Planting Seeds In Dry Places
- The relationship between organizational legitimacy and building peace

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Abstract

It is indisputable that in order for an organization to act within a society, legitimacy is needed. A peace-building organization in a post-war society this might be even truer. This thesis attempt to answer how it is possible to understand legitimacy in relation to peace-building. By participating observational study and semi-structured interviews I have collected empirical material from a peace-building organization in Georgia, in the South Caucasus.

I have asked the question how a peace-building organization create and perceive legitimacy in a context that identify it as traitors, anti-nationalistic, don't trust them or work against them. The findings points at that the legitimacy exists within the relationship between the organization and different stakeholders and therefor is evolving and changeable. The mandate for peace-building is ad hoc and vague as different actors tries to influence what the organization should work for. Legitimacy becomes something hard to come by as the different actors have different views and goals that not necessarily correspond with each other.

Keywords: legitimacy, peace-building, civil society, Georgia, South Caucasus

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1 Introduction

The Republic of Georgia is located in the Caucasus, south of the Russian Federation and has since the beginning of the 1990s been involved in two wars- the 1992 conflict with the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia over their will to become independent states, and the war with Russia in 2008 as a result of a military escalation. Today both conflicts are regarded as protracted and the negotiation over a peace agreement is at a standstill. Much of the informal negotiations and peace-building is carried out by civil society organizations and by nongovernmental actors. The task is however far from an uncomplicated or uncontroversial one, as only 11 percent of asked Georgians (2011) claimed that they fully trust nongovernmental organizations, while the trust level is 97 % for the leader of the highly conservative Orthodox Church (http://www.crrc.ge/oda/).

Working as an organization in the field of peace building and conflict resolution in Georgia requires acceptance and legitimacy, but at the same time is there a prevailing tendency in the Georgian society to believe that "what has been lost by force, it can't be regained by peace"[3], the positive peace-building and negotiation is therefore sometimes something controversial and far from friction free.

Suchman (1995) argues that organizational legitimacy is connected to if the organizations values coincide with the surroundings, so called normative legitimacy or output legitimacy connected to the acts and activities of the organization. The organization that will be examined in this thesis, works with issues such as conflict resolution, peace-building, equality, social and political participation where they are advocating issues that are not supported by the state or the population. Which brings us to the question - if what they are working for is not fully accepted neither by the government or by the population, in whose eyes do they have the right to exist and where do they draw their legitimacy? The question is therefore to what degree does the organization perceive itself to have legitimacy and how

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[3] This was a statement I often encountered and basically refers to the Georgian warrior culture and that it is important to protect what is yours and also skepticism towards nonviolent peacebuilding.

does the organization try to create legitimacy in a political context that questions the organization's existence. Further on it is a question of what it is in the context surrounding the organizations, such as other organizations, politics and values that does or does not affect the space of maneuver for the organization in a protracted conflict society.

1.1   Aim and research question

The aim of this thesis is to outline how a peace-building nongovernmental organization acts from the organization's point of view. That makes this thesis a case study, which aims at testing organizational theory and legitimacy in a context of protracted conflict. It is important to acknowledge that peace-building differs from many other kinds of work that nongovernmental organizations do, as issues such as neutrality and politics, not only on a national but on a international level need to be taken intro consideration. It involves different processes and different stakeholders that have to be taken into consideration.

The question of organizational legitimacy and peace- building is relevant as Georgia is involved in protracted conflicts with/over South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Russia. Even if the situation is labeled as stable at the moment, no peace agreement has been signed. The ministry that formally works with the question is the State Minister of Reintegration, but nongovernmental actors such as the one that will be examined in this thesis do much of the peace building. As there is little trust in civil society and in nongovernmental organizations in Georgia it is a question of how the organization generates legitimacy in the absence of public trust. There is therefore an aim to outline in whose eyes do they need legitimacy and what do they do or not do to generate legitimacy for their actions?

Lastly is it important to understand peace-building as a process which includes addressing social justice, gender and minority equality, health and equal participation in civil society. Whereas social work organizations are seldom contested, peace-building organizations often are viewed as worthless or grant eaters, anti patriotic, liberal or even traitors – even though they might work towards the same goal, albeit with different physical expressions.

The research questions are:

How does a peace-building organization create legitimacy in a conflicted political context?

How does the organization experience legitimacy in connection to the conflict?

Including the questions

Legitimacy from whom? And *Legitimacy to do what?*

1.2   Outline

In chapter two, *theoretical framework,* I outline my theoretical framework about legitimacy (Suchman 1995), isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 1991) and the difference between conflict resolution and peace-building. Lastly I address previous research on the topic   of   how   nongovernmental   organizations   create   legitimacy.
In chapter three, *method and data,* it is possible to find material, methods, ethical reflections and criticisms. In chapter four, *analysis and discussion,* I outline my collected material from six weeks of participant observation studies and five interviews in a peace building organization in Georgia (ICCN). The thesis is summarized and concluded under the part "summary and conclusion", and lastly I raise the topic of future research.

2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter I outline my theoretical framework, based mainly on the concepts normative and pragmatic legitimacy as defined my Suchman (1995) and isomorphism by DiMaggio and Powell (1983, 1991). Thereafter I outline the concepts peace-building and conflict resolution and lastly I discuss previous research connected to peace-building, nongovernmental organizations and legitimacy.

2.1 Legitimacy

Uhlin (2010) argues that legitimacy is a socially constructed phenomenon and should be perceived as such. Today is there a large literature on legitimacy but there is also a great lack of consensus among scholars as to *what* it is. Suchman[4] (1995) defines different types of legitimacy, spanning from normative, pragmatic and cognitive, personal and consequential legitimacy and it is in this literature that this thesis is predominately anchored.

Following Suchman (1995) is it possible to understand legitimacy as normative reference framework and that the organization's actions are desirable, proper or suitable within a socially constructed system of norms and values. Corresponding to beliefs and definitions, is according to Suchman (1995) important features of creating legitimacy. Meaning that the organization is perceived (by others) to have *the right* to do something in the society. Which can be seen as a combination of procedural and physical constraints as well as how much the organization's values are connected to the values and beliefs in a society or context.

In order to make a distinction and limitation I will outline normative and pragmatic legitimacy. This is in order to address the questions, *legitimacy from whom* and *legitimacy to do what*? While normative legitimacy to a large extent is connected to values, norms and standards, pragmatic legitimacy or output legitimacy is connected to stakeholders and their

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[4] Suchman (1995) is influenced by Max Weber's thoughts and there are many similarities. Suchman manages however to formulate his thoughts in more contemporary and a more accessible manor.

demand for output and accountability. One cannot argue that there is one kind of legitimacy present in an organization's life but rather that it is circular reasoning and that the different parts of legitimacy are strongly connected to each other.

2.1.1 Normative/moral[5] legitimacy

Normative or moral legitimacy is connected to a normative system and answers the question of whether the action is proper and desirable within a given context. As an example of this, Suchman (1995) mentions that a hospital would not lose legitimacy even if its patients die, but it would lose legitimacy if it started to perform exorcism – even if the patients would live. Acting as others perceive the organization should act is therefore an important aspect *of normative legitimacy.*

This standpoint is however problematic on the field of Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as their role is far from fixed. On the international arena NGOs belong to the private sphere, in contrast to governments, and are seen as moral watchdogs. On a national level NGOs are sometimes seen as a part of civil society and to some extent as a political actor working with or against the government. Depending on who is watching the NGO, there are different demands, values and anticipations surrounding the organization (Bexell 2005). This makes it difficult to agree upon what and whose values the organization has to adapt to in a given context – presumably also for the organization. This puts a stress on the normative legitimacy as there might be a discrepancy between what the potential donor of the organizations might want and how they perceive the organization, what the target population need but also where they place the organization in relation to the state, and lastly also what the NGO itself wants to do. This raises a question that Edwards (1999:260) in an essay on International Nongovernmental Organization formulates as:

> "Questions of [non-governmental organisations'] legitimacy involve judgements and choices, struggles and negotiations about what NGOs do and who has what rights to influence organizational decisions."

