Peace research meets implementation studies: The role of implementing actors

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Abstract
In spite of a vibrant debate about the genesis, logic and effects of peace operations, peace research remains poorly equipped to account for how policies are implemented and ‘translated into practice’ – issues that have been the focus in implementation studies for nearly five decades. In response, we propose a merger of certain strands of peace research with bottom-up implementation studies, which forefronts the role of ‘implementing actors’, namely, those actors who are granted the discretionary powers to carry out policies in their daily encounter with local counterparts on the ground. Through a case study of peace operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), we show that successful policy implementation depends on that field-based implementing actors are provided with discretionary powers to use their skill, judgement and local knowledge to solve problems and ensure implementation of peace operations on the ground. There is a need for a paradigm change within peace research in order to account for these findings. Better understanding of the daily work carried out by implementing actors in the field makes it possible to avoid many of the pitfalls and shortcomings we have witnessed through several decades of flawed or even devastating peace operations such as the one in DRC.

Keywords
Democratic Republic of the Congo, peace-building, peace operations, policy implementation, security sector reform, stabilization

Introduction
Today, a greater number of peace operations than ever before are deployed in increasingly complex conflicts, with increasingly challenging duties and responsibilities. These
operations go beyond traditional surveillance and intervention to include the rebuilding of state institutions, security sector reform, stabilization and creating the conditions for the delivery of humanitarian aid.\(^1\) Much of the scholarly debate within peace research during the last two decades has centred either on the shortcomings of peace operations or on debating the assumptions, aims and methods involved in efforts to achieve and build peace.\(^2\)

Mainstream and so-called problem-solving approaches within peace research emphasize the need to ‘fix’ the problem of peace, however defined. From this perspective, the primary focus is the design and ‘accomplishment’ of peace operations and state-building interventions, rather than the question how policies are implemented and translated into practice.\(^3\) Critically-oriented scholars within peace research, on the other hand, generally reject the idea that external interventions can, or even should, ‘fix’ the problem of peace from the outside. Instead, they frequently emphasize the need to bring on board local actors and local perspectives in order to improve our understanding of the logic and contradictions of contemporary peace operations on the ground. This has given rise to the so-called ‘local turn in peace-building’ and a range of associated notions, such as ‘post-liberal peace’ and ‘hybrid peace’.\(^4\) It is striking, however, that in spite of the strong emphasis on local actors and local contexts, this literature gives little attention to implementation per se.\(^5\) Furthermore, since implementing actors are usually simply lumped together with a range of other local actors, they are neither adequately conceptualized, nor sufficiently analysed.

This article is motivated by the neglect of ‘implementation’ and ‘implementing actors’ in peace research. In spite of an impressive number of theories and studies within peace research devoted to the genesis, logic and effects of peace operations and interventions in a wide-ranging number of cases around the globe, peace research remains poorly equipped to account for how policies are implemented and ‘translated into practice’ – issues that have been at the centre of implementation studies for many decades. In order to overcome the shallow approach to ‘implementation’ within peace research, we propose a merger of certain strands of peace research with certain strands of implementation studies, in particular bottom-up approaches, which forefront the role of ‘implementing actors’ and their understanding and interpretation of the policies they carry out on the ground.

In line with bottom-up implementation studies, implementing actors are defined as those actors who are granted ‘the legal authority, responsibility, and public resources to carry out policy directives’.\(^6\) In order to carry out their daily activities, implementing actors have a degree of flexibility and leverage that allows them to take the specific context and issue at stake into consideration when deciding on how to implement a specific policy. As a result of ‘the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressure, [implementing actors] effectively become the public policies they carry out’.\(^7\)

The added value of the proposed merger for implementation studies is that it carries this field of research, and more precisely bottom-up implementation studies, into a new empirical domain. By doing so it provides new insights into how externally induced policies are translated into practice in complex and unpredictable international policy environments, which has received fairly limited attention in existing implementation research.\(^8\)
In our view, the lack of dialogue between peace research and implementation studies is surprising. As this article will show, the two research traditions are mutually reinforcing in the sense that both are concerned with how policies are implemented in local settings by actors with various degrees of leverage, resources and skills. From our perspective, then, it is essential to investigate how implementing actors understand and interpret the policies they are tasked with carrying out, and how they use their discretion throughout the implementation process.

The implementation of international peace operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is used as a critical case study.9 This allows to conduct a deeper empirical analysis of the specific role of implementing actors in a case that often is recognized as a failure in terms of implementation. Although few other conflicts and cases have received so much scholarly attention, we argue that our focus on the role of implementing actors contributes novel and previously ignored insights for a better understanding of the implementation of peace operations in the case of the DRC. While the DRC contains certain idiosyncrasies, there is no reason why the analysis would not be relevant also for our understanding of the implementation of peace operations in other conflicts and contexts. The general contributions beyond the case of the DRC are elaborated in the conclusion.

Our analysis focuses on two significant subcases within the overall context of external peacebuilding interventions in the DRC: the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (ISSSS) and security sector reform (SSR). In the context of the ISSSS, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) is a key player. MONUSCO is one of the world’s largest ongoing UN peacekeeping missions, with nearly 18,000 personnel and a yearly budget of roughly US$1.1 billion (2021).10 Other important actors include assorted UN agencies, several regional organizations (both the EU and organizations within Africa), non-African as well as African states, and numerous international and national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).11 The SSR programme in the DRC also involves a range of external actors and development agencies. Here, the EU is a particularly active player, with numerous initiatives and policies, but several other Western states and NGOs are also active.

The data for our study consists of 44 semi-structured interviews conducted with various implementing actors: UN and EU officials, national diplomats, and staff of local and international NGOs, both in the capital city of Kinshasa and in eastern DRC. Drawing on insights from bottom-up implementation studies, an essential distinction is made between implementing actors based in Kinshasa and those based in the field in different locations in the DRC. The majority of the interviews were conducted by one of the authors, and a smaller number were carried out jointly by two of the authors, at various points in time and focusing on the time period 2010–2014. The reason for limiting the analysis to these years is that it was during this period which stabilization policies and security sector reform packages were implemented in tandem. After 2014, two EU missions in the DRC were gradually closed down or about to end, and the stabilization packages for the DRC also entered a new phase. Most of the interviews lasted for 45–60 minutes, and interview material has been anonymized owing to ethical considerations and the sensitivity of the research topic.

