

## Introduction

I made a number of faux pas during my first day as an international intervener in a conflict zone. In July 2000, I arrived in Kosovo for a six-month mission and was preparing to attend my first coordination meeting with representatives of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, donors, and military contingents of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. My colleagues had told me that these meetings always began with some significant delay, so I decided to postpone my departure and finish some office work in the meantime. When I finally got there, however, I discovered that this particular gathering was under the supervision of a few military actors who, as it turned out, were invariably punctual. To make matters worse, the room's creaking door and regrettable arrangement eliminated any chance for stragglers to enter discretely. Not that I would have been inconspicuous anyway: I was visibly out of place from the moment I stepped inside. In the hopes of being easily recognizable to my new colleagues, I had proudly put on a vest emblazoned with my employer's logo, but, to my dismay, the peacekeeping soldiers were the only people displaying their organizational affiliation. Eyes turned from the speaker to me and, for a few interminable moments, I became the center of attention. Mortified, I scurried to the back of the room to find a seat (and hide).

As my first month progressed, I made fewer missteps. Still, I was puzzled. I had two graduate degrees in international affairs and a year of experience as an intern with various humanitarian and peacebuilding agencies in New York. I had even worked as a volunteer for grassroots organizations in India, Nicaragua, and South Africa. By industry standards, I was perfectly qualified for my entry-level role in Kosovo, yet I felt utterly lost.

I ultimately realized that all of this theoretical knowledge and technical experience was not enough to ensure my success. The community of international interveners that I had joined in Kosovo had a culture of their own. I had naively expected my colleagues' attitudes and behaviors to be as varied as the countries they came from and the organizations they represented. In fact they shared a common collection of practices, habits, and narratives that shaped their

every attitude and action. If I wanted to fit in, I had to learn the quotidian elements that veteran interveners saw as obvious, or even took for granted.

During my time in Kosovo, I did my best to assimilate into my new community and adapt to the international interveners' way of life. I followed my colleagues' standard practices, like attending coordination meetings, throwing going-away parties, and documenting every professional action in an endless stream of reports. I acquired their shared habits, such as following standard security procedures and socializing primarily with other expatriates. I became fluent in their language, with its technical vocabulary and alphabet soup of acronyms. I also learned their dominant narratives, notably those on our roles as foreign actors, our views of local counterparts, and our reasons for acting as we did. All in all, over the course of six months, I familiarized myself with the subtle hierarchy and the ritualized patterns of interaction that exist not only among interveners themselves but also between them and local populations. Plus, I figured out which meetings started on time and what I was supposed to wear to them.

These newly acquired competencies helped me successfully approach my later missions in Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Despite the staggering differences between each of these countries – in terms of geographies, cultures, people, languages, dynamics of violence, and conflict histories – the interveners who worked in them shared the same daily modes of operation. After learning the ropes in Kosovo, I never again felt out of place when I arrived to work in a new conflict zone, because the characteristics of the international approach – the identities of the participants, the relationships among them and with local populations, and the other everyday elements – were all familiar to me. As I moved from one place to another and found the same kind of environments, the same types of actors, and sometimes even the same individuals, I started to feel part of a transnational community, a community of expatriates who devote their lives to working in conflict zones. I felt that I had become part of a new world: Peaceland.<sup>1</sup>

## **Peaceland and Its Puzzles**

For close to fifteen years, I have been attached to this world. My husband and most of our friends inhabit Peaceland, and I return to it frequently. As I traveled from one conflict zone to another, I became increasingly obsessed with the issue of efficacy. When in the field, during formal meetings or around drinks in the evening, my fellow Peacelanders and I regularly deliberated the same questions: Why do peace interventions regularly fail to reach their full potential? What can account for the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of international peacebuilding efforts? How can interveners be more successful when they are already effective and avoid failure otherwise? These subjects were and still are at the center of

<sup>1</sup> The neologism “Peaceland” is a paraphrase of the word “Aidland” coined in Apthorpe 2005.

policy and scholarly debates on intervention efforts. They are also the concerns that lie at the heart of this book.

For years, my friends and I returned to the same answers. To be more effective, we required more financial, logistical, and human resources. We also needed powerful states and organizations to stop ignoring or encouraging violence and, instead, start actively supporting peace. As I continued to live and work in intervention areas, I began to consider another explanation for ineffective peacebuilding: Many of the practices, habits, and narratives that shape international efforts on the ground – everyday elements that I had come to take for granted as an intervener – are, in fact, counterproductive.

