

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Reconceptualising the politics of knowledge authority in post/conflict interventions: From a peacebuilding field to transnational fields of interventionary objects

Anna Danielsson* 

Swedish Defence University

*Corresponding author. Email: anna.danielsson@fhs.se

(Received 29 November 2018; revised 23 July 2019; accepted 15 September 2019; first published online 28 October 2019)

Abstract

Peacebuilding debates increasingly revolve around questions about knowledge and expertise. Of particular interest is what (and whose) knowledge(s) ends up authoritative in interventions. This article addresses a problem in the literature on the epistemics and epistemic authority of peacebuilding interventions: the acknowledgement of but lacking attention to plural knowledges, the transgressive character of expertise, and knowledge struggles. It does this by discussing recent suggestions that peacebuilding epistemic authority can be fruitfully analysed as a Bourdieusian field. The article identifies a tension in Bourdieu's own thinking about fields, which has shaped some of these recent proposals. This tension, nevertheless, also enables a reconsideration of fields and struggles, and thereby an analysis that takes plurality and transgressiveness into account. By developing such an alternative conceptual position, the article sees peacebuilding epistemic authority as object- and struggle-bound; conditioned and dependent on dynamics that go beyond peacebuilding as a distinct field of practice. This position is illustrated in an analysis of the emergence and (temporary) establishment of epistemic authority in peacebuilding interventions on informal economies.

Keywords: Peacebuilding; Knowledge; Epistemic Authority; Expertise; Pierre Bourdieu

Introduction

Knowledge is central to international peacebuilding, and to scholarly critiques thereof, yet not always openly acknowledged.¹ With peacebuilding increasingly characterised by an 'unprecedented project of knowledge production',² however, practitioners and scholars have begun to focus more explicitly on the epistemics of intervention. This can be understood as an affirmation – and actualisation – of how 'global governance boils down to a constant, mainly upstream, "under the radar", and politically defused warfare over the knowledge and interests that steer it'.³ Knowledge battles and the valuing of some knowledge claims over others render certain policies and governance arrangements legitimate, even 'natural', without the use of brute force. This makes questions about knowledge particularly pertinent for peacebuilding studies.

Recently, a literature has emerged that specifically addresses the epistemics of peacebuilding. These studies share a number of characteristics. To begin with, they depart from assumptions

¹'Peacebuilding' refers here to the wide set of practices involved in post/conflict peace operations and reconstruction, some of which are focused on transforming/'building' the state.

²David Lewis, 'The myopic Foucauldian gaze: Discourse, knowledge and the authoritarian peace', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 11:1 (2017), p. 22.

³Niilo Kauppi, 'Knowledge warfare: Social scientists as operators of global governance', *International Political Sociology*, 8:3 (2014), p. 330.

of a given authority of, for example, thematic, technical, and/or institutional knowledge that is held by international agents and challenged by local claims to knowledge and authority.⁴ Instead, works on peacebuilding epistemics analyse the conditions of possibility of certain knowledge(s) *to become authoritative*, to become expertise,⁵ and of certain agents to inhabit dominant knowledge positions. Studies have found that peacebuilders who seek authoritative positions in fact advance claims to local knowledge based on context familiarity and access.⁶

A further characteristic of many works on peacebuilding epistemics is that they find inspiration in sociological studies of knowledge and expertise. Particularly emphasised are two features of contemporary knowledge production. First, peacebuilding involves multiple issues and plural knowledges. There is no given, incontestable knowledge and no given epistemic hierarchy in relation to a particular issue.⁷ Rather, it is necessary to analyse struggles over knowledge claims, and what (and whose) knowledge is being considered expertise and incorporated into peacebuilding strategies.⁸ Second, knowledge production in peacebuilding and elsewhere has become a ‘socially distributed process’ that transcends professional and geographical boundaries. This calls for greater attention to the *transgressive* conditions and divergent sources of epistemic authority.⁹ Socially distributed knowledge production and the transgressive character of what becomes authoritative knowledge thus suggest a crossing of boundaries and, by the same token, a *simultaneous linking* of areas and agents conventionally treated as distinct. What is significant is the ‘problem context’, rather than confinement to pre-assumed institutional, professional, and/or geographical boundaries.¹⁰

These shared characteristics, however, also bring about an internal tension in the literature on peacebuilding epistemics. While studies initially acknowledge a plurality and transgressiveness of peacebuilding knowledge and expertise, and that epistemic authority is not given but struggled over and *achieved in competition*, these points subsequently end up stifled. More precisely, existing studies tend to restrict their analyses to the knowledge claims and competitive practices that an individual or group – treated as freestanding – enact to construct their knowledge as authoritative. For example, while demonstrating the geographically transversal character of knowledge production, Markus Hochmüller and Markus-Michael Müller confine their analysis to the International Crisis Group (ICG). They refrain from exploring the broader playing field of agents, power relations, and intersubjective conditions in which a position of epistemic authority for the

⁴See, for example, Roger Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh (ed.), *Rethinking the Liberal Peace: External Models and Local Alternatives* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Hannah Neumann and Joel Gwyn Winckler, ‘When critique is framed as resistance: How the international intervention in Liberia fails to integrate alternative concepts and constructive criticisms’, *International Peacekeeping*, 20:5 (2013), pp. 618–35.

⁵Authoritative knowledge and expertise may be defined interchangeably; see Anna Leander, ‘Essential and embattled expertise: Knowledge/expert/policy nexus around the Sarin gas attack in Syria’, *Politik*, 17:2 (2014), p. 34.

⁶Markus Hochmüller and Markus-Michael Müller, ‘Encountering knowledge production: The International Crisis Group and the making of Mexico’s security crisis’, *Third World Quarterly*, 35:4 (2014), pp. 705–22; Berit Bliesemann de Guevara, ‘Intervention theatre: Performance, authenticity and expert knowledge in politicians’ travel to post-/conflict spaces’, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 11:1 (2017), pp. 58–80; Berit Bliesemann de Guevara and Roland Kostić, ‘Knowledge production in/about conflict and intervention: Finding “facts”, telling “truth”’, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 11:1 (2017), p. 4; Julika Bake and Michaela Zöhler, ‘Telling the stories of others: Claims of authenticity in human rights reporting and comics journalism’, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 11:1 (2017), p. 83.

⁷Leander, ‘Essential and embattled expertise’, p. 28; Bliesemann de Guevara and Kostić, ‘Knowledge production in/about conflict and intervention’, p. 6.

⁸Hochmüller and Müller, ‘Encountering knowledge production’, p. 708; Roland Kostić, ‘Shadow peacebuilders and diplomatic counterinsurgencies: Informal networks, knowledge production, and the art of policy-shaping’, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 11:1 (2017), pp. 120–39.

⁹Helga Nowotny, ‘Transgressive competence: the narrative of expertise’, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 3:1 (2000), pp. 5–21; Bliesemann de Guevara and Kostić, ‘Knowledge production in/about conflict and intervention’.

¹⁰Nowotny, ‘Transgressive competence’, pp. 13–14, 18.

ICG is achieved.¹¹ Likewise, in his study of peacebuilding knowledge production by informal networks, Roland Kostić emphasises knowledge diversity and shows the transgressive character of knowledge production as networks straddle geographical and professional boundaries.¹² However, when seeking to account for knowledge struggles, Kostić points at factors predominantly *internal* to the network that are said to make it successful.¹³ The intersubjective conditions and competitive battles over epistemic authority are left out of the analysis.

This article seeks a way to overcome this problem. It is not the first attempt to do so. Two recent studies have a similar goal. Ole Jacob Sending and Catherine Goetze respectively suggest reconceptualisations of peacebuilding expertise and epistemic authority based on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'field'.¹⁴ While such framing would in principle resolve the aforementioned tension, another shortcoming emerges in their respective works. Neither Sending's nor Goetze's analysis, and this is my *first argument* in this article, takes fully into account knowledge pluralisation and, particularly, the transgressiveness of knowledge production and authoritative knowledge. Their respective analyses neglect the transgressive character of what becomes authoritative knowledge, that is, the latter's emergence from hybrid social input that transcends conventional boundaries (whether geographical, professional, or of other kind).