The article is structured as follows: The next section describes the strengths of implementation studies and the limits of peace research to provide an entry-point for why a
merger between the two appears so promising. Then, by merging certain strands of research from implementation studies with peace research, we construct, in the third section, an analytical framework that focuses on implementing actors’ understanding of three aspects of implementation: (i) policy content, (ii) actor interaction and (iii) the implementation context. Each of the subsequent three empirical sections focuses on one of these aspects. In the final section, we draw general conclusions and outline implications for theory-building and future research.

The limits of peace research and the promise of ‘bottom-up’ implementation studies

Our proposed merger between peace studies and implementation studies is only intelligible if we recognize the limits of peace research in accounting for policy implementation. Most scholarly debates within peace research during recent decades have centred around two main ways of thinking about the implementation of peace operations: proponents of problem-solving approaches and the ‘liberal peace’ have emphasized what explains the success and failure of liberal peace-building and state-building, whereas more critically oriented peace researchers have focused on and criticized the assumptions, aims and methods that underlie liberal peace operations and the liberal peace-building project. The two main schools of thought are reviewed in turn.

Research on ‘liberal’ peace and peace-building is comprehensive. A considerable part of the literature is devoted to the buildup of key state institutions and functions, such as security, the rule of law, bureaucratic institutions, public goods, democratic processes and the fostering of market-led development. From an implementation perspective, this literature is heavily geared towards the operational aspects of external peace operations (such as the use of force and compliance, financing of missions, logistical problems, civil–military forces) or the effects of peace operations. With regard to the focus of this article, there is an overwhelming emphasis in this literature on policy accomplishment and success/failure in attaining end-goals rather than a genuine concern for the process of implementation and how policies are ‘translated into practice’ (i.e. what sometimes is referred to as execution). From an implementation perspective, most of the literature on liberal peace-building corresponds to the top-down version of policy studies, which focuses on end-goals and accomplishment (instead of execution) and generally pays little attention to what takes place on the ground. As a result, there is a lack of interest in the microfoundations of implementation, which in turn results in that implementing actors are usually lumped together with a host of other international/external actors as well as local actors. These omissions are highly problematic from a bottom-up implementation perspective, which explicitly emphasizes that different implementing actors have different decision-making roles and powers, as well as varying understandings of the issues at stake.

During the last decade or so, we have seen the growth of a considerable literature within peace research about how peace operations play out ‘from below’. For instance, one of the most influential scholars on peacebuilding, Autesserre, challenges the hegemonic (and incorrect) top-down belief that ‘instructions from capitals and headquarters automatically translate into corresponding action in the field’. In her widely acclaimed book, The Trouble with the Congo. Local Violence and the Failure of
International Peacebuilding, Autesserre\textsuperscript{18} claims that the international community (the UN and the EU in particular) failed to establish a lasting and durable peace in the DRC because a lack of understanding of the local conditions and local actors on the ground. In her follow-up book, \textit{Peaceland. Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention}, Autesserre argues strongly that international interveners need to have access to context specific knowledge, and she moves on to clarify a range of traps international actors otherwise risk to fall into in the everyday politics of international interventions. According to Autesserre,\textsuperscript{19} successful interventions need to ensure local ownership in its fullest sense.

In a somewhat similar fashion, Da Costa and Karlsrud\textsuperscript{20} also underline the significance of individual actions by civilian peace operation personnel on the ground, claiming that ‘local peacebuilding outcomes depend as much or more on negotiations, bargains and compromises between different actors, than on institutional and top-down decision-making deriving from headquarters’. In fact, there is a rich literature supporting the view that the outcomes of peace operations depend on the interaction between various external/international and internal/domestic actors.\textsuperscript{21} While a focus on these interactions is absolutely essential for understanding implementation processes, we maintain that existing literature in this field tend to confuse rather than specify the role of implementing actors. This is because a whole array of external intervenors and local actors are lumped together without clear distinctions between their different roles throughout the implementation process. In particular, the implementing actors’ understanding and interpretation of the policies, and their discretionary powers are not given enough attention.\textsuperscript{22} This blurred understanding, even neglect, of implementing actors is particularly evident in the literature on the ‘local turn in peace-building’.

One main proponent of the local turn, Mac Ginty,\textsuperscript{23} argues that external and local actors are unable to act autonomously and should not be understood as discrete categories. According to Mac Ginty,\textsuperscript{24} the comprehensive intervention strategies developed by external actors become distorted as those actors compete with the strategies and reactions of the local actors involved. The result is a ‘hybrid peace’, which reminds us of ‘the lack of autonomy on the part of actors in peace-making contexts’. According to another authority in this school of thought, Oliver Richmond,\textsuperscript{25} the goal of the local turn is not to understand ‘implementation’ but to avoid a situation in which those intervened upon are defined as objects or as powerless, and instead to frame the local ‘as a means for emancipation and inclusion of local agency’.\textsuperscript{26} While these approaches may bring new insights to important and previously overlooked aspects of peace-building, they either fail to or are not designed to increase our understanding of implementation processes and how policies are translated into practice.

The ‘trench war’ between proponents and critics of the ‘liberal peace’ has evoked a standstill, and, in our view, prevented a deeper understanding of the implementation of peace operations in today’s world. This article is motivated by the fact that dominant approaches within peace research lack the tools to understand and analyse implementation processes, and that peace research can profit from insights from what is generally referred to as ‘implementation studies’, in particular ‘bottom-up’ implementation studies. For a long time, scholars concerned with implementation analysed it as a top-down process, which very much resembles the way problem-solving and ‘liberal’ peace
research deals with implementation. In the 1970s, however, bottom-up implementation scholars discovered a gap between expected and actual results, and emphasized how a given policy’s official objectives fail to tell us how successful the policy will be or how it will be accepted and adopted by those it directly affects. Aiming to develop ‘systematic knowledge regarding what emerges, or is induced, as actors deal with policy problems’, bottom-up implementation scholars began to elaborate ‘what happens between the establishment of policy and its impact on the world of action’.

Approaches to bottom-up implementation provide tools for understanding policy implementation through an explicit focus on the implementing actors, which are those actors who are granted the authority, responsibility and public resources to carry out policies. The focus on implementing actors has been developed in the literature on ‘street-level bureaucracy’. According to its main proponent, Lipsky, these actors play a key role in policy implementation, since their understandings, interests and motives effectively ‘become’ the policies that are implemented. This literature emphasize the discretion of implementing actors as a result of the complexity of the issues to be addressed (which means that policies necessarily lack detail and precision) and the need for implementing actors to take into consideration and adjust their activities to the specific details of a given setting during implementation. The discretionary powers of implementing actors result from that they are most deeply integrated into the ‘field’ (or the ‘streets’) and because they have the greatest understanding and knowledge of recipients, which implies that they are able to take the most informed decisions on how policies should be implemented. The role and discretionary powers of implementing actors increase under conditions of uncertainty and when top-down policies are less efficient, that is, conditions which apply to many complex international policy issues in general and peace operations in particular.

