The owl and the dove: knowledge strategies to improve the peacebuilding practice of local non-governmental organisations
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Mobilising indigenous knowledge, learning from practitioner experience, and drawing on academic research are activities that have the potential of making peacebuilding more successful. In the words of Kofi Annan, “we realise more and more that knowledge is what makes the difference: knowledge in the hands of those who need it, and of those who can make best use of it” (cited in Clarke and Squire 2005: 110). Although knowledge is less tangible than material resources, it has an impact on developments by shaping policy and practice. As Keynes wrote,

“[t]he ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believed themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas.” (Keynes 1957: 383-384)

The fact that knowledge is itself a resource receives increasing attention in the development field. Following developments in the private sector, ‘knowledge management’, ‘learning’ and ‘networking’ are the new buzzwords in the world of development organisations.

“[E]conomic improvement is largely a result of the application of knowledge in productive activities and the associated adjustment in social institutions. [E]conomic growth [can be attributed to] interactive learning involving government, industry, academia, and civil society. It focuses on the importance of learning or continuous improvement in the knowledge base and institutional arrangements for development.” (Juma and Lee 2005: 15)

This chapter conceptualises knowledge and links it to the practice of NGOs working in the peacebuilding field. In doing so, it looks at the question: what forms does knowledge of peace and conflict take? In other words, based on what ideas do peacebuilding organisations work, and where do they get these ideas? The chapter looks at different types of knowledge that can be distinguished, the knowledge demand (and supply) of local civil society peacebuilders, and the content and sources of available peacebuilding knowledge. Drawing on relevant literature,

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section 2.1 distinguishes between different types of knowledge: tacit, explicit and implicit knowledge, and academic and practitioner knowledge. 2.2 links this to peacebuilding, offering some reflections about what conflict and peace knowledge mean. Next, in 2.3, different sources of peacebuilding knowledge are discussed: first, the academia and second, the dichotomy of external versus indigenous knowledge. 2.4 places that dichotomy in the context of traditional and modern knowledge systems. 2.5 offers some reflections about the extent to which knowledge is context-specific (something with implications for knowledge sharing), and finally, 2.6 gives an overview of the implications of all this for the content and use of peacebuilding knowledge.

2.1 Types of knowledge

What kind of knowledge are we talking about in this study? What characterises knowledge of peace and development processes? ‘Knowledge’ is a broad concept that is used in many different ways. It includes ‘information’ but goes beyond that concept: it also includes the meaning that is allocated to information. Knowledge is subjective: ‘I know what a terrible person you are’. Unlike information, knowledge can also be an experience or skill: ‘I know the best way to do this’. There are different types of knowledge. Knowledge can be available in written form (explicit) or locked inside someone’s head (tacit). It can be theoretical (academic) or based on practical experience. This section pays attention to different types of knowledge and discusses their implications for learning and knowledge exchange processes.

2.1.1 ‘If only we knew what we know’27: Explicit, tacit and implicit knowledge

A distinction is often made between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge, where explicit knowledge can be processed in a way that makes it accessible to others and tacit knowledge cannot, or less easily. Explicit knowledge can be codified or written down. It may consist of anything from the formal procedure for application to a European Union fund to the way a copy machine works. As it can be recorded, it may be passed onto others who may add it to their own body of knowledge. The challenges concerning explicit knowledge relate to codification and recording processes (processing knowledge in such a way that it is of the

27 Title of a book by O’Dell et al. (1998)
most use to others) as well as dissemination (ensuring that knowledge reaches the people who might need it). The two facets are interrelated: in order to be able to reach the intended recipient, the knowledge has to be recorded in such a way as to make it attractive and accessible to this recipient.

The term tacit knowledge refers to knowledge based on a person’s unique experience: knowing how to do something. In the field of peacebuilding, this may be experience-based knowledge of what makes a community dialogue run well. According to some, tacit knowledge can be shared through communication. It may be possible to codify or write down part of it, for example in a manual or report, thus turning it into explicit knowledge. But there are also components of tacit knowledge that cannot be exchanged in written form. The intricacies of interacting with various community members and of sensing the difficulties they may have can never be recorded entirely. It may be possible to transfer such knowledge through face-to-face interaction: during a discussion at a training session, or when colleagues accompany one another during a community dialogue project.

This type of knowledge is like knowing how to ride a bicycle. Although it might be possible to write down some principles, it is only through direct interaction that the skill can be taught. Another important way of transferring tacit knowledge is through personal observation or shared experience. Thus, accompanying an experienced colleague during a field visit can be a powerful way of learning (Smit 2006: 12). Such interaction is also important because often the person possessing tacit knowledge does not realise that he has it at all, or does not recognise it as a valuable commodity for others because it seems natural to him. A granddaughter may not know there is anything special about the way she speaks to her grandmother who suffers from Alzheimer’s - until someone points out to her that she has unconsciously developed a skill that others may benefit from.

There are also forms of tacit knowledge that cannot be transferred at all because they are too closely related to their possessor’s unique set of experiences and perspectives. Told to another person, this knowledge does not make sense. (Polanyi, cited in Sauquet 2004: 377) This draws attention to the fact that knowledge is subjective and the words allocated to a particular piece of knowledge may mean different things to different people. People may have diverging associations and allocate different meanings when they hear the label ‘a difficult person’, based on their own past experiences. To transfer knowledge from one person to another often requires translation and explanation; when knowledge transfer
crosses borders of language and culture, the translation process becomes even more complex. Something that can be helpful in this regard is a third category of knowledge: implicit knowledge.

Implicit knowledge refers to knowing what is socially and culturally appropriate in a given circumstance. “[I]t is knowledge of shared beliefs, values and expectations (e.g. knowing that it is inappropriate to undermine colleagues in public)” (Ramalingham 2005: 4). Such implicit knowledge is particularly relevant to our field of analysis because it represents implicit codes of behaviour that are often not universal but culturally specific – whether to an organisational culture or a national or regional one. In that sense, implicit knowledge represents the cultural aspect of interactions and learning processes and as such it will be referred to in various places of this book. An NGO staff member experienced in running projects in a particular community may have developed personal relations and silent habits of interaction with local people, which a colleague could never simply copy.