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[5] Suchman uses both Normative and Moral legitimacy as concepts in his article from 1995 and meaning the same thing– I will use normative.

Today it is the prevailing understanding that NGOs defend a value that is of higher moral order - which NGOs tend to do by claiming to be good or do good by the sole claim of being "non-profit". Further on,the NGO's values are strongly connected to the organizational identity as it is argued that NGOs stand for participation, empowerment and democratization (Rusca &Schwartz 2012, Werker and Ahmed 2008). This is connected to *normative legitimacy*. There might be a diminishing of legitimacy if the values that the organization claim to stand for and their actions do not fully correspond. However, the organization may deviate from values– as long as it doesn't deviate too much from the population's values or provoke the population (Suchman 1995). The organization cannot therefore make claims that are too diverted from the surrounding and behave in a illegitimate way according to the context. However, if an organization has a strong reputation it is possible for it to lean back on it and by this create a room of manouvre and still be percived as a legtimate actor. This contests the normative legitimacy and on legitimacy in relationship to values and norms. Here trust becomes essential, which organizations gain by acting in specific ways acceptable by the society (Bolman and Deal 2007, Deephouse and Carter 2005, Tonkiss and Passy 1999)

Werker and Ahmed (2008) argue that it is possible for the organization to provide goods, trainings and services whose quality is problematic to measure and for any group to claim responsibility and accountability for or as Jarvik (2007:219) puts it:

> "They are neither elected nor paid by the population of the countries where they operate and therefore insulated from both electoral and marketplace of control"

Meaning that NGOs are not elected and seldom asked by any group to address an issue but have taken it on themselves to do so (ibid). One way of gaining normative legitimacy is by adapting to already well-known techniques and procedures. Meaning that the organization might choose not to deviate from the already accepted ways of doing activities or producing goods (Suchman 1995). This kind of search for legitimacy is strongly connected to the lack of measurable outcomes or outcomes that are difficult to quantify. Which brings us to the next question, *legitimacy to do what*?

2.1.2Pragmatic legitimacy

Peace-building organizations, such as the one that will be examined in this thesis, mainly work with soft activities that are not easily quantified. NGOs therefore have to focus on issues that can be quantified, but with the potential result of not fully addressing issues that might be problematic to quantify (Rusca &Schwartz 2012) and lastly evaluate. Political organizations diminish in legitimacy when they fail to fulfill their promises (Lipset 1982), the same thing should be true for NGOs. That is; if the organization claims to work to reach peace – if peace isn't reached, can they argue to do a sufficient job? Values and actions are strongly connected when it comes to who is doing the evaluating and what standards they claim to have.

The pragmatic or output legitimacy can be described as the following – do the organization's activities contribute or not contribute to peace-building and what are the outputs for the organization (Suchman 1995)? This must be seen in relationship to the interests that surround the organization. The legitimacy is therefore connected to whether the stakeholders perceive the organization to be receptive and supports them in their interest (ibid).

The pragmatic legitimacy comes back to who do the organization really work for and what is good output for the organization? It is axiom that organizations that are not self sustainable are dependent on other actors to survive. Stakeholders such as donor organizations and target groups are therefore important and while donor organizations have one set of values but also demands that the organization has to fulfill, organizations often have their own view of who are their target groups. Which stresses the relationship between normative and pragmatic legitimacy. That is: do the organization, the donor organizations, the state and the organization's target group have the same values and norms? And do they value the organization in the same way?

2.2   Isomorphism

DiMaggio and Powell (1983, 1991) argue that adaptation to the surrounding institutional values is one of the strongest ways for an organization to gain legitimacy, which corresponds with Suchman's (1995) thoughts on *normative legitimacy* as well as *pragmatic legitimacy*. However are there forces in the context that surrounds the organization that will try to constrain it to behave in a specific way and that the

organization doesn't always have a choice in deciding what values they want to adapt to.

Peace-building organizations normally exists in countries where protracted conflicts are going on, post-conflict societies or where countries might relapse into conflict (Ramsbotham et al 2005). This means that there is a high level of people who want and advocate for war and therefore are in direct opposition to what peace-building organizations strive for. As there is an absence of public trust in Georgia and a weak state it is further important to understand the context. The theory of isomorphism both reflects the question *Where does the legitimacy and right to exist come from (legitimacy from whom)* and *legitimacy to do what?*

Coercive isomorphism can be seen as both formal and informal pressure exerted from other organizations but also by cultural values and laws in the society that force the organization to behave in a specific way (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). For example, stronger or already established organizations may request weaker or newer organizations to adapt to the institutional demands (Eriksson- Zetterquist 2009). However, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argue that *all* organizations within a field affect each other by producing and reproducing the forcing structures in a never-ending process of institutionalisation. That is, all organizations contribute to the set of values regarding how things are done or seen to be done within the organizational field. In the context of this thesis, this is taken to refer to peace- building organization[6] (s) but also other actors that influence the institutional life such as donors, target groups and the government.

The second mechanism that DiMaggio and Powell (1983,1991) identify is *mimetic isomorphism/processes.* The mechanism proposes that organizations imitate more successful organizations within the same organizational field. According to the authors this is connected to internal insecurity and an inability to solve problems. The organizations therefore strive to develop tools and settings similar to organizations that are viewed as more successful. Suchman (1995) argues that organizations tend to adapt to already established techniques in order to be seen as legitimate actors. Resulting that arguably the activities of, for example peace-building organizations, might resemble

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[6] See 2.2 for a discussion on the difference between peace-building and conflict transformation.

each other because the organization knows what other organizations got funds for or that have been viewed as successful. Or for that matter – not stopped.

Sometimes is there a discrepancy between what the organizations articulate that they do and what they actually do, and by this perform a kind of symbolic action for the surrounding (Alvesson 2009). However: do the symbolic actions generate or diminish the organization's legitimacy? Meyer and Rowan (1977) argues via an example of a doctor treating a sick man that rituals and actions are important sources of creating legitimacy – both internally and externally. Hence, the image of what the organization says it does is just as important as what it actually does, meaning that doctors sometimes treat persons without the treatment being efficient, but that it is the action of receiving patients that creates and generates legitimacy. This can be related back to *both pragmatic and normative legitimacy*.

Normative isomorphism is the last mechanism that DiMaggio and Powell (1983) recognize as a force and is mainly connected to professionalism and the idea that people who are employed within the same field and have the same kind of education will be able to claim a sphere of expertise and hence legitimacy.

2.3   Conflict resolution and peace-building

In the overarching theories of conflict resolution[7] there is a wide literature with different concepts connected to ending conflicts and building peace. The literature spans from dealing with preventing conflict and ending conflict to peacekeeping, peace-making and peace building (Ramsbotham et al 2007). There is a difference between negative and positive peace-building, where the first mainly focuses on ending the violent conflict and the personal violence in relation to other groups. Positive peace-building on the other hand also addresses issues such as ending cultural and structural violence but also addressing the long term relationships between the conflicting parties (Galtung 1969).

The objective within peace-building is to build democratic institutions with the help of locally based NGOs and the civil society and to fostering and cultivating

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[7] The theories are normally addressed as "Theories of Conflict Reslution". The concept therefore describes both the theories in which peace-building, trust-building, conflict transformation are parts of, as well as being a concept in itself.

cultures of peace free from structural and cultural violence. It is indisputable that NGOs are important features for grassroots peace-building but it is decisive to realise that peace and conflict are dynamic processes with dynamic phases of which conflict resolution and peace-building are vital and crucial parts. However; neither peace nor conflict are linear or predictable but co-exist and are conjoined (Ramsbotham et al 2007).

Conflict resolution as a term implies that the deep-rooted sources are addressed and transformed and that the attitudes between fighting groups no longer are hostile. This however does not necessarily include being at peace but merely the end of violence and a level of acceptance of the other party, which is normally viewed as negative peace (ibid. Wallensteen 2002).

What lastly should be included in the theories of peace and conflict is the definition of *mediation*, which in its most simple connotation can be defined as the involvement of a third party to settle conflicts (Ramsbotham et al 2007), which also is the definition that will be used from now on.