Another key feature of implementing actors is their unique position as intermediaries between the recipients of the policies and the organization they are embedded within. This double role offers them crucial insights into both the specific needs, conditions and demands of the recipients and the requirements, measurements and constraints of their own organization. Viewed from this perspective, the analysis of implementation depends heavily on how implementing actors understand the policies and the implementation context, and how they use their discretion throughout the implementation process. Given the considerable influence of bottom-up implementation studies in a variety of sub-fields and debates within political science and public administration, it is rather surprising that peace research has largely ignored these approaches and tools.

**Framework**

As elaborated above, bottom-up approaches to implementation strongly emphasize the essential role of implementing actors in policy implementation. Implementing actors are decisive because of the complexity of the tasks that they face on an everyday basis and their double role in the implementation process. In order to make their tasks manageable and mediate external and internal demands, implementing actors develop routines and responses, so-called ‘coping strategies’. While our core argument is that a bottom-up implementation approach is highly relevant for peace research, it is still relevant to
consider the literature within peace research that deals with different components of the implementation process. For this reason, we take the literature on street-level bureaucracy as our point of departure, but complement it with familiar ideas within peace research about policy consistency, actor coordination and context sensitivity.

The implementation lens shifts the focus from the broader aspects of local dynamics in peace operations towards implementing actors, discretionary power and coping strategies throughout the implementation process. Our analytical framework is constructed around how implementing actors understand three aspects of implementation: (i) policy content, (ii) actor interaction and the (iii) implementation context. In each of the three parts, we pay particular attention to how discretionary power and coping strategies are played out in combination with the double role of implementing actors as intermediaries between recipients and their own organization.

The first building-block of our analytical framework consists of implementing actors’ understandings of the content of the policies that they are involved in implementing. ‘Policy content’ refers to policy standards and objectives as well as the policy approaches that are assumed to translate those policy standards and objectives into more concrete policies. Implementation scholars emphasize that general goals and legislative documents need to be concretized through the elaboration of standards and policies that are supposed to facilitate shared understandings and interpretations among implementing actors, while at the same time allowing for taking the specific needs and considerations of recipients and the implementation context into consideration.35 Such scholarship emphasizes aspects such as clarity, consistency and specificity.36 Although peace research more or less overlooks implementation actors, there is nevertheless emphasis on the need for policy objectives to be clear, appropriate and achievable. It is also often emphasized that mission mandates and goals should be flexible enough to allow implementers to interpret and adjust objectives depending on the local circumstances in which the policies are executed.37

Implementing actors’ understandings of interaction among the various relevant actors constitutes the second building-block of our framework. Following the spread of bottom-up approaches to implementation since the 1970s, the question of interaction and negotiation among implementing actors and between implementing actors and policy recipients has become increasingly significant.38 Also, the double role of implementing actors, discussed above, offers them crucial insights into both the specific needs, conditions and demands of the recipients and the requirements, measurements and constrains of the organization.39 A main concern is how implementing actors understand and interpret the involvement of other actors throughout the implementation process (their different positions, knowledge, roles, etc.), rather than interaction itself. Peace research certainly has also paid attention to various dimensions of actor interaction in particular inter-agency coordination in peace operations, the perverse effect of breakdown in communication and interaction between the capital and the field, and the problems related to the relationship between external intervenors and those intervened upon.40 While all of this would be familiar to any critical study of peace operations, most of this literature has overlooked the essential role of the implementing actors’ understandings of interaction.

The third building-block of our framework relates to the context in which implementation is pursued. Bottom-up implementation approaches strongly emphasize that
knowledge of the implementation context is essential if implementers are to realize the standards and objectives outlined in public policies and programmes.41 However, knowledge of the implementation context must not be conflated with knowledge of the local context, a distinction which is not sufficiently acknowledged in peace research, which focuses mainly on the latter. The ‘implementation context’ refers both to the local setting (context-specific knowledge) and to the broader context in which the implementation of a particular policy or programme takes place (shaped by political elites, domestic politics and capacities, donors, etc.). This brings us back to one of the key features of implementing actors; namely their ‘double role’ and positionality between the recipients of the policies and the implementing organization. It follows that the implementing actors are the actors with the potential of having the best knowledge of the implementation context.42

The three aspects of implementation teased out above – policy content, actor interaction and the implementation context – guide the empirical analysis presented below.

**Policy content**

The first part of the analysis in this section concentrates on implementing actors’ understandings of the policy goals and policy standards relevant for their work, and particularly the question of consistency between different goals and standards. The second part focuses on the different policy approaches that are designed to turn policy into practice, highlighting in particular how some implementing actors favour technical whereas other stress political approaches.

With regard to the understanding of policy content, a wide range of implementing actors in the DRC state that SSR and stabilization policies are both unclear and inconsistent.43 A senior Goma-based UN official bluntly states: ‘We [implementing actors] all have our own understanding of the ISSSS’.44 Understood as the root causes for these competing interpretations are the novelty of stabilization approaches as part of peace operations and the particular design of the ISSSS. The ambiguity surrounding the role and purpose of the ISSSS, for example, is criticized by a senior UN official who has been part of the development of the strategy from the beginning:

> Everything became stabilization... There was the understanding that all problems of the Congo could be solved through the ISSSS. So, the ISSSS was more of a basket where donors could throw in pretty much everything that they wanted to throw in.45

Unsurprisingly, implementing actors share the view that stabilization has become a buzzword in the Congolese context, provoking a situation in which stabilization policies have been interpreted very differently. On the one side of the spectrum, a Goma-based MONUSCO official compares the stabilization approach under the ISSSS to a military intervention.46 Other respondents, in contrast, highlight how any stabilization initiative should take its point of departure at the local level, allowing for the inclusion of local actors and local conditions.47

Implementing actors emphasize similar policy ambiguities in relation to SSR. For instance, SSR policies are understood as being neither adequately concretized nor sufficiently integrated into guiding policy documents. As pointed out by a senior Goma-based UN official:
Because of a lack of political framework, SSR . . . is in the air, not part of a comprehensive project with a long-term plan. . . MONUSCO and EUPOL, yes, they have nice documents on what we should do, the nuts and bolts of SSR, but that has no framing in the political understanding. And, therefore, the impact is zero.48

Policy ambiguities are accordingly blamed for the variety of different understandings among implementing actors, which in turn give rise to competing approaches regarding how to turn policy into practice. While it is generally agreed among implementing actors that both stabilization and SSR policies should be understood as political endeavours, interviewees testify that they nevertheless, and against their own understandings, predominantly translate those policies into technical approaches. This result is particularly interesting considering the discretionary powers and double role of implementing actors. Instead of using their discretion and positionality in order to broker different understandings and interpretations of the policies, in this case, the implementing actors conform with a specific practice, the so-called technical approach.

