

# Fitting the Pieces Together: Implications for Resilience, Adaptive Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice

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## INTRODUCTION

This edited volume set out to explore how resilience, adaptive peacebuilding and transitional justice can help societies recover after collective violence. To do so, it examined diverse societies across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East that have experienced, or are continuing to experience, violence. The eight case studies – Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), Rwanda, Uganda, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Colombia, Guatemala and Palestine – provide in-depth conceptual and empirical analyses of resilience and adaptive peacebuilding in a range of transitional justice settings. This final chapter will reflect on what we have learned from the cases covered in this volume. In particular, it will discuss how they enrich our understanding of the concepts of resilience, adaptive peacebuilding and transitional justice, and what they tell us about the complex ways that resilience and adaptive peacebuilding manifest in transitional and post-conflict settings. The chapter begins with a discussion of adaptive peacebuilding and resilience in transitional justice contexts.

## ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING

Adaptive peacebuilding is an approach that involves peacebuilders, together with the communities and people affected by conflict and violence, actively engaging in a structured and iterative process to sustain peace through learning and adaptation. The adaptive peacebuilding approach aims at supporting societies to develop the resilience and robustness that they need to cope with and adapt to change, by helping them to develop greater levels of complexity in their social institutions (de Coning, 2018: 307).

Adaptive peacebuilding implies that international and national actors engaged in conflict resolution and peace processes have to take responsibility – ethically – for their choices and actions. Taking responsibility means that policymakers and peacebuilders need to think through the ethical implications of both their macro theories for resolving conflict and sustaining peace and the specific choices that they make in any given context. They have to be conscious of the knowledge claims and assumptions that inform their choices, and the potential consequences – intended and unintended – of their actions. The primary directive that should guide all conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives is to ‘do no harm’ (Anderson, 1999).

Adaptive peacebuilding is thus a conscious normative and functional approach to peacebuilding and transitional justice aimed at navigating the complexity inherent in trying to nudge societal change processes towards sustaining peace, without interfering so much that it causes harm by inadvertently disrupting the very feedback loops critical for self-organisation to emerge and become sustainable. There are three key concepts that inform adaptive peacebuilding, namely complexity, local ownership (linked to self-organisation) and resilience.

### *Complexity*

Complexity theory provides a theoretical (ontological and epistemological) framework for understanding how social systems function, including how they react to shocks and stressors. By applying some of the insights derived from the study of complex systems, we may be able to strengthen the ability of societies to prevent, manage, withstand and recover from violent conflict. Social systems are empirically complex. This means that they are a particular type of system that has the ability to adapt and demonstrate emergent properties, including self-organising behaviour. These systems emerge, and are maintained, as a result of the dynamic and non-linear interactions of the individuals and institutions that make up the system, based on the information available to them locally. Also highly significant are their interactions with their environment and the modulated feedback that they receive from other elements of the system (Cilliers, 1998; de Coning, 2016: 198).

Complicated systems, such as an advanced spacecraft or a super-computer, can be comprehensively described and understood through observation and analysis of their component parts and how they work together to produce a specific effect. Designing, building and launching a spacecraft into space, for example, is highly complicated, but, once it is mastered, the same process can be repeated with a reasonable chance of success. In fact, the most

frequently used rocket to send people and goods into space is the Soviet Soyuz rocket, and this has a core design that has been in use since 1967 (European Space Agency, n.d.). In complex systems, in contrast, the whole has properties that cannot be found in the constituent elements or in the sum of their properties (Cilliers, 1998). In social systems, for example, the society as a whole develops and sustains norms, identities, structures or hierarchies and behaviours that serve the common needs of the community. When we study people as part of a society, as opposed to studying them as individuals, a different side of their being is revealed, including aspects related to their role in a family and their society. The African philosophy of *Ubuntu* covers this well, in its saying: 'I am myself through you' (Akinola and Uzodike, 2018: 95).

