11 Social scientists in post-war contexts

Bridging the gap between reflection and action

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In this chapter, I examine the tension between norms and interest that marks the motivations and actions of the diverse organizations and actors in post-war contexts. While in some ways acting as ideological entrepreneurs, norm-following employees of international organizations also possess status and privileges in the post-war context. In addition, multiple norms compete for attention of international and local actors, and it is far from certain which norms will end up motivating behavior if norms supersede interest as the main motivation. Finally, these international workers often take for granted that their preferred intervention works, even if it does not.[2] Unfortunately, even if some intervention works, we often do not know why this occurs as well.

To illustrate these issues, I will look at an under-investigated set of interveners in post-conflict settings, scholars and academics. In addition to secondary sources, I will present evidence drawn from my own experience as a scholar practitioner. Just like international bureaucrats and activists, scholars face concerns about the type of interventions that occur in post-war societies. After evaluating different types of intervention, I argue that a productive approach for social scientists to both gain theoretical knowledge and make a difference on the ground is to engage in targeted micro-interventions. Thereby, we can satisfy both demands of being impartial researchers and ethically supporting actors that promote democracy and peace.

In the first section of this chapter, I will lay out the challenges faced by scholars in understanding the actions of international NGO workers in post-war contexts. The second section will investigate the inherent dilemmas facing scholars who conduct research in post-war contexts. The third section will present a model of scholarly micro-interventions that enhance both scholarly analysis and social impact. I use the term intervention to refer to any externally led process that aims to change a specific social institution: for instance dialogue for peace, or electoral assistance for democracy. After identifying reasons why practitioners overestimate success in their work, I recommend that both practitioners and scholars learn from the failures of the various post-war interventions.

The complexity of the post-conflict context

Are actors involved in democracy promotion motivated by their norms and values, or are they merely strategic actors who maximize their own personal or institutional interests? This debate is clearly not settled, and for good reasons. Constructivists argue that agents of change such as international organizations and NGOs take actions that reflect their internalized norms (Barnett and Finnemore 1999; Finnemore 2003). Rationalist authors on the other hand claim that organizations operate in a market where they "scramble" for funds, and therefore act strategically to maximize their interests (Cooley and Ron 2002). In practice, both sides overstate their claims and when they engage in empirical analysis, they accept that both ideas and strategic interests matter. As expected in such scholarly debates, each side argues that their favorite theory provides the best explanation.

During my field work interviews in Kosovo in 2007–2009, I kept asking actors about their motivations. Following the constructivist theoretical framework, I was expecting to see clear patterns of motivation. The United Nations and the NGOs should be motivated by values, while consultancy companies should be motivated by profit. I was surprised to notice that actors usually provided mixed motivations for their behavior. UN officials were usually both highly paid professionals and followers of their institutional norms. Some saw their mission to transform the society from a culture of violence and mono-ethnicity to peace and multi-ethnicity. However, even the UN volunteers were usually paid a high salary compared to local wages. Volunteering is also seen as a stepping stone to other UN jobs. (Similarly, religious missionaries believe they will gain salvation in the afterlife in return for bringing more converts to the church.) Civil society professionals are also bound by their mission statement. However, NGO leaders constantly worried about funding and were continuously fund-raising for the next project. An international lawyer, Robert (personal interview, 2008)[3] claimed he wanted to help Kosovars build their state, but he would not stay a single day if he did not have his 10,000 dollars a month USAID contract. Maybe the purest strategic actors would be private companies like Blackwater or Halliburton who are beneficiaries of the outsourcing practices in an era where even powerful states like the United States outsource the provision of their services, including coercion and protection.

Some of the respondents possibly lied to me when they tried to mention both normative and strategic reasons. Yet, they believe that having more than one reason to pursue a certain course of action is better than only one reason. Indeed, policy makers also like to have a variety of different reasons, since they are convincing for different constituencies. For instance, President Obama, just like other political leaders, usually provides both moral and efficiency reasons for his various initiatives, from health care to sending troops to Afghanistan.

Taking at face value their stated mission, one would assume that international representatives follow clearly stated norms in their professional work: to transform the host society into a democratic and stable one. However, the international professionals often face competing norms. As global culture theory suggests, there are a multitude of norms in the world polity that could complement or compete with each other (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 37). Conflict resolution and human rights norms, for example, compete when local societies and international interveners have to decide whether to provide amnesty for former military commanders accused of war crimes for the sake of stability, or prosecute them in courts for the sake of human rights (Babbit 2009, 616–617). International actors therefore face multiple norms and they have to negotiate their prioritization, often believing in preferred principles and interventions that could complement or undermine each other.