Nonetheless, and this is my *second argument*, there are good reasons to remain with Bourdieu to develop an alternative conceptual position capable of capturing plurality, transgressiveness, and knowledge competition and struggles – and thus of resolving the present tension in the literature. Doing so, it becomes possible to advance four general and interlinked propositions for how peacebuilding epistemic authority can be rethought. First, peacebuilding epistemic authority can be understood as involving the relational positioning of certain knowledge of an object as authoritative, while being *simultaneously* conditioned by struggles over what knowledge is to be held as authoritative. This implies a perspective from which epistemic authority is inherently linked to the practices that bring into being and define a particular issue as an *interventionary object* in the first place, and from which the authority of any particular knowledge is never given.¹⁵ Second, to understand peacebuilding epistemic authority conventional distinctions between 'international' and 'local' knowledges and agents are not helpful. The matter is better understood as one of *different local knowledges in transnational circulation and battles over authority*, that place some *transnationalised* agents in authoritative positions. Third, these transnationalised dynamics may also involve agents who are located in multiple professional and institutional spheres, *including but not limited to* peacebuilders. Fourth, while a (temporary) state of epistemic authority may be achieved, this is always amid struggles and existing alternative knowledges. Epistemic authority is thus always in flux, more or less embattled, and in need of constant reproduction.¹⁶ In sum, the alternative conceptual position developed by this article actualises analyses of how the making of peacebuilding knowledge authority is object- and struggle-bound, and (re)produced in and through (epistemic) practice. This process, moreover, may imply that what is advanced as 'local knowledge' of a particular object is simultaneously valued and subjugated.¹⁷ To substantiate this conceptually and empirically though, it is necessary to push the

¹¹Hochmüller and Müller, 'Encountering knowledge production'; for a similar type of analysis, see Berit Bliesemann de Guevara, 'On methodology and myths: Exploring the International Crisis Group's organisational culture', *Third World Quarterly*, 35:4 (2014), pp. 616–33.

¹²Kostić, 'Shadow peacebuilders and diplomatic counterinsurgencies', pp. 121, 123.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹⁴Ole Jacob Sending, *The Politics of Expertise: Competing for Authority in Global Governance* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2015); Catherine Goetze, *The Distinction of Peace: A Social Analysis of Peacebuilding* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

¹⁵'Practice' refers to epistemic practices; see Christian Bueger, 'Making things known: Epistemic practices, the United Nations, and the translation of piracy', *International Political Sociology*, 9:1 (2015), p. 6.

¹⁶See also Leander, 'Essential and embattled expertise', pp. 34–5.

¹⁷This position resembles recent works on the building of authority in peacebuilding (for example, Thorsten Bonacker and André Brodocz, 'Introduction: Authority building in international administered territories', *Journal of Intervention and*

existing uses of the Bourdieusian ‘field’ by Sending and Goetze further towards Bourdieu’s underlying relationalism and distinct epistemology.

To make and illustrate these arguments, the article is divided into two parts. In the first, I substantiate my critique of Goetze and Sending. Here, I suggest a reading of Bourdieu that conceptually brings about the aforementioned propositions sensitive to pluralisation and transgressiveness. Despite the critical reading of Sending and Goetze, then, their works function as sounding boards against which an alternative Bourdieu-inspired conceptual direction may be outlined. This direction forms around a reading of Bourdieu that renders a set of theoretical distinctions for how the concepts of fields and struggles – including the more ambiguous ‘field of power’ – may be used.¹⁸ These distinctions, summarised as four new lines of inquiry, shift the analytical focus away from pre-assumed subjects and objects of (authoritative) knowledge, to the transgressive and relational processes whereby the object and subjects come into being in the first place. In the article’s second part, I illustrate the arguments empirically. Guided by the new lines of inquiry, and by illustrating the relational and transgressive emergence of knowledge authority in peacebuilding operations on informal economies, the second part demonstrates the value of the article’s conceptual position.¹⁹ In the conclusion, I discuss the article’s contributions to the literature on peacebuilding epistemics and, briefly, to peacebuilding research and international studies more generally.

Peacebuilding epistemics through the lens of ‘fields’

Recent works by Sending and Goetze make use of Bourdieu’s concept of ‘field’, and related notions of ‘capitals’, ‘struggles’, and ‘(mis)recognition’, to shed light on peacebuilding knowledge and expertise.²⁰ Knowledge is central to Bourdieu’s sociology, which couples epistemological and sociological concerns. Although he does not (as far as I know) use the term ‘epistemic authority’, Bourdieu’s thinking is fruitful for the study thereof. The concept of field reveals the conditions of possibility of ‘symbolic power’, understood as a power of constitution that refers to the construction, recognition, and legitimation of a particular knowledge and vision of the world, that becomes authoritative and constitutive of practices and hence the world itself.²¹ A field can

Statebuilding, 11:4 (2017), pp. 395–408). However, instead of taking as context a certain post/conflict environment, this article shifts focus to the ‘problem context’ that crosses various professional and geographical boundaries. Also, the discussion links to debates about peacebuilding ‘hybridity’, or rather, to critiques of this concept. Shahar Hameiri and Lee Jones suggest that ‘hybridity intrinsically dichotomises and reifies “local/traditional” and “international/liberal” ideal-typical assemblages of institutions, actors and practices’ (Shahar Hameiri and Lee Jones, ‘Against hybridity in the study of peacebuilding and statebuilding’, in Joanne Wallis, Lia Kent, Miranda Forsyth, Sinclair Dinnen, and Srinjoy Bose (eds), *Hybridity on the Ground in Peacebuilding and Development: Critical Conversations* (Acton, ACT: Australian National University Press, 2018), p. 100). Despite similar ambitions, this article’s knowledge sociology is best understood as complementary to Hameiri’s and Jones’s focus on peacebuilding *outcomes* (including further epistemic struggles) in a specific geographical setting. The article provides a framework for the analysis of the transgressive emergence and circulation of knowledge claims, of how come certain knowledges in peacebuilding end up (always temporarily) authoritative and how this depends on wider global structuring dynamics.

¹⁸The push further towards the distinct relationalism and epistemology of Bourdieu that this reading implies – which renders an alternative take on what field and which struggles to analyse and which agents to include in the analysis – is thus best understood as contrasting previous uses of the Bourdieusian concepts in studies of peacebuilding epistemics (that is, Sending and Goetze in particular). As we are to see, parallels can be drawn to what has recently been called an object-centred approach to knowledge (Bentley B. Allan, ‘From subjects to objects: Knowledge in International Relations theory’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 24:4 (2018), pp. 841–64) and to some earlier uses of the Bourdieusian thinking tools in IR theory (for example, Mikael R. Madsen, ‘Reflexivity and the construction of the international object: the case of human rights’, *International Political Sociology*, 5:3 (2011), pp. 259–75).

¹⁹Informal economies or ‘informality’ refer to income-generating, monetarised activities that occur outside the official purview of the state (see Colin C. Williams and John Round, ‘Re-theorizing the nature of informal employment: some lessons from Ukraine’, *International Sociology*, 23:3 (2008), pp. 367–88).

²⁰Sending, *The Politics of Expertise*; Goetze, *The Distinction of Peace*.

²¹Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Social space and symbolic power’, *Sociological Theory*, 7:1 (1989), pp. 14–25; Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990 [orig. pub. 1980]). This is akin to Thomas Gieryn’s more discourse-orientated take

thus be understood as an analytical tool with which to grasp the relational processes whereby agents are attracted to and invest in a particular issue – a particular object – and simultaneously (and variously) construct and constitute the object by advancing competing claims to knowledge.²² Seen from a perspective of fields, then, epistemic authority is not tied to official mandates or subjective strategies but is relationally brought into being with the object through practices and claims to knowledge, and is as such constantly embattled.

While useful for the analysis of peacebuilding epistemic authority, the question is how to employ the Bourdieusian field thinking to overcome the problem that marks existing research. In this part, I argue that while Sending's and Goetze's approaches give some (albeit limited) understanding of knowledge plurality and struggles, they fail to take into account the *transgressiveness* of authoritative knowledge. Both Sending and Goetze remain within a geographical international-local divide (effectively reifying it) and within assumed professional boundaries that envision peacebuilding as a distinct field of practice. From a perspective of epistemic authority as involving hybrid social input and transgressing conventional boundaries, this is problematic. In order to address the initial problem, rather, I argue that the Bourdieusian tools are still useful but need a further push towards the underlying epistemology and relationalism of Bourdieu's thinking.

In the following, I make this argument by posing two questions: *what field* and *which struggles* are pertinent to construct and analyse? Doing so, this part identifies a friction within Bourdieu's own work on fields. Such friction, however, also opens up the possibility of conceptualising fields differently. As we are to see, this reasoning relies on a shift from 'subject-centred' investigations to an 'object-centred' one.²³ This implies a break with conventional views of peacebuilding as forming a distinct field of practice, and of peacebuilders as sole subjects involved in interventionary knowledge production. The shift in perspective entails a focus on the processes whereby an interventionary object emerges in the first place, which involves various agents attracted to the object and its stakes. The idea here, then, is not to claim 'the correct' reading of Bourdieu (as if that was ever possible/desirable). Rather, this part comes up with a set of theoretical distinctions for how fields can be understood that shift the analytical focus to the transgressive making of an interventionary object. These distinctions are summarised as four new lines of inquiry.