As social systems are also highly dynamic, non-linear and emergent, it is not possible to find general laws or rules or a neat algorithm that will help us to predict with certainty how they will react. For example, if a small amount of foreign aid slightly increases economic growth, we might expect that more aid should produce greater growth (Jervis, 1997). However, in complex systems, the relationships between variables are dynamic and disproportionate (Kiehl, 1995). Similarly, if a particular process helped to sustain peace in one society, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa, it cannot be repeated in another context with any reasonable expectation that it will have the same outcome (de Coning, 2016). Such uncertainty is not a reflection of imperfect knowledge, inadequate planning or implementation (Popolo, 2011: 209). It is an intrinsic quality of complex systems. Acknowledging uncertainty as a starting point is what Barnett refers to as cultivating 'a spirit of epistemological uncertainty' (cited in Benner et al., 2011: 225). Making a similar point specifically in the context of peace and conflict, Hughes (2012: 116) argues that 'an explicit, reflexive awareness of the incompleteness of our understanding is (...) vital so that decisions are taken with a large degree of caution (and humility) while at the same time demanding that we think through the possible ramifications'.

Until fairly recently, the transitional justice and peacebuilding community were confident in their ability to diagnose the problems affecting a society emerging from conflict and to prescribe the steps that such a society needed to take to transform its judicial and related systems in order to sustain peace (World Bank, 2011). The outcome was believed to be more or less guaranteed if the design was followed, and uncertainty was seen as a risk that could be managed with good planning (Eriksen, 2009: 662). Complexity provides us with the theoretical framework for understanding the hubris of these assumptions. Indeed, interventions in complex systems can produce unforeseen

consequences and create new problems (Preiser et al., 2018), as some of the case studies in this volume have showed.

It is important to underline, however, that, within a complexity framework, non-linearity is not associated with disorder and chaos. In fact, non-linearity is an essential ingredient in the processes of emergence and self-organisation that generate order in complex systems. While these systems cannot do without hierarchy and structure, hierarchy is not hard-wired or externally determined and controlled. It is emergent and self-organised, and thus it changes as the system adapts and evolves in response to its environment (Cilliers, 2001). Indeed, the vitality of the system depends on its ability to transform itself, including its structure and hierarchy (Chapman, 2002). Fundamentally, thus, non-linearity is the element that distinguishes a complex system from a deterministic or mechanical system. A rocket is fully knowable, predictable and, hence, controllable in principle. It is also unable to do anything that is not pre-programmed or designed. In contrast, the non-linearity in complex systems is what makes it possible for them to adapt and to evolve. Non-linearity is therefore an essential part, in fact a pre-condition, for emergence, self-organisation and adaptation in complex systems (Cilliers, 1998).

### *Self-organisation and Local Ownership*

Self-organisation refers to the ability of a complex system to organise, regulate and maintain itself without needing an external or internal managing or controlling agent. For example, the economy is a self-organising social system that continuously responds to a large number of factors without requiring a controlling agent. The organisation of the economic system as a whole comes about as a result of the interactions between the various agents (individuals and institutions like central banks, investors and private companies) that constitute the system and its environment (Cilliers, 1998). No single agent or group of agents controls the economic system, but many try to influence the behaviour of the system. Through these interactions, and the feedback effects that they have on each other, the economy self-organises spontaneously. This is an emergent process that comes about as a result of the cumulative and collective interactions of all the agents in the system. The economy is just a sub-set of the larger social system of which it forms a part, and all social systems are similarly self-organising. Self-organisation in the social context refers to the various processes and mechanisms a society uses to manage itself, including in times of crisis. It speaks to the ability of a society to manage its tensions, pressures, disputes, crises and shocks without collapsing into disorder and violence.

Adaptive peacebuilding is an approach or method where peacebuilders, together with the communities and people affected by conflict, actively engage in a structured process to sustain peace and resolve conflicts (de Coning, 2018). Instead of using a pre-designed blueprint, or a top-down control model, the adaptive peacebuilding approach is a conscious method for engaging with a particular society to develop an intervention together with them from the bottom up. The aim is to stimulate self-organisation, not to control how a community will act. A self-organised social system cannot be directed to achieve a specific predetermined result. However, it can be nudged in a direction, although whether it will follow that direction is uncertain and unpredictable. This is a process that needs to be undertaken together with the community, and as such it encourages and enables local ownership. The end result is often more appropriate to the context than what any pre-determined plan could have foreseen. The adaptive peacebuilding approach is thus a specific methodology for coping with the complexity, uncertainty and unpredictability we encounter when attempting to influence complex social systems.

