Identity in Peace and Conflict

A multi-level, interdisciplinary approach to conflict and peacebuilding in Nigeria

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Abstract

Peacebuilding has increasingly gained the attention of scholars over the past decades. Many have studied peacebuilding initiatives in conflict situations from different angles, ranging from national and political to grassroots and psychological peacebuilding. Although these studies have increased our understanding of peacebuilding and conflict, they do not often incorporate all levels of society into the analysis. However, it is an important insight of social and religious studies: especially when it comes to the role of religion in conflict and peacebuilding (but the same is true for ethnicity and culture) that the context of actions and decisions matter much for understanding the situation. This study therefore aims to show that all levels of society are interconnected and thus that all levels of society are part of the context of decisions of actors at these different levels. Besides it aims to show how peacebuilding and conflict as such cannot easily be separated but are interrelated and mutually influencing through all these levels.

This study shows that an inclusive and context-sensitive analysis of conflict and peace can be done by building an analytical framework based on identity-theory. The framework is based on identity insecurity, selfing and othering and identity politics, all identity aspects that are widely acknowledged as important in conflict and peace. This framework is then put to the test in an analysis of the conflict and peace situation in Nigeria. Through analysing actors at the national, regional, local and international level in conflict and peacebuilding in terms of identity, cross-level processes are uncovered that provide for more understanding of the role of religion, ethnicity and culture in peace and conflict. Eventually, this thesis shows that there are interesting insights to be gained by connecting levels and connecting peace and conflict, which can add to current debates about peacebuilding.

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Introduction

"We have the capacity to sink to the very depths of depravity, but you know what, we also have this remarkable capacity, to be… to be noble!"[1] – Desmond Tutu

Everyday, the depths of human depravity manifest in our daily lives. News about conflicts, violence and death reaches many people through television and internet. It should therefore not be surprising that many have felt the urge to understand what leads people to conflict and has motivated practioners to understand how peace can be restored or created. Desmond Tutu, whose quote is heading this introduction, has for example been involved in a Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) to reconcile South Africa with its violent past. And not only he, over the years many peacebuilders have tried to rebuild peace in conflict-ridden societies. This increased practice has led to an increased scholarly interest in the study of war, conflict and peace. Nowadays there are countless studies and theories about conflict as well as about peacebuilding, to examine how and when mankind can be "noble".

However, as for almost all complex phenomena, there is not one view on how conflicts start and peace comes about, but there are many. Perspectives on and definitions of peace and conflict vary widely, depending on which methodological, epistemological or ontological views one has of the world. For example, scholars in International Relations stress that states and state actions are of major importance for both peace and war. Since most resources, power and interests in conflict are at the disposal of the state, state actions are most influential in conflict. Therefore the state has been the major focus of political scholars and 'traditional' International Relations theories.[2] However, the past decades have seen a large increase in differing and critical perspectives in sociology and political science. Through the influence of thinkers such as Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci and Jürgen Habermas as well as through the rise of feminism and other emancipatory voices, many different concerns have come to bear on social, historical and political studies, including peace and conflict studies.

The aim of this thesis is not to give an overview of the field of conflict and peace studies. There are many excellent handbooks that cover the broad range of views on conflict, peace and peacebuilding. Rather what this thesis wants to do is propose a framework for analysing peace and conflict that has not been deployed much up till now; namely a way of analysing that does not focus on one aspect of peacebuilding, but tries to connect different perspectives with each other. In

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[1] Desmond Tutu in his acceptance speech of the honorary doctorate from the University of Groningen for his work in the South African Truth and Reconciliation committee, Monday 24 September, 2012.
[2] A comprehensive discussion about International Relations Theory is beyond the scope of this thesis. For an overview of International Relations theories see: Paul R. Viotti and Mark P. Kauppi: International Relations Theory, 5th ed.)

contemporary literature, often the focus is at one level of society, or one analytical unit. Traditionally in International Relations (IR), the focus has been on the state and international level to explain conflict and peace. But also social sciences focus mostly at one level, although they often emphasize lower levels and different smaller units of analysis. Their focus is rather on civil society and the grassroots level than on the state level.[3] What the main aim of this thesis is, is to show an approach to peacebuilding and conflict which integrates these multiple levels and perspectives on peace as well as conflict, as to provide an inclusive picture of a case study.

Such an endeavour fits within the recent developments of peacebuilding studies. For example, John Paul Lederach and R. Scott Appleby, both important peacebuilding scholars, have suggested in a recent book that an approach to peacebuilding must incorporate different views and methodological approaches to peace. They state:

> "we believe that the greater potential can be realized by envisioning peacebuilding as a holistic enterprise […] that can be improved by greater levels of collaboration, complementarity, coordination, and, where possible, integration across levels of society" (Lederach and Appleby, 2010, 24).

However, this thesis wants to go further, by not only focussing in such a way on peacebuilding, which is still a quite novel approach up until now, but also to include conflict in such an integrated analysis.

To achieve a more inclusive, multilevel view, the focus of my analysis will be on something that is and can be relevant at all levels of society and plays a role in both conflict and peace, namely *identity* and *identity theory*. The choice for identity is not arbitrary. The important role of identity in conflict is already widely acknowledged by many different scholars who have focussed on varying actors in conflict, including religious groups and state actors.[4] Not only is this acknowledged by those having a social sciences perspective, but also Jeffrey Seul, an International Relations scholar, argues: "Identity competition very likely is a necessary condition to the eruption of intergroup conflict" (Seul, 1999, 563).

What is meant with identity in this thesis is strongly influenced by the insights of sociology and religious studies. A very basic insight for peace and conflict studies coming from sociology and religious studies is that religious, but also cultural or ethnic identity, plays an important, but ambiguous role in conflict and peace. Many have researched religious worldviews, the persistence of certain religious conceptions and religious practices and their role in conflict and violence, as for

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[3] See for example, Megan Shore, 2009, *Religion and conflict resolution,* or R. Scott Appleby, 2000, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred.* Or Lederach, 1997, *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in Divided Societies.*
[4] A few examples of scholars who explicitly talk about the role of identity in the development of conflicts are Eriksen, Cook-Huffman, Juergensmeyer, Seul and Haynes.

example the work of Juergensmeyer shows. However, it is argued that these same 'religions' can also lead to "militant peacemakers" (Appleby, 2000, 13). Therefore, and this is also an important insight from religious and social studies, identity aspects, such as religious or cultural identifications are very *context dependent*.

So with these theoretical assumptions about identity, derived from religious studies, the aims of this thesis become even clearer. Because, as described above, to understand a situation of peace and conflict in terms of identity, requires a large focus on context. Focussing on multiple levels can give a more contextual picture than a single-level analysis. Therefore, this thesis wants to show that there are valuable insights to be gained when one uses a framework for analysis that incorporates the national and political as well as the local, religious and cultural.

Secondly, I will argue that for an analysis to be really inclusive and sensitive to it has to take both conflict and peacebuilding into the study and not look at one of both. To separate conflict from peacebuilding is to obscure the effects conflict has on peacebuilding and vice versa. Even more, modern conflicts also support an approach that takes into account both peace and conflict. In many contemporary conflict situations, violence, conflict and peacebuilding exist simultaneously, thereby influencing each other. Therefore conflict and peace should be studied in relation to each other.

To achieve these aims a large part of this thesis will be devoted to a case study in which a framework, focussed on identity, is used. The case study at hand is about Nigeria, where both conflicts and peacebuilding initiatives are ongoing. Violence and conflict are a part of everyday life in Nigeria. At the time of writing, Boko Haram, a fundamentalist Islamic movement, has declared a Caliphate in the North Eastern part of Nigeria and is now fighting the government armies that want to reclaim the territory. Car bombs, kidnappings and violence between rural communities also happen every week. At the same time, many national and international NGOs, churches, local communities and even the state try to establish a safer environment and try to eradicate the root-causes for conflict. This shows that the situation of conflict and peacebuilding in Nigeria is complex. Conflict at one level is influencing conflict at another level, and the conflict is influencing peacebuilding initiatives as well. Besides, the various actors who are involved in peacebuilding are influencing each other as well as the conflict situation in Nigeria.

Therefore, the following main question will be central in this thesis: *What does a framework that focuses on identity at different levels of society contributes to our understanding of both conflict and peacebuilding in Nigeria?* Of course, an analysis of peacebuilding and conflict based on identity, even though including different levels, is neither an all-encompassing nor an exclusive approach. However, approaching the often difficult, real-life situations of such an inclusive way, might encompass more subtleties and complexities within peacebuilding and conflict in Nigeria than an approach based on one level can provide.

To answer the main question, this thesis will be structured as follows. First of all the concepts of peacebuilding and identity must be elaborated on to provide for the necessary theoretical background for the case study. Besides, it needs to be clear how an approach, based on theories about identity can connect the different levels of society, in a framework for analysing conflict and peacebuilding. These two issues will be elaborated on in chapter one. The second chapter will be devoted to an analysis of the conflicts in Nigeria by looking at how identities play a role and how different identifications figure in the (domestic) conflicts of Nigeria. Such an analysis will result in a short characterization of the different mutually influencing processes that play a part in these conflicts. The third chapter will consist of a comprehensive analysis of several attempts to build or restore peace in Nigeria, at different levels of society. This chapter will also look at mutually influencing processes, coming from the different levels as well as the interplay between conflict and peacebuilding at these levels. The fourth chapter will elaborate on the insights from the second and third chapter. In this chapter I will also argue that an analysis based on more levels can provide a rather holistic, interdisciplinary interpretation of conflict and peacebuilding in Nigeria and I will show what can be gained in general from a multilevel analytical framework.

Chapter one: Identity in peace and conflict studies

This first chapter will outline the theoretical debate and theoretical approaches to peacebuilding and identity. To do this, I will firstly provide a brief discussion of the concepts of peace and peacebuilding which I think are most fruitful for a multilevel approach. Secondly I will discuss the concept of identity and its relevant aspects for analysing conflict and peace. Thirdly, I will show how identity has been dealt with within peace and conflict studies and establish my position within the debate as derived from religious studies insights. Lastly, I will combine the recent developments in peacebuilding with the insights about identity, and lay down my framework with which, as I will argue, I can analyse conflict and peace at different levels of society and even more, connect conflict and peace at different levels with each other as to provide an inclusive 'holistic' picture of the situation in Nigeria.

The concepts of peace and peacebuilding

To understand the concept of peacebuilding it is useful to look at the history of the concept. A good starting point is the definition of peacebuilding as formulated by Johan Galtung, a sociologist and political scientist who was one of the first to study peace and conflict. He came up with three different terms to designate different ways of 'restoring peace': *peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding*. Peacekeeping, according to Galtung, denotes activities of armies that play a monitoring role between warring parties. Peacemaking is ending a conflict through third party mediation or providing assistance with drawing up a ceasefire agreement or peace agreement. Peacebuilding is aimed at creating sustainable peace by focussing on the causes of conflict and violence in a country (Galtung, 1976, II.11). Important is that peacebuilding is distinguished from other peace-activities with respect to its focus on sustainable peace and causes of conflict.

In practice, however, peacebuilding is not always so neatly distinguished from other forms of 'restoring peace'. For example, in *An Agenda for Peace,* UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali defined peacebuilding as "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (UN, 1992: para., 21). However, what both Galtung and the UN seem to attribute to peacebuilding is a focus, on the *structural* and *societal aspects* of restoring peace by appealing to the removal of causes of conflict, and the solidification of peace. So by using the term peacebuilding in the thesis I will mean to focus mostly on the eradication of structural and root-problems to peace.

However, more fundamental for any definition of peacebuilding is the question what accounts for *peace*. Galtung for example, famously distinguished between 'negative' and 'positive' peace and has expanded what is included in 'peace' throughout the years. According to Fischer,

Galtung's comprehensive definition of negative peace is specified as the absence of military, economic, political or cultural violence and positive peace is defined as the building of peace-promoting structures in the military, economy, politics and culture (Fischer, 2007, 188).

Although this definition is already comprehensive in taking into account many different societal aspects, I believe a more personal element of peace is lacking, which is also very important to identity and identity-theory. Charles Webel has in this respect come up with a rather helpful and fundamental definition of different kinds of peace which I think is more inclusive than Galtung's definition. He distinguishes between *inner peace, external peace and interpersonal peace*. According to him, inner peace means that one experiences internal, psychological stability. External peace is aimed at economic, political and social stability and opportunity and interpersonal peace is concerned with conflicting or harmonious relations between other people (Webel, 2007, 10). As I will show, this threefold distinction between aspects of peace fits very nicely with my discussion about identity. In addition, for a multi-level understanding of peace and conflict in terms of identity, all three levels of peace; personal, external and interpersonal are important. However, before turning to a discussion of identity I will briefly describe how developments in peacebuilding have created space for a multi-level approach.

The developments in peacebuilding
As argued above, traditionally the focus in IR scholars on peacebuilding was largely positivist social and empirical. Therefore, IR studies addressed mostly states, power, rational choice, economic and political interests. Other aspects, such as cultural and religious aspects, were not considered very important for the study of peace (Marsden, 2012, 2). According to John Heathershaw (2008), this was due to the political optimism in liberalism as a peace promoting ideology that resulted from the end of the cold war and the turn to democracy of many former Communist countries. The discourses on peace in politics and science reflected therefore this Western, positivist, rational and state-centred approach (604).

However, this approach to peacebuilding has been criticized greatly for neglecting other interests and other viewpoints that are very relevant for conflict and peace. Oliver Richmond, a very critical peace and conflict scholar, argues that the classic definition of peace in International Relations Theory has been too orthodox, absolute and rigid. He argues that peace in IR is presented as an objective truth, based on universal, western moral norms, liberal politics and "is predicated on preventing conflict" rather than building peace (Richmond, 2008, 449). According to Richmond such an approach has severe shortcomings. It fails in bringing 'real' peace to other parts of the world, because it relies too much on a Western preconception about what is good for all, while these ideas are simply not endorsed in parts of the world where different ideas about peace prevail. Therefore, a

conception of peace should be plural and sensitive to local contexts. The contents of peace should be based on multiple and critical viewpoints, including feminist or religious perspectives (ibid. 461).

This lack of consideration for subjective and cultural views might stem from the idea that a state should not rely on ideas from culture or religion, but only rely on rational and liberal principles, such as *secularism.* According to Elizabeth Hurd, the lack of consideration for something other than rational liberalism stems from an Enlightenment-based distinction between public and private sphere. In this view, religion is an internal and private affair, which functions in the public sphere mostly "as an epiphenomenon to more fundamental material interests" (Hurd, 2008, 32). However, Hurd describes very neatly how secularism is historically constructed, specifically European and has its ideological roots in Western-European Christendom, which it has tried to leave out of politics. Therefore it has no *objective* authority to define what the relationship between religion and state should be with respect to other cultures (ibid. 153). So, one cannot put secularism or liberalism forward as a universally acceptable standpoint in politics or peacebuilding at all.

Since liberalism or secularism has not proven to be appealing to many non-Western countries, from the 1990s onwards the focus of both policymakers and scholars has greatly shifted. In contemporary literature about peacebuilding there is much more consideration for other approaches to peacebuilding than the liberal, such as religious approaches (Marsden, 2009, 3). Religious scholars and peacebuilders have, just as other critical voices, helped to change the focus of peace and conflict studies to other aspects of peace and conflict and other ways to exercise peacebuilding. To exemplify the development that peacebuilding has gone through in the past years, I will focus on two scholars who have influenced the contemporary views on (religious) peacebuilding: R. Scott Appleby and John-Paul Lederach.

Appleby stresses in his book *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* the importance of religiously inspired peacebuilding and therefore the importance of someone's identity in peacebuilding. Instead of focussing on state-actors, he shows how much good work churches, religious individuals and religious NGOs, have done when it comes to peacebuilding in violent communities. He argues that this religious peacebuilding is not conducted with rational interest and power-relations in mind. Instead, religious people are much more motivated by values and norms coming from their identifications such as a "passionate opposition to evil" and feelings of responsibility "for the conditions of life in their villages, towns and cities". Moreover in religious peacebuilding "peaceful coexistence with the enemy is the ultimate goal" (Appleby, 2000, 12-13). This asks for a very different view on what is important in peacebuilding. Not state involvement is the way to build peace, but religious "participation […] in a larger, communitywide effort to build structures of civil society that promote nonviolent, inclusive and tolerant civic life" (ibid. 295). An important addition to peacebuilding is first of all Appleby's extensive case based evidence that ideology and religion are

pivotal elements in creating peace but he also shows that peace is often created in local communities and through grassroots initiatives.