This realization hit me ten years after my embarrassing first day in Kosovo, during one of my many sojourns in the Democratic Republic of Congo (henceforth, Congo), home to a conflict that ranks among the deadliest since World War II.<sup>2</sup> In an attempt to reconstruct state authority in the eastern part of the country, various international peacebuilding agencies had decided to assist the Congolese police in deploying officers to some of the most unstable areas. The implementation of the project began in May 2010, when the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) constructed police stations and helped transport Congolese police units to selected volatile villages. Upon completing this initiative, officials at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York claimed that they had successfully accomplished an essential step in their mandate to stabilize Congo. In theory, mobilizing a greater law enforcement presence in an unstable area would secure it, allowing for the deployment of other state representatives and eventually contributing to the reestablishment of state authority and the return to peace.

In reality, the program made a bad situation worse. The newly deployed police were untrained and they had to compete for control of the area with both local militias and remnants of rebel groups. As a result, they could not make even a modest contribution to the reestablishment of law and order. Not only did they fail to improve the stability of the region, but they also became one more factor of insecurity. The new officers came from faraway provinces and had no ethnic or family links with surrounding groups. While this strategy was supposed to prevent corruption and collusion, it also produced a new force with no support among local populations, no deep-rooted personal stakes in bettering security in the area, and little knowledge of the specific local history and customs of the villagers. Even more problematic, the authorities in Kinshasa refused to support any units they considered “UNOPS police” and not state police, while the UN maintained that it was the Congolese government’s responsibility to pay, feed, and house its own officers. Eventually, nobody took care of these

<sup>2</sup> This book deliberately forgoes the use of the article “the” in front of Congo or Sudan, to avoid the colonialist overtones of this grammatical convention.

On mortality in Congo, see the statistics in International Rescue Committee 2008, and the discussion of these figures in Goldstein 2011, pp. 260–264.

obligations. Lacking basic necessities, the police officers ended up preying on the very population they were tasked to protect. The Congolese authorities, the deployed police, and the affected communities all blamed the UN for the decline in the situation.

The initiative had followed a standard pattern for international interventions. Expatriate peacebuilders conceptualized the project with minimal local input. Then, they secured external resources to finance it. Finally, they tasked international agencies with implementing the project, and they involved local counterparts only in the final stages, as assistants, subcontractors, or mere recipients. Throughout this process, the foreign actors in charge relied on their own views of how best to rebuild a state, their own beliefs about what responsibilities a government should meet, and their own notions of what ordinary citizens would want. They worked hard, endured many deprivations, occasionally risked their lives, and became frustrated when – to their surprise – the situation worsened.

In fact, the UN actors could have easily predicted the police initiative's difficulties, as the program contained several elements that interveners commonly acknowledge to be problematic. It is conventional wisdom that local ownership is essential for successful peacebuilding, but local stakeholders rarely feel included in the design of international programs.<sup>3</sup> Practitioners and researchers have written countless books, articles, and reports to explain that approaches based on ready-to-use, universalized templates usually fail and context sensitivity is crucial, and yet interveners often use models that have worked in other conflict zones but are not appropriate for specific local conditions, just as the UN did in Congo.<sup>4</sup> Field-based international peacebuilders regularly emphasize the importance of good relationships between interveners and local actors; however, interactions between the two groups often remain

<sup>3</sup> For a review of the main scholarly arguments emphasizing the importance of local ownership, see Sending 2009, p. 4. For the policy perspective, see Anderson and Olson 2003, pp. 32–33; the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's *Paris Declaration* (2005) and *Accra Agenda for Action* (2008) (available at [www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm)); and the *Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship* (Stockholm, 2003), point 7 (available at [www.goodhumanitarianandonorship.org/Libraries/Ireland\\_Doc\\_Manager/EN-23-Principles-and-Good-Practice-of-Humanitarian-Donorship.sflb.ashx](http://www.goodhumanitarianandonorship.org/Libraries/Ireland_Doc_Manager/EN-23-Principles-and-Good-Practice-of-Humanitarian-Donorship.sflb.ashx)). For analyses of the current implementation of the local ownership idea, see Campbell 2010 (notably pp. 9, 10, and 52–59); Donais 2009; Joseph 2007; Martin and Moser 2012; Richmond 2012; Sending 2010b; and Wilén 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Among many others: Andersen 2005; Anderson, Brown, et al. 2012, pp. 24–25 and chapter 5; Campbell 2012; Chandler 2005, p. 308; Chopra and Hohe 2004; Cousens, Kumar, et al. 2001, notably p. 15; Coyne and Pellillo 2012; Duffey 2000, notably p. 144; Ellis 2005; Escobar 1995; FEWER, International Alert, et al. 2004, chapter 3, module 1; Gilbert 2008, pp. 21–26; Hohe 2002; Lange 2004, notably pp. 12–13; Mac Ginty 2006 and 2008; Ottaway 2003; Paris 2004 and 2010; Peacekeeping Best Practices Section 2008, p. 39; Pouligny 2004, especially pp. 133–136 and 293; Salem 1997, chapter 2; Smith 2004, notably p. 10; Verma 2011, pp. 64–67; and Woodward 2007, pp. 160–161. For a discussion of this literature, see Moore 2013, pp. 29–30.