2.4   Previous research

There are few papers that examine *how* the local peace-building non-governmental organizations create and attain this legitimacy with empirical material, or raise the question of whether they have it all. The literature on the concept of legitimacy spans from Weber (1987), Rusca (2005), Suchman (1995) to Deephouse and Carter (2005), and are all dealing with different aspects of the concept.

Walton's (2008, 2012) articles on peace-building NGOs' legitimacy in war-torn Sri Lanka, point out how the change in actors and values creates limitations for the peace-building and for their legitimacy (Walton 2008, 2012). The findings suggest that peace-building organizations often have a problem of legitimacy and that it often is connected to the values that the organization is supposed to stand for. Walton (2012) suggests that peace-building NGOs could enhance their effectiveness by spending more energy on creating legitimacy and on the process of the same. Because of the contested context that constitutes war, a NGO tries to create legitimacy for its cause with many

different actors but with the possible outcome of losing it in all as the stakeholder's aims seldom are conjoined (ibid).

There is a large literature on peace and conflict theories Galtung (1969), Curle (1999), Wallensteen (2002) and Ramsbotham et al (2005). However, there is a lack of focus on the local peace-building organizations that they all point out as important actors for peace. In contrast, the peace-building organizations and NGOs are seldom questioned or scrutinized – which I think this thesis can do.

In the literature, values such as impartiality, reacting to atrocities and being accepted the local government and population, are mentioned in connection to peace-building INGOs, and how they gain and create legitimacy (Bratt 2007, Ramsbotham et al 2005). This is regardless of size or scope of the organization. However, the prerequisite is not the same for a local non-governmental organization as it is for a international non-governmental organization (INGO) regarding for example survival, mandate and physical expressions. The basic prerequisites still exists but due to different contexts cannot be easily nor directly transferred between each other. Issues such as reputation, funding and having an established but uneven relationship with other actors and stakeholders make the search for legitimacy important for the LNGO (Walton 2012).

Examples of peace-building activities in the South Caucasus range from exchanging of prisoners of war and bodies of victims, dialogue meetings and deconstructing the image of the other as the enemy. At the same time is it problematic to evaluate peace-building activities as these are more or less never seen as efficient when it comes to making changes in the society (Hasanov 2013, Zolyan 13).

In many post-soviet countries NGOs became dependent on western based donor organizations for organizational sustainability, but where autonomy and self-definition was questioned. Financial support from the state would be a possible way of moving away from this. However, many NGOs have come under attack by the state and are subject to negative sanctions for not being on the same side as the government (Hamilton 2000, Jarvik 2007, Jailobeavas 2011). This raises the question of the government outsourcing governmental tasks to NGOs – so called New Public management (NPM). As NGOs and INGOs take over the government's tasks or become contracted by the government to execute governmental tasks and work, they also become accountable for outputs and outcomes towards the population. NGOs are of course important actors for peace, but should they be accountable for the outcome and

how do you measure peace? It is also possible to contemplate about NPM from the international community (INGO) to the LNGO and how much power the global north still has over the global south. In contrast to a post-colonial point of view, the emergence of NGOs can also be seen as a sign that the educated are discontented with the ruling politics and therefore fund NGOs to lobby against it and to emerge in the space of decision-making, Arguing for a bottom-up approach (Smith 1987, Hamilton 2000). In a post-soviet context still ridden by corruption and nepotism allocating governmental tasks to private companies is problematic. Further on is the government in these contexts often weak and the most of the governmental responsibilities are often neglected or taken care of by private actors, without the support of the government.

In sum: There is research on theories of conflict resolution and peace building. There is research on legitimacy for NGOs and even legitimacy for international peace-building NGOs but there is, as of yet, very little research on how local *peace-building* NGOs create legitimacy and how it diminishes. This research can therefore be seen as an attempt to contribute to the research on how a peace-building nongovernmental organization creates legitimacy, their view of the same and why the life of a peace-building NGO is complicated and sometimes dangerous.

3 Method and data

In this chapter I discuss my methods, i.e. participant observation studies and semi-structured interviews, and data. In this chapter I also discuss the ethics surrounding taking interviews in a post-totalitarian regime and in the Caucasus.

3.1 Participant observation studies and ethnography

The first questions I asked myself before going to Georgia was what do I know and what do I think I know about Georgia. I knew that Georgia was in a transition phase towards becoming more democratic but still suffered from the war with Russia in 1992-94 and 2008 with a numerous population of internally displaced people (IDP). I knew that the poverty rate was high and that the state was weak with little true political power. I also knew that there still is no peace settlement over the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The first aim of this thesis was to conduct it in Azerbaijan but with political happenings during 2013 I decided that Georgia was a good second choice[8]. However, my knowledge was limited and I decided that observational studies were appropriate in order not to translate the knowledge I had about Azerbaijan to the Georgian context.

The research method *ethnography* aims at trying to understand and describe the studied phenomenon by being in the same context and understanding the situation from the perspective of people affected by the phenomenon. By traveling to Georgia I could gather cultural, political and societal information via media and discussion and also

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[8] During the spring 2013, numerous of people were arrested without trials and hearings related to the presidential election and I decided that going to Azerbaijan would be too dangerous and instable, especially conducting a thesis like this.

share the feelings my studied objects had instead of just taking interviews and leaving (Lalander 2007). Being in the context made it possible for me to understand what problems the organization encounters, and how the organization is affected by the power structures in Georgian society, not only regarding the government, but also cultural power structures. This is something that would be very problematic to do in a quantitative way. A possible way could be literature or textual studies, but that would however not give the deeper insight of what the organization's life is like. It would also not make me understand contemporary events in the Georgian society – or even hear about them. The early ethnographers encouraged their students to leave the safe haven of the university to take part of the world they were studying, and I had to do the same. That is, I had to go to a conflict zone in order to understand the phenomenon of peace-building (Parks and Burgess as referred to in Bryman 2007).

One weakness with the method is that the studied objects, in this case the employees of the organization, might feel that they are being observed and therefore put on an act for the researcher. Also the lack in fluency in the Georgian and Russian language made it at times problematic and a little shallow as I often needed translation and explanations. This means that I did not always have full access to the field. The advantage is that prior to this research, as I mentioned in the beginning, I spent time in the South Caucasus and I have a basic knowledge on cultural expression, for example on the importance of relationships and trust building (Bryman 2002, Lalander 2007).

It is not the internal organizational structure that is the object of the research, but how the organization works in the given context and creates legitimacy in relation to the same. That means that I tried to understand what it is in the context that might influence the staff and the organization. That means politics, culture, relationships with donor and partner organizations and with target groups. In these observations I tried to observe the employees' everyday work, how they responded to demands from donors, from the government and from the organization's target group, such as minorities, internally displaced persons, journalists, civil society activists and the society at large. It is my conclusion that the following things were important to understand in order to make the interviews:

1. The historical political context (including the relationship with Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia). What was the conflict about?

2. The contemporary political context – Who is the stakeholder in the state apparatus? What does the government say about the situation and how is ICCN's relationship with the state?

3. What are the other stakeholders that the organization has to take into consideration?

4. For the organization I wanted to see what did they claim was their work and what was the physical outcomes. That meant that I took part in their projects and gave inputs and thoughts (hence participant observation).

May (2009: 195-197) outlines six parameters, which he states contribute to research validity: time, place, social circumstances, language, familiarity and social consensus. These parameters have been my guidelines during my observation of the organization's work.

I spent six weeks in the organization and I was by this able to observe the employees and the head of office. They were fully aware of the research aims and agreed to and encouraged it. Furthermore, I was to a large extent involved in the same processes as the members and staff of the organization. I did not only observe but I was a member of the organization, which is important in the context (Strati 2000). The latter brings us to the dilemma of detachment in participating observation studies that I will further elaborate under "ethical reflections, criticism and limitations".