International "missionaries" are also frequently unclear about why their intervention would move the host society from war to peace, from authoritarianism to democracy, and from planned economy to free markets. In other words, international practitioners often come with a fixed intervention in their minds; they do not know if it will work and how it will work, yet they assume it will work. Such activists often do not evaluate their interventions to check if their theory works. Within the overall mission, however, we can distinguish between various strategies to achieve the same goal. Various actors believe that peace can be achieved through dialogue (Nansen Dialogue Center), promotion of human rights (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, police academy), military coercion (NATO), "naming and shaming" watch-dog NGOs, election support, political parties support and so on. Yet, what I call strategies, or means to pursue the general goal, can also be deeply held values for the actors. For instance, religious groups who focus on dialogue deeply believe that such a means makes a difference. Human rights activists strongly believe that through monitoring, naming and shaming, a more peaceful society will arise (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

Why is it that, despite all resources spent in rebuilding post-war countries, we know so little about what kinds of interventions are effective, and under what conditions? Part of the reason why we do not know the conditions under which dialogue or electoral accountability work is because both scholars and practitioners hold these values dearly, and therefore find it hard to test them. Lant Pritchett (2008) suggests that the reason most development programs (some of them are the same as post-war programs) do not get evaluated rigorously through randomized double-blind experiments is because true believers in specific interventions already think they know the value of the intervention. Other less altruistic advocates worry about using evaluation, because negative evaluation results would undermine future funding of the organization. My own experience as a practitioner confirms this insight. Unfortunately, there is little to no

incentive to report failure in civil society or international organization work, since future funding is contingent on current spending on already approved priorities.

Our knowledge of peace-building would increase if the implicit theories of change of all these strategies would be made explicit and tested on the ground. A theory or hypothesis of change gives the reasons and mechanisms (why and how) for the process that links a set of activities to the desired social goal. For example, the theory of change for facilitating dialogue between antagonistic groups is that people who dislike each other will recognize the humanity of the other and either transform their identity to a more inclusive group, or engage in bargaining negotiations to resolve the conflict. The expectation for change is that the process of dialogue brings peace, an outcome that can be measured in various ways. The contact hypothesis, first formulated by Gordon Allport (1954) underpins the expected positive change through dialogue. The premise of the contact hypothesis is that interpersonal contact among majority and minority groups reduces animosity and stereotypes, thereby contributing to improved inter-group relations. Yet, we know that dialogue sometimes fails to produce peaceful interactions or broader social peace. For instance, dialogue between antagonistic individuals may fail when one group presents oneself as more powerful and arrogant. Negative stereotypes can then be reinforced instead of transformed. Dialogue was not a sufficient condition for peace, since places like Bosnia had high inter-ethnic dialogue, intermarriage and cooperation before the war. In addition, as Thania Paffenholz (2009, 11, 15) and her colleagues have detailed, dialogue is often used during the violent stage of a conflict, where its effectiveness is less likely to occur compared to the later post-war stage.

Let me illustrate the importance of making our theories of change explicit with a personal example from my work as a practitioner. Between 2002 and 2005, I developed and implemented a peace education project in Albania. My work fit with both my internalized norm of building peace and democracy and my interest to have a job. Initially, I thought that building a culture of peace was the process to achieve both peace and democratization goals. A culture of peace refers to "a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiations among individuals, groups and nations" (Dhanapala 2005, 12). Albania was emerging from state collapse in 1997 when 2000 people died as disorder reigned in most of the country. As pupils and teachers learned and applied human rights protection and conflict resolution in their daily lives, they would change their values and be less likely to resort to violence. I have explained both the intended and unintended consequences of the project elsewhere (Skendaj 2009). As the national project coordinator, I occupied an "in-between" position, as I linked the international organizations with the local aspects of the peace education

program. One particular incident taught me a lot about how I had to change my strategies in order to achieve the overall goal.