We have seen that tacit knowledge consists of both translatable and untranslatable kinds of knowledge. It is on the first kind that I will focus, as translatable knowledge can be meaningfully shared with others and be the starting point of learning processes. Untranslatable tacit knowledge does not really constitute a challenge for us because there is no way for us to access it, nor is it likely to have any value in a different context from the one in which it originates. Translatable tacit knowledge, on the other hand, presents various challenges, the most obvious one being the translation process itself. How can we codify and record tacit knowledge in such a way that it becomes useful to others? And if it cannot be codified and recorded, how can we put people in touch with each other so that the knowledge can be transferred directly? If a person does not realise that she possesses valuable knowledge, the only way for it to come to the surface is through interaction with people who might need it. But how can others know that this person possesses knowledge of value to them? Enabling the ‘right’ people to get together presents a formidable challenge and it is impossible to access and mobilise all valuable tacit knowledge, even if it is translatable. Some types of tacit knowledge may be of such a specialised character that it is important mainly for people to know where it is located, in case they need to draw on this knowledge and obtain specialist advice. This type of knowledge takes the form of ‘I know that you know more about x’.

28 Particularly in 2.4, 4.4, 4.5, 5.6.6 and 8.4.4
The following figure helps to categorise the different kinds of tacit knowledge. The knowledge in the top left hand box is already shared, common knowledge. It is also possible that it has not yet been shared but at least I as well as others know that I have it and therefore everyone knows where it can be found in case it is needed. The knowledge in the lower right hand box cannot be shared, because I don’t know that I possess it – and neither do others. If, by chance and through an interaction between myself and the others, we find out that I know something of value, we move out of this ‘black’ box and into the top left hand corner. The box in the lower left hand corner contains knowledge that I know I possess, while others don’t realise this. I might identify people who could benefit from my knowledge and offer it to them, in which case the knowledge moves to top left hand box. Finally, although I am unaware of the existence or relevance of my knowledge inside the box on the top right hand side of the figure, others recognise it and may point it out to me if they need it. In that case, it again moves to the top left hand side.

![Figure 2.1: Recognising tacit knowledge](image)

This leads to the following possibilities and questions with regard to the mobilisation and exchange of tacit knowledge:

- Regarding the two movements shown by black arrows in the figure, from top right to top left and from bottom left to top left: how can we transfer it in a meaningful way? What is the best way to get in touch with people who might have knowledge that I want, and what is the best way to get in touch with someone who might benefit from my knowledge?
- Concerning the movement shown by the dashed arrow, from bottom right to top left: how can we create the optimal circumstances for interactions that enable people to discover, and delve into, previously unknown knowledge resources?
2.1.2 ‘Nothing more practical than a good theory’. Academic versus practitioner knowledge

Another distinction is often made between academic and practitioner knowledge. Drawing on Gibbons (1994), De la Rive Box distinguishes between different modes of knowledge creation. The first mode corresponds with what is called academic knowledge generation. It takes place in the traditional context of the scientific profession, along disciplinary lines. The setting is a homogeneous academic community, with a hierarchical structure and its own specific interests. (De la Rive Box 2001) This community is accountable largely to itself, setting the standards of ‘sound scientific practice.’ Science engages itself with drawing together data from different contexts into a body of generalised knowledge. In most cases its starting point is concrete, context-specific information. Taking different contextual factors into account, and comparing the information with data from other contexts, lead to knowledge that is considered universally applicable and scientifically valid. A next and difficult step is the re-application of this knowledge in other specific contexts. Combining academic knowledge with concrete experiences leads to a modification of this knowledge, and the process starts again. (Rip 2001: 14).

The generalisation of knowledge in an academic context is accompanied by the use of a particular language shared by scientists in an academic discipline. Particular concepts are used to order the information and make it understandable for a broader academic public. This distinctive language enables results from different production sites to be compared and coordinated. At the same time it makes generalised scientific knowledge abstract in the eyes of practitioners, who have difficulty applying it in practice. Practitioners often view academics as people occupying an ‘ivory tower’ in which more attention is paid to scientific reputation than to the practical applicability of research findings. To an extent, this view is probably correct. The measure of success for scientists is often determined not by the practical application of the knowledge they generate but by peer reviews. Competence and performance standards are set by colleagues. The distinctive language of academic disciplines reduces lay participation in assessment of contributions. In other words, a scientific field has ‘a standardised skills and symbols system which monopolises the communication of results and the means of obtaining reputations’ (Whitley 1984: 32).

According to De la Rive Box, there is a second mode of knowledge creation that takes place in a context of application. It often involves a trans-disciplinary approach by practitioners from various backgrounds.
It starts when there is a broad community of people interested in solving a problem. Accountability is not to the academic community, but to the people affected by the problem to be solved. Thus, this second mode of knowledge generation is characterised by social rather than academic accountability, and by user review rather than peer review. Not global models but local problems are the starting point for this kind of knowledge creation. (De la Rive Box 2001) Needs assessments and evaluations carried out by peacebuilding organisations or their donors are examples of this ‘mode two’ knowledge creation. However, such practitioner-generated knowledge, recorded in reports or existing in the form of tacit knowledge, is often viewed by academics as insufficiently valid in scientific terms because it does not comply with scientific standards of knowledge creation. Evaluations and lessons learned reports often do not take into account contextual factors and comparisons with other cases in the way that academic research does, and are therefore considered less universally applicable.

All scientific knowledge in some way has its basis in practice. It can also be the basis for new practice: “there is nothing more practical than a good theory”.29 Most practitioners consciously or unconsciously apply insights that originated in academia. For example, the outcome document of a seminar of practitioners on ‘learning for social change’ notes that academic knowledge is helpful because “it lends itself to building a ‘big picture’ of historical change and can offer a great range of alternative understandings about why and how societal change happens” (Taylor et al. 2006: 17). However, the processes linking the academic and practitioner worlds of knowledge generation are hampered by the gap that exists between them. It is widely agreed that changes and mechanisms are needed in order to bridge this gap. Knowledge networks may be one such mechanism. Indeed, in addition to the two modes of knowledge creation mentioned, De la Rive Box identifies knowledge networks as a third mode, a middle ground. ‘Mode three’ knowledge creation stresses the horizontal exchange of information. It emphasises the complementarity between the academic- and practitioner-led approaches and the exchange among them in dynamic knowledge networks. (De la Rive Box 2001) This study takes up networks as a way of knowledge exchange and joint knowledge generation, specifically in chapters six and seven.

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29 This quotation is variously attributed to Kurt Lewin, Ludwig Boltzmann, James C. Maxwell, and Rudie van Lier.
2.2 Knowledge, conflict and peace

2.2.1 Types of knowledge applied

The previous section distinguished between several types of knowledge. One distinction was between tacit, explicit and implicit knowledge, another between academic and practitioner knowledge. What meaning do these types of knowledge have in the peacebuilding field? Tacit knowledge of conflict and peacebuilding includes the practical experience of peace workers with various methods, people, and institutions. Through their work they have developed a feeling for what works and what does not that is often not written down in any explicit way. Through conversations and other forms of direct exchange, this knowledge may become available to others, who might be able to use it in their own work. Some of this tacit knowledge is made explicit in the process of transferring it. Explicit knowledge takes the form of academic publications, project reports, and databases containing information about partner organisations and projects.