3.2   Semi-structured interviews

In order to understand and get explanations about what I have observed, I have conducted what are known as semi-structured interviews. I have asked questions connected to my theoretical framework: about legitimacy and the political context and happenings; but I have also given the informants a lot of freedom to answer the questions with their own experiences and thoughts (Bryman 2002:301). The main reason for doing so is to enhance cultural understanding and also due to the fact that the cultural context is based on relationships and trust between people. With this I want to emphasize the importance of spending a lot of time building trust in order to get people

to feel comfortable sharing views and thoughts. I believe that my physical appearance as a young woman made it problematic for me to enter the formal meetings as I did not have the legitimacy to do so. However, interviews and simply being in the office space made it possible to ascertain the contents of the meetings anyway.

I have conducted five semi-structured interviews and I chose to only use participants from the office as I was interested in seeing from their point of view. I wanted to see what they feel they do and also how they feel that the surrounding and the political changes in Georgia affect them. The interviews were held at the office space in the International Center of Conflict and Negotiation and took on average 70 minutes per interview, which were later transcribed.

My presence in the region for a prolonged time made it possible to access private thoughts and reflections of the participants. This has given me the opportunity to draw connections between contextual happenings and what the organization articulated. A disadvantage on the other hand is that Georgia, and the South Caucasus as such, has a very special political and cultural climate, which I have endeavored to be aware of when conducting, transcribing and interpreting interviews. Hence: I have tried to not to read cultural prejudices into the interviews, but aimed to be aware of my thoughts and my own understandings of the context through reflexive practice.

I aimed at an objective and non-judgmental standpoint but I also understand that my own culture and previous knowledge about the Georgian culture influenced my thoughts. My first and foremost prejudice was that discretion and privacy are very important features. I also believed that it would be problematic in terms of getting people to share their views in an honest way and I thought that they, due to the rumors of surveillance (see for example Svd 2013-10-30 "Svensk teknik i Georgisk avlyssning" and Hammarberg 2013), would not feel that they could speak freely, especially regarding the politics and political actors. That did not come true.

Lastly, I am aware that my previous work (Autumn 2012) in another peace building/conflict transformation organization in the neighboring country, Azerbaijan, has influenced how I understood the context and the organization's work. But in my opinion it has been mainly beneficial, as I had an understanding of what kind of problems they might encounter. However, Azerbaijan is also a completely different context with different political changes and problems such as being semi-authoritarian, less developed and a stronger risk for relapsing into war with Armenia.

3.3   Data

I spent two week doing purely observational studies where I held informal conversations with the staff of the office. During these weeks I took notes on where the conversation took place, who was involved, what topics were discussed and how it was related to the office's work. The observational studies are outlined and labeled Memo and then a date. In the notes names are mentioned, which I later took away to fulfill the discretion criteria, as I did with the interviews.

The interview guide is based on the first two weeks of observational studies and my theoretical framework on legitimacy and isomorphism as described in chapter 2 – theoretical framework. The interviews were all conducted at ICCN in one of the conference rooms and I used my observational notes to analyze my interviews. While my aim was to do six interviews it was not possible in the end and I had five. I asked individuals for interviews on the basis of how important I thought their position was in the organization, how long they have been working in the organization, how their work is connected to peace-building and if they were interested in doing an interview. The interviews were all conducted in English and since it is neither their nor mine native language it is possible that some things were lost in translation. Here the transcripts made it possible for me to go back and clarify things – if needed.

My interview guide can be found in the end of the thesis. I have outlined my material from the following standpoints: the aim of the organization, how the organization works with other organizations and their view on the relationship with donor organizations, connection with politics and their view of themself. In this I have strived to focus on how organizational legitimacy and peace-building efforts are related. Lastly I analyzed the interviews with the help of my theoretical framework regarding organizational legitimacy and the knowledge I gained from being in the context.

3.4   Ethical reflections and limitations

Participant observation studies are problematic. As I have become close to the object I have studied, I have developed emotional relations towards it, and at some points of my

research I have to some extent taken a step back instead of pushing for information, in order to spare people's emotions. I have at other times found it very difficult to take a step back and detach myself from the people at the office and from time to time I became emotionally involved in the office work instead of just observing it.

What I had to take into consideration is that there was a rumor of surveillance of the citizens and NGOs in Georgia. Therefore, a great level of discretion, trust, sustainability and a proven interest in the region is important to access information (Vetenskapsrådet 2002). I have therefore changed the name and sex of everyone at the office. In all research which include studying people and behavior, discretion is essential and needed in order not to unintentionally hurt anyone. Other criteria I took under consideration is the right of the informants to determine what they want to answer, how long they want to be part of the study and that they can withdraw their participation at any time. All this was made clear from the beginning (ibid).

If I were to involve too many actors – such as donors, partners or other organizations on the field I would have needed more time. It is also a question of accessibility, and while I could guarantee that I would have access to the employees of the organization in that space of time, it was not sure that I would be able to speak to partners and/or donors.

What needs to be taken into consideration is that mediation, negotiation and peace- building with Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia was, and to some extent still is, regarded as extremely controversial and delicate in the political sphere in Georgia. This is true of the domestic political issues as well as the international implications after the Russia- Georgian war in 2008, people have in the past not always been willing to share their thoughts.

Lastly: I have chosen to use to concept *legitimacy* instead of the concept *trust*. The two are very similar but as the latter also exist as a concept within peace-building and addresses how an actor aims to create trust between two conflicting parties (Ramsbotham et al 2005), and is therefore not adequate to use in this thesis.

4 Analysis and results

In this chapter I outline material gathered from five interviews with employees at International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN) and observation of the same. The material is arranged from the following standpoints: the aim of the organization, ICCN and other NGOs, their view on the relationship with donor organizations, connection with politics and lastly the relationship with the wider population and the organizations view on legitimacy. Lastly in this chapter I discuss my findings and possible future research.

4.1 Background to peace building in Georgia

As noticed in the introduction, Georgia is located in the south Caucasus and is a post-Soviet and post-totalitarian country with rapid changes in the political sphere. The contextual actions relating to this thesis emerge from the conflicts with the breakaway regions, also known as the De Facto states, of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 1992, and the Georgian – Russian August war in 2008.

In 1992 the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia expressed a wish of independence from Georgia and armed conflict broke out between Georgian and (Russian-supported) Abkhazian forces. As a result, between 1992 and 1994 almost 250 000 people, mainly ethnic Georgians, fled the regions as Georgian forces were not able to withstand the military pressure by Russia.

In August 2008 the war with South Ossetia and Russia erupted in a presumed response to Russian and South Ossetia military provocation and Georgian armed forces moved in to South Ossetia. On the morning of August 8, Russia moved in to Georgia via the Roki Tunnel in the name of peace enforcement (Phillips 2011, Cheterian 2008).

Since 2010 big financial actors such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) have abandoned their financial and humanitarian aid and there is a slow transgression and plan to leave Georgia also by the European Union and its monitoring mission (memo EUMM briefing room/Gori 2013-04-25). The main reason is the recent transformation in the political sphere towards democratization, explicitly that in October 2012 and 2013 Georgia's first free and fair elections in history was conducted.

For the sphere of civil society, the election resulted in a change in ministerial appointments, as a lot of people from the civil society moved to political posts, including the post of Minister of Reintegration – Paata Zaakersisvili. During the spring of 2013 he expressed that conflict resolution no longer is part of what the government wants to articulate towards the society, but that the new government are looking for ways to build peace. Further on does he claim that organizations from the civil society might be viewed as partners in this area (Commonspace extra). In the Action Plan For Engagement (2010) the Ministry for Reintegration stated that:

> "The heart of the Action Plan is a catalogue of projects that seek directly to improve the welfare of the populations of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia—so that they have the same opportunities available to the rest of Georgia—and support interaction between divided communities."
> (Action Plan for Engagement by the government of Georgia, 2010:4).

The regions are considered to be a part of Georgia and they, as the name of the ministry implies, should be reintegrated to Georgia. This is still the leading document for the government on this case and it is not possible to access anything else.

Today is it still possible to notice the conflict, as Russia puts up CCT cameras, barbed wires and army bases along the ABL[9]. This affects Georgian citizens who have their land patched up and are detained when trying to cross.

