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Climate Peace – The New Liberal Peace

A Study of decolonised intervention in United Nations climate peace writing on South Sudan

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Abstract

In this paper, climate peace-related intervention by the United Nations Country Team in South Sudan is investigated. The case is approached through a decolonised intervention perspective based on Meera Sabaratnam's theory in *"Decolonized Intervention: International Statebuilding in Mozambique"*. The reflexive interpretation method described by Alvesson and Sköldberg is used to approach the question, focusing on the openness toward alternative interpretations and an awareness of how one constructs "facts". The paper concludes that from a decolonised intervention perspective, the United Nations Country Team is not giving enough space for the South Sudanese government and people to create their own climate peace, and the intervention is not decolonised. There are, however, several reasonable indications in the material, and there is room within the same framework for alternative interpretations that might produce other conclusions. Lastly, the paper encourages several other perspectives through other frameworks that might shine more or different light on this case, such as a feminist lens or a theory that encompasses the global economic structures of climate peace.

Key Words: Climate peace, Local Ownership, Decolonisation, South Sudan, United Nations, Peacebuilding, Intervention.

Word Count: 9956

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List of Abbreviations

AU – African Union

EU – European Union

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

G7 – Group of Seven

INGO – International non-governmental organisation

NGO – Non-governmental organisation

NUPI – Norwegian Institute of International Affairs

SIPRI – Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

SSR – Security Sector Reform

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNEP – United Nations Environmental Programme

UNOPS – United Nations Office for Project Services

WFP – World Food Programme

> *“Humanitarian response, sustainable development, and sustaining peace are three sides of the same triangle.”*
>
> – United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, 2016

1. Introduction

As I write this introduction, reports on this year's seasonal flooding in South Sudan have just started coming in. Until August 6th, 2021, approximately 90,000 people have been affected by the flooding this rainy season. Such events pose enormous risks to families, livestock, homes, and agriculture (Reliefweb, 2021).

While rainy seasons are perfectly normal in the South Sudanese climate, the country has been experiencing increased rainfall variability leading to, among other issues, a shorter growing season, in turn, reducing yields and leading to crop failure (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, p. 59).

"Intense and unrelenting for two years, the flooding is seriously degrading the ability of the people to cope and survive. Tens of thousands of people have been impacted"

- Arafat Jamal, the Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim in South Sudan

(Reliefweb, 2021)

Unfortunately, flooding is not the only climate change-related problem facing South Sudan. The country and its people are likely to face issues with agriculture and fishing, access to water, water quality and water quantity, livestock diseases, decreased food availability for humans, livestock, wildlife, and fish (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018).

The climate-related risks, in combination with the ongoing conflict, pose a significant threat to human security. As stated in several reports on South Sudan's environment, the population of South Sudan is highly vulnerable. Climate change will exacerbate developmental challenges that the conflict and political instability has caused (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, p. 59)

A critical part of building capacity, mitigating, and adapting to climate change that is stated repeatedly in reports on South Sudan, is reaching peace and political stability. Maintaining peace and security in South Sudan is seen as an opportunity for South Sudan to cope with its environmental/climate issues (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018).

The situation is undoubtedly severe, acute even, and there is such potential in the idea of an environmentally sustainable, peaceful future nation of South Sudan. Here is where climate peace comes in, an emerging field within peace research, investigating the possibilities of incorporating climate adaptation and mitigation into peace processes (Further developed in section 1.1). Seemingly perfect for South Sudan.

Questions are awakened when an old debate meets a new one, what happens to local ownership when climate peace is practised? Does the emergency nature of the climate-conflict nexus affect the way local ownership is practised? How can we understand international power structures, climate, and local ownership?

These arising questions lead me to investigate writing on climate and peace by the United Nations South Sudan country team from a decolonised intervention perspective. Using a reflexive interpretation as a method, I analyse documents and news from the UN team.

1.1. An introduction to policy research on climate peace

One of the main reasons this topic is of interest to peace- and conflict studies is the emergence of studies, briefs, and policy recommendations within the field of climate peace. To explain the context for this paper, a short introduction to important work in this area is provided here. It is important to note that this is a new field. Thus research and policy are limited.

A critical step for climate peace as a concept was an independent report commissioned by the G7 (Group of Seven). This report titled *"A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks"* investigates ***compound climate-fragility risks*** and identifies seven such risks. These are said to pose severe threats to the security and stability of states and societies. In the report, swift action to increase resilience is recommended to limit these risks to the planet and peace. The emissions already released will destabilise current systems, especially already fragile systems and weak states, risking destabilisation and possibly conflict, in turn causing the most harm to already vulnerable peoples (Rüttinger, Smith, Stang, & Tänzler, 2015, p. vii).

Secondly, an important actor in the field is Sipri. Their recent project *"Climate-related peace and security risks"* produces reports and fact sheets with ***recommendations for dealing with***

climate and conflict, with one of the reports being on South Sudan. The project was launched to generate information and analysis on ***climate-related peace, security, and development risks*** in countries of interest to the UN Security Council's agenda. Sipri initiated the project considering the recognition by the UN, AU and EU that climate change has implications for peace, development, and security (Sipri, n.d.).

