus never a final, ideal state, but rather the outcome of the totality of transactions among agents up to that point in time, given that the system remains dynamic and nonlinear. 'Optimal' does not refer to a preconceived or determined-design idea of what is ideal given an imagined future context. 'Optimal' refers to an emergent property, generated by the system's interactions and influenced by its environment. It cannot be known in advance, but it can be encouraged, facilitated and pursued by modulating the exchange of information among the agents, with a view to trying to ensure that as many of the agents as possible have access to information about what is happening in the environment and elsewhere in the system itself.

7.7   CONCLUSION

The relevance of Complexity to the peacebuilding context has been considered in this chapter and the prevalent 'deterministic-design' approach to peacebuilding was contrasted with a 'complex systems' approach. The 'deterministic-design' concept was used to refer to the basic theory of change most widely used and applied by the peacebuilding policy and practitioner communities, namely one in which the policy makers and practitioners are confident in:

(i)   Their ability to analyse and identify 'the problem' that they have to address;

(ii)   Their ability to design an intervention in response, i.e. 'the solution' that will solve this problem; and

(iii)   Their ability to implement remedial programmes which administer these solutions.

In contrast, a complex-systems approach is based on an understanding of complex systems in which change processes are evolutionary in nature, i.e. the system adapts to its environment and its own emergent behaviour through a continuous process of adaptation regulated by its own self-organising processes.

In the context of peacebuilding systems problem solving, stabilisation, time, pace and positioning, and coherence were considered. With regard to problem solving it was found that when something is complex it cannot have one definitive 'solution' and there should thus not be an attempt to 'solve' it with reductionist design methodologies aimed at identifying and applying such solutions. In contrast, a complex-systems approach adopts an evolutionary model that experiments with multiple parallel interventions that generate variation and then selects and further refines those interventions that work better than the others in a continuous iterative process.

With regard to stabilisation, it was found that that there is a difference between thinking of change and conflict as abnormal problems that need to be stabilised so that the system can return to its ideal steady state and thinking about change as something normal and optimal and that this difference has important implications for how we think about influencing and interfering in peacebuilding systems.

With regard to time, pace and positioning, it was found that it is important to factor in the time it takes for social change to emerge and that the pace of change needs to be matched with a society's capacity to absorb it. International agents have a critically important role to play, but they need to position themselves in such a way that they do not harm or delay the internal system's self-organising processes.

A complex-systems approach thus requires a radical repositioning of our understanding of peacebuilding as something that needs to be essentially local – it is something a society has to do for itself. The role of the external actors may be necessary to provide an initial safe and secure environment and to act as a catalyst by stimulating and facilitating the processes necessary for social regeneration, but it is not sufficient to achieve self-sustainable peace consolidation. The essential ingredient is local, emergent, self-organised complexity; the

society needs to develop its own capacity to manage itself without lapsing into violent conflict.

With regard to coherence, what was found was that there seems to be a tension between the stated objectives of the coherence imperative on the one hand and the role that diversity plays in complex systems on the other, and this inherent tension may explain why the coherence dilemma has proven to be such a persistent feature of the peacebuilding experience. It was argued that it is not possible to establish one meta-narrative that can accommodate all the different perspectives that the different peacebuilding agents bring to the table. Nor is it desirable, because there is virtue in maintaining some level of diversity, robustness and resilience when coping with complex systems.

Based on these insights from Complexity for peacebuilding, coherence should be redefined as a process aimed at achieving an optimal level of self-organisation among interdependent agents in a given context. The definition should include an understanding that 'optimal' here implies the need to take the specific context into account and that what is thus regarded as optimal will differ from context to context. 'Optimal' does not refer to a preconceived or a determined-design idea of what is ideal given an imagined future context. Optimal refers to an emergent property, generated by the system's interactions and influenced by its environment. It cannot be known in advance, but coherence can be encouraged, facilitated and pursued by modulating the exchange of information among the agents.

In the next chapter the question to be addressed concerns whether it is possible to manipulate or direct complex systems. This is an important question for peacebuilding because it seems to be an underlying assumption that the international or external system has the agency to intervene and direct a local or internal system. However, as discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, Complexity seems to suggest that the capacity to intervene in complex systems is much more limited than assumed in the peacebuilding policy community.

PART III: GUIDELINES FOR COMPLEX PEACEBUILDING

CHAPTER 8

INFLUENCING COMPLEX SYSTEMS

All interventions are intrinsically unpredictable, chaotic, and uncertain and will rapidly confound well-laid plans and careful predictions. The uncertainty in intervention is much more profound than the uncertainty in domestic policy. (Stewart & Knaus, 2011:xx)

An explicit, reflexive awareness of the incompleteness of our understanding is therefore vital so that decisions are taken with a large degree of caution (and humility) while at the same time demanding that we think through the possible ramifications. A big part of the challenge for the international community is to accept that what eventuates may not approximate the Western liberal democratic model. (Hughes, 2012:116)

Interventions are necessarily linked to the notion of 'intention' since their shared motivating perspective is a desire to bring about change or solve a 'problem'. The notion of intention presupposes that social entities can be steered, guided, managed and corrected…indeed, interference by 'outsiders' in the affairs of 'insiders' is emerging as a structural characteristic of today's international system. (Gelot & Söderbaum, 2011:75-76)

8.1   INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of this study is to explore the utility of using Complexity to gain insights into the coherence dilemma in peacebuilding systems. Peacebuilding and coherence were introduced in Part I and the factors that constrain coherence were discussed. In Part II, Complexity was introduced; it was established that peacebuilding is complex, and some of the implications of Complexity for peacebuilding were considered. In the process, insights were gained about how self-sustainable peace consolidation can potentially be influenced by facilitating and encouraging local self-organisation and by mitigating the perverse effects of external interference in local social change processes. In Part III, guidelines for complex peacebuilding will be generated. In this chapter, the discussion will focus on influencing complex systems. Recommendations for coping with complex peacebuilding systems will be presented in Chapter 9.

In the preceding chapters, peacebuilding was presented as a system that can be understood as an instrument used by the international community to stabilise and assist a country emerging out of conflict to rejoin the international system. In this context, peacebuilding is framed as a tool used by the international community to influence a specific society emerging out of

conflict to adopt a pattern of behaviour desired by the international system. In the short term, the tool is intended to assist the society in preventing a relapse into violent conflict. In the medium to longer term it is meant to support the society on its path to recovery as it develops the systems and subsystems necessary to regulate itself, internally as well as in relation to the regional and international systems within which it is embedded. In this sense, the peacebuilding tool is intended to facilitate the normalisation of a country's position in the international community as a member in good standing, at peace with itself and its neighbours. Peacebuilding thus is seen as a tool for influencing a society to adopt norms and behaviour compatible with the international rules and standards, as agreed among the member states and institutions that make up the international community.

The prominent verb in this description is 'influence', and in this context peacebuilding is framed as an activity that is essentially about one system – the international community – interfering with another – the local society – with the purpose of trying to influence it to behave within certain parameters. Two qualifications need to be added: The first relates to the fuzziness of borders and boundaries in complex systems, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, and what is understood here as the 'international community' and the 'local society' thus need to be understood very loosely. We have already discussed, for instance, how the government of South Sudan is both a member of the international community as well as part of the local society. The second relates to our understanding of peacebuilding as inclusive of all agents that pursue the common peace consolidation objective, regardless of whether they are external or internal agents. Thus when this study broadly refers to the influence of the international community on the local society, the reader needs to take these nuances into account, but understand that the study is simplifying for the sake of drawing attention to those aspects related to one system attempting to interfere with another. The insights that can be gained from Complexity when it comes to this act of 'interfering' with complex systems are considered in this chapter. Twelve leverage points for intervening in complex systems as conceptualised by Donella Meadows (1999 & 2008), in particular, will be discussed and considered.

The purpose of this chapter on influencing complex systems is to improve our understanding of how one complex system can influence another in the peacebuilding context. What is known about how systems respond under pressure from other systems? And what are the

implications of understanding peacebuilding as one system trying to influence or manipulate the behaviour of another?

8.2   INFLUENCING COMPLEX SYSTEMS

In Chapter 2, peacebuilding was described as a concerted effort by a group of international and local actors to consolidate a peace process. The argument concerned a general theory of change in peacebuilding that holds that it is possible for the international community to consolidate a peace process by assisting the parties in the conflict through facilitating conflict resolution, supporting national reconciliation and nation building, and by undertaking state-building activities in support of establishing rule of law, good governance and democracy. This theory of change is built on the assumption that it is possible for one system – broadly referred to here for our purposes as 'the international' – to influence or manipulate another system – 'the local'. What is considered in this chapter is whether it is indeed possible for one complex system to influence another and, if so, how this process works.

A useful metaphor to remind ourselves of the differences between manipulating a complicated versus complex systems has been suggested by Plsek (Chapman, 2002:40), who compares throwing a stone with throwing a live bird:

> The trajectory of a stone can be calculated quite precisely using the laws of mechanics, and it is possible to ensure that the stone reaches a specific destination. However, it is not possible to predict the outcome of throwing the live bird in the same way, even though the same laws of physics ultimately govern the bird's motion through the air. (Plsek quoted in Chapman, 2002:40)

As Plsek points out, "one approach is to tie the bird's wings, weight it with a rock and then throw it. This will make the trajectory (nearly) as predictable as that of the stone, but in the process the capability of the bird is completely destroyed" (Chapman, 2002:40). Plsek argues that "this is more or less what policy makers try to do when using a linear approach, based on a mechanical model, to try to control the behaviour of a complex system for which they are devising policy" (*ibid.*).

The insight that can be gained from Plsek's bird-throwing metaphor is that if there is a desire to influence a complex system, interventions that take account of the properties of the system would have to be designed. For instance, in the bird metaphor Plsek points out "that a more

successful strategy for getting the bird to a desired end-point might be to place food at the destination" (*ibid.*).

Plsek's bird example emphasises the differences between influencing complicated and complex systems. Others, such as Byrne (1998:16), question whether it is at all possible to influence a highly dynamic and nonlinear complex system. Paul Cilliers (2001:145) makes the point that Complexity can help us to improve our understanding of complex systems in general, but it cannot help us to predict or control the behaviour of a particular complex system. In the context of an economic system, Cilliers (1998:90) argues that, although the interactions of a large number of factors (e.g. money supply, growth rate, employment, and so forth) is too complex to allow for the design of a deterministic model, some degree of intervention is possible (e.g. adjustment of interest rates, stimulus packages, regulation, and so forth). Cilliers (*ibid.*) makes the point, however, that the effects of these interventions will only be predictable in the short term since the spontaneous adjustment and self-organisation of the system involves the complex interaction of many factors, most of which fall outside the scope of the intervention and cannot be controlled at all.

Cloete (2004:15) argues that a complexity-science approach shifts our focus from the control of behaviour in order to achieve a specific outcome, to the facilitation and encouragement of dynamic and non-linear system processes that modulate self-organisation to achieve desired objectives. Traditional policymaking is ineffective in complex systems because control and prediction are impossible to achieve (*ibid.*). In other words, if with 'influence' we mean control the outcome of the behaviour of a complex system, then the short answer from a Complexity perspective is that it is not possible for one complex system to influence another.

However, if with 'influence' we mean to stimulate changes in the behaviour of a complex system, and if we accept that it is not possible to control the outcome of such interference, the short answer is that it is possible for one complex system to influence another. However, as the behaviour of a complex system can only be stimulated, not controlled—. Maintaining the behaviour of a system within certain parameters (in the peacebuilding context such parameters could be identified as indicators that are indicative of a high risk of relapse into violent conflict) cannot be achieved with a once-off intervention. Trying to influence a system with the aim of maintaining it within certain parameters will have to be a continuous process of interference, where the intervention takes the form of a series of relatively short-term

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corrective stimuli, where each successive stimulus provides positive or negative feedback on the way the local system has responded to the previous stimuli.

A useful metaphor for this kind of influence is the kind of corrective adjustments a steersman continuously has to make to the direction of a ship. The ship is continuously influenced by the wind and currents, and the steersman, in order to follow a general course, has to continuously make adjustments to the rudder to keep the ship on course. For the steersman it is a process that stops when the ship docks at its destination, but for a society it is a never-ending process.

The first insight gained from Complexity for influencing societies in the peacebuilding context is thus that, whilst an external intervention may be able to influence a local social system, this should not be confused with controlling the system. A complex system regulates itself through its own processes of self-organisation. If an external intervention were to reach a point where it is able to control the local system, the local system would no longer be self-sustainable. It would become dependent on and, in effect, a subsystem of the external system. In such a case, the intervention would radically alter the local systems' character. A recent example would be the occupation of Iraq. However, if the aim of the intervention is to generate self-sustainable peace consolidation, then the intervening agency needs to accept that it cannot control the outcome or behaviour of the local system; it can merely try to influence it to behave in certain ways.

Sergey Samoilenko (2008:41) suggests that one way in which one may be able to influence complex systems is by modulating the relations between the agents of the system. He argues that the "complexity of the process of organizational transformation can be controlled by means of altering the internal parameters of the system". What he is suggesting, building on the concept of fitness landscapes (Kauffman, 1993 & 1995), is that by manipulating the distance and connections, whether social and/or geographic, among actors, one should be able to influence their "interdependencies" (Samoilenko, 2008:43).

Samoilenko's argument implies that we may be able to influence the behaviour among conflicting parties by making sure the agents are better informed of each other's interests and motivations for acting in a particular way. It may be possible to influence the capacity of a society emerging out of conflict to cope with future tensions by improving the connections among different interest groups in the society, for instance by ensuring that there are multiple

and robust mechanisms that exist in the society that can detect tensions, manage disputes before they may lead to violent conflict, facilitate dialogue, and absorb and resolve such tensions peacefully. In the peacebuilding context, this can be attempted by stimulating the development of a range of governmental institutions, as well as through encouraging the development of civil society organisations.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Robert Axelrod's (2006) work on game theory[36] suggests that there are various ways in which cooperation among agents can be encouraged. Both Samoilenko and Axelrod thus suggest that one way of influencing the behaviour of a complex social system is to modulate the interdependencies among the agents in the system by influencing the flow of information among the agents, so as to strengthen the connections among them and, in so doing, improve the ability of the system to self-organise, or self-coordinate. This brings the discussion to the leverage points that Meadows has developed for influencing complex systems.

Donella Meadows (1999 & 2008) has specifically studied influencing complex systems, and she is particularly interested in the leverage points that can be used to influence complex systems. Meadows (1999:4) understands influencing a system as moving it from a perceived current state to a future goal state. She has a term for the difference between the current state and the goal state, namely 'the discrepancy'. She perceives a system as containing stock, with inflows and outflows, and at any given time, based on the amount of stock in the system, one can consider the system to be in a certain 'state'. The 'state of the system' thus refers to any standing stock of importance. Meadows gives examples of stock such as the amount of water in a dam or the amount of money in a bank, but in the peacebuilding context, it is suggested to think of stock in terms of information. For this discussion on the leverage points for influencing complex systems in particular, it is suggested that the degree of confidence that a given community has in a peace process should be understood as the standing stock that Meadows refers to.

The *World Development Report 2011* stresses the role that restoring confidence plays in breaking the cycles of violence (World Bank, 2011). The Report argues that "Confidence-

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[36] Game Theory refers to en extensive body of literature (see Poundstone, 1992; Axelrod, 1984, 1997 & 2006) on which strategies will generate the best results in situations where persons or organisations are confronted with having a choice between cooperation and competition, in order to pursue a given interest.

building…is a prelude to more permanent institutional change . . . because low trust means that stakeholders who need to contribute political, financial, or technical support will not collaborate until they believe that a positive outcome is possible" (World Bank, 2011:12). When people believe a positive outcome is possible, it results in them taking individual actions, such as returning home, planting crops, sending their children to school, starting a business, and so forth. Such decisions have a positive feedback loop effect that generates confidence in others, and as more and more people view the future positively and act on that perception, the cumulative effect is to encourage and bolster the peace process itself. If enough people have confidence in the peace process, one may reach a tipping point where, bar some kind of major set-back, the confidence may become a self-fulfilling attitude that fuels the positive momentum of the peace process. One can thus think in terms of more or less confidence, and there is thus an understandable interest in influencing the levels of confidence in any given peace process. That is why it is suggested that the level of confidence in a peace process in a given society be used as the 'standing stock' when discussing the relevance of Meadows' leverage points for peacebuilding systems.

Meadows argues that what she terms 'inflows' increase the stock and 'outflows' decrease it. In our example, certain events, for instance, the release of political prisoners, rivals coming to an agreement, or a speech by a prominent politician can increase a community's hope that a peace process will be successful and thus increase the confidence stock. Other acts, for instance, increasingly negative or insulting rhetoric among politicians and an increase in lawlessness or a prominent murder that is rumoured to be politically motivated, would decrease the community's trust in the ability of the peace process to succeed and thus reduce the confidence stock. Meadows (1999:4) argues that there are basic laws of conservation and accumulation that govern the amount of stock in a system. If the inflow rate is higher than the outflow rate, the amount of stock will increase. If the rate of the flow is fairly small and the standing stock is large, the system will be sluggish to respond. Meadows gives the example of a small amount of water flowing into a big stock of water, and she uses it to explain why "policy changes take time to accumulate their effects" (*ibid.*).

She does not, however, take account of the fact that in nonlinear systems, as seen in Chapter 5, some flows or events have the asymmetrical potential to trigger large reactions in the system. For instance, in our peacebuilding example, a sense that there is a steady increase in politically motivated murders may slowly increase a community's concern for the future

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stability of the system, but the murder of a single prominent politician could result in a major loss of confidence in the future stability of the system in a very short time. Because of the nonlinear nature of Complexity, the reverse can also occur; a major event or announcement intended to have a high impact on the confidence levels in the community may turn out to have no or little impact.

However, in reality, such high-impact events are rare, and her basic point helps us to understand why most normal policy interventions take time to have an effect or only have a small or short-term effect. The concept of a standing stock and the impact that inflows or outflows may have on the standing stock also helps one to develop an understanding of the proportional relationship between a given intervention and the size of the standing stock on which such an intervention is meant to have an influence. Similarly, it can help one to consider the complexity that derives from multiple simultaneous inflows and outflows and how that would complicate determining the effect of any one of those interventions on the standing stock, or of the complex task of somehow coordinating those multiple inflows and outflows with a view to achieving a desired future goal state.