John Paul Lederach has developed many theories on peacebuilding. One important addition of Lederach is his focus on different levels in society, the local, the civil society and the national level. According to him different levels have different aims and different actors. Peacebuilders working at one level must aim to reach the people active on this level, as to accommodate for the best peacebuilding at this specific level (Lederach, 1997). This approach allows for much more than only state-centred peacebuilding. In later works, Lederach has proposed to integrate all levels and approaches into a holistic approach to peacebuilding, which he calls *Strategic Peacebuilding* (Lederach and Appleby, 2010, 26-27). Besides the fact that this proposed Strategic Peacebuilding is multi-level and incorporates many different perspectives, it also does not have a positivistic (liberal) presupposition. Emotional healing, personal security and forgiveness as well as 'moral imagination' are core elements in successful peacebuilding, thus including the very personal in peacebuilding. Moral imagination for example, requires norms, values and characteristics that relate to subjective elements of one's personal identity: such as creativity, "relationships that includes our enemies" and the courage to think outside the established structures (Lederach, 2005, 5).

What I want to stress by the discussion above, is that these two authors show how peacebuilding has changed to include aspects "[R]elating to a discursive, empathic and emancipatory project, reflecting the life of all, men, women, children, in the varied contexts around the world" (Richmond, 2008, 452). Besides, since the focus has shifted to include religion and culture in peacebuilding, identity and theory about identity have gained an important role in peacebuilding literature. Therefore I will now turn to a discussion about what I will consider relevant aspects of identity that will be the building blocks of the multidisciplinary approach to peace and conflict.

The concept of identity
The concept of identity has been much elaborated on in sociology and psychology. From different perspectives identity has been defined and theorized. In this respect, the distinction made in psychology and sociology between personal identity, social identity and group identity is very useful, although these concepts are closely connected. Personal identity can be summarized as containing aspects of someone's character, values, ideas, worldview and the attributes someone ascribes to oneself (Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre, 1997, 48). Someone's social identity is often constructed through how he perceives his place in his social environment. Social identity can be constructed by having certain roles, (being a student) or by belonging to a certain group, voluntary, or involuntary, (being a Socialist, being Dutch). Of course someone's social identity influences greatly her personal values, worldviews and personality (ibid. 48-49).

Group identity adds another dimension to the concept of identity. Since violent conflicts are often between groups of people, most scholars who write about conflict and identity focus most on group-identity and group dynamics. According to Jeffrey Haynes, group-identities are a form of social identity, based on shared values or concerns between individuals. These values include religion, political ideologies, ethnicity, nationality and culture (Haynes, 2009, 56). What is interesting about a group-identity is that groups always try to distinguish themselves from others, creating or emphasizing characteristics that are 'special' for one group. The group one considers oneself and like-minded others part of is called an *in-group* while an *out-group* consists of those one distinguishes oneself from. In society therefore, people describe themselves in social, personal and group terms to distinguish or associate themselves with other individuals and groups. This process, of articulating sameness and differences between people is called *selfing* and *othering* (Haynes, 2009, 56. Camilleri and Malewska-Peyre, 1997, 49. Eriksen, 2010, 79).

Although these terms might suggest that one can clearly categorize and label people in certain groups, identity is never something fixed or static, but is socially constructed. Even those characteristics, with which one is born, can often be manipulated or rephrased in different contexts. This means that identity and identity-markers such as religion and ethnicity are not only attained by in-group and out-group members, but also *framed* as belonging to self or others and can *change* within an between groups in different situations and at different levels. That group affiliations can differ from level to level was an important insight of Evan-Pritchard, who argued that identities are *segmented*, which means that identities at different levels are differently constructed, including people who formerly were out-group members (Eriksen, 2010, 92).

This leads to the question *why* people would frame their identities and change them in different situations and on different levels. Although I will return to this question in the next section, I will first explain the concept that focuses on this question: *identity politics.* Thomas Eriksen, who has written much about ethnicity, devotes reasonable space to the concept in his book: *Ethnicity and Nationalism*. According to him, especially in politics, identities have been framed, used and abused for political social or economic goals. History has shown that the way in which groups position themselves vis-à-vis other groups is part of the justification of many social or cultural ideas, but also of policies and politics. According to Eriksen, most often identity is used to justify by appealing to a superior distinctiveness of others; so through negative othering, or by *overcommunicating* or *undercommunicating* specific traits of out-group or in-group. Identity is also used to rally for (political) support by in-group leaders. They often do this by appealing to a shared history, most often of marginalization and repression. This way the in-group identity incorporates a collective feeling of 'being wronged', which strengthens group identity and in turn makes othering easier (Eriksen, 2010).

Lastly, identity-formation and identification seems to be of increasing importance in modern conflicts. Due to globalization and modernization traditional identities seem challenged by plurality. Although there has always been a certain degree to which people cannot control what influences and changes their lives and identities, the increased proliferation of values, ideologies and identity-markers through globalization and modernization has as increased this uncertainty. At a personal level, this has destabilized individual identities and could potentially lead to a "total personality breakdown" (Seul, 1999, 554). In terms of social identity, according to Haynes: "It is widely accepted that stresses and strains associated with both modernisation and globalisation contribute to manifestations of religious and ethnic identity in the developing world" (Haynes, 2009, 57).

Due to the fact that identities are challenged through globalization, people resort to strong(er) meaning-systems. Ethnic nationalism and religion often provide for these very comprehensive worldviews and strong meaning-systems through which the world can be categorized. This adds a degree of predictability to an insecure world. (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 2010, 40). Because religious meaning-systems define our relationships with all others, with family, friends, strangers and even the highest good (be it God or something else), who is the ultimate meaning of life, it has offered "much in response to the human need to develop a secure identity" (Seul, 1999, 558).

The relation between identity and conflict

As shown above, identity is a broad concept ranging from the very personal to the social and political. When talking about identity in conflict one often talks about identity-groups. Groups of people that describe themselves differently from others with respect to ethnicity, religious affiliation, culture, nationality, ideologies, etcetera. While conflicts *between* nations have diminished in the past decades, conflicts between identity-groups *within* countries have not decreased, especially so it seems, when it comes to religion. Therefore a larger focus in recent literature has been on the relation between religion and conflict. Also this thesis will focus much on religious identification as an important aspect of identity in peace and conflict.

The relation and relative importance of religion (but the same is true for ethnicity and culture) in conflict is not undisputed. The debates about this refer again to the question of *why* identifications coming from religious traditions, culture or ethnicity play out in specific situations the way they do. Answers to this question vary in the relative importance they ascribe to in conflicts of identity aspects, including values, ideologies, worldviews and histories in contrast to material, economical and political power interests. In line with Hasenclever and Rittberger, I will distinguish between three positions in this debate: the *primordialist, instrumentalist* and the *pragmatist or*

constructivist position, which all view the above posed question differently (Hasenclever and Rittberger, 2000, 644).

First of all, according to primordialists, basic identities such as ethnicity or religion are viewed as immutably primary to individuals. This means that identifications such as ethnicity and religion are deeply historically, biologically and psychologically embedded in individuals and groups. Therefore they are an important (primary) cause for conflict between groups, rather than for example material differences (Eriksen, 2010, 63. Hasenclever and Rittberger, 2000, 643. Blattman and Miguel, 2010, 16). A primordialist, then, views conflict as "rooted in intense emotional reactions and feelings of mutual threat" to identity (Blattman and Miguel, 2010, 16).

Important is the *motivation* or *cause* for conflict. According to primordialists, these are often the ideologies and values, historical narratives and beliefs of groups. Religious identity therefore can be a cause of conflict due to the fact that religious actors are "emboldened by a sense of religiously defined identity and purpose and their traditions may provide a fund of symbolic […] resources that can be used to mobilize the group and legitimate its cause" (Seul, 1999, 564). Also according to Mark Juergensmeyer, religion can provide the "motivation, justification, the organisation and world view" of violence (Juergensmeyer. 2003. 7). Juergensmeyer argues that the threat can be material, such as a threat of loss of territory, but the fact that the 'other' opposing group has another religion which claims to be true is perceived heretic and threatening to the established strong meaning-systems of those being challenged for territory. Therefore, religious ideas can develop in a way as to provide violent justification and motivation for the expulsion of the 'other'. As an example Juergensmeyer discusses Hamas and its aversion to the establishment of a Jewish state in the Middle-East (ibid. 165). Examples of how religious ideas can turn violent are certain interpretations of holy texts which are beyond discussion or by *satanizing* enemies*,* meaning that the 'other' is integrated in the in-group cosmology as part of the cosmological 'evil'. An example hereof is the conviction some Christians held for a long time that Jews are 'mud people' who deserve to die (ibid. 177-179).

Secondly, opposite to this perspective are those who are called instrumentalists*.* According to instrumentalists, the entire reason for ethnicity and religion to be relevant in any case of conflict is because it serves political and material goals and the improvement of social conditions (Eriksen, 2010, 64). Therefore, the historic formation and ideological content of identifications are not relevant in themselves but can be 'explained away' by more general social and economical theories about human behaviour. Then the 'real causes' of conflict behind identity and ideology, namely economic inequality or an unequal distribution of power can be uncovered (Hasenclever and Rittberger, 2000, 645). Many of the International Relations scholars I have described above would fall

into this category.[5] Identifications, in their view, can at most serve as justifications for violence, not as causes to conflict.

Lastly, Hasenclever and Rittberger try to define a middle ground by proposing a *constructivist* position. In their view, identifications such as religious identifications are not an isolated cause of conflict, and also not a mere excuse. Rather it must be seen as an "intervening variable" which influences the behaviour and choices of groups that have certain goals and live under certain threats (ibid. 649). This position, I believe, is very fruitful because it fits with an approach to religion and culture that, I believe, can resolve the dichotomy created between material or economical aspects of life and its more ideological and value-laden aspects.

In the social sciences there has been much debate about how to explain and approach religious beliefs and practices. And before I go on to the next section, I will briefly explain further my position in this debate. Important in this debate is the question to what extent one must be a 'realist' about social, cultural and religious phenomena. This is reflected in the positions above, where primordialists argue for religion as a genuine 'object' in the world that can cause behaviour and instrumentalists for deconstructing religion in other social processes. I will propose a middle-way, based on different theories that are developed about religion and that also need to deal with questions of the 'reality' and reducibility of religion (which would also true for culture or ethnicity).

The first thing I want to stress is the non-reducibility of religion in line with the primordialists. Interaction of religious people with the world, I believe, is non-reducible to other factors because the minds of people are deeply embedded in their metaphysical beliefs and assumptions which, at least for them, are reality. Secondly, however, religious beliefs are also not beyond our understanding because the practice of believing entails much agency and action oriented aspects which can be explained by social theories and analysed in terms of desires, routes to action and goals, which are shared by people across ideologies, and this appeals to the point of the instrumentalists.

These two assumptions can be combined as to come to a constructivist or pragmatic view of religion, culture and other identifications. Identifying self and other helps to order the world and this can be metaphysical, while identifications function also as a social a guide for how to engage with the world and this is more pragmatic. Engaging with the world is never neutral and can by inspired by metaphysical religious beliefs, but is also not static but context-dependent and subjective, influenced and intertwined with the material world because, religious ideas and practices must be able to 'deliver' on all our (immaterial and material) desires and goals in life (Smilde, 2012, 60). This means that religious perspectives endow the material with religious meaning while religious perspectives and practices also incorporate material desires and are changed by them. So in short, our social

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[5] See for a list of scholars: Hasenclever and Rittberger, 2000, *Does religion make a difference?*

context both provides for meaning to our identifications while at the same time it is provided with meaning by our identifications.

In terms of the relation between identity and (material) conflict this means that one cannot separate identifications of groups from their material goals, because the world around us and our identities are mutually influencing each other. Therefore, one must be sensitive to the context of identity-groups, because context is pivotal in both understanding the perspective from where an actor perceives the world as well as the options this actor perceives he has and how he can achieve what he wants. Therefore, the occurrence of conflict between identity-groups is highly context dependent. This is also in line with Haynes observation that "in some cases religious and/or ethnic fragmentation leads to competition and conflict although not in others" (Haynes, 2009, 57).

The relation between peace and identity

Although there are many studies that focus on the relation between identity and conflict, not much has been written about peace and identity. However, much is written about peace that indirectly refers to the role of identity. As I have argued above, the view of peacebuilding has become increasingly comprehensive in the past decades, leading to new insights into how identity can contribute to peace. To see how identity can play this role, I want to recall the distinction above between *inner peace, external peace* and *interpersonal peace* and I want to link them to identity and identification as a way of securing all three of them.

First, people form and change their identity in response to internal, psychological insecurity. As I have argued above when it comes to threats to identity, the increased options for people and the increased plurality of ideology and identities can lead to more orthodox and less tolerant ideas within an identity-group and might lead to violence. However, this insecurity is not necessarily negative for one's identity. Hermans for example argues that insecurity can be good thing, because it breaks down long established convictions and makes room for identity aspects of others which might become part of one's own identity through internal *dialogue* in which different interests can be weighed. Foreign aspects of one's environment can this way be made familiar and this may eventually lessen fear and perceived threats (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 2010, 28).

Such a theory of seeing insecurity as an opportunity rather than something that has to be fought seems to me as being reflected in peacebuilding, by Lederach's concept of 'moral imagination'. When he describes components of this imagination, he talks about how peacebuilders must perceive insecure situations in a more transcendent way. What peacebuilding needs are people who perceive increasing possibilities not as threatening, but as bringing opportunities. Approaching *all* possibilities, not just those accepted in one's own confined environment, in a creative way, can be a potential source of turning points in violent situations (Lederach, 2005, 26-27).

An approach to globalization and modernization that takes the above described approach to increasing pluralism in account might result in more *inner peace*, since it familiarizes foreign elements and views globalization, not as a threat, but as a platform for identities to be formed and changed through contact with the 'other'. It could even be that different aspects or 'positions' in one's identity remain at odds with itself, but result in a peaceful identity nonetheless, because continuous dialogue grants flexibility in when specific positions will dominate or become relevant. For example, sometimes my identity as a 'student' might conflict with my identity as a 'Christian', but both are a part of me and through dialogue I form middle-positions that reconcile both parts for specific situations and contexts. This way "[e]ntering a dialogue, with other individuals or with oneself, opens a range of possibilities that are not fixed at the beginning, but remain flexible" (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 2010, 46).

Secondly, identity can play a role in constructing *external peace*. As argued above, in situations of economic, social or political dissatisfaction, identity can give meaning to the situation as well as be used and formed to result in the desired outcome. What I have wanted to stress in the introduction as well as in what is said above is that perception about one's context and the ways to achieve a goal can change one's (religious) ideas and identifications of self and other. Therefore, religion, allows for all sorts of behaviour, not only militant violence can be justified through one's religious identifications but also militant peace-oriented views of the world. Appleby especially stresses this point, by giving numerous examples of the development of peaceful ideology in the midst of violence. He shows how in times of conflict and high insecurity people go to religious institutions for help. These in turn radicalize by emphasising to those in conflict the need for peace and tolerance as 'virtues of religion'. This has happened for example in Thailand and India through Buddhist worldviews or in Nicaragua, Somalia or Northern Ireland through Christian worldviews. (Appleby, 2000, 295).

Thirdly, a way to undermine the negative and destructive framing of identities is by focussing on changing identifications of in- and out-group as to create *relational peace*. I have argued that violence can be facilitated by dehumanizing 'others', thereby widening the gap between self and other. To create peace this means that selfing and othering and the framing of identity differences between groups must bring this 'other' closer to the 'self' and create mutual understanding for foreign identity-positions. Because this is an important aspect of peacebuilding, it is not surprising that those who focus on peacebuilding and identity has much focussed on ways in which to change views on 'self' and 'other' and improve relationships between groups.

According to Lederach and Appleby, creating sustainable relationships is at the heart of 'strategic peacebuilding'. They state that "[t]he building of constructive, personal, group, and political relationships is perpetual, occurring as a constitutive part of prevention, negotiation, transitional

justice, and problem resolution" (Lederach and Appleby, 2010, 24). The way in which identities are formed, influenced and in their turn create subjective frameworks through which situations are perceived is fundamental for the creation of relationships. Therefore, peacebuilding should be aimed at changing negative identifications between identity-groups.

With respect to changing the content of negative selfing and othering; *dialogue* has been professed by many - religious and non-religious, peacebuilder and scholar alike - as a way in which identifications can be successfully changed to generate peaceful relations. According to the *contact hypothesis,* dialogue is considered an important way of engaging identity in a peaceful manner after conflict, and stresses how "perceptions and attitudes of individuals change when they interact with or experience a different cultural setting" (Abu-Nimer, 2001, 687). This 'different cultural setting' then can be achieved by putting those of different backgrounds together on equal footing.

Appleby refers to dialogue in the context of both conflict management and conflict resolution. The aims of dialogue according to him are just these: to combat prejudice and ethno-religious hatred. According to him dialogue was used, in Southern Sudan by the Presbyterian Church, in Ireland, in Palestine and many more countries in which it brought religious groups together and eventually helped restoring the peace (Appleby, 2000, 216-217). Since identities are socially constructed, this means that when ideas about the social context can be changed through dialogue, identifications might change as well (ibid. 203).