What field?

Goetze points out that existing research fails to examine the conditions of possibility of international peacebuilders' 'authority, domination, and power', not least in terms of knowledge.²⁴ To remedy this, Goetze offers a sociology of peacebuilders that focuses on socioeconomic background, education, values, career trajectory, and networks. Agents are part of the peacebuilding field if they distinguish and understand their activities as peacebuilding, and thereby participate in struggles over 'the authority to define what peace is and how it should be built'.²⁵ While this analysis is intuitively appealing and offers an impressive sociology of peacebuilders, for the analysis of plural, competing, and transgressive knowledges, Goetze's analysis is too focused on constructing peacebuilding as a distinct, semi-autonomous field. More precisely, by constructing fields based on the types of agents in them, peacebuilding as a distinct field stems from agents' self-representations and claimed professional identities. This perspective can thus render few insights into peacebuilding authoritative knowledge as transgressive and an effect of hybrid social

on epistemic authority as 'the legitimate power to define, describe, and explain bounded domains of reality'; see Thomas Gieryn, *Cultural Boundaries of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 1.

²²Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 98.

²³Allan, 'From subjects to objects'.

²⁴Goetze, *The Distinction of Peace*, pp. 6–7, 27.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 2.

input. There is no space for examining how the production of, and struggles over, knowledge that becomes authoritative in peacebuilding may involve agents from various professional, institutional, and geographical spheres.

Interestingly, a construction of fields based on agents' self-representations and claimed professional profiles illustrates a friction in Bourdieu's own thinking. This opens up for an alternative interpretation of how to conceptualise the field as analytical tool. For Bourdieu, reality and knowledge are relationally constructed and constituted in relation to sociomaterial conditions, positions, and dispositions. Relationalism requires a break with substantialist thinking, in favour of a focus on 'the apparent invisibility of the relations between agents rather than the visibility of these same agents. This invisibility does not mean pre-existence but action in the making that binds agents together as well as distinguishes them.'²⁶ Relations of interdependence and distinction condition practices and subjects in relation to a specific object. An agent has no inner substance, but is defined by her relative position in the web of relations that constitutes the object. Such relational construction (mediated by practices) of knowledge and reality, objects and subjects, involves social agents as well as researchers.²⁷ However, while strictly applying a relational thinking in his studies of religion, media, or academia,²⁸ Bourdieu is less clear on how to think relationally when it comes to the 'distinctions between fields'.²⁹ He is critical of the notion of profession as it gives a false sense of homogeneity.³⁰ Rather, 'an agent or institution belongs to a field inasmuch as it produces and suffers effects in it'.³¹ At the same time, he talks about the religious, political, or academic field as if distinctions between fields hinged on the types of agents in them.

For some observers, the construction of fields based on agential types makes the Bourdieusian approach unsuited to capture the fluid and transgressive character of knowledge and expertise. Authoritative knowledge and experts are typically understood as 'boundary phenomena' located in intermediary positions between, for instance, 'science, universities and knowledge production on the one side, and power, politics, parliaments and making binding decisions on the other'.³² Expertise and experts, for instance think tanks, are 'boundary organizations' that straddle and mediate the divide between established fields.³³ The irony of parts of this critique, though, is that such representations rest on the assumption of pre-existing fields characterised, precisely, by agential types and professional profiles.

Nevertheless, this discussion takes us further towards the alternative way of envisioning Bourdieusian fields. Thomas Medvetz, for instance, somewhat adapts Bourdieu's field theory to capture the special role of think tanks in establishing, while traversing, the boundaries between established fields.³⁴ This, however, leaves the question of the object out of the analysis. A more encompassing approach, which draws on Bourdieu and Bruno Latour, is offered by Gil Eyal. When studying the production of expertise on Arab affairs in Israel, Eyal found it difficult to

²⁶Didier Bigo, 'Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations: Power of practices, practices of power', *International Political Sociology*, 5:3 (2011), pp. 236–7.

²⁷Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Chamboredon, and Jean-Claude Passeron, *The Craft of Sociology: Epistemological Preliminaries* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991).

²⁸See, for example, Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988); Pierre Bourdieu, 'Genesis and structure of the religious field', *Comparative Social Research*, 13 (1991), pp. 1–44; Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

²⁹Gil Eyal, 'Spaces between fields', in Philip S. Gorski (ed.), *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 158.

³⁰Loïc Wacquant, 'Towards a reflexive sociology: a workshop with Pierre Bourdieu', *Sociological Theory*, 7:1 (1989), p. 38.

³¹Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, p. 232.

³²Trine Villumsen Berling and Christian Bueger, 'Security expertise: an introduction', in Trine Villumsen Berling and Christian Bueger (eds), *Security Expertise: Practice, Power, Responsibility* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 9.

³³Thomas Medvetz, 'Murky power: "Think tanks" as boundary organizations', in David Courpasson, Damon Golsorkhi, and Jeffrey J. Sallaz (eds), *Rethinking Power in Organizations, Institutions, and Markets* (Bradford: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2012), pp. 128–9; Eyal, 'Spaces between fields', pp. 162, 168, 173–4.

³⁴Medvetz, 'Murky power', pp. 119–28.

distinguish between an academic field of Middle Eastern Studies and the bureaucratic field of military intelligence. Agents constantly straddled these boundaries. This led him to suggest that the boundary between fields should be analysed as ‘a real social entity’. The boundary turns into a hybrid social space whose existence, form, and delimitations are ongoing achievements and always struggled over.³⁵ Eyal develops this argument with the help of Latour’s thinking on hybrids.³⁶ Approaching the boundary as a hybrid space entails that what is inside is ‘neither here nor there’.³⁷ Indeed, and akin also to Bourdieusian reasoning, there is a double dynamic within the hybrid. The production of knowledge and expertise make, simultaneously, the object and subjects of expertise – it brings about (and utilises) hybrids. Yet within the hybrid there are also constant attempts at ‘purification’. That is, there are constant epistemic struggles as agents seek to advance their particular knowledge and gain legitimate authority, and in this way enact the boundaries of the space in particular ways.³⁸

As this indicates, there is an alternative way to conceptualise fields that is better suited to capture the transgressive character of knowledge and epistemic authority. This requires that we take seriously the field as analytical tool, that is, as a lens constructed by the researcher rather than by social agents and their self-representations. Moreover, in the study of peacebuilding as a multifaceted phenomenon comprised of various tasks, it is particularly rewarding to remain with Bourdieu. In Eyal’s partly Latour-inspired account, there is a slight balance in favour of the subjects (and networks) of expertise and the struggles between them, at the neglect of broader structuring forces that shape the object and that may, at least in part, extend beyond a certain hybrid. All in all, this alternative forms around Bourdieu’s call for a ‘double epistemological rupture’ with the object and subject(s) of knowledge and invites a first reconsideration of *what field* to analyse.³⁹ Rather than being guided (and constrained) by prior assumptions about knowledges and agents, the object and subject(s) are constructed as the effects of multiple, relational (epistemic) practices that are enacted by various agents.⁴⁰ With regard to the field, then, three new lines of inquiry can be formulated.

A *first line of inquiry* forms around peacebuilding as a phenomenon that comprehends multiple tasks, for instance humanitarian assistance, agricultural development, economic reconstruction, and security-sector reform. Such compartmentalisation into functional areas is sometimes criticised for enabling a ‘silo mentality’.⁴¹ Here though, compartmentalisation is the starting point for an analysis of the emergence of the object – the ‘object of intervention’. An object of intervention refers to a distinct peacebuilding problem or issue that emerges as an effect of competing knowledge claims enacted by multiple subjects, some of which may be directly involved in peacebuilding. Through these competing claims, epistemic struggles are produced through the emergence of the object. This process may be analysed as a field provided that it involves interdependencies as well as distinctions between knowledge claims and agents.

This is akin to recent works in IR theory that shift focus from ‘how knowledgeable practices shape the interests and actions of international *subjects*’ to how various governance objects emerge as products of knowledge practices and struggles over ‘who gets to define and represent those objects’.⁴² The difference is that subject-centred perspectives are concerned with how forms

³⁵Gil Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient: Expertise in Arab Affairs and the Israeli State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 7.

³⁶Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

³⁷Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient*, p. 7.

³⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 13–20.

³⁹Bourdieu, Chamboredon, and Passeron, *The Craft of Sociology*, pp. 13–55.