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[9] Administration boundary line. As the entities are not fully recognized as autonomous there is also no border. Russia is creating a border, which violates Georgian territory and international law. In 2013 more than 40 square meters of Georgian territory came under Russian control (Memo ABL/EUMM 2013-04-25).

4.2   Case study ICCN – Creating legitimacy and building peace

4.2.1 ICCN: aim and origin

International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN) was established in 1994 and on their website is described as an organization that works for positive peace- making and strengthening civil society, human rights and gender equality trough trainings, research, advocacy and lobbying. They run three types of programs: on gender and minority issues, on conflict transformation and on civil society, and they merge into the field of building peace, conflict and negotiation (ww.ICCN.ge 2013-04-26). When the head of the organization, Gio, is asked why he started the organization and what the aim was, he explains:

> "The aim was to mediate conflict and find the possibilities to develop dialogue with the conflict parties in Georgia and in the Caucasus. At that time we had three targets, Abkhazia, Ossetia and Nagorno- Karabakh."

What Gio addresses is the three conflict areas in the region, and the aim from his point of view is the engagement and dialogue with the conflicting parties, meaning Georgia and Abkhazia and South Ossetia (1992). The aim was also somehow to find ways to mediate between the conflicting parties over Nagorno-Karabakh (1992), namely the neighboring countries Azerbaijan and Armenia. When I ask about if the aim of the organization has changed he replies that:

> "it is broader than it was before but basically it hasn't changed. Since unfortunately the areas of conflicts did not settle since then."

Here it is possible to notice that the target was to deal with the people living in the war torn regions. However does he also notices that there has been a change in the aim but emphasizes that it is still important to address the conflicts because they are still ongoing as no peace has been reached. Stine, who joined the organization later, gives a different picture as to what she thinks is the aim and whether there is difference between then and now:

"No, I don't think that there is a difference. The mission that we had and that we have is the same. Which is first of all to contribute to the inserting democratic values in Georgia, strengthening democracy within the society and conflict resolution and prevention through these perspectives – peaceful resolution of the conflicts. The aim is the same.. "

Here other aspects of the conflicts is mentioned, resolution and prevention, but still are the protracted armed conflicts in the center. What she refers to is more what normally is considered positive peace-building, that is addressing social and democratic values in the society, while what Gio refers to is more towards conflict resolution[10]. Asta tells me how she perceived the aim of the organization during the 1990s and the aim today. Asta:

"It started with trainings for IDPs for four years every single week and it was supported by Norwegian and Danish Refugee Council. So we worked with IDPs[11] every single day. After that we decided that the society need to stop talking about conflict, but that it was time to start talking about peace building and we transformed our program from conflict resolution to peace building. Then BP [British petroleum - author's note] entered the country and it was a very interesting period and our peace-building transformed into community development. Because we were running a lot of different things simultaneously – conflict training, peace building but we were working with communities and developing their skills and work. It was quite the transformation."

Asta talks about a transformation in the organization's work from humanitarian aid, to peace-building and lastly to community development. These can be seen as three very broad areas and, as Asta also argues, the work is very diverse. Asta tells me that BP entered the country and implies that it was somehow connected to transformation in society but also of the office work. What is notable is that it was due to BPs involvement that they really changed their direction. Here it is possible to notice that ICCN is not an isolated entity but affected by others, and that the work and output are related to the NGO-donor relationship.

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[10] See 2.3 for the theoretical framework on peace and conflict.
[11] Internally displaced person/people

4.2.2 ICCN and donor relationship

It is a fact that the NGO field is highly competitive, with organizations in constant struggle over scarce resources in order to survive. The first resource is the international donors themselves and as the conflicts become protracted and prolonged the prevailing feeling is the donors withdraw from the region with the argument that nothing is happening (Gio). The connection with other organizations is often very limited. The reason for this is because it might compromise the chance of survival. Anna notices:

> " it is about connections with donors and it is a about privatizing donors. Sometimes the sharing happens and I am happy that happens. If someone is working on something and that we can cross-fertilize".

The reason for this is connected to the funds that the donors can provide. The project proposal is described as a competition where grants are either won or lost - normally each grant is allocated to just one organization or one project. This leaves the organization in a situation where it lives on a project-to-project basis. Another topic that Anna raises is the topic of proving to the donor that the projects that they want to do are worth doing. She notices that one of the bigger projects that they were doing was not fully supported in terms of money and time. When Gio is asked the same question it comes back to:

> "There are some donors that are favorable to projects and some are not and sometimes they are changing. Sometimes they become more favorable and responsive, and I see that there are some donors that just want to keep themselves out. I don't always understand why but we are considered to be, what you know, thinking creatively and writing good project proposals and projects. That is the general overall view of what we are doing".

In the quotation above there is general feeling that there is a great insecurity related to the donors and that sometimes they respond to ICCNs proposals but that is not always the case. There is insecurity on the reason to why the donors sometimes just don't respond. The demands are getting higher and that isn't only connected to thinking creatively, creating all the documents needed and to keep the proposals to fit the requirement, but also that familiarity and code of communication is getting more and more important. Which ICCN have to adapt to in order to be perceived as a legitimate actor. When Stine is talking about the donor relationship she contemplates that:

"As you know we have our field of expertise and field of work and of course to some extent we are restricted within this field. But of course the donors also has their requirements and field of interest so it is a combination of their sphere of interest and our field of expertise and work. Usually, for EU just opens calls for conflict resolution projects or human rights or strengthening democratic values and within this there are spheres of interest. We are trying to adjust and to submit our proposals. In this case project proposals are very important because you might have a very good idea but if they are not articulated well and if they are not justified with the supposed results and indicators of these results. Of course the donors have their requirements and the proposals must be submitted within the existing format they have and has to be very well explained and articulated and justified."

The foundation of the relationship with donor organizations can be summed up to the interests of the donor organization, and what ICCN can provide in terms of existing knowledge and expertise and outcome. However is it possible to notice that ICCN have to adapt to specific ways of articulating and justifying project proposals in order to receive them. Just submitting proposals is not enough but also a specific language and terminology is needed for the proposal to be accepted.

What I observed in project meetings was that there was a search for code words and things that would make the donor organization see that ICCN is a suitable partner for cooperation, for example "Agent for Peace". Which of course is something that all organizations have to do in the search for grants but the question is if the organization sometimes claims to have values they don't really have in order to win projects and grants. One example is after training on gender equality where one of the staff noticed that she wasn't sure that men and women really are equal or that they should be treated as such (memo 2013-06-05). Stine notices:

"Of course it remains important to have donors, not only financial but also when it comes to support in values and our readiness and motivation to work and our ability to change the things that we want to change."

It is important to have donors not only for the financial support that they can provide but also that it is important to get support for thoughts and values. But in the quotation above she clearly sees ICCN as an active subject and not an object. The funds are there to help them realize their views and values and not vice versa. However, as Gio noticed in the beginning of this part – the field is becoming more competitive which is evident for all organizations within the peace-building field.

The question is if it is intentionally that ICCN adapts to the values that the donor organizations have? ICCN have been working since 1994, which for the Georgian

society is as old as an organization can get without being the state[12], and therefore have a solid reputation. In order for that they need to have some background that supports their claim to advocate values. Which comes from that Gio and the aim he had when he first started the organization – addressing and dealing with the conflicts within Georgia and in the Caucasus. But as the conflicts become prolonged there is a transgression and transformation in the donor community. Gio contemplates about the relationship with the donor community:

> "There are several stages in this for example the humanitarian assistance that was given in the 90s was suddenly abundant and transgressed to development program because the country does not any longer need the humanitarian assistance. Now we need the programs of development and that is true, and that is even better than humanitarian. But then there is the idea that also the development program also should be removed and that several spheres are already done."

Today donors don't focus on conflict resolution and that there is reluctance from donors to work with the August 2008 war. It is also connected to what is viewed essential to focus on from the donor organizations point of view. Peace-building is not interesting or important to focus on – despite the fact that no peace-agreement have been reached and that there still are important aspects that hasn't been dealt with, for example the repatriation of the internally displaced persons/IDPs and the almost daily bordarization.