The recognition in the adaptive peacebuilding approach of the fact that there is no external privileged knowledge or predetermined model, and that the design of solutions for peace should emerge from the process itself, creates meaningful opportunities for all stakeholders, and especially for local societies and communities, to co-own and co-manage the process (de Coning, 2018). The adaptive peacebuilding approach may also help to clarify the different political interests at stake or reveal spoilers, because of its focus on proactive monitoring and feedback.

A key feature of the adaptive peacebuilding approach is the recognition of the inherently political nature of peacebuilding. Choices regarding who gets to make decisions about which opportunities to explore, which programmes to replicate or expand and which criteria will be used in the process all have political dimensions and political effects. Decisions regarding which policy options to pursue are rarely technical. They are influenced by political judgements about who may lose or gain, and as a result it is rare that the technical aspects of a particular initiative will override what is seen as politically feasible in a given context. This also implies that a decision to pursue a particular initiative may face pushback from those who view it as harmful to their interests or were excluded from the process. An approach informed by complexity theory thus recognises that forward momentum is not inevitable (de Coning, 2018).

A core insight from complexity theory for peacebuilding is that, in order for a peace process to become self-sustaining, resilient social institutions need to

emerge from within, i.e. from the local culture, history and socio-economic context. External actors, like international peacebuilders, or the national government in the case of a local society or group, can assist and facilitate this process, but if they interfere too much they will undermine the self-organising processes necessary to sustain resilient social institutions. A complexity-informed approach suggests that those engaged in transitional justice and peacebuilding should focus their efforts on safeguarding, stimulating, facilitating and creating the space for societies to develop resilient capacities for self-organisation (de Coning, 2016: 173).

### *Resilience*

Many definitions of resilience exist, but it is broadly understood as the ability to manage, withstand and recover from shocks (Joseph, 2018: 3). To this general definition, Folke et al. (2010) add that withstanding a shock means retaining or recovering essentially the same function, structure, feedbacks and, by extension, identity. Ungar (2013: 256) defines resilience as 'the capacity of both individuals and their environments to interact in ways that optimize developmental processes' (see also Chapter 1). In the adaptive peacebuilding context, we can conceptualise resilience as the ability of a society to prevent, manage and recover from violent conflict in ways that maximise developmental processes (de Coning, 2016).

Adaptive capacity is understood as the ability to thrive in an environment characterised by change (Joseph, 2018: 14). In the adaptive peacebuilding context, it refers to the ability of a society to adjust to disruptive change, to take advantage of opportunities and to respond to consequences (Engle, 2011: 648). Resilience and adaptive capacity are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Adaptive capacity emphasises the extent to which civil society and social institutions are able to adapt to rapid or drastic change, i.e. their flexibility and responsiveness in the face of crisis. Resilience underlines the ability of these social institutions to prevent, manage and recover from the effects of a disruption. The more adaptive capacity a society has, the more resilient it will be. Resilience is broader than adaptive capacity; it covers reducing vulnerability and managing risks – for example, by taking various preventative actions – and other forms of dealing with and responding to shocks beyond adapting to change.

Both resilience and adaptive capacity strongly rely on social capital (Putnam, 1993). Social capital refers to the resources and other public goods that individuals and social institutions can access via networks and communities. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

(OECD) defines social capital as networks that, together with shared norms, values and understandings, facilitate co-operation within or among groups (Keeley, 2007: 102). In other words, social capital refers to how social networks foster understanding and trust, and in the process enable people to work together. By extension, resilience, adaptive capacity and social capital combined are fundamentally about the ability of a society or community to develop and evolve while at the same time retaining essential values, cohesion and identity. Collectively, these concepts describe a society or community's systemic capacities to reorganise, learn and adapt in response to significant disruptions, such as violent conflict or civil war.

In Chapter 1, Michael Ungar introduced and contextualised the concept of multi-systemic resilience and its relevance to the field of transitional justice. He argued that the concept of resilience is best understood as a process whereby individual capital and social capital interact in ways that create optimal outcomes in stressed environments. He further explained that any system may show patterns of persistence, resistance, recovery, adaptation or transformation depending on the resources available to it to support change. Ungar's chapter examined these processes and how they affect systems simultaneously at multiple levels.