⁴⁰Madsen, ‘Reflexivity and the construction of the international object’.

⁴¹Lisa Smirl, ‘Building the other, constructing ourselves: Spatial dimensions of international humanitarian response’, *International Political Sociology*, 2:3 (2008), p. 247.

⁴²Allan, ‘From subjects to objects’, pp. 842, 855, emphasis in original; see also Olaf Corry, *Constructing a Global Polity: Theory, Discourse and Governance* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Examples include Timothy Mitchell,

of knowledge constitute agents' subjectivities and actions, while this type of object-centred approach 'foreground[s] objects and, with them, how the space of the international is constituted and populated with common problems and imperatives', around which various 'actors coalesce and interact'.⁴³ Such governance objects can be understood as 'hybrid entities comprised of ideas, artifacts, physical phenomena, and practices' that are made distinct from other objects.⁴⁴

In fact, this resembles Sending's approach. Rather than agent's self-representations, Sending focuses on the practices that condition and make possible a governance object. Authoritative knowledge of an object is the effect of an 'ongoing process of competition for the authority to define what is to be governed, how and why'.⁴⁵ The emergence and dynamics of governance objects shape global politics by conferring authority on some knowledges, activities, and subjects, rather than others.⁴⁶ In other words, there are similarities between Sending's approach and the position developed by this article. However, in relation to peacebuilding, Sending's account becomes too generic. It fails to take into account the transgressiveness of authoritative knowledge in both a professional, institutional, and geographical sense. For Sending, peacebuilding is one expression of a general international field. This field enables peacebuilders to approach 'the local' as an 'international governance object'.⁴⁷ This level of abstraction does not permit investigations into how the various aspects of peacebuilding translate into *specific interventionary objects* and how these are produced and governed by specific knowledge claims. Moreover, Sending begins from a given set of subjects (UN peacebuilders). He thus *partially* remains within a subject-centred perspective. There is no room for analysing how the production of interventionary objects may be conditioned by hybrid social input, that is, involve agents from multiple professional and geographical spheres. Sending thus also reifies the international-local divide so characteristic – and criticised – of peacebuilding research.

Instead, the first line of inquiry implies a historicisation of the (if possible) relational dynamics and competing knowledge claims that bring into being an interventionary object, analysed as a semi-autonomous 'field of an interventionary object'. Empirically, this concerns whether any particular peacebuilding task can be studied as an effect of relationally conditioned practices that construct and constitute this object through competing knowledge claims. Moreover, while only relatively autonomous, the interventionary field forms around a distinct object. From this follows that the emergence of the object involves the creation of its outside, that is, enactments of boundaries that distinguish the object and its stakes from other domains. The epistemic struggles that go on within the interventionary field are thus at the same time struggles over the borders of the field.⁴⁸ As Matt Carlson puts it: 'claims to expertise are at once solidifying while differentiating' and the boundary between the inside and the outside of the field 'becomes a site of tension'.⁴⁹

'Rethinking economy', *Geoforum*, 39:3 (2008), pp. 1116–21; Madsen, 'Reflexivity and the construction of the international object'; Bentley B. Allan, 'Producing the climate: States, scientists, and the constitution of global governance objects', *International Organization*, 71:1 (2017), pp. 131–62; Anna Danielsson, 'Programming peacebuilding: Representations, misrepresentations and a shift to the production of interventionary objects', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 22:3 (2019), pp. 584–609.

⁴³Allan, 'From subjects to objects', pp. 849, 853.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 842, 853. In other words, the notion of an interventionary object closely resembles (mainly) Corry's and Allan's ideas about governance objects. In this article though, I use the designation 'interventionary' object in order to retain a link specifically to peacebuilding as a global phenomenon – not as a distinct field of practice, but as a distinct transnational ordering and logic(s) constituted by a multitude of interventionary objects that may in turn be more or less interrelated and mutually structuring. Thus, this labelling also serves to recognise peacebuilding projects and agents, while critically exploring the constitutive processes that bring them into being, in certain ways, in the first place.

⁴⁵Sending, *The Politics of Expertise*, p. 4.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 33, 68.

⁴⁸Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, p. 100.

⁴⁹Matt Carlson, 'Introduction: the many boundaries of journalism', in Matt Carlson and Seth C. Lewis (eds), *Boundaries of Journalism: Professionalism, Practices and Participation* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), p. 6.

From this follows a *second line of inquiry*. Given that the analytical focus lies with relational practices that advance claims to knowledge of an object while bringing the object into being, the conceptual position developed here departs from subject-centred accounts. This does not mean a lack of agents, but only that we cannot know on beforehand which agents to include in the analysis.⁵⁰ Generally, agents to be considered are those who partake in the production and advancement of competing claims to knowledge of the object. This may involve academics, and academically produced knowledge.⁵¹ Participation is conditioned upon agents experiencing an attraction to the object, that they consider the issue meaningful and worthy of ‘investment’.⁵²

Closely related is a *third line of inquiry*. As touched upon, when researching fields of interventionary objects, we should be open to the possibility of such fields to involve agents not only from different professional and institutional spheres, but also geographical. Indeed, what is ‘revealing about peacebuilding is that the actors constitutive of it transcend the local/international divide’.⁵³ While this is ultimately an empirical question, I therefore suggest adding the qualifier ‘transnational’ to fields of interventionary objects. The point of a transnational field is precisely to avoid any easy ordering into either international or domestic domains. In a transnational field, agents are ‘neither entirely international nor national but effectively transnational’ – shaped by their positions and practices in national as well as international settings.⁵⁴

Which struggles?

So far, the proposed framework approaches peacebuilding as a phenomenon comprised of a myriad of transnational fields of interventionary objects, each made possible by a variety of practices, knowledge claims, and agents. However, the framework remains underdeveloped with regard to how certain claims and knowledges become authoritative. A *fourth line of inquiry* thus concerns the types of struggle that shape what, and whose, knowledge becomes authoritative. In relation to other object-centred approaches, such as that advanced by Eyal (and, in part, by Sending), attention to multiple epistemic struggles and their mutually structuring dynamics is what makes the Bourdieusian tools particularly useful for a study of peacebuilding epistemic authority.

For Bourdieu, practices that construct and constitute an object (field) depend on and put into play various resources. These ‘capitals’ are of different kind. Social capital, for instance, refers to the ‘aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition’.⁵⁵ Cultural capital may exist as embodied dispositions, artistic or intellectual goods (such as paintings or awards), or as institutionalised resources, such as educational credentials.⁵⁶ The knowledge hierarchies of a field link to the field’s specific capital configuration. Positions in the field

⁵⁰See also Mustafa Emirbayer and Victoria Johnson, ‘Bourdieu and organizational analysis’, *Theory and Society*, 37:1 (2008), p. 7.

⁵¹See also Madsen, ‘Reflexivity and the construction of the international object’. Furthermore, even though scholars may participate in a field of an interventionary object as outlined here, this does not rule out analyses of specific academic field that form around other objects. In fact, participation in an intellectual field is required as basis for scholarly engagement in other fields; see Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Fourth lecture: Universal corporatism: the role of intellectuals in the modern world’, *Poetics Today*, 12:4 (1991), pp. 655–69.

⁵²Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, p. 67.

⁵³Vivienne Jabri, ‘Peacebuilding, the local and the international: a colonial or a postcolonial rationality?’, *Peacebuilding*, 1:1 (2013), p. 15.

⁵⁴Niilo Kauppi and Mikael R. Madsen, ‘Fields of global governance: How transnational power elites can make global governance intelligible’, *International Political Sociology*, 8:3 (2014), p. 327; See also Yves Dezalay and Bryant G. Garth, ‘Hegemonic battles, professional rivalries, and the international division of labor in the market for the import and export of state-governing expertise’, *International Political Sociology*, 5:3 (2011), pp. 276–93.

⁵⁵Pierre Bourdieu, ‘The forms of capital’, in John E. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 247–48.

⁵⁶Ibid.

are relatively defined based on their placement in this configuration. The different, dominant/dominated 'poles' of a field can be understood as analytical notions that help to make sense of knowledge hierarchies and the relative positioning of knowledge claims.

Capitals, then, are potential sources of power and epistemic authority. Still, to become powerful any capital and related knowledge claim must be recognised by agents in the field.⁵⁷ Power and epistemic authority are thus not properties of specific agents, but relationally brought into being by all. Acts of recognition temporarily structure the field into dominant/dominated poles around which different knowledge claims and agents coalesce.⁵⁸ Such acts, moreover, may simultaneously involve more or less explicit struggles. Agents seek to advance their particular knowledge claims and position themselves as holders of legitimate authority over the object and its stakes.⁵⁹ As mentioned, these struggles at the same time concern the field's borders that construct the object and its stakes as distinct from other domains.