Implicit knowledge, understood as social and cultural norms, plays an important role in this field that is characterised by cross-cultural interactions. These interactions are often characterised by misunderstandings and confusion, caused by cultural differences and diverging social norms. Implicit knowledge is also of significance in carrying out peace projects in local communities, where building on local traditions and norms can yield better results than merely introducing pre-established ideas and methodologies. The interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge raises the importance of a two-way exchange, which as we will see in chapter five is emphasised by Southern peacebuilders. Such an exchange is needed because explicit knowledge needs to be linked to the tacit knowledge of the recipient in order to have meaning – and, as we have seen, tacit knowledge is only transferred through direct interaction. Implicit knowledge is related to the discussion of different knowledge systems in section 2.4. However, as we will see there, the issue of different ‘knowledges’ that is discussed there goes deeper than implicit norms alone and applies to all types of knowledge. The issue of academic versus practitioner knowledge is essentially about knowledge sources. In the field of development and peacebuilding a particularly important distinction in that regard is that between indigenous and external knowledge, to which I return further on in this chapter.

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30 for example between staff of international and local organisations
2.2.2 Knowledge of conflict and knowledge for peace

In order to do peacebuilding work, knowledge of conflict is required. This may include general knowledge of theories and research findings with regard to conflict causes and dynamics, such as might be taught in training programmes or academic conflict studies courses. Statistical studies about correlations between conflict and factors such as poverty, the presence of natural resources, and ethnic diversity give an idea of where to look when trying to explain a particular conflict. Ideas about conflict stages and steps in a process of escalation may help an organisation decide when and where to intervene. Theory with regard to the roles of various actors in causing and prolonging the conflict may offer NGOs insights about which groups or individuals to engage with in order to meet particular goals. However, knowledge of a conflict is never neutral. The history and characteristics of a conflict are always contested. Knowledge is part of conflict: “competition over ‘the right to truth’ is an inherent part of war” (Lammers 2006: 104). Conflicts are characterised by conflicting visions of past and future. Information about the conflict is never external or objective to people’s experiences. Lammers writes that for refugees in Kampala:

“political context is anything but an abstract, external given. […] [They] not only *find* themselves in a political field, but […] they become part of it, and ultimately contribute to constructing it. In Kampala, where people’s minds were jammed with memories of wartime violence, suspicion and fear were their daily companions. [It] is hard to overestimate how intricately sensitive everything – every appearance, every comment, every visit – is in such a situation. This reality raises questions about truth and the level of objectivity in refugees’ testimonies.” (Lammers 2006: 102, emphasis in original).

In a conflict most people identify to a greater or lesser extent with one of the sides, leading to bias. In addition, people have a need to justify the role they have played or are playing, and the information they give is influenced by that need. People may have a personal or political interest in hiding or exaggerating facts. As a further complication, trauma also tends to warp people’s memories and perceptions. Even what appear to be neutral facts – the numbers of people killed or the size of the area controlled by a rebel group – are in fact stakes in a political struggle. As data are difficult to obtain in a context of instability and violence, different statistics usually circulate, and estimates given often depend on the political programme of those providing them. After a battle has been fought, the two sides almost invariably give widely differing estimations of the number of victims.
Even when people agree about the raw data, discussions arise about how to interpret them. In Central Asia, for example, national politicians strive to frame violence as radical Islamist or terrorist activity, while others call it a legitimate struggle over access to land and decision-making. A similar dynamic is visible within conflict countries. Local or private conflicts that may be unrelated to the wider conflict are often cast in the language of that conflict in order to gain support. As a result, looking at macro-level causes and motivations alone will not explain the level and nature of violence used at the local level: “first, actions ‘on the ground’ often seem more related to local or private issues than to the war’s driving (or ‘master’) cleavage; second, individual and local actors take advantage of the war to settle local or private conflicts often bearing little or no relation to the causes of the war or the goals of the belligerents.” (Kalyvas 2003: 475-476)

Peacebuilding activities are designed to limit manipulations of information and limit the divergence of interpretations. Working together on a common ‘truth’ about the conflict is seen as an important step towards peaceful coexistence. Truth and reconciliation commissions are increasingly popular forms of doing this after a conflict. They aim to start a national discussion about what happened, provide accountability on the part of those involved in the violence, and contribute to reconciliation. People also share experiences and try to make sense of them in other shared venues: newspapers, public squares, history books. Part of the effort to establish some kind of ‘truth’ is the collection of data: “[t]he details of history, the careful mining of all resources – from letters to computer files to court records to artefacts and newspapers – provide a focus for questions and both open the imagination to possibilities and deny it the freedom to lie against the facts” (Culbertson and Pouligny 2006: 8). After the collection of data comes the discussion about how to interpret it. Knowledge of conflict is not merely a matter of statistics or events. In large part it is about giving meaning to events. People want to know: ‘how could this happen?’ Blaming is often a part of that. Conflict is at least partly about people’s perceptions of one another. When it comes to the interpretation of facts, the redevelopment of history curricula is often an important but highly contested activity in the postconflict phase. Civil society initiatives try to stimulate dialogue around parties’ diverging interpretations of history.

Having discussed the characteristics of conflict knowledge, we may now raise the question, what is peace knowledge? One way to look at peace knowledge is as individual and collective visions of a peaceful future; in other words, of the goal of peacebuilding and social change. This is closely tied to knowledge of what happened during the conflict, and
relates at least in part to backward-looking processes of justice, reconciliation, truth-telling, and confession. Knowing what peace entails requires knowing the individual, social and cultural realities that, if not taken into account, hamper efforts at the development of markets, governance, and civil society. This requires dialogue. (Culbertson and Pouligny 2006: 2-3) Arriving at joint visions of peace is important and may be seen as a next step after truth commission-type processes have been completed. However, this step has not received much attention up to now. As we saw in chapter one, even NGOs whose daily job it is to work for peace often lack an integrated vision of the kind of situation they are aiming to contribute to.

A final aspect to emphasise in relation to knowledge and peacebuilding is that increasing one’s knowledge can also contribute to peace more directly by changing perceptions and attitudes, countering misinformation, and empowering people through knowledge. Knowledge, particularly through formal education, also gives people more opportunities for advancement and provides access to ways of income other than fighting or other war-related activities. In fact, one study shows that each year of education reduces the risk of conflict by around twenty per cent (Collier et al. 2001, cited in Lopes and Theisohn 2003: 49).