The kind of inflow-outflow model that Meadows (1999:4) suggests is manipulated by two negative feedback, or correcting, processes, the one controlling the inflow and the other the outflow. If you want to increase the stock, you increase the inflow and/or decrease the outflow. If you have too much stock you increase the outflow and/or decrease the inflow. Meadows (*ibid.*) points out that neither the goal of the system, nor the feedback connections are necessarily visible or obvious to an external observer. The complexity derives from the fact that each of these systems is connected to many others and the number of causal effects is so many, and so interconnected, that it is not possible to track what causes, or controls, a particular flow. There is not one single inflow or outflow mechanism with which we can control the confidence of the society in a given peace process.

It was mentioned earlier that one high-profile political murder can, for instance, have an asymmetrical affect on a peace process. Imagine being in South Africa on 10 April 1993 and being Nelson Mandela or FW de Klerk and hearing that Chris Hani had been murdered.[37]

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[37] Chris Hani was a prominent member of the African National Congress (ANC). He led the South African Communist Party and headed the armed wing of the ANC. His murder came at a highly sensitive time in the South African transition, and it brought the country to the brink of disaster. It was an attempt by right-wing

Imagine all the potential different directions in which the South African peace process could have gone at that point. And imagine that, despite that tragedy, you had to design an intervention aimed at maintaining the society's confidence in the peace process. What steps could be taken to prevent large-scale violence breaking out, and what could be done to keep the peace process on track? How could the outflow of trust in the peace process be contained, and how could the inflow of hope be increased?

Chris Hani's assassination is an interesting example of how one group of right-wing plotters tried to radically influence the South African conflict system, how the system reacted in part as they intended (positive feedback), and how the intervention by Mandela and others managed to check the system (negative feedback), and to then direct it instead to increase the intensity of the peace process (positive feedback). The first democratic elections in South Africa took place just over a year later on 27 April 1994. This particular example will be discussed again because the outcome of the South African peace process is fairly well known, and it can thus serve as a useful example to illustrate Meadows' leverage points, as well as our consideration of them. For now, the attention is on Meadows' (1999) twelve leverage points. These twelve points (Meadows, 1999:3), in order of increasing effectiveness, are:

12.   Constants, parameters, numbers,

11.   The sizes of buffers and other stabilizing stocks, relative to flows,

10.   The structure of material stocks and flows,

9.   The lengths of delays, relative to the rate of system change,

8.   The strength of negative feedback loops, relative to the impacts they are trying to correct against,

7.   The gain around driving positive feedback loops,

6.   The structure of information flows,

5.   The rules of the system,

4.   The power to add, change, evolve, or self-organise system structure,

3.   The goals of the system,

2.   The mindset or paradigm out of which the system – its goals, structure, rules, delays, parameters – arises; and

1.   The power to transcend paradigms.

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politicians to derail the process leading to the end of apartheid. Nelson Mandela made an impassioned call for calm during a national television broadcast. His message emphasised reconciliation and the rule of law, and his plea, together with similar views expressed by many other South African leaders at all levels of society, managed to contain the unrest and violence that followed in the wake of Hani's assassination.

Although she does not suggest a specific model for using the twelve leverage points other than differentiating between the degrees to which each influences a system, the implication is that these twelve leverage points should be pursued, more or less simultaneously. As this twelve-leverage-point approach may be a useful way to think of influencing complex systems in the peacebuilding context, each of the twelve leverage points suggested by Meadows are introduced next, describing each in her terms, and then attempting to contextualise them in a peacebuilding setting.

8.3   CONSTANTS, PARAMETERS AND NUMBERS

Meadows (1999:5) understands parameters and numbers as indicators of discrepancy. They tell us about the state of a system, for instance the size of the population, the number of unemployed, the crime rate, and so forth. Some of these numbers may be physically locked in and are unchangeable, but most are popular intervention points. We tend to focus on things such as the crime rate, the number of people that are unemployed, and the rate of economic growth. This is because these parameters offer quantifiable indicators for tracking and managing change. Meadows (6) argues, however, that these are the points of least leverage. She says it is like re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Although most of our attention is focused on parameters, there is not much leverage in them (*ibid.*). That does not mean they are not important. She argues that they can be important and that people do care deeply enough about them to become engaged in fierce battles about parameters. However, merely changing a specific parameter rarely changes the behaviour of the system.

What she means is that spending more on policing, for example, does not address the socioeconomic reasons why some people engage in crime. The increased spending may, or may not, actually be linked to a reduction in the crime rate, but mostly it is an affirmation to ourselves that we are doing something about the problem, i.e. in this example, a government can show that it is responding to rising crime by spending more on the police, i.e. the government can show a positive change in a parameter.[38]   A parameter on its own does not have much leverage, and intervening in a system in order to influence a parameter, is not likely to have much effect on the system itself. However, parameters can be useful in tracking

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[38] In this example the parameter is the amount spent on policing, for instance, an increase or decrease in the annual budget.

leverage points when they reflect changes related to the leverage points lower down on her list (Meadows,1999:6).

This is an important insight, especially because the results-based management approach has received a lot of attention in the peacebuilding and development field, and this has resulted in a lot of focus on developing and tracking indicators of progress. There is a danger that when indicators of progress are pre-determined, people will tend to design activities aimed at hitting the targets, instead of pursuing the goals and interventions of the programmes, and this is likely to cause all kinds of side-effects and distortions in the system. The net effect is likely to be a loss of system effectiveness (De Coning & Romita, 2009).

8.4   BUFFERS AND OTHER STABILISING STOCKS

A buffer is the ability of a standing stock to stabilise a system. For instance, when the amount of stock is much bigger that the amount of inflows and outflows, the standing stock acts as a buffer against the change caused by the flows. "You can stabilize a system by increasing the capacity of a buffer" (Meadows, 1999:7). There is leverage in changing the size of buffers, but buffers are not easy to change. Big buffers make systems inflexible and can be costly to maintain.

In the peacebuilding context, a buffer can be something as intangible as confidence. It can be argued that, in the example of the Chris Hani assassination, and despite all the uncertainty and instability, the vast majority of people in the South African community were at that point confident and hopeful enough to persevere with the peace process, i.e. their expectations and wish for a better future sufficiently outweighed their pessimism and fears, and this acted as a sufficient buffer against the potentially devastating negative effects of the assassination; it therefore only took a certain amount of reassurance for the system to overcome that challenge. That being said, it would also have taken only a few more similar events to have eroded that confidence, but the point is that, in this case, the size of the buffer prevented the system from lapsing into violent conflict on a scale that would have resulted in the breakdown of the peace processes. Many other peace processes would have lapsed into violent conflict under similar pressure, because they do not have such buffers or standing stock of goodwill or hope.

Meadows does not mention the negative effects of buffers on systems change, although it is implied, but in peacebuilding systems there are often many buffers that complicate and slow down the system's ability to change. Examples include high numbers of people that are unskilled, illiterate and uneducated, which implies that it will take generations to improve the overall education rate of affected communities. Societies in transition are typically faced with population growth, mixed with low economic growth and, thus, a high and increasing number of people unemployed, especially the youth. The size of a country's population is a slow-changing buffer, and it is extremely difficult to have an effect on such buffers in the short term. It may thus be important to focus on ways to cope with the effect of such buffers, as any interventions aimed at the buffer itself will require time to have an effect. The concept of buffers and their effects when contemplating system change is thus a useful concept to bear in mind, both in terms of their positive and their negative effects. It should also serve as an additional insight that cautions those that think rapid change is possible.

8.5   THE STRUCTURE OF MATERIAL STOCKS AND FLOWS

The structure of a system – and its stocks and flows – has a major effect on how the system functions. Structure is an important consideration for understanding how systems operate, but it is not a good leverage point because changing structure is time consuming, costly and difficult. Meadows (1999:8) states that "the leverage point is in proper design in the first place. After the structure is built, the leverage is in understanding its limitations and bottlenecks and refraining from fluctuations or expansions that strain its capacity."

Meadows is thinking here about physical structure systems designed by humans, such as road networks or water drainage systems (1999:8). In the peacebuilding context, several relevant examples illustrate her point. Population structure and flows are important system structures to contend with. A useful example of a structure in the peacebuilding context is a constitution. Many peace processes require changes in existing constitutions, or the drafting of new ones. Meadows' point is that it is difficult, and politically costly, to change a constitution once it has been adopted. The best point at which to influence a constitution is when it is drafted.

Another example, unique in many ways to the peacebuilding context, is the way the international peacebuilding community in general, and the UN in particular, are structured. The most obvious example perhaps is the composition of the UN Security Council. Another

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could be the way UN peacekeeping is funded by the assessed contribution budget whilst Special Political Mission is funded by the regular budget and voluntary contributions. As Meadows points out, trying to change this kind of structure and flow dynamics is extremely difficult, costly and usually highly contested and resisted, especially by those that are benefiting from the existing arrangement. The leverage lies in understanding these structures and working with and around them, avoiding, as she points out, the bottlenecks or strains on capacity that the existing structure of the stocks, and their flows, may cause. In the peacebuilding context, a relevant example can be understanding how to use the peacekeeping budget to achieve peacebuilding effects, and how to ensure that the transition from assessed to voluntary funding does not result in gaps in peacebuilding programming. Coping with Complexity in this context is thus about understanding the structural constraints of a given situation and working with and around them.

8.6 DELAYS AND THE RATE OF SYSTEM CHANGES

Meadows (1999:8) argues that "a delay in a feedback process is critical relative to rates of change in the system state that the feedback loop is trying to control." She explains that, if you are trying to influence a system towards your goal but the information you receive about the state of the system is delayed, you will tend to over- or under-adjust the corrections. Influencing a complex peacebuilding system is like steering a huge oil tanker that is slow to respond to the rudder. One has to learn to make small changes and to plan any changes in direction far in advance, because any sudden movements will be slow to register, will eventually have a large effect, and will be equally slow to correct.

Meadows (1999:9) explains that she would have listed delay lengths as a high leverage point, but she did not because the reason for delays is often structural and thus difficult to change. She argues that "things take as long as they take" and gives the example of the time it takes for a child to mature or the growth rate of a forest (*ibid.*). She argues that it is easier to slow down a change rate than to speed up a process, and slowing down a process, e.g. economic growth, may help "so that the inevitable feedback delays won't cause so much trouble" (*ibid.*). This point is an important check on models that call for speeding up the rate of adjustment in the system. Any system will have limitations as to how fast it can change its structures and stocks in the face of change, and this is especially true for social systems. The argument in Chapter 7, and elsewhere, is that social systems need time to process change, and

a model that anticipates the system to adjust faster than is possible will cause feedback delays that could cause collapse.

Meadows (1999:9) points out that if there is a delay in the system that can be changed, changing it can have big effects. She gives the example of the push for further reducing information and money transfer delays in financial markets, and warns that it is likely to result in wild gyrations because the system will react automatically to changes faster than traders or regulators can make sense of their impacts. In general, she seems to favour trying to slow down change processes, rather than speeding them up, so that the system has time to 'think', i.e. to process feedback and absorb the effects of the changes that have been occurring. This is an important point for coping with Complexity that we will return to later in this chapter.

System delays also imply that when we identify a certain phenomenon and decide to intervene, the cause of that phenomenon is likely to still have a delayed effect for a time, and we should thus not be too hasty in dismissing the effectiveness of our intervention. For instance, when a thermostat detects that a room has reached its desired heat and switches off the heating element, the heating process is likely to have been at its peak, and the system will continue to distribute the warmth already generated before the heating element was switched off. The temperature of the room will thus continue to increase and will overshoot the temperature at which the thermostat intervened. A more sophisticated type of feedback system will start to reduce the rate of increase as the temperature starts to approach the target.

The effects of feedback delays are critical in several aspects of peacebuilding systems. The most strategic effect relates to the overall theory of change driving most peacebuilding systems. Most state-building interventions attempt to engineer radical changes in the structure and composition of the state's institutions over a three- to five-year period. It is possible to change the vision, mission and structure of an institution in a relatively short period of time, but it takes much longer to change the attitude, educational profile, and organisational culture of the staff. It takes even longer for the relationship between the institution and the society within which it is meant to be embedded, to adapt to such changes (World Bank, 2011:13).

The speed within which it is possible to change organisational structures far outpaces the time it takes for a society to adjust to these new structures, including the time it takes to develop

the managerial and other skill sets necessary to run these institutions. These differences cause important feedback delays and, as a result, these kinds of state-building interventions often contribute to the very weak governance, corruption and state failure that they were intended to prevent and redress. For instance, a country in transition may develop, with the assistance of external peacebuilders, a relatively sophisticated public finance management system. However, due to brain drain and poor education before and during the conflict, the relevant ministry may be unable to hire people with the necessary financial management education and experience to staff key positions; it may take several years before developments in the education system result in an adequate supply of people with the necessary educational qualifications. In the meantime, the newly-designed public finance management system will require a high level of international support, perhaps via consultants, to maintain, and the overall result thus is increased dependency and delayed self-sustainability. The same kind of feedback delays and negative side effects can be identified at all levels in the system where the pace of change outstrips the ability of the community to absorb and adjust to these changes. As Meadows points out, the best way to manage these situations is to slow down the pace of change, so as to avoid or limit the side effects that will be caused by the feedback delays.

This kind of delay factor is also an important consideration when it comes to the withdrawal of an intervention. An unsophisticated, thermostat-type intervention will maintain the intervention, perhaps even increase it, right up to the moment a certain benchmark is reached and then withdraw it. A more sophisticated intervention would slowly reduce the intensity of the intervention in relation to, for instance, anticipated increases in the capacity of the local system.

An important consideration in the context of self-sustainability is that a system cannot be expected to be self-organised and externally controlled at the same time. Those waiting for the system to self-organise before the removal of the external controls are thus in it for a long haul. The external controls need to be removed, and one needs to allow for delayed effects before a system will be able to develop the full ability to self-organise. The more intense the intervention, the longer it will take for the system to wean itself of its dependency, and the more one can anticipate delayed impacts.

This list of twelve leverage points is being presented in increasing order of effectiveness. The first four leverage points have dealt with the physical attributes of the system, such as structures, stocks and flows. As seen, these physical aspects are difficult to influence, and costly and slow to change. The next few leverage points deal with the movement of information in a system, and these processes provide more opportunities for leverage (Meadows, 1999:9).

8.7   NEGATIVE FEEDBACK LOOPS

Negative feedback loops slow down a process and are used to correct system behaviour, so that a system state can be kept within certain parameters, e.g. to promote stability. They occur naturally in all physical, chemical, biological and social systems and humans design them in engineering and organisational systems for the same purpose (Meadows, 1999:9). The classical example is the thermostat loop. It is designed to keep room temperature at a desired level (goal). The thermostat contains a monitoring device to keep track of the temperature in the room, as well as a signalling device so that it can communicate corrective instructions to the heating source (*ibid.*).

A complex system will have many negative feedback loops that serve to self-correct many aspects of the system's behaviour. Most are not visible or obvious, and some only come into effect when certain critical thresholds are at risk, but the role of all these negative feedback loops is critical to the robustness and fitness of the system (Meadows, 1999:9). Meadows (10) argues that the strength of a negative feedback loop, namely "its ability to keep its appointed stock at or near its goal", depends on the combination of many parameters and links, and these are all potential leverage points. They include the "accuracy and rapidity of monitoring, the quickness and power of response, [and] the directness and size of corrective flows" (*ibid.*). She points out that "the strength of a negative feedback loop is important relative to the impact it is designed to correct" (9). If the size or scope of the impact increases, the feedback loop would have to be adjusted as well.

Negative feedback loops, of course, are very important for peacebuilding systems as well. They relate to all the sanctions that exist in the conflict system to keep it from lapsing into violent conflict, as well as all the sanctions that the peacebuilding system, in addition, brings to bear on the conflict system with the same purpose. Most conspicuous is the peacekeeping

force that is typically part of the stabilisation and transition phases of a peacebuilding system and that provides the system with the capacity to sanction any physical security threats. In most cases, the mere presence of the force is enough to dissuade those that may otherwise have considered violent means of achieving their objectives.

In addition, there is a whole range of more subtle negative feedback processes at play. The agents in the peacebuilding system are continuously in communication with their counterparts in the conflict system, and they have numerous ways of signalling and communicating negative feedback, when deemed necessary. In some cases these are in the form of sanctions, such as withholding benefits, but mostly it comes in the form of corrective advice. For instance, a UN police advisor who acts as a mentor and adviser to a local counterpart will, in many different ways, influence and guide the behaviour of the local police officer, but is only likely to report the behaviour, and recommend disciplinary actions, of the local police officer to superior officers in exceptional cases.

8.8   POSITIVE FEEDBACK LOOPS

Meadows (1999:11) says that a negative feedback loop is self-correcting, whilst a positive feedback loop is self-reinforcing. A positive feedback loop speeds up a process by encouraging it to repeat the same behaviour. "Positive feedback loops are sources of growth, explosion, erosion, and collapse in systems. A system with an unchecked positive loop ultimately will destroy itself" (*ibid.*). That is why systems also have negative feedback processes, and both negative and positive feedback processes are thus used to maintain the system state near or at its goal. Meadows (*ibid.*) argues that, in most cases, it is preferable to slow down a positive loop rather than speeding up a negative one, because "slowing them gives the many negative loops . . . all of which have limits and delays – time to function." For example, it is advisable to drive slower, and thus have more time to react in an emergency. In other words, it is advisable for peacebuilding interventions to unfold more slowly so that the society is better able to absorb and integrate all the programmes and activities that it is experiencing, and has time to develop the norms and institutions it needs to manage its own change processes sustainably.

In the peacebuilding context, positive feedback is used in our theory of change to encourage desired behaviour. It usually comes in the form of incentives and rewards, for instance,

incentives may be offered to a displaced community if they return home, or rewards are offer to a combatant if a Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme is successfully completed. Many examples of the negative effects positive feedback loops can have are also seen, for instance when hate speech and violence spirals out of control. Hate speech can become part of a positive feedback loop when it encourages others to also engage in hate speech, i.e. the breaking of one taboo results in more people feeling emboldened to also break the taboo until a tipping point is reached and it is no longer a taboo. Outbreaks of violence often spiral out of control in this way. One act results in a counter act and soon communities arm themselves in defence, and because they anticipate violent attacks, they are likely to react to a much wider series of stimuli with violence than they would under normal circumstances.