Describing their comments as a matter of ‘becoming realistic’, implementing actors remark that, as they see it, the far-reaching political goals of both stabilization and SSR are difficult if not de facto impossible to achieve in the specific context of the Congo:

You must be realistic. The Congo is too complicated, too big, with many different ethnicities, and there is a lack of governance. Consequently, a technical approach has been taken, focusing on the construction of hospitals, schools, prisons, etc.49

Consequently, a mere technical interpretation of stabilization and SSR appears to be accepted as de facto manageable. At the same time, however, implementing actors argue that a technical interpretation of stabilization and SSR is doomed to fail: ‘In a country where the state is as dysfunctional and corrupt as it is the case in the DRC, the understanding to build buildings to restore state authority doesn’t and cannot work’.50 Some implementing actors therefore emphasize that a political (not technical) interpretation of the stabilization strategy is necessary. As highlighted by a senior UN stabilization expert:

Stabilization as such is a political exercise. But the political part of stabilization has been ignored so far. This is why the good stuff that has been done is not having any impact. We have again and again and again pointed out this problem. Stabilization must be understood in the political context.51

A more political approach, however, is understood by implementing actors not only as more difficult to achieve, but often criticized by their capital-based superiors as well as by the donor community at large. Indeed, implementing actors repeatedly complain that they experience the provision of long-term strategic and political advice as being less appealing to funding agencies compared to the implementation of short-term training and capacity-building activities. Implementing actors thus feel that their hands are tied and that they are pressured to interpret policies in a certain way, predominantly without believing in the approach they are forced to adopt, in order to achieve short-term visibility and publicity. Implementing actors claim, for instance, that it is by satisfying donors with publicly visible projects that they manage to create room to manoeuvre, which then
enables them to simultaneously execute less visible and politically oriented aspects of SSR, such as the provision of strategic advice, in a way that they deem appropriate:

We [EUPOL] do give trainings, but it’s mainly a marketing tool. The trainings provide the mission with publicity, and this publicity we need to be able to do what is at the heart of the mission. That is the provision of strategic advice.\textsuperscript{52}

These findings indicate that the implementing actors develop specific coping strategies that enable them to carry out their work. Satisfying external demands allows implementing actors to invest time, efforts and resources in what they themselves identify and interpret as ‘the heart of the mission’.

**Actor interaction**

The section concentrates on implementing actors’ understandings of the involvement of various actors throughout the implementation process, and how they respond to these interactions. Implementing actors highlight two aspects as particularly important. First, they emphasize problems related to the *structural and institutional links* between different implementing actors, especially the perceived conflict between actors based in the capital and those based in the eastern part of the country. Second, they also suggest that the implementation process is undermined by the *quality of interaction* between implementing actors.

Both Kinshasa- and Goma-based implementing actors share the view that they remain detached from each other, and that this undermines their efforts to effectively implement SSR and stabilization policies in the DRC. Two main reasons for such a view are highlighted: First, they emphasize the combination of the sheer spatial distance between Kinshasa and Goma (i.e. 1500 km) and the limited and costly nature of communication connections in the DRC, which serves as a structural constraint on their daily work. Lack of resources, in particular time and funding, is a recurrent theme in the implementation literature. Interestingly, as pointed out by several scholars, more resources rarely solve the problems at stake. Instead, there are institutional or regulatory shortcomings in the organization that needs to be addressed to deal with the ‘service gap’.\textsuperscript{53} This relates to the second finding; implementing actors openly complain about the existing institutional setup, which is described as ‘excessively hierarchic’\textsuperscript{54} and centred on Kinshasa at the expense of policy implementation on the ground. Many implementing actors argue that the sharing and exchange of information between the capital and the eastern provinces does not function well – they complain that important information is often withheld, and that views and opinions circulating in Kinshasa are rarely shared with them. As pointed out by a senior Kinshasa-based UN official: ‘Kinshasa sucks in all information, and we’re not allowed to share it. The fear is that information can leak out to the media’.\textsuperscript{55}

In addition, implementing actors complain about how the transfer of tasks and responsibilities from the capital to the eastern provinces – where policies are de facto implemented – remains restricted. This has a negative effect on the daily work of the field-based implementing actors. As one UN representative put it: ‘We have a huge problem in
horizontal coordination. Kinshasa generates its own workload, there are too many people . . . too few duties are transferred to the field’.56

The lack of transfer or redistribution of tasks within the organization is particularly problematic from an implementation perspective. The field-based implementing actors hold the so-called ‘double role’, referred to above. They possess vital insights about the field they are acting in, and they have insights about the organizational constraints and setups, such as funding requirements and prerequisites. If information is not sufficiently shared between the levels and different actors, the field-based implementors are prevented from making use of their full potential as implementing actors.