2.3 Sources of peacebuilding knowledge

This section examines what the literature has to say about sources of knowledge for peacebuilders. First, it looks at developments and discussions regarding the academic discipline of peace and conflict studies and its relationship to the practice. Next, it discusses the relationship between indigenous and external knowledge.

2.3.1 Peace and conflict studies as an academic field

This section briefly sketches the way the field of peace and conflict studies has evolved until today, before moving on to look at its relationship with practice. Although developments in other disciplines preceded it\(^{31}\), peace studies as a more or less coherent academic field is

\(^{31}\)Developments in the 1930s and 1940s in the field of peace and conflict studies include work by Sorokin, Richardson and Wright in the interwar years which showed that rigorous scientific methodology could be applied to the causes of war, and by implication, the conditions of peace. Their efforts were referred to as polemology. In the same period there were also developments in psychology, politics and international relations, and new research into organisational behaviour and
considered to have come out of the threat of atomic destruction at the end of the Second World War. Conflict resolution and the prevention of war became central to the research agenda of many, including Kenneth Boulding and his group at the University of Michigan, who founded the Journal of Conflict Resolution in 1957 (Miall et al. 1999: 42-3). Their main concern was the prevention of large-scale nuclear war between states. In the 1960s, researchers recognised the importance of smaller-scale armed conflicts as well, and the study of conflict and peace broadened to include intra-state conflicts. While the early editions of the Journal of Peace Research, founded by Johan Galtung, focus mainly on topics relating to disarmament and public opinion on the Cold War, soon civil war and revolution and their causes became topics for research as well.32

Galtung also introduced a distinction between direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence, as well as between negative peace (the absence of direct violence) and positive peace (the absence of structural violence). Inequality played a central role in this type of thinking as a cause of structural violence. North American academics rejected this broad definition of conflict and peace and a “struggle” ensued “between European structuralists and North American pragmatists to define the peace research and conflict resolution agenda”, resulting in an “uneasy compromise”. (Miall et al. 1999: 44) The difference in emphasis still exists, with much of American research directed at conflict management or conflict resolution, which takes place between relatively equal parties and within a given structure, and much of European research aiming at conflict transformation in asymmetric conflicts that require radical changes in the very structure of relations among the parties. In the United States, peace and conflict studies have traditionally focused not so much on the analysis of conflicts or the theory of peace, but more on practical negotiation, mediation and conflict resolution skills, which were then applied to conflicts and interactions at all levels. Harvard Law School introduced the soon very popular concept of problem-solving negotiation in which the parties work together to find solutions that are optimal – or at least satisfactory - for all involved. (Fisher and Ury 1983)

A recent development in the field of peace and conflict studies is its attempts to connect better to the field of development studies. Duffield (2001: 1), for example, notes that “development concerns have become
increasingly important in relation to how security is understood” and vice versa. Although little has so far been written about how to translate these ideas into practice, the new conflict-development nexus receives increasing attention. Various terms are used to describe it, such as ‘human security’, ‘conflict-sensitive development’, and ‘post-conflict development’ (Anderson 1999, Carbonnier 1998, Addison 2003, Junne and Verkoren 2004). This emerging field of study entails a combination of development and conflict theory, although the reconciliation of these two strands of theory is only just starting to occur. Research is not only undertaken by academics but by agencies from the practice of peacebuilding and development, such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well, and much of the research actually goes on in this ‘grey circuit’ of policy reports and the like. This leads us to the relationship between academia and practice in the peacebuilding field.

2.3.2 Academia and practice in the peacebuilding field

Adam Curle, the first professor at the Bradford School of Peace Studies, formulated Bradford’s mission and that of the whole field of peace studies as follows:

- to identify and analyse unpeaceful relationships
- to find out about the economic, political and social conditions in which relationships might tend to be more or less peaceful
- to devise means of changing unpeaceful relationships into peaceful ones. (O’Connell and Whitby 1995: 4-5)

This use of a broad definition of violence and peace at Bradford resulted in criticism that its courses were too diffuse, too abstract and insufficiently applied. Under pressure from the students the department then made efforts to make the curriculum more focused and problem-oriented. With a growing emphasis on practice by the faculty, however, the tension between those in favour of activism and those stressing the academic dimension again came to the surface. (O’Connell and Whitby 1995: 6) Most researchers agreed that the field should include elements of both engagement and academic distance, but discussions revolved around where the balance between the two should be. A related debate was about whether the discipline could be value-free, and if not, what

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33 It is “now generally accepted that international organisations should be aware of conflict and, where possible, gear their work towards conflict resolution and helping to rebuild war-torn societies in a way that will avert future violence” (Duffield 2001: 1).
34 “[The new development-security terrain remains underresearched and its study has yet to establish its own conceptual language” (Duffield 2001: 9).
values should be a part of it. In Bradford, these discussions also played out in disagreements about whether the department should engage in activism. In the end, the applied nature of peace studies at Bradford became restricted to the department’s policy-oriented research (O’Connell and Whitby 1995: 7-8).

Similar questions have been asked recently by Louk de la Rive Box (2006) about the broader field of development: “how relevant is our understanding of development for the management of social change? […] Has development studies grown into a field of studies that is only to be judged by the academic standards it has set for itself? By, for example, the number of publications in respected international (read: North American and British) journals? Or do we judge our relevance by the value of our contributions to those engineering social change through enterprises, civil society organisations and public administration? If so, what is the opinion of those colleagues in the global South that we aim to assist?” De la Rive Box’s answer is not mild: “our discipline may […] be on the verge of irrelevance”. In his view, development studies have contributed little to global debates and are too much inward-focused. Ultimately it is the notion of development itself that is to blame, as it “implies a paternalistic conception of managed social change based on post- [Second World War] Northern optimism regarding newly independent countries”. De la Rive Box concludes that development studies need to “open up […] to novel global realities” and “move beyond the discourse of development” in order to maintain their relevance. Some directions in which to move may be to substitute the North-South dichotomy by a focus on transnational, informal networks, to pay more attention to non-State actors and movements, and to recognise and analyse new forms of global interdependence among all actors involved. (De la Rive Box 2006)

The new security-development field, however, appears to be one in which the connection to policy and practice is made relatively well. The nature of most publications in this field is predominantly prescriptive and policy-oriented. Few publications aim at developing the theory of the new “development-security terrain” (Duffield 2001) at an abstract level, and no significant attempts have been made to set the research agenda or develop standards for evaluating results. Instead, researchers engage in evaluating field activities and drawing concrete and applicable lessons from them. In addition, certain non-scientific knowledge is taken up by academics. The World Bank is an important player in post-conflict development research. Its publications are often quoted in other studies in the field. (Boyce 1996, Ball 1996, Addison 2003, Moore
2000, Junne and Verkoren 2004). In some cases it is even difficult to distinguish between academic and non-academic literature. This does not necessarily mean that academic knowledge is always taken up by practitioners in the peacebuilding field, who have trouble making the time to read and apply scientific publications. The format of most formal research (long books and refereed journal articles full of jargon) does not easily lend itself to application in the field. As in other fields, academics tend to set their own research agendas rather than respond to needs in the field. As a result, “the gap between academic theory and NGO practice is still a wide one”, and “policy is often determined by organizational mandates, past practice and politics, with little reference to the findings and prescriptions of academic researchers.” (Goodhand 2006, 178) Some popular peacebuilding concepts have found their way into NGO handbooks, but academic-practitioner interactions are not continuous. Within some international NGOs thematic departments have been created that aim to make better use of research findings from outside the organisation – but the trouble lies in connecting these thematic departments to the operational, often regionally organised, departments of these organisations.