conflictual.<sup>5</sup> Evaluations of peacebuilding programs consistently underscore the need for interveners to speak at least one of the local languages of their area of deployment, but many interveners in the field lack such linguistic capabilities.<sup>6</sup> Local people and interveners themselves deplore the latter's tendency to live in a bubble, where they interact mostly with other expatriates and lack contact with host populations, and yet this phenomenon still occurs throughout zones of intervention.<sup>7</sup>

The persistence of these inefficient modes of operation is all the more perplexing because in many cases we cannot attribute it to callousness, stupidity, or lack of self-awareness on the part of the international peacebuilders. While not all interveners deployed in the field lie awake at night worrying about the effectiveness of their efforts, most of them genuinely try to end violence and work hard to improve local situations. Far from being callous, they are usually well-meaning individuals who have devoted their lives to combating injustice, violence, and poverty. Moreover, on average, they are intelligent, well-read, and well-educated people. Some of them even realize the consequences of their standard practices and feel very uncomfortable with the way international peacebuilding operates on the ground. Why, then, do certain ways of working persist although they are clearly ineffective? Moreover, why do interveners perpetuate even those modes of operation they know to be counterproductive?

Recent advances in the anthropology of aid provide a useful starting point for approaching these puzzles and the broader question of effectiveness. Raymond Apthorpe coined the term "Aidland" to describe how "aid workers inhabit a separate world with its own time, space, and economics."<sup>8</sup> Apthorpe's insight has inspired a new body of research on development and humanitarian aid, and I propose that it is fruitful to approach peacebuilding similarly.<sup>9</sup> International peacebuilders also inhabit a separate world with its own time, space, and economics – and, even more importantly, its own system of meaning.

<sup>5</sup> Among others: Anderson 1999, pp. 62–63; Anderson and Olson 2003, chapters 4 and 5; Duffey 2000, p. 151; Heiberg and Holst 1986, pp. 410–411; Holohan 2005, pp. 74–85; Huang and Harris 2006, pp. 86 and 88–90; McWha 2011; and UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations – Department of Field Support 2012, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Public sources include CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2010b, pp. 3–4; Coles 2007, pp. 28–29; Last 2000, especially p. 87; Lehmann 1999, p. 74; Pouligny 1999 (pp. 416–417) and 2004 (p. 194); and Toshiya and Konishi 2012, pp. 56 and 70.

<sup>7</sup> Among many others: Eyben 2011; Harper 2011; Johnston 2005; McWha 2011, pp. 33–35; Mitchell 2011a, pp. 12–15; Mosse 2008, p. 122; Rajak and Stirrat 2011; and Verma 2011, pp. 67–74.

<sup>8</sup> Apthorpe 2005; and Fechter and Hindman 2011a, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> For the research on development and humanitarian aid, see notably the various contributions to Fechter and Hindman 2011a and Mosse 2011. As will become clear throughout the book, earlier studies of development – notably Anderson 1999; Ferguson 1990; Mitchell 2002; and Scott 1998 – were also influential in shaping my research.

This metaphorical world, inhabited by the transnational community of interveners for whom peace is either the primary objective (such as peacekeepers) or part of a broader set of goals (such as certain diplomats and development workers), I name Peaceland. In order to understand how and why this world gets created and maintained, and how this process influences peacebuilding effectiveness, I develop an ethnography of its inhabitants, meaning that I paint a portrait of the interveners and their customs, rituals, cultures, structures, beliefs, and behaviors.<sup>10</sup> My study focuses on the everyday elements that characterize life and work in Peaceland: its standard practices (routine activities that are socially meaningful and have an un-thought character<sup>11</sup>), shared habits (automatic responses to the world<sup>12</sup>), and dominant narratives (stories that people create to make sense of their lives and environments<sup>13</sup>). In documenting the dynamics resulting from these elements, I provide a fresh answer to the questions of why strong boundaries exist between interveners and host populations. I also explain why dominant modes of operation (actions, behaviors, and discourses based on prevailing practices, habits, and narratives) that most interveners view as inefficient or even detrimental to their efforts nevertheless persist. Finally, I offer a novel perspective from which to consider why international interventions regularly fail to reach their full potential – and sometimes fall flat altogether.