Whilst both positive and negative feedback loops are thus present and extensively used in peacebuilding systems, they, surprisingly, are not considered actively in the design of plans and programmes as conscious leverage points. It is hoped that this study may make practitioners more aware of the way in which they are using, or relying, on feedback effects in their interventions, and that a more conscious and thus considered approach will result in a more sensitive application of feedback loops.

8.9   THE STRUCTURE OF INFORMATION FLOWS

The structure of information flows determines who does, and does not, have access to certain information. This structure can be changed so that the flow of information can change. Changing the structure of information flows is easier and cheaper than changing the structure of organisations. Meadows (1999:13) argues that missing feedback is the most common cause for system malfunction. By adding new loops, i.e. delivering information to a place where it was not going before, and therefore causing the system to behave differently, the system can be helped to function more effectively.

Sergey Samoilenko (2008:41), who suggested that one way in which it may be possible to influence complex systems is by modulating the relations between the agents of the system, was introduced earlier. He suggested that this can be done by manipulating the flow of information among the agents. Axelrod (2006) has also been introduced; he suggested making agents aware of the future costs of not cooperating or of the potential benefits they may lose if

they choose not to cooperate. Meadows, Samoilenko and Axelrod thus all consider influencing the way information flows in a system as a critical leverage point in complex systems.

Meadows (1999:13) suggests that self-organisation can be facilitated by increasing the flow of information among certain agents. This is also what Cloete (2004:15) referred to when he said that process is more important than mechanisms, and the flow of information is more important that operating procedures. However, Meadows presents the flow of information as a kind of structure, and this is of help in thinking about how that structure can be manipulated.

In the peacebuilding context, the flow of information, for instance the dissemination of an important new strategy or policy, can be influenced in a number of ways, including by increasing the overall number of connections, increasing the amount or volume of the information flow and directing the information. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, peacebuilding agents tend to operate independently, because they are evaluated and rewarded for their independent action. However, those who have an interest in pursuing a system-wide or holistic peacebuilding effect, for instance a UN Special Representative or a Resident Coordinator, can use various coordination mechanisms to make these agents more aware of their interdependencies.

Coordination is a way of making sure independent agents are made aware of what others are doing and of overall whole-of-system progress, so that they become more aware of their own position and their own contributions and role in the larger peacebuilding system. Coordination can range from exchanging information to actively taking decisions together about division of tasks, joint actions, joint planning, etc. As discussed in Chapter 3 and 4, the context determines what type of coordination may be appropriate in a given situation, and too much coordination can have perverse effects. The point being made here is that coordination, understood broadly to incorporate a wide range of options and approaches, is a tool for manipulating or stimulating the flow of information in the peacebuilding system and thus also the key to stimulating self-organisation. By making some parts of the system more aware of what is happening elsewhere, more agents would be enabled to take better-informed decisions, and we, in effect, will be modulating the feedback effect in the system, thus increasing the overall effect of the flow of information in the system.

One way in which this is done in the peacebuilding context is by facilitating the participation of otherwise independent agents in an integrated or joint action, such as joint assessments, integrated planning, joint monitoring and evaluation, and so forth. As a result of their participation in these processes, agents are exposed to more information and they achieve a higher level of understanding of how the situation is unfolding as a whole. Their perspective is broadened beyond their own concerns, and they gain insight into what others are doing, how others perceive developments in the system, and how the system as a whole is changing. By manipulating the connections among agents and by increasing the volume of information among them, independent agents are better enabled to adjust their own actions, i.e. make more informed decisions, and the overall effect, at the system-level, is more effective self-organisation.

Modulating the flow of information is not just about volume and connections but also about direction. Simply increasing the volume of information can easily result in peacebuilding agents being overwhelmed by information. Directing information – by using various coordination nodes that sort through and redirect or push information to those who can potentially make the most effective use of it – is thus another way of changing the structure of information flows in a system. A useful example is the humanitarian cluster system, where those working on certain specialised areas, such as water and sanitation or protection, group together and share information relevant to their area of specialisation.

Another, more recent, innovation is the increased use of 'communities of practice' that group together those performing similar tasks or those who work on a common theme, thus creating an information exchange platform that people can access, regardless of the context in which they are performing their function. For instance, in 2012 approximately 900 Civil Affairs officers serving in 15 different peacekeeping missions are linked together through the Civil Affairs community of practice, which is a website and e-mail group-type social network that allows the members to exchange information, ask each other questions and access documents and reports.[39] There are similar communities of practice for planning, training, etc. All of these bring together people who share a particular interest, allowing them direct contact with each other via a social-media type platform and thus creating the opportunity for a more in-

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[39] The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) facilitates several such communities of practice, for instance, apart from the one for Civil Affairs officers. There are also communities of practice for officers responsible for planning, best practices, protection of civilians, etc.

depth and specialised exchange of information than would have been possible in a broader discussion group. Specialised coordination is thus a way of directing information to those who can make the best use of it, and it also creates a concentration of expertise that helps with the processing of that information, so that once it is passed on to other more general coordination mechanisms, the information has been distilled and processed.

This study is about the lack of coherence in peacebuilding systems and how that coherence deficit can be addressed. All twelve leverage points suggested by Meadows can be used to influence peacebuilding systems, but the last three leverage points that relate to information flows specifically address the information dimension of the coherence deficit and, as such, have special relevance to this study. These insights are therefore reconsidered in the next chapter when more detail about how to cope with peacebuilding complexity is presented.

8.10   THE RULES OF THE SYSTEM

As explained earlier, the list of twelve leverage points are presented in order of increasing effectiveness. The first four leverage points (12-9) dealt with the physical aspects, and the next three leverage points (8-6) dealt with the flow of information. The last five points deal with the rules, the governing structure of a system, its goals, and the underlying worldviews that determine the overall purpose and aim of the system.

Meadows' (1999:14) advice is to pay close attention to the rules of a system. She argues that "if you want to understand the deepest malfunctions of systems, pay attention to the rules, and to who has power over them". She says that rules define the scope of the system, its constraints and degrees of freedom (13). Rules are high leverage points because the system can be changed radically by changing the rules. Power over rules is real power (14).

In the peacebuilding context, the rules that are central to the peace consolidation process are those that govern access to and control over political and economic power. In most cases, the inequalities in these relations have contributed to the conflict in the first place, and those power relationships would need to change for the risk of relapse into violent conflict to be successfully addressed. This is why peacebuilding is so political. The change process is meant to change the existing political and economic order and to facilitate a process that results in a new order taking shape. This means that those who are benefiting from the current

system may lose some of the privileges they have enjoyed under the old system and, even if they are likely to gain others, they are likely to resist change and some may try to undermine the process.

Peacebuilding is thus essentially about changing the rules of the conflict system. This obviously is a very delicate process. One can distinguish between different layers of rules. There are surface level rules, i.e. those that are the most apparent and symbolic, and thus often also very emotive, and by changing these one can give the most obvious impression that change is taking place. There are also tacit or underlying rules, and these are often more difficult to identify and change because there typically are powerful vested interests that resist change at this level. In the South African case, for example, it was possible to give all people equal political rights with the adoption of a new constitution in 1996, but the underlying economic inequalities will take several generations to be addressed. There is tension between those who believe that it is in the best interest of long-term peace consolidation to speed up and bring about the necessary changes in the short to medium term, and those who believe that it is in the best interest of the system to bring those changes about in the medium to long term. This kind of tension exists in all systems that are undergoing change, and they have to be addressed on a case-by-case basis, taking the specific context into account. The overall point is thus to emphasise the potential impact that can be achieved by focusing on the rules of the system to bring about change, but also to point out how sensitive changing these rules can be and the negative side effects that such changes can bring about.

Rapid change at these levels requires a radical restructuring of the rules of the system. Whilst revolutions do bring about rapid change, they also bring about decades of uncertainty, volatility and, often, violence, and most societies thus seem to prefer more gradual change. Forcing through change at too fast a pace is widely seen as undesirable, because of the extent of the disruption and change that it may bring about. Rules, especially underlying rules, evolve slowly and cumulatively as a result of the socio-cultural evolution of a society. Too much external interference implies the foreign imposition of new rules and is likely to result in the society resisting such interference. Too little interference may result in no or only artificial changes taking place. Finding the right balance is therefore critical, if the aim is self-sustainability. This also explains why some elements of a peace process can make relatively rapid progress whilst others may take generations to change. The art of peacebuilding lies in being able to make these distinctions and in being able to make judgements about the level

and pace of change that a conflict system can handle without risking a relapse into violent conflict.

It is also important to consider the implications of these insights in the context of self-sustainable and self-organising systems. True self-sustainability comes from a process in a society that has ownership of the rules because it has generated those rules as a result of its own history. The degree to which the rules are perceived to be foreign or imposed may thus have an effect on the degree to which the system is self-sustainable. It takes time for a society to develop its own rules, as it will require several iterations of experimentation, feedback and adaptation for such rules to gain legitimacy and credibility in the culture of a given society. Such processes can be modulated and intensified, but at the end of the day they do require the passage of time.

Some rule-generating processes that have taken hundreds of years to unfold in the West may generate similar results in the peacebuilding context over several decades, but what is common to all these types of processes is that they require several generations or iterations for them to become integrated bottom-up processes. Peacebuilding, thus, essentially is a process whereby these rule-generating activities are facilitated and modulated with a view to shortening the overall period necessary for them to unfold naturally. Thus there is scope in peacebuilding systems to both stimulate the rule-generating process and to influence specific rules, but at the end of the day the self-sustainability of the rules process will depend on the degree to which the rules that are generated are perceived to be credibly and legitimately self-generated. Too rapid a process will fail to generate the sense that the rule-generating activities are home grown. To slow a process may cause such a build-up of frustrations that it may lead to a relapse into violent conflict. Change thus has to be fast enough to create a sense of hope for a better future, but slow enough to ensure that the society is able to absorb, re-interpret, evolve, and integrate the change into its own social fabric so that it generates new rules that are home grown and thus have the legitimacy and credibility that only local owned processes can generate.

Peacebuilding is itself also governed by a loose set of rules that determines what the international community regards as legitimate or appropriate peacebuilding actions. Some have a high degree of commonality and can be regarded as the core rules and others are contested and can be thought of as peripheral. Those on the periphery are not unimportant, but

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they are not widely agreed upon. Examples of peacebuilding rules currently being contested are the principle of 'responsibility to protect' and the notion of neo-liberal peacebuilding, as discussed in Chapter 2. Both are seen by the Global South as too interventionist and as potential or actual Trojan horses for neo-imperialism by the North. The North, on the other hand, protests that both are needed to ensure greater global stability and prosperity. The North sees both as being in the long-term interest of humankind and regard opposition to both as acts of self-preservation by those currently in power, without any regard for the wellbeing of the people they govern. The South sees both as hypocritical, capitalist-expansionist programmes masked in high ethics, but with the ultimate aim of Western cultural and economic domination in the interest of the North.

What is clear from these differences is that the rules that govern how we undertake peacebuilding have major implications for the systems that are targeted and are themselves indicative of the major paradigms that are being contested in the international arena. This dissertation engages in the discourse on changing the rules of the peacebuilding systems and argues for a significant restructuring of the focus of peacebuilding as a whole. It argues for shifting the aims of peacebuilding from being something that the international community does to assist local societies, to a new approach that is essentially local. It argues for a re-centring of the locus and agency of peacebuilding from the international to the local – and for a shift from the essential act of peacebuilding being in the design, to one where peacebuilding is understood as emergent from the local.

8.11   SELF-ORGANISATION

Meadows (1999:14) sees in self-organisation the possibility of changing any of the lower leverage points on her list, i.e. the power to change the rules, the flows of information, to add feedback loops, to change the rate of system change, and so forth. The ability to self-organise thus is the strongest form of system resilience (15).

Meadows does not explain how self-organisation is a leverage point for system change, but one can assume that she means that self-organisation is, in and of itself, a change agent of a higher order than those discussed earlier. Although she does not say so herself, at least not as part of her own discussion on self-organisation as a leverage point, some, if not all, of the leverage points discussed earlier can be used to stimulate and influence self-organisation.

This is an extremely important point for this discussion on peacebuilding systems because it implies that stimulating the ability of the society to self-organise will be a more effective leverage point than any of the lower-order leverage points introduced earlier. Emergent self-organisation implies local ownership and context-relevant organisation, and the degree of self-organisation is thus, in itself, an indication of the robustness and fitness of the new emerging system and its ability to sustain itself (Kauffman, 1995:208).

The more the external peacebuilding system intervenes, the less the conflict system will be able to self-organise. The internal-external relationship thus requires a careful balancing act. The external peacebuilding system needs to decrease and withdraw its influence on the conflict system so that, in its later stages, it acts only as an emergency thermostat that kicks in when certain outer parameters or thresholds are crossed, for instance a relapse into violent conflict. Eventually, even those outer thresholds need to be managed by the new system itself.

The same, of course, is also true for peacebuilding-system coherence, namely that stimulating the ability of the peacebuilding system to self-organise will generate more effective system coherence than any of the other forms of leverage discussed earlier. This is because, when the system is managing itself, that process of self-organisation will be the result of the interaction of all the elements of that society, and the emergent self-organising behaviour of the system will reflect the inherent capacities of the system. It will rely on and make use of the internal robustness and resilience that exists in the society to manage both internal tensions, as well as any crises that may come about as a result of the system's interaction with its environment.

More effective system coherence, in this context, does not necessarily imply quantity, but rather an increase in appropriate effectiveness. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, more coherence is not a good in and of itself. The level of coherence needs to be appropriate to the situation, and self-organisation is the most effective process for generating the appropriate level of coherence. The level of coherence that can be sustained by the system itself will be the optimal or appropriate level of coherence in that given context.

8.12   SYSTEM GOALS

Meadows (1999:16) states that the goals of the system is a leverage point that is even more influential than the self-organising ability of a system. Every leverage point lower down on the list will conform to the system's goals. For example, negative feedback loops have a goal, namely to maintain a system state at a certain level or within certain parameters, but the higher-order system goal will provide the reason for the negative feedback loop to maintain that part of the system within those parameters – the higher system goals are served by the negative feedback loop.

Whole-of-system goals are usually not obvious but can be deduced from what the system as a whole does, and these are typically goals such as survival, expansion, growth, maintaining and increasing power and evolution (Meadows, 1999:16). Many, if not most, agents in a system are not aware of the whole-of-system goal(s) because they are driven by lower-order goals. The concept of the goal of a system as a leverage point is very useful in the peacebuilding coherence context because, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, most peacebuilding agents are not aware of the fact that they are part of a larger system or of their role in and contributions to the larger peacebuilding system. Whilst it is not a prerequisite that actors understand their role in the system, it may, in some cases, stimulate self-organisation. In would be helpful if some of the peacebuilding agents understood that by working together they are contributing to achieving larger whole-of-system goals. And that working together with others towards the whole-of-system goals also help them to achieve their own individual goals. This will make them more aware of the need to coordinate some aspects of the overall sequencing of developments, for instance to invest in capacity building first and to delay some initiatives until more capacity is in place, and make them more willing to slow down some of their own ambitions to allow other parts of the system to develop sufficiently, to avoid the kind of perverse side effects that can develop if, for instance, the security sector is developed at a pace that undermines civilian oversight.

As discussed earlier, Robert Axelrod (2006) has suggested that one of the ways in which cooperation among agents can be encouraged is to 'enlarge the shadow of the future', i.e. to make agents aware of the possible outcomes of their decisions to cooperate or not. In the peacebuilding context, this may imply making agents aware of how the achievement of their specific programme goals are dependent on developments elsewhere in the system and how

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cooperating with others may increase the likelihood that those developments will take place, thus also enabling the environment that will make it possible for their specific goals to be achieved. Increasing the number of agents that share this insight, i.e. the awareness of their interdependence and thus the larger common peacebuilding goal that they share, is the key to enhancing appropriate coherence in a complex-system context.

It also follows that one of the key leverage points for peacebuilding systems when attempting to influence conflict systems is to assist the agents in the conflict system to articulate their own whole-of-system goals and to increase the number of agents in the system that adopt the whole-of-system goal as their own, i.e. to increase the number of agents that have an interest in achieving the whole-of-system system goal, to grow the core, and to absorb more and more of the periphery into the core.

In the local or conflict system context this means increasing the number of agents that realise that an overall successful peace process is a better means of achieving their individual goals than pursuing those goals through violent conflict or confrontational tribal, ethnic or factional rivalry. For most individuals and groups emerging out of conflict, this is a significant shift in thinking. During the conflict, their security and social wellbeing were most probably served by allegiance to their tribe or ethnic group, and they are now being asked to re-align themselves with a larger, perhaps more abstract, national identity, political process and social contract. The degree to which the peace process manages to convince people to make this shift will determine the sustainability of the process. The insight that Meadows contributes is that focusing on the system goal, in this context, is more effective than any of the preceding leverage points in achieving this objective.

8.13   SYSTEM PARADIGM

Meadows (1999:17) explains that the shared ideas in the mindset of a society, its unstated assumptions, constitute that society's paradigm or deepest set of beliefs about how the world works. To illustrate the point, she gives the following example:

> It doesn't matter how the tax law of a country is written. There is a shared idea in the minds of the society about what a 'fair' distribution of the tax load is. Whatever the rules say, by fair means or foul, by complications, cheating, exemptions or deductions, by constant sniping at the rules, actual tax payments will push right up against the accepted idea of 'fairness'. (Meadows, 1999:17)

Meadows (1999:17) says that paradigms are the sources of social systems. "From them, from shared social agreements about the nature of reality, come system goals and information flows, feedbacks, stocks, flows and everything else about systems" (*ibid.*). If you manage to intervene in a system at the level of paradigm, you are using a leverage point that has the power to totally transform a system (*ibid.*).

However, Meadows cautions that paradigms are harder to change than anything else about a system. Societies resist challenges to their paradigm more than they resist anything else (Meadows, 1999:17). To show how paradigm change can be approached, Meadows (*ibid.*) refers to the advice of Thomas Kuhn (1962), who argues that in order to replace an old paradigm with a new one you have to keep pointing out the anomalies and failures of the old paradigm. You have to give assurances from the new paradigm, and you have to insert people representing the new paradigm in places of public visibility and power. Instead of wasting time on reactionaries, you work with active change agents and with the vast middle-ground of people that are open-minded (*ibid.*).