One type of struggle is hence that which plays out internally within the field. Still, fields are only semi-autonomous. They are not immune to struggles and structuring forces that are in part external to them, and that they also structure.⁶⁰ For the here proposed rethinking of peacebuilding epistemic authority, which envisions peacebuilding as fragmented into a myriad of transnational fields of interventionary objects, this is a crucial insight. When portraying peacebuilding as a fragmented phenomenon that involves practices and subjects beyond those conventionally associated with the building of peace, it is important to be, at the same time, open to interventionary fields as structured by (and structuring of) an encompassing symbolic logic of peacebuilding. To grasp such a 'fragmented whole',⁶¹ the Bourdieusian concept of a 'field of power' is useful.⁶²

A translation of this concept into a 'field of peacebuilding power' renders a tool with which to interrogate more completely the forces that condition peacebuilding epistemic authority over a particular interventionary object. Following previous work that have adapted the field of power into transnational dynamics, the field of peacebuilding power can be understood as one of several transnational fields of power that exist with relative autonomy from national dynamics.⁶³ The field of peacebuilding power spans horizontally and amalgamates the multiple transnational fields of interventionary objects. Like any field, the field of peacebuilding power is a field of struggles. These struggles, however, involve agents that inhabit dominant positions in their respective interventionary fields, whether these are UN agencies, large international organisations such as the World Bank (WB), locally-based organisations, think tanks and organisations like the ICG, or academics. The struggles of the field of peacebuilding power concern the 'relative value and potency of rival kinds of capital' and thus the legitimisation of the 'dominant principle of domination' in peacebuilding.⁶⁴

With this tool, it becomes possible to analyse whether, and if so how, the dynamics and battles of the field of an interventionary object are shaped also by (and help shape) an overarching symbolic logic of peacebuilding. Two caveats are in order. First, in order to understand the dynamics of a field of peacebuilding power, an initial analysis of *multiple* interventionary fields would have to be conducted. Second, there is no given homogeneity or automatic correspondence between

⁵⁷Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question* (London: SAGE Publications, 1993 [orig. pub. 1984]).

⁵⁸Importantly, the labelling of poles as dominant/dominated provides merely a dichotomous and thus very rough understanding of the field's dynamics and lines of interdependence and distinction.

⁵⁹Bourdieu, 'Social space and symbolic power', pp. 15–21.

⁶⁰Pierre Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 33.

⁶¹See also Allan, 'From subjects to objects', p. 857.

⁶²Loïc Wacquant, 'From ruling class to field of power: an interview with Pierre Bourdieu on *La noblesse d'État*', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 10:3 (1993), pp. 9–44.

⁶³See, for example, Bigo, 'Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations', pp. 248–9.

⁶⁴Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 265; Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, p. 76, n. 16.

the field of peacebuilding power and an interventionary field.⁶⁵ Instead, one can think of the relationship as a *constant and two-directional work of mediation* that may result in homologous knowledge logics. The point of the field of peacebuilding power as an analytical tool is thus not to assume or predict the dynamics in an interventionary field. Rather, it is a tool with which to summarise the analysis of an interventionary field and get a more complete understanding of dominant and dominated positions and knowledge claims.⁶⁶

In this sense, the analysis of peacebuilding epistemic authority can in fact make another use of Sending's argument. In his account of peacebuilding as an international field that approaches 'the local' as governance object, Sending argues that peacebuilding is shaped by an 'ethnographic sagacity'.⁶⁷ This logic inclines peacebuilders to 'seek recognition from peers and superiors for their ability to deploy local knowledge as a means to further "international rule"'.⁶⁸ Peacebuilders favour forms of local knowledge that are in line with internationally predefined programmes and goals.⁶⁹ Potentially, and again the point is that this can help make further sense of the analysis, a logic of ethnographic sagacity may constitute an overarching symbolic logic of peacebuilding. This logic would thus stem from a mutually structuring relationship between interventionary fields and the field of peacebuilding power. In sum, with this *fourth line of inquiry*, and by both drawing on and diverging from Sending, the here developed conceptual position is as attentive to a potential encompassing knowledge logic inherent to peacebuilding activities as it is to the plurality and transgressiveness of knowledge, knowledge battles, and expertise.

Informal economies and the production of peacebuilding epistemic authority

Somewhere in Bali in the 1990s, the story goes, a couple of dogs barked. This may not appear that remarkable. Still, as the story continues, it becomes an entry point into relational and transgressive historical dynamics that have arranged informal economies into distinct interventionary objects and, simultaneously, brought into being struggles, strategies, and agents. Tracing these dynamics, it becomes clear that the question of what (and whose) knowledge is made authoritative in peacebuilding activities on informality involves and depends on relations and struggles between a multitude of variously located practices and agents, beyond those directly associated with the building of peace.

The man telling the story about the dogs in Bali is Hernando de Soto, a Peruvian economist and entrepreneur. de Soto describes how he took a stroll through the island's rice fields. As he walked, he had no idea about when he crossed the boundary separating one farm from another. But, as he says, 'the dogs knew': 'every time I crossed from one farm to another, a different dog barked. Those Indonesian dogs may have been ignorant of formal law, but they were positive about which assets their masters controlled.'⁷⁰ In de Soto's rendition, the barking dogs are metaphorical of claims to a legalist-institutionalist form of local knowledge of informality that focuses on the 'rules' and 'costs' of informal economies.

Existing research shows that legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims of informality became authoritative in the peacebuilding missions to Bosnia and Kosovo. At the same time, there were multiple and competing representations of informality in play during these missions.⁷¹ Informed and summarised by the new lines of inquiry established in the previous part, the

⁶⁵Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, p. 17.

⁶⁶Bigo, 'Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations'.

⁶⁷See also George Steinmetz, 'The colonial state as a social field: Ethnographic capital and native policy in the German overseas empire before 1914', *American Sociological Review*, 73:4 (2008), pp. 589–612.

⁶⁸Sending, *The Politics of Expertise*, p. 55.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 74.

⁷⁰de Soto, cited in Jeremy Clift, 'Hearing the dogs bark', *Finance & Development* (December 2003), p. 8.

⁷¹Danielsson, 'Programming peacebuilding'; Anna Danielsson, *Informal Economies and Power* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019).

following account of the production of informality as an interventionary object illustrates the processes conditioning this particular state of epistemic authority in the Bosnia and Kosovo missions. To understand this, then, the analysis needs to go beyond peacebuilders and trace the relational and transgressive emergence and circulation of an interventionary object and the knowledge claims that constitute it, as well as the various types of struggles that ground a (temporary) positioning of certain claims as authoritative.

From Bali to the Balkans

In the early 2000s, informal economies and the question of ‘formalisation’ became a privileged peacebuilding task within the confines of economic reconstruction.⁷² This can be understood in relation to two developments. First, there had at the time been a general shift in peacebuilding practice from economic and political liberalisation to statebuilding and institutional strengthening.⁷³ Understood as a deviation from institutional governance standards, informality became a key issue. This also made the WB, among others, ‘as significant an actor in peacebuilding as the UN or NATO’.⁷⁴ In addition, there was at the time an increased focus on conflict’s economic dimensions and different aspects of a war economy.⁷⁵ Informal or ‘coping’ economic activities of ordinary people were considered distinct from those of former warlords.⁷⁶

Two of the largest peacebuilding missions at the time, those to Bosnia and Kosovo, exemplified this new focus on informality. During these missions, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the International Labour Organization (ILO), as key agents, carried out ‘anti-informality’ operations and implemented specific policies and governance arrangements. These were informed by legalist-institutionalist claims to local knowledge of informality and centred on the notions of ‘costs’ and ‘rules’. Policies and arrangements were focused on simplifying rules and regulations, and on removing institutional barriers. The goal was to lower various costs of the formal economy, such as taxes, unfavourable labour markets, and transaction costs. By decreasing the costs of formality, the expectation was that people would become disincentivised from engaging in informal economic practices.⁷⁷ In both missions, the authority of legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims was further enhanced also by state agencies and smaller as well as local organisations. In Kosovo, for instance, these particular knowledge claims were supported by the national government’s Small and Medium Enterprise Support Agency, and by local and international think tanks such as the Riinvest Institute, the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society, and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.⁷⁸

However, this particular state of peacebuilding epistemic authority for legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims was not given. In fact, peacebuilders in Bosnia and Kosovo produced multiple representations of informality. Some contrasted the notion of costs and related institutional solutions, and instead depicted informality from a perspective of its social and historical preconditions, as well as its potential role as alleviator of poverty and marginalisation.⁷⁹

⁷²Werner Distler, “‘And everybody did whatever they wanted to do’: Informal practices of international statebuilders in Kosovo”, *Civil Wars*, 20:2 (2018), p. 288.