Although they are pervasive, there is nothing innate or unchangeable about these everyday modes of operation. James Scambary, for instance, lived and worked in Peaceland in a markedly different way than I and most of my other contacts did.<sup>14</sup> James recalled that, during his deployment to Timor-Leste in the early 2000s, he “did not have a car, so [he] could not go away to the countryside to a nice guest house or to the beach for the day like all the others were doing” during weekends. Instead of socializing with other foreign peacebuilders, he “spent [his] time in [his] neighbors’ backyards talking.” Time passed, and James became part of the local fabric. His Timorese friends spoke in his presence in a way that they never did in front of other interveners. They mentioned hopes and fears that they usually hid from expatriates, and they talked about incidents that usually went unreported. The riots that erupted in 2006 in Timor-Leste, which almost collapsed the peace process, took virtually all interveners by surprise, but James Scambary was one of the few foreigners who had predicted a deterioration of the situation and had tried to convince his colleagues to help

<sup>10</sup> This sentence builds on the definition of “ethnography” in Harris and Johnson 2000, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Swidler 2001, pp. 74–75; Pouliot 2008 and 2010; and Pouliot and Adler 2011b. See Chapter 1 in this book for a more thorough definition and a discussion of this concept.

<sup>12</sup> Swidler 2001, p. 75; and Hopf 2010. See Chapter 1 for more details.

<sup>13</sup> Abbott 2008; De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2008; and Patterson and Monroe 1998. See also Chapter 1 in this book.

<sup>14</sup> The rest of this paragraph is based on an author’s on-record interview with James Scambary, independent researcher, Australian National University, Dili, Timor-Leste, February 2012.

prevent the looming crisis.<sup>15</sup> Again, this was not necessarily because Scamby was smarter or better trained than other interveners. He had, however, a comparative advantage: in-depth personal relationships with his neighbors. The backyard discussions had provided him with a different, and much more accurate, perception of the challenges to the ongoing peace process.

This book is not just about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the interveners' dominant modes of operation. It is also about the individuals and organizations who, like James, evade, ignore, or even actively challenge the international peacebuilders' dominant practices and suggest alternative modes of operation. It is by looking at these exceptional cases that we can begin to understand how to reform the way peacebuilding works on the ground, so that interveners stop perpetuating ineffective modes of action and instead help construct a better system.

### Everyday Dimensions of Peacebuilding Effectiveness

International peace interventions have multiplied since the end of the Cold War, with UN operations, non-governmental agencies, donors, diplomatic missions, and regional organizations becoming increasingly numerous and influential.<sup>16</sup> Identifying the factors that influence the effectiveness of these initiatives is of critical importance to scholars, practitioners, and people living in post-war states.

Admittedly, peacebuilding efficacy relies primarily on the actions, interests, and strategies of national and local actors and of potential outside spoilers.<sup>17</sup> Wars can end only when hostile parties at the local, national, and international levels agree to stop using violence to resolve their differences, and when their fellow citizens concurrently strive to establish and maintain lasting solutions to the conflict. Foreign interveners can, at best, support peace initiatives and undermine efforts to resume violence.

That being said, external contributions, however limited, can mean the difference between war and peace. Regardless of local conditions, foreign peace interventions increase the chances of establishing a durable peace.<sup>18</sup> Recent quantitative analyses show that international interventions have significantly

<sup>15</sup> Several other interviewees confirmed the fact that Scamby had been one of the very few foreigners to predict the 2006 riots.

<sup>16</sup> On UN and non-UN peace operations: Daniel and Taft 2008, p. 11; and Duffey 2000, p. 142. On non-governmental organizations: Barnett 2011, pp. 3–5; and Werker and Ahmed 2008, p. 75. On donors: Barnett 2011, p. 4. On international actors in general: Anderson and Olson 2003, p. 8; Barnett 2006, pp. 87–88; Cousens, Kumar, et al. 2001, p. 1; and Garb and Allen Nan 2009, p. xiv.