1.2. Relevance

The ***relevance*** of this paper is based on several elements. It is to solve real-world problems and engage with something that affects people's lives and further goals of scientific literature by contributing to a defined group of literature (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 98). In addition, it is meant to solve a mystery created through problematisation, a process explained in the Methods section (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, pp. 382,389).

Halperin and Heath present the task of understanding potentially harmful events as an example of engaging with something that affects people's lives, thus, holding ***societal relevance*** (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 98). Studying the climate conflict nexus in a country such as South Sudan attempts to understand potentially (or, in fact) harmful conditions. As outlined above, the South Sudanese people are highly vulnerable to compound effects and is one of the five countries most vulnerable to impacts of climate change (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, p. 66). As we have learned from previous interventions (outlined in the literature review 3.1), local ownership is integral to sustainable peace and arguably has an integral value.

In terms of ***academic significance***, this paper brings together a dominant debate with an emerging one while adding to both literature sets. It also engages with critiques of local ownership by engaging with structural power dynamics. Furthermore, climate peace is relevant in the case of South Sudan because of the policy recommendation by Sipri, which actualises South Sudan as a potential sight for climate peace-building (Sipri, n.d.; Nupi; Sipri, 2021). In addition, the climate policy written with the UN on South Sudan reiterates the importance of the climate/environment and conflict connection, repeatedly highlighting peace as a critical step to environmental sustainability and climate adaptation/resilience (see, for example, Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan and UNEP, 2018).

Lastly, ***creating a mystery*** is about freeing the work from assumptions. Alvesson and Sköldberg argue that traditional ways of finding research questions through gaps in the literature are problematic. We then build on existing literature without questioning the assumptions, and we risk reproducing “truths” and creating reality ordering research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, pp. 365, 389). Problematising climate peace by asking questions of the power dynamics present when recommendations are made while also problematising the universal application of local ownership theories and the neglect of global power structures has created a mystery. The mystery being, is climate peace the new liberal peace?

1.3. Research question

The purpose of this paper is to gain insight into the emerging climate peace policy and how climate is dealt with in conflict contexts. To gain one perspective on this, I situate climate peace in one of the central questions of peace and conflict, namely local ownership versus liberal peace. These purposes lead to the research question this thesis aims to answer.

Research question:

What space does the United Nations Country Team in South Sudan leave for ***protagonismo*** in their reports and news on climate and peace?

2.Previous research

In this section, I will introduce two areas of research relevant to my research question and case. The first being research on local ownership in the South Sudanese peace process, and the second being research on climate/environment and peacebuilding in the South Sudanese peace process.

2.1. Local ownership of the South Sudanese peace process

There are several articles in this research area that deal with South Sudan. Examples of themes in such papers include local ownership in SSR programmes (Kammel H, 2018; Gordon, 2014) and complex challenges in local ownership and traditional donor methods (Mackenzie-Smith, 2015).

Hirblinger and Simmons *"The good, the bad, and the powerful: representations of the `local' in peacebuilding"* is relevant because the authors argue for more ***reflexivity*** in accounts of peacebuilding, something which inspired the choice of method in this paper. They stress the need for more reflections on representation as neglecting its effects gives an incomplete account of peacebuilding and the views on the local (Hirblinger T & Simons, 2015).

An article that is particularly interesting in relation to this paper is *"Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Friction Sites and Local-Level Peacebuilding in Haiti, Liberia and South Sudan"* by Nagelhus Shia and Karlsrud. This paper is of interest because it investigates similar critiques to those addressed in this paper; however, it presents an opposing perspective on the debate. Nagelhus Shia and Karlsrud address the critique that peacebuilding actors are orientalist and western. They argue that while this claim is not entirely false, there is also another side to it, the will to understand the local context and how other actors become part of it. In addition, peacebuilding tends to be caught between power structures in the system, and there is a tendency not to apply previous knowledge (Nagelhus Schia & Karlsrud, 2013).

Lastly, a paper which is interesting as it provides the analysis of ***contextualised local ownership***, a similar attempt to the one in this paper, however with a different approach and focus. *"Contextualising Liberal Peacebuilding for Local Circumstances: UNMISS and Local Peacebuilding in South Sudan"* studies local social structures and the concept of the external actor. In the case of UN civilian peacekeeping in South Sudan, the authors conclude that efforts to contextualise local peacebuilding exist (Da Costa & Karlsrud, 2012).

2.2. Climate and peace in South Sudan

Research on climate/environment and peace in South Sudan is limited, but several highly relevant papers are available. Themes include youth as a driver for action against climate change and conflict (Ensor, 2013), conflict and climate change as complex problems in need of multidisciplinary research (Knight, 2013), and climate change and insecurity in wider Africa (Busby, Smith, White, & Strange, 2013).

A paper that can be seen as a background to the need to study climate peace in South Sudan is *"Climate Change and Conflict in South Sudan"*. In which the authors investigate ***climate change, climate disasters and their links to conflict*** in South Sudan. The paper concludes that climate is changing in South Sudan, the connection between climate change and conflict is insignificant, but there is a link between floods/droughts and conflicts as conflicts occur after floods/droughts. The report recommends that the government of South Sudan attempt to gain and spread a more extensive understanding of both conflict and climate-related questions. It also includes a recommendation to integrate climate change adaptation in peacebuilding, making it relevant as a background to this paper (Tiitmamer, Mayai, & Mai, 2018)

A paper that inspired the ***state-building critique