Apart from the above-mentioned structural and institutional constraints, implementing actors at various levels also differ in how they understand and approach other actors. At the capital level, implementing actors view the approaches chosen by different actors and agencies as predominantly complementary. While the UN, for example, has the manpower and financial resources to carry out basic training sessions for up to several hundreds of police officers at a time, training activities carried out by EUPOL RD Congo, which consists of a comparably small number of experts, have an in-depth focus and are targeted at groups of 20–30 police officers that already have expertise in a specific area.57

The lack of coordination is furthermore identified by Kinshasa-based implementing actors as a way of avoiding feelings of weakness and meaninglessness vis-à-vis their Congolese counterparts, and of countering fears that they might fall victim to the whims of Congolese interests in the implementation process:

The international community is more and more realizing that the Congolese government is not a serious partner. Donors start realizing that the government plays a game to weaken us. Consequently, the money spent is fragmented; there is little coordination but bilateral projects. However, if the international community . . . if we were coordinated, we would be stronger, and it would be more difficult for the Congolese government to play us off against each other.58

Field-based implementing actors working in SSR paint a substantially different picture. Instead of aiming to achieve complementarity in the implementation process, several actors from both the EU and the UN consider themselves as ‘merely coexisting’.59 Again, these diverging understandings between different implementing actors undermine both shared knowledge and sharing of information about institutional constraints and prerequisites in the field. Whereas coexistence may be perceived as unproblematic under certain conditions, it is clearly identified as an obstacle with regard to the very similar training activities implemented by EUPOL and UNPOL. In fact, in the context of police reform, implementing actors blame each other for having evoked a situation of competition:

Actually, we [EUPOL and UNPOL] do the same thing . . . but they, MONUSCO and UNPOL, see police reform as a market, a commercial for the UN. They understand us as competitors. What UNPOL does is quantity, but we go for quality. We have expertise, they have the money. I wonder what they [UNPOL] are actually doing.60

Similarly, a Goma-based UN official accuses EU actors, and notably EUPOL staff, of being selfish, inward-looking and difficult to interact with:
There is not much cooperation with EUPOL. They’re operating in their own bubble. The reason for that is that EUPOL comes with a mandate from Brussels, which is neither streamlined with our mandate nor with the government. There is not much to do about it.61

Implementation context

Throughout our fieldwork, field-based implementing actors consistently suggested that poor knowledge and even misinterpretation of the implementation context undermines policy implementation. As frankly admitted by one senior UN official who was one of the architects of the ISSSS, and who had been stationed first in Kinshasa and then in Goma: ‘Our initial hypothesis was faulty. We didn’t know enough about the situation’.62 Furthermore, numerous field-based implementing actors also accuse their capital-based colleagues and the international community more broadly of disregarding their contextual knowledge and being blind to what is actually going on in eastern DRC. According to a field-based UN official, this indifference towards the implementation context and the knowledge of field-based implementing actors is believed to explain the failure of the UN’s approach in general and the implementation of the ISSSS in particular.63

In spite of these differences, it must be recognized that both Kinshasa- and Goma-based implementing actors often share a negative picture of their Congolese counterparts. A senior EU official tasked with implementing development-oriented projects in Goma, for example, lumped all the Congolese together and simply referred to them as ‘lazy’: ‘It’s difficult here to get people to work’.64 A prevailing view among international implementing actors is that the Congolese government cannot be treated as a reliable and trustworthy partner in the implementation process. A Kinshasa-based senior UN official referred to President Joseph Kabila as ‘an idiot’,65 and the government is commonly described as ‘weak’,66 ‘dysfunctional and corrupt and not working as a real government but strongly divided along group and personal interests’.67 Another capital-based EU official compared the government to recalcitrant teenagers:

It is easy to have access to members of the government at all levels. We can have quite frank discussion. . .. [T]he problem here is that there’s no follow-up. The government is ‘a wall made up of pudding’; it reacts like a teenager. They say: Yes, you’re right, absolutely . . . but then nothing is done.68

Not all implementing actors share these notions, however. One UN official took a very negative view of how such attitudes have provoked a paternalistic donor-driven attitude among actors in the implementation process, which they described in terms of: ‘We’re the donors, we have the money and we know what to do’.69 Similarly, another UN official was troubled by the lack of respect or even arrogance towards Congolese actors:

Everyone thinks that one is doing better than everyone else. But people don’t accept and relate to the context. Local organizations are better in that, more flexible to the context, but have less competence, for example, in project implementation. So, everyone should recognize that the other one has to add something.70
The interviewee was critical of how international interventions continue to rely predominantly on international staff, which undermines the role of the recipient country and results in the Congolese not being considered trustworthy partners: ‘The international community simply does not really respect the Congolese’. Following this line of thought, a senior Kinshasa-based EU official warned against the marginalization of Congolese actors:

“We’re so absorbed with our own coordination; we talk too much to ourselves and we have little time for the Congolese. It’s also a culture. We hang around together in meetings and share information between diplomats. There are so many working groups here. You always talk about the Congolese situation, but what you should do is to talk to the Congolese. The real challenge is to get to know the actual situation in the country and not to hang around just in Gombe, which is not Congo.”

In addition to the exclusion of their Congolese counterparts, implementing actors openly suggest that the Congolese government is to blame for the lack of adequate progress and results in both SSR and stabilization. In this context, the perceived lack of political will on the part of the DRC government is commonly given as a reason for the failure of policy implementation. According to a Kinshasa-based diplomat:

“Regarding SSR, there is a lack of political will to change something. The government is just not willing. Donors seem to not lose hope that it will change. But why should it? In the last 10 years, not much has changed. Of course, you can also make the picture look greyer. But there is no real willingness on the side of the state and a lack of capacity. But 90 percent of the failure is due to unwillingness.”

Many interviewees refer to the government’s lack of both the capacity and the political will to implement reforms and strategies – such as SSR – that are supported or driven by the international community. A prevailing understanding among interviewees is that it is possible to fill capacity gaps, at least to a certain extent – for instance, through the provision of training activities. However, basically nothing is considered achievable without the necessary political will:

“UNPOL, for example, trained 600 policemen over a six-month period. And this is a positive step. But in the end, if they don’t want to change anything . . . the lack of will is the biggest challenge . . . and we cannot do anything against their will.”

According to many implementing actors, the Congolese government needs to take the lead in the reform process. However, one UN official distinguished sharply between Kinshasa and eastern Congo, and emphasized that more attention needs to be paid to local governments:

“Local government officials are often on top of the game. But the problem at the Kinshasa level is that they don’t keep their own promises.”

Our interviewees emphasize the importance of local government officials as important partners of collaboration because they are much more knowledgeable of the local setting
as well as the needs and demands of local communities. The field-based implementing actors are oftentimes, just like local government officials, held accountable for the lack of progress or failure of different policies and programmes, and therefore they share a common concern for successful policy implementation, which differentiates them from other capital-based officials and officials working in the headquarters outside DRC.