In Chapter 2, Wendy Lambourne explored how resilience thinking can contribute to the transformative potential of transitional justice processes, and how these processes can foster and deepen our understanding of both resilience and adaptive peacebuilding. Her chapter also demonstrated that building resilient communities is a logical consequence of more inclusive justice and facilitated participation (core processes of both adaptive peacebuilding and transitional justice), along with healing and reconciliation.

Understanding resilience as a multi-systemic concept can help to explain how social systems affected by transitional justice (both judicial and non-judicial processes) respond to stressors, helping individuals, communities and institutions to survive and thrive. Awareness of the diversity of forms that resilience can take in these societies, and of how individuals and communities – in interaction with their wider social ecologies – utilise and develop their own resilience resources is, in turn, an important part of moving away from template approaches to 'building peace'.

In this regard, an adaptive peacebuilding approach differs from more conventional top-down approaches in two key ways, namely: (1) recognising the resilience and adaptive capacity of facilitated self-organisation and (2) understanding that optimal responses have to be emergent from the context and community. The aim, thus, is not to implement a specific pre-designed, step-by-step transitional justice, recovery or reconciliation programme, but

rather to engage the community in a process that identifies and builds consensus around what the problem is, what the intended responses could be and how to proceed. This is not a one-off event (e.g. a two-hour workshop). There needs to be a structured learning process wherein different initiatives are assessed and decisions are made about whether to further adapt or scale up those initiatives that show promise. The result is thus a continuous adaptation based on experimentation, feedback and collective learning. This pattern is very much in evidence in the case studies presented throughout this volume.

One of the book's core aims was to develop the idea of adaptive peacebuilding, both conceptually and empirically. Specifically, the chapters have analysed whether and how transitional justice processes themselves can contribute to adaptive peacebuilding in the sense of helping to foster adaptive capacity and resilience across complex systems that have experienced the shocks and stressors of war, conflict and large-scale violence. The next section reflects on what we can learn from them about resilience, adaptive peacebuilding and transitional justice.

#### WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

The chapters in this volume have covered a variety of conflict contexts across various parts of the world, exploring in depth one or more micro-level experiences of conflict in order to assess whether and how different transitional justice initiatives have contributed to resilience and adaptive peacebuilding. Some common inter-linked themes have emerged, and this section focuses on three in particular, namely self-organisation, unintended consequences and process.

#### *Self-organisation*

A common theme that emerges from the case studies is the idea that resilience is associated with people affected by conflict coming together to form cooperative networks that help them cope with violence or its aftermath. In Chapter 5 on northern Uganda, for example, Philipp Schulz and Fred Ngomokwe showed how survivors' groups enable those involved in them, through creative and participatory practices, to strengthen their agency and craft spaces for healing, justice and peacebuilding. The groups help survivors to develop adaptive and transformative capacities that assist them to process and respond to shocks, stressors and harms resulting from mass violence (and its aftermath). These survivors' groups are engaged in a variety of different activities, including psychosocial peer support, collective income-generating

activities and joint financial schemes, such as Village Savings and Loan Associations.

Schulz and Ngomokwe argue that this kind of self-organising group activity enables survivors to interact with their wider socio-ecological environments in ways that facilitate positive psychological, physical and social development, thereby also aiding recovery, adaptation and transformation. Based on these findings, they view adaptive peacebuilding and resilience as multi-faceted processes that require relationality and local ownership, and which embrace the complexities and diversities of post-conflict and post-disaster lived realities (Chandler, 2012; de Coning, 2018; Ungar, 2018). Schulz and Ngomokwe conclude their chapter by setting in place processes for survivors to engage with their experiences on their own terms – structured around self-organisation, local ownership and internal capacities, as well as relationality and social networks – and thus for the groups to contribute towards adaptively building peace and fostering resilience at the local level and among their members.