Interestingly, policymakers and practitioners in the field of peacebuilding and development increasingly take on the task of research themselves in order to be certain that the research done is practice-oriented and answers their specific demands for knowledge. In addition to large multilateral institutions, NGOs also try to develop more research capacities. For example, Search for Common Ground has set up a research and development division that “aims to research and develop advancements in evaluation approaches and peacebuilding practice for the benefit of Search for Common Ground and the conflict resolution field.” Although this is in itself a positive development, contributing to the output and application of useful research results, it does not necessarily complement, and interact with, the research done at universities – in the North and especially in conflict-affected developing countries themselves.

35 For example, Paul Collier, who plays a prominent role in debates about the causes of current-day conflicts, has done work both in the capacity of director of the World Bank’s Development Economics Research Group and as professor at Oxford University. Whether his World Bank publications are any less academic than his Oxford ones is difficult to say.

36 During a University of Amsterdam course on learning processes in Dutch NGOs for Master students and NGO staff, which I co-taught during the spring of 2007, this issue emerged repeatedly in the discussions and research projects of the participants.

Much has been written about linking research to policy in the development field. For example, Court and Young (2003, 2005) of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) draw from fifty case studies a number of observations about the impact of research on the development policies that are made by (donor) governments, international organisations, and other influential actors. They note that literature on the link between research and policy is moving away from a linear view, focusing on ways to ensure that research results reach policymakers, towards a more complex view that emphasises a two-way process between research and policy, “shaped by multiple relations and reservoirs of knowledge” (Court and Young 2005: 21). They find that three elements play an important role in determining to what extent research results are used:

- The political context, including “political structures/processes, institutional pressures, prevailing concepts, [and] policy streams and windows”
- The evidence, particularly its “credibility, methods, use, [and way in which] the message is packaged and communicated”
- Links “between policy makers and other stakeholders, relationships, voice, trust, networks, the media and other intermediaries.” (Court and Young 2005: 21)

Political context is often the most important issue in affecting the degree to which research influences policy (Court and Young 2003: 11; 2005: 21). Political contestation, institutional pressures and vested interests play an important role. The political context also includes the political system and processes, the way policymakers think, and policy implementation. In an open political system evidence is freely gathered, assessed and communicated. In non-democratic contexts where academic, public and media freedom are curtailed, this is much more difficult. In terms of the political process, one of the main issues that affect the extent to which research is taken into account is the degree of policymaker demand. Research has a greater impact when it is policy-driven or has high-level political commitment. The degree of political contestation also matters greatly: “even in open systems, many decisions are political and research-based evidence may be completely ignored, even if it was convincing.” Indeed, research is unlikely to affect policy if reforms it suggests run counter to the interests of major political players. (Court and Young 2003: 11-13) Policymakers like straightforward stories and advice they can understand – even if it does not hold up to closer scrutiny. In addition, the agenda-setting process is important to understand for researchers seeking to affect policy. A key influence on the agenda-setting process are ‘political streams’: the wider political
environment, including government changes and public opinion. Research will have a greater impact if it fits within “a range of what can be seen as ‘good advice’” (Court and Young 2003: 11).

When it comes to the evidence, two sets of issues have a bearing on whether research influences policy: the credibility of the research and its communication and packaging. Credibility in the eyes of policymakers relates not only to the perceived quality of the research and the degree of consensus in the research community, but also to the relevance of the research and the extent to which it provides solutions. Policymakers are particularly convinced when something has been piloted and proved successful. The perceived quality of the research is affected by the reputation of the researchers and their institutions. In addition, the research method plays a role. Participatory methods in particular tend to impress policymakers. (Court and Young 2003: 16-18) The success with which findings are communicated matters for their impact on policy. Strenuous advocacy efforts are usually required. The uptake of recommendations is most likely when there has been a clear communication strategy throughout the research process. (Court and Young 2003: 18-19).

Court and Young (2003: 20) also conclude that “the links between researchers and policymakers are critical to bridging research and policy. These include feedback, dialogue and collaboration between researchers and policy-makers; the role of networks and policy communities; and issues of trust, legitimacy and participation.” Feedback refers not only to interactions linked to a particular project, but to continuous feedback loops between research, policy, implementation and monitoring. Shared objectives and views and individual contacts between researchers and policymakers are all highly influential factors in this context. (Court and Young 2003: 20-21) Ideally, contacts should start in the phase of research design. In the words of De la Rive Box, “A better understanding of research design and execution would allow for the realistic involvement of users, and prevent general policy prescriptions from overriding legitimate scientific demands. It would also prevent scientific free riding at the cost of user relevance.” (De la Rive Box 2001)

Building networks of researchers and policymakers emerges from ODI’s case studies as a helpful tool for the bridging of the gap between research and policy. Networks and ‘epistemic communities’ – colleagues who share a similar position or approach in regard to a given issue and maintain contact with each other across different locations and fields – provide important channels for knowledge exchange and the
The interactions between academic researchers and policymakers and practitioners in the field of peace and development described here for the most part only apply to Northern academics, and Northern policymakers and practitioners. The challenge is to better take into account local knowledge of people living and working in conflict-affected developing countries.

2.3.3 Indigenous versus external\(^{38}\) knowledge

Local knowledge may take the form of traditional peacebuilding methodologies, such as singing and storytelling as ways to educate people about conflict resolution, rights, and peaceful ways of living together. Traditional peacebuilding methods include traditional rituals that can contribute to peacebuilding. “In Mozambique and Sierra Leone, actions undertaken by traditional healers for children traumatised by war and former child soldiers demonstrate the success of strategies deeply rooted in the social and cultural context.” (Pouligny 2005: 502-503) Purification rituals also occurred in Mozambique: “[r]eferring to concepts of pollution and purification, they made it possible not only to designate and describe the period of violence as ‘abnormal’ or ‘unacceptable’, but also to define the rules indispensable for the groups’ coexistence and survival.” Such rituals “reflect a will both to recover one’s roots and to reinterpret them in a world that has gone through a profound upheaval”. (Pouligny 2005: 502-503) They recognise that the dynamics of a conflict itself has a tremendous impact on people (‘possesses’ people) and makes them do things that they otherwise probably would not have done, thereby reducing the differences between victims and perpetrators and contributing to reconciliation.