One of the project schools had both rural pupils and urban ones. After hearing from both pupils and teachers that the urban pupils and rural pupils did not often mix, I assumed that they needed to have densely shared experiences to become friends. Hence, the project steering group decided to sponsor several sport events, debates and cultural activities that specifically would engage the rural and urban kids. A year into the project, I still heard occasional complaints that the rural kids still "stank." During a visit to the dormitory where the village kids stayed, I noticed a terrible stench coming from all floors. Politely, I asked the dormitory director about the smell. She said that unfortunately, the rural kids had usually two pairs of clothes with them. Since their mountainous villages were far from the town, they went home at most every two weeks. The dormitory did not have a washing-machine, and only some of the pupils washed their clothes by hand in the extremely cold water. Despite frequent requests from dormitory director, the municipality had refused the dormitory's request to buy a washing-machine. The next day, we, the project local coordinators, decided to buy a washing-machine and some detergent for the dormitory. The causal mechanism for the divisions between the two groups was therefore material and related to structural conditions of extreme rural poverty. While my goal remained the same, improving the relationship between the rural and urban pupils, the strategy changed. Hence, looking for motivation might not be the most productive research strategy. Instead, we should look at theories of change, mechanisms, and rigorously think about how changes at the micro level contribute to the macro-level.

As a practitioner, I was worried initially about reporting failures or strategy changes in my project. What if we did not receive the funding for next year? The receipt of the second and final year of funding relied upon the spending of the full amount of the first year funding, and changing strategies and funding priorities in the middle of the project might not seem "professional." As in many projects, the last two months of the fiscal year were jammed with activities and programs, in order to assure that the full amount had been spent. When I told the international project board in the peace education program about the washing machine, I was pleasantly surprised with their response. The international leaders of the project liked the learning from failure experience, and they encouraged me to write about it. I did (Skendaj 2009).

Scholars as internationals in the post-war context

While practitioners are often oblivious or reluctant to test their preferred interventions on the ground, there is another set of professionals who love to see unexpected results: scholars. Practitioners are rightly afraid that they might lose funding if the results show that the intended intervention

did not have the predicted results. Scholars, on the other hand, love it when the expected outcome fails to emerge, because they get a new article or book out of it. So, even when they share the same values with practitioners, scholars have the incentive to test the theories of change more rigorously.

Scholars who conduct research on post-war contexts are a subset of these internationals who are important in both framing the violent conflicts and suggesting ways to deal with them. There is indeed little scholarly research which investigates the scholars who study post-war developments. We know that writers and academics have influenced the discourse during war and in post-war settings. Infamous books like *Balkan Ghosts* (Kaplan 1993), which blamed the Yugoslav wars on the presence of ancient hatreds among the different ethnic groups, implied that there was nothing to be done to stop these wars.[4] While Robert Kaplan is a journalist and not an academic, his book was bedtime reading for President Bill Clinton, and arguably delayed the international intervention in Bosnia. Nationalist academics in many countries also publish research that views the war from a partisan perspective: "The other group was solely responsible for the war, and their fighters were criminals. On the other hand, our nation had the moral right to fight the war, and our fighters were heroes." Such parallel narratives are also held by the various groups who are fighting for dominance within the same territory.[5]

Compared to such blatantly partisan and often inadequate scholarship, many social scientists would place their faith in the scientific method. While I also am a proponent of using empirical investigations to confirm or reject various hypotheses, I am also cautious about the ways scientific knowledge can be used to oppress people, instead of empower them. On one hand, scientific knowledge has help create the computer, the electricity, the telephone and printer that are enabling my work as I write these pages. On the other hand, scientific knowledge has help produce nuclear weapons that are capable of eradicating life on earth. Pseudo-science was used to justify planned collectivization in communist economies, resulting often in famine and reduced agricultural production. In addition, some scientists have intentionally hurt their subjects of research, as demonstrated by the recent scandal of US scientists infecting 1500 Guatemalan prison inmates, sex workers and soldiers with syphilis in the 1940s.