When it comes to paradigms as leverage points in the peacebuilding context, two things are worth emphasising at this point: The first is that there typically is a big difference between the paradigm informing the peacebuilding system and the paradigm informing the conflict system. Whilst this tension will always be present and needs to be carefully managed, it can, at times, become the main source of tension, and in these cases it tends to undermine the whole peacebuilding effort. In Iraq and Afghanistan there has been a number of interventions in the early 21st century, especially in the wake of the pivotal so-called 9/11 terrorist attack on the United States, which illustrate this point. In both of these cases the presence of large numbers of American and Western soldiers, and the way in which these interventions were managed, resulted in these interventions being strongly identified with Western cultural and social imperialism. In other words, in both these cases, the contrast between the paradigms represented by the external intervention and the local society became so prominent that it totally dominated the intervention. All attempts to influence the societies with the aim of building local institutions and fostering local capacity were interpreted and perceived as attempts to impose and embed Western cultural and social values on those societies and thus rejected. In both these cases the interventions themselves, and the history that generated these interventions, became so problematic that they became a major, if not the primary, cause of continued instability and thus a major peace consolidation risk in and of themselves.

The second point is that, whilst interventions that aim to save lives, alleviate suffering and stabilise security are generally welcome, those that aim to change a local paradigm are usually resisted. As Meadows points out, societies tend to defend their own paradigm vigorously and, as the discussion in Chapter 2 on the differences between the way in which the Global South and North view peacebuilding illustrates, peacebuilding systems lose their international legitimacy when they are perceived to be a Trojan horse for replacing the local paradigm with the international/Western, neo-liberal paradigm. Both these points have important implications for the coherence dilemma in international peacebuilding systems.

It follows that peacebuilding interventions that are perceived to be attempting to change the core values and norms of a society are likely to be fiercely resisted. Those transformations that are the most likely to succeed and to be self-sustainable are those that are perceived to have been self-generated. Peacebuilding interventions that stimulate change processes that result in self-generated change are thus more likely to become self-sustainable than those that attempt to directly influence and manipulate change and that try to control the outcome.

Another way to look at the importance of paradigm shifts in the peacebuilding context is to note that peace processes that have failed to change the paradigm of a society emerging out of conflict, for instance when a peace agreement among the parties has merely resulted in elite accommodation, are likely to be unsustainable. A number of 'governments of national unity'-type agreements can be cited as examples, for instance in the cases of Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Zimbabwe. In other words, in these agreements, the needs of the competing elites may have been temporarily accommodated, but, as the underlying paradigm that caused the conflict in the first place has not been sufficiently addressed, those conflicts are likely to relapse into violent conflict.

Influencing the paradigm itself is thus potentially the most lasting approach but also requires the most subtle approach. The external intervention should be limited to setting the process in motion, after which it has to be an indigenous and self-organising change process. However, some aspects of the original design may well have a lasting impact. The starting point of any intervention is critical, and planting the right seeds may result in the system adopting some of the characteristics intended. What is important from a sustainability perspective is that those seeds develop in such a way that the system perceives them to be home grown, as opposed to

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being imposed from the outside. The outcome cannot be predicted or controlled, and attempts to control or inappropriately influence the process are likely to have perverse effects.

The point is not that the way to influence the paradigm of a society emerging out of conflict is to plant certain values or norms as seeds, although this what is being attempted in the neo-liberal approach to peacebuilding. The point is rather that peacebuilding should facilitate processes of change that stimulate the widest possible social participation, and that such processes should be encouraged and nurtured so that self-organisation can emerge. When it does, a new social paradigm may evolve that has the potential to transform the society and result in the society achieving the robustness and resilience that will enable it to manage its own disputes and tensions peacefully. Self-organisation is encouraged by facilitating processes in which agents become aware of their interdependency on one another. Such processes need to evolve over several generations or iterations, and the common identities, norms and values that emerge as a result need to adapt and refine until a new culture, or a shared worldview, has emerged in the process, and when that has happened the conflict-paradigm of the society would have been transformed.

8.14 TRANSCENDING PARADIGMS

The final leverage point is the power to transcend paradigms, which derives from the understanding that there are paradigms (Meadows, 1999:18). Meadows says one has the power

> to keep oneself unattached in the arena of paradigms, to stay flexible, to realize that no paradigm is 'true', that every one, including the one that shapes your own worldview, is a tremendously limited understanding of an immense and amazing universe that is far beyond human comprehension. (18)

In the peacebuilding context, this insight is linked to the ability to understand that the international peacebuilding system is informed by a certain paradigm, as is the conflict system, and to see the differences and tensions between the two in that context. Those favouring the neo-liberal peacebuilding model, for instance, would argue that for the local system to achieve sustainable peace, it would need to adopt the neo-liberal paradigm (multi-party democracy, free market economy and individual freedoms). Therefore, the international paradigm should inform and shape the local paradigm, in the same way that the missionaries

and colonisers of the past argued that they have an obligation to bring 'civilization' to the 'savages'.

Those favouring a local peacebuilding model would argue that for peace to be sustainable, the local system has to find its own home-grown solutions that are appropriate to its own context and that the role of international interventions is to restore order and save lives, but not to try to change local paradigms. This study sees a fusion between these paradigms as inevitable, but with the specifics wide open for application on a case-by-case basis. In other words, and as will be elaborated further in the next section, this dissertation presents the argument that, whilst local ownership is critical to self-sustainable peacebuilding and needs to become much more central to the overall process than is currently practiced, this does not imply that international support is not also a critically important aspect of the change process. Both are necessary, and the art of peacebuilding lies in finding the appropriate balance in every given context.

The point has been made that for peace consolidation to be sustainable societies need to develop their own self-organised capacities to manage their own peace process. However, in many cases, societies that have collapsed into violent conflict need external assistance to regain stability, and they can benefit from the facilitated change management services that external peacebuilders can offer. Appropriate peacebuilding can help to modulate the change processes and can assist in these processes taking less time, and being less violent or costly in other ways, than may be the case if there were to be no external peacebuilding facilitation.

However, the word 'appropriate' is key here. As seen, many peacebuilding processes have had perverse effects and have served to slow-down or otherwise undermine, rather than facilitate, sustainable peace. It is posited that 'appropriate' essentially refers to finding the right balance between manipulation and facilitation. Manipulation refers to intervening in the system to impose a desired outcome, for instance using force to prevent an outbreak of violent conflict. Facilitation refers to encouraging the system to go in a certain direction, for instance by stimulating a change process service, but stopping short of actually trying to determine the outcome of the process. In other words, allowing or trusting the process to generate its own optimal, context-specific outcome.

8.15   CONCLUSION

Ways and means of influencing complex systems were discussed in this chapter. In the first section of the chapter, the focus has been on influencing complex systems. Peacebuilding was framed as an activity that is essentially about one system trying to influence another, and insights that might be gained from Complexity when it comes to interfering with or manipulating complex systems were considered. The conclusion was reached that one of the ways in which the behaviour of complex social systems can be influenced is by modulating the interdependencies among the agents in the system. This can be achieved by manipulating the flow of information among the agents with the aim of strengthening the interconnections among them, and in so doing improving the ability of the system to self-organise.

Twelve leverage points that Meadows suggests can be used to influence a complex system were discussed. As her contribution showed, it is possible to influence a complex system at all levels from the most conceptual (paradigms and system goals) to the most material (structure and flow of stocks). The most effective peacebuilding interventions will make use of all possible levels of influence simultaneously. Meadows also helped us to understand that focussing on higher order leverages, such as rules, goals and paradigms, has a much higher impact value.

On the basis of the insights gained from applying Complexity to peacebuilding, and further informed by the discussion of the twelve leverage points for influencing complex systems suggested by Meadows, this dissertation argues for a significant shift in the peacebuilding paradigm away from it being seen as something that the international community does to assist local societies in transition to a new approach that frames peacebuilding as something that is essentially local. This would include a shift from the essential act of peacebuilding being in the design to one where peacebuilding is understood as emergent from the local. Peacebuilding interventions that stimulate change processes that result in self-generated change are thereby more likely to become self-sustainable than those that attempt to directly influence and manipulate change, and that try to control the outcome.

In the next chapter, the dissertation is focused on using these findings to generate a set of recommendations for coping with peacebuilding Complexity.

CHAPTER 9

COPING WITH COMPLEXITY

Rather than searching for better policy or commissioning more detailed forms of analysis, the real task is reforming the institutions and networks of global governance to address complexity . . . Reform would require turning rule-based bureaucracies into adaptive, learning and networked organisations. (Duffield, 2001:264-265)

Compromised peacebuilding, if done right, might be the best of all possible worlds. (Paris & Sisk, 2009:49)

The high-failure rate (of peacebuilding) strongly supports the basic intuition that we do not know what we are doing – and one of the critical elements of any argument for autonomy is that people tend to know themselves, better than others how they ought best to live their lives. (Feldman, 2004:69)

9.1   INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is interested in exploring the utility of Complexity for gaining insights into the coherence dilemma in peacebuilding systems. In Part I, peacebuilding and coherence were introduced. Complexity was introduced in Part II and some of its implications for peacebuilding were considered. Part III concerns generating guidelines for managing complex peacebuilding. In the previous chapter, the discussion involved influencing complex systems and in this chapter, the focus is on generating recommendations for coping with complex peacebuilding systems.

A complex systems approach is essentially a critical approach, one that checks the self-confidence and inherent hubris of the determined-design approach to peacebuilding and that encourages self-doubt, caution and humility. A complex systems approach is also an ethical approach that reminds the policy maker and practitioner of the ethical implications of their actions and the fact that they are responsible for the effects and impacts of their acts and omissions.

The fifteen recommendations for coping with complexity generated by this dissertation will be discussed under the following headings:

(1) integrating an awareness of our limitations in understanding complex systems,

(2) accepting the Complexity of peacebuilding;

(3) the primacy of the agency of the local society;

(4) self-organisation as the principal vehicle for self-sustainable peacebuilding;

(5) the link between peace consolidation and self-sustainability;

(6) the evolutionary experimentation approach;

(7) framing peacebuilding as process facilitation;

(8) moving from preoccupation with stability to embracing change;

(9) on being sensitive to the ambiguity of borders and boundaries;

(10) accepting that social change processes take time;

(11) matching the pace of delivery with the rate of absorption;

(12) robustness and resilience;

(13) prioritisation and comprehensiveness;

(14) on the assumption that all systems are complex; and

(15) optimal levels of coherence.

These fifteen recommendations are closely interconnected. They are mutually reinforcing and together represent a comprehensive complex systems approach to peacebuilding. No claim is made in this dissertation that by following these recommendations one is guaranteed to generate a more effective and efficient peacebuilding intervention. This set of recommendations does not constitute a model that can be replicated in any context. The recommendations serve as a summary and categorisation of the insights gained through this study by applying the general characteristics of Complexity to peacebuilding in general, and the coherence dilemma in particular. As such, they suggest what a complex-systems approach to peacebuilding would consist of and are offered as a general guideline for coping with peacebuilding Complexity.

9.2   INTEGRATING AN AWARENESS OF OUR LIMITS IN UNDERSTANDING COMPLEX SYSTEMS

In Chapters 5, 6 and 7 the discussion was centred on why our ability to gain knowledge of the complex social systems we deal with in the peacebuilding context is inherently limited. In Chapter 5 it was argued that complex social systems are dynamic and nonlinear, and this implies that we cannot predict or control the future behaviour of a society on the basis of a general law or on what we know about how this system, or others, behaved in the past. Accepting and recognising that our ability to understand complex social systems with the use

of a rule-based approach is limited, is the foundation of a complex systems approach to coping with Complexity. The alternative to a deductive rule-based approach to engaging with social systems is to follow an inductive methodology of exploration and experimentation. This method consists of probing or exploring possibilities, monitoring for feedback, and continuously adjusting and expanding the current understanding of a situation on the basis of new information that becomes available as a result of the explorative probing and feedback processes this method engages in. The method should be recognised as a continuous process of discovery and experimentation that generates an emergent understanding of the system as it evolves. A complex-systems approach to knowledge generation recognises that because the larger environment and the particular social system that is our subject are changing continuously, our understanding of the social system has to continuously co-evolve with it.

This method thus does not have a start or an end, where the start represents a question or problem statement and the end represents a definitive answer or solution. A complex-systems approach would rather be interested in trying to understand the processes that generate change in the system and the interlinkages between the various elements of the system. One approach could consist of probing the subject social system using the twelve leverage points for influencing complex systems suggested by Meadows (1999) discussed in the previous chapter. Such an approach would seek to identify some of the underlying 'rules' of the system, what feedback processes are at work, and how the paradigm on which the system is based can be framed in relation to the paradigm of the observer. The complex-systems approach is thus aimed at generating the kind of knowledge that would be useful for the potential manipulation or modulation of certain effects in the system, i.e. for influencing the system.

Such an approach has to be critical and sceptical. It is necessary to be sceptical about the knowledge we think we have gained and to be critical about what others present as knowledge that has been gained on a particular social system. It is necessary to recognise that the understanding that might have been gained up to a certain point remains provisional and to remain open to continuous adjustment and refinement of our understanding as new information becomes available. It is necessary to guard against falling into the trap of arriving at a certain 'picture' or 'narrative' of the system and then judging further inputs and feedback, and accepting or rejecting them, to the extent that they match a pre-assumed picture or narrative. The dynamic, non-linear and emergent nature of complex systems imply that one

needs to remain open to the possibility of, at any point, becoming aware of new information that completely alters a previously held understanding of the system.

The first recommendation is thus that the way in which knowledge about any particular complex social system is generated needs to be based on the recognition of an inherently limited ability to fully understand complex systems.

9.3   ACCEPTING THE COMPLEXITY OF PEACEBUILDING

It was established in Chapter 6 that peacebuilding is complex in the way this concept is understood in the study of Complexity. It is not just the conflict system that we are engaging with that is complex; peacebuilding itself is also a complex system. This recognition has several important implications for the way we undertake peacebuilding. It implies that we should not expect any particular peacebuilding system to be organised as if it has been externally designed or as if it is subject to central control. There can be no one controlling agent in charge of a particular peacebuilding system. Each peacebuilding agent's perception and understanding of the larger system of which it is a part, including those with specific responsibility for coordinating the system such as a Special Representative of the UN's Secretary-General (SRSG), will be inherently limited. Even those that have responsibility for the system will, at best, be able to act as process facilitators that can attempt to modulate the flow of information between the other agents in the system, for instance by manipulating the structure of the interconnections among some of the agents. A peacebuilding system thus is a self-organised system that relies on adaptation and evolution to arrive at the optimal interaction and engagement with the local system.

Such recognition also implies that none of the peacebuilding agents can have a superior claim to understanding transitions from conflict to peace. There are no off-the-shelf solutions and no single theory of change that can work better than others in all possible contexts. Neither the neo-liberal peacebuilding doctrine, nor any other predetermined or rule-based model can claim universal relevance.

The second recommendation is that peacebuilding itself needs to be understood as complex, and that this implies that it is necessary to recognise that any particular peacebuilding system will be self-organised, and emergent. This has implications for how assessments are

undertaken and specific peacebuilding interventions are planned, coordinated, led, and evaluated.

9.4   THE PRIMACY OF THE AGENCY OF THE LOCAL SOCIETY

It was argued in Chapter 7 that local societies, who have to live with the consequences and pay the cost of any lapse into violent conflict, should have the primary agency to make decisions about their future. However, it was also pointed out that the local system is part of the international system and, as such, does not exist in isolation. The international system has agreed on certain norms and values and have an interest in seeing that a responsible government comes into being to manage the local system in such a way that it lives at peace with itself and its neighbours and that it carries out its international obligations. Whilst the international system is concerned with maintaining international peace and security to the extent that it would authorise and assume the cost of a peacebuilding intervention, it is not prepared to take on the cost of indefinitely managing the local system.

The aim of peacebuilding thus is to assist local social systems to regain the capacity to manage themselves so that the international community's peacebuilding intervention can be withdrawn as soon as it can reasonably be done without risking relapse. Peacebuilding is aimed at facilitating local ownership and its success depends on the degree to which local societies can self-sustainably manage their own peace consolidation process. Whilst these aims and assumptions are built into the peacebuilding theory of change, international peacebuilding efforts in most, if not all, current and recent cases have been undertaken at such a pace and with such a scope that they have overwhelmed the capacity of the local society to meaningfully engage with the peacebuilding intervention.

The result is that most peacebuilding interventions, for instance those recently undertaken in Burundi, Sierra Leone and Liberia, have generated institutions that mirror international expectations but lack genuine indigenous home-grown identity, norms and culture. These countries have police forces or justice ministries that could have existed anywhere. There is little that makes them uniquely suited to their context and even less that genuinely connects them to local socio-cultural values, norms and histories. This lack of local ownership undermines the ability of these societies to self-organise, and thus ultimately to become self-sustainable.

The role that external peacebuilders can play, for instance by providing security guarantees that prevent genocide, war crimes and human rights abuses, may be necessary in some cases, but it is never sufficient to generate sustainable peace. The most important dimensions of any peacebuilding effort is stimulating and facilitating the development of those local social system attributes that, taken together, allow self-organisation to emerge. Self-organisation, in this context, refers to the ability of the local social system to manage its own tensions and disputes without relapsing into violent conflict.

The third recommendation thus is that it should be recognised that the local society have the ethical right and duty to control their own future, but that their freedom to choose future paths are constrained by the international parameters set for the responsible behaviour of states in the international system.

9.5   SELF-ORGANISATION AS THE PRINCIPAL VEHICLE FOR SELF-SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING

Peacebuilding essentially is about stimulating and facilitating the capacity of societies to self-organise. Self-organisation in this context refers to the various processes and mechanisms a society makes use of to manage its own peace consolidation process, i.e. the ability to manage its own tensions, pressures, disputes, crisis and shocks without relapsing into conflict. As discussed in Chapter 7, a peaceful society is not a society without tensions, disputes and crises, but rather a society that has developed the robustness and resilience needed to manage its own conflicts without violence.

