

3. Rethinking Peace, Peace Research and Peacebuilding

Laurent Goetschel and Tobias Hagmann

3.1 Introduction

Not long ago, talking about peace was a highly political act observed with considerable suspicion in some parts of Western Europe.¹ Outside of scholarly peace research, peace was either equated to utopian thinking, as belonging to the religious and spiritual realms, or as a subversive idea in deference to the socialist Eastern bloc of a world split by the Cold War. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, these ideological constraints to peace as a legitimate object of politics and research dissolved at an amazing speed. Peace lost its contested political connotation as the peacebuilding agenda became increasingly unchallenged within Western countries and was shared by conservatives, liberals, and social democrats alike. Since the mid-1990s, bilateral donors, multilateral institutions, and NGOs integrated a wide array of peacebuilding activities into their policies and programs, thereby effectively beginning to “implement” peace. This evolution was accompanied by a gradual institutionalization of peacebuilding within foreign ministries and development agencies. Concomitantly, peacebuilding was professionalized as conflict resolution specialists, peacebuilding advisors and conflict analysts were required to manage the wide range of new projects devised to end conflict and promote peace in developing countries. In parallel, NGOs specializing in peacebuilding such as International Alert, Saferworld, or the International Crisis Group gained prominence. Peace had forcefully entered the discourses and practices of policy-makers, bureaucrats, and development planners in donor countries.

Peace research has always strived to produce politically relevant knowledge that contributes to a more peaceful world. Hence, from a peace research perspective, it is tempting to consider adoption of the peacebuilding agenda by governmental organisations as the major political achievement of the past two decades. Paradoxically, quite the opposite is

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the case. Despite (or rather because of) the seemingly uncontested triumph of the “peacebuilding consensus” (Richmond 2004), we argue that peace has become increasingly bureaucratized and one-dimensional in meaning. Rather than an emancipatory ideal that mobilises people, “positive peace” (Galtung 1964) is nowadays approached by dint of a project management logic administered by Western peace and development experts working with an essentialist understanding of liberal peace. As a result, peacebuilding depoliticizes peace and normalizes a technocratic meaning of peace to the detriment of other interpretations. It does so by propagating liberal democracy as the only permissible form of political organisation, by eliminating the scope for alternative concepts of peace, and by privileging so-called expert knowledge over broader societal involvement of affected populations in defining peace itself. Positing that peace practice and peace knowledge mutually reinforce each other, we contend that the ascendancy of state-sponsored peacebuilding poses a formidable challenge to critical peace researchers. By expounding the overly bureaucratic and prescriptive logic of mainstream peacebuilding, we argue for a renewal of critical peace research that seeks to conceptualize alternative forms and meanings of peace.

We develop our argument in five steps. The first section retraces the evolving interaction between peace research and politics. It recalls some of the central features of critical peace research as well as the articulation between norms and causal assumptions. The second and third sections expound what we call the bureaucratisation of positive peace by governments and NGOs at both the institutional and ideational levels. We draw attention to how peacebuilding has been institutionalized in diplomatic and aid organisations and how it propagates a set of received ‘wisdoms’ about peace. In the fourth section we discuss problems that derive from a number of paradoxes of state-sponsored peacebuilding from the viewpoint of critical peace research. Finally, we conclude with some observations on the role of peace researchers and some suggestions on how a tradition of critical peace research could be reinvigorated to fruitfully engage with contemporary peace issues.

3.2 Peace research and peace practice

In order to grasp how state-sponsored peacebuilding coins and diffuses particular meanings and models of peace, it is necessary to understand the

relationship between peace policy and peace research and, more broadly, between (state) power and scientific knowledge. This relationship is at the core of the historically evolving meanings that have been attached to peace.² Positivists assume a separation of principle between a (peace) policy on one hand and production and dissemination of knowledge (about peace) by scholars on the other. We argue that political programs implemented in the name of peace cannot be understood independently of how peace researchers and broader sections of society - both in developing and developed countries - understand peace. In this sense the “real” world and discourse about the “real” world cannot, as Roy Bhaskar (1978) reminds us, be divorced analytically. Rather meanings are primarily a function of the prevailing socio-political context, political economy, and power structures in which language is enacted (Bourdieu 1991). Consequently, peace must be analysed both in terms of its substance by identifying the normative and causal propositions that it conveys, as well as in terms of the interactive and dialectic relationship between peace discourses and peace practices. As Forsyth (2003:266) points out in his analysis of the relationship between environmental science and politics, the two “should be seen as *co-produced* - or as mutually reinforcing at every state” [emphasis in the original]. The same applies to peace policy and peace research.