Just as international organizations rely upon technocratic rational and impartial expertise to enhance their authority and power (Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 20–29), social scientists also try to justify their lack of bias through the use of impartial and objective methods. Barnett and Finnemore argue that the power and authority of IOs relies upon them providing technocratic and impartial solutions to global problems. The expertise of researchers relies upon using the methods to uncover causes, links and maps of social phenomena. Impartiality is therefore crucial in both constructions of expertise. As Barnett states:

> Social scientists have also searched for a different kind of purity and unity, a purity of a knowledge that is generalizable to the ages and a unification with the logic of inquiry that defines the natural sciences. This search has encouraged social scientists to try to purge themselves of the political by reaching for an epistemological objectivity and by distancing themselves from practical engagement.
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> (Barnett 2008, 237)

The norm of impartiality, therefore, is difficult to be reconciled with "practical engagement," the desire and ability to intervene on processes and actors on the ground. Field work in social science tries to reconcile the competing demands for explaining general processes and making sense of the particular experience rooted in time and space. The expectation of the field work is that social scientists make positive research that aims at minimizing the subjectivity of the researcher. However, there is very little knowledge or training for scholars who conduct field work in terms of enhancing their "practical engagement."

While social science researchers celebrate the norm of detached scholarship in the unbiased pursuit of knowledge, the temptation to intervene in the field of action occurs due to either a competing norm or profit. Even when norms are the main motivation for action, different social norms may contradict each other, and the actor has to interpret what is the best course of action. While social science is supposed to be value neutral, many scholars become activists in the pursuit of certain missions. Researchers can also become involved in close relationships with their research subjects. Another PhD candidate in social science from a major university became a supporter of the main anti-establishment activist group in Kosovo and a member of the central committee of their newly created party.

In addition to my normative commitment to impartiality as a social scientist, I also have normative commitments towards democracy and peace. Indeed, the reason I chose to empirically study state-building and democratization for my thesis related to my prior normative commitment toward effective state bureaucracies and democratic institutions that help to build peace. I grew up in Albania in a tumultuous period in the history of the country: from the end of communism in 1991 to the state collapse in 1997. Ever since a gangster almost shot my father and me, as I came back for a visit from my university, I wanted to learn and use my knowledge to build better societies where rule of law prevailed.

To illustrate these challenges, I will give two examples on how I got involved with activist activities during my field work in Kosovo. First, I conducted a workshop with the main watchdog NGO who led the anti-corruption civil society network in Kosovo. What was the main motivation for this workshop? In terms of norms, I believed that democracy was a superior form of regime, not perfect, just better than others. In addition, I

also saw democracy as the best form of government that provides non-violent solutions to potential conflict. Just like countless scholars who study democratization and peace, I shared this norm with practitioners in democracy promotion. Knowing the goal of democracy, I believed in the important work of this NGO that collected and publicized information about the corruption of Kosovo parliamentarians and government. Borrowing the idea from a successful Romanian NGO, the anti-corruption NGO collected data for each candidate in national parliamentary elections on whether they were involved in corruption.

Since Kosovo has only one agency of investigative journalism and few other watchdog groups, I thought that supporting the NGO was both a good thing to do normatively, and important strategically, since it advanced the goal of democracy promotion. I also did not receive any payment for this workshop. I did think however that my support would contradict the academic norm of detached observation.

As I already interviewed one of the leaders of the watchdog NGO, I also felt that I needed to bring back something to them. I used knowledge that I had acquired through interviews with non-governmental organizations, government officials and international organizations to canvass the perception problem that the NGO had. In the workshop, I presented the two main perception issues: the government was portraying the NGO as allied to the opposition, and hence partisan and unreliable. The media, other NGOs and international organizations complained that the NGO collected its evidence in café conversations and therefore were not sure about the quality of their evidence.

In the workshop, I started by asking the activists to tell me how they were perceived and treated by both government and the public opinion. After I confirmed with them that the government viewed them as an enemy, and the public was often unsure about the quality of the evidence, I offered three recommendations. First, I noted that if some government institution performed relatively well and without corruption, then the NGO report could single them out as well as point to the corruption in other bureaucracies. Thus, to address the charge that they were not impartial observers, I suggested they include in their reports both government's faults and achievements in a systematic way, without aiming to be servile to the government. Second, they needed to be more transparent in the quality of their data. I noticed in their reports that they did not cite either newspapers or other sources. I recommended that they cite where they got their information, and use pseudonyms for the protection of some of their sources. Finally, I recommended that they create a Government Index that measured the performance of various institutions that would single out both the ineffective and effective institutions. Just like the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the NGO could give an award for good governance to the institution that had the highest improvement over the past year. The NGO organizers implemented the first two recommendations, yet they rejected

the third recommendation because they thought that the Index was a very "technocratic" solution. Justifying this logic, one of the main organizers, who had previously worked for the Kosovo central government, claimed that the international standards for Kosovo distracted people from focusing on gross corruption and mismanagement (Arben, personal interview, Kosovo 2008). Looking back, I think the organizers were right to focus on uncovering and publicizing the gross political corruption, instead of spending their scarce human resources on a government index that should be best created by scholars.