⁷³Roland Paris, *At War’s End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁷⁴Jabri, ‘Peacebuilding, the local and the international’, p. 10.

⁷⁵See, for example, Karen Ballantine and Jake Sherman (eds), *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003).

⁷⁶See, for example, Michael Pugh, ‘Crime and Capitalism in Kosovo’s Transformation’, paper presented at the International Studies Association Conference, Hawaii, 1–5 March 2005.

⁷⁷Danielsson, ‘Programming peacebuilding’; Danielsson, *Informal Economies and Power*, p. 59.

⁷⁸Danielsson, *Informal Economies and Power*, p. 60; see also Riinvest Institute, ‘To Pay or Not to Pay: A Business Perspective of Informality in Kosovo’ (Pristina: Riinvest Institute, Kosovo Foundation for Open Society and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2013).

⁷⁹Danielsson, ‘Programming peacebuilding’, Danielsson, *Informal Economies and Power*, pp. 60–3.

In order to illustrate how come legalist-institutionalist claims to local knowledge of informality nevertheless ended up authoritative, I will follow the four lines of inquiry developed in the previous part and trace the transgressive processes, knowledge work, and struggles that conditioned this state in the first place. This illustrative analysis will take us beyond peacebuilders and beyond a focus on peacebuilding as a distinct field of practice, and into relational processes that conditioned the emergence of informality as a distinct object and that involved the work by various professionals, located in multiple geographical settings. The transgressive emergence of informality as a distinct interventionary object, analysed as a field, thus involved a simultaneous crossing and linking of institutional, professional, and geographic boundaries. From this perspective, de Soto and his Peruvian think tank *Instituto Libertad y Democracia* (Institute for Liberty and Democracy, ILD) are among a set of agents not directly engaged in peacebuilding, but nonetheless central in the processes leading up to the (initial) formation of ‘informality expertise’ in the peacebuilding missions to Bosnia and Kosovo.

Some caveats are in order. The missions to Bosnia and Kosovo are chosen here as existing research has demonstrated a state of epistemic ‘consensus’ over informality in these missions, amid conditions of multiple representations and possible alternative knowledges. Rather than conventional case studies though, the Bosnia and Kosovo missions are used as points of departure for a historicisation and tracing of the relational and transgressive emergence of informality as a distinct interventionary object, and the struggles over knowledge authority that simultaneously occurred. This means that the illustration does not focus on potential further epistemic struggles over informality as played out in Bosnia and Kosovo. Further, as the analysis functions as an illustration of the developed conceptual position, it is wanting as a history. It is wanting also as an ‘orthodox Bourdieusian’ study, as this would for example require a more in-depth reconstruction of the field’s dispositional logic(s). That said, the analysis illustrates the relational and transgressive processes and struggles that formed informality into a distinct interventionary object; dynamics that conditioned what became considered (again, at least initially) ‘informality expertise’ in the peacebuilding missions to Bosnia and Kosovo. As we are to see, these dynamics involved a simultaneous valuing and subjugation of claims to local knowledge of informality.

What field? The emergence of informality as an interventionary object

In 1986, de Soto published a book entitled *El Otro Sendero (The Other Path)*. This would become a bestseller, praised by leading politicians in the UK and US, and a catalyst of the global rise of legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims of informality. The book advanced a perspective focused on the local conditions of informal economies. These conditions were understood in terms of the ‘costs of formality’, that is, various types of legal and institutional barriers that were assumed to underpin the existence of informal economic activities.⁸⁰ Much knowledge work prior to and after this publication conditioned the advancement of legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims.

One decisive project was the establishment in 1981 of the ILD think tank in Lima, Peru. This was a direct outcome of efforts by members of the Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS) to connect the neoliberal movement via a global net of think tanks.⁸¹ Financial support, advice on advocacy, and social contacts provided by MPS-related think tanks such as the Atlas Economic Research Foundation and the Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) helped set up the ILD.⁸² Thanks to this, the ILD could begin pilot studies of the costs of formality in Lima. Following these projects, in turn, de Soto and the ILD published *El Otro Sendero* and got involved

⁸⁰Hernando de Soto, *The Other Path: The Invisible Revolution in the Third World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), pp. 12, 132–3.

⁸¹See Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (eds), *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁸²Gerald Frost, *Antony Fisher: Champion of Liberty* (London: Profile Books, 2002); Timothy Mitchell, ‘How neoliberalism makes its world: the Urban Property Rights Project in Peru’, in Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (eds), *The Road from*

in Peruvian domestic politics. In 1992–4, the ILD carried out pilot studies on the registration of urban property in Lima. Two years later, the Peruvian government initiated the Urban Property Rights Project (UPRP), a comprehensive programme for urban formalisation directly based on legalist-institutionalist claims to knowledge of informality. Soon, the WB joined the UPRP.⁸³ While not the Bank's first encounter with informality, this meant that legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims entered global policy circles and discourses.

This initial spread of legalist-institutionalist claims thus depended on much work inside and outside of Peru. This work involved various resources. Different forms of cultural capital were significant. Legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims enjoyed objectified cultural capital through the publication of *El Otro Sendero* and through various awards and prizes given to de Soto. Also, de Soto himself carried a kind of 'embodied' cultural capital.⁸⁴ This arguably strengthened the value of the objectified cultural capital. While often interpreted as 'cultural refinement', embodied cultural capital can be understood also as a personal background that renders an aura of legitimacy. As a Peruvian, de Soto could say that his country's problem with informality was due not to global inequalities but to domestic conditions.⁸⁵ Moreover, legalist-institutionalist holding of cultural capital was further facilitated by a vast amount of social capital established through MPS contacts. For instance, many of the awards given to de Soto came from MPS-linked organisations, such as the Cato Institute.⁸⁶ With capitals being mutually strengthening, social and cultural capital helped attract economic capital to the legalist-institutionalist position, not least then in the form of financial support from the WB.

These capitals were relationally significant. Specifically, they conditioned the advancement of legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims that opposed the, at the time, established epistemic positions on informality. Although the concept had gained some traction already in the 1950s, it was not until the 1970s that it reached momentum. The World Employment Program (WEP) launched by the ILO in 1969 was crucial. The WEP and the links it forged between the ILO, the WB, trade unions, and scholars was one factor behind the establishment of an initial epistemic consensus on informality.⁸⁷ This was a dualist consensus that saw informal economies as residuals of modernity.⁸⁸ In the late 1970s and early 1980s though, consensus shifted from dualism to dependency. The ILO and other international organisations repositioned in favour of a conception of informality as a spin-off to capitalist development. This implied a turn to development planning and governance arrangements favouring state support of informal businesses.⁸⁹

It was only, however, with the rise of legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims that more pronounced *relational* dynamics started to form around informality as a *distinct* interventionary object distinguishable from others, permitting an analysis of informality as a semi-autonomous transnational field with its distinct stakes and epistemic struggles.⁹⁰ Although there had been contestations also within the dependency consensus, these did not concern any specific stakes of

Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 386–416.

⁸³Mitchell, 'How neoliberalism makes its world', pp. 389–90.

⁸⁴Pierre Bourdieu, 'The forms of capital', pp. 243–58.

⁸⁵Art Kleiner, 'The philosopher of progress and prosperity', *Strategy + Business*, 1 June (2004), p. 5, available at: {<https://www.strategy-business.com/article/04211?gko=3b8cb>} accessed 9 May 2018.

⁸⁶Mitchell, 'How neoliberalism makes its world', p. 400.

⁸⁷Paul E. Bangasser, 'The ILO and the informal sector: an institutional history', *Employment Paper 2000/9* (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2000), pp. 2, 6, 10.

⁸⁸S. V. Sethuraman, 'The urban informal sector: Concept, measurement and policy', *International Labour Review*, 114:1 (1976), pp. 69–81.

⁸⁹Ray Bromley, 'A new path to development? The significance and impact of Hernando de Soto's ideas on underdevelopment, production, and reproduction', *Economic Geography*, 66:4 (1990), pp. 330–8.