However, dialogue is not a panacea. First of all, as Lederach has pointed out, substantial changes in one's identification are not made through having just one dialogue, workshop or through signing a cease-fire agreement. Rather, dialogue is long-term, continuing, hard and tedious work. Changing perspectives on society, self and other is never 'finished'. The 'other' in a conflict must continuously be engaged in dialogue because especially differing religious identities and social statuses often remain conflicting, even after dialogue (Lederach, 2005, 49). So despite dialogue, strong moral, spiritual and ethical components of identity might prevent people from forming identifications that can acknowledge the sameness across cultural and religious differences, and their willingness (or ability) to change in attitude towards other identities (Abu-Nimer, 2001, 701).

Not only might the content of our identifications influence the promotion of peace, but also the *kind of relationship* which is established between 'self', or in-group and 'other' might influence peace. According to Gerd Baumann (2004), there are roughly three 'grammars' in which we frame our selfing and othering which might make people less, or more, peaceful. First, we can perceive ourselves as different but also somehow better than another group (notwithstanding their merits). This way of identifying emphasizes negative aspects of the 'other' which might contribute to demonization. Secondly, another grammar consists of undercommunicating differences by claiming an overarching identity; such as "we're all human". However, then, relevant differences might be

downplayed, thereby silencing identity-groups that already feel suppressed. *Segmentation*, according to Baumann, seems the most peaceful way of selfing and othering. To share higher level, or lower level commonalities and identities does not challenge the differences in identities at different levels. For example, people might differ fiercely between support for local football clubs, but can be all united when it comes to national football teams.

A very radical approach to identity in peacebuilding is to stress that salient identity-markers such as religion ought to be de-emphasized entirely and historically deconstructed. According to Bekerman and Zembylas, especially children should be educated and trained to view their identities as fluid products of socialization. This is important, because after conflict, narratives of different identity-groups still contain so much othering, that one should strive to de-emphasize identity in its totality to restore a peaceful environment. Rather, we should make people aware of the way in which their identities are constructed, and emphasize practical collaboration for a better world (Bekerman and Zembylas, 2012, 220-221).

However, this approach seems problematic to me. Firstly, it is unclear who defines the norms for collaboration and what consists of a 'better world'; these concepts already carry many ideological presuppositions. Besides, and this I will show in the next chapters; deconstruction of identity within societies in which identities and relations between groups are strongly established might be in vain when not conducted at all levels of society. So in any case identity is relevant for peace. In this section I have shown how the literature about peacebuilding recognized that identity and identifications can of even must play an active part in refiguring social relations, redefining in-group and out-group boundaries and changing perceptions of self and other.

Identity in conflict and peacebuilding: a multilevel and interdisciplinary tool

This discussion about identity in conflict and peacebuilding above shows that identity is no outsider in peace and conflict studies. Besides, as I have argued, religious identity and cultural identity are intertwined with their broad social context, including the political, social and economical. Therefore in my analysis of peace and conflict I will try to comply with Smilde's demand that: "Sociologists […] need also to look at religion on terms of discourse, rituals, material culture and everyday practice" (Smilde, 2012, 63). Consequently, I will shortly summarize which points from the above discussion about identity will be most important in my analysis of conflict and peace.

Firstly, in my analysis I will focus on how conflict and peacebuilding influence the individual pursuit for a *stable identity*. So inner peace and inner stability and the pursuit for identifications and meaning-systems that provide security and stability will form a way to analyse low and individual level peacebuilding. Secondly, *selfing* and *othering* can be aspects of both peace and conflict. Above I have proposed several ways to look at selfing and othering, namely to the extent in which 'self' and

'other' are defined, used, dehumanized or rather integrated, and segmented to contribute to conflict or peace. Thirdly, I will look at identity in a 'pragmatic' or political way, as is advocated by instrumentalist, but also by Eriksen and Smilde in a more comprehensive way. While taking notice of the ways in which identifications already influence perspectives on the world, identities are also used, changed and manipulated to make it serve the needs of the in-group or religious/ethnic individual. This changing of identity, rituals and practices to adhere to needs I will, in line with Eriksen, mostly refer to as *identity politics.* However, this is not to say that the identifications or religious and ethnic adherence of those using identity politics is not sincere.

The reason why I take these three elements of identity for my analytical framework is because they are relevant at all levels of society and can therefore support my multilevel approach. At a national level, selfing and othering and identity politics are relevant as well as on a civil society level or at a local level. Also, the individual in its pursuit for a stable identity is influenced and influencing, not only on a local level but also on higher levels, because higher level identifications and in-group and out-group confrontations reach us through (modern) media in our localities, and influence our perspectives on identity. Therefore, identity is a truly multilevel concept of which I have tried to capture the inner aspect, the relational aspect and the external identity politics aspect. These three aspects of identity I have argued are analogous to Webel's threefold definition of peace, thereby encompassing a comprehensive view on conflict, peace and how to build this peace.

Lastly, I want to argue that my approach tries to be interdisciplinary, and does thereby try to avoid favouring a liberal perspective over other non-liberal views on peace. As I have tried to argue, peace is a very subjective concept which must be sensitive to local ideas about peace. Inner peace or external peace do not require a certain a priori set of norms, but allow for local, in my case Nigerian, perceptions of peace. Besides, I have argued for the importance of context. Hence, I will try to establish perspectives in the way they appear in their context and try to avoid (liberal) one-sidedness by showing how perspectives are embedded in many different social processes. This way I will try to contribute to the understanding of the: "heterodox conditions of [...], a pluralist and everyday peace across diverse contexts" (Richmond, 2008, 463).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have laid down the framework I will use for analysing the Nigerian conflicts and peacebuilding conflicts. I have done this firstly by showing what a comprehensive concept of peace is and how peacebuilding studies have developed as to advocate more 'holistic' approaches to peacebuilding. Secondly I have tried to argue that to have a more holistic and multilevel approach an analysis based on identity is a fruitful candidate. Not only is identity-theory sensitive to many

different processes, within peace and conflict studies it has long been integrated as an important aspect in the understanding of and practicing in conflict situations and peacebuilding.

So in line with the proposed 'holistic' theories of peacebuilding, in this chapter I have proposed a way in which multiple levels of society can be connected with each other in analysis, which is necessary to get a more complete 'picture' of conflict and peace in any given case. Besides I have tried to show how the concept of identity as I understand it, does not distinguish very much between material or ideological interests and can also not so easily be divided in good or bad identities, but that many processes in identification are subjective and context-dependent aspects of an identity-continuum, in which both conflict and peacebuilding can occur. Because of these reasons, I believe to have shown how identity can support an integrated analysis of both conflict and peace at multiple levels with taking into consideration different perspectives. However, to see whether this is really the case, the next chapters of this thesis will be devoted to an in-depth analysis of conflict and peace in Nigeria.

Chapter two: Conflicts in Nigeria

Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa, harbouring over 150 million inhabitants from more than 250 ethnic groups (Ukiwo, 2013, 179). Created arbitrarily by the British colonizers as a country, after 1960 it suddenly had to function as an independent 'nation-state'. Nigeria has been constituted as a Federal state, and its states have grown to 36. Many who write about Nigeria often divide it in a North, a South and a Middle-Belt. The following map shows the states of Nigeria divided in six geographical zones, whereby roughly the 'North Central' could account for the Middle-Belt.
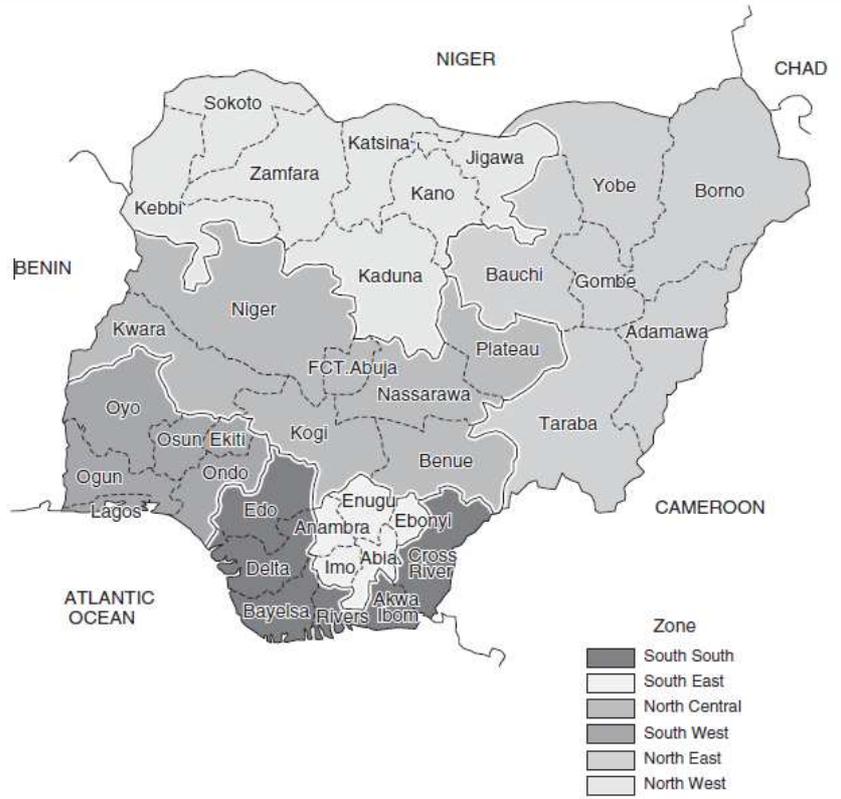

Figure 2.1 geographical/political map of Nigeria (Source: Ukiwo, 2013, 181).

In the past decades violence and conflict have occurred in different parts of the country for many varying reasons and with many identities involved. Nigeria's conflicts are mainly internal, meaning that identifications *within* Nigeria are of primary relevance, although the international level does influence how Nigerians perceive themselves and others within their conflicts.

This chapter will analyse the conflicts in Nigeria at different levels and will connect these levels by focussing on identity and identification. To get a better understanding of the history and background of the established identities, this chapter will first of all provide a brief outline of the recent history of Nigeria. Secondly, the focus will be on conflicts at different levels of society and the

role that identity plays in conflict at these levels. Lastly, I will show how these levels can be connected to each other through identity, as to provide an inclusive view on conflict in Nigeria.

The history of identity formation in Nigeria

Many scholars who write about conflicts in Nigeria argue that the now established identity cleavages have been greatly influenced by British colonization. During the colonial period, different political systems in the North, Middle-Belt and South of Nigeria were deployed. In the North, where the tribes of the Hausa and Fulani lived, and where Islam is the dominant religion, the British left the existing power structure including the system of Sharia law mostly unchanged and established a system of 'indirect rule' (Harnischfeger, 2008, 51-52).[6] In the middle-belt area, where mostly traditional African communities lived, the British allowed the more 'civilized' Northern Hausa-Fulani to impose their rule. In this way the British institutionalized the subjection of these communities to the Hausa-Fulani. In the South, there was no overarching political structure, nor ruling elite, but there were only locally organised tribes. Therefore, the British subjected these people under direct rule and imposed their own rulers on the area. This led to an "identity crisis and a loss of authenticity" for the Southern tribes, where the people found themselves subjected to strange rules, which had little in common with their traditional culture (Adigwe and Grau, 2007, 84).

As an effect the South of Nigeria was subjected to Western education, Western norms and Christianity. British missionaries were allowed to establish churches and schools in the South, while in the North they were severely restricted to do so. There, the British did not want to disturb the peace by attempting to convert Muslims to Christianity. This has led to a geographical and historical cleavage in religious and cultural identity between North and South. People in the south of Nigeria consider themselves nowadays mostly Christian, Western educated, and have adopted a more Western lifestyle than their northern counterparts (Harnischfeger, 2008, 54-55).

Not only religious cleavages have developed themselves historically in this way, also social and economic statuses have become tied up with ethnic and geographical identities through colonial rule. The Hausa-Fulani in the North, for example, gained economic power and the status of 'rich ruling elite' through the favourable treatment the British gave them. The British saw in the Hausa-Fulani supreme rulers, just like they themselves were and because of that let them rule other ethnic groups as well. This has led to resentment among those other ethnic groups, mostly in the Middle-Belt, because the Hausa-Fulani have gained a large monopoly on political power and wealth (ibid. 52). Also other economic cleavages have become established between ethnic groups, of North and South. Thanks to difference in education and natural resources the South has in general acquired

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[6] I will further refer to this ethnic group as the Hausa-Fulani, in line with a general perception that these two ethnicities are often taken together.

more wealth than the North and so economic and social disparities have become tied up with ethnicity (and religion) (Ukiwo, 2013, 187-189).

The gap between identity-groups in Nigeria, widened further not only during colonial rule, but also after independence in 1963. Religion has played an important role in politics and has divided the North and South over important issues. For example, with every new constitution that has been drafted, it is fiercely debated what the position of Sharia law should be and whether federal institutions should help to enforce Islamic laws. While the federal state of Nigeria is officially neutral and secular - a claim most fiercely defended by Southerners – the Sharia debate illustrates the complicated relation between religion and government. Because even though a federal Sharia court of appeal was established, the consensual character of this court and its restricted jurisdiction left either side of the debate with an increased feeling of dissatisfaction (Suberu, 2009, 551).

The cleavages between groups in the North and the South in terms of religion have also been strengthened. This happened through a religious revival in Nigeria that took place primarily between 1960 and 1980 in both Muslim and Christian communities. Multiple Charismatic and Pentecostal churches arose all around, especially in the South, while in the North many converted to Islam and there was a large increase in mosques. This has led to a renewed focus on living a religious life and has sharpened the distinctions and the relations between Christians and Muslims (Nwanaju, 2004, 226. Ojo and Lateju, 2010, 33).

This short history of Nigeria shows how the current identifications at a national level are historically constructed. Besides, North and South are now tied up with ethnic, religious and cultural identity-differences and these aspects mutually reinforce each other as I will show further on; widening the gap between North and South. The labels of 'North' and 'South' have even become so important at a national level that they are sometimes considered more decisive for group-identity than religious or ethnic identity. An example of this was the first 'democratic' presidential elections of 1993. A Muslim from the South ran for presidency, and the South supported him over a Muslim and a Christian from the North. The South saw him as the best candidate because he was Southern, and therefore more inclined to favour Christian demands. In reaction, the sitting rulers from the North, who had supported 'their' candidates, annulled the election results. This led to fierce protests and a heightened tension between North and South (Adigwe and Grau, 2007, 97). Ever since politics at a national level have not been aimed at unity or proper democratic representation, but is an attempt to satisfy identity-groups, which leaves all parties continuously dissatisfied (Falola, 1998, 102).

Conflict and violence in Nigeria: an identity perspective

Many violent conflicts have occurred in Nigeria throughout its history. While most violence has erupted at a local and regional level, all levels, also the national and international, contribute to the conflicts. Therefore I will analyse the construction of conflicts at these levels, taking the local and regional level together, because conflict at these levels is closely connected.

The Local and regional level: conflict and violence

In the literature about conflicts in Nigeria, three major 'kinds' of conflict can be distinguished at a local and regional level. The first kind that is distinguished, are conflicts cast in terms of religious reasons and differences. Secondly, literature describes conflicts arising between local armies, gangs or 'boys' and government and international cooperation security forces because of political, social and economic problems. Lastly, violence has been categorized between tribes, and especially between 'settlers' tribes and 'indigenous' tribes, for both ethnic and economic reasons. In reality, this threefold distinction is not this clear-cut, and identity, especially religious and ethnic identity is important in all conflicts.

First, I will say something more about religious violence in Nigeria. In some conflicts religion seems very much the motivation and justification for violence in a 'primordialist' way. Examples of violence of this kind are the actions of Boko Haram. Almost everyday, Boko Haram attacks villages and cities with suicide bombers and car bombs. According to themselves their aim is to undermine and agitate against the 'secular state' which is *haram* and ought to be overthrown (Adesoji, 2011, 105-106). This has also been the aim of other Islamic groups in the North such as the Maitatsine group, that operated in the 1980s in Nigeria and also strived to redeem "God's righteous people" from hypocrisy and who saw Western influence as an "evil force" (ibid. 102).

Although especially this kind of violence might seem to be a result of the 'threat' to identity as perceived by the primordialists, most conflicts in Nigeria are in some way 'religious'. Many Nigerians have been killed in disputes between Christians and Muslims ranging from universities protests to traffic accidents (Obadare, 2007, 144 and Harris, 2012 328). Some of the larger incidents have resulted in many casualties, as in the case of the violence of 2004 in Yelwa, a region in the North-West, which started out as a dispute about political representation and land. There, Christian ethnic minorities attacked Muslim ethnicities, resulting in many deaths. The problem with these conflicts is often that no real peace is created after the fights, no clear laws or boundaries are drawn or situations are changed. This only has deepened the cleavages in Yelwa for example, where Christian and Muslim communities blame each other for starting the conflict (Egwu, 2011, 63-64). Throughout this analysis therefore, the religious dimension of many conflicts will be given attention, and I hope to show the heterogeneity of the different conflicts discussed here.