Coming back to thoughts on legitimacy it is possible to contemplate how much ICCN adapts to the donor organization's values and views in order to be perceived as a legitimate actor, (according to normative legitimacy). Donors are a strong coercive force in the context that pungently dictates the agenda. Even if there is a space of maneuver for the organizations, it is still the one that can articulate its proposals best that will win the grants. The competition means that the field of peace-building organizations becomes increasingly homogenous in order to be perceived to do what the few donor organizations wants them to do and be.

4.2.3 ICCN and other NGOs

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[12] Some would argue that the state is younger and that it was in 2003, during the Rose Revolution that the state actually emerged.

Project activity and project proposals are central activities at the office and much of the office's energy needs to be diverted to this. Cooperation, sharing of ideas and meeting with other organizations are described as something time consuming, and even when there is a will to do it, it rarely occurs. Stine notices:

> "You see, the point is that in general there is much talk that NGOs should interact with each other, that it is important and effective and the NGOs can show that they know the others do projects they implement. First because of evading duplication and of complementarity. However, it doesn't happen frequently because of competition between NGOs and the limited resources. Actually the most of them welcome cooperation and interaction but in practice there is a lot of information that you don't know about the other organizations who have the program or projects in the same field. It is not because they hide something but they are so much concentrated on their own activities and agendas that they just don't have time for interaction. But they meet at different forums and during such forums they exchange their results, but not on a regular basis"

From the quotation is it possible to surmise the kind of world that the organizations live in. They may unintentionally and indirectly work against each other and therefore their work might be counterproductive. The sole focus on their own projects makes cooperation problematic and seldom occurring. It is also possible that, because many organizations compete for the same proposals, they adopt related values and expressions and thus become increasingly homogenized.

In a report produced by ICCN, the organization addresses the challenges to the civil society sector in connection with peace-building (Supporting Georgian Civil Society in Peace-Building 2010). In the report three points are outlined: firstly, that there is a lack of debate within civil society on what peace-building and conflict is; secondly, that there is a lack of coordination and cooperation in peace-building activities with other organizations within the same field; and thirdly, that the competitive environment affects how the different actors perceive and treats each other. Another issue was raised when I ask about relationship with other organizations on the same field. Asta notices:

> "I also participated in dialogue process and was very interesting but it was some kind of stagnation and it was the same people. It was 2001 and 2002 and I was actively involved in the dialogue with the Abkhaz and the Caucasus format. It was a very nice work and very nice meetings but it was always the same things and the same meetings. The same of nothing."

This view is further supported by Stine who claims that:

> "I can't say that they imitate but I can bring you one example when ICCN and another, quite renowned think tank and NGO in Georgia were doing the same dialogue process, approximately within the same sphere of time. I am talking about the Georgian – Abkhazian dialogue of experts and we didn't know much about each other. In this case it was the same experts that participated in these meetings. You know that the expert community working on Caucasus issues and on Russian – Georgian relations. I think that the expert community in general is very small so it quite limited and closed circle so you might understand why they experts where the same. "

Here, both respondents highlight that there are few individuals involved in the peace-building and mediation process and that little or nothing is happening on the field. Stine talks about how two organizations, unintentionally, were doing the same kind of project and dialogue. Even if the similarities in the projects seem unintentional, it is not surprising. Conferences, trainings and workshops tend to take very similar forms and physical expressions – whoever runs the project or facilitates the activities. Which is connected to *what is allowed to be addressed and where.* Notable is that there is a culture of doing things in very similar ways via "TOT" [training of trainers]. or "Soviet-style" conferences[13] (memo 2013-05-17). Which has a lot to do what kind of activities that the donors support. Here is evaluation important, and where people participating in a workshop are something that easily can be measured and quantified – in contrast to the level of peace in a protracted conflict context. Where it is impossible to bring South Ossetians and Abkhaz to Georgia, the meetings have to take place in another country, emphasizing the picture that the conflicts are far from solved.

It is possible to wonder if ICCN is forced to act in a specific way, that is do they copy other organizations activities? On the one hand, it is ICCN's task to address sensitive issues, but it is very clear that there are topics that still are not allowed to be discussed and brought to the table – for example the return of IDPs and the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Which can be seen as a coercive force in the context (DiMaggio and Powell 1991), meaning that there is a political red line that all organizations have to respect in order not to be perceived as to controversial or risking to be the subject of negative sanctions. The organizations within the field of peace-building therefore become increasingly homogenous and might adapt to how other organizations act and solve problems in order to stay out of trouble and to be perceived

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[13] A gathering where very few individuals are allowed access, where the topics in general are very uncontroversial and can at times be seen more as a way to report information rather than trying to discuss and solve a situation.

as a legitimate actor on the field. At the same time are they not making any effort to be synchronized enough to formulate, work and reach a common goal, which is peace. If ICCN had spend more time cooperating with other organizations it could strengthen the field of peace-building and legitimacy for the same, as in Sri Lanka (see Walton 2008).

4.2.4 ICCN: and the state

From the government's point of view, there are some topics that are not allowed to be discussed openly, such as the return of IDPs and the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Addressing these questions would be considered as crossing a political red line (Gio 2013-05-07), other not fully that explicitly declared by the governments, is the question of human rights and the atrocities during the war. This means that conferences and discussions mainly stick to subjects that are not too controversial and are unlikely to create political problems for the people involved. It is still considered problematic to address who started the August war in 2008 and also Georgia's role and participation in the conflict. Things that are important to discuss at some point to be able to resolve the conflict and build a lasting peace (Galtung 1969).

It is described how the previous government, under Saakashvili, blocked them from participating in peace-building and mediation efforts. This because they had argued that it was important to mediate also with Russia (Gio 2013-05-07). Today the situation appears to be different. The State Minister of Reintegration Zaakerishvili has at times declared that the new government is aiming for peace and that both Abkhazia and South Ossetia should be reintegrated to Georgia. The official statement is that by providing a strong welfare state and strong social support for the citizens both South Ossetia and Abkhazia will chose to be integrated into Georgia instead of Russia (MEMO 2013-05-18 Conference about Conflicts in South Caucasus).

Before the parliamentary elections in October 2012, the situation was quite difficult and civil society was often ignored in their attempt to influence the government and the peace process. Stine argues that today the situation is different due to the fact that the new State Minster of Reintegration previously was involved in civil society. She argues that there is future where ICCN and civil society as such will be more involved in the decision-making process and connected to the state (Stine 2013-05-

02)[14]. This is largely connected to Gio's close relationship with the new government and especially the former Prime Minister Ivanishvili.

The question is however if it is possible for the peace-building organization to become to close to the state? If the organization is stopped by the government from executing peace-building activities they can't do much work, if they are too close to the state the Abkhaz and South Ossetian's might view them as part of the state. Or should ICCN be seen as messengers who can advocate values and views without being accountable for things to be realized? Therefore: should peace-building organizations be a part of the state or mainly aim for neutrality and distance itself from it? And is it possible to do that in a context such as Georgia, which still very much is, described by the staff as, a tribal society? The connection to the state could enhance the thought that ICCN is elitist and out of touch with the target groups. Anna is more cautious in her expressions and argues that:

> "No, I just don't see what can be done. These people and civil society is working and running their projects and I don't know how or what the state can do. I have to read what he has declared. He is, hum, a person that comes from our circles and he is a man you can speak to and I think that closer relationship between government and civil society can happen – this time. But I don't see what shape it can take."

She doesn't exclude the idea that there might be future cooperation, but she is also very insecure about what form it might take. Further on, and as long as the government doesn't acknowledge gender and minorities rights, little can be done:

> "I remember not long ago, I brought some gender issues to an absolutely gender blind government and we have prime minister that is absolutely somewhere else. He doesn't feel or know anything about gender and makes huge and unforgivable mistakes. So probably some directions will be developed well and others probably not."