Similarly, in Chapter 8, in the context of her study of the conflict and peace process in Colombia, Sanne Weber finds that social relations and organisation go a long way towards explaining how people manage to continue living despite multiple harms and hardships. In particular, she highlights the role of organisations that arose from the struggle to defend the land and rebuild the communities, and which play an important role in the process of returning people to their land after displacement. Weber argues that these actions, for which organisation among people was key, can be seen as a form of ‘radical citizenship’. According to her, these findings suggest that unity, organisation and the forms of active citizenship that they enabled are crucial aspects of the social resilience outlined by Michael Ungar in Chapter 1. She maintains that social resilience enables individuals and communities to navigate and negotiate access to the resources they need, such as land and financial support.

However, Weber also finds that transitional justice and related peacebuilding processes in Colombia have not contributed to strengthening this social resilience. She points out that the Colombia case shows not only the risks of raising expectations but also the impact of unmet expectations and disappointments on people’s ability and willingness to place their trust in either the peace process or their leaders. Weber finds that these frustrations resulted in people choosing to focus their energy on their own interests, rather than investing in struggles for the greater good. She argues that this eventually makes it harder to overcome the structural marginalisation and lack of access to basic social and infrastructural services that the communities face. In order to address this, she underlines that transitional justice should promote social resilience, or the

capacity of survivors to organise themselves – as communities or groups of survivors – to protect and promote their own well-being. She concludes that self-organisation allows survivors to adapt their demands and negotiation strategies to changes on the ground and resulting needs, even beyond the often limited timespan of transitional justice mechanisms. Weber thus calls for increasing social resilience, by strengthening organisational and lobbying skills among people and promoting a collective identity and unity, and argues that facilitating self-organisation will produce more appropriate and long-term results than the short-term impact of a compensation cheque.

In Chapter 9, Lykes, Crosby and Alvarez reflect on the experiences of Mayan women in Guatemala. Similarly placing a strong emphasis on self-organisation, they demonstrate that various group processes helped to give voice ‘to multiple experiences of previously silenced embodied suffering’. This resulted in the protagonists with whom they worked ‘standing up to publicly assert their rights as women, denouncing not only racialised war-based violations of their bodies but also contemporary gendered family violence and corporate extraction of natural resources in their territories’.

In Chapter 3, Janine Natalya Clark makes the case for a new framing of transitional justice that gives greater attention to broader social-ecological systems. She points out, however, that it is not about simply ‘correcting’ them through administrative reforms or technical measures, but, rather, about helping to foster resilient systems that can effectively and positively adapt to adversity. Part of the process of operationalising the synergy between adaptive peacebuilding and transitional justice, therefore, involves stimulating self-organisation and exploring ways of fostering resilience within often overlooked community-level systems. In other words, Clark argues for a reframing of transitional justice that places greater emphasis on the fundamental self-organising systems that connect people (Clark, 2019, 2020c), thereby strengthening local capacity to advocate for and exert pressure for broader systemic change within the context of adaptive peacebuilding.

These case studies have thus identified how some peacebuilding and transitional justice practices can promote and facilitate the capacity of groups that have experienced harm to organise themselves, and how this may help to foster resilience by enabling and empowering communities to direct their own recovery processes.

More broadly, what the case studies in this volume also show is that conflict resolution and peacebuilding are delicate processes. An inherent tension exists between, on one hand, the act of promoting a process of self-organisation from the outside, and, on the other hand, excessive external interference that ultimately undermines self-organisation. From a complexity perspective,

one can argue that, whenever external peacebuilders intervene to solve a perceived problem in the local system, they interrupt the internal feedback process and thus deny the local system the opportunity to respond to a problem or challenge itself, thereby impeding self-organisation and resilience. State and social institutions develop resilience through trial and error over generations. Too much filtering and cushioning slow down and inhibit these processes. Acknowledging this tension – and the constraints that it poses – can help us to understand why many international transitional justice and peacebuilding interventions have made the mistake of interfering so much that they ultimately undermine the ability of local system to self-organise (de Coning, 2018). Jennie Burnet's discussion in Chapter 4 illustrates this point.