<sup>17</sup> Sending 2010b and 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Fortna 2004 and 2008; Gilligan and Sergenti 2008; Goldstein 2011; Hampson 1996; Howard 2008; and Walter 2002 demonstrate this point based on macro-level data (statistics for national and international conflicts), and Barron and Burke 2008; and Blattman, Hartman, et al. 2012 on micro-level analyses. For a similar claim by local people in countries of intervention, see CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2011b, p. 1.

improved security conditions in many places where they have been deployed, even if other measures of peacebuilding success are less optimistic.<sup>19</sup> The international efforts in Congo, which most scholars and policy analysts view as failing, also aptly illustrate the value of peacebuilders. Despite their poor overall performance, interveners achieved a number of positive results. Reestablishing even a precarious peace over most of the Congolese territory would not have been possible without the presence of the UN peacekeeping mission and the work of African and Western diplomats. Likewise, it is mostly thanks to these international actors that Congo managed to organize its first democratic elections in 2006. At the time of this writing in 2013, the UN mission remains the only military force capable of protecting the population from abuses by the Congolese army and various other armed groups, even if they do so imperfectly. Foreign humanitarian agencies are similarly the only ones able to respond to epidemics and, in the eastern provinces, to provide access to clean drinking water and basic health care. In sum, improving the effectiveness of external efforts can significantly increase the prospects for peace.

This book uses a situation-specific definition of effectiveness, as it is the most appropriate for studying intervention efforts on the ground (see [Chapter 1](#)). A peacebuilding project, program, or intervention is effective when a large majority of the people involved in it – including both implementers (international interveners and local peacebuilders) and intended beneficiaries (including local elite and ordinary citizens) – view it as having promoted peace in the area of intervention.

Ascertaining the reasons for international intervention efficacy and inefficacy, and explaining why international peace efforts regularly fail to reach their full potential, requires a variety of approaches and analyses. The prevailing scholarship on this topic focuses on the impact of vested interests, material constraints, and the imposition of liberal values. These analyses tell us a great deal about how policies, institutions, ideologies, and discourses affect interventions.<sup>20</sup> However, while there are some exceptions, the vast majority of scholars and practitioners consider the everyday dimensions of peacebuilding efforts on the ground unimportant. As a result, we do not know much about the “nuts and bolts” of peacebuilding: the banal, everyday activities that actually make up the bulk of the work.

<sup>19</sup> The quantitative studies include: Doyle and Sambanis 2006; Fortna 2008; Gilligan and Sergenti 2008; and Goldstein 2011. For less optimistic evaluations, see Heathershaw 2008; Licklider 1993; Lund 2003; Mac Ginty 2006; Neumann 2011; and Stedman 1991. Paris 2011, pp. 351–353 develops a nuanced discussion of the record of peace interventions. See also [Chapter 1](#) in this book, section “Peacebuilding Effectiveness: Definitions and Contestation,” for a more thorough presentation of the debate on the rate of success and failure in international peacebuilding.

<sup>20</sup> The rest of this paragraph builds on the insights presented in Fechter and Hindman 2011a, introduction; and Verma 2011, notably pp. 62–63; as well as on personal communications with Dr. Audra Mitchell (lecturer in international relations, University of York, August and September 2011). See also Sending 2010b, p. 1 for a similar claim.

Scholars such as Oliver Richmond and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh have already called for a renewed attention to “the everyday” in the study of international interventions, but the everyday experience in question is usually that of local actors.<sup>21</sup> While we have extensive ethnographic data on host populations and many insightful analyses of how their cultures and practices can promote or impair effective conflict resolution, the ethnographic gaze has rarely focused on those performing the intervention.<sup>22</sup> Several social scientists have recently produced fascinating studies that begin to fill this gap, but these authors focus on the impact of the everyday on development, humanitarian aid, or democratization.<sup>23</sup> Only a few anthropologists (Paul Higate, Marsha Henry, and Robert Rubinstein) and political scientists (Audra Mitchell, Béatrice Pouligny, and Ole-Jacob Sending) have researched the influence of the everyday on peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts.<sup>24</sup> Building off this diverse array of insights, this book examines the everyday implementation of international initiatives on the ground to develop a complementary explanation for peacebuilding effectiveness, and thus paint a more complete picture of how interventions operate.