In contrast, a society that has lapsed into violent conflict or civil war is an indication that its internal conflict-management systems have been overwhelmed and that its ability to self-organise has been seriously weakened by the conflict. An outbreak of violent conflict can be understood as a symptom of a serious loss of social complexity. From this perspective, peacebuilding can be said to be about helping such a society to regain its ability to self-organise. This is a very delicate and inherently contradictory process fraught with built-in tensions. There is an inherent tension in the act of interfering in a local system when that very interference is meant to assist the local system with gaining, or regaining the ability to self-organise.

Many international peacebuilding interventions make the mistake of interfering so much that they end up undermining the ability of the local system to self-organise. This inherent tension requires a very delicate balancing act that comes down to limiting the external interference to the minimum necessary to prevent a relapse into conflict, so that the society being influenced can have the maximum space needed for its own self-organisation to emerge.

If a system is able, without external support, to manage several generations of change and the shocks and crises that such change implies on its own, it means that a sufficient degree of self-organisation has emerged for the external agents to declare that such a system has attained the capacity to be self-sustainable and to conclude that the peacebuilding intervention has come to a successful end.

The key to—some would say, the art of—successful peacebuilding thus lies in finding the appropriate balance between external security guarantees and support on the one hand, and the degree to which the local system has the freedom to develop its own self-organisation, on the other. What is appropriate has to be determined in each context specific case, and as these processes are dynamic—what is appropriate will be continuously changing.

This implies caution, sensitivity and self-awareness when it comes to managing the role and position of the international peacebuilding intervention. The success of the peacebuilding intervention will be determined by the degree to which it can limit itself to stimulating and facilitating self-organisation. External peacebuilders thus need to find the balance between stimulating the change process without harming or inhibiting it through doing more than is absolutely necessary, and in the process creating dependencies that undermine and delay the emergence of self-organisation and self-sustainability.

The purpose of the feedback processes employed by the peacebuilding system is thus not just to seek information on how the system is responding in ways intended, but also to be sensitive and self-aware to the unintended consequences and perverse effects the interference can have on the local society, and to mitigate against and limit those effects whenever they are detected.

The fourth recommendation is that the aim of peacebuilding interventions needs to be focussed on, and limited to, stimulating the capacity of local societies to self-organise.

9.6   THE LINK BETWEEN PEACE CONSOLIDATION AND SELF-SUSTAINABILITY

Peace consolidation, i.e. avoiding a (re)lapse into violent conflict, has been used throughout this dissertation as the benchmark for self-sustainable peace. However, it should not be understood as only a negative-peace indicator. Peace consolidation is not understood here as merely the absence of violence. In order for a social system to avoid lapsing into violent conflict, it has to have at its disposal a rich, robust and resilient variety of positive-peace attributes that enable it to process shocks and crises without lapsing into violent conflict.

In Chapter 8 the assassination of Chris Hani in the period leading up to South Africa's historical election in 1994 was used as an example of the kind of stresses societies emerging out of conflict have to be able to manage if they are to avoid relapsing into violent conflict. In this case, it can be argued that South Africa had the necessary positive-peace attributes to prevent it from lapsing into civil war. It had high-quality leadership shaped through years of experience; it had well-organised political parties and organisations that could exercise sufficient control over their constituencies; it had enough of an independent legal system that resulted in both the leaders and the people trusting the formal justice system to investigate and prosecute the person(s) that were arrested; it had a free press that acted as a neutral guarantor and that people trusted to uncover any conspiracies, and a national broadcasting infrastructure that enabled Nelson Mandela, although he was not the President at the time, to address the nation to call for calm. It also had sufficient security (negative peace) capacity to contain and control the limited violent conflict that did break out as a result of the assassination. Therefore enough positive-peace attributes – enough robustness and resilience in the system – were present to generate an overall negative-peace effect, i.e. the absence of widespread violence.

When a social system has developed the capacity to self-organise to the extent that it is able to manage shocks and crises without lapsing into violent conflict, it reflects that it has developed enough positive-peace capacity to be able to sustainably self-organise, even in the face of severe or radical high-impact change events.

Seen from the perspective of the total period of engagement, only a small portion of the overall peacebuilding effort should be dedicated to negative peace capacity, i.e. to physically preventing local social systems from lapsing into conflict, by initially providing external security guarantees and later by developing internal physical security capacities. The bulk of the peacebuilding system's effort should be devoted to assisting the local society with developing the positive-peace social capacities it needs to ensure sustainable self-organisation.

The focus on peace consolidation as the ultimate aim of peacebuilding should thus not be misunderstood as a focus on negative-peace, because, as has been argued here, a range of positive-peace attributes is necessary to prevent a relapse into violent conflict. A self-sustainable peace process is one that has acquired those positive-peace attributes it needs to manage its own peace process, taking into account the shocks and crises it is likely to be exposed to.

The fifth recommendation is thus that the focus on peace consolidation as a benchmark for self-sustainable peace should not be misunderstood as a prioritization of security. In order for a social system to avoid lapsing into violent conflict it has to have at its disposal a rich, robust and resilient variety of attributes that enable it to process shocks and crises without lapsing into violent conflict.

9.7   THE EVOLUTIONARY-EXPERIMENTATION APPROACH

As emphasised earlier, complex systems are not predetermined; they are emergent, and this implies that we cannot predict or control the future behaviour of the system on the basis of a general law or a set of predetermined rules about how the system functions. How, in the face of such uncertainty, is enough knowledge of the social systems being dealt with developed, so that meaningful engagement with them is possible?

A process aimed at generating knowledge of a complex system needs to be based on an approach that continuously probes, questions and adjusts the knowledge it generates, based on the feedback generated by the method. The evolutionary-experimentation approach thus makes use of feedback to generate a knowledge development process that continuously interacts with the system it is trying to comprehend. As a result, the knowledge it develops is

continuously refined and adapted. Although it is possible to generate snapshots of our understanding of the system's status at various stages, it is important to understand that the system itself is dynamic and non-linear and that our knowledge of the system therefore needs to continuously co-evolve with the system itself.

The utility of the evolutionary-experimentation approach is not limited to knowledge development; it is also an approach that can be used to inform the way programmes and activities are undertaken and managed. The peacebuilding system attempts to influence the society in question by employing a range of programmes, projects and activities that collectively and cumulatively support, stimulate and assist the society to arrive at a point where it has sustainably consolidated its peace process.

Each programme, project or activity can be designed and implemented in such a way that the overall process resembles an evolutionary-experimentation process, i.e. it should generate a variety of options; implement some of them; obtain feedback on how the system is responding to these interventions; identify those approaches that show results and those that do not; discontinue or adjust those that do not work, and replicate a variety of those that do. This process should be repeated over and over again until the purpose of a given programme has been achieved or the system as a whole has transformed to such an extent that the purpose is no longer relevant.

This evolutionary-experimentation approach is scalable at all levels – the same basic approach can be applied for individual programmes, for projects, for campaigns, for strategic frameworks, and so forth. The evolutionary-experimentation approach is an iterative process that never arrives at an optimal 'solution' because the internal system is constantly changing and adapting to both its own internal dynamics and the influences of its environment, including those of the specific peacebuilding interventions aimed at manipulating its behaviour.

The peacebuilding intervention is simultaneously under way at multiple levels and in various subsystems with the intent of generating a system-wide effect. Some programmes are highly specialised; others are meant to impact large subsystems such as the security dimension. The feedback generated by these various interventions at different levels should be shared and modulated as widely as possible throughout the system so that as broad a spectrum of

programmes as possible can act, self-adjust, and co-evolve, on the basis of the information generated in the process.

The sixth recommendation is thus that it is necessary to be sensitive to how complex systems process information, self-organise and adapt, and suggest that the evolutionary experimentation methodology can assist in purposefully co-evolving with the systems we are attempting to influence.

9.8   FRAMING PEACEBUILDING AS PROCESS FACILITATION

As discussed earlier, a complex-systems approach recognises that peacebuilding is also a complex and self-organising system. As such, it is possible to pursue processes within both the peacebuilding system and the society it is trying to influence, which seek to optimise the self-organising behaviour of these complex systems. As discussed in Chapter 8, by stimulating and modulating feedback it becomes possible to increase the quantity and quality of information available to the agents in these systems and increase their awareness of the overall behaviour or progress of the system and their role in it.

Thus the ability of the agents to take informed decisions can be influenced by manipulating the interconnections among them, and in so doing, stimulating the flow of information between them. This kind of intervention encourages the self-organisation processes in the system and increases the overall robustness and resilience of the distributed nature of the intelligence in these systems, as well as the Complexity of the systems themselves.

Note that it is not a specific outcome that is manipulated, but the process that generates outcomes. In the complex systems approach, the essential or core activity of a peacebuilding intervention is one of process facilitation. Peacebuilding is about stimulating the processes in a society that will lead to change and that will enable self-organisation. It is impossible to direct or control self-organisation from the outside. It has to emerge from within, but external peacebuilding agents can assist a society by facilitating and stimulating the processes that enable self-organisation to emerge.

The seventh recommendation is that peacebuilding should not be understood as an activity that generates a specific outcome, but as an activity that facilitates and stimulates the processes that enable local self-organisation to emerge.

9.9   MOVING FROM PRE-OCCUPATION WITH STABILITY TO EMBRACING CHANGE

In Chapter 7 we argued that the determined-design approach tend to perceive conflict as disorder and that it therefore frames peacebuilding as a tool utilised to stabilise a system, i.e. that returns it to order. In the determined-design context, peacebuilding is a tool that maintains the international system by correcting and returning the behaviour of errant states to their orderly place in a stable international system.

The determined-design approach was contrasted with the complex-systems approach that sees peacebuilding as a process working with – not against – change, i.e. it aims to work with and use the natural dynamic and non-linear processes that characterise conflict systems to stimulate feedback and facilitate the natural ability of complex systems to self-organise.

It implies modulating change, facilitating the flow of information and generating processes, both within the peacebuilding system itself and within the society that is being influenced that can self-regulate the change processes necessary to organise complex systems. In this context the complex systems approach is about helping societies to develop the resilience and robustness they need to cope with and adapt to change. Peacebuilding is about making adaptation and evolution integral to our systems. From a complex systems perspective, peacebuilding agents engage with a complex society in a process of constructive interference. The peacebuilding agents attempt to influence the behaviour of the society emerging out of conflict by limiting its ability to lapse into violent conflict, whilst at the same time attempting to stimulate it to develop the capabilities and processes such a society needs to self-organise.

The eighth recommendation is thus that peacebuilding should embrace change as normal and optimal and that it should seek to manipulate and modulate the dynamics of the change processes of the social systems it is trying to influence.

9.10   BEING SENSITIVE TO THE AMBIGUITY OF BORDERS AND BOUNDARIES

It has been suggested that the aim of peacebuilding should be to assist and support a society emerging out of conflict to regain the ability to act within the internationally agreed parameters for responsible state behaviour in the international system, i.e. to become a state that is at peace with its neighbours and itself and that respects and participates in the international system according to the norms and standards governing that system. Societies emerging out of conflict thus not only regain direct sovereignty over their own affairs, but also regain the right to help shape the international system.

A new country like South Sudan, which joined the international system for the first time in July 2011, is thus not only the subject of an international peacebuilding intervention, but it is also a party to its own intervention as a member of the United Nations. At the same time, the Government of South Sudan is also an important internal peacebuilding agent. From a complex systems perspective it is thus possible for an element or agent in the system, like the Government of South Sudan, to be both subject and object at the same time.

The point is that a complex-systems approach does not lend itself to clear and neat borders and boundaries. As discussed in Chapter 5, the framing of the system depends on the perspective of the observer. A complex systems approach thus reminds us to be cautious and critical of neat internal-external and international-local categories.

However, the concept of self-sustainability in peacebuilding theory depends on us being able to distinguish between internal and external agents, because it holds that the external and internal agents have to be identified and separated at some point, so that the external agents can withdraw and allow the internal agents, in their identity as members of the local society, to manage their own peace consolidation process.

There is thus a tension between the need to be able to distinguish between internal and external actors on the one hand, and the recognition, on the other, that the internal and external systems are deeply interconnected. Whilst it may be possible to identify some of the kind of obvious or overt external system behaviours that need to be withheld to allow the local society to self-organise on the one hand, the systems, on the other hand, are so

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interconnected as part of the globalised economy and international governance system that it may be impossible for them to be fully independent from each other. A more realistic approach would be to try to identify a kind of tipping point where the balance of power and influence shifts from mostly externally controlled and influenced to mostly internally controlled and influenced. The extent to which local societies can fully self-organise and be self-sustainable then becomes a question of degree, rather than an absolute category.

The point is that a complex-systems approach reminds us to be very cautious of the assumptions that are made about the framing of borders and boundaries. There is utility in categorisations when that process helps us to better understand the identity, roles and relationships of the various agents involved in a system, but it is also necessary to take into account the degree to which these agents are interconnected and interdependent. We should thus continuously question our own framing of borders and boundaries and be aware of how the categorisations that we impose on our understanding of complex systems may blind us to critically important interdependencies and interconnections.

The ninth recommendation is thus a reminder to be very cautious of the assumptions that are made about the framing of borders and boundaries, and that the extent to which local societies can be judged to be fully self-organised and self-sustainable in a highly globalised and interconnected world involves matter of degree, rather than absolute categories.

9.11   ACCEPTING THAT SOCIAL-CHANGE PROCESSES TAKE TIME

As discussed in Chapter 7, one of the most perverse aspects of external peacebuilding interventions often is their perception of time. Peacebuilding interventions are typically conceptualised, planned and implemented according to a timescale that is primarily influenced by external considerations (e.g. donor budget cycles) and supply-side dynamics (e.g. competition among external agents) or the election schedule of a particularly influential agent. The common wisdom is that peacebuilding should achieve as much as possible in as short a period as possible, before international attention evaporates and before local patience with the international presence runs out.

It has been argued that peacebuilding has achieved sustainability when self-organisation had been achieved and sustained over time. Self-sustainability implies that a society has prevented

itself from lapsing into violent conflict without external support over a period of time during which it had the opportunity to be exposed to various tensions, shocks and crises. In other words, a peacebuilding process needs to allow a sufficient passage of time for these processes to accumulate a meaningful history – a collective memory and experience of how its norms, values and institutions have performed under various stresses, which will inform how the society responds to future stresses it may be confronted with.

The society emerging from conflict thus needs time to develop a collective experience, to develop, test, select and adapt its own new norms and to generate its own new institutions. The World Bank's 2011 Word Development Report makes the point that "creating legitimate institutions that can prevent repeated violence is, in plain language, slow" (2011:10). And it goes on to argue that "a repeated process enables space for collaborative norms and capacities to develop, and for success to build on success in a virtuous cycle" (12). The point is that peacebuilding needs to unfold at a pace that allows self-organisation to emerge.

A complex-systems approach recognises that robust social systems that are resilient enough to cope with major political and social change, without relapsing into violent conflict, cannot develop in a few short years. Societies need time to generate, absorb, adapt and refine new social norms, and to integrate these into new institutions grounded in and interlinked with the network of indigenous systems. A complex-systems approach will therefore need a longer-term approach to stimulating change. Progress will be evaluated not on how fast change is being achieved, but on how sustainably the local society is absorbing change and the effects such change is having on the peace consolidation objective. A complex-systems approach will also be sensitive to the unintended consequences that can result from too much external pressure, and actively monitor for feedback to this effect, so that programming can be adjusted accordingly.

The tenth recommendation is thus that peacebuilding takes time, typically several decades and generations, and trying to rush or compact the process may have perverse effects.

9.12   MATCHING THE PACE OF DELIVERY WITH THE RATE OF ABSORPTION

Our perception of pace is closely related to our perceptions of time. This study has argued that the rate and volume of the influence the peacebuilding system is aiming to exert on a given society needs to be paced so that it matches the ability of that society to absorb the influence. Too much stimulation will overwhelm the local system, and the excess or surplus, the support it cannot absorb, will be wasted.

In some cases the redundant support may have perverse effects, i.e. it will stimulate black markets and corruption that can ultimately undermine the overall process. In other cases, the competition among elites to gain access and control over the surplus can become more important than the peace process itself, because it gives them the leverage to exert influence and gain support in their patrimonial systems.

The art of peacebuilding is thus closely related to the timing and pace of the influence being exerted. Too much, too fast will overwhelm the society, whilst too little, too slowly will not generate enough stimulus for change. The ability of a peacebuilding agent to judge the time and pace of its interference will depend on the degree of sensitivity that it has been able to achieve in its feedback processes. The higher the degree of feedback complexity, i.e. the degree to which the agent is able to generate and respond to feedback, the more sophisticated it will be in its ability to time and pace its influence.

The eleventh recommendation is thus that the rate of change and the level of external assistance have to be determined by the capacity of the local society to absorb change.

9.13   THE IMPORTANCE OF INVESTING IN ROBUSTNESS AND RESILIENCE

The argument has been made that it is necessary to invest in robust and resilient systems, because that improves our capacity to cope with Complexity. Our consideration of the degree of robustness and resilience that may be needed in a particular system needs to be informed by the potential of that system to change. We have argued that the potential cost associated with investing in robustness and resilience needs to be discounted against the potential costs of system failure.

However, robustness and resilience cannot be pursued as a goal free from considerations of cost. The internal system obviously needs to be able to sustainably afford the costs associated with maintaining such robust and resilience capacities. Costs depend on design. Robustness and resilience typically are associated with investing in duplicate systems. However, in complex social systems, robustness and resilience can also be achieved by distributing intelligence, information processing, decision making and related capacities throughout the society. In the peacebuilding context, the implication is thus not to concentrate capacity building in only a few select sectors, for instance in state capacities such as the security sector, but to distribute these capacities widely and deeply into the society as a whole. The more the society as a whole is engaged in making decisions about, for instance, security, the more robust and resilient the society will be.

The implications run contrary to the kind of approach favoured by the deterministic-design approach, namely to prioritise its assistance on a few key state-building sectors, typically the executive, the security sector and the criminal-justice sector. The World Bank's World Development Report (2011:41) defines institutions as "the formal and informal 'rules of the game', which include formal rules, written laws, organizations, informal norms of behaviour and shared beliefs." Most state-building activities have been limited to the formal and externally visible aspects of institutional development (people, uniforms, cars and equipment), and too little attention has been directed to the informal 'rules of the game' and informal norms of behaviour and shared beliefs. Institutions are developed top-down and are imposed on the societies they are intended to serve, instead of them emerging out of the societies themselves.