The idea that “through research it would be possible to rid the world of war or at least to reduce its incidence” (Patomäki 2001:725) was at the heart of establishing international relations (IR) as an academic discipline. Both the World Wars I and II represented founding moments of early peace research, which drew further impetus from the experience of the Cold War and a number of what Wallensteen (1988, 2001:5) calls “traumas” (nuclear threat, Vietnam war, environmental degradation, etc.) and “encouraging events” (European integration, East-West *détente*, UN peacekeeping, etc.) that shaped the peace research agenda within IR and neighbouring disciplines. Peace research triggered some of the most groundbreaking and partly utopian ideas in IR by pursuing an interdisciplinary approach to politics, economics, and law. To cite just a few examples, Mitrany’s (1943) functionalist “peace system”, Etzioni’s (1965) “political unification”, Deutsch’s (1961) “security communities”, Kras-

2 For a succinct overview of evolving meanings of peace in the international-relations and peace-research literature since the beginning of the 20th century, we refer the reader to Richmond (2007).

ner's (1983) "international regimes", Boulding's (1989) work on the nature of power, and Burton's (1989) "conflict prevention" all explored principles of cooperation and peaceful interactions in world politics.

With the advent of weapons of mass destruction, scholars' declared normative standpoint became more prominent as peace research evolved into a discipline that concentrated on the conditions under which a threatened humanity could survive (Deutsch 1972). Peace research distinguished itself from modern IR theory, as it posited the value of peace as primary when compared to other international objectives or interests (Koppe 2005). Since the end of the 1960s a considerable portion of the heterogeneous peace-research community has defined itself as an essentially value-driven group of scholars that seeks to investigate how human coexistence can be grounded in harmonious interests and cooperation rather than in realist conceptions of "negative peace" (Galtung 1964). In his 1976 review of peace research, Singer (1976) distinguishes between "the pure science school", "the applied science school", and "the radical critique school". To various degrees the latter two schools shared the idea of peace research being value driven.

Contrary to other IR and political science research traditions, only peace research explicitly conceives of peace "as being either negative or positive in character as a focus for its research and normative agendas" (Richmond 2007:250). Rather than narrowly focusing on conflicts, peace researchers have studied various forms of direct, structural, or cultural violence as antithetical to peace (Miall *et al.* 1999). Conflicts are not reduced to social anomy, but viewed as catalysts of social change and might therefore even be promoted as long as they are not destructive (Kriesberg 1998). The critical peace research tradition best epitomizes scholars' quest to combine "formal value orientation toward peace while seeking legitimacy through empiricist practices" (Reid and Yanarella 1976:316).³ Peace researchers' self-proclaimed role consists of contributing to peace strategies by bridging "general theory as well as political

³ Different interpretations exist about what 'critical peace research' consists of and who its major protagonists are. We use the label 'critical' to refer to peace researchers with a declared value-commitment to peace and who assume 'that human ideas and concepts are significant from the point of view of reproducing or changing social relations' (Patomäki 2001:727). Exemplary in this regard is the West German peace-research tradition of *kritische Friedensforschung* (Senghaas 1971), which since the 1970s produced 'substantively significant, theoretically informed, historically oriented, and self-reflective' contributions to peace research (Reid and Yanarella 1976:317). See the 1973 special issue of the *Journal of Peace Research* on 'Peace Research in the Federal Republic of Germany', 10(3).

practice” (Wallensteen 2001:11). Patomäki (2001:726) underlines peace research’s prescriptive character as “an applied science charged with the task not only of presenting how things actually are, but also of telling how they should be”.⁴

Despite claims to the contrary, this declaredly normative orientation of peace research is not necessarily affecting its scientific validity. According to Max Weber’s famous reflection on this question, there is no correlation between moral indifference and objectivity (Weber 1949:60). To achieve scientific validity, the knowledge derived from normative basis (*verstehen*) must be verified by empirical tests. A purely empirical science, however, does not tell anyone what he or she *should* do, but rather what she or he *could* do (Hughes 1979:308). This combination of value-commitment and scientific rigour is essential for peace researchers who seek to be utopian in their ultimate normative orientation and empirically sober in regard to their scientific standards. In particular, critical German peace researchers apprehended science as an intellectual instrument oriented towards emancipation and the creation of equality (Krippendorff 1973).