The distrust towards the government is quite high. Asta contemplates:

> "Today? I think it is not about bad relationship and NGO sector but it is about political taste and political will. Whom you trust and whom you like and not. Today's government is not established and they are not sure of themselves. On one hand is the PM[15] super powerful in terms of being a billionaire and PM. The situation is not clear."

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[14] It should be taken into consideration that this staff member left the office to work at the Ministry of Reintegration before I left the office in June 2013.

[15] This was when Ivanisvili still was Prime Minister (PM), he left his post as PM in October 2013.

In the quotation is it possible to notice that the tribal feeling noticed and argued for. Meaning that it is important to be friends with the one in power in order to be able to do anything, and the organization to some extent has to adapt to some of the government's rhetoric – if they want to stay on their good side. At the same time – as I noticed, ICCN is trying to start a conflict with the government and challenge the same rhetoric and values. Creating a crisis of legitimacy both internally and externally, as one part of the organization wants to work more with the government while other part argues that they barely can be trusted.

It is notable that the opinions about the state differ within the organization. While some argue that they can see the government as a potential partner for cooperation, others are more ambivalent and take a step back. Which to a large extent can be attributed to the lack of trust and the instability of the government. It is also a question of what interest does the state have and who is the stakeholder in this matter. While the Ministry of Reintegration is important, the very limited, if next to no -opportunity to cross the borders in any direction makes it almost impossible for governmental representatives to meet with Abkhaz and Ossetians. NGOs are therefore the most important actors dealing with overlapping the gap with the Abkhaz and South Ossetians and therefore have to have legitimacy also in their eyes[16].

Explicitly: Donor organizations uses the LNGO to create peace and implement values, but which might start a conflict with domestic stakeholders such as the state. Which stresses the normative legitimacy, as the organization can be perceived as anti-nationalistic, liberal, pro ethnic and minority rights and working against the highly conservative Orthodox Church and the state. ICCN is in conflict with the views and

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[16] I travelled to Abkhazia to get a greater understanding of the conflict and the situation in general. While I was there I got the opportunity to talk to one of the partner organizations.

The Head of Office at the partner organization mentions that efficiency is one of the most important reasons for cooperation. That it is believed that ICCN are doing a good and efficient job. Another argument is that they feel that it has been possible to develop a common language to talk about sensitive issues such as atrocities, repatriation and the status of the entity. In this is it also important for them that ICCN tries to take a neutral part in the conflict and the mediation process in order not to damage any trust between the people.

The head of office was very cautious when contemplating the future and argues that peace between the Abkhaz and the Georgians is not possible yet and that there are many grievances that must be resolved before it can happen but that peace is possible in the future (Memo Sukhum/i 2013-06-14). Lastly is it mentioned that they feel that their relationship is with individuals at ICCN rather than the organization as such.

values of one very important actor in the Georgian society with great influence in the peace-building process.

On the other hand, being to close to the state enhances the view of ICCN and other NGOs as an elitist phenomenon out of touch with their target group and might diminish their legitimacy in Abkhaz and Ossetians eyes – the people they want to create peace with (Jailobeavas 2011). Either way is their neutrality and whom they are accountable to, questioned and comes back to pragmatic legitimacy. ICCN's choice of partners affects ICCN's actions and in whose eyes they can make legitimate claims.

4.2.5 ICCN, experts and the population

When I ask the staff what they think contributes to legitimacy, the answer is almost always, that the team are experts in their specific topics. Mariana says:

> "[name of person], the head of office and all of our staff members makes a contribution to the good reputation. I think that values are very subjective and that for funds and financial resources also. It is very important how ICCN communicate with colleagues in legal and private sector. Meaning that our values contributes to our reputation and in that case we have good position. And also that we are efficient. "

Here Marina begins by talking about the expertise[17] and how it contributes to the good reputation of the organization, the connection to donors, but also how the organization communicates with other organizations. She notices however that the values and views of the organization's staff are subjective and not homogeneous, and that it is important to be efficient. Which comes back to both normative and pragmatic legitimacy and the organization's outcome. Stine answers:

> "Because of our impartial character, because of our sustainability and because of our dedication to this field for so long and the quality of expertise."

She continues:
> "it comes from the existence of ICCN as a team and a group of people with the same values, approaches and visions. Secondly it because of our viability we have had permanently and our activities and that we have financial support and that we have the opportunity to implement our projects"

Here, sustainability and the question of neutrality are once more addressed, but she also mentions the level and quality of expertise and the claim to be experts. What is interesting is that she sees financial support as a reason to legitimacy. Which comes back to pragmatic legitimacy. Past activites become important in the quest for legitimacy, creating a circular reasoning about normative and pragmatic legitimacy and which of them comes first. Which highligts how problematic it is to evaluate the question of legitimacy.

Gio answers on the same question about his view on legitimacy and where he refers back to something he answered earlier about how hard it is for a peace-building organization to create and gain legitimacy in the eye of the population. He argues that whereas human rights defenders and organizations working with legal aid are seen as more respected and more valid, the peace-building organization is different in the aspect that there is no clear or measurable outcome.

> "[….]we have the level of professionalism and qualification and that is, as you know, respected in this society. But they are irritated about the results that are never achieved. Neither by the politics nor by the nongovernmental sector. That we are not being able to change the situation. They see that the state exist and that we exist but still.."

Gio is the only one who puts the question of legitimacy in contrast to the conflicts and in relation to the state. As the conflicts becomes protracted and prolonged, their existence is questioned and raises the question if what they are doing is producing any result and output. He is the only one that puts legitimacy it relationship to the wider population and the society. Which brings us back to the pragmatic legitimacy and if the surrounding perceives the organization to do what it claims to be doing and what happens when it fails to do so. The rest of the staff argues that the society and the wider populations view on ICCN is not important nor essential to their work. This enhances the picture of the elitist organization out of touch with the population in Georgia and that the output is more important in the eyes of other stakeholders e.g. donors, than the population even if the latter are the ones directly affected by the conflict.

It has also been mentioned that being impartial is something important for the organization in order to be perceived as legitimate. This statmen is interesting to contemplate in relation to that no organization is an island but are affected by other organizations, the state and the politics.

4.3　Discussion

Going back to the research question of how a peace-building organization creates legitimacy, it is without doubt a very complex field. Suchman argues that organizational legitimacy, is when the organization is accepted as having the right to do something, within a given socially constructed context around norms, values and beliefs (1995).

From a conflict resolution point of view, the conflict can be summarized to be at standstill, protracted, frozen and forgotten, but still affecting the population, especially along the ABL. While donors want to stop allocating funds to peace-building, other LNGOs might be working on the same thing as ICCN, but without telling anybody and unintentionally working against them. All the while the Georgian government argues that the geographical entities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia should be reintegrated into Georgia as the only solution. I mentioned that only 11% of the population in Georgia trusts nongovernmental organizations. From that point of view it is clear that legitimacy is a hard thing to come by, for what they are doing. Meaning that ICCN is having a hard time corresponding their views and values with any other actor or stakeholder on the field when it comes to peace-building

In order to create legitimacy in the eyes of the international donor community, ICCN adapt to values, vocabulary, and other criteria that the donors might have. Even if it diverts from the first aim of peace-building and negotiation, or for that matter including everything under the name of peace-building and hence strongly flat-packing everything. Thus ICCN advocate values that are normally considered to be typically western, which puts the organization in conflict with the highly conservative Georgian state and population. Further on; different donors have diverse demands and views on what should be done. These international spheres of interests can exploit the fact that ICCN lives on a diversified project-to- project basis, with their own different and diverse demands. This raises the question whether ICCN have adapted a behavior of being opportunistic towards the donors, all the while the local population perceives ICCN to be incoherent with their many projects and western values. This can de-

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legitimize their claim to be standing for specific, but many different views and values. To further complicate the field, the forces in the changing politics of Georgia can act as coercive factors. Here the theories of isomorphism can shed some light on the matter (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 1991).