Such embedded robustness and resilience do not necessarily have a higher price tag, but they do require a greater investment in time and a slower pace. External agents need to be more sensitive to the side effects of top-down institutional development. Statebuilding that generates institutions that meet external expectations but that are not embedded in their own local social history do not contribute to self-sustainable peace consolidation. In fact, they may very well undermine the ability of the society to self-organise. External peacebuilding agents need to learn to trust the ability of the self-organisation process to generate an appropriate context-specific outcome.

If, on the other hand, the aim of peacebuilding should be to generate institutions that meet some internationally set standard, then the international community needs to accept that, in that context, self-sustainability can no longer be a realistic aim, and that such systems will need to be externally supported and manipulated for as long as is necessary to maintain the international standard.

The twelfth recommendation thus is that, in complex social systems, robustness and resilience can be achieved by distributing intelligence, information processing, decision making and related capacities throughout the society. This implies that more effort needs to be invested in the relationship between formal institutions and their societal roots, as that is where the potential for robustness and resilience resides.

9.14   THE LIMITS OF PRIORITIZATION AND THE NEED FOR COMPREHENSIVENESS

Another important concept in the context of self-sustainable peace consolidation is comprehensiveness. Under time and resource pressures, policy makers naturally need to prioritise. However, prioritising only certain aspects of a complex system will generate side effects elsewhere in the system. Often this basically amounts to externalising or shifting the costs. For instance, increasing police presence in one area does not necessarily reduce overall crime; it usually simply results in shifting the problem to somewhere else in the system. In order to address crime, a more comprehensive approach is necessary.

Comprehensiveness is about recognising that the complexity of the interconnections among the various dimensions is as important, if not more so, than the individual dimensions. Addressing only some of them, through narrowly informed and often externally-designed processes of prioritisation, is likely to generate negative side effects in the system. For instance, prioritising the security sector without at the same time giving sufficient attention to related aspects of civilian control is likely to generate a number of medium- and longer-term negative side effects. Another example discussed earlier was that of giving disproportionately more attention to one aspect of policing, e.g. gender-based violence, can negatively affect the overall cohesion and effectiveness of the police force.

Comprehensiveness is thus about recognising that we cannot assess the value of efficiency in isolation from related and interconnected considerations such as robustness, resilience, sustainability, local ownership and organisational learning.

The thirteenth recommendation thus concerns the need to recognise that the interconnections among the various dimensions in a complex social system are as important, if not more so, than the individual dimensions. Prioritising only some sectors of a society may generate perverse side effects. A complex-systems approach requires a comprehensive approach that is concerned about ensuring overall system performance.

9.15   ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT ALL SYSTEMS ARE COMPLEX

Some societies or states may not be self-sustainable, i.e. they may not be able to have sufficient internal Complexity to self-organise. Such societies or states may need to form a class of their own – perhaps occupying a kind of 'suspended sovereignty' category – and they may require indefinite support from the international system. The point is that it should not be assumed that all societies or states are able to achieve self-sustainable peace consolidation.

This realisation challenges the broad assumption that dominates the current approach to peacebuilding. The international community intervenes in all violent conflicts under the same assumption, namely that it is possible for those societies to achieve self-sustainable peace if only they receive the necessary catalytic support. As a result, the international community imposes the same theories of change on all the countries in which it intervenes.

Similarly, the international community assumes that all societies can be developed to the point where they can become self-sustainable states that participate as sovereign but interdependent members of the world economy. However, it is apparent that some states are politically, socially and economically dependent on larger regional systems and networks. Such societies will require a different support system, one that recognises their dependence on the larger systems or subsystems of which they form part.

The fourteenth recommendation is a reminder that not all societies have the internal Complexity to achieve self-sustainable peace. The complex-systems approach should thus

only be applied to those societies that are, or have the potential to, become self-organised complex social systems.

9.16   OPTIMAL LEVELS OF COHERENCE

The relevance of Complexity for coherence was considered in Chapter 7. It became clear that coherence should be understood as a process aimed at achieving an optimal level of cooperation among interdependent agents in a given context. In this new understanding, coherence is a process that strives towards achieving the most effective and efficient level of self-organisation, taking into account the specific combination of participating agents and the environmental context, including the pace at which the system is likely to have to cope with, and adapt to, change.

Coherence is thus not about seeking agreement for a common approach among peacebuilding agents. It is not about seeking consensus or harmony as an end in and of itself. Coherence, rather, is about seeking the optimal level of cooperation among agents in a given context. In a complex-systems context, the concept thus recognises that the appropriate level of coherence will be determined by the specific context within which the system is operating. The concept also recognises the inherent value of diversity, and that is why it is qualified with a requirement to determine the 'appropriate' level.

Some systems operate in more volatile environments than others, and such systems need to accommodate more diversity than others, because the range of options such a system needs to manage is broader than a system that operates in a more stable environment, where fewer changes, and thus fewer diverse options, are likely to be required. Thus the optimal balance between coherence and diversity, or dependence and interdependence, needs to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

As discussed in Chapter 4, in situations where violent conflict is still likely to disrupt the peace process, for instance in the eastern DRC, Afghanistan and Darfur, the conflict system itself, as well as the peacebuilding system that supports the peace process, needs to be able to respond to a wide range of possible futures. These situations are highly dynamic and they are likely to experience a high degree of change in the short to medium term. As a result, the agents need a high degree of freedom and independence so that they may be able to respond

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quickly to changes in the system, without having to first seek consensus, or agreement from a wider group, on which actions to take. This does not apply to all agents in these contexts, but there typically are enough agents in such contexts who require a high degree of independence to result in a situational context in which there is less room for coherence than in situations where the risk of a relapse into violent conflict is less acute, such as in contemporary Liberia or Sierra Leone.

The level of coherence that is possible in any given situation is thus influenced by the context, but a system that achieves and maintains close to optimal levels of coherence is likely to be more effective and efficient in pursuing or achieving its aims than a system that struggles to find its balance. This principle applies to all contexts, i.e. also to contexts where less coherence is appropriate. Pursuing more coherence than appropriate in situations like the eastern DRC, Afghanistan or South Sudan, where outbreaks of violent conflict are more likely, will result in the system being less effective and efficient than when pursuing a more appropriate level of coherence.

In other words, trying to force agents in a highly volatile situation to have a common analysis of the situation and to plan together is likely to cause even more tension among the agents. In response, they may be forced into adopting clearer or official positions regarding the types of cooperation they are willing to engage in, and this is likely to hinder the level of unofficial and informal exchange of information and tactical cooperation that would otherwise have taken place. The net result may thus actually be less cooperation and coherence.

However, if a more appropriate level of coherence is pursued, one that is designed to recognise the need for the agents to be independent and one that is limited to modulating the exchange of information, the result may be that the agents, whilst acting independently, will nevertheless have more information about the actions the other agents in the system are taking, and this will enable them to adjust their own actions accordingly. The overall system will thus be able to self-organise more optimally at a level appropriate for that context.

Pursuing more coherence than is optimal thus leads to a decrease in overall effectiveness, because agents are likely to respond to the pressure to coordinate by taking steps to emphasise their independence, and this will result in even less sharing of information in the system than

was the case before greater coherence was pursued. A complex systems approach thus favours pursuing optimal levels of coherence, where what is optimal is determined by the context.

The fifteenth recommendation is thus that coherence should be understood to pursue an optimal level of cooperation among agents in a given context. In a complex-systems context, the concept thus recognises that what is optimal will be determined by the specific context within which the system is operating.

9.17   CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this study was to explore the utility of using Complexity to gain insights into the coherence dilemma in peacebuilding systems. Fifteen recommendations for coping with peacebuilding Complexity have been generated and listed in this chapter. These are as follows:

The first recommendation is that the way in which knowledge about any particular complex social system is generated needs to be based on the recognition that our ability to fully understand complex systems is inherently limited.

The second recommendation is that peacebuilding itself needs to be understood as complex, and that this implies that we need to recognise that any particular peacebuilding system will be self-organised, and emergent. This has implications for how assessments, planning, coordination, leading, and evaluating specific peacebuilding interventions are undertaken.

The third recommendation is that it should be recognised that the local society has the ethical right and duty to control their own future, but that their freedom to choose future paths is constrained by international parameters set for the responsible behaviour of states in the international system.

The fourth recommendations is that the aim of peacebuilding interventions needs to be focused on, and limited to, stimulating the capacity of local societies to self-organise.

The fifth recommendation is that the focus on peace consolidation as a benchmark for self-sustainable peace should not be misunderstood as a prioritisation of security. For a social

system to avoid lapsing into violent conflict it has to have at its disposal a rich, robust and resilient variety of attributes that enable it to process shocks and crises without lapsing into violent conflict.

The sixth recommendation is that we have to be sensitive to how complex systems process information, self-organise and adapt, and suggests that evolutionary experimentation methodology can assist in purposefully co-evolving with the systems we are attempting to influence.

The seventh recommendation is that peacebuilding should not be understood as an activity that generates a specific outcome, but as an activity that facilitates and stimulates the processes that enable local self-organisation to emerge.

The eighth recommendation is that peacebuilding should embrace change as normal and optimal and that it should seek to manipulate and modulate the dynamics of the change processes of the social systems it is trying to influence.

The ninth recommendation is a reminder to be very cautious of the assumptions that are made about the framing of borders and boundaries, and that the extent to which local societies can be judged to be fully self-organised and self-sustainable in a highly globalised and interconnected world is matter of degree, rather than of absolute categories.

The tenth recommendation is that peacebuilding takes time, typically several decades and generations, and trying to rush or compact the process has perverse effects.

The eleventh recommendation is that the rate of change and the level of external assistance have to be determined by the capacity of the local society to absorb change.

The twelfth recommendation is that robustness and resilience can be achieved in complex social systems by distributing intelligence, information processing, decision making and related capacities throughout the society. This implies that more effort needs to be invested in the relationship between formal institutions and their societal roots, as that is where the potential for robustness and resilience resides.

The thirteenth recommendation concerns the need to recognise that the interconnections among the various dimensions in a complex social system is as important, if not more so, than the individual dimensions. Prioritising only some sectors of a society may generate perverse side effects. A complex systems approach thus requires a comprehensive approach that is concerned about ensuring overall system performance.

The fourteenth recommendation is a reminder that not all societies have the internal Complexity to achieve self-sustainable peace. The complex systems approach should thus only be applied to those societies that are, or have the potential to become, self-organised complex social systems.

The fifteenth recommendation is that coherence should be understood to pursue an optimal level of cooperation among agents in a given context. In a complex-systems context, the concept thus recognises that what is optimal will be determined by the specific context within which the system is operating.

The next and final chapter of the dissertation presents a summary of the findings of this study and reflects on the degree to which the research questions posed in the introduction have been addressed.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

Crucially, Complexity re-opens the question of what exactly should be the role of Reason after the Enlightenment, suggesting that Reason should be that which enables us to cope with uncertainty (which is a fundamental and objective property of nature, in both the natural and social worlds), rather than that which encourages us – as if by automatic reflex - to look for certainty-based explanatory models. (Popolo, 2011:213)

It is inappropriate for international peacebuilders to engineer electoral outcomes or even impose a specific voting system on a conflict country. The risks of subverting the development of a sustainable indigenous brand of democracy are too high – and if mistakes are made, they should be local mistakes as this is an inherent part of democratization. (Ponzio, 2011:247)

I share with a growing number of practitioners and academics the belief that the international community's underlying role should be about creating the space in which the political can evolve in productive ways. (Hughes, 2012:117)

10.1   INTRODUCTION

Peacebuilding is said to be complex, and this study investigated what that implies and asked whether Complexity could be of use in improving our understanding of the assumed causal link between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability in the context of peacebuilding systems. Coherence, or rather the lack of coherence, has been identified as one of the most critical shortcomings in international peacebuilding interventions to date. Consequently, there is a widely-held assumption in the peacebuilding policy community that improving coherence among peacebuilding agents will result in more effective peacebuilding action. More effective peacebuilding is, in turn, anticipated to result in more sustainable impact.

In this dissertation the assumed causal link between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability was questioned and explored. In the Introduction it was argued that, if there is such a link, we should be able to influence effectiveness and sustainability by improving our understanding of the ways in which we can increase coherence. However, if such a link does not exist, it will have significant implications for one of the core assumptions in peacebuilding theory and for the amount of energy and time devoted to trying to increase coherence in peacebuilding practice. To explore this question, the focus was directed to the study of Complexity. When systems become so dynamic that it is no longer possible to keep

track of the effects of specific initiatives, they are commonly refered to as 'complex'. This dissertation asked, what does it mean when we say a particular conflict, or the international response to it, is complex?

An attempt was made to answer this question by exploring how the study of Complexity, a field of research dedicated to studying complex systems, may assist us in gaining new insights into the dynamics of peacebuilding systems. The aim was to determine what can be learned from applying the knowledge generated by the study of Complexity to the peacebuilding context. Could insights from the study of Complexity assist us in improving our understanding of some of the core challenges experienced by peacebuilding systems?

These questions were approached in three parts. The first introduced and discussed peacebuilding, coherence and the factors that constrain coherence. Thus, the context was specified and the dilemma introduced in Part I. Part II introduced Complexity, established that peacebuilding is complex, and considered the relevance and implications of Complexity for peacebuilding in general and the coherence dilemma in particular. In Part III consideration was given to how complex systems can be influenced and a set of recommendations for coping with peacebuilding complexity was generated on the basis of the findings of Part I and II. The main findings of these three parts of the dissertation are summarised below.

10.2   PEACEBUILDING AND COHERENCE

Peacebuilding is a collective term used to refer to all actions undertaken by the international community and local actors to consolidate the peace in a given conflict-prone system, i.e. inclusive of the whole range of political, security and development actions taken to prevent a (re)lapse into violent conflict. The nexus between development, governance, politics and security has become a central focus of the international effort to manage transitions, and peacebuilding is increasingly seen as the collective framework under which these diverse dimensions of conflict management can be brought together under one common framework.

Peacebuilding is still emerging as a distinct form of international cooperation, but thus far its record has been mixed. Paul Collier and his colleagues (2003) found that about half of all peace agreements fail in the first ten years after being signed. There are many reasons why some peace processes are not sustainable — some relate to the role of spoilers and the

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dynamics of post-conflict settlements, whilst others are associated with shortcomings in the support provided by the international community. In this dissertation, the focus has been on the complex interrelationships among peacebuilding agents and specifically on the problems associated with the lack of coherence among them. Throughout this dissertation this challenge has been referred to as the 'coherence dilemma'.

The liberal peace debate discussed in Chapter 2 reminds us that our understanding of the contemporary peacebuilding system has been deeply influenced by the way peacebuilding has been conceptualised, theorised and debated over the last few decades. These debates, and the competing theories of change that influence them, thus need to be taken into consideration when trying to understand how peacebuilding has been practiced and how it has been perceived by the different stakeholders and agents that have been engaged in some or other way in pursuing coherence while undertaking peacebuilding programmes and activities.

In Chapter 3, the dissertation adopted a working definition for coherence in the peacebuilding context. It was stated that coherence refers to the effort to ensure that the political, security and development dimensions of a peacebuilding system in a particular crisis are directed towards a common objective.

The coherence dilemma refers to the persistent gap between policy level assumptions about the value and causal role of coherence in peacebuilding effectiveness and empirical evidence from peacebuilding practice to the contrary. It was argued that there is a widely-held and acted-upon assumption in the peacebuilding policy community that improved coherence leads to (causes) greater efficiency and effectiveness. For example, the Joint *Utstein* Study (Smith, 2004) of peacebuilding in which 336 peacebuilding projects implemented by Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Norway were analysed, identified a lack of coherence at the strategic level – what was termed a strategic deficit – as the most significant obstacle to sustainable peacebuilding. The *Utstein* study found that more than 55% of the programmes evaluated did not show any link to a larger country strategy.

In Chapter 4 of the dissertation, the aim was to identify and consider some of those factors that limit, inhibit or constrain our ability to achieve coherence. Four factors were discussed, namely the tension between long-term impact and short-term output; conflicting values, principles and mandates; the context-specific scope for coherence; and the power imbalance

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between local and international peacebuilding agents. It was posited that persistent evidence-based feedback from the field indicates that, at the operational and tactical levels, many of the assumptions about coherence are contestable at best, and flawed, at worst. Peacebuilding efforts appear to be challenged by enduring and deep-rooted tensions and inherent contradictions between the various peacebuilding dimensions and among the different peacebuilding agents.

The argument stated that the tension between impact and output, between what is good for the system as a whole as measured over the long term, and what is in the best interest of the individual agent as measured in the short to medium term, consistently undermines coherence. It was pointed out that some peacebuilding agents have inherently contradictory values, principles and mandates and that these typically manifest in fundamentally different theories of change and result in disagreements with regard to, for instance, prioritisation and how to measure progress. The context within which peacebuilding unfolds, and especially the degree of volatility in the system, was shown to determine the possible scope for coherence. Lastly, it was also argued that there are fundamental and inherent tensions in peacebuilding systems because of the inherent power imbalance between the external and the internal agents.

Based on these observations, it was concluded that there are inherent limits and constraints regarding the degree to which coherence can be achieved in the peacebuilding context. The exact limits are context specific and have to be transacted on a case-by-case basis. But not recognising and addressing the fact that these limits exist, by for instance blindly pursuing an idealised or maximum level of coherence, regardless of context, is likely to result in such efforts ultimately generating perverse effects for the society in question.

The overall finding in this chapter was that, whilst pursuing coherence is an integral part of peacebuilding, the commonly held causal assumption that more coherence will automatically result in more efficient, and thus more sustainable peacebuilding operations, is flawed. There seems to be a threshold beyond which, at first, pursuing more coherence seems to yield little additional benefit and, beyond that, pursuing even more coherence starts to have perverse effects.

On the basis of these findings, it was argued that the apparent correlation between coherence

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and effective peacebuilding observed by the policy community has been a result of misinterpretation. The correlation does not imply that there is a causal relationship between coherence, effectiveness and sustainability, but rather that the systems that have achieved greater levels of peace consolidation, and that we may thus associate with effective and sustainable peacebuilding, are at the same time also conducive to greater coherence.