A second kind of conflict is between federal police or army and local armed 'gangs'. An important (economic) contributor to this sort of unrest and conflict is the geographical concentration in Nigeria of natural resources. Oil, the largest export product of Nigeria, is mostly concentrated in the South, the Niger Delta, with some oil in the middle-Belt of Nigeria. The reason why the revenues from oil are so hotly contested is not difficult to imagine, the amount of money earned from oil production is enormous: 85 percent of the state revenues comes from selling oil and gas (Ushie, 2013, 32). The question of who should benefit from these natural resources and to what extent, leads to violence. Most ethnic groups that are living in the Niger Delta and in other rural areas are very poor and lack basic sanitary facilities and clean drinking water, while the resources in their soil yield so much money. Therefore, in the Niger Delta, crude oil theft, kidnapping of employees of oil companies and general insurgencies are causing much trouble and conflict.

Lastly, in other areas of Nigeria, conflicts are not so much between oil companies or government and local ethnicity, but between ethnic groups. All across the country conflicts arise between those who claim to be indigenous to the land and those that are seen as settlers. These ethnic conflicts often revolve around some problem of scarcity of resources in which the indigene argue that settlers have less rights to land, political power and money (Adesoji, 2010, 4, Orji, 2011, 475, Egwu, 2011, 57-58). These conflicts often escalate even further when there is a religious difference between the tribes. Then both ethnicity, the place of origin of the settlers and religion provide for very strong mutually enforcing cleavages that make violence more likely.

When analysing these three 'kinds' of conflicts in terms of identity, several insights can be added to the above short accounts. First, as argued in chapter one, what contributes greatly to conflict and violence is the fact that identity-groups feel threatened in their core identities. Identity insecurity in Nigeria increased dramatically during the period of colonization. By way of Christianizing Nigeria through British missionaries the North suddenly had an ideological opponent, while the South was deprived from their traditional identities. Since most people in the South have developed their identity in line with Christian worldviews the North views the 'South' as rival and foreign. The stable meaning-system in which life had been ordered is threatened because society, both national and local, is not singular anymore, but includes a plurality of other identities. There have been attempts to curb plurality and especially Christian influences. For example, since the early 20th century till today churches are banned in Islamic cities or can only be built far away from city-centres (Yahaya, 2004, 176-177). In Zamfara, a Northern state, the Town Planning Board ordered all the churches to move and be located in a special quarter of the city (Harnischfeger, 2009, 95). Besides, religious groups such as the Maitatsine and Boko Haram have put their explanations for their *Jihad* in terms of purification from the 'other'. This is a very radical way to protect a religious social structure and they have stated to set the Muslims free and kill the 'unbelievers' (Olaniyan and Asuelime, 2014, 96).

From this description of conflicts in Nigeria it becomes clear that mutually reinforcing cleavages between identity-groups in Nigeria have greatly influenced, and probably helped, the occurrence of violence. The lack of cross-cutting identities allows for a strong dichotomy across politics and society and across levels. Local communities oppose the federal government, but at same time they oppose other regional ethnicities, other religious groups and those from the 'North' and 'South' as well, for various religious, historical, political social and economical reasons. What is important, I believe, is that the above account shows the relevance of the way in which the 'other' is sometimes positioned as diametrically opposed to the in-group. This shows the power of identification, and especially ethnicity and religion to form social realities and greatly influence conflict situation. So the context of the history of the conflict as well as the goals of the groups in question figure in their identifications and actions towards violence, as I have argued for in Chapter One.

The national level: making the conflict persistent

Although there has been no violent conflict at a national level since the civil war of 1967, the ways in which some state-wide disparities play out, and the way in which the federal state reacts to conflicts, seem to make conflict persistent. First of all, in line with what is argued above, the salience of cleavages between 'self' and 'other' seem to encourage an identity politics discourse of marginalization and economical victimhood at a national level. As argued above, higher order identifications seem to revolve around a South and a North and this dichotomization is strengthened because the North is more benefitting from national funds and better represented in the military, while Southerners have better access to health-care, social services and education which leads to mutual resentment (Ukiwo, 2013, 187). Besides, economic inequality has led to the feeling among Northerners that the South is keeping money from them, while states in the South complain about the unequal distribution of oil revenues and military power, which seems to favour the North (Aghedo, 2012, 270).

This complex overlapping system of economic, social, political, geographical, ethnic and religious identity plays a role in many political discourses of identity-groups that use it in their selfing and othering. One example is the political discourse of the Igbo an ethnic group of the South. According to their national secessionist movement they, the Igbo are the chosen people of God, distinct, through descent, from other ethnicities and religiously singled out through their Christian faith (Harnischfeger, 2014, 1). This idea of distinctness is combined with a discourse of marginalization, which is based on their perception that they have no real power at the national level, where the North is perceived to reign (Smith, 2007, 192). In terms of economic differences, the Igbo on the contrary are better developed and have good access to the large oil reserves, so their

discourse does not allow for a Northern claim to that (Falola, 1998, 55, Olaniyan and Asuelime, 2014, 95-96).

Since identifications are so relevant for violent conflict, minorities of any warring in-group elsewhere run the risk of becoming victims of retaliatory actions, making violence spreading throughout the country. For example when the Igbo from the South staged a coup d'état, and thereby killed and chased away those of other (Northern) ethnicities. In revenge, the Igbo's who lived in the North were killed in revenge. This in turn even inspired revenge violence in the South again and this cycle of violence eventually helped trigger the outbreak of the civil war (Olaniyan and Asuelime, 2014, 95).

Secondly, almost all writers that address the ongoing problems and conflicts on a national level refer to the large amount of corruption that has penetrated all levels of society, and which has made the government incapable of providing an alternative to violence. Someone who has written in detail about corruption and scams in Nigeria is Daniel Smith. His fieldwork in Nigeria shows how corruption is "embedded, systematic and routine" in Nigeria and can take on very eloquent forms (Smith, 2007, 89). And although Nigerians, according to Smith view their corruption as a skill (ibid. 222), it is fatal for any representative governmental system in Nigeria. Government officials are not reliable and do in general not work on resolving problems, which makes politics ineffective at large and makes people take their fate into their own hands, widening the gap between the local 'self' and federal 'other'.

What worsens this alienation is that this system of corruption is tied up with a system of patronage on the basis of identity. According to Ifeka: "ethno-religious groups define their inter-relationship through the money they receive from the Federal Government…" (Ifeka, 2000, 452). In a well working democracy this would not be a large problem, because there, interest groups can rally their supporters along identity-lines and negotiate policy at a national or federal level. However, Nigerians do not view negotiating a consensus between parties favourably. Rather they see the distribution of power and money as a zero-sum game. A reason for this zero-sum perspective is provided by Eriksen. He argues that others at local levels are seen as rivals because of an *inverted refrigerator system*, in which, to generate internal warmth and cohesion in one social group this directly goes at the expense of the out-group creating a 'cold' social environment.[7]

So improving one's own situation implies preventing others from gaining power. Therefore ordinary Nigerians expect of 'their' in-group politicians that they advance the cause of their identity-group. In fact, when a politician shows to be incorruptible he often loses the support of his ethnic affiliates (Harnischfeger, 2008, 166-167 and Adigwe and Grau, 2007, 89). Not only the in-group is

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[7] http://hyllanderiksen.net/Identity_politics.html

expected to benefit, the Nigerian elite is expected by the Nigerians to gain much wealth and to display this wealth to their clients, Smith describes this as the 'big man syndrome' (Smith, 2007, 105). This system normalizes corruption and thereby widens the gap between self and other and undermines 'legitimate' ways of accessing material resources.

What is interesting is that 'North' and 'South' as identifications do not as such figure so much in local and regional conflict. At a national level, these labels are widely used in identity politics, thereby *creating* opposition and a specific identity discourse at a national level. Nigerian politicians, religious umbrella organisations and secessionist movements of for example the Igbo and the Yoruba all use narratives of superiority and inequality between North and South to gather support. A nice example of this is the way in which the problem of Boko Haram is perceived and used in discourse. Whereas a 'Southern' political party stated that Boko Haram is sponsored to discredit the sitting Southern president, the governor of Niger state (a Northern state) claims that Boko Haram is sponsored to cripple the economy of the North (Olaniyan and Asuelime, 2014) and this is but one example of many more. However, although 'North' and 'South' are mostly used in political rhetoric and by the media, these 'labels' are most often used as a means to serve the purposes of lower level identity-groups. Because of the inverted refrigerator effect, ethnicity, religion, but also economic status have become most salient to achieve one's own goals, and so identifications at all levels have become very much politicized, emphasizing differences rather than shared identities.

The international level: a complicating factor

The international level complicates the conflicts in Nigeria mostly because Nigerians have adopted identities that align with the international dichotomization between 'the West' and the 'Middle-East' and this undermines a possible national, higher order identity (Falola, 1998, 14). For example, the Islamic population in Nigeria identifies itself strongly with the international *umma* of believers. The fact that Islamic groups worldwide feel under threat by 'the West' influences the selfing of Muslims in Northern Nigeria. Because Nigeria is also composed of a large group of Christians that endorse – in their eyes - a 'Western' lifestyle, militancy among Muslims is strengthened through the international level.[8] The Northern Muslims identify themselves, in their national struggle against 'perverse' Western influence, with Muslims in other countries and follow their example. For example, when the World Trade Centre was destroyed, Muslims in Jos were celebrating it as a victory of themselves and subsequently started killing many citizens of Jos, mostly Christians (Back, 2004, 216).

On the other hand, the developments on the international stage have a similar impact on Christians. Christians in Nigeria are wary that the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria is a

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[8] The name of Boko Haram is often explained as meaning 'Western education is sinful', which also exemplifies the radicalization of Muslims as aimed against 'the West'.

continuation of the worldwide attack of 'Arabia' on Christianity (Olaniyan and Asuelime, 2014, 97). Therefore, the "challenge posed by Islam" in general, has greatly influenced the "politicization of Christianity in Nigeria" and their increasing hostility against Islam (Falola, 1998, 15).

Although this is very brief, what this passage illustrates is that the international level complicates the conflicts in Nigeria. Now, tensions framed in terms of religious identity are not only part of national dichotomization, but the distinction between religions in Nigeria and their tensions have become part of a higher, international order. The irreconcilability of Islam with Christianity at this international level hinders a higher order national identification *within* Nigeria. Northern Nigerians might not look at the South anymore as sharing in some form of inclusive and segmented national Nigerian identity, but they might be more inclined to turn to the *umma.*

The levels connected: identity as firmly established in society and politics
The account above shows how identity plays a role at every level of society and enables violence and conflict to thrive. What has perpetuated the situation is the fact that there is now a political system in which the identity insecurity and identity cleavages are embedded. This form of identity politics has influenced all levels of society and therefore connects conflict and identity throughout the different levels.

First of all, identity discourse has become the major political discourse used at all levels. Identity differences are used, abused, under- and overcommunicated to reach specific goals or positions. An example of this at a regional level is that the government of Zamfara state declared in 2002 that Sharia law was the "unanimous wish of the people" neglecting the fact that there is a minority of Christians living in Zamfara that is opposed to Sharia law (Harnischfeger, 2008, 108). Also, regional politicians depict their rivals as "devils" (Hills, 2011, 50). Locally, this centrality of identity in politics has sometimes even become violent, when politicians pay local in-group members to advance their cause not only through rhetoric, but by 'deeds'. Especially around elections, militia's and 'area boys' (gangs of unemployed youth) are paid by national and regional politicians and local chiefs to promote their cause or as a remedy to alter unwanted outcomes in politics or to intimidate voters or politicians' opponents (Smith, 2007, 122, Aghedo, 2011, 272 and Guichaoua, 2013, 75).

Governance, politics and social advancement in Nigeria can therefore almost be equated with identity politics, because the government as an apparatus cannot be trusted because it does not carry any generally acknowledged legitimacy. This means that ordinary Nigerians cannot rely on any government to protect their deep-seated norms, beliefs and characteristics; in short, their personal identities. Because of this insecurity, according to Seul, ordinary Nigerians will gather even more in locally organised identity-groups. The reaction to this identity politics is a local form of organised

identity politics centred on securing important core identity aspects, which can be violent when local communities provide for their own security, and solve their own conflicts.

Since the religious revival in Nigeria, the need to protect Christian and Muslim (identity) elements (including material culture and practice) has become increasingly urgent. This radicalization has made local populations denounce too 'lenient' politicians that fall short of their increasing orthodox supporters. Their demands for stronger forms of (religious) justice, therefore has to be enforced locally. In some local communities Muslim laymen try to enforce far-reaching religious laws through militia's, for example to prevent people from travelling during prayer-times (Harnischfeger, 2008, 94-99). That these groups are popular is evident. Some vigilante groups, such as the "Bakassi Boys", even have gained the status of 'superheroes' fighting against evil (Smith, 2007, 180).

From this analysis it appears that the wider social and political context of local and regional agitators is very important. Depending on where in-groups stand and what their specific aims are, identity-markers are deployed to categorize the world on the one hand, while on the other hand these categorizations are sharpened, changed in content and relevance, depending on the desires and goals these groups have through identity politics. This reflects both the importance of the reality of religion or ethnic narratives for in-group members, as well as the pragmatic use of these identifications in daily-life through politics. However, when politics are approached as a zero-sum game, there will always be groups that remain unsatisfied and insecure. The failure of government to deliver security and prosperity to different identity-groups in a legitimate undisputed way has made local identity-groups resort to violence and self-help. They justify this violence with the idea that they are the legitimate protectors of their own identity. Ironically, the violence hurts mostly those it aims at helping; namely the poor and middle-class people and this only increases feelings of insecurity and threat among local communities.

Conclusion

This chapter has briefly explored the conflicts in Nigeria and its relation to identity, focussing on securing a stable and safe identity, selfing and othering and identity politics. The strong overlapping identifications in terms of religion, ethnicity, geographical descent and economic development, have made many people perceive Nigeria at a national level as deeply divided between a North and South. This difference between North and South has sometimes led to conflict, but on a regional and local level predominantly in the Middle-Belt where the local population, consisting of Christians and traditional African believers still violently resists the 'Northern rulers' (Orji, 2011, 475-476). However, lower level identifications, which are deeply tied up with one's social contexts, also lead to various conflicts.

That the identifications as shown above help to 'construct' conflict in Nigeria is due to the historically established systems of politics that seem to foster insecurity and alienation between groups and between local communities and government. The federal government adheres to no higher order, it has no shared 'democratic' 'secular' or 'accountable' profile, and is ineffective in almost anything; creating distrust and fragmentation among Nigerians. Therefore most disputes are solved locally. So, when a local struggle for power with other local identity-groups is determined by an *inverted refrigerator system* violence might seem the only option to achieve any goal, including identity stability and the protection of cultural practices, rituals and ideas in this 'cold' environment.

Now that a multi-level picture is presented about conflict I will go on to see how peacebuilding initiatives fit into this framework. In chapter three I will focus on peacebuilding at the different levels. This way I will try to establish how peacebuilding influences or complicates the situation described above even further while trying to solve difficult and structural problems in Nigeria.

Chapter three: Peacebuilding in Nigeria

In this chapter I want to look at the impact of peacebuilding in Nigeria at different levels in society. Because my space is limited and I want to cover such a broad area with many different actors, I won't go into the details of most peacebuilding initiatives. This broad scope is necessary, because - as I have argued in chapter one - when focussing on the connections between levels, different perspectives in peacebuilding and their context and complexities can be more fully understood.

This chapter builds on the theories presented in chapter one and is embedded in the context of conflict and its holistic analysis, provided in chapter two. The first level I will be looking at is the national level. Secondly I will assess civil society. The third level I will analyse is the local level. Lastly I will look at global involvement and influence on the peacebuilding initiatives. Within all these levels I will try to establish connections with higher and lower levels.

The national level: governmental attempts at building peace

At the national level the main actor to look at in terms of peacebuilding is the federal government. Due to internal and international pressure the government has in fact taken some measures with respect to peacebuilding. The peacebuilding facets and measures of the federal government can roughly be divided in three different kinds of federal peacebuilding. First, the federal system itself is seen as fostering peaceful coexistence. Secondly the ways in which the police and the security forces are handling tense and violent situations are considered to be aimed at peacebuilding. Third, the government has established and financed specific departments, institutes and platforms aimed at building peace and mutual understanding between warring parties.