⁹⁰Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question*, p. 72; See also Bentley B. Allan, 'Producing the climate: States, scientists, and the constitution of global governance objects', *International Organization*, 71:1 (2017), pp. 136–7.

informality *as such*.⁹¹ With the advancement of legalist-institutionalist claims, however, new stakes were established that concerned the *local conditions* of informality. From the early 1990s, old (such as the ILO and the WB) and new agents were attracted to and converged around these stakes, and advanced competing claims to the 'right' local knowledge of informality. This involved also scholars. While de Soto and the ILD had initially made a virtue of not having links to the social sciences – thereby distinguishing themselves from the dependency position – the success of new institutional economics (NIE) in the 1980s and 1990s underpinned a legalist-institutionalist academic literature on informality.⁹² Legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims thus came to benefit also from scientific capital, which worked in conjunction with the other resources. As one CIPE employee put it when explaining the organisation's early support of de Soto and the ILD: 'there was a common interest in the new institutional economics, and one thing that informed our work from the early days was this institutional approach with Douglass North, and all of us knowing each other'.⁹³

In sum, with regards to the *first line of inquiry* (and while this is never a finished accomplishment), informality emerged as a distinct interventionary object through relationally positioned and competing knowledge claims that constituted informality as a specific object. Legalist-institutionalist claims disrupted an established epistemic consensus, and established novel stakes of the object. As the following section further demonstrates, these stakes attracted new agents and propelled older ones to reposition themselves. The emergence of informality as a distinct object was thus not only conditioned by competing claims to knowledge, but also conditioning of new knowledges and expert positions.⁹⁴

Related to the *second line of inquiry*, the emergence of informality as a distinct interventionary object and the new stakes were not linked to a given set of agents, but effects of practices, knowledge work, and claims by a heterogenous group of agents whom were attracted to and coalesced around the object. These included domestic think tanks in Peru and the United States, Peruvian state agencies, academics, and large international organisations such as the WB and the ILO. Some of these agents, then, are also engaged in peacebuilding, but all of them have shaped, and been shaped by, the relational process conditioning informality as a distinct interventionary object in the first place.

Finally, and with regards to the *third line of inquiry*, the above demonstrates the multiple geographical locations of the agents involved and the, from the very start, transnational character of the informal field. Neither its external boundaries nor its internal lines of differentiation and opposition are easily drawn between the international and the local, whether in terms of agents or knowledges. Rather, and as the next section illustrates, these are characterised by the 'right' type of knowledge claims of informality's local conditions. In other words, the epistemic hierarchies of the transnational field of informality concern different kinds of local knowledge of informality that are of hybrid origin and in, with more or less ease, transnational circulation.

Which struggles? Battles over knowledge and the temporary establishment of epistemic authority

As informality emerged as a distinct object, claims to local knowledge became entry requirements, stakes, and main lines of differentiation in the field. By the mid- to late 1990s, the field

⁹¹Desmond McNeill, 'The informal sector: Biography of an idea', in Morten Bøås and Desmond McNeill (eds), *Global Institutions and Development: Framing the World?* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 44.

⁹²Bromley, 'A new path to development', p. 333; See also, for example, Edgar J. Feige, 'Defining and estimating underground and informal economies: the new institutional economics approach', *World Development*, 18:7 (1990), pp. 989–1002; Era Dabla-Norris, Mark Gradstein, and Gabriela Inchauste, 'What causes firms to hide output? The determinants of informality', *Journal of Development Economics*, 85:1–2 (2008), pp. 1–27.

⁹³Author's interview with officials at CIPE, Washington, DC, 2 May 2017.

⁹⁴See also Allan, 'Producing the climate', p. 138.

had consolidated around two main poles that worked to distinguish knowledge claims, and around which old and new agents coalesced. Some agents previously linked to the dependency consensus, such as the ILO, repositioned themselves closer to the legalist-institutionalist position.⁹⁵ Beneath antagonisms and different knowledge claims and constitutions of informality, then, was a shared recognition of this as a phenomenon that could (and should) be known and intervened upon, and the value of local knowledge for this.

Ever since, legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims have remained orthodox and inhabited dominant positions in the field, yet not without contenders. A snapshot of contemporary field dynamics and internal struggles sheds an initial light on this. The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) advances knowledge claims that recognise the value of local knowledge of informality, but that can also be characterised as heterodox and contending. This shows in how the IIED's claims *explicitly oppose* legalist-institutionalist conceptions and judge these as too 'technocratic', 'efficiency-focused', and/or 'legalistic'.⁹⁶ Instead, the IIED claims an understanding of the 'social value' of informal economies.⁹⁷ The organisation emphasises the challenges but also opportunities with informality.⁹⁸ Rather than strict formalisation, the IIED speaks of a 'light-touch' or 'selective' formalisation. The idea is to create 'well-being within informality, rather than hoping to replace it with something'.⁹⁹ Significant here is that this opposition at the same time implies an *act of recognition* that, unwittingly, produces a dominant position for legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims. Indeed, contenders in the informal field have to recognise, and by that partially legitimate, legalist-institutionalist claims and categorisations in order to counterbalance them, and make use of them for their opposed aims. At the same time, this adds to the authoritative positioning of legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims.¹⁰⁰

Another organisation in the contemporary field is the aforementioned CIPE. Since the field's emergence, CIPE has played a vital role for the continuous production and advancement of legalist-institutionalist claims to local knowledge of informality. For CIPE, formalisation is key to strengthen democratic governance and secure economic efficiency.¹⁰¹ CIPE advances claims to knowledge that constitute informality as an effect of high costs and 'barriers to market entry', in turn 'caused by badly designed laws and regulations' specific to each context.¹⁰² Formalisation is to be achieved through legal and regulatory reforms that lower the costs and institutional barriers to formal market entry.¹⁰³ While CIPE was set up to 'pursue a partnership model of programming, where we would not dictate a particular policy agenda or programmatic course of action, but fund local organisations' and their projects,¹⁰⁴ the way in which the organisation refers to 'costs', 'barriers', and 'incentives' informs of basically preset understandings of and claims to what constitutes informality in different local contexts. In addition, while speaking from orthodox positions in the field that only exist as they are relationally interdependent on yet distinct from past orthodoxy and current heterodoxy, CIPE's advancement of legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims needs not to show awareness of antagonistic positions and contending claims.

⁹⁵Bangasser, 'The ILO and the informal sector', pp. 15–16.

⁹⁶Author's interview with senior researcher at the IIED, London, 12 April 2017; IIED, 'Briefing: Artisanal and Small-Scale mining: Protecting Those "Doing the Dirty Work"' (October 2014), available at: {<http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/17262IIED.pdf>} accessed 7 May 2018.

⁹⁷Author's interview with senior researcher at the IIED, London, 12 April 2017.

⁹⁸Bill Vorley, Ethel Del Pozo-Vergnes, and Anna Barnett, 'Small Producer Agency in the Globalised Market: Knowledge Programme' (London: IIED, Hivos – People Unlimited, Mainumby Nakurutu, 2012), p. 21.

⁹⁹Author's interview with senior researcher at the IIED, London, 12 April 2017.

¹⁰⁰See also Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity*, p. 35.

¹⁰¹Kim Eric Bettcher and Nafisul Islam, 'Reducing Economic Informality by Opening Access to Opportunity: Reform Toolkit' (Washington, DC: CIPE, 2009).

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 3–4.

¹⁰³Kim Eric Bettcher, Martin Friedl, and Gustavo Marini, 'From the Streets to Markets: Formalization of Street Vendors in Metropolitan Lima. Reform Case Study No. 0901' (Washington, DC: CIPE, 2009), p. 8.

¹⁰⁴Author's interview with officials at CIPE, Washington, DC, 2 May 2017.

These respective advancements of claims to local knowledge of informality together illustrate interdependent yet differentiated positions in the field, from which agents speak and act. The examples point to the field being structured into two main segments, a dominant and a dominated knowledge pole. While merely providing a somewhat rough picture, this gives a sense of the field's knowledge hierarchies in terms of *competing claims to local knowledge of informality*. These claims thus constitute in different ways informality as an interventionary object.

The field's *dominant* pole is characterised by claims to local knowledge that advance certain preset factors as constitutive of informality. As seen, legalist-institutionalist claims to local knowledge of informality assume their meaning from assumedly cross-culturally valid determinants such as costs and institutional barriers. The *dominated* pole, on the other hand, is characterised by knowledge claims that advance relatively unstrained conceptions of what constitutes informality. As exemplified by the IIED, these claims may emphasise the social and cultural context of informality, but involve fewer specific factors that on beforehand limit what local knowledge of informality may concern. As mentioned, furthermore, agents positioned near the dominated pole tend to advance claims that – through opposition and contestation – recognise the authority of orthodox legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims. The temporary authoritative positioning of legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims to informality thus depends on all agents in the field.