It can thus be concluded that there are inherent dynamics in peacebuilding systems that limit, inhibit and constrain the degree of coherence that can be achieved. In practice, these constraints are not sufficiently recognised and discounted at the policy level (De Coning & Friis, 2011:20). The result is that the policy debate is setting itself overly ambitious targets for coherence, which are impossible to achieve in reality. A more realistic understanding of the limitations of coherence and the inherent contradictions in the system will allow the international community to adopt a more sober approach to coherence and to set itself more humble goals (Paris & Sisk, 2009:64).

The argument was made that considering the degree to which coherence is attainable in a given context and adjusting expectations and models accordingly, should result in more efficient operations, and such an approach should also generate greater sensitivity to potential unintended consequences of pursuing coherence beyond its limits (De Coning & Friis, 2011:21).

10.3   PEACEBUILDING AND COMPLEXITY

For the purposes of this dissertation, Complexity was described in Chapter 5 as a property of a complex system that has the ability to adapt, that demonstrates emergent properties (including self-organising behaviour) and that comes about and is maintained as a result of the dynamic and non-linear interactions of a large number of its elements (based on the information available to them locally) and of their interaction with the environment, as well as from the modulated feedback they receive from the other elements in the system. Complexity was situated in the history of science and some of the general characteristics of complex systems was explained. Three of these were focused on in particular, namely a whole-of-systems approach, non-linearity and self-organisation. In the process the importance of concepts such as emergence and feedback was discussed.

The implications of Complexity for epistemology and ethics were also considered. It was argued that the non-linear and dynamic nature of complex systems places inherent limitations on our ability to know, predict and control complex systems. It also limits our ability to generate knowledge that is transferable from one context to another. Complexity thus reminds us to be sceptical in principle of results and findings, regardless of the method used to obtain them, because all methods are limited when considering highly dynamic and non-linear phenomena. From an ethical perspective this implies that it is necessary to acknowledge that as peacebuilders, we are acting on the basis of our own provisional understanding of a social system, not on the basis of scientifically proven knowledge that makes it possible to predict and control such complex systems. Peacebuilders thus have an ethical duty to proceed with caution and to monitor carefully the effects (intended and unintended) that peacebuilding interventions will have on the societies they are trying to influence, because their actions impact on the everyday lives and livelihoods of real people.

In Chapter 6, the characteristics of Complexity formulated by Cilliers (1998) were applied to peacebuilding, and the conclusion was reached that peacebuilding systems are indeed complex in the way this concept is understood in Complexity theory. This characterisation opened the way for exploring the relevance of some of the findings generated by the study of Complexity for peacebuilding systems.

In Chapter 7 the prevalent 'deterministic-design' approach to peacebuilding was contrasted with a 'complex systems' approach. The deterministic-design concept was used to refer to the basic theory of change most widely used and applied by the contemporary peacebuilding policy and practitioner communities; namely one in which the policy makers and practitioners have confidence in their ability to analyse and identify 'the problem' that they have to address; their ability to design an intervention in response, i.e. 'the solution' that will solve this problem; and their ability to implement remedial programmes with which to administer these solutions.

In contrast, a complex-systems approach is based on an understanding of complex systems in which change processes are evolutionary in nature, i.e. the system adapts to its environment and its own emergent behaviour through a continuous process of inductive adaptation, regulated by its own self-organising processes.

The dissertation explored the relevance of Complexity for the problem-solving assumption, the stabilising conflict assumption, and the time, pace and positioning considerations prevalent in contemporary peacebuilding theory. When it comes to the relevance of Complexity for the problem-solving assumption in peacebuilding, four implications of Complexity for peacebuilding were identified:

- The highly dynamic and non-linear nature of complex systems constrains our ability to fully understand complex peacebuilding systems, and peacebuilders are thus inherently limited in their ability to design pre-determined outcomes.

- One cannot have a definitive 'problem' or 'solution' in a complex peacebuilding system. Peace can thus not be framed as a 'problem' to be 'solved'. Peace needs to be understood as an emergent property of a complex system that is able to self-organise without lapsing into violent conflict.

- The highly dynamic and non-linear nature of complex systems results in the reductionist approach being limited in its application. It needs to be complemented and augmented with a complex-systems approach that seeks to understand the patterns, trends and processes that give us clues as to how the system works as a whole.

- The focus of a peacebuilding intervention has to be on the internal political dynamics of the system experiencing change, not on the technical aspects of the external intervention.

In the context of the stabilising conflict assumption, a further eight implications of Complexity for peacebuilding were identified:

- Change and conflict are normal and necessary, and peacebuilding should thus not be so much about restoring order and stability, as it should be about stimulating change and facilitating constructive conflict.[40]

- Peacebuilding is about peace consolidation, and whilst avoiding a lapse into violent conflict is important, it should be recognised that a preoccupation with controlling the political and social space in order to ensure security and stability is likely to constrain the space and pace for the emergence of self-organisation. The best way to ensure

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[40] An important distinction was made here between violent conflict that is undesirable and constructive conflict, which refers to the tensions and competition among people pursuing different interests, and that is normal for any vibrant society.

sustainable peace consolidation is to encourage and facilitate the capacity of a society to organise itself.

- A perfectly harmonious stable or orderly state is a conceptual construct, i.e. it is an ideal model that cannot exist in real or material terms. It is an idea that cannot be operationalised.

- The 'normal' and, in fact, optimal state of societies is to be complex, i.e. highly dynamic and non-linear.

- An international intervention cannot aim to achieve self-sustainable peace and stability and wish to remain in control of an internal system at the same time.

- A complex-systems approach needs to be sensitive to the need for societies to self-evolve, including through constructive conflict and competition.

- If we accept that in complex systems change is normal, even optimal, then it would make sense to invest in developing improved capacities to facilitate and cope with change.

- This represents a shift in focus from trying to ensure that you arrive at a pre-determined, ideal end-result, to trying to ensure that the system has the robustness and resilience to manage its own emerging outcomes without lapsing into violent conflict.

From the insights gained from applying a Complexity perspective to the time, pace and positioning considerations of peacebuilding, it was found that:

- When the 'determined-design' interference approach to peacebuilding results in situations where communities are under pressure to adapt faster than they can collectively absorb change, the peacebuilders are in effect delaying the ability of such communities to become self-sustainable.

- The rate of change has to be matched to the society's capacity to absorb change for it to be sustainable. Imposing more change than can be absorbed results, at best, in overflow and waste and, at worst, in pollution (corruption, breakdown of social systems and values, a culture of winner-takes-all short-term self-enrichment, and so forth).

- A complex-systems approach requires a radical re-positioning of our understanding of peacebuilding as something that needs to be essentially local.

- The role of the external actors may be necessary, for instance, to provide an initial safe and secure environment and to act as a catalyst by stimulating and facilitating the

processes necessary for social regeneration, but it is not sufficient to achieve self-sustainable peace consolidation. International agents thus may have a role to play, but need to position themselves in such a way that they do not harm or delay the internal system's self-organising processes.

- The essential ingredient is local emergent self-organised complexity, i.e. the society needs to develop its own capacity to manage itself without lapsing into violent conflict.

- The external actors should not benchmark their own drawdown and exit on the degree to which full self-sustainability seems to have been achieved, but rather on the capacity that exists for self-sustainability to take hold and continue after external support has been withdrawn.

10.3.1 Implications for the coherence dilemma

In Chapter 4 it was argued that the causal assumption common in peacebuilding policy circles, namely that more coherence will result in more efficient, and thus more sustainable peacebuilding operations, is flawed. The empirical evidence suggests that there seems to be a threshold beyond which pursuing more coherence seems to yield little additional benefit. In fact, it seems that when more coherence is imposed than what emerged naturally, perverse effects are likely to be generated. The further argument was that the degree to which a certain level of coherence is likely to be achieved appears to be highly context specific, i.e. the degree to which the system is conducive to coherence seems to be much more important that the type of coherence model or the degree of inter-connectivity among peacebuilding agents.

In Chapter 7 these findings were further augmented with insights from Complexity that provided a theoretical explanation for what appears to be a contradiction, namely that coherence can be both necessary and yet unattainable. The dissertation argued that seeking coherence has utility because it drives processes that stimulate the exchange of information, connectivity and self-organisation. However, the resilience and robustness of complex systems start to be negatively affected when coherence ranges beyond a certain optimal level. Beyond that optimal level, coherence decreases diversity, i.e. the number of possible responses available to a system, and inhibits competition among agents, and in so doing, starts to undermine the ability of the system to self-organise and adapt to changes in its environment. In other words pursuing coherence is a desirable activity when it contributes to

the Complexity of the system by connecting agents and stimulating the flow of information, but it becomes undesirable when the systems becomes too closely connected that its starts to negatively affect the ability of the system to cope with diversity, i.e. when it starts to constrain Complexity.

Complex systems self-organise around the optimal level of coherence. The optimal level of coherence is case or context specific, and attempts to impose more coherence than optimal in a given context are not sustainable, nor desirable, in complex systems. This finding challenges the prevailing conventional wisdom in peacebuilding policy circles (see Chapter 4), which holds that coherence is attainable and that increased coherence leads to more effective peacebuilding.

Based on these insights gained from applying Complexity to peacebuilding, the dissertation redefined coherence as a process aimed at achieving an optimal level of self-organisation among interdependent agents in a given context. The degree of coherence in a given context can be enhanced by facilitating the exchange of information and modulating feedback among the agents so that the decisions that the various agents take independently are better informed and can thus contribute to more effective system-level adaptation and self-organisation. In this new definition, coherence is aimed at pursuing the most effective and efficient level of self-organisation taking into account the nature of the participating agents and the environmental context, including the pace at which the system is likely to have to cope with, and adapt to, change.

The definition requires an understanding that 'optimal' here implies the need to take the specific context into account and that what is thus regarded as optimal cannot be universal, i.e. it will differ from context to context. Each context is also subject to change, and what is optimal can thus never be a pre-determined ideal state. "Optimal" refers to the outcome of the totality of transactions among agents up to that point in time, given that the system remains dynamic and non-linear. Optimality does not refer to a preconceived or 'determined-designed' idea of what is ideal given an imagined future context. Optimality refers to an emergent property, generated by the system's interactions, and influenced by its environment. It cannot be determined in advance, but it can be encouraged, facilitated and pursued by modulating the exchange of information among the agents, with a view to trying to ensure

that as many of the agents as possible have access to information about what is happening in the environment and elsewhere in the system itself.

10.4   GUIDELINES FOR COMPLEX PEACEBUILDING

The dissertation argued that, from a systems perspective, peacebuilding can be understood as a concerted effort by a group of international and local actors to influence or manipulate a complex system with a view to consolidating a peace process. Based on the findings on the role of coherence in complex peacebuilding systems, an attempt was made to determine whether it is indeed possible, from a Complexity perspective, to influence and direct a complex system. In other words, if the scope for coherence is largely determined by the context, to what degree is it possible to influence the context itself?

In peacebuilding, the general theory of change is a peace process can be consolidated by assisting the parties to the conflict and peace process through facilitating conflict resolution, supporting national reconciliation and nationbuilding and by undertaking statebuilding activities in support of establishing rule of law, good governance and democracy. The general theory of change behind peacebuilding is thus built on the assumption that it is possible for one system (external or international) to influence or manipulate another complex system (internal or local). The researcher was interested in exploring whether this is indeed possible, and if so, how? The question, from a Complexity perspective, was what do we know about influencing complex systems?

The literature concerning influencing complex systems was considered in Chapter 8 of the dissertation, and it was found that one of the ways in which the behaviour of complex social systems can be influenced is by modulating the interdependencies among the agents in the system. This is achieved by manipulating the flow of information among the agents with the aim of strengthening the interconnections among them and, in so doing, improving the ability of the system to self-organise. However, influence should not be confused with control because, although complex systems can be stimulated, the way that they respond may be non-linear and can thus not be predicted or controlled.

In this regard, the twelve leverage points for influencing complex systems developed by Meadows (1999 & 2008) were found to be especially insightful for the purposes of the

dissertation. Meadows argues that it is possible to influence a complex system at all levels, from the most conceptual (paradigms and system goals) to the most material (structure and flow of stocks). The argument that developed from this is that the most effective peacebuilding interventions will make use of the widest possible range of leverage points simultaneously, but that higher-order leverages, such as rules, goals and paradigms, will have much higher impact value than the lower-order leverages.

Based on the implications generated by the application of the general characteristics of Complexity to peacebuilding and what was learned about how complex systems can be influenced, fifteen recommendations for coping with Complexity were formulated in Chapter 9.

The first recommendation was that the way in which knowledge about any particular complex social system is generated needs to be based on the recognition that our ability to fully understand complex systems is inherently limited.

The second recommendation was that peacebuilding itself needs to be understood as complex, and that this implies that we need to recognise that any particular peacebuilding system will be self-organised and emergent. This has implications for how assessments, planning, coordination, leadership, and evaluating specific peacebuilding interventions are undertaken.

The third recommendation was that it should be recognised that the local society has the ethical right and duty to control their own future, but that their freedom to choose future paths is constrained by international parameters set for the responsible behaviour of states in the international system.

The fourth recommendations was that the aim of peacebuilding interventions needs to be focused on, and limited to, stimulating the capacity of local societies to self-organise.

The fifth recommendation was that the focus on peace consolidation as a benchmark for self-sustainable peace should not be misunderstood as a prioritisation of security. For a social system to avoid lapsing into violent conflict it has to have at its disposal a rich, robust and resilient variety of attributes that enable it to process shocks and crises without lapsing into violent conflict.

The sixth recommendation was that we have to be sensitive to how complex systems process information, self-organise and adapt, and this dissertation suggests that the evolutionary experimentation methodology can assist us in purposefully co-evolving with the systems we are attempting to influence.

The seventh recommendation was that peacebuilding should not be understood as an activity that generates a specific outcome, but as an activity that facilitates and stimulates the processes that enable local self-organisation to emerge.

The eighth recommendation was that peacebuilding should embrace change as normal and optimal and that it should seek to manipulate and modulate the dynamics of the change processes of the social systems it is trying to influence.

The ninth recommendation was a reminder to be very cautious of the assumptions that are made about the framing of borders and boundaries, and that the extent to which local societies can be judged to be fully self-organised and self-sustainable in a highly globalised and interconnected world is matter of degree, rather than of absolute categories.

The tenth recommendation was that peacebuilding takes time, typically several decades and generations, and trying to rush or compact the process has perverse effects.

The eleventh recommendation was that the rate of change and the level of external assistance have to be determined by the capacity of the local society to absorb change.

The twelfth recommendation was that robustness and resilience can be achieved in complex social systems by distributing intelligence, information processing, decision making and related capacities throughout the society. This implies that more effort needs to be invested in the relationship between formal institutions and their societal roots, as that is where the potential for robustness and resilience resides.

The thirteenth recommendation concerned the need to recognise that the interconnections among the various dimensions in a complex social system are as important, if not more so, than the individual dimensions. Prioritising only some sectors of a society may generate

perverse side effects. A complex-systems approach thus requires a comprehensive approach that is concerned about ensuring overall system performance.

The fourteenth recommendation was a reminder that not all states have the internal Complexity to achieve self-sustainable peace. The complex-systems approach should thus only be applied to those groupings of societies that are, or have the potential to become, self-sustainable states.

The fifteenth recommendation was that coherence should be understood to pursue an optimal level of cooperation among agents in a given context. In a complex-systems context, the concept thus recognises that what is optimal will be determined by the specific context within which the system is operating.

These recommendations can be summarised into three core findings:

10.4.1 Peacebuilding, complexity and epistemology

The first finding is the recognition that peacebuilders' ability to gain knowledge of the complex social systems they are dealing with is inherently limited. The concept of Critical Complexity was introduced in Chapter 5 and it was explained that Critical Complexity holds that the study of complex systems may assist peacebuilders in improving their understanding of such systems, but cannot help them predict or control the behaviour of a specific complex system. Critical Complexity reminds participants that any insights or knowledge they may have gained about any given complex system is provisional, because the non-linear and highly-dynamical nature of complex systems implies that the system will continue to change in unpredictable ways.

With hindsight it may be possible to connect the dots; however, it remains impossible to predict future events, even if the circumstances appear similar to others already encountered, because complex systems are non-linear and dynamic. In other words, causality can be traced looking back to the history of the system, but it cannot be used to project forward into, or to predict, the future – at least not beyond a very short horizon. Complexity does not generate definitive answers to policy problems. In fact, it clarifies why, in the context of complex

phenomena, the search for definitive answers and the pursuit of imagined definitive solutions is flawed.

It is not just the conflict systems that are complex; the international peacebuilding instruments share the same messy characteristics. It needs to be recognised that the international peacebuilding system does not have a superior claim to knowledge about managing specific transitions. There are no off-the-shelf solutions and neither is there a single theory of change or model of state transformation, such as the liberal peace model, that can claim universal applicability.

In this dissertation it has been suggested that an evolutionary approach to knowing should be explored. This means that what is already known should be generated, refined and adapted in an iterative and ongoing inductive process without ever expecting to arrive at definitive conclusions. It is thus not possible to diagnose definitive causes for, or to design solutions to a particular social conflict; instead, the focus should be on facilitating inductive processes that assist knowledge to emerge. Complexity reminds us to be sceptical of results and findings, regardless of the method used to obtain them, because all methods are limited when considering highly dynamic and non-linear phenomena.

In this dissertation, it was thus argued that one should not see peace as a problem to be solved. Peace does not, in any given context, have a stopping rule. There is no one right or wrong peace. Instead, from a complex-systems perspective, peace is emergent and thus has to be context specific. Making choices about a 'good enough' peace and determining whether specific policy choices have resulted in a better or worse outcome can thus ultimately only be done by those embedded in a given context. From the perspective of a particular peacebuilding agent, one can perhaps talk about an undesirable state based on the negative impact such a state is perceived to have on, for instance, a society or parts of that society. One can also talk about better or worse approaches, i.e. a scale of policy responses that range from having improved the situation from the perspective of what the policy set out to achieve on the one end of the scale, to policy approaches that made things worse, on the other. In all these cases it will be important to consider who the agents that make these decisions are, and especially whether such judgements are made by the societies themselves, or by others on their behalf. The overall point, however, is that when it comes to complex social conflicts,

one cannot talk about problems and solutions as if there is a right, correct or best solution for a problem that is just waiting to be discovered.