Federal system

At a very basic level, the fact that Nigeria is constituted as a federation is, according to political scholars, the first step to an adequate peace and coexistence between the pluralities of people in Nigeria. Political science scholar Ukoha Ukiwo argues for example that the federal requirement that all political parties must have representatives from all states "has helped to stabilise the polity as it ensures representation of most of the groups" (Ukiwo, 2013, 187). Rotimi Suberu an International Relations scholar puts the point very nicely:

> "Nigerian federal system can be seen to include institutional characteristics that constitutional designers would consider as crucial to a robust multi-ethnic federal design that have been actually effective in securing the federation's continuity" (Suberu, 2009, 548).

He argues that the way in which the 'Sharia debate' has been resolved in Nigeria shows that the federal system is capable of dealing with ideological conflict and can foster peace. Therefore he points to the fact that advocates of Sharia law did not demand the implementation of it nationwide, but only wanted it for their own states in the North (ibid. 553). The scope and applicability of the Sharia is monitored by federal, *secular courts* that scrutinize the implementation and application of Sharia Law in specific cases (ibid. 556).

It seems true that the partial implementation of religious law in some states has prevented escalation of the conflict over the fact whether the different Nigerian states must be secular or not. However, what does create conflict is the more general question whether the federal state must or is allowed to pursue religious policy or whether it should be neutral or secular. Already since the establishment of Nigeria as a federal state, heated debates have been held about whether the federal state is secular or not. Christians in Nigeria claim the former, while Muslims claim the latter (Harnischfeger, 2008, 78).

According to some scholars, secularity or 'democracy' is the solution to many problems of the Nigerian state, arguing that "the government should review its policy of patronage of religion, with a view to leaving it in the private realm" (Adesoji, 2011, 115). Others argue that when Nigeria will become serious about democracy, this will help address political conflict (Adigwe and Grau, 207, 106). However, this view is too simplistic. The problem with the concepts of democracy and secularism is that they are not at all neutral. As summarized in chapter one, Elizabeth Hurd argues that secularism is a Western ideology with Christian roots, and this 'bias' makes secularism rather another argument for Christians in Nigeria than an 'objective' argument. Also, however not accurate, present-day narratives about democracy often equate democracy with 'Western ideas' and 'secularism' (Hurd, 2008, 5). So arguments in favour of secularism and also to a lesser extent democracy are often considered Christian arguments in Nigeria to curb the influence of Sharia. The Islamic emir of Ilorin, for example has argued, that those who favour 'secularism' are not at all rational or objective, but rather "mischief makers" (Adebanwi, 2011, 32-33).

Eventually, what is interesting and potentially destructive for Nigeria's federal power is the observation that: "the debate over secularism [...] almost always fuses into north-south divide" (ibid. 34). This has led to a federal government which is neither appealing to Muslims nor Christians. The South wants to dominate it, and claims it to be secular, while the North wants the same and sees it as an institute that serves their goal of institutionalizing Sharia. Because the federal government is neither secular, nor totally religiously committed, many view the federal state as illegitimate. This difference in perspective on what the federal state is and should be, only widens the gap between North and South.

However, it is also true that few Nigerians would want to eliminate the federal system entirely. Most different groups in Nigeria do not seem to question the federal polity of the state. The idea that there is a higher order 'Nigeria' to which everyone belongs is somehow embedded in the identities of many. If one is to believe a survey, conducted about this subject, about 80% of the Nigerians that participated felt at least equally 'Nigerian' as their own ethnic identity (Ukiwo, 2013, 204). Further, both Suberu and Harnischfeger - who has extensively researched Nigeria's struggle with democracy and Islamic law - argue that the federal character of the state might figure as a safeguard for national conflict. The (relative) ease with which some Northern states have established Sharia law exemplifies the freedom to accommodate at a state level the wishes of the different identity-groups. This way, very different groups can all have a social environment that aligns with their deeply-felt norms, which stabilizes these local and regional societies.

Police and security forces

The police and security forces are of course the official entities that must ensure that no group will resort to violence and that local environments are safe. Police and army have attracted much criticism for being inconsequent and corrupt. Their incompetence has been attributed to the fact that they are poorly paid and their equipment is often insufficient. However there are also aspects of the security forces that in fact seem to promote peace.

The first is the *federal character* of these security forces and police. This means that across states, they consist of both Muslims and Christians (Hills, 2011, 47). The positive effect of this federal character is that it creates a professional distance from local identity-groups and their specific conflicts. Because they are professionally mixed, they must be addressed as 'Nigerian'. In this way they are a visible sign of a higher order 'Nigerian identity' that could enhance a segmented view on identifications in Nigeria. Such a police-force which, at least professionally, supersedes group identification, might give a sense of stability as a 'neutral broker' in an environment in which identity-groups see each other as enemies. This was the case with the Nigerian army after the civil war. While the future of Nigeria as one entity was uncertain, the army took it upon themselves to be protectors of Nigeria's unity (Harnischfeger, 2008, 87).

In spite of this, the effects of the secularity of the security forces and the police must not be overstated. According to a more sceptical analysis, these soldiers and police officers are "first and foremost human beings and second Nigerians whose loyalty to their ethnic groups or their religious persuasions sometimes takes precedence over their loyalty to the country" (Adesoji 2010, 9). Another negative side-effect of the way in which police and security forces deal with conflicts between identity-groups is that they mostly use brute force to stop violence, while almost nothing is done to reconcile conflicting parties with each other (IPCR 2002, 30). In conflicts in which identity

plays an important role people feel very personally involved. So a response aimed at repressing expressions of (perceived) deep-seated differences and problems might only lead to resentment, making a relapse into violence very likely.

A second aspect that seems to contribute to peace and even legitimacy for the security forces is that they collaborate with the local bands and 'boys' who protect their community and religious laws. This does not only increase trust and legitimacy, but also gives the security forces some sort of overarching neutrality because they can refrain from enforcing identity-sensitive laws, such as the prohibition on alcohol or adultery and leave that to the bands (Hills, 2011, 55).

Interestingly, accepting and bargaining with (religious) militias works better than opposing them. In Kano, a city in the north the special Islamic police, the *Hisba* is very popular among the Muslim population. Not only are they enforcing very important Islamic laws, they do so in a very clear and no-nonsense way, relying on informants and punishing instantly (ibid. 56-58). Although this sounds aggressive, this actually makes people feel more secure. This might not seem so extraordinary if one recalls from chapter two how ineffective often government and government institutions are. Besides, in the federal legal system criminals often go unpunished. Therefore, by identifying with these vigilante groups, credibility is reflected on the federal police. This way they acknowledge the needs of the locals and respect the status of the *Hisba* as an "important actor by virtue of its religious significance, [...] and popularity as a provider of quick and affordable justice" (ibid. 64).

Specific institutions

Due to both internal and external pressure, the federal state has established many initiatives that aim at peacebuilding. Most of these initiatives are offices, institutes or commissions that focus at research and make recommendations about peacebuilding. The office of the Special Adviser on Conflict Management, the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution established in 2000, the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission established in 1999 or the National Political Reforms Platform are examples hereof (Fagbemi, 2013, 225-233). In addition, there has been a National Action Plan on Human Rights violations; there has been a National Action Plan on the Strategic Conflict Assessment and different reports by different panels. Often, these investigations have led to detailed reports of the achievements and remaining challenges in peacebuilding.[9] It goes beyond the scope of this paper to assess these initiatives separately, so I will only look at some characteristics to illustrate the general effect of these initiatives.

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[9] See for example the detailed 'National Action Plan for the Promotion & Protection of Human Rights in Nigeria', 2006.

One general observation is that the real execution of peacebuilding attempts is minimal, despite quite a few well-considered and complete reports from these state institutions. This might be due to the fact that: "The reports of such investigations often end up on the shelves in government offices without any attempt to publish them or […] to implement some of the recommendations" (Fagbemi, 2013, 226). In addition, these panels and commissions sometimes lose credibility by making the wrong decisions. This was the case with the Special Adviser on Conflict Management, who backed the plan by a Southern state to disengage employees that were not 'indigene'.[10] They also lose credibility by taking bribes, of which a poignant example is the discovery that the chairman of a panel that investigated government corruption had been bribed (Fuelling poverty, 2012). A last reason for the lack of implementation is that often the funding is poor or lacking or is stolen by corrupt panel members. Because of these problems, national initiatives generate next to no effect at regional and local levels. And when the government has in a very few instances implemented initiatives at the local level, such as local peace and security committees, these have proven to be largely ineffective (Strategic Conflict Assessment, 2002, 31).

The fact that the government does make regulations, but is incapable of effective peacebuilding has an effect on the local identity-communities in terms of their feelings of security. While local communities are dominated by rules and regulations that are enforced in name of a so-called legitimate government, basic needs are barely satisfied and local opinions are not valued. Therefore, through national failure in peacebuilding, trust in government to protect core-identities has decreased even more. This ineffectiveness of the (federal) state only strengthens, as already argued in chapter two, the identity politics and strife for personal, or in-group advancement also in terms of peacebuilding. Something that could be an indication of this is the fact that the federal police are regarded with less esteem than many local vigilante groups both in South and North, who share the same ethnicity and religion as the community (Hills, 2010, 63-64. Smith, 2007, 184-185). This example illustrates that people have lost faith in the central government and that their solution is clear; they have put their trust in people from their own groups.

Another result of the ineffectiveness to peacebuilding of the state, in relation with the fierce identity politics at this level is that all problems are blamed on the 'other'. As shown above, this was already the case in the discussion about secularism, in which North and South blame each other for preventing the government from good governance. Another example hereof is that the lack of effective reaction against Boko Haram is used in the discourse of Northern and Southern identity politics. When a Northern politician claims that "Any objective observer couldn't have missed how through massive propaganda certain northern politicians are being made to look like sponsors of the

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[10] http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/10/non-indigenes%E2%80%99-sack-cracks-ndigbo-unity/

terror group…" (Olaniyan and Asuelime, 2014, 99), a southern political assembly states: "… We are convinced that [Boko Haram's] agenda, clearly that of its urbane [Northern] sponsors, is to make the [Southern] presidency of Goodluck Jonathan unworkable" (ibid. 101). By blaming the existence of Boko Haram on their opponents, the South frames violent event not as a religious ideological problem nor as an economic or national problem, but rather *uses* it as a political tool to keep the government in power. The North does the same, distancing themselves from Boko Haram ideologically in discourse and obscuring underlying societal problems in favour of political accusations. So the context of the political strife between North and South is very relevant for understanding the framing of national problems. The politicization of these problems obscures real solutions and complicates peacebuilding.

The regional level: better achievements in peacebuilding?

The regional level is a somewhat ambiguous level. I however have approached it in line with Lederach, who argued that middle level actors are those operating in civil society (Lederach, 1997, 39). So the kinds of actors that I will be focussing on at this level are non-governmental organisations (NGOs), advocacy-groups (universities or professional associations) and religious organisations. Although the distinction with local level peacebuilding is not always as clear, I consider the regional level actors as superseding the very grassroots small-scale approach I analyse at the local level. Firstly, I want to look at some initiatives by national and regional NGOs and advocacy-groups, secondly I will discuss the role that churches and other religious institutions play in peacebuilding.

NGOs and advocacy-groups

I use in this thesis a very simple definition of NGOs. What I mean by NGO is an organisation aimed at peacebuilding and tackling the root causes for conflict, which is non-profit and is not managed by the government or a church or other religious organisations. While there are many NGOs nowadays in Nigeria, they mostly focus on development and other social causes and less directly on peacebuilding. Some NGOs that do have this aim are the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding[11] and Search For Common Ground. Larger organisations sometimes have departments aimed at peacebuilding and conflict management, for example Shell has such a department (Fagbemi, 2013, 234).

When looking at activities, WANEP has recently done projects on conflict management for female leaders and conflict prevention programs with representatives from newspapers, youth-groups as well as other NGOs.[12] SFCG has done alike projects, training local leaders in Plateau State

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[11] see: http://www.wanepnigeria.org
[12] http://www.wanepnigeria.org > programs > conflict prevention/women in peacebuilding.

for peacebuilding and using the media to promote peaceful dialogue.[13] Since these NGOs do not operate at a grassroots level but are established across larger regions, their participants are most often not the local community members, but (local) leaders and other civil society actors, such as the media and other NGOs. These leaders are trained through dialogues which try to change ideas about the 'other' among participants. This seems to work, for participants have stated that they now realised that the 'opposite' party was not as different as they thought, saying: "I learned someone you see as an enemy is a potential friend" or, as a Muslim participant said: "I've learned from Christian women. We came to understand each other" (SFCG, 2013, 22-24). This is very positive, however the effect on peace in the communities in which this is of importance is limited. As a dialogue participant remarked and which seems to be supported by the continuation of local conflicts: "I've learned most people who talk about peace don't follow through back in their communities" (SFCG, 2013, 24).

This lack of following through might be explained by looking at the several identifications of the participants. Newly established shared identifications, at which dialogues seem to aim, might just not be strong enough. In the political climate of Nigeria, 'artificial' identity-groups might be less lasting because 'primordial' elements of one's identity are a stronger base for political lobbies. Fagbemi observes something along these lines when he says: "Civil society then has more non-voluntary associations like the family, ethnic group, and religious groups, to which people are more faithful than they are to voluntary groups" (Fagbemi, 2013, 223).

However, these peacebuilding organisations are not the only relevant actors in civil society. To understand identity and peacebuilding at the regional level more fully, the scope must be broadened. As argued in chapter one, peace is not only the 'absence of violence' but entails much more, including external peace, which includes social, economic and political stability. So in terms of NGOs, the wide variety of projects advancing the situation of women, orphans, widows, poor in general and many more have an effect on peacebuilding and identity by trying to stabilize civil society. For example, human Rights NGOs or democratic awareness NGOs aim at changing society to be more peaceful and at curbing structural political problems. (See for many examples of NGOs: Noah, 2011).

One major achievement of intellectuals and civil society in general that has been acknowledged by different authors is their positive and constructive role in advancing democracy and independence in the 1960s (Falola, 1998, 53). Other effects of these NGOs are that the standards of living have increased for those involved in projects as well as their awareness of their rights and

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possibilities.[14] These achievements create a sense of empowerment amongst project participants which might help to curb violence and insecurity.

However, authors have also pointed out how the peacebuilding effects of these NGOs and pressure groups are weakened because of the rally for power in the public sphere (Obadare, 2007, 145-146). The civil society level has become the place in which lower level political aspirations are mixed with higher order identity politics, discourse and corruption. For example, during the struggle for independence, the very groups that had lobbied for freedom and democracy nation-wide soon had turned into pressure groups for ethnic interests, representing South or North (Falola, 1998, 54). Also after the annulment of the elections of 1993 the NGOs that most fiercely protested against this were centred around the elected Southern candidate Moshood Abiola (Noah, 2011, 9-10). Even more, (identity) NGOs are often incorporated in the political patronage system and are generally ridden with corruption, or NGOs are "post-box NGO" which only exist to receive foreign funding but do not really exist (Obadare, 2007, 143 and Smith, 2007).

When it comes to intellectuals and NGOs propagating human rights or democracy it appears that the very poor and low-educated population of Nigeria at a local level is not much interested in political lobbies and the hard and difficult paths towards compromise and democracy. This creates a culture of relative indifference towards NGOs in which these NGOs can rally for support but might find little (Noah, 2011, 10). Most local communities are more interested in improving their standards of living and protecting their identity and accept NGOs mostly insofar as they serve these goals. This has led to two related outcomes. First, Human Rights and Dialogue NGOs have experienced the limits of their projects because at a local level they have little effect when appealing to higher order identifications (Akpabio, 2009, 312. Owoh, 2004, 299). Secondly, to adhere to local realities, NGOs have become more identity-centred, using identity-discourse to rally for recourses and power. Obadare observes this especially with regard to religious NGOs and even talks about the "religionization of public affairs" (Obadare, 2007, 146). So, NGOs, even when they have good intentions, have limited effect and are sucked into the system of identity politics, dichotomization and zero-sum perceptions of the public sphere.

So maybe, when it comes to civil society one should not put hope in identity-NGOs and other NGOs or advocacy groups that are caught up in the systems described above, but should look at the cross-cutting possibilities of civil society. According to Ifeka, what ought to be represented in the public sphere are the different socio-economic *classes*, in this way poor citizens can identify with each other across established in-groups to rally for common goals and this might increase cross-cutting affection between Nigerians (Ifeka, 2000, 457).

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[14] see Akpabio, 2009, SFCG reports, WANEP reports, Collier and Vicente and others.

Class or profession based advocacy-groups might indeed provide for less violent cross-cutting cleavages because, regardless of ethnicity, these organisations carry their legitimacy for their supporters in sharing problems linked to profession and income. Interesting examples of unity across religious and ethnic boundaries are *strikes* in Nigeria. Although there are many strikes nowadays, bringing universities or even hospitals to a standstill, striking also seems to have positive effects. For example during a large-scale strike in January of 2012, thousands of people protested against the rise of fuel prices in the state capital city, Lagos. Regardless of ethnicity or religion, they protected each other from the police and chanted the national anthem together (Africa Research Bulletin, 2012, 19408. Fuelling Poverty, 2012).