My central argument is as follows. I demonstrate that mundane elements – such as the expatriates’ social habits, standard security procedures, and habitual approaches to collecting information on violence – strongly impact the effectiveness of intervention efforts. I also emphasize the influence of the informal and the personal on formal professional initiatives. Everyday practices shape overall interventions from the bottom up. They enable, constitute, and help reproduce the strategies, policies, institutions, and discourses that political scientists usually study. They also explain the existence and continued use of ways of working that interveners view as inefficient, ineffective, or even counterproductive.

I am not suggesting that daily habits and practices explain everything about the effectiveness of international peace interventions. I simply argue that an investigation of such everyday elements sheds light on several unexplored facets of this topic. It enables us to grasp why certain modes of action may persist even when interveners know that they are detrimental to their efforts. It also elucidates how the constraints, interests, and liberal values that other scholars study are created, sustained, and reinforced – or challenged – on the ground. As a whole, this book demonstrates that the process of international efforts (the “how”) is just as important to examine as their substance (the “what”). The way in which interveners interact with local stakeholders or construct

<sup>21</sup> Richmond 2011; Richmond and Mitchell 2011; and Tadjbakhsh 2011. For a related approach, see Mac Ginty 2008 and 2011. For an analysis, see Higate and Henry 2009, pp. 1–2 and 16; and Mitchell 2011b.

<sup>22</sup> On the cultures of host populations and peacebuilding, see, among many others studies: Avruch 1998; Duffey 2000; Mac Ginty 2008; Richmond 2009; Schirch 2005; and Shaw, Waldorf, et al. 2010.

<sup>23</sup> On development: Fechter and Hindman 2011a; and Mosse 2011. On humanitarian aid: Duffield 2010; and Smirl 2008. On democratization: Coles 2007; and Holohan 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Higate and Henry 2009; Mitchell 2011b; Rubinstein 2008; Pouligny 2004; and Sending 2010b.

knowledge of their areas of deployment deserves the same critical attention as the actual objectives that peacebuilders pursue, such as reintegrating militias or promoting geostrategic interests. For this reason, analyses of international interventions which fail to consider everyday elements – for instance, studies based exclusively on instrumental or normative rationality – are necessarily incomplete.<sup>25</sup> In other words, my approach and existing explanations are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are complementary.

I develop this argument based on a year of ethnographic study in Congo, enriched with material from brief research trips in Burundi, Cyprus, Israel and the Palestinian Territories, South Sudan, and Timor-Leste (see the map of fieldwork sites in Figure 1). The material collected specifically for this project includes 15 months of field observations, 295 in-depth interviews, 124 discrete participant observation events lasting more than 330 hours in total, and hundreds of key documents (see Appendix for more details). In addition to analyzing this new data, I draw extensively on both the material I collected for a previous project on Congo, which includes more than 330 interviews and another 1.5 years of field observations, and my 2 years of work experience as an intervener in Afghanistan, Congo, Kosovo, Nicaragua, and in the New York headquarters of various organizations. Altogether, I rely on several years of ethnographic inquiry in conflict zones around the world. I spent these years embedded in the communities I was studying, observing them sometimes from the inside, as a fellow intervener, and other times from the outside, as a researcher.

My interpretation of the concept of intervention overlaps with its standard definition in international relations scholarship, which focuses on the use of military force by states.<sup>26</sup> But like most researchers who focus specifically on peacebuilding, I define interveners to include not only states but also inter-governmental and nonstate actors, and their actions to encompass not only use of military force but also a range of other military and civilian undertakings aimed at ending existing violence and preventing its recurrence.<sup>27</sup>

I examine all of the foreign entities – people, countries, and organizations – whose official goal is to help build peace in their countries of deployment, regardless of whether or not they have other objectives alongside that goal. These international peacebuilders may be diplomats, other government officials (such as defense officers), personnel of non-governmental agencies, academic experts serving as advisors or consultants, employees of private subcontractors or for-profit development firms, and staff of international organizations – both military and civilian. The interveners I study are thus a diverse group. They

<sup>25</sup> Based on Hopf 2010, p. 540. See also Chapter 1 in this book.

<sup>26</sup> For instance, Chesterman 2001; Walzer 1977; and Wheeler 2000. For a compelling critique of these standard definitions, see Mitchell 2014, pp. 3–9.

<sup>27</sup> Authors using a similar definition include, among many others: Brown 2006; Chopra and Hohe 2004; Coles 2007; Fassin and Pandolfi 2010; Mitchell 2014; Rubinstein 2008; and Sørbø 2010.