International peacebuilding and transitional justice interventions should provide security guarantees and maintain the outer parameters of acceptable state behaviour in the international system; and they should stimulate, facilitate and create the space for the emergence of robust and resilient self-organised systems. However, international peacebuilding and transitional justice interventions should not interfere in the local social process with the goal of engineering a specific outcome. Trying to control the outcome will, in all probability, produce the opposite of what peacebuilding aims to achieve; it will generate ongoing instability and dependence, and it will undermine self-sustainability (de Coning, 2016). The key to more effective peacebuilding and transitional justice thus lies in finding the appropriate balance between international support and local ownership.

To elaborate on an earlier point, the essential difference between a complex-systems approach and a determined-design approach like the liberal peace model is that, under the latter, the solution is understood to come from the outside (Liden, 2009). In the liberal peace model, the agency to solve the problem resides in the international capacity to assess the situation and to design a solution and to then undertake an intervention where the solution is applied (Eriksen, 2009). The insight from complexity theory for transitional justice is that, for any society to live sustainably in peace, it needs to generate its own capacity to self-organise. This is a process that can be facilitated and supported by external peacebuilders, but it ultimately has to be a bottom-up and home-grown process. Self-organisation cannot be imposed (de Coning, 2016).

### *Unintended Consequences and Unintentional Harm*

A second common theme that runs across many of the chapters in this volume is that attempts to strengthen societal or community resilience at one place in

the system (even if they are not expressly framed as such) can cause harm in another place, or at another level. In their introduction to this volume, Janine Natalya Clark and Michael Ungar remind us that adding a resilience lens highlights the importance of focusing not just on direct victims of violence and human rights abuses but also on their wider social ecologies. Peacebuilding and transitional justice practitioners thus need to anticipate that interventions in complex systems will generate a number of effects, not all of them intended or desired. While this underscores the crucial point that resilience is not inherently good (or bad) in itself, it also underlines that practitioners must be ready to monitor and mitigate negative side-effects, thereby adapting their actions to prevent or reduce harm (Aoi et al., 2007).

In Chapter 4, in her case study of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, Jennie Burnet points out that many applications of resilience ‘depoliticise processes that are, at heart, deeply political’. She argues that politics produced the Rwandan genocide, and so it is no surprise that politics has also heavily shaped recovery processes. Burnet notes that many definitions of resilience accentuate the ability of systems or communities to absorb disturbance, meaning that resilience can potentially reinforce existing inequalities and perpetuate vulnerabilities (see also Béné et al., 2012: 14). Indeed, in demonstrating that systemic factors often privilege recovery for some people in society over others, her overall argument is that transitional justice – as the state in post-genocide Rwanda has used it – has in fact disrupted local adaptive peacebuilding initiatives. Instead, a highly politicised transitional justice process has imposed a new, stable (and thus ‘resilient’) social order on Rwandan society that privileges some citizens over others and leaves unresolved many important issues related to recovery and long-term prospects for peace. Accordingly, Burnet insists that transitional justice in Rwanda has ultimately benefitted the nation-state at the expense of community healing and displaced local adaptive peacebuilding efforts that were often the most successful in promoting reconciliation.

In Chapter 6, Nayanika Mookherjee questions the routine testimonial processes that international and national transitional justice practitioners use to re-create a narrative of wartime sexual violence. Focused on the use of sexual violence during the 1971 war in Bangladesh, she emphasises practices to document the voices of *birangonas* (war heroines) aimed at highlighting the prevalence of rape in war and seeking justice for the crimes committed. However, she powerfully questions the idea that resilience is automatically generated through giving survivors a voice and demonstrates that within human rights narratives in Bangladesh, there is a predetermined focus on documenting and presenting only ‘horrific’ accounts of survivors. Inadequate

attention is given to the ways in which the *birangonas* themselves would want to articulate their experiences, not only of the 1971 war but also of their lives today.

Mookherjee shows that focusing on the post-conflict lives of the *birangonas* not only gives in-depth insights into the long-term impacts of wartime rape but also illuminates the complex ways that the women and their families have dealt with the violence of rape over time (a theme that Lykes, Crosby and Alvarez also explore in their chapter on Mayan women protagonists in Guatemala). Consistent with asking new questions about the complex realities of experiences of wartime rape among the *birangonas* and their families, she accentuates a type of resilience that she terms 'generative resilience'. This goes beyond survivability and recognises the socialities of violence (thereby avoiding the empty global signifier of 'trauma') for the survivors. She argues that the process of adaptive peacebuilding can be inherently flawed if ethical practices are not adhered to when recording testimonies of sexual violence. She further underlines that, in the case of Bangladesh, collapsing peace, reconciliation and resilience into a simple construct does not work as the country's war crimes tribunal has itself become a source of tension, division and harm.