\(^{38}\) The use of the word ‘external’ represents a conscious choice. The oft-heard dichotomy of ‘global’ versus ‘local’ or ‘indigenous’ knowledge will not be used. The reason is that what is often termed ‘global’ is really European and North American, and calling it global obscures the fact that it is itself ‘local’ in origin and context. The fact that the distinction is often made in these terms does reveal an important reality, however, namely that of the global dominance of Western knowledge and of a discourse that labels it as universally applicable and uniquely legitimate. We will return to this in chapter 5. Here we will instead distinguish between knowledge that is ‘external’ and ‘indigenous’ to developing, conflict-affected societies.
According to Grenier (1997: 10-11), paying attention to indigenous knowledge may

- create mutual respect, encourage local participation, and build partnerships for joint problem resolution
- facilitate the design and implementation of culturally appropriate development programs, avoiding costly mistakes
- make programmes more relevant and, as a result, more sustainable
- identify techniques that can be transferred to other regions and help identify practices suitable for investigation, and improvement. An example of non-Western peacebuilding methods that have been exported is the concept of restorative justice, which focuses on reconciliation rather than retribution and was made famous by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. A West-African interviewee quoted the concept as a good example of an African way of looking at things.39

However, peacebuilding interventions are often based on Western concepts of conflict resolution, mediation, and institution building. In many cases this happens despite the best intentions of donor agencies and their recognition in theory of the importance of local knowledge. Inequalities in knowledge production and recognition, elaborated in chapter four, play a role in this. In addition, indigenous knowledge is often not easily accessible. It often remains undocumented. It “is stored in people’s memories and activities and is expressed in stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, dances, myths, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community laws [and] local language […].” (Grenier 1997: 6)

Further on in this book we will see that the importance to combine indigenous and external knowledge, weighing the benefits of both tradition and innovation, emerges clearly from my interviews. Indigenous knowledge is by no means monolithic or unchangeable. It evolves in interaction. Local knowledge systems are dynamic: new knowledge is continuously added. (Grenier 1997: 5). “[I]nnovation is part of every culture’s reality, and that borrowing, grafting ideas from the outside, and reshaping old concepts to hold new experiences are also important local strategies.” (Culbertson and Pouligny 2006: 5) The role of outsiders can be extremely important in learning processes. They can serve as idea givers, researchers, facilitators, or advocates. (Culbertson and Pouligny 2006: 20) However, translation between external and local knowledge

39 Interview with director of a West African NGO network. Accra, Ghana, 6 February 2006.
can be difficult as they are often grounded in fundamentally different knowledge systems.

2.4 Different knowledge systems

“We all ‘know’ the world through a combination of our education, language, culture, and belief and, just as importantly, our actual physical realities – gender, location, socio-economic environment. […] The issue for anyone working on development issues cannot be simply how to deal with ‘knowledge’, but how to act effectively in an environment of multiple ‘knowledges’.” (Powell 2006: 521)

The world has different knowledge systems. “[N]ot only are there different realities, but different people have different epistemologies or ‘ways of knowing’. The distinctions usually made in this respect are between indigenous knowledge and western scientific knowledge, and between different gender epistemologies.” (Baumann 1999: 14) Here we focus on the first distinction – between Western and non-Western knowledge systems. As will be discussed in chapter four, some knowledge systems are more dominant than others. Oversimplifying terribly, the gist of much literature about different knowledge systems is as depicted in Table 2.1 below: in contrast with non-Western knowledge systems, in which magic, myth, intuition, and tradition play an important role (Mudimbe 1988: 189), Western knowledge systems emphasise rationality, scientific research standards, and codified, written-down knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western / modern knowledge system(s)</th>
<th>Non-Western / traditional knowledge system(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scientifically generated</td>
<td>Experience-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documented, formalised</td>
<td>Undocumented, oral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codified, abstracted, quantifiable</td>
<td>Qualitative, stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientifically tested</td>
<td>Intuition, tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic, verifiable</td>
<td>Myth, magic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term emphasis, deadlines</td>
<td>Long-term emphasis, process-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reductionist</td>
<td>Holistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Objective’, ‘value-free’</td>
<td>Subjective, moral, spiritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on learning in formalised settings, separated from applied context</td>
<td>Learning through observation and experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data generated by researchers</td>
<td>Data generated by practitioners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Simplified and generalised overview of the differences between Western/modern and non-Western/traditional knowledge systems
A lot can be said against this simplified depiction of opposing knowledge systems. In reality, elements of both exist both in the developing world and in the West. The elements generally associated with Western-style knowledge, shown in the left-hand column, are part of ‘machine’, ‘logic’, rational, positivist, or even bureaucratic-style knowledge – which certainly has a dominant position in the West but not only there and not to the complete exclusion of elements from the right-hand column. Myths and rituals play a role in each society, and most humans draw on ‘logic’ and scientific types of knowledge as well as more intuitive or even spiritual kinds. In any case, some criticise how “in their depiction of the way in which western science has conspired to subjugate Third World people, populists come close to resembling orientalist myths that deny people any history or creativity. […]” (Baumann 1999: 15)

Notwithstanding these qualifications, there certainly are differences between indigenous and Western knowledge systems, if only because in the latter the left-hand column elements have dominated for a much longer time. Interviewees of local peace NGOs refer to differences between local and Western knowledge systems and for that reason alone it would be important to look at this distinction. In their view, the elements in the left-hand column of the above table are generally associated with the West, particularly by those outside that region. However, if there is a clash between Western and indigenous knowledge, it takes place not so much between parts of the world as it does within countries and communities: between those who have been educated according to Western standards, and those who have not; between the youth, who have access to new sources of knowledge through information technology, and the older generation who stick to traditional knowledge; between politicians who maintain the Western-style state apparatuses installed by colonialism, and traditional authorities at the local level. (Senghaas 2002)

Western or ‘modern’ knowledge is not universal but represents a specific system of knowledge. This is also true for the way knowledge itself is viewed. In the tradition of Western Enlightenment, there is a separation between the observer and what is being observed. This is different for example in Zen-influenced Japanese culture, in which there is no such separation. Baumann generalised this to all non-Western or indigenous knowledge systems, writing that “1) indigenous knowledge is embedded in a particular community and contextually bound; 2) it is not based on a subject/object dichotomy, and; 3) it s not individualistic
and is based on a commitment to a local context” (Baumann 1999: 14). Interestingly, the same things are often said for female epistemologies – as opposed to male ones. Indeed, Baumann (1999: 15) mentions that some authors group together “western/male epistemologies and eastern/female epistemologies”. Given that some women are raised in Western scientific traditions while others are raised in non-Western traditions, it is difficult to explain this. In any case, doing so would go beyond the scope of this study.