3.3 The bureaucratisation of positive peace

Peace researchers used to struggle convincing foreign policy makers and development practitioners about the moral need for and the practical feasibility of scientifically inspired peace strategy. In a 1981 article on the role of German peace researchers, Groten and Jansen (1981:175) deplored “the alienation from social reality and practical policy-making of the scholarly community of peace researchers”. During the Cold War international politics were primarily framed in terms of bipolar super-power confrontation. Positive peace was on the agenda of peace researchers (Galtung 1964, 1969) and various national peace movements, but by and large not a foreign policy objective materializing in principled and causal peace beliefs. Development policy was largely seen as apolitical, and its protagonists mostly refrained from discursive references to peace, which was perceived as politically conspicuous. Governments’ scepti-

⁴ Scholarly activism is obviously not confined to peace research. See Jackson and Kaufman (2007) for a recent case study of U.S. security policy activism.

cism towards positive peace ideas that critical peace researchers had advocated since the 1970s eroded quickly after the Cold War.

However, the demise of the Soviet Union, the political victory of U.S.-championed (neo-) liberalism, and the spread of intra-state conflicts gave momentum to new conceptions of peace and international engagement framed in terms of “preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peacekeeping” (Boutros-Ghali 1992). With the publication of the *UN Agenda for Peace*, post-conflict peacebuilding [defined as an “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict” (*idem.*: article 21)], was recognized for the first time as an indispensable foreign policy goal. Originally conceived to propagate military peace keeping and the notion of conflict prevention, the *UN Agenda for Peace* quickly became a founding ideological reference for government-sponsored peacebuilding across the globe.

Throughout the 1990s the United Nations, Bretton Woods institutions, the European Union, and foreign ministries of major donor countries developed a plethora of peacebuilding definitions. In doing so, they alluded to related concepts such as conflict prevention, peacekeeping, crisis management, and post-conflict reconstruction (Barnett *et al.* 2007). In parallel, NGOs and humanitarian agencies produced their own interpretations of peacebuilding by conceptually linking the latter to development and relief programs (Lewer 1999).

The gradual rapprochement between civilian and military peacebuilding on one hand and between development and security policy on the other motivated governments to elaborate increasingly comprehensive, but distinctly syncretistic peacebuilding “packages”. These packages combine a wide and extremely diverse range of activities including trauma work, small-arms control, legal reforms, and infrastructure projects. To cite a representative example of this tendency, Japan’s development agency (JICA 2003) lists the following tasks in its peacebuilding strategy document: reconciliation, governance including democratization, the “promotion of legal systems” and “support for administration”, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization, reintegration of ex-combatants, small-arms control, “rehabilitation of social infrastructure”, “economic recovery”, “assistance for socially vulnerable people”, and humanitarian emergency relief. Recent peacebuilding definitions by gov-

ernmental bodies echo this inclusive and wide-ranging understanding of peace that can be equated to positive peace, as all root causes of conflict are addressed by bureaucratic peacebuilding.⁵ It seems that Galtung's call for creation of positive peace was finally heard by statesmen, bureaucrats, and development planners.

Peacebuilding not only penetrated the policy agendas of major diplomatic and aid organisations; it also led to new funding schemes and administrative units. Already by the mid-1990s peacebuilding and reconciliation were considered as "marketable items, assured of funding" (Bennett and Kayitesi-Blewitt 1996:39).⁶ A decade after publication of the *UN Agenda for Peace*, Bush (2003:49) observed the "commodification" of peacebuilding within the development industry. The bureaucratisation of positive peace evolved incrementally and went largely unnoticed by the larger public. Institutionally, it progressed by dint of newly created administrative branches within foreign ministries and development agencies on one hand, and by mainstreaming of peacebuilding activities and frameworks into existing humanitarian aid and development programs on the other. Peacebuilding was increasingly professionalized as development experts, peace researchers, members of think tanks, diplomats, and area studies specialists were recruited on full- and part-time basis to consult, implement, and evaluate projects of the "peacebuilding infrastructure" (Dress 2005). Numerous OECD countries substantially increased financial resources for civilian peacebuilding both within and outside their existing development programs throughout the 1990s. As a result "an entire industry of "peacebuilding" consultants, experts, and practitioners" (Denskus 2007:657) emerged over the past decade. Within the United Nations system, institutionalization of the peacebuilding agenda culminated in creation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission at the UN World Summit in 2005. At budgetary level, the decision by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee to include a number of peacebuilding activities