A problem of this aspect of empowerment is that people without a job cannot go on strike to try and influence the government. The importance of a *lack of opportunity* as a cause of violence is not to be underestimated. All three 'variants' of violence in Nigeria contain an aspect of lack of 'normal empowerment'. Ushie describes the violent "boys" of the South as jobless and in search for employment. Boko Haram members are also described as very poor: "young jobless and homeless men" (Adesoji 2011, 103). This is not to say that economic deprivation is the sole instigator of violence. This is a very good example of the inseparability of religious values and beliefs and practices and material culture. Since the poor seem to perceive their ethnicity and religious affiliations as empowering them to unite in strong in-groups sharing the same views on reality, their material causes and the means they deploy are shaped by their identity standpoints.

Religious peacebuilding

Religious communities have become important civil society actors in Nigeria over the past years, and have started to provide for conflict relief and peacebuilding. This is, according to Haynes, the result of their frustration with government (Haynes, 2009, 66). According to Omotoye and DeCampos when the missionaries left after independence, churches started to develop their own identities. Although this has in many cases led to increased separation from the Northern 'other', on the positive side in some churches this has led to the development of higher order identities. Through the idea that: 'everyone is created in God's image' more tolerance developed and some churches have started to lobby for more social and economic equality and democracy (Omotoye and DeCampos, 2013, 209).

When religious peacebuilding in Nigeria is addressed in literature, there is one success-story often mentioned. This is the story of a pastor and an imam from the North, who were both highly involved in religious violence, eventually even suffering casualties within their families. However, "[d]iscovering their mistakes, both men saw the events as a signal from God and henceforth they started to work together as peacemakers" (Haynes, 2009, 66). They created the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum, to promote mutual understanding and peace. This Dialogue Forum was based on a

form of common identity which entailed the belief that there is a strong shared normative ground between Islam and Christianity and that both holy scriptures preach peacefulness. This therefore was their shared task: to spread the message of peace, not conflict (ibid., 67). Their initiative has been effective. Through joint effort and different rounds of workshops with local authorities they even managed to help establish a compromise between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna, in Northern Nigeria (Pace and Kew, 2008, 224. Ojo and Lateju, 2010, 36).

This case however is one of few successful examples of religious peacebuilding. Already from the late 80's there were attempts at facilitating interreligious dialogue. Often these attempts were fruitless because divisions over irreconcilable differences in world-view dominated the talks. Besides, when dialogue was established in conflict areas, this was not conducted with the warring parties, as in the case above, but between high-profile religious leaders that were not concerned directly with the conflict (Ojo and Lateju, 2010, 33-35). An example of this is the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), which is comprised of high-profile religious leaders, such as the leader of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), and the Sultan of Sokoto, which is a high-profile Islamic function. Although they urge religious and political leaders to promote peace in their communiqués (NIREC. Quarter Meeting Communiqués 2011 and 2013) and although they claim to have pacified a religious crisis in Bauchi state, the sincerity of these organisations can be debated.[15] Often these organisations are two-faced. Both Christian and Islamic discourse is deeply embedded in ideas of inferiority and illegitimacy of the other religion. I will illustrate this by focussing on Christian rhetoric, but the way in which the 'other' is characterized in Islam is not very different.

Discourse about the 'other' in Pentecostal churches is often aimed at demonizing the Northern Muslims and establishing a history of marginalization in the South. In this rhetoric, Islam is depicted as wanting to Islamize the entire continent by grand design (Kalu, 2008, 245). Umbrella organisations and prominent Christians also adopt this negative othering. The chair of CAN has for example threatened Muslims by stating to not let the insurgence of Boko Haram go "unpunished" (Obadare, 2006, 667). A prominent politician, the former president of education has described the change from an Islamic to Christian presidency and presidential residence as: "Satan had been sitting pretty before. Now, God has dislodged Satan but we needed to clear all the debris that Satan had put in what was his former territory" (ibid. 672). This has created resentment on the side of the Muslims, and, according to Nwanaju it is even a "common parlance" among Muslims that the shared enemy of CAN has unified differing Muslims (Nwanaju, 2004, 276).

Because of these large cleavages between Muslims and Christians, peacebuilding initiatives initiated by a religious group have often difficulty generating trust among people of other religions.

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[15] http://www.nirecng.org/achieve.html

Even when initiatives are not directed at reconciliation but just at relief after conflict, help and materials are viewed with suspicion by the 'opposite faith' (Orji, 2011, 484). There exists a continuing mistrust because even peacebuilders with the best intentions are suspected of wanting to *convert* those of the other religion (Nwanaju, 2004, 259). Therefore, Orji argues that aiding one's own identity group first and foremost, appears very fruitful in ideologically pluralist areas such as the Middle-Belt, more than interreligious peacebuilding (Orji, 2011, 488).

The account above shows a mixed effect of religious peacebuilding. It can really establish results in conflicts between groups of different religions, but it is certainly no miracle-remedy for conflict in Nigeria. The destructive selfing and othering and identity politics are continued through the embedded discourse that is at the basis of many religious organisations, therefore, many interreligious peacebuilding initiatives at a regional level lack the power to change the ways in which others are perceived by local communities at large. In this respect, serving one's own community seems a more fruitful way of doing religious peacebuilding, because it generates more trust.

People from the same identity-groups tend to trust each other sooner so it is much easier to re-establish stability in one's own community. Besides, local communities will most likely endorse the goals of the peacebuilding initiatives because religious peacebuilders have a strong moral basis that is shared between believers from the same identity-group. These advantages also have a great downside. Helping solely one's own identity-group contributes to a culture in which only through tuning to in-group security, and material goods are attained. There is no need to address the structural underlying causes of conflict, such as the demonization of the 'other', because those that are involved in peacebuilding share a cosmology and worldview. While, as Appleby contends religious peacebuilders should do exactly the opposite, namely aiming to change existing expectation-patterns and stereotypes (Appleby, 2000, 261).

In Nigeria, changing expectations is only possible if one is able to generate trust outside the corrupt and violent system of self-help and identity politics, so by not concentrating on advancing goals for one group only. When looking at the case of the Imam and Pastor it is interesting to see that they did just this. They went to great lengths to ensure they could not be accused of identity politics. One of things they did was including many different minorities, like youth and women in their initiatives and peace talks and approached not only leaders, but 'locals' as well (Little, 2007, 266). In addition, they tried to stay away from the media, because they did not want to be politicized by media-discourse that would undoubtedly have cast their initiatives in terms of identity politics (Little, 2007, 267-268).

In conclusion, I think NGOs and religious peacebuilders fare better than the state in building peace, albeit a little. This more positive assessment is mostly because civil society peacebuilders sometimes do succeed and in any case provide within their limited sphere for some security, stability

and positive selfing and othering. However, both the fact that what NGOs and churches do is not supported or followed through at a lower lever as well as the fact that NGOs are often caught up in the current system of politics and corruption undermines much of what happens and even turns peacebuilding itself into a tool for identity politics.

The local level: Grass-roots peacebuilding most effective?
The local level has gained much more attention during the past years in literature and practice. This is not surprising because many of the critical theorists who focus on emancipation stress the importance of the grassroots level for peacebuilding also many practioners have started with local peacebuilding. To understand how this works in practice, I will firstly look at three examples of very different kinds of grassroots-projects conducted in Nigeria. Secondly, I will look more generally at the effects of low-level dialogue and mediating initiatives between community members.

Specific community projects
To show the variety of grassroots peacebuilding, I have focussed on three different projects aimed at three different regions with three different methods. The first is a government led project in the Niger Delta, the second an election-violence project conducted by a NGO in the Middle-Belt, and the last is a project conducted by an international researcher aimed at reconciling Muslim and Christian youth in the North. Although these three projects are very different, the results generated can in all cases be analysed in effects on identity-insecurity, identification and identity politics.

The first project was called the 'amnesty-programme' and conducted and financed by the government. It was aimed at providing amnesty, education and jobs for the 'area boys' and gangs active in the Niger Delta. It consisted of several stages, the first being disarmament, the second providing amnesty and third an education and reintegration program. Although many arms were handed in and about 20.000 people registered for amnesty, the rest of the program failed due to problems such as financial mismanagement, corruption, lack of integration of the local wishes and local initiatives and lack of trust (Aghedo, 2012, and Ushie, 2013).

Despite the poor realization, the project indicates a way in which peacebuilding might work and affect the Niger Delta inhabitants positively. Because it also generated some positive effects. For example, during the beginning of the project, violence was reduced and some youths from the area did eventually get an education and offered a job. The project therefore has a mixed account of both success and failure. Eventually even the project might have worsened the conflict situation, because those who came to join the project were soon asked to leave the accommodations of the amnesty project due to overcrowding, lack of funding and mismanagement. This led to much resentment and a resurgence of violence (Aghedo, 2012, 274).

In terms of identity these inadequate measures only confirmed the population in their belief that the government is non-functioning. However, initially it led people to view themselves and their opportunities more positively; education and employment would have probably improved their standard of living. So where the project in the first place seemed to bridge the gap of selfing and othering between the marginalized population and the 'greedy government', it did only consolidate it, making marginalization part of the selfing of the group. The context of marginalization therefore, has in some case become intertwined with other identifications, influencing religious views on self and the local means to peace. For example an important aspect of the narratives of the Igbo, are ideas of 'the oppression of the faithful' and God who will help the oppressed break free. Namely, these discourses have helped to justify and normalize local self-help. Besides through government failure, these narratives have only become more radical, developing into a religiously inspired separatist discourse (Harnischfeger, 2014, 4). This illustrates again the importance of context to understand religious practice and discourse, also in conflict and peacebuilding.

The second project I want to discuss was conducted by Action Aid International Nigeria (an NGO), during the elections of 2007. People were asked to come to town meetings and theatre plays that made them aware of the fact that they should choose the candidate that they wanted to vote for, and not to be intimidated into not voting at all (Collier and Vicente, 2008). According to Collier and Vicente this project was successful because it made voter turn-out higher. It also influenced the 'system of violence', because the "anti-violence campaign […] decreased the intensity of real violent events, implying that the behaviour of politicians who use intimidation as an electoral strategy was influenced". Also, very importantly, among the population it "increased perceptions of local safety and empowerment" (ibid. 24).

In terms of identity-change such a project is very interesting. The situation in Nigeria is, and was, one of local 'anarchy', which means that there is no strong form of official government at the local level. Therefore, people do not rely on federal government but rely on local identity-groups in politics, and especially elections are much abused to determine power-relations between those groups on the basis of violence and intimidation. As a result, during the elections of 2007, many polls didn't even open and eventually 300 people were killed (Human Rights Watch, 2007). To go voting in such an environment requires much courage in the first place, but also a change in selfing and othering with respect to the government. One must consider oneself committed to government and view oneself as a 'democratic citizen' with certain rights and, more importantly, certain *power*.

If the results of this project are significant, this means that a changed perception of one's relation to the government can have effect on an established system of local 'anarchy' and on the feelings of empowerment of voters. Again as with the amnesty-project, when local communities can find a form of *legal* empowerment, whether it is material or in terms of democratic power, they

change the perception of their position towards the government. The gap between citizen and government is bridged, and the government is incorporated in one's identity because both become part of a higher order system in which government is legitimate. The change from violent empowerment to this kind of empowerment apparently then has the effect of reducing violence at the local level.

The third project was a community based education program that was centred in Kaduna, a city in Northern Nigeria, between 2008 and 2009 and was aimed at deconstructing established identities. In this program, young Muslims and Christians, both male and female participated in different groups (Harris, 2012, 322). This project had a very individual goal, aiming at deconstructing the reasons for violence in terms of gender differences and domestic relations. Many participants were made aware that violence was interwoven with their households through upbringing, so that it was not surprising that people quickly resorted to violence in society (ibid. 323). Especially men admitted that to get involved in sectarian violence they often felt the peer-pressure to do so. They felt that in their role as a 'man' they had to react with violence to an argument in traffic or while collecting water from the well. However, through the project their ideas about the requirements for gender roles were changed and empowerment was defined in opposite terms. The participants afterwards believed that they were a 'man' by standing up *against* violence and refusing to join in and by teaching peaceful ways to solve arguments in the local community. Apparently it had effect on the youth from the project, because they didn't join in the subsequent violence in Kaduna, but even tried to stop it (Ibid. 328-329).

This is a very neat example of how, because of the interrelatedness and context-dependence of identity, change with respect to one aspect of identity can change perceptions of local context in general. Because the participants created a higher order common identity with respect to family and gender roles, they started to reconsider their ways of empowerment in their community. More importantly, they realized that they didn't need their religious in-group identity to bring about inner peace and social security. In addition, the fact that peaceful coexistence did not threaten deep-held (religious) beliefs made peaceful empowerment possible.

All three projects seem to share that they affect the way in which participants view themselves and view their relationships to others and the government, when empowerment of local communities searching for identity security, or 'inner peace' and material, social and political welfare or 'external peace', is cast in terms that do not *threaten* important identifications. Whether this empowerment is a change of perspective on government or on gender roles, what is important is that means to get to the desired goals are complemented with peaceful legitimate options that actually build on trust rather than insecurity.

Observations about local peacebuilding in general

In general, there has been a major focus on the successes of local level peacebuilding by scholars such as Richmond, Hasenclever and Rittberger, Lederach and Appleby. These authors tend to focus on dialogue and interactions between individuals from different groups. When looking at such projects in Nigeria, three observations can be made in terms of identity.

Firstly, the idea that conflicts and peacebuilding are about in-group and out-group differences in important identity-markers such as ethnicity and religion is *downplayed* by local dialogue or workshops. This seems to establish trust between groups and enables cross-cutting identifications. In the gender-project above this was most obvious. The problems were claimed to be due to perspectives on gender and family-roles and not on differences in religion. Also in the dialogues of the SFCG a participant pointed out that "I think many see it as a religious conflict, but I've learned it's more about poverty and land disputes. Rumour is much a part of it" (SFCG, 2013, 22-24).

A second interesting observation is the fact that higher-level identity discourse and politics seem to have less effect at a lower level. Therefore, the content of one's identity is more flexible in local-level situations. Already the fact that bridges even *can* be built at a local level through peacebuilding seems to indicate a flexibility that is not reflected at higher levels. Another nice example hereof is the way that Nigerians experience football games. According to Henry Majaro-Majesty during the Premier League, people assemble in television centres to cheer for 'their team'. In these centres identity-groups are based on club affiliation rather than on ethnic or even religious background (Majaro-Majesty, 2011, 210). He argues therefore that despite some conflicts that occur between groups of competing fans, fandom as an identity marker is cross-cutting ethnic lines and can help to resolve conflict (ibid.). Although I do not share with him the optimism that this will reduce the relevance of ethnic and religious affiliation, it might indeed help locally to open up the dialogue between identity-groups and to break down negative stereotypes.

Lastly, insecurity remains in the local communities despite these local projects. In all three projects described above, violence returned in and between local communities. A reason why this insecurity might be so hard to resolve is because peacebuilding projects are not changing the political system. Notwithstanding the ease with which people might agree with others on basis of values, interests or even aspects of ideology, these account only partially for what is important for identity. As argued before, material, social and economic positions are intertwined with religious, ethnic and cultural identifications and it seems that this economical, political and societal aspect is limiting enduring effects of dialogue based peacebuilding. Because when it comes to protecting local identity, in terms of ideology, practice and material culture, identity politics is still the main means and this leads rather to increased othering than to incorporating any other.

So community-self help is the system through which basic needs, both in terms of inner peace as well as external peace are established. Basic needs, are provided via the local, ethnic or religious community. Even when it comes to empowerment, such as jobs, people from the local community are hired over 'external' - better educated - people. Also, things like infrastructure are acquired: "through a mutually benefiting network based on a deep sense of community values" (Owoh, 2004, 515). As I have already shown in chapter two, security and law-enforcement are too managed locally. This was the case with the *Hisba* in Kano and vigilantes in the South, who are endorsed by the local people, not only for their, sometimes cruel, quick justice system, but these groups are also used to lobby for street lanterns and working drainages. This way, these local initiatives provide for forms of inner peace such as security and external peace, such as cohesion, material welfare and empowerment for the youth (Ismail, 2013, 104-105).

In conclusion then, grassroots peacebuilding in terms of projects and dialogue-groups at a local level do in fact break down some of the negative 'othering' and sometimes enable higher-order common identities. The dialogues described above, did make people realize that Muslims or Christians are not so much enemies, but potential friends or mates that love the same football-club and this has increased peace and stability. At a local level therefore peacebuilding aimed at changing identities seems to be easier than at a national level. As argued, this might be due to the fact that at a local level there are less *large* political achievements at stake, the influence of the national dichotomizing discourse is lesser and accountability and effects can be checked more easily.