These chapters thus raise the question 'Whose resilience are we studying?' Is it the resilience of the state and dominant society, or the resilience of those who are marginalised and on the periphery of society? (Cote and Nightingale, 2012: 479). These case studies show that one part of a society can be resilient while another part is not; or even that the resilience of one part of society may come at the expense of another part. When peacebuilders design and undertake transitional justice interventions, care should thus be taken not to focus only on the positive dimensions of resilience. To reiterate, it is also imperative to recognise and anticipate that any intervention in a complex social system will generate unintended consequences.

### *Process, Not End States*

A third common theme that has emerged from the case studies is a focus on process rather than end states. From an adaptive peacebuilding perspective, the core activity or practice of peacebuilding is process facilitation; the aim is to stimulate processes that will strengthen the resilience of those social institutions that manage internal and external stressors and shocks, and, in so doing, to prevent violent conflict and sustain peace (de Coning, 2018). This implies a shift in focus from ends to means. Instead of fixating on an idealised notion of peace or justice that could be attained at some distant point in the

future, the emphasis shifts to the quality, integrity and ethics of the process here and now, and in the immediate future. A number of case studies have identified the importance of this focus on process.

For example, in Chapter 2, Wendy Lambourne reflects on the implications of resilience thinking for transitional justice as a transformative process that contributes to adaptive peacebuilding. Recognising that resilience is highly relevant to a number of core transitional justice goals, including the re-establishment of the rule of law, peace and reconciliation, she explores the extent to which transitional justice processes affect and engage with multiple interacting systems in ways that can foster resilience and adaptive capacity across these systems – and the relationships that underpin them. Questioning the adequacy of what she refers to as ‘the politico-legal transitional justice framework’ for promoting resilience in societies recovering from mass atrocities and human rights violations, Lambourne argues that an alternative approach centred on socio-economic and psychosocial transformation would be needed to achieve a transformative and networked resilience approach to transitional justice. Such an approach would focus on root causes, respond to the past trauma of mass atrocities and ongoing trauma of relative and absolute poverty and deprivation, and (re)build relationships in communities and throughout the political system. She thus underlines that process is more important than the type of mechanism employed and shows that a transformative approach to transitional justice needs to incorporate this emphasis on process – consistent with existing scholarship that has underlined the importance of participation, agency and empowerment at the local level.

In Chapter 3, Janine Natalya Clark suggests that transitional justice processes can potentially contribute to resilience, and thus to peace and reconciliation, by paying more attention to the social ecologies that necessarily shape processes of dealing with the past. In her case study of Ahmići, she demonstrates that the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia contributed to essentially creating two worlds, in the sense that Bosniaks and Croats remain fundamentally divided about what happened on 16 April 1993 (and during the weeks and months leading up to that day). In this regard, formal transitional justice processes in BiH have failed to transform the conflict and create a new common identity, or even a shared narrative of the war. Her proposed social-ecological remodelling of transitional justice – as part of developing adaptive peacebuilding – aims at targeting the multiple systems (including political and education systems, attitudes and value systems) that both hinder and potentially facilitate resilience.

In Chapter 7, Timothy Williams demonstrates in his case study of post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia that multiple systems actually limit and undermine

community resilience. Specifically, he shows that systemic processes related to political empowerment, economic opportunity, social structure, rule of law and others interact with each other to promote or undermine the provision of resources. He further points out that the positive consequences that a transformative use of transitional justice could potentially have for social resilience in Cambodia are limited by other sub-systems of corruption and nepotism, political illiberalism and hegemony that ultimately subjugate the transitional justice process to their broader dynamics. One of his core arguments is that national actors in Cambodia recognise that they can gain more advantages through corruption and autocratic power, and hence they have strategically used transitional justice to undermine peacebuilding.