5 For example, the OECD (1997:86) provides the following definition: 'Peacebuilding and reconciliation focuses on long-term support to, and establishment of, viable political and socio-economic and cultural institutions capable of addressing the root causes of conflicts, as well as other initiatives aimed at creating the necessary conditions for sustained peace and stability. These activities also seek to promote the integration of competing or marginalised groups within mainstream society, through providing equitable access to political decision-making, social networks, economic resources and information, and can be implemented in all phases of conflict'.

6 Canada pioneered the institutionalization of peacebuilding by establishing an annual fund of \$10 million (CAN) earmarked for peacebuilding and jointly managed by its foreign ministry and development agency in 1996 (DFAIT 2000:17).

into its member states' official development assistance statistics represented a significant step in the field's ongoing bureaucratisation (OECD 2005). Concomitantly, the conceptual and operational boundaries between peacebuilding and development were further blurred.

One driving force of expanding civilian peacebuilding was use and adoption of seasoned administrative procedures of humanitarian and development aid to peacebuilding. At the onset, donors propagated conflict and crisis prevention, "conflict sensitivity" (Africa Peace Forum *et al.* 2004), and "do no harm" principles (Anderson 1999) to increase the effectiveness of aid projects in conflict situations as well as to minimize their unintended negative consequences. As the peacebuilding agenda gained strength, peacebuilding was itself integrally subjected to the project management logic that had been used to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate development projects (Duffield 2001b). Project cycle management effectively rationalized peacebuilding, as it allowed for "planning, assessment, and evaluation of peace" (Paffenholz 2005:2). Since peacebuilding had evolved into a proper public policy funded by Western taxpayers, the progress of individual projects needed to be reported, impacts had to be measured, and lessons to be learned. Practical tools that permitted implementers to analyse a given conflict context, formulate a corresponding peacebuilding strategy, develop indicators of project success, and measure impacts of project activities rapidly gained popularity in the peacebuilding community (Bush 1998; Fisher *et al.* 2000; Reychler and Paffenholz 2001). Given the need to equip its bureaucrats, project partners and consultants with methods to plan and evaluate peacebuilding projects, donor agencies like DFID (2002), GTZ (Leonhardt 2001), Sida (2006), and USAID (2005) developed their own conflict-analysis manuals. Just as participatory rapid appraisal tools had to be invented to facilitate development operations (Chambers 1994), bureaucratic peacebuilding produced its own conflict analysis tools that allowed peacebuilders ignorant about local contexts to implement projects quickly. Like participatory rapid-appraisal tools, donor-propagated conflict analysis templates are built on selective and under-theorized understandings of peace that eventually produce a certain number of "peace orthodoxies" as described in the following section.

3.4 Peace orthodoxies

The bureaucratisation of positive peace by donor agencies evolved in parallel to the forging and dissemination of particular meanings of and assumptions about peace at the ideational level. From an academic viewpoint, peacebuilding's ontology is difficult to determine because of its definitional incoherence and the many domains where peacebuilders are active. David (2002:20) suggests that there are "as many visions of peacebuilding as there are experts on the issue and actors in the field". Barnett *et al.* (2007:44) reckon that this definitional incoherence explains the success of the peacebuilding concept, because it "camouflage[s] divisions over how to handle the postconflict challenge".

Yet, backed by budgets and bureaucracies and couched in a humanitarian vocabulary, state-sponsored peacebuilding forwards numerous assumptions about reality, which are presented as factual evidence. Civilian peacebuilders' causal beliefs in many ways bear a resemblance to the "environmental orthodoxies" that Forsyth (2003) observed within contemporary environmental policy. These orthodoxies are "institutionalized, but highly criticized conceptualizations" of a problem that policy seeks to solve (Forsyth 2003:37). They represent "vague statements or 'received wisdoms' rather than a narrowly defined scientific theory or hypothesis" (*idem.*). Over the years civilian peacebuilding institutionalized numerous such vague statements and received 'wisdoms' about positive peace and the way to achieve it. For the purpose of this article, we refer to these vague statements and received wisdoms as "peace orthodoxies".