Nevertheless, higher level systems of society do influence, local approaches to peace. As argued above, many local communities try to secure peace, in their own way, and this undermines bridge-building initiatives. This 'peacebuilding' is analogous to the inverted refrigerator metaphor of chapter two. Higher level insecurity makes local communities work very hard to strengthen internal cohesion, resulting in inner peace and security and material improvements, but impeding any form of peacebuilding across communities.

International and global influences on peacebuilding in Nigeria
This last part focuses on the effects of the international community on peacebuilding in Nigeria. To see what these effects are, I will focus on two ways in which Nigeria interacts with the international level. Firstly, all different actors in Nigeria interact with other countries and international organisations to pursue their goals. Secondly international actors play a role in Nigeria, in peacebuilding as well as business and development aid, which influence how Nigerians identify themselves and others.

Nigeria's involvement abroad

Nigeria's political history suggests that the Nigerian government wants to portray itself as the "big brother" of Africa (Ukiwo, 2013, 178) and sees its internal affairs as it's 'own business'. This can be concluded from how Nigeria behaves on the international stage. For example, when there is internal turmoil in Nigeria, the government does not request international help, it did not even resort to the UN for help during the civil war (Aaronson, 2013. 182). Another indication of this is the hegemonic tendency of Nigeria in regional affairs. Nigeria wants to dominate the Western African Organisation; ECOWAS, and manages to do this to a certain extent (Francis, 2009, 107). Also, Nigeria is a large contributor to international peacekeeping missions. In 2013, Nigeria had almost 3000 peacekeepers in Darfur and about 1500 in Liberia (Firsing, 2014, 53). The amount of money Nigeria has and displays and the large investments from foreign countries, such as the United States in the oil industry give Nigeria a strong bargaining position (Hoffman, 1995). However it must be said that often the country has given in to international pressure. For example, Goodluck Jonathan, the president, did call for an international conference about the situation with Boko Haram and allowed Britain and the US to help, after having received much international criticism.[16]

Nigerian foreign affairs seem to be aimed at downplaying greatly its structural internal problems with society at large. For example, Nigeria was sure to present its problems in the Niger Delta as problems dealing with 'terrorism' and not with unequal distribution. This way, their fight against this 'terrorism' fitted nicely in the global 'war on terror'. As a result, US oil companies and the US government increased their security forces and money supplies, to secure oil revenues for the Nigerian government, suppressing local discontent (Obi, 2011, 108). Also in discussions Nigeria only wants to talk about global threats and regional disturbances in West Africa, and not about their internal security issues. In a "Joint Way Forward" agreement between Nigeria and the European Union, Nigeria agreed to establish a dialogue about peace, security and stability, but no dialogue has been established yet.[17]

In terms of peacebuilding this means that the federal state has a very powerful position to maintain the status quo of local misrule and anarchy because the chance of unwanted international interference is small. But because the state does not do anything, local communities have sometimes tried to advance their causes at the international stage themselves. For example the Ogoni, a tribe of the Niger Delta, was in 1991 very effective in its international lobby against the oil industry in Ogoniland. Eventually, due to external pressure Shell was forced to stop its activities in Ogoniland because they were accused of human rights violations and exploitation of the Ogoni people (Obi, 2011, 103). However, this victory was short-lived, because the state sent troops to protect its oil

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[16] http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/16/us-nigeria-girls-summit-idUSBREA4F0BQ20140516
[17] http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/nigeria/eu_nigeria/political_relations/index_en.htm

revenues and started to suppress and chase away the Ogoni, leading to more violence (ibid.). This example only illustrates how the state dominates the internal affairs of Nigeria and tolerates little defiance or change, if it runs the risk of losing money.

Foreign involvement in Nigeria

International influence on peacebuilding in Nigeria happens roughly in two ways. The first way is by being directly involved in the country through multiple foreign NGOs and local projects. The second way is by indirectly financing and supporting all sorts of groups, schools, churches and businesses. The economic sector, especially the oil business, but also churches, NGOs private initiatives and peacebuilding are all financed by foreign investments. For example, the Jama'atu Nasr al-Islam, an umbrella organisation for Muslims involved in conflict relief has been known to be sponsored by Saudi Arabia. On the other side, many Christian NGOs as well as Nigerian departments of International NGOs all rely heavily on subsidies and donations from the (Western) world (Orji, 2011, 485).

The origins of these peacebuilding organisations or their sponsors are very relevant in terms of identity. Most of the help provided to Nigeria comes from the 'West' and the West is viewed with suspicion. Even developmental projects, like the construction of roads or bridges, or the handing out of vaccines are viewed with suspicion and sometimes called an "American conspiracy" as was the case with the polio vaccines of UNICEF in 2003 (Harnischfeger, 2008, 234). And it is not only Muslims that fear for pollution of their 'pure religion', also Christians in Nigeria have, through their religious revival become more critical and defensive towards Western involvement, because the West has become "decadent, and sexually irresponsible" (ibid. 236).

Not only the West exerts influence over Nigerians abroad and in Nigeria, also the Middle East has been appealing to Nigerians. Many Northerners leave for Saudi Arabia to get educated in the Islamic holy scriptures, which sometimes radicalizes them greatly when they return. This was the case with the Nigerian Muslim Brothers, who were sponsored to go to Iran to see how and when they could try to establish an Islamic State (Harnischfeger, 2008, 202-203). This implies that a religious dichotomization is not alleviated at the international level through international help in building peace. Rather, the fact that since the last years the global 'West' has become more and more opposed to a global 'Middle East' has only enabled 'North' and 'South' in Nigeria to widen their cleavages in peacebuilding by appealing to different 'allies'. Furthermore, they see their national struggle for peace, reflected in worldwide struggles between those that strive for an Islamic state and those that propose a western, secular or Christian style of government, and this makes them rather more determined to pick a side and to fear and demonize the 'other', than to seek dialogue with the other.

Conclusion

There is still a very long way to go if peace in Nigeria is to become nation-wide and long-lasting. Meanwhile, several things have appeared to be more effective than others. On a national level the federal character of the state seems to have contributed to relative peace and stability in Nigeria at large. The federation allows mutually exclusive world-views and their interpretation of politics and society to exist side by side in one nation. Also, the mixed and thus seemingly 'neutral' outlook of the security forces is in theory a stabilizing factor in tense regions. However peacebuilding by the government is largely ineffective, due to structural problems, such as corruption and mismanagement. This 'failed government' has led to a lack of trust in government peacebuilding which is reflected in a lack of trust in the federal police and security forces.

At the regional level the success and effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives depends greatly on whether the cause of the organisation and its underlying norms involve and are endorsed by the local communities. Initiatives such as the interreligious dialogue, or the organised strikes to battle social inequality seem to be most promising because they avoid identity politics as a method of peacebuilding and appeal to local communities. Also peacebuilding aimed only at the in-group of the peacebuilders is effective and quick and has the advantage of trust and tradition at its side. However, it is also limited because it does not tackle structural problems such as identity politics.

At the local level most projects seem to be successful in their direct goals. Dialogue groups and local development programs manage to improve ideas and images of the 'other', create segmented identities and relationships between groups. Nevertheless, structural root-causes of conflict also limit the effect of local projects. The current problem is that conflicts over resources remain and nothing is done to reduce local insecurity; in terms of both material and ideological insecurity. Also the unchallenged idea that power apparently cannot be *shared* between groups, making politics a zero-sum game, only reinforces the importance of ethnicity, clientelism and patronage.

Lastly, the international level seems to have a twofold effect on peacebuilding initiatives in Nigeria. Firstly, because Nigeria has a strong position at the international level, it has power to maintain a political status quo and is not so often challenged to change internal evils. This impedes peacebuilding further. Secondly, involvement of organisations labelled 'Western' or 'Arabian' increases suspicion and complicates the peacebuilding in Nigeria. The focus on a 'Nigerian solution' is therefore shifted to seeking a solution along the lines of one's ideology; albeit a Christian solution or an Islamic solution. This way the international level only strengthens the focus on identity and takes religious and ethnic insecurity to an even higher plane.

Chapter four: innovations for peacebuilding

You can identify the strands of identity mutation that make this country so vulnerable: nobody is in charge of anything. The result is that foot soldiers are springing right, left and centre, and everybody has gone back to their little tribe to fight their cause[18] - M. H. Kukah

In this last chapter I will link the insights of the last two chapters to the theoretical debates introduced in the first. The aim of this chapter is to show how the last two chapters, when taken together, provide a 'holistic', multilevel and interdisciplinary approach to conflict and peace. Also this chapter will show what theoretical insights this case study provides in relation to peace and conflict studies. Therefore, I will first of all very briefly outline how peacebuilding and conflict at different levels in Nigeria can be viewed as interrelated within one 'holistic' picture. This I will do by looking at the elements of insecurity, identification and identity politics across levels. Secondly, I will show how the results of my case study can add to the discussions about peacebuilding in peace and conflict studies. This way, it might become clear what can be learned from the case of Nigeria and what theoretical insights this analysis brings to the broader discussion and to understanding conflict and peace in other countries as well.

Peace and conflict in Nigeria: A holistic picture

To show how the analyses of chapter two and three can be merged into one holistic picture of both conflict and peace in Nigeria, I will now, instead of focussing on the levels separately, focus on the three aspects of my identity-analysis across these levels to connect both peace and conflict at the different levels with each other.

Insecurity

When approaching the insights from politics, sociology and psychology as described in chapter two and three in terms of feelings of insecurity, several measures in Nigeria have shown to be effective in curbing insecurity while others have only worsened insecure environments. Major contributors to insecurity have been the state and its misrule, as well as the national and regional discourse about politics as a zero-sum game and the continuous dichotomization of different groups in Nigeria. On the other hand, measures that seem to have taken away insecurity can be roughly divided in two. Firstly, some peacebuilding has aimed to reduce the presence or the impact of 'other' identity-

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[18] Matthew Hassan Kukah, as quoted in Adejumobi, 2011, 13.

groups. Secondly, other measures have aimed to *empower* local communities in some way, by giving them legitimate and non-violent ways of influencing their status and relation vis-à-vis the 'other',

Among the actors that have chosen for the first option, are the Northern states that, through their federal right, have introduced Sharia Law and subsequent laws that banish other faiths from city-centres. Also local groups such as the 'Hisba' or the 'Bakassi boys' can be seen as forces that have tried to secure inner peace y strengthening in-group (religious) beliefs and practices. Their law-enforcement measures have often been aimed at eradicating threatening practices, ideologies or ethnicity from their local vicinity. However as argued, the security provided in these cases seem to fail to account for peacebuilding, because it fails to address the problems underlying violent ideology, insecurity across groups, social, economic and political inequality and other causes and only results in more insecurity for the groups it is aimed against.

The second way, of peaceful empowerment and inclusion of others, can also be found in Nigeria at different levels. As I have tried to argue, the projects that focussed on gender, election violence, and the interreligious projects seemed to indicate ways of solving local problems by empowerment of local groups that allowed space for the 'other' to co-exist. That this power to overcome distrust can even become embedded at a higher level in the state-citizen relation shows the amnesty project, in which ordinary citizens were willing to participate despite their relation with their government, because the government finally seemed to help those in need and provide them with their long-sought after goals, normalizing their position in terms of identity vis-à-vis the government.

Therefore (in)security as a concept borrowed from identity-theory serves the aim of this thesis when it comes to connecting the different levels, across the continuum of conflict and peace with each other. Security, or insecurity, provides part of the context in which identifications shape and form perspectives and routes to action. The present relations between local communities, politics and civil-society, seem to have been established this way, because in Nigeria there is no universally legitimate, working and overarching system that guarantees security. Therefore different groups have sought different paths to establish security within this context, violent, but also not-violent. Religion plays a role in both as a means and an end, because religious beliefs can provide security, but at the same time needs to be protected. This has led to many defensive stances towards in-group identity, perpetuating the system of insecurity for minorities and out-groups but has also put peacebuilding at the heart of mostly local and regional religious groups of which the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum is the most successful example. However, this reaction of incorporating peacebuilding in religious world-views and ideas happens rather at a local level, and less at a higher level.

Selfing and othering

In the second chapter I have already argued quite extensively how different in-group and out-group identifications have formed through Nigerian history and have contributed to a deeply ingrained system of identity politics and patronage. However, when taking all levels together and looking at conflict and peacebuilding simultaneously two things can be concluded. Firstly, mostly *local initiatives*, such as dialogue groups, rather than government measures have contributed to a change in identification. Secondly, it appears that changes in identification are not easily transferred across levels or transferred from one person/group to another.

So firstly, relationships with the 'other' and higher-order identifications have been mostly established at the local and regional level. Dialogue-groups (the interfaith dialogue group and gender dialogue are examples hereof) that engage a broad spectrum of participants from different identity-groups have shown to affect the ideas that participants have about the 'other'. By getting to know each other and thinking together about problems, prejudice has in many cases been reduced or taken away. Besides, participants have been primed to view problems, not along salient identity lines, but cross-cutting. When considered even more general, the relative ease of changing identifications between identity-groups could also be seen in local processes that are not necessarily aimed at peacebuilding, such as the football fandom in Nigeria shows. But all these changes happen in small groups, in local communities, and are aimed at groups on that level.

At a national level, nothing really has been done to curb negative identifications across groups. As I have shown in the last two chapters, government officials, church officials and other higher order actors as well as national media all have an identity-coloured agenda and the routes to their goals go by means of severe 'othering'. Even despite the fact that the federal government has firmly tried to limit the possibilities of institutionalised identity politics by prohibiting official political parties be solely Northern or Southern, parties as well as specific politicians all serve their identity-groups through patronage and bribery (Ifeka, 2000).

Secondly, this is linked with the observation that changes in selfing and othering in Nigeria seem rather tied to the persons and levels at which they have been primarily changed. Several reasons might have attributed to that. First of all, as I have extensively shown, some nation-wide systems established at the national level determine to a great extent 'the rules of the game' especially in politics at a local level. So whenever two groups are inclined to reconsider their positions towards each other to form a more positive and overarching identity, the superseding 'system of in-group benefits through patronage and bribery' does simply not accommodate for newly established, higher-order identifications. And because this nation-wide system of North-South identity politics is too widespread to be locally changed, positive higher-order identification only seems to work at lower levels.

Lastly, another reason why more inclusive ideas about the 'other' are not easily spread, is because these systems are not only imposed on local communities, from above, but are sustained from below because thy have become deeply interwoven with daily-life. As Smith has extensively shown, corruption and distrust seem a way of life for most people in Nigeria, which are not questioned. Even among 'born again' Christians, who view peace, faithfulness and a strong personal morality and purity as belonging to their core values, corruption and political systems are just not addressed in conversation and sermons. As an effect, they are kept out of range and real problems are obscured (Smith, 2007, 216-220). This makes it harder for dialogue, which can uncover these deep-seated practices, to spread from the participants of the dialogue to the whole community. Since established norms are often just not discussed and entrenched in daily life, a need for change might not seem obvious to the community.

Identity politics

In this, and earlier chapters, I have argued that identity politics play an important role in Nigeria. In the context of insecurity, identity politics at a national and regional level prevent the development of trust among local and regional identity-groups. In the context of selfing and othering, identity politics encourage the view that one group can only advance its cause at the expense of another, and this calls for negative identifications between in- and out-group. So this system of identity politics and zero-sum game politics seems to be an important part of the context of peacebuilding at all levels of Nigerian society.

A good way to look at identity politics is to look at the reaction of actors in Nigeria towards the system of politics. Depending on the level and place in which a group acts, different perspectives on the system of politics are developed. Therefore this context not only determines *action* but different groups have tried to *change* this context as well. The case study has roughly shown three ways in which the political system in Nigeria is approached by different groups at different levels. First, some peacebuilders engage in the current system of identity politics. Secondly, some try and avoid politics in Nigeria at all and lastly, some try and use another system than identity politics. Several examples of the first approach have been provided in the preceding chapters. Politicians, ethnic groups, churches and national religious umbrella organisations, are involved in identity politics to secure their ideology and goals. As I have tried to argue: these actions do not provide long-term stability and security between and across identity-groups. Instead, this system contributes greatly to the culture of violence in Nigeria. Therefore, maybe more is to be expected from other ways of dealing with politics.

Secondly for some peacebuilders refraining from politics is the only way to establish cross-cutting identifications with others. Groups that do the former are mostly located at the *local level.*

For example, in many individual churches politics is said to be a "dirty game in which no Christian could participate" (Kukah, as cited by Adigwe and Grau, 2007, 91). Also development oriented NGOs and grassroots dialogue groups, as I have shown in chapter three, have tried not to get involved in politics, and not without effect. Maybe just because at this level politicized identities in the public sphere can more easily be 'undercommunicated' in these projects, a space can be created in which trust and mutual understanding can develop. However, when the regional and national level, from which the political system can hardly be separated, are deliberately excluded from peacebuilding, these projects can be expected to have little spill-over effect on these levels, as I have tried to show in chapter three.