**Conclusion**

This article starts out from the observation that peace research is poorly equipped to account for what happens when peace operations are translated into practice in complex implementation contexts. With inspiration from bottom-up implementation studies, we develop a framework that forefronts implementing actors in order to better understand how policies are implemented and translated into practice in the daily encounter between implementing actors and their Congolese counterparts. Our approach contrasts sharply with conventional ‘problem-solving’ peace-building approaches that predominantly adopts a top-down approach with a focus on effectiveness and the ‘accomplishment’ of peace operations rather than on how policies are implemented and translated into practice. Our approach differs also from radical and critical approaches within peace research, such as the literature on the ‘local turn in peacebuilding’ or the post-liberal peace, for two main reasons. First, the main concern of these approaches is seldom implementation per se but rather transformation and transformative social change. Second, as far as implementation is concerned, critical approaches are usually too inclusive regarding who is a relevant local actor, which results in a failure to acknowledge the unique role of implementing actors. From a bottom-up implementation perspective, it is essential to distinguish implementing actors from the broader spectrum of local actors and partners more generally.

The case study of the DRC underlines how implementation is strongly affected by implementing actors’ understandings and coping strategies along the three components of our framework: policy content, actor interaction and the implementation context. First, the implementation of SSR and stabilization policies in the DRC is negatively affected by the different and often competing understandings of the policy content. This results in a situation where implementing actors struggle to interpret official policies and balance existing policy ambiguities. Given their discretionary power, implementing actors diverge into different interpretations of the policies they are to carry out, which in turn leads to different, and even competing, strategies and practices for policy implementation.

Second, there is a range of negative tendencies related to actor interaction. Clearly, the UN and the EU are not always working hand in hand in order to build lasting peace in the DRC. However, it is not just the interaction, or lack thereof, between different external actors that undermines implementation, but also the problematic nature of the interaction between actors at various levels within the same organization. Indeed, one important contribution of our study is to pinpoint the competing contradictions between capital-based and field-based implementing actors in specific external agencies such as the EU and the UN. Our result shows that field-based actors are frequently by-passed, which is highly problematic from a bottom-up implementation perspective. This is because of the unique double role of implementing actors, that is they have an extensive knowledge about the situation on the ground and the needs of the recipients as well as the
organizational set-ups responsible for carrying out policy implementation. This position gives them access to crucial information and knowledge invaluable for interactions and negotiations with local actors, an asset that needs to be safe-guarded and utilized in order for implementation to work.

With regard to the third component of the framework, varying perceptions of the implementation context help to explain the logic and pitfalls of policy implementation in the DRC. It is evident that both the ISSSS and SSR are designed to strengthen the formal structures of the Congolese state/government rather than society in a broader sense. However, such a state-centric approach is inconsistent with the conviction held by many external actors that the ruling political regime is ‘part of the problem’. It also reinforces diverging understandings of the implementation context. Again, the differences between the perceptions of implementing actors based in Kinshasa and those of implementing actors based in eastern DRC are particularly striking. Many field-based implementing actors believe that their superiors and Kinshasa-based colleagues misunderstand the contextual realities they are confronted with during their daily work. While both Kinshasa-based and field-based implementing actors may agree on that the personalized nature of power in the DRC may be problematic, the patronizing attitude of Kinshasa-based colleagues towards the national government is undermining implementation. It is quite clear that field-based implementing actors in eastern DRC are usually more capable of working together with their Congolese counterparts when they are able to exploit their double role and utilize various coping strategies throughout the implementation process. That is, many implementation problems are reinforced when field-based implementing actors are marginalized in both policy design and conflict analysis. Even if a proper conflict analysis is demanding in the Congolese context, poor preparatory work results in a dearth of knowledge on how to define and execute policies in order to ensure real achievements on the ground. This sentiment was candidly lamented by one field-based EU representative stationed in the eastern Congo, who stated that ‘I do not know what I am doing here’ before going on to say that ‘the EU’s involvement is purely political’. Since this official was only one of a few field-based officials responsible for policy implementation on the ground, this is deeply problematic for any satisfactory outcome.

The merger of the two strands of research presented in this study has far-reaching theoretical implications. Our study suggests that peace research ought to give more emphasis to the distinct tasks, roles and experiences of implementing actors – a lesson consistent with several decades of bottom-up implementation research. In fact, peace research has not sufficiently distinguished implementing actors from other actors in the conflict environment, and as a result it has also missed an opportunity to understand an essential ingredient of how policies are translated into practice. Implementing actors are (often) crucial because they are granted extensive discretion so that they can take contextual factors into consideration in their daily work and are thus able to carry out implementation in the best possible manner. As this study has shown, implementing actors deserve a lot more attention for understanding ‘bad’ governance and policy failures. In fact, implementing actors are the only actors within a given organization that can call out policy failures based on their lived experiences in the field. Therefore, empowering implementing actors and strengthening their discretionary powers makes it possible to
reformulate and implement policies so that they better align with the real problems on the ground.

We argue for a paradigm change within peace research that explicitly accounts for the importance of implementing actors. This paradigm is by no means new or our own contribution, but has been established as part of the agenda of bottom-up implementation studies. While this paradigm has had little influence on peace research, it has had considerable influence on other subjects and academic disciplines, such as development research. In one of the most powerful and most widely discussed contributions to development research in recent decades, *Navigation by Judgement*, Honig asks the crucial question when and why foreign aid organizations should rely on top-down or bottom-up management to implement their aid interventions? After analysing over 14,000 development projects over 50 years and a wide range of foreign aid organizations, Honig concludes that high-quality implementation is secured when bottom-up, frontline workers are given the authority to use their own judgements to implement foreign aid. The essence of Honig’s argument is that ‘development implementation requires soft information, tacit knowledge, and flexibility that are crowded out by tight controls or an organizational navigation strategy focused on short term measurement and targets’. Such ‘navigation by judgement’ is particularly appropriate under conditions of uncertainty and unpredictable political environments, whereas top-down management may be more useful when pre-set measurable targets are more easily defined and achieved, for instance in road construction. The important implication for the purposes of this paper is that peace operations correspond well to the unpredictable political environments where frontline workers, rather than distant headquarters, ought to be using their skills, local knowledge and creativity to solve problems in ways that maximize the impact of foreign aid. Just like in the case of foreign aid, top-level management of peace operations ought to relax at least some of their control and steering and allow frontline actors to navigate by judgement in order to promote efficient and high-quality policy implementation.