10.4.2 Peacebuilding, complexity and practice

The second insight is that peacebuilding is essentially about stimulating and facilitating the capacity of societies to self-organise. Self-organisation in this context refers to the various processes and mechanisms a society makes use of to manage its own peace consolidation process, i.e. the overall ability to manage its own tensions, pressures, disputes, crises and shocks without relapsing into violent conflict. This is a very delicate and inherently contradictory process fraught with built-in tensions. There is an inherent tension in the act of interfering in a local system, when that very interference is meant to assist the local system with gaining, or regaining the ability to self-organise.

The robustness and resilience of the self-organising capacity of a society determines the extent to which it can withstand pressures and shocks that risk a (re)lapse into violent conflict. Peacebuilding should thus be about safeguarding, stimulating, facilitating, and creating the space for societies to develop robust and resilient capacities for self-organisation.

International peacebuilding interventions should provide security guarantees and maintain the outer parameters of acceptable state behaviour in the international system, and they should stimulate, facilitate and create the space for the emergence of robust and resilient self-organised systems.

However, international peacebuilding interventions should not interfere in the local social process with the goal of engineering a specific outcome. Trying to control the outcome will, in all probability, produce the opposite of what peacebuilding aims to achieve; it will generate ongoing instability, and dependence, and it will undermine self-sustainability.

Many international peacebuilding interventions to date have made the mistake of interfering so much that they ended up undermining the ability of the local society to self-organise. The key to successful peacebuilding thus lies in finding the appropriate balance between international support and local ownership.

Local ownership cannot be reduced to a type of hybridity where the international community gives some space to the local society to add local flavour to an internationally-designed model. Local ownership is not power, authority and legitimacy given by international peacebuilders to the local society. Local ownership is the recognition that peace can only be achieved if it is emergent from the local society. For peace to be self-sustainable, it has to be home-grown. Local ownership therefore is an essential precursor for self-sustainable peace. Local ownership is thus the core ingredient for successful peacebuilding and is non-negotiable.

It is the role of the international peacebuilders that needs to be negotiated in every specific case to suit that particular context. They can have almost no role, as in South Africa's transition, a minimum role, such as in Rwanda or Ethiopia, or a significant role, such as in Liberia or South Sudan, but they cannot have a dominant role, such as in Afghanistan and Iraq, because that is incompatible with self-sustainable peace.

Hybridity may thus be re-framed to refer to the role that would be appropriate for the international community to have in any given peacebuilding process. Local ownership needs to be understood as a necessary, but not necessarily a sufficient, condition for self-sustainable peace. In some cases the assistance of the international community may be needed. The critical difference between this approach to hybridity, and the approach most generally associated with hybridity (Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond, 2011) is that it is not the degree of local ownership that is regarded as the variable that defines the degree of hybridity in a given case, but rather the level of international interference.

There may be cases where external parties have such a strong interest in seeing a particular norm adhered to, or a particular state of affairs maintained, that they are willing to sacrifice the goal of self-sustainability and accept the cost of continued interference. However, such a type of intervention could not be categorised as peacebuilding – as defined in this dissertation– even though, for political reasons of legitimacy and credibility, the countries involved may choose to frame it as 'peacebuilding' and may include references too 'self-sustainability' in their stated goals. One thus need to draw a distinction in some cases between peacebuilding rhetoric aimed at creating a legitimising narrative for an intervention that is aimed at norm enforcement, or that may pursue some other over-riding national interest, and peacebuilding interventions that genuinely pursue self-sustainable peace consolidation.

In addition, there may, of course, be exceptional situations where the international community chooses to intervene against the wishes of some parts of the local society in order to stop or prevent genocide, severe abuse of human rights or war crimes, such as was recently the case in Darfur, Libya and Cote d'Ivoire. These exceptional powers are provided for under the enforcement articles of Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The interventions that flow from such authority are not peacebuilding interventions but are aimed at the protection of civilians and the stabilisation of affected societies. However, once such situations have been sufficiently pacified, they typically change into a new phase where self-sustainable peace consolidation becomes the new goal of the operation, and when this happens, there has to be a significant shift in the ownership of the process from the international to the local.

The essential difference between the complex-systems approach and a determined-design approach like the liberal peace model is that, under the latter, the solution is understood to come from the outside. The agency to solve the problem resides in the international capacity to assess the situation and to design a solution and to then undertake an intervention where the solution is applied. The implication from Complexity for peacebuilding is that, for any society to live sustainably in peace, it needs to generate its own capacity to self-organise. This is a process that can be facilitated and supported by external peacebuilders, but it ultimately has to be a bottom-up and home-grown process. Self-organisation cannot be imposed. Any attempt to make a society self-organise will constitute interference and disruption in the system, and the more you intervene, the more you will undermine the process of self-organisation.

The essential difference between these two approaches thus is the recognition that self-sustainable peace is directly linked to, and influenced by, the extent to which a society has the capacity, and space, to self-organise. For peace consolidation to be self-sustainable, it has to be the result of a home-grown, bottom-up and context-specific process. In this understanding, the art of peacebuilding lies in pursuing the appropriate balance between international support and home-grown context-specific solutions. In this dissertation, we argued that the international community has, to date, failed to find this balance. In the process, the peacebuilders have contributed to the very weaknesses and fragilities in complex social systems that they were meant to address.

The dissertation therefore presents the case for a significant re-balancing of the relationship

between international influence and local agency, and, on the basis of insights drawn from our understanding of how complex systems function, it argues for a new understanding of peacebuilding as something that is essentially local.

10.4.3 Peacebuilding, complexity and ethics

The third insight is that the general understanding of how complex systems function has important ethical implications for interventions in social systems. Critical Complexity holds that we cannot predict the future and therefore cannot control future behaviour, but it also argues that this does not mean that we are somehow powerless or without agency. In Chapter 5, reference was made to Woermann (2010:121), who explained that a Critical Complexity approach implies a shift from trying to discover 'the Truth' about given situations, to a process of making choices and developing strategies for living and acting, and for dealing with the often unexpected outcomes of these strategies. An uncertain future can be meaningfully anticipated, influenced, adapted to, and engaged, but such engagement needs to be informed by an awareness of the limits of anyone's ability to ultimately fully know complex systems, and that awareness has important implications for the ethical status of interventions into such systems. No party can claim moral superiority on the basis of pre-determined models or lessons learned elsewhere, nor can anyone hide behind ignorance, because it is known that complex systems are non-linear and dynamic. Therefore, peacebuilders need to be careful, cautious and self-critical when considering and reflecting on the choices they make, because their actions may have negative consequences for the people affected by those decisions and actions.

> An explicit, reflexive awareness of the incompleteness of our understanding is therefore vital so that decisions are taken with a large degree of caution (and humility) while at the same time demanding that we think through the possible ramifications. A big part of the challenge for the international community is to accept that what eventuates may not approximate the Western liberal democratic model. (Hughes, 2012:116)

The dynamic and non-linear nature of complex systems implies that competing theories of change need to be contextualised before their validity and applicability can be judged. Choices will thus have to be made by taking a range of factors into account and the selection of a given approach ultimately would need to be a local and context-specific informed choice.

In this dissertation, the argument was made that it is the local societies who have to live with the consequences of peacebuilding operations, and who have to pay the cost of any lapses into

violent conflict, who are best positioned to make such judgements. They should thus have the ultimate right to make decisions about their own future. Rights also imply responsibility, but local societies can only have that responsibility if they have agency over the outcome. The international community cannot expect a local society to take responsibility for the peacebuilding process when they continue to insist on a pre-determined liberal end state. Local ownership implies taking ethical responsibility for the process and its results, and thus implies that the international community must be willing to give up control over the outcome of the process.

The acknowledgement that the decisions made when choosing a given peacebuilding approach is the product of a deliberate political choice, as opposed to a choice based on an proven optimal model, represents a significant shift in locating ethical responsibility for the outcomes of a peacebuilding intervention squarely with those exercising such a choice. The ethical responsibility thus clearly shifts from the perceived pre-determined virtue of a proven model or theory of choice, to those that have the agency to choose which model or theory of change will be applied in a given context.

However, any local society is also part of the international system and, as such, cannot exist in isolation. Whilst the local society has the rights and responsibility to control its own future, it should also be recognised that their freedom to choose future paths are constrained by the international parameters set for responsible behaviour in the international system. The international system will act to prevent, and may even use force to stop, mass abuse of human rights, genocide and war crimes.

The implications is that the international peacebuilding agents have a role in assisting local societies to develop the capacity to become responsible members of the international community, but this role does not give them the agency to make decisions on behalf of the local society. The exception would be those extraordinary circumstances where local behaviour crosses the parameters set for acceptable behaviour in the international system, i.e. in cases where genocide, severe abuses of human rights or war crimes result in an internationally sanctioned intervention to protect civilians. However, when such a situation has been sufficiently stabilised and the focus shifts to self-sustainable peace consolidation, the agency has to shift to the local.

As discussed in preceding chapters, the notion of local ownership also raises several concerns, such as that local societies are not necessarily well informed about their options and that there seem to be persistent and challenging questions about who can legitimately speak on behalf of these local societies. These are legitimate concerns that need to be addressed, but the fact that it has been challenging to operationalise local ownership does not imply that the principle lacks an ethical foundation. The soundness of the principle, now also supported by the perspective of a Complexity-theory informed analysis, should inspire policymakers and practitioners to find new ways of engaging with, empowering, and giving space to local societies, so as to give practical meaning to the notion of local ownership.

This does not exclude international actors from having a role in assisting local societies in understanding their choices and otherwise supporting and facilitating their transition, but it does imply that such actors offering assistance should stop short of taking decisions on behalf of local societies on the basis of superior claims to knowledge about what is in the best interest of those societies. Hence, a much clearer understanding needs to be developed of what are, and are not, appropriate degrees of influence for international peacebuilders and how intrusive peacebuilding should be.

Critical Complexity thus implies that the peacebuilders, local and international, have to take responsibility – ethically – for their choices and actions. Taking responsibility means that peacebuilders need to think through the ethical implications of both their macro theories of peacebuilding and their specific choices and actions in any given context. They cannot base their decisions on the claimed superiority of one or other theory of change, because no one model, e.g. the liberal peace model, can be held up as inherently superior. They have to understand the choices they make and the potential consequences of their actions for each specific context and take responsibility for them.

10.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The application of Complexity to peacebuilding in this dissertation has generated a number of unconventional findings and many of them are likely to be controversial. This dissertation thus opens up considerable room for further research.

The dissertation presents a particular interest in the peacebuilding coherence dilemma, and a number of findings have been generated in this regard, including that the scope for coherence is determined by the context within which peacebuilding interventions take place. Based on these findings, it was argued that the correlation between coherence and effective peacebuilding observed by the policy community has been misinterpreted. The correlation does not imply that there is a causal relationship between coherence and effectiveness, but rather that the systems that have achieved relative stability, and that may thus be associated with effective peacebuilding, are also conducive to greater coherence.

These claims can be tested against the empirical record, and it would be useful to analyse the scope for coherence achieved in several peacebuilding interventions against the context that prevailed in each of these cases. Specifically, it would be useful to explore whether a correlation can be established between the degree of volatility, and especially the level of violence in a given context, and the degree of coherence that was achieved in that context.

A further argument in the dissertation, on the basis of insights drawn from the application of Complexity to peacebuilding, is that, for peace consolidation to be self-sustainable, local societies have to (re)gain the resilience and robustness necessary to achieve a level of self-organisation that will enable them to manage their own tensions and internal conflicts without relapsing into violent conflict. Whilst the principle of local ownership has been established in peacebuilding theory, it thus far has failed to be operationalised in practice. The primacy of local self-organisation for self-sustainable peacebuilding, presented in the context of a broader complex systems approach to peacebuilding interventions, has the potential to inject new vigour in the local ownership debate. The dissertation argues that peacebuilding programmes should be focused on assisting societies to develop the capacity to self-organise. Much more research will be needed to improve our understanding of self-organisation in the social context and especially in the context of societies emerging out of conflict where self-organisation needs to be (re)gained. Research can be directed at trying to identify entry points for stimulating and facilitating self-organisation and especially to determine how feedback can be manipulated to influence complex systems.

The researcher has also cautioned against levels of international intervention that undermine the ability of societies to self-organise and has argued that the 'art' of peacebuilding lies in finding the appropriate balance between too little and too much international intervention.

The last decades have presented the researcher with ample cases against which these claims can be explored. Empirical research and case studies could elaborate on the examples provided in this study of situations where too much international interference has had perverse effects. In fact, research that aims to identify and explain the opposite would be even more useful, namely cases where societies have been able to consolidate the peace without international interference, or with limited international support. Some research has already been undertaken on Somaliland (Boege *et al*., 2008:13), Bougainville (Boege *et al*., 2008:14) and Rwanda (Donais, 2012:6), but there is not yet a sufficient body of literature on this kind of locally-driven peace process to support or disprove this hypothesis.

The dissertation has also argued for a new perspective on peacebuilding, whereby peacebuilding should be understood as an effort by the international community to influence a local complex social system. This perspective on peacebuilding has important implications for how peacebuilding is planned and undertaken. Thus there is ample room for applied research into the implications of such a complex system approach for assessments, planning, coordination, leadership, evaluation and organisational learning in the peacebuilding context.

More research that tests, probes and further explores the findings of this dissertation would be very useful towards further illustrating the utility of Complexity for peacebuilding, as well as the implications of understanding peacebuilding as something that is essentially local.

This study has demonstrated the utility of applying Complexity to peacebuilding, and this may encourage others to explore the relevance of insights from Complexity for related fields such as conflict management, security studies, and peace studies.

10.6   CONCLUSION

The intention with this dissertation was to make a contribution to the larger critical discourse around improving peacebuilding practice. Some of the contributions made by this dissertation to the literature on peacebuilding includes the introduction of Complexity into the peacebuilding debate (Chapter 5); the framing and analysis of the peacebuilding coherence dilemma (Chapters 3 and 4); the comparative analysis of the determined-design and complex systems approaches (Chapter 7); the development of recommendations for coping with

peacebuilding Complexity (Chapter 9); and, overall, the exploration of the utility of applying Complexity to the study of peacebuilding. As such, this study is also an example of the value that can be generated by applying theory to a particular field of practice.

On the basis of the application of the general characteristics of Complexity to peacebuilding, the following three recommendations reflect the core findings of the study:

(1) Peacebuilders need to concede that they cannot, from the outside, definitively analyse complex conflicts and design 'solutions' on behalf of a local society. Instead they should facilitate inductive processes that assist knowledge to emerge from the local context, and such knowledge needs to be understood as provisional and subject to a continuous process of refinement and adaptation.

(2) Peacebuilders have to recognise that self-sustainable peace is directly linked to, and influenced by, the extent to which a society has the capacity, and space, to self-organise. For peace consolidation to be self-sustainable, it has to be the result of a home-grown, bottom-up and context-specific process.

(3) Peacebuilders need to acknowledge that they cannot defend the choices they make on the basis of pre-determined models or lessons learned elsewhere. The ethical implications of their choices have to be considered in the local context and the effects of their interventions - intended and unintended - needs to be continuously assessed against the lived-experience of the societies they are committed to assist. Peacebuilding should be guided by the principle that those who will have to live with the consequences should have the agency to make decisions about their own future.

It was argued that the insights drawn from Complexity for peacebuilding presented in this dissertation makes a compelling case for shifting the locus and agency of peacebuilding from the international to the local. The dissertation also posits the argument that, if we accept the implications of Complexity for peacebuilding presented in this dissertation, we should also support a shift from understanding the essential act of peacebuilding as being in the external design, e.g. in the liberal peace model, to one whereby peacebuilding is understood as emergent from the local, and whereby self-sustainability is thus understood to be dependent on local self-organisation. The dissertation thus argues for a significant shift away from understanding peacebuilding as something that the international community do to help local societies, to a new approach of understanding peacebuilding as something that has to be essentially local.

The primary objective of this study was to explore the utility of using Complexity to gain insights into the coherence dilemma in peacebuilding systems. The dissertation presents the finding that the application of Complexity has been fruitful in that it has:

- Generated unconventional insights into the role of coherence in peacebuilding.

- Alerted us to various potential perverse effects and unintended consequences of the determined causality approach.

- Suggested a potential new perspective on peacebuilding, from which peacebuilding can be seen as an effort to influence a complex system, with important implications for how we plan and undertake peacebuilding.

- Provided a theoretical framework for the local ownership principle and introduced self-organisation as an essential precursor to self-sustainable peace.

- Emphasised local context and local ownership as core requirements for self-organisation to occur and in the process identified the need for a significant shift in peacebuilding, away from peacebuilding as something undertaken by the international community and towards a new approach that recognises peacebuilding as something that has to be essentially local.

The dissertation thus concludes that there is indeed utility in using Complexity to improve our understanding of peacebuilding.

This dissertation represents a personal journey of exploration and discovery. The researcher set out to find theories and models that could help to solve the coherence dilemma. Along the way he discovered that the coherence dilemma is natural and indeed, necessary. The 'problem' that needed to be resolved was not the coherence dilemma itself, but rather our approach to understanding and dealing with the kind of Complexity represented by the coherence dilemma.

Consequently, the focus of the study shifted from solving the coherence dilemma to coping with its complexities. As a result, the dissertation's engagement with peacebuilding gradually shifted from an initial preoccupation with the international to the essential role of the local. For peacebuilding to be self-sustainable, the dissertation found that self-organisation has to emerge from the local society itself and be informed by the local context. In this context the

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role of the international peacebuilder has to be limited to assisting, facilitating and stimulating the capacity and resilience of the local society to self-organise.

For such a Copernican shift to take place in peacebuilding agency from the international to the local, the peacebuilding community will have to fundamentally alter the underlying theories of change that inform the currently dominant liberal peace approach to peacebuilding and development. In general, the prospects for this kind of major paradigm shift are bleak. However, at this particular point in history we are witnessing a major shift in international power and influence from the West to the East. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Global South in general, and the BRICS countries in particular, are sceptical of the motives behind the liberal peace approach and favours an approach to international cooperation that give much more weight to the principles of self-determination and sovereignty in international relations. These changes in global power and influence have created an historic opportunity for the peacebuilding community to reflect on the assumptions and theories of change that have influenced its policies and practices to date, and in particular to reassess the role and agency of local societies in peacebuilding. The most important question here is who has agency to make decisions about the future? The central finding of this dissertation has been that if self-sustainable peace consolidation is the goal, then the answer to this question is that peacebuilding has to be essentially local.

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