Internal struggles and the different knowledge poles illustrate different constitutions of informality as an interventionary object. This, then, also concerns the borders of the informal field. More or less consciously, as agents seek to advance their particular knowledge of the object, they construct different relations to the object's outside, for instance in terms of the envisioned relationship between informality and the formal economy. From orthodox/dominant positions, informality is constituted as the inverse of formality. Legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims, as exemplified by CIPE, assume a strict dichotomy between the formal and the informal. The latter can be decreased (formalised) through improvements of the former. The borders of the informal field are thus enacted in essentialist and dichotomous terms, based on a determinist view of human agency. From heterodox positions, rather, and as exemplified by the IIED, the borders between informality and formality are made more ambiguous, malleable, and less predictable. For the IIED, 'informality not only coexists with the formal economy; the two can be symbiotic'.¹⁰⁵ This is another rendition of the field's external boundary, from which the conception of informality as the inverse of formality does not make sense. Moreover, these internal struggles and differentiations also push the participating agents in the direction of particular outside, while they – by necessity – also remain in the field.¹⁰⁶ Orthodox positions can involve agents such as CIPE that claim informality expertise based on a general profile as experts on private sector development and market-led solutions. Heterodox positions, by contrast, both advance more unstrained conceptions of informality and, by the same token, suggest the need for more specialised knowledge. As one IIED official puts it: working on informality is 'part almost of our DNA'.¹⁰⁷

The history and internal knowledge contestations of the informal field, then, partly account for how come legalist-institutionalist claims to local knowledge of informality achieved epistemic authority in the peacebuilding missions to Bosnia and Kosovo, under conditions of multiple representations and potentially alternative governance arrangements. As the WB and the other IOs involved in economic reconstruction in Bosnia and Kosovo participate in the informal field, their peacebuilding activities on informality are structured by, and help structure, the knowledge dynamics and hierarchies of the informal field. The WB has been positioned near the dominant knowledge pole ever since the field's emergence. Its peacebuilding activities in Bosnia and Kosovo are thus shaped by this positioning, just as the Bank's financial support to

¹⁰⁵Vorley, Del Pozo-Vergnes, and Barnett, 'Small Producer Agency in the Globalised Market', p. 22.

¹⁰⁶See also Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁷Author's interview with senior researcher at the IIED, London, 12 April 2017.

de Soto, the ILD, and the UPRP project were crucial for the advancement of legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims in the first place. The ILO, on the other hand, has experienced shifting positions in the field. From having been closely associated with the early dependency consensus, the organisation was subsequently drawn closer to the dominant pole. Moreover, and as mentioned, this pole not only attracts large peacebuilding IOs, but also national state agencies in Kosovo and Bosnia as well as local and international think tanks. Rather than either international or local, then, the formation of peacebuilding epistemic authority places some effectively transnationalised agents in authoritative positions.

What is significant here is that we cannot understand these peacebuilding organisations' activities by treating them as freestanding, or by taking their representations and valued knowledge(s) as given. Rather, these organisations' knowledge claims and practices are effects of historical and relational dynamics, struggles, and knowledge hierarchies that involve all agents in the semi-autonomous field of informality, whether or not these are directly engaged in the building of peace. As seen, the epistemic authority of legalist-institutionalist claims to local knowledge of informality depends not least on how agents located closer to the dominated pole nevertheless recognise these claims. Likewise, the alternative, but marginalised, representations of informality that existed in the Bosnia and Kosovo missions, and that could have informed other governance arrangements, resemble knowledge claims linked to the dominated pole of the informal field.

The epistemic authority and travel of legalist-institutionalist claims from Peru and Bali to peacebuilding in the Balkans were thus in part conditioned by relational and transgressive processes and struggles that brought informality into being as an interventionary object in the first place. That said, also struggles partly outside the interventionary field matter. While this illustrative analysis cannot do justice to the idea of a field of peacebuilding power, legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims can indeed be summarised in terms of an 'ethnographic sagacity', that would then form an overarching symbolic logic of peacebuilding. Legalist-institutionalist claims recognise the value of local knowledge while, simultaneously restricting the meaning of this to certain preset factors, much in the same way as discussed by Sending. Also important is that this particular constitution of the object of informality makes it translatable and portable to various contexts. This is an important characteristic of global governance objects in general.¹⁰⁸ The precise make-up of the costs of formality may be context-specific, but the explanatory primacy of costs is not questioned. By contrast, knowledge claims positioned nearer the dominated knowledge pole appear less easily translated into abstract notions, less easily portable.

Important to recall, however, is that the field of peacebuilding power stands in a two-way relationship to transnational interventionary fields. The former is thus shaped by the dynamics and struggles of a *multitude* of transnational fields of interventionary objects. While some recent observations point to a widespread acknowledgement of the value of local knowledge in peacebuilding,¹⁰⁹ of note is that a field of peacebuilding power and an overarching symbolic logic of peacebuilding can only be understood following the analysis of several fields of interventionary objects, and how these – potentially – involve struggles over *different* forms of local knowledge, each linked to different governance arrangements and outcomes.

To summarise, the illustration of various types of epistemic struggles that shape the transnational field of informality was guided by the *fourth line of inquiry* developed in the first part. While the analysis suggests that the authoritative positioning of legalist-institutionalist knowledge claims to informality can be summarised in terms of an ethnographic sagacity, it is vital (in contrast to Sending) to also place this in relation to the internal, field-specific struggles and acts of recognition that make this possible. Historically contingent object-bound struggles

¹⁰⁸Allan, 'Producing the climate', p. 137.

¹⁰⁹See, for example, David Chandler and Oliver P. Richmond, 'Contesting postliberalism: Governmentality or emancipation?', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 18:1 (2015), pp. 1–2.

(whether or not explicitly recognised as such) *also* shape any potential overarching symbolic logic of peacebuilding. Changing epistemic hierarchies in interventionary fields would thus likely effectuate changes in the field of peacebuilding power. Moreover, attention to various types of struggles illustrates that an interventionary object attracts multiple agents from different institutional, professional, and geographical locations. Although in this case the interventionary field of informality has displayed a rather stable logic since its emergence, such ordering is an ongoing achievement that requires constant acts of safeguarding and boundary work amid multiple agents and contending knowledge claims.

Conclusion

This article has addressed a present tension in the literature on peacebuilding knowledge and expertise. It shows that the recent turn to Pierre Bourdieu's thinking tools is a fruitful way forward, but only if these tools are pushed further towards the relationalism, object-focus, and epistemological breaks at heart of Bourdieu's thinking. Based on this, the article develops a conceptual position based on an alternative reading of fields and struggles. This position was summarised as four new lines of inquiry. Subsequently, these informed an empirical illustration of how peacebuilding epistemic authority can be alternatively understood as inherently linked to the relational and transgressive processes through which contending knowledge claims bring an interventionary object into being. Looking specifically at how the making of informality as an interventionary object has shaped peacebuilding epistemic authority on informal economies and anti-informality operations, the article has demonstrated the plurality and transgressiveness of this, as well as how claimed local knowledge of informality is simultaneously valued and subjugated. Informality as an interventionary object in the Bosnia and Kosovo missions could, therefore, have been authoritatively understood in other ways, leading to other governance arrangements.

By offering a more firmly object-centred approach to peacebuilding epistemic authority, the article makes a conceptual contribution to the literature on peacebuilding epistemics and pushes it beyond its present tension. This, in turn, links to the relation between international studies and peacebuilding research more generally. As others have noted, it is problematic to assume peacebuilding as a distinct arena with little or no connection to international structures.¹¹⁰ By shifting to analyse the formation of interventionary objects as a process in which peacebuilders participate but are not the sole architects of, we gain an understanding of how peacebuilding activities are both constituted by and constitutive of wider global arrangements and circuits of power that have significant sociomaterial consequences 'on the ground', in conflict environments and elsewhere.

Acknowledgements. I would like to thank the editors and anonymous reviewers of *EJIS* for their constructive and much helpful comments and suggestions. Many thanks to Berit Bliesemann de Guevara for her valuable comments on an earlier version of this article.

Anna Danielsson is Assistant Professor in War Studies at the Swedish Defence University. She was previously a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer in International Relations at the Department of Government, Uppsala University. Anna's research is situated at the nexus of war studies, social and practice theories, critical peace and conflict studies, and the history and sociology of knowledge. She works on issues pertaining to urban warfare, urban peacebuilding, and the production of knowledge and expertise in international interventions.

¹¹⁰See, for example, Lou Pingeot, 'United Nations peace operations as international practices: Revisiting the UN mission's armed raids against gangs in Haiti', *European Journal of International Security*, 3:3 (2018), p. 365.