In thinking beyond the case of the DRC, there is no reason to believe that our findings are restricted to a particular political context. Even if difficulties with policy implementation may be exacerbated by the distinct conditions existing in the DRC, the study highlights that implementation problems (and failures) cannot simply be explained by contextual circumstances. Clearly, policy implementation is complicated regardless of context. We believe that the general logic of implementation and the challenges facing implementing actors identified in this study are likely to exist in a range of other similar comprehensive peace operations and peacebuilding efforts, especially in complex political environments such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, Niger, Somalia, Sudan and so forth. That said, we do not know whether the complexity of a given conflict creates the same logic under slightly different conditions. To address this question, future research could explore implementation under different conditions, for instance the uncertainty and complexity of the political environment. Other relevant possibilities are to investigate cases where recipient governments are stronger or where peace operations are smaller than in the case of the DRC.

Finally, the merger should also prove beneficial for implementation studies, which in our view needs to become more ‘global’ and internationalized. Although we can discern a move towards global public policy in certain policy fields, such as health and
development, implementation studies remains heavily focused on national policies as well as Western welfare states. Thus, implementation studies can become more ‘global’ and diversified through increased recognition of both non-Western cases and more internationalized implementation contexts. Expanding the empirical domain and engaging with implementation processes in utterly complex and internationalized political environments, such as those in the DRC, will help us to further analyse the complex relationships between different actors at various levels (local, national, international) as well as the impact of those relationships on policy implementation.

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Notes
1. Traditionally, peace operations have been defined as ‘the dispatch of expeditionary forces, with or without a United Nations (UN) mandate, to implement an agreement between warring states or factions, which may (or may not) include enforcing that agreement in the face of willful defiance’, see Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, ‘Who’s Keeping the Peace? Regionalization and Contemporary Peace Operations’, *International Security*, 29(4), 2005, pp. 157–95, on p. 157. Over time, peace operation has taken on a broader and ‘multidimensional’ meaning and is now used as an umbrella term to refer to extensive and complex international efforts to help maintain peace and security in challenging political sites and by a range of various international actors and agencies. Such operations go beyond ‘traditional’ peacekeeping to also include, for instance, stabilization and state-building efforts, which blurs the line between ‘peace operations’ and ‘peace-building’.
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3. Sarah Detzner, ‘Modern Post-Conflict Security Sector Reform in Africa: Patterns of Success and Failure’, *African Security Review*, 26(2), 2017, pp. 116–42; Daniel Druckman, Paul C. Stern, Paul Diehl, A. Betts Fetherston, Robert Johansen, William Durch and Steven Ratner, ‘Evaluating Peace Keeping Missions’, *Mershon International Studies Review*, 41(1), 1997, pp. 151–65; Alison C. Giffen, *Enhancing the Protection of Civilians in Peace Operations: From Policy to Practice* (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2011).
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5. Charles T. Call and Elizabeth M. Cousens, ‘Ending Wars and Building Peace: International Responses to War-Torn Societies’, *International Studies Perspectives*, 9(1), 2008, pp. 1–21,
on p. 15; Roland Paris, ‘Broadening the Study of Peace Operations’, International Studies Review, 2(3), 2000, pp. 27–44; Ole Jacob Sending, ‘The Effects of Peacebuilding: Sovereignty, Patronage and Power’, in Susanna Campbell, David Chandler and Meera Sabaratnam (eds), A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding (London and New York, NY: Zed Books, 2011), pp. 55–68.

6. Robert T. Nakamura and Frank Smallwood, The Politics of Policy Implementation (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1980), p. 47.

7. Michael Lipsky, Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services (New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 1980), p. xii.

8. While there is little interaction between peace research and implementation studies, there is a much greater cross-fertilization between implementation studies and development research. For one influential example, see Merilee S. Grindle, ‘Policy Content and Context in Implementation’, in Merilee S. Grindle (ed), Politics and Policy Implementation in the Third World (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 3–39, on p. 13.

9. Mario Luis Small, ‘How Many Cases Do I Need? On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-Based Research’, Ethnography, 10(1), 2009, pp. 5–38; Robert Yin, Case Study Research. Design and Methods (London: Sage, 2014), pp. 51–4.

10. The United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) was deployed in 1999 to monitor the implementation of the by then ongoing peace process and to establish a minimum of security in the DRC. In 2010, the mission was transformed into MONUSCO, introducing an ‘S’ for ‘Stabilization’, which became part of the mandate alongside the protection of civilians; see ISSSS, Generating a Joint Political Approach to Stabilization, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2012, p. 5.

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15. Lipsky, Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services, p. xii; Richard E. Matland, ‘Synthesizing the Implementation Literature: The Ambiguity-Conflict Model of Policy Implementation’, Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 5(2), 1995, pp. 145–74, on p. 148.

16. Séverine Autesserre, The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Linnéa Gelot and Fredrik Söderbaum, ‘Interveners and Intervened Upon: The Missing Link in Building...
Peace and Avoiding Conflict’, in Hanne Fjelde and Kristine Höglund (eds), Building Peace, Creating Conflict? Conflictual Dimensions of Local and International Peace-Building (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2011), pp. 73–88; Béatrice Pouligny, Peace Operations Seen from Below: UN Missions and Local People (London: Hurst & Co., 2006).

17. Séverine Autesserre, Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Interventions (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 25.

18. Autesserre, The Trouble with the Congo; Autesserre (2014), p. 9.

19. Autesserre, Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Interventions, p. 25.

20. Diana Felix da Costa and John Karlsrud, “‘Bending the Rules’: The Space Between HQ Policy and Local Action in UN Civilian Peacekeeping’, Journal of International Peacekeeping, 17(3–4), 2013, pp. 293–312, on p. 294.

21. In addition to footnotes 16–20, also see Sending, ‘The Effects of Peacebuilding: Sovereignty, Patronage and Power’, p. 64.

22. There are of course some exceptions, such as Simon Chesterman, ‘Ownership in Theory and in Practice: Transfer of Authority in UN Statebuilding Operations’, Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 1(1), 2007, pp. 3–26; Sara Hellmüller, ‘The Ambiguities of Local Ownership: Evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo’, African Security, 5(3–4), 2012, pp. 236–54; Linnéa Gelot, ‘Civilian Protection in Africa: How the Protection of Civilians is Being Militarized by African Policymakers and Diplomats’, Contemporary Security Policy, 38(1), 2017, pp. 161–73; and Antoine Rayroux and Nina Wilén, ‘Resisting Ownership: The Paralysis of EU Peacebuilding in the Congo’, African Security, 7(1), 2014, pp. 24–44. However, although these and other similar publications maintain clear distinctions between external/international and internal/local actors, there is still no focus on the nature and role of implementing actors which comes close to bottom-up implementation studies.