Arguably the most influential "peace orthodoxies" concern (1) the tacit assumption that peace is an uncontested idea, (2) that peace can be achieved by dint of planned interventions, and (3) that liberal democracy equals peace.

The first and maybe most significant peace orthodoxy concerns peace itself, since peacebuilders tend to take its internal nature for granted. Although they generally concur that peace must be and is more than the absence of physical violence, few peacebuilding programs actually define peace. A cursory review of representative policy and strategy documents unearths bureaucrats' received ideas about peace, which is described in either indistinct or tautological terms. For example, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2004:15) mentions "lasting and sustainable peace

within and between states” as the goal of peacebuilding. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation describes peace as being “built on solid economic, socio-cultural, and political institutions” (SDC 2003:6). The Canadian peacebuilding strategy equates peace to “human security” (DFAIT 2000:14), while the German government and the European Union favor the term “structural stability” (Leonhardt 2001). A majority of governmental peacebuilding documents including conflict-analysis guidelines simply refrain from defining peace. Consequently, the following contradiction emerges: while donor countries institutionalized peacebuilding politically, rhetorically, and administratively, they assume the meaning of peace to be essentially given and uncontested.

A second orthodoxy of peacebuilding concerns how peace can be achieved. As a result of peace strategies being colonized by planning and management tools, project cycle management, and impact assessments, peacebuilding bureaucrats assume that peace can be engineered externally if one has the appropriate knowledge, local partners, and financial means. This assumption translates into a “toolbox” approach to peace that has become common currency in the practice-oriented peacebuilding literature. The latter proposes a set of tools and instruments that can be combined almost at will by external peace promoters. Representative examples of such technocratic methodologies for peace are Lund’s (2001) four-page “Toolbox for responding to conflicts and building peace” or a CD-ROM on “Conflict prevention and peacebuilding” produced by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP 2001), which allows desk officers to match particular conflict scenarios with predefined peacebuilding strategies. In a study commissioned by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Smith (2004:32) uses the metaphor of a “palette” from which peacebuilders choose and combine “tools” as if they were “mixing paint”. Despite repeated pleas for taking into account local contexts and popular perceptions by means of participatory appraisals, bureaucratic peacebuilding essentially transpires a top-down vision of peace promotion. An instrumentalist understanding of social relations and target groups in conflict zones - the so-called “beneficiaries” of peacebuilding - accompanies the orthodox belief in the feasibility of a standard set of peacebuilding tools.

The third and most criticized orthodoxy of civilian peacebuilding concerns the assumed nexus between liberal democracy and peace. As Paris

(1997:56) observed in his seminal contribution to the topic, peacebuilding has been “guided by the single paradigm of ‘liberal internationalism’”. The “construction of a liberal society” (Biersteker 2007:39) is at the core of bureaucratic interpretations of positive peace that associate wars with backwardness, democratic deficit, and a lack of modernity (Cramer 2006). By preaching market liberalization, good governance, and civil-society promotion as universal recipes for (democratic) peace, donor peacebuilding uncritically endorses democratic peace theory. As peace ontologically diffuses into liberal democracy and *vice versa*, international organisations such as the OECD (2001) advocate good governance and civil society as foundational for peace. As a result, donor agencies uncritically share the idea that conflict is caused by “poverty, economic inequality, ethnic discrimination, or lack of democracy” (Sida 2006:33) and, as in the case of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC 2003:20), peacebuilding and governance become “two sides of the same coin”. As one result, civil society organisations are designated to provide “local capacities for peace” (Anderson 1999) or to act in the form of “peace constituencies” (Lederach 1997) as spearheads of the liberal democracy to be established.

3.5 Paradoxes of donor peace

Progressive bureaucratisation of positive peace since the mid-1990s has given birth to new principled and causal beliefs about peace (Goldstein and Keohane 1993:8-11). Donor peace is ideologically liberal, but it presents itself as universally true while its operational activities are guided by largely unquestioned causal assumptions or “peace orthodoxies”. Just like national security served as the overall legitimacy for policy-making during the Cold War (Buzan *et al.* 1998), peace serves as a conceptually evasive but symbolically powerful reference to credit humanitarian interventions in conflict-torn societies. Implementing agencies perceive that peacebuilding and development share the same goal of helping “rebuild or repair societies that are hurting, physically, economically, and socially” (Neufeldt *et al.* 2002:4). As a result, the boundary between development and peace becomes blurred, as donor agencies assume that foreign aid causally contributes to peace and that peace and development are mutually constitutive (Lange and Quinn 2003). Debates about peacebuilding focus much more on *how* to achieve a pre-conceived idea of

donor peace than *if* particular strategies actually contribute to peace and *whether* they are shared and endorsed by beneficiaries (Pearce 1997). The bureaucratisation of positive peace has negative consequences on how major international organisations and donor countries apprehend peace. Three particularly problematic points stick out.