Another complication to the notion of ideological entrepreneur is that the motives are often not pure. As Stirrat (2008) points out, employees of international organizations and NGOs may also have mercenary interests, since they may earn a very good living from their jobs, in addition to pursuing a mission. Since organizations have to attract professional employees in a competitive international market, they have to pay expatriate workers comparatively high salaries that dwarf local salaries. Sometimes mercenary instincts can be as powerful, or more powerful than the missionary impulse.

For instance, the government or international organizations might ask the scholar to be a consultant for a short time. Such consultancy brings more dilemmas since there might be pressure to paint a positive picture of the organization for which you consult. During my field work in Kosovo, I became a short-term consultant for the UN Development Program (UNDP) as I wrote a chapter for the Kosovo Human Development Report on the links between civil society and government in Kosovo. I heard about the report during an interview and I expressed my interest to participate in the writing group to the UNDP coordinator. I signed in after receiving assurances that my writing would not be censored. While I did receive €750 for my chapter contribution to the report, my principal goal was to use this opportunity to complement my field work. I did not have enough research funds to conduct a survey, so I was hoping to include some of my relevant questions in the UNDP survey on civil society in Kosovo. After many discussions, I did include some of my questions in the survey, and the authors of the report referred to the responses to those questions as well. In the process of working as a consultant for the Human Development Report, I learned that the Kosovo writers were all very busy doing three or four projects at the same time, and the UNDP had three project coordinators who often did not communicate the timelines and goals to the researchers. Even though I was the last writer to get on board, I ended up coordinating the writers, revising the public survey and organizing the three main focus groups.

While the process was frustrating, it gave me additional insights about how the international organizations and NGOs function. The report was written at a critical time when the international donors were shifting their attention and resources from the civil society into supporting state bureaucracies. I hoped that our recommendations would provoke some changes in how the

state bureaucracies would relate to civil society, but to my knowledge, nothing has changed. The relations between bureaucrats and civil society are still very personalized, just like most informal networks within the central administration (Skendaj 2008). The report was published five months after its due date, and the president and prime minister attended the launch of the publication. Formally, the president of Kosovo praised the report and the government's good relation with UNDP and civil society. However, the authors who were present at the launch told me that it was obvious that the functionaries did not know anything about the content of the book.

I was able to write my chapter without being censored by the UNDP Human Development Report working group. There was only one change that I was recommended to make for my chapter that I now regret. I decided to change one key term from my initial draft. Initially, I used the term "war" to refer to the armed struggle that occurred in 1998–1999 in Kosovo between the Kosovo Liberation Army and NATO on one side, and the Yugoslav military on the other side. One internal editor from UNDP told me to change it from "war" to "conflict" because "this is how the international organizations viewed the situation." I told him that since 10,000 people died in this armed struggle, war was an appropriate term. He said the accepted usage in international community was "conflict" and "post-conflict" situation. I had already noticed that people in Kosovo widely referred to the armed struggle as "war," while the civil society, international organizations and researchers usually referred to it as "conflict." In the end, I did change the term I used in the paper from "war" to "conflict." The other authors had done the same, and I surrendered to peer pressure to confirm the "right" usage of the term for this international report. Since the writers were all Kosovo professionals with extensive experience with international organizations, they probably did not even insert "war" before they substituted it with "conflict."

I now wish I had not substituted the "war" term with the "conflict" one. Using "conflict" instead of "war" sanitizes the bloody and violent processes that occurred during the armed struggle. In the imagination of the "international community," the period after the conflict, "the post-conflict reconstruction and development" offered an opportunity to start a society and a state anew. Such term also hides the difference between victim and perpetrator, allowing the international actors to be the impartial forces that "move society forward." Of course, the sporadic violence after 1999 in Kosovo contradicted the idea that conflict had ended. Globally, between one third and half of civil wars that end start again within five years of cessation. As John Paul Lederach (2005, 43), a leading scholar practitioner of peace-building claims, "post-conflict" is the "greatest oxymoron" of all "the posts."