23. Roger Mac Ginty, ‘Hybrid Peace: The Interaction Between Top–Down and Bottom–Up Peace’, Security Dialogue, 41(4), 2010, pp. 391–412, on p. 392.

24. Mac Ginty, ‘Hybrid Peace: The Interaction Between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace’, p. 392.

25. Oliver P. Richmond, A Post-Liberal Peace (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2011).

26. Hanna Leonardsson and Gustav Rudd, ‘The “Local Turn” in Peacebuilding: A Literature Review of Effective and Emancipatory Local Peacebuilding’, Third World Quarterly, 36(5), 2015, pp. 825–39, on p. 825.

27. Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron B. Wildavsky, Implementation (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), p. xv.

28. Laurence J. O’Toole, ‘Research on Policy Implementation: Assessment and Prospects’, Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 10(2), 2000, pp. 263–88, on p. 266.

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30. Nakamura and Smallwood, The Politics of Policy Implementation, p. 47.

31. Michael Lipsky, Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services (New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 1980), p. xiii.

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33. Michael Lipsky, Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services, p. xii; Tony Evans, Professional Discretion in Welfare Services; Lars L. G. Tummers, Victor Bekkers, Evelien Vink and Michael Musheno, ‘Coping During Public Service Delivery: A
34. Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*, p. xii; Tummers et al., ‘Coping During Public Service Delivery: A Conceptualization and Systematic Review on the Literature’, p. 1100.

35. Donald S. van Meter and Carl E. van Horn, ‘The Policy Implementation Process’, *Administration & Society*, 6(4), 1975, pp. 445–88, on p. 466.

36. Laurence J. O’Toole, ‘Policy Recommendations for Multi-Actor Implementation: An Assessment of the Field’, *Journal of Public Policy*, 6(2), 1986, pp. 181–210.

37. Lakhdar Brahimi, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (Brahimi Report)*, UN doc. A/55/305-S/2000/809, 2000, p. 10; Jaïr van der Lijn, ‘If Only There Were a Blueprint! Factors for Success and Failure of UN Peace-Building Operations’, *Journal of International Peacekeeping*, 13(1), 2009, pp. 45–71, on p. 52.

38. Susan M. Barrett and Colin Fudge, ‘Examining the Policy–Action Relationship’, in Susan M. Barrett and Colin Fudge (eds), *Policy & Action: Essays on the Implementation of Public Policy* (London and New York, NY: Methuen, 1981), pp. 3–32, on p. 4; Benny Hjern and David O. Porter, ‘Implementation Structures: A New Unit of Administrative Analysis’, *Organization Studies*, 2(3), 1981, pp. 211–27, on p. 211.

39. Tummers et al., ‘Coping During Public Service Delivery: A Conceptualization and Systematic Review on the Literature’, p. 1100.

40. Cedric de Coning, *Coherence and Coordination in United Nations Peacebuilding and Integrated Missions: A Norwegian Perspective*, Security in Practice No. 5 (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2007); Meike Lurweg, ‘Coherent Actor or Institution Wrangler? The European Union as a Development and Security Actor in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo’, *African Security*, 4(2), 2011, pp. 100–26; Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, *Managing Contradictions: The Inherent Dilemmas of Postwar Statebuilding* (New York, NY: International Peace Academy, 2007).

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42. Merilee S. Grindle, ‘Policy Content and Context in Implementation’, in Merilee S. Grindle (ed), *Politics and Policy Implementation in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 3–39, on p. 13.

43. Interview with a representative of the European Union in Goma, DRC, 8 October 2012, and with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 6 October 2012.

44. Interview with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 15 October 2012.

45. Interview with a representative of the UN in Kinshasa, DRC, 9 April 2013.

46. Interview with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 10 October 2012.

47. Interview with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 6 October 2012, and with a diplomat in Kinshasa, DRC, 16 April 2013.

48. Interview with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 15 October 2012.

49. Interview with a representative of the UN in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 April 2013.

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51. Interview with a representative of the UN in Kinshasa, DRC, 9 April 2012.

52. Interview with a representative of the EU in Kinshasa, DRC, 10 April 2013.

53. Peter Hupe and Aurélien Buffat. “A Public Service Gap: Capturing Contexts in a Comparative Approach of Street-Level Bureaucracy”. *Public Management Review*, 16(4), 2014, pp. 548–69.

54. Interview with a representative of the UN in Kinshasa, DRC, 15 April 2013.
55. Interview with a representative of the UN in Kinshasa, DRC, 15 April 2013.
56. Interview with a representative of the UN in Kinshasa, DRC, 9 April 2013.
57. Interview with a representative of the EU in Kinshasa, DRC, 10 April 2013, and interview with a representative of the EU in Kinshasa, DRC, 15 April 2013.
58. Interview with a diplomat in Kinshasa, DRC, 18 April 2013.
59. Interview with a representative of the European Union in Goma, DRC, 8 October 2012.
60. Interview with a representative of the European Union in Goma, DRC, 8 October 2012.
61. Interview with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 8 October 2012.
62. Interview with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 10 October 2012.
63. Interview with a representative of the EU in Goma, DRC, 8 October 2012, and with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 10 October 2012.
64. Interview with a representative of the EU in Goma, DRC, 12 October 2012.
65. Interview with a representative of the UN in Kinshasa, DRC, 15 April 2013.
66. Interview with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 16 October 2012.
67. Interview with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 6 October 2012.
68. Interview with a representative of the EU in Kinshasa, DRC, 15 April 2013.
69. Interview with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 15 October 2012.
70. Interview with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 10 October 2012.
71. Interview with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 10 October 2012.
72. Interview with a representative of the EU in Kinshasa, DRC, 15 April 2013. Gombe (or: La Gombe) is Kinshasa’s main business district and a residential area hosting many expatriates. Many national and international institutions are based in Gombe.
73. Interview with a diplomat in Kinshasa, DRC, 10 April 2013.
74. Interview with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 10 October 2012.
75. Interview with a representative of the UN in Goma, DRC, 9 October 2012.
76. Interview with a representative of the EU in Goma, DRC, 19 October 2010.
77. Two influential examples are Merilee S. Grindle (ed), Politics and Policy Implementation in the Third World (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); Clark C. Gibson, Krister Andersson, Elinor Ostrom and Sujai Shivakumar, The Samaritan’s Dilemma: The Political Economy of Development Aid (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
78. Honig, Daniel, Navigating by Judgment: Organizational Structure, Autonomy, and Country Context in Delivering Foreign Aid (Cambridge, MA: Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, 2015), p. iii.
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