In the protracted conflict context of Georgia and ICCN, the case study show that it is not always possible to act as the organization dictates. The state is a strong coercive force in this context, as it puts both a restraint on what issues that can be brought to the table but also a technological restraint on what actually can be done (ibid). As my study shows, the will of the state and that of the donors are often in conflict, and ICCN have often to choose to whom they want to put forward their claims, and be perceived as a legitimate actor. Playing this game, they run the risk of losing legitimacy on both sides, as was the case in Sri Lanka (Walton 2012, 2008). By focusing on community development and inserting democratic values, ICCN tries to detach itself from the topics of politics and conflict resolution. An effort that can lead to strong questioning of the name "International Center on Conflict and Negotiation", while loosing legitimacy to do what the name implies.

A strong connection to the state increase the influence and cooperation on the peace-building process on the highest of levels, but there is also a risk that ICCN is to be perceived as elitist and out of touch with their target group, subsequently meaning the people mostly affected by the war (Jailboeva 2011). Hence: gaining legitimacy in the eye of the state might decrease ICCN's legitimacy in the eyes of the population. This in turn leads to critique from donor organizations looking at the dwindling participants (from the population) to their projects. On the other hand it is only Gio who acknowledge the population (and not participants of their projects) as an important stakeholder in their search for legitimacy and survival.

It is possible to contemplate a post-colonial approach to ICCN, and that it is a part of Europeanizing Georgia, inserting values that are strongly against the prevailing and highly conservative values in the Georgian society. This possibility definitely puts ICCN in conflict with the greater part of the Georgian society. The reduction of legitimacy in the population's eyes frame ICCN as being anti-nationalistic, or worse, being traitors. Which puts ICCN in a complicated situation – can one be neutral in some parts and not others?

While some parts of ICCN are not neutral, such as on gender and minority issues, peace-building and mediation, they do a balance act of articulating neutrality. On the

other hand; is it possible to be neutral in an issue that includes that the land of your country which is grabbed by another power? Or is articulating to be neutral more important than being neutral, and is it more a symbolic action in order to be perceived as a legitimate actor (Alvesson 2002)?

Further on; does being neutral mean that they don't have any values and views at all, and if so – is this how a peace-building organization should be perceived? On the other hand, should they take a stand for a view that might be uncomfortable, and claim legitimacy in some of the stakeholders and actors eyes while loosing it in others? Stating a claim for neutrality while being involved certainly has its risks. Should ICCN address the issues of repartition of IDPs and the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but with the risk of being sanctioned and stopped from doing anything at all?

Lastly: The state articulates that they perceive civil society as important actors for peace-building, and recognizes it to be an ongoing process, which it tries to open up for more cooperation. This leaves the process open for future governments to solve the conflicts. However, there are ongoing legitimacy issues, where some of the staff sees the state as a future partner for cooperation, others distrust it. There is therefore an ever present legitimacy conflict within the organization regarding on what the direction will be in relation to the state. Notable is the fact that peace is far away, and it is very unlikely that anything will happen on the ground for the time being. While peace isn't reached; can ICCN claim to do what they clearly articulate to be doing also stressing the pragmatic legitimacy. But then again – how do you measure peace?

4.4   Summary and conclusion

Due to the abstract nature of legitimacy it is difficult to be explicit and say "this is how legitimacy is created". It has to be seen as contested dynamic process. Forces from the outside affect ICCN's work, on what they can and are allowed to do. The role of a peace-building organization is far from uncomplicated, as some parts works with the state, while some works against it. Some parts advocate difficult western values, while others want to be neutral or even support of traditional viewpoints. Clearly leaving ICCN in an internal and external crisis of legitimacy. The fact remains though, that

ICCN wouldn't be a recognizable as a force of legitimacy if it did not experience the problems of legitimacy that it tries fervently to deal with.

Legitimacy exists within the concept of relationships between ICCN and all these actors. In a wider context, it certainly explains the reality that peace-building organizations have to navigate within a conflict-ridden society. Every actor tries to influence what can be done and what values should be advocated for. The state, the donor organizations, other NGOs and populations remain important stakeholders. As ICCN lives on a project-to-project basis, the mandate for peace-building is vague, ad hoc and at risk to become non-reflexive. What constitutes peace might therefore be determined by the donors capacities and the staffs expertise. However, for all partners involved ICCN has the legitimacy to be a watchdog for positive values and views in society.

4.5   Future research

Future research could include partner organizations inside Georgia and/or in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It would be interesting to outline why some organizations chose to cooperate with ICCN in particular, and to try understand how legitimacy and negotiation is connected.

It would also be interesting to further outline how donor organizations view ICCN and how they determine ICCN to be a trustworthy and legitimate organization in Georgia. Characteristics that could be included are internal organizational structure, management and democracy within the organization. Further on, it would be interesting to outline how a peace building organization creates and generates *trust* in relation to its target groups but also within society in general.

Future research could include making comparisons with other peace building organizations inside and outside of Georgia. It would also be interesting to integrate theories on peace building and conflict resolution more deeply, in order to outline what peace building at the grassroots level really is and how it is possible to include social work into peace-building and vice versa. It would be possible to make a comparison with other countries and conflicts such as the low-intensity Northern Ireland conflict,

the war in Afghanistan or the post-war period in Iraq to see how organizations work with there and what problems they encounter in their work.

Lastly, future research could include replicating this research in a semi-authoritarian regime such as Azerbaijan. Even if there are many similarities in the two countries, there is a higher risk for Azerbaijan to re-laps to into war with Armenia, than Georgia with Russia. The war propaganda is also more notable in the Azerbaijan as well as a stronger legislation that prohibits peace -building.

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6 Appendix 1. Interview Guide

1) Could you tell me a little about yourself, your education and how you got in to this work and
   for how long you have been doing it?
   3.1 How long have you been working with ICCN?
   3.2 Can you tell me more about your sphere and what you are doing?
   3.3 What is your specific task.
   3.4 Could you tell me a little about a typical day at work?
   3.1 How would you describe the organization's work and aim with the work?
   In your opinion, what other organizations is there that is working within the same
   organizational field?
   3.1 Could you tell me more about the projects?
   who are participating?
   3.2– partners and donors –
   - Regarding the projects that you are working with, what partners do you work with and why?
   Could you describe your relationship with other organizations within the same organizational
   field?
   What do you think about the future?
   Where do you see ICCN in the future?
   3.2.1 In your opinion is what the organization doing a response to what the target groups want
   or is it a result of what donors finds "hot" or essential to focus on at the moment?
   3.3- would you say that you are mainly on the peace building/making field or community
   development field and do you see any differences between the two fields?

2) Some say that being involved in peace building and negotiation is a for one a very
   complicated thing and that some would say that peace is not the way to go and that Georgia
   should get back both Abkhazia and South Ossetia
   4.1 Is it always friction free to do the things that you are doing?
   4.2 Have you encountered any problems with your work?
3) Has the politics, both within the organizational field but also on a domestic and international
   level – such as with Russia and with the de facto states anytime effected what you have been
   allowed to do your work?
   5.1 The state minister for reintegration said in a recent interview "conflict resolution is no
   longer part of the propaganda" but that they are taking steps towards peace building. How do
   you think that might (or might not) affect the organizations work?
   Where do you see ICCN on the political sphere?
   (alternative) How do you see the relationship with the state?
   What do you think about being neutral as an nongovernmental organization?
   5.2 The State Minister also said that "the last government was not that interested in working
   with the civil society" but that the new government is – what do you think about that?
   Do you think that the organization will have more work and how?
   Will there be a change in how the organization is involved – if not why and if yes – in what
   way?
4) After the last year election a lot of people from sector of the non governmental organizations
   became politicians, in your opinion, do you think that has affected the organizational field?
   (if yes how)
   6.1 What do you think contributes to legitimacy as an organization and ICCN specifically?

5) There are organizations such as International Crisis Group leaving the region as it no longer is seen as a crisis and there are some who argues that EU's monitoring mission (EUMM) also might not get an extended mandate for the seventh mandate period. How do you think this will affect the organization and the peace building efforts in the region?
6) Is there anything you feel that you would like to mention regarding the topics that we have touched here today?
7) Or anything you would like to add?