In Hinduism, knowledge is seen as a balance of the knowledge of one’s self with knowledge of the external world. The African concept of *Ubuntu* relates knowledge very much to a collective sense of identity. In this tradition the observer is an integral part of the reality he is observing and an individual can only be understood as part of a wider group: ‘I am therefore you are’. “Whereas Western science attempts to isolate a problem – to eliminate its interlinkage with various other factors and to reduce a problem to a small number of controllable parameters – traditional approaches usually examine problems in their entirety, together with their interlinkages and complexities”. (Grenier 1997: 10) In *Ubuntu*, the truth cannot be objectively discovered and verified, as Western scientific traditions like to believe, but is multi-dimensional and ever-changing. No truth is static, absolute or eternal in this way of thinking; instead it is defined by change, ambiguity and movement. (Lammers 2006, 106). Recalling the discussion about the contested nature of conflict knowledge earlier in this chapter, this way of looking at truth seems quite relevant for people engaged in conflict and peacebuilding.

2.5 The applicability of knowledge: how context-specific is knowledge?

In how far is knowledge based on a specific experience useful in a different situation, with different circumstances? To a large extent this question relates to the discussion of tacit knowledge in section 2.1.1. There the conclusion was that some knowledge is so much related to a person’s individual set of mind frames and experiences that it is impossible for others to understand and use. An example from another context may illustrate this. How I deal with the specific issues I face in the relationship with my spouse, issues which are so much related to our personal histories and to the way our relationship has developed over the years, is highly specific to my context. Much of my behaviour takes the form of a habit based on knowledge and experience that I don’t even realise I have. At the same time, it may help me to talk to friends who,
although their characters and personal histories differ, may be dealing with similar issues. Comparing our assumptions and behaviours could lead me to see things from a useful new perspective. Alternatively, a psychologist could provide me with objectified, codified knowledge based on the experiences of many people like me. Even though this knowledge alone might not solve my particular problem, which is too specific for anyone else to understand completely, my problem does contain generalisable facets that others have experience with as well. Applying knowledge that originated elsewhere to my own context remains a task that only I can fulfil.

The question also relates to the differences between ‘Northern’ and ‘indigenous’ knowledge. In this context, De la Rive Box (2001) describes the prevailing assumption in the 1950s that countries were developed because they were scientifically advanced and therefore industrialised. Underdeveloped countries lacked knowledge and therefore that knowledge needed to be transferred first. Sending experts to, or training students from, developing countries could do the job. However, says De la Rive Box, experiences have shown that the technical knowledge required in tropical countries was not available in the West or at least not suited for application in conditions other than those in the West. “Nevertheless, the technology transfer model continued to inspire aid or cooperation policies for decades to come.”

Similarly, Baud (2002: 54) describes the “classical linear model” of knowledge dissemination from North to South, which “assumes that the scientific community produces ‘universally applicable knowledge’”, but which is now widely criticised for ignoring “the context in which the knowledge is produced, and the limits of that context”. In contrast to this model, we will see later on that many peace practitioners interviewed do not view knowledge as produced in one context and transferred to another, but as produced through interaction between and among practitioners and researchers, who are at the same time sources and users of knowledge.  

2.6 Implications: forms of peace and conflict knowledge

The dichotomies described in this chapter - tacit-explicit, academic-practitioner, indigenous-external –overlap. Indigenous knowledge, for example, can at the same time be tacit and academic. To show this overlap, the various types of knowledge discussed are combined in the

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40 See also Baud 2002: 54.
following tables. Table 2.2 deals with academic knowledge and organises it into six categories, using the dimensions indigenous-external and tacit-explicit-implicit. The same is done for practitioner knowledge in Table 2.3. Although many other ways of conceptualising types of knowledge can be envisioned, the organisation in these tables gives an idea of the range of different types and categories of knowledge.