Despite its impreciseness (and maybe because of it), the term "post-conflict reconstruction" is still in use. Instead of merely looking at the term as the time after the end of major atrocities, the "post-conflict" term should only be used to refer to that precarious period after major violence

when the parties can still go back to war, and the (threat of) violence is still used to punish political opponents. As scholars, we should be more creative in coming up with new theoretical frameworks that will supersede the current "post-conflict reconstruction" one.

As I applied for grants and fellowships that would enable me to conduct field work in Kosovo, I also used the term "post-conflict reconstruction." I acted therefore as a client to the state patron in using the vague policy term to refer to the unsanitized reality of blood and violence. I did not think about the use of such terms when I applied. Maybe, even if I thought about it, I would have rationalized it by claiming that it was a small price to pay for receiving the funding necessary for my research. However, such small innocent compromises might make scholars not question the euphemistic policy categories, thereby preventing us from viewing the problem beyond the policy blinders.[6]

The "post-conflict" term is therefore imprecise and I would prefer it discontinued and be replaced with "post-war". However, various institutions build whole programs on the post-conflict reconstruction framework. If we have to retain the concept of "post-conflict," we should not view it as the end of conflict, but as a possible change from violent to nonviolent processes of conflict situations. The very possibility that war could recur also points to for how long should we use the "post-conflict" term. The conflict legacies that make a return to violent struggle possible mark the "post-conflict" period. Unemployed former military forces, societal factions that view the continuation of war as profitable, or groups trapped into security dilemmas could trigger another return to violence. Once such legacies are not salient anymore, we should not use the term.

A framework for scholarly intervention

What is the space for useful interventions for academics who care about social change? The issue of reconciling the ethical demands of impartial social science methods and micro-interventions toward democracy and peace is very important for students of post-war contexts. As scholars, we are studying these issues not simply because we want recognition as academics, but because we want to make a difference. Indeed, from the early days in the seventeenth century, social science developed with the hope to solve social problems, building upon the Enlightenment faith in human progress through the pursuit of knowledge.

Competing missions for social scientists who study post-war countries create dilemmas about following the norm of detached research versus direct involvement with the actors and processes. I propose one way to solve this dilemma by working on them in sequence. First, scholars may use social science analysis to learn about the place, the main forces and actors, and then intervene by helping pro-democratic social actors use this knowledge to increase their power. In return, scholars would use the

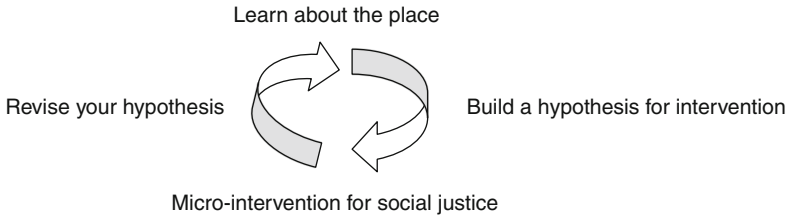

Figure 11.1 A model for social science micro-interventions in post-war contexts.

feedback from the intervention to inform their research. The iterative process can continue in the future as well, since academic analysis can also be strengthened through the results of the intervention.

Figure 11.1 illustrates this model. It builds upon the experiential learning models in which students learn through involvement. The iterative stages in the experiential learning model are concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb 1984, 42). This is a similar process to how doctors use interventions to improve the health of their patients.

The benefits of this iterative model are impressive for both the subjects of our research and for social science. Supporting the processes and local actors that contribute to peace-building and democratization creates freer and better life chances for the people. Our scholarly findings are also stronger after they have been tested on the ground.

One potential cost of this approach can occur if the intervention does harm to the people or the processes of democratization and peace-building. In order to avoid doing harm, scholar practitioners need to be aware of their micro-interventions, causal logics and check that the implementation of the intervention is not harming the people it is supposed to support (Anderson 2002). Other scope conditions include the agreement of the human research subjects to participate, and mechanisms to stop the research if negative consequences emerge. The regulations of the Institutional Review Boards in American universities, despite being cumbersome, guard against research that could potentially hurt the very people we study.