Lastly, some of the peacebuilding in Nigeria shows prospects of a way of curbing identity politics without shying away from politics at all. Two examples might illustrate how this can be done. Firstly, the strikes of 2012, which involved class-identifications were that were cross-cutting through religion and ethnicity were empowering in a way that was legitimate and still had a political message. One could question of course, whether these strikes really showed some shared identity among Nigerians, or that it just showed that different groups have a shared enemy; the state. But in any case, these mass-mobilizations were a positive sign of constructive empowerment shared across different identity-groups.

The second example shows another way of doing peaceful politics. Some successful dialogue projects, such as the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum have also tried to make political statements by being inclusive in its political endeavour and sensitive to local religious perspectives. They understood what was important to local and regional communities, including deep-seated beliefs in their work, while at the same time ensuring their promises of trustworthiness by listening to many different perspectives and groups and including many non-leaders of different identities at a local level.

Although this might be a textbook example of how peacebuilding should be conducted, what, I belief, the case study of Nigeria shows is that it is also a very difficult and labour-intensive way of peacebuilding that is the exception rather than the rule. To generate that amount of trust and mutual understanding at a local level requires much skill and personal involvement from peacebuilders, a large change from participating individuals and most of all, it must curb a system that penetrates all levels of society.

The holistic picture

This brief summary of the findings of the previous chapters shows how processes that influence peace and conflict can be analysed through identity in a multi-level way. What I have shown in this section is how levels can be connected to each other, by interpreting peacebuilding and conflict

through identity, and specifically insecurity, selfing and othering and identity politics. This way I have tried to establish a larger context for peacebuilding that influences action, ideology and identification itself. For example, I have shown how the national level is of major importance for local level conflict and peacebuilding by showing how identity politics influences feelings of insecurity and selfing and othering which in turn influence perspectives on identity and ideas about how to build peace, and how to approach politics.

In addition, the analysis I have done shows how identity can connect conflict and peace without the need to rely on one approach or perspective, allowing for subjectivity to enter my perspective. All the different perspectives I have presented in this thesis have been approached as relevant for the identity of individuals and in-groups and as influencing their perceptions of society. Both the actions of militant religious groups as well as 'dialogue' projects have been considered as possible contributors to peace as well as conflict. This way I have tried not to adopt one perspective on what is right in conflict or peacebuilding, rather I have tried to establish what the different ways of approaching peace and conflict were.

In conclusion then, the analysis above sets forth a multilevel approach to peace and conflict. By looking at the relations between the levels I have hoped to provide for more context to the choices made by peacebuilders and agitators and their perspectives in terms of ethnicity, religion and identity in general. By showing how local details and social/political systems together form the framework with which actors deal, I have hoped to add to our understanding of the complexities of peace, conflict and their interrelations. In addition I hope to have done justice to the important insight of religious studies, that religious, cultural and ethnic identifications and practices are context-dependent and subjective in nature.

Identity and innovations in peacebuilding

How do the insights above then relate to the theoretical debates about peacebuilding? Several questions might arise when looking at the account above. Firstly I will briefly go into the discussion what the relation is between identity and other aspects of peacebuilding. Secondly, I will discuss whether or not my approach, by wanting to incorporate 'everything' is too broad to work with in peace and conflict.

Studying peacebuilding: insights from the case study in Nigeria

Already in chapter one I have touched upon the discussion between authors who stress that different things should be made the main focus of peacebuilding. I have discussed this mostly in relation to the discussion between primordialists and instrumentalists and their differences in focus on material and more cultural or ideological causes to conflict. However, I will take up with two others debates that

are relevant for the present discussion. Firstly I will see what my approach can say about the relative importance of the levels discussed and whether one should take precedence. Secondly I will go into the debate about the relative importance of different peacebuilding techniques, such as ' a 'multi-identity' approach versus a 'single-identity' approach.

Firstly, there is a discussion about the relative importance of the different levels of society. Lederach believes in a trickle-up and down effect from middle-level peacebuilding and stresses therefore that the middle level "has the greatest potential for establishing an infrastructure that can sustain the peacebuilding process" (Lederach, 1997, 60). However, Lederach nuances his position in other works to argue for peacebuilding as a 'web' in which all things are contextually linked (Paffenholz, 2014, 16-17). This is also what I have argued; to approach peacebuilding on different levels as a whole. Despite this nuance, Paffenholz notes that in practice internal and external NGOs, as well as foreign subsidies have not been divided across levels, but mostly focussed on the civil-society level (ibid. 23). Her analysis however shows that the middle-level is often not the most effective. She says: "it is *not* [urban based elite-NGOs] that have shown the biggest transformative potential of violent conflict" (ibid. 26). Rather, actions at the national level have generated the "biggest impact on peacebuilding" while local peacebuilding has had an effect on local communities without much of a "trickle-up effect" (Paffenholz, 2014, 22).

This casts doubts on the middle-level as the most relevant level for peacebuilding and when looking at the case study in this thesis, it seems to support these findings of Paffenholz. The most successful peacebuilding activities as described in this thesis were not necessarily those at the middle-level. NGOs and churches in their peacebuilding have had a limited effect and a lack of connection with the local level. On the other hand I have argued that national systems and processes as well as the impact of the government on conflict and peacebuilding, (although negative), is very large and felt throughout all levels of society. Also my thesis supports the observation that local peacebuilding often operates quite independently from higher levels, making it less likely that grassroots peacebuilding can deliver 'national peace'.

What Paffenholz suggests with respect to these observations is that peacebuilders at any level must take their 'context' as determining the means to peacebuilding. According to Paffenholz peacebuilders must accept the political aspects and complexities of society and try to use these to build peace. This way local realities and national political culture are incorporated in peacebuilding and therefore engaging in the context of a country (Paffenholz, 2014, 26-27). Although the case of Nigeria supports the argument that the system of politics is a large aspect of the 'context' of peacebuilding, I want to add a cautious note to this suggestion. As I have argued above, supporting politically biased or explicitly 'ideological' groups in civil society does seem to complicate situations of insecurity and selfing and othering in a country. The effect of choosing one group over another

and using politics in peacebuilding is a dangerous endeavour that runs the risk of excluding local marginal communities and identities, due to identity politics systems such as in Nigeria.

A second debate concerns the question is where the focus should be upon, whether this is 'dialogue' and inter-identity group relationship building, or what Powers has called 'single-identity' peacebuilding. Powers argues for an increased emphasis on 'single-identity' peacebuilding, because "Inter-religious peacebuilding faces obstacles that single-identity peacebuilding does not" (Powers, 2010, 344). This tension between interreligious peacebuilding and single-denomination peacebuilding I have tried to capture in chapter three. But where Powers thinks interreligious peacebuilding has more problems than single-identity peacebuilding and is therefore "often not most essential and effective" (ibid. 345).

I want to qualify this argument with the case at hand. I agree with Powers that single-identity peacebuilding has the advantage of being locally embedded in existing culture, tradition, beliefs and norms, but, as I have argued in the case of Paffenholz recommendation, taking (identity-)sides in a country in which identity is very salient, and has since long played a role in determining who gets what, is potentially worsening a system of patronage and identity politics. One important argument coming from the case study of this thesis is that there is no 'neutrality' of external, international parties, so single-identity peacebuilding always has an excluding effect on others. Therefore, it might be a quick and relatively 'cheap' way of providing conflict relief, it is - due to its nature - also very limited.

Multi-level identity analysis: inclusive or too broad?

Lastly, I want to reflect again on the concept of identity as an analytical tool. One might wonder, whether this is a very basic and encompassing way to review violence and peacebuilding, or whether it is too broad and loses focus on specific groups and viewpoints that can illuminate much more about the complex details of peacebuilding? Two things I want to say about this.

First, peacebuilding is primarily about peace, so which definition of peace one uses, determines very much what one thinks is important in building it. In the first chapter I have proposed a threefold approach to peace, consisting of inner peace, external peace and inter-relational peace. This perspective differs from more classic approaches by incorporating a personal aspect as well and by being very broadly defined. The reason for taking such a definition to peace was that this fitted with the identity-approach to peacebuilding that tried to be inclusive of one's context, and therefore it had to be very encompassing. So I only partially agree Michael Lund who argues that:

> A line needs to be drawn between peacebuilding and maximizing various levels of social, economic and political development possible in a given society. Otherwise, if the term

peacebuilding becomes a synonym of all the positive things we would want to include in development […], it becomes useless for guiding knowledge gathering and practical purposes (Lund, 2003, 28-29).

He might be right that when peacebuilding in practice is to include all developmental goals it loses its distinct purpose. However, when it comes to *analysing* peacebuilding, this criticism might fall prey to arbitrariness. In looking at what contributes to peace and what does not, we should not start with predetermined ideas of what contributes to peace and which aspects of society are somehow not, or less relevant for peacebuilding. However, one could object that my approach is also arbitrary because I haven't included *everything* in my case study, but made a selection as well. This is true, however, I have tried nonetheless to include many things, and also many *different* perspectives. As I have showed; ethnicity, culture, religious identifications, development, material wellbeing, political structures, even football matches play a role in peacebuilding and conflict.

Still, one could wonder if by using such a broad concept, many specific insights, gathered from in-depth small case-studies into peacebuilding are being neglected. Does the approach above not gloss over very valuable aspects of peacebuilding that are specific to the different levels? Of course this is true and these are aspects not captured by my analytical tool, however, this thesis has presented one view among many about peacebuilding. My approach therefore is not a substitute but rather an addition to single-level or single-actor analyses and has built on many of these to form a bigger picture. To combine a 'big picture' approach with different 'detailed' studies might add to the understanding of a case and might illustrate the interconnectedness of all these projects.

In conclusion, although the specific results of a case study such as presented in this thesis is different for every country, the main thing I have wanted to argue is that for many groups that are engaging in conflict and peace situations there is a wider context, namely on consisting of all levels of society. What I have wanted to show is how, when looking at the different levels, these peacebuilders can be found to be influenced by national structures as well as local considerations. So eventually what is the most important contribution of this thesis for peace and conflict studies, as well as for those studying specifically the role of religion (or culture) in conflict is that actors on specific levels never operate in the isolation of these levels. Rather, actors in conflict and peace situations are embedded in a much larger social context in which all levels and actors are relevant and in which ideas are not 'given' but are shaped through and also shape actively these very contexts. To approach peacebuilders and agitators in such a way does more justice to the complexities of their choices to fight, or to be noble.

Conclusion

This thesis has tried to answer the question *What does a framework that focuses on identity at different levels of society contributes to our understanding of both conflict and peacebuilding in Nigeria?* I have proposed that the contributions of a multi-level analysis to the case at hand must be sought in understanding the context of peacebuilding and conflict. I have tried to generate a picture that was sensitive to mutually influencing levels of society by taking an identity-perspective.

To establish the framework with which to analyse the situation of conflict and peace in Nigeria, I have focussed in the first chapter on the concepts of peacebuilding, conflict, peace and identity and their interrelations. I have argued that peacebuilding concerns matters of statecraft, democracy, money and power, as well as identifications, the protection of ideology and other insights drawn from sociology and religious studies. Besides, I have argued that all levels of society and their interactions are important for peacebuilding, because religious studies have shown that to understand religion (in conflict) one must take contexts into consideration, and a context includes also higher and lower levels of society. In particular I have focussed on three aspects of identity that makes it possible to analyse the national, regional, international and local levels in a same fashion. These three aspects are (identity) insecurity, selfing and othering and identity politics.

In chapter two, I have, analysed the conflicts in contemporary Nigeria at different levels based on this identity-framework. When it comes to national level influences on conflict, I have argued that many conflicts are caused by a lack of trust in the government of Nigeria. This in turn has fuelled problems with local anarchy and insecurity in local communities, who are not sure whether their survival as an identity-group can be guaranteed. Therefore, locally people have resorted to those they in fact do trust; people from their own identity-groups. In Nigerian society therefore there is a very large emphasis on ethnicity, geographic descent and religion. This is also reflected in the established system of politics, in which patronage, and identity politics are the norms of politics.

The persistence of this system is strengthened by the fact that there are large inequalities between different identity-groups in terms of social, economic and political development. Besides, throughout the history of Nigeria a national, regional and even local discourse has established that consists in a very negative othering between North and South, Muslim and Christian and different ethnicities. So while locally in-group connections are strengthened, regionally, identity-group differences are strengthened from both the national level and the local level, creating some very hostile social environments in regions with many different identity-groups and violence.

In chapter three peacebuilding initiatives have been analysed with respect to their effect on identity and peace. I have found that many peacebuilding initiatives have mixed accounts. For

example at the national level, the government has attempted at some peacebuilding and reconciliation, but the fact that the federal government has no firm grip on what happens at local or regional level has increased distrust and insecurity. For example, the fact that the federal system has allowed for Sharia law, has on the one hand, given people more freedom to shape local societies according to their religious beliefs which increases security by enclosing their core values and norms in a social system. On the other hand this system has increased fear and insecurity among Northern minorities and in the South. There the allowance for (Islamic) religion to be integrated in state government has reduced trust in government and has increased radicalized religious voices.

An effect of the failure of peacebuilding at a national level by the government is that regional level actors and local level communities have started to build their own 'peace'. Feelings of empowerment have appeared to be very important in peacebuilding, both through projects NGOs and churches as well as through local communities themselves. One way that local communities have empowered themselves is through vigilantes, and other local bands that propagate ethnic, religious or other ideological values. But also the radicalization of identity-groups in terms of their religious identifications can be seen as a reaction to social insecurity. Peacebuilding by NGOs, researchers and churches that increases feelings of empowerment in a non-violent way, and without relying on the inverted-refrigerator effect, seem therefore to be very effective in creating higher order identifications.

However, all the levels cope with limitations and problems. At a national level, the federal state of Nigeria falls short in following through on peacebuilding initiatives despite the fact that governmental attempts at reaching out to ordinary Nigerians might greatly curb fundamental distrust and could establish higher order identifications that incorporate citizen and government. So the effects could be very large, but instead state-level peacebuilding generates new problems and violence. Also, at the regional, civil-society level there are problems with peacebuilding initiatives that, through workshops and dialogues, rely on religious leaders and other middle-level leaders to 'spread' the peace. What I have argued is that political networks are highly susceptible to corruption, so they do not generate trust with the local communities. Besides, rather than generating large trickle-down and trickle-up effects in itself, the middle-level seems itself to be more influenced by higher and lower levels.

The problem with grassroots peacebuilding is mostly that it is limited in its scope; does not seem to have much effect on higher level political systems. These systems - in which identity-based conflict seems often immanent - are a hazard for locally constructed peace in the long term. However, the long-term effect of all sorts of local peacebuilding cannot yet be analysed. Perceptions of the construction of society and politics in the mind of ordinary Nigerians may be changing, but change in such large social mechanism needs much time and much effort across all levels of society.

In the last chapter I have combined all the findings above and argued how, by connecting levels of society with each other, actions of actors at these different levels, become more clear, and more nuanced by focussing on the context in which these actions take place. Besides, I have argued how the case study can add to debates within peace and conflict studies with respect to the relative effects that levels have on peacebuilding, arguing for a large role for the national level, a smaller one for the regional level and a rather isolated role for the local level in peacebuilding. Also I have argued how context complicates peacebuilding, making it potentially worse when getting involved in politics, while staying out of identity-politics has proven very hard at higher levels.

In conclusion then, the most important contributions of a multi-level analysis of peacebuilding and conflict in Nigeria to understanding peace and conflict are twofold. First, it adds the insight that levels never operate alone. Scholars stressing the importance of the grassroots level should be very aware of the influence of established national and even international discourses, disparities and political systems, while others who focus at the national level, must realize that local realities are very important to understand peace and conflict situations at a national level. Secondly, conflict and peace are not separated but mutually influencing each other. I will give one example of this thesis to illustrate their complex relation. Local armed gangs in Nigeria I have both analysed as ways in which local communities try to create peace, to secure inner and external security and stability, but I have also pointed to the fact that their actions also contribute to the root-causes of conflict and are in itself rather threatening and violent way of securing peace. So, for actors aims and goals involving peacebuilding can also be considerations that involve conflict and vice-versa. This makes it necessary to analyse both at the same time.

For Nigeria however the question arises, how to go from here? Well, the current account I have given peace in Nigeria is mixed. On the positive side, people's perceptions of their own identity and that of others have changed, to be more inclusive of other religions, or of the government. Also, material disparities have in some cases lessened and some people are empowered in a peaceful way. On the negative side however, there are large impediments to long-term, nation-wide peace, with the present 'culture of politics' being its largest obstacle. Local communities, shop owners, students and taxi-drivers will continue to feel insecure and will continuo to rely on their own identity-groups, expecting nothing of an overarching 'Nigerian government', as long as Nigerians can (rightfully) claim that: "Government in Nigeria is….we don't have government…is a whole big Banana-republic" (Fuelling poverty, 2012).

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