First, peacebuilding “black-boxed” (Latour 1987) peace into an empty shell that has become void of meaning. The need to generate quick peacebuilding impacts within narrowly defined project goals and time-frames runs counter to efforts to conceive peace more meaningfully. Richmond (2004:136) rightly points out that peacebuilding professionals expend little effort “upon conceptualizing the essential qualities of peace, nor are devoted to the multiple interpretations of peace”. Instead peace and development planners implement “mass-produced [initiatives] according to blueprints that meet Northern specifications and (short-term) interests” (Bush 2003:49). By espousing a managerial project logic, peacebuilders evacuate the thorny question of what peace means for different social groups and how it can be attained in a particular place and time. Peacebuilding discourse evacuates these declaredly normative questions relating to popular identity, local and global power relations, and contested conceptions of social justice. However, the evacuation of these questions cannot be taken as evidence of their irrelevance nor of an absence of local struggles over the definition of what peace is and means. Although peacebuilding discourse circumvents the discussion of such fundamentals, its organisational structure is part of “an enormous experiment in social engineering” (Paris 1997:56) that is deeply political. Donor peace presents itself as an enlightened alternative to power politics but rarely allows room for alternative concepts of peace that deviate from its liberal agenda.

Second, in contrast to the emancipatory ideals of critical peace research, post-Cold War donor peace is highly prescriptive and instrumentalist. Bureaucratic civilian peacebuilding reproduces a division of labour in which the global North, represented by international organisations, donor agencies, and NGOs, defines and finances peace while the global South is expected to absorb these peace projects and projections. As a result, state-sponsored peacebuilding contradicts its own credo about the need to empower local actors and constituencies in shaping the future of their society. Instead Western peacebuilding professionals force their own “post-

conflict reconstruction makeover fantas[ies]” (Cramer 2006:227) upon recipient countries and target groups. As legal anthropology remind us, “disputing is cultural behaviour” (Merry 1987:2063) and involves controversial beliefs about social harmony and conflict, which have often little in common with implementers’ peacebuilding toolboxes. Customary conflict resolution mechanisms that enjoy great acceptance among, for instance, rural dwellers in developing countries are often embedded in entirely non-liberal worldviews and conceptions of self and society (Hagmann 2007). Consequently, state-sponsored peace promotion undermines communities’ ability and elbow room to pursue their own conceptions of peace (Ginty 2007), which peacebuilders wrongly assume to be identical with their own liberal values.

Third, the peaceful transformation of “social order” (Senghaas 1997) necessitates contextual knowledge about peace that is locally relevant and recognized by the different stakeholders involved. In the case of bureaucratic peacebuilding, principled beliefs about peace are not subject to discussion since target groups are often only consulted to determine implementation modalities. Peacebuilding shares the fate of conventional development, because it disseminates uniform and formalized types of technical knowledge about peace and the ways to achieve it. These confront localized, contextualized, and empirical types of popular knowledge about conflict transformation (Olivier de Sardan 2006). Outsiders’ technical peacebuilding knowledge essentially camouflages the fact that implementers often lack an in-depth understanding of local conflict contexts. Instead, peacebuilders substitute their lack of contextual knowledge with pseudo-scientific peace orthodoxies that are legitimized with the type of managerial discourse that results from bureaucratization. Since external “expert” knowledge primes popular and indigenous conceptions of peace, peacebuilding risks being stripped of its ideational substance, since target groups may become more interested in appropriating a project’s material resources than its actual goals.

3.6 Conclusions

To conclude, we would like to draw attention to the consequences of the ascendancy of state-sponsored peacebuilding on the peace research community. We have highlighted how the triumph of the peacebuilding agenda promotes a concept according to which peace can be achieved by

bureaucratic means. Although peacebuilding is committed to positive peace, its discourses and practices tend to depoliticize peace. Peacebuilding transformed peace into an apolitical concept whose meanings, substance, and causal beliefs are taken for granted by practitioners and policy-makers. This development should be of concern to peace researchers who are committed to offering their intellectual abilities to the “peace search” (Galtung 1964:4). Most academic writings on peacebuilding are either deliberately practice oriented or lack a more critical stance towards peacebuilding’s shortcomings. With the gradual bureaucratisation of peace, peace researchers have moved much closer to peace practice, yet knowledge about peace has not necessarily increased. Thus there is a need for peace researchers to engage more critically with the overly technocratic, prescriptive, and instrumentalist conceptions of contemporary peacebuilding. This can be achieved by contributing to alternative conceptions of peace, by discussing problems of peacebuilding’s ethical and normative shortcomings, and by proposing avenues for reconciling local and expert-based knowledge about peace. How can peace research engage more seriously with these issues? Within the realm of qualitative research, we see two different and equally promising avenues for engagement.

The first one consists of rejuvenating the critical peace research tradition, which produced “substantively significant, theoretically informed, historically oriented, and self-reflective” contributions to former peace research (Reid and Yanarella 1976:317). Patomäki (2001:733-734) has recently outlined the tenets of a contemporary critical peace research agenda that combines realist ontology with relativism in regard to truth judgements and reliance on peace theories. If peacebuilding has “depoliticise[d] social transformation” (Daley 2006:305), critical peace research needs to conceptually re-politicise peace and social transformation.⁷ Critical peace research also allows intellectual confrontation of the predominantly liberal internationalism in global politics and its underlying belief in scientific and intellectual modernization (Zacher and Matthew 1995). It raises awareness about the fact that peace cannot be achieved by gearing interventions solely to changing the “other” party in foreign contexts. Instead it must eventually transform the very interna-

⁷ Such an endeavour could build upon key insights of the West German peace research tradition of *kritische Friedensforschung* (Senghaas 1971).

tional order in which peacebuilding is embedded. Critical peace researchers should document the plurality of peace meanings that exist in both developed and developing countries, and explore how the bargaining power of weaker social groups can be increased in formulating and implementing donor-funded peace projects. Finally, critical peace researchers could also scrutinize the dialectical relationship and co-production of peace discourse - both by policy-makers and researchers - and peace practices.

A second and complementary approach consists of elaborating more detailed *in situ* and *ex post* empirical analyses of operational peacebuilding projects, either on the basis of a comparative research design or as ethnographies of peacebuilding.⁸ Policy debates have mostly focussed on how to improve peacebuilding rather than asking whether particular measures contribute to peace, what this peace looks like, and if beneficiaries endorse external interventions (Pearce 1997). A more empirical approach to peacebuilding, which makes use of established qualitative social science techniques including deep immersion into the local context, can address this gap. Authors of the “ethnography of aid” school (Mosse 2004) have drawn attention to the contradictory interests, power relations, and practices that accompany the implementation of aid policies and projects. A similar line of inquiry could be pursued for peacebuilding projects, an approach followed by Bichsel (2009) in her ethnography of peacebuilding projects in Kyrgyzstan. Thus the aim is not to determine whether peacebuilding works, but to understand how it operates as a system of rules, how it is organised institutionally, and how it is reproduced socially (Korf 2004).

Whichever strategy peace researchers adopt, the bureaucratization of peace requires that scholars position themselves more explicitly towards government-sponsored peacebuilding. Before the triumph of peacebuilding, critical peace researchers mostly played roles of “issue advocates” (Pielke 2007) who lobbied for positive peace concepts and strategies within foreign policy.⁹ While their impact on policy was limited, critical peace research produced original notions of peace and coexistence. With the institutional and ideational bureaucratisation of liberal peace, peace

⁸ An example of how this could be done for the concept of human security is provided by Goetschel (2005).

⁹ Based on the degrees of prevailing value consensus and uncertainty on a particular issue, scholars can take up different roles as either ‘pure scientists’, ‘science arbiters’, ‘issue advocates’ or ‘honest brokers’ (Pielke 2007).

research was overtaken by depoliticized conceptions of peace diffused by powerful international organisations. Many peace researchers abandoned their critical stance to power, which was partially overtaken by critical security studies (Eriksson 1999:319). Crucial questions about the underlying norms and legitimacy of bureaucratic peacebuilding have remained largely unasked or confined to small academic circles. This represents a major challenge for both peacebuilding practice and peace researchers. The former need to be sensitized about the disempowering aspects of peacebuilding, while the latter must rethink their role and contributions along the arguments presented in this chapter.