In Chapter 10, Devin Atallah and Hana Masud argue that, in the Palestinian context, there is a need to go beyond reforming existing legal systems and institutions. They accordingly call for a shift in focus from legal to social and political processes; and from state and institution building to communities and everyday processes. They point out that transitional justice is rooted in liberalism and neoliberalism, economic development, universalist human rights frameworks and colonial hegemonic discourses, which see liberal democracy as an endpoint. In contrast, they associate transformative justice with an increased focus on context-specific, grassroots approaches to adaptive peacebuilding that accentuate complexity, resilience and process over an end goal. Consequently, rather than 'transitional justice', they argue that adaptation and resilience in Palestine require 'transformative justice' paradigms and practices that underscore the need for complex, collective processes that can challenge the embodied, relational, racialised, interpersonal, intrapersonal and inter-generational expressions of harm.

One of the observations that emerges from all of the chapters in this volume is that it is impossible for peacebuilders to design – that is, to predetermine – optimal pathways to reach desired transitional justice end states. Consistent with an adaptive peacebuilding approach, they suggest that the focus should instead be on the quality of the process. The more inclusive, participatory, emergent and adaptive the process is, the more likely the outcomes from it will be self-sustainable.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this final chapter was to discuss how the various contributions to this edited volume have enriched our understanding of the concepts of resilience, adaptive peacebuilding and transitional justice – and what they tell us about the complex ways in which resilience and adaptive peacebuilding

manifest in transitional and post-conflict contexts. The case study chapters have explored whether transitional justice processes – including criminal trials, truth commissions and reparations – have contributed to resilience and adaptive peacebuilding in a number of societies that have experienced mass violence; or, vice-versa, whether resilience and adaptive peacebuilding processes employed have contributed to transitional justice.

In most of the cases, the contributors' findings were far more complex and nuanced than what standard transitional justice theories of change anticipate. What has emerged as common across experiences in BiH, Rwanda, Uganda, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Colombia, Guatemala and Palestine is the idea that resilience at one systemic level – for example, at the level of the nation-state – does not necessarily imply that there is resilience at other levels, for example, among a community or particular group within that state. The reverse may also be true. There can be pockets of resilience among various groups and communities, but this lower-level resilience does not necessarily scale up to the resilience of the society as a whole. Different types and levels of resilience can thus co-exist in the same society, and transitional justice or other peacebuilding interventions can sometimes accentuate or reinforce these differences. Such interventions may thereby foster more resilience at one level or in one system, while at the same time undermining resilience at other levels or systems.

Three key lessons have emerged. First, peace is an emergent and self-organising process. The outcomes and programmatic causal logic or theories of change of peacebuilding and transitional justice interventions cannot be predetermined, but need to emerge, adapt and evolve in a participatory process together with the communities involved. Second, peacebuilders need to recognise and anticipate that any intervention in a complex social system will generate unintended consequences, some of which may cause harm, and accordingly take the necessary steps to monitor, mitigate and respond to these consequences as soon as they are identified. Third, as it is impossible to predetermine optimal pathways to reach desired end states, the focus should be on the quality of the process. The more inclusive, participatory, emergent and adaptive the process, the more likely it is that the outcomes will be self-sustainable.

These findings thus warn against making broad assumptions about the linear progressive attributes or positive outcomes of resilience, adaptive peacebuilding and transitional justice. They highlight the need to critically consider, in each specific case and context, who benefits from, and who is affected by, attempts to strengthen resilience, improve justice, facilitate reconciliation and sustain peace. It is clear from this volume that resilience,

adaptive peacebuilding and transitional justice are inter-linked. At times, they are mutually reinforcing, but this is in no way guaranteed. In some cases, transitional justice initiatives have undermined resilience and inhibited the sustainability of peace. An adaptive approach to resilience, transitional justice and peace acknowledges this inherent uncertainty when attempting to influence complex social systems. It therefore opts for a participatory experimental approach that iteratively explores a variety of interventions, while also investing in monitoring and regular reflective decision-points where choices are made to stop, continue or further diversify and scale the exploratory interventions, based on the feedback generated throughout the process. In this way, our knowledge about resilience, adaptive peacebuilding and transitional justice – as demonstrated in this volume – is revealed as emergent, provisional and subject to continuous adaptation.

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