The small size of the intervention also corresponds to a vision of piecemeal social engineering, that Karl Popper (1971) contrasts with utopian or comprehensive social engineering. While utopian social engineering provides blueprints for the whole society and aligns resources and strategies to achieve the grand goal, piecemeal social engineering entails small interventions within the system, without an overall plan. Soviet communists tried to build the whole society according to the ideological Marxist blueprint, and they failed to achieve their goals. Chinese economic reforms in the past 30 years indicate the effectiveness of the piecemeal social engineering. A student of Chinese reforms, John McMillan, claims:

> China's reforms, which brought world-record growth of around 8 percent per capita for thirty years, were piecemeal. Each reform was tried out on a small scale and expanded if it worked. In Den Xiaoping's folksy formulation, China was "crossing the river by feeling each stone".
>
> (McMillan 2008, 511)

Therefore, micro-interventions avoid the hubris of comprehensive social engineering that can create big problems. Testing on a small scale also indicates the humility of the researcher, and can be easily contrasted with the arrogance that we already know about the ineffectiveness of our interventions.

Arguably, this mode of learning and intervention is superior to the fully detached mode of social science. In the latter mode, scholars refrain from providing any information for the people in the post-war contexts; instead, they just write for academic purposes. There is hubris in the detached social science mode, because the researcher is taking information and knowledge from people in distress without giving back to them knowledge that could potentially improve their lives.

Such a sequential and iterative mode of learning is also superior to another already mentioned mode encountered in post-war societies. Practitioners of international organizations often come in and give advice to people about their preferred intervention, without trying to learn comparatively about the local context or checking if their intervention works. This second kind of hubris also does not enhance the knowledge base of the actors involved in post-war peace-building and democratization. Instead, the danger is that the international is merely giving to the local something too general for them to apply in their lives. In my field work in post-war Kosovo, I heard many stories of incompetent international consultants coming up with a copy-paste solution to any issue. For instance, Gerd, an international lawyer working as a consultant for a European Union project was puzzled at how international experts translated laws without regard for their institutional preconditions. For example, an expert translated a law from Slovenia that included a non-profit foundation that would facilitate the implementation of the policy. While the foundation already existed in Slovenia, such an entity did not exist in Kosovo and jeopardized the implementation of the policy (Gerd, personal interview, 2008).

Conclusion

This chapter makes the following contributions to the edited book. First, it investigates both multiple norms in the global polity and the mercenary motivations in the post-war context. Second, it illustrates these issues using actors who are not normally included as part of the post-war interveners, the scholars who produce academic works on "post-conflict reconstruction."

The chapter also provides a framework for scholarly micro-interventions in post-war contexts.

Contrary to current expectations among international practitioners that only success should be reported in order to keep the flow of money going, we should be more honest about the state of our knowledge and restructure the basic incentives for reporting failure. First, we should humbly acknowledge that we often do not know if our preferred interventions work, or if they work, why they do. The constant pat on the back for spending money on untested interventions that starts from the field offices and goes to the headquarters of international organizations should be interrupted. Instead, practitioners should be rewarded when they fail to achieve the expected result, despite implementing the project as usual. Reporting failure would mean that we know more about interventions that do not work and spend more of our resources on interventions that work.

Notes

1 I wish to acknowledge the useful feedback by Chip Gagnon, Stefan Senders, Matthew Evangelista and Daniel Perez.

2 I use the term "internationals" to refer to representatives of international organizations, diplomats, donors, international NGO staff, and other members of the so-called international community in Kosovo. This is the term that they use to refer to themselves as well. The internationals are often contrasted with the "locals" who are Kosovo employees in international organizations, members of civil society, and government representatives. In my interviews, locals also use this term to refer to themselves in contrast to the internationals. Other scholars employ the same "international" versus "local" terms as well (Holohan 2005; Coles 2007).

3 Many interviewees gave me frank answers that could endanger their job and livelihood, if such quotations were traced back to them. In order to protect the anonymity of my sources, I have used first name pseudonyms for most of them.

4 See Gagnon 2004 for a clear rebuttal of the ethnic ancient hatreds hypothesis of the Yugoslav wars.

5 For instance, for competing narratives in Kosovo's war see Mertus 1999.

6 As I am writing this, I was reminded to check the use of the term in my recently completed PhD dissertation (Skendaj 2011). In my dissertation, I used the term "post-war" 21 times, and the terms "post-conflict" three times. Two out of three times in which I used the term "post-conflict," it was used in a context of referring to other works that used the same terminology. I changed the term from post-conflict to post-war in the third instance.

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