**Table 2.2: Types of knowledge: academic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Knowledge</th>
<th>Indigenous / local</th>
<th>External</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tacit / unique</td>
<td>The specific expertise and experience of indigenous academics and local academic communities (1)</td>
<td>Research skills and experience of external academics; Northern academic communities (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit / programmable</td>
<td>Local academic publications or lectures (3)</td>
<td>External academic publications (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit / cultural</td>
<td>Research findings and knowledge regarding local cultural norms and traditions; norms and traditions of local academia (5)</td>
<td>Research findings and knowledge regarding non-local cultural norms and traditions; norms and traditions of external academia (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioner Knowledge</th>
<th>Indigenous / local</th>
<th>External</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tacit / unique</td>
<td>Personal knowledge of staff. Stories, contacts, experience. (7)</td>
<td>Travel stories, personal contacts, experience of external people. (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit / programmable</td>
<td>Statistics, databases, intranets. Manuals, project reports, lessons learned documents, evaluation reports. (9)</td>
<td>Websites, publications, manuals of external agencies. (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit / cultural</td>
<td>Local norms and traditions in NGOs and communities (11)</td>
<td>Northern norms and traditions; norms and traditions of the international peace and development community (12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is important with an eye on the use of knowledge is that different categories of knowledge present different challenges for learning and knowledge sharing initiatives. Table 2.4 below draws attention to the kinds of process challenges associated with the mobilisation of the twelve categories of knowledge distinguished in Tables 2.2 and 2.3. In addition, the table lists possible beneficiaries of the various types of
knowledge, as well as a number of methods that could facilitate the processes needed to reach these beneficiaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of knowledge, challenges and methods</th>
<th>Process challenges</th>
<th>Utilisation and recipients</th>
<th>Methods for knowledge production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) The specific expertise and experience of indigenous academics and local academic communities</td>
<td>Very few local academics working on peace issues How to make this knowledge more explicit? How to make it available to other researchers and non-academics – locally and globally?</td>
<td>External academics may learn from the skills of doing research in particular local (conflict) contexts Academics in areas facing similar challenges may compare and learn from their experiences Practitioners can use context-specific research skills for reflection on practice</td>
<td>Build local academic capacity through cooperation with external academics Bring together Southern academics and practitioners in research around projects and in discussion forums (see chapter eight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Research skills and experience of external academics; global academic communities</td>
<td>How document this knowledge? How to make it available to local researchers and non-academics?</td>
<td>Local researchers can learn from these communities Practitioners can use research skills for reflection on practice</td>
<td>Build local academic capacity through cooperation with external academics (see 4.1 and 4.2) Bring together Northern and Southern academics and practitioners in research around projects and in discussion forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Local academic publications or lectures</td>
<td>How to reach possible audiences abroad? How to apply theoretical ideas to the practice? How to bridge the gap between academia and practice?</td>
<td>External academics may use the knowledge and combine it with knowledge from elsewhere to generate generalised knowledge Academics in areas facing similar challenges may</td>
<td>Capacity building (see 3.6 and 4.7). More research in response to demands from practitioners (see 5.3.4, 5.5.5 and chapter eight). Participatory research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) External academic publications</td>
<td>How to link up with indigenous research – and local and global practice?</td>
<td>Indigenous researchers may combine this knowledge with their own research results in order to generate new generalised knowledge. Practitioners may apply the knowledge in their work.</td>
<td>North-South research partnerships and networks. More research in response to demands from practitioners (see 5.3.4, 5.5.5 and chapter eight). Participatory research. Packaging: writing style, summarising. Active attention to communication and dissemination of research results beyond academic community (see 2.1.2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Research findings and knowledge regarding local cultural norms and traditions; norms and traditions of local academia</td>
<td>Intangible nature of such knowledge and fact that it usually exists only in tacit form. Challenge for external actors to gain access to this knowledge and to apply it/adjust to different norms.</td>
<td>Northern researchers, policymakers and peacebuilding practitioners – researchers in order to do research more effectively in countries with different cultures, policymakers to make more relevant policy, practitioners to work more effectively.</td>
<td>Comes to the fore in indigenous-external exchanges. Attempts may be made to document this knowledge through joint North-South, participatory research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Research findings and knowledge regarding non-</td>
<td>Intangible nature of such knowledge and fact that it usually exists only</td>
<td>Southern researchers, policymakers, practitioners, in order to more effectively.</td>
<td>Comes to the fore in indigenous-external exchanges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local cultural norms and traditions; norms and traditions of external academia</td>
<td>Work with external actors.</td>
<td>Attempts may be made to codify through joint North-South, participatory research.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(7) Personal knowledge of staff. Stories, contacts, experience</strong>&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>How to find out who knows what?&lt;br&gt;How to make explicit and share?&lt;br&gt;How to share beyond the immediate community?&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>Colleagues may access the knowledge present inside their organisation&lt;br&gt;Other organisations could benefit for their own work&lt;br&gt;Researchers (local and external) may use it to generate more generalised knowledge&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>Staff surveys, yellow pages (see 3.2.4).&lt;br&gt;Encouraging documentation.&lt;br&gt;Create space for intra-organisational exchange through meetings, joint field visits, differing team compositions (see 3.2 and 5.3).&lt;br&gt;Make space for (online) discussion with staff of other organisations and local communities (see 5.3 and chapters six and seven).&lt;br&gt;International conferences, networks or discussion forums (chapter seven).&lt;br&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(8) Travel stories, personal contacts, experience of external people.</strong>&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>How to find out who knows what?&lt;br&gt;How to distil knowledge for sharing?&lt;br&gt;How to codify and share beyond the immediate community?&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>Fellow practitioners inside and outside the own organisation may benefit from the accumulated practical action experiences (learning how to do something)&lt;br&gt;Researchers may use it to generate more generalised knowledge&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td>Encouraging documentation (see 5.3 and chapter eight). Dissemination of conference reports and organisation of follow-up. Intra- and extra-organisational exchanges (see 5.5). Create global database of experts.&lt;br&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **(9) Statistics, Statistics, Statistics**<br>| How to write and 'Raw data' for local Accessible writing | }
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>databases, intranets, manuals, project reports, lessons learned documents, evaluation reports</th>
<th>process them in such a way that they do not end up on a shelf? How to enable people in other regions to learn from local experience?</th>
<th>and external researchers who use it to produce knowledge with a wider applicability. Local practitioners use the information in the planning of new interventions. Practitioners in other regions may learn from evaluation results, repeat successful activities or avoid making similar mistakes.</th>
<th>with possible broader applicability of conclusions on mind. Pay attention to communication of results and issues. Create space for (online) discussion of outcomes. Cooperation with researchers to make sense of information and draw conclusions for wider application (see chapter eight). Create global networks (chapter seven).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(10) Websites, publications, manuals of external agencies</td>
<td>Dealing with information overload. Selection of relevant information, time management issues. Access issues.</td>
<td>See above.</td>
<td>Create online portals and search engines. Make websites interactive, allowing for improvement of manuals based on user experience. Improve internet access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11) Local norms and traditions in NGOs and communities</td>
<td>Intangible nature of such knowledge and fact that it usually exists only in tacit form. Challenge to gain access and to apply.</td>
<td>External practitioners in order to work more effectively in local context. Exchange with locals; observation. Being open to different perspectives, traditions (third-order, cross-cultural learning; see 3.1, 4.7.2 and elsewhere).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12) Northern norms and traditions; norms and traditions of</td>
<td>Intangible nature of such knowledge and fact that it usually exists only</td>
<td>Local NGO staff are relatively adept at accessing norms and language of external</td>
<td>Exchange with external actors and observation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.7 Concluding remarks

The table above gives an overview of the forms that knowledge of peace and conflict takes, and the issues and challenges that arise when it comes to sharing them with others. A number of issues emerge from the various types of knowledge discussed in this chapter:

- **important challenge for knowledge processes is how to mobilise, exchange and apply tacit and implicit knowledge.** In Table 2.4 in the previous section this was concretised some more. But what ideas about learning and knowledge exchange actually exist that try to facilitate these processes? We will turn to that question in the next chapter. The question may also be raised how such processes work in reality in NGOs. While the next chapter provides some initial ideas about this, it is in the remainder of the book that this question will really be explored for the practice of Southern peace NGOs.

- **There are some communication issues between practitioners and academics when it comes to the sharing of knowledge, although academic knowledge originates in practice.** It is suggested that dynamic knowledge networks could provide an avenue for joint academic-practitioner knowledge creation. But how does this work in practice? In chapters six and seven, we will look at networks as a knowledge exchange and knowledge generation tool.

- **Knowledge of conflict and peace is never neutral and there are usually competing versions of the ‘truth’.** Discussing these different interpretations is in fact an important part of peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. This means that reconciliation has an important knowledge component. How exactly can knowledge exchange and joint learning processes contribute to peacebuilding? And does this happen in reality? This is another set of questions that we will return to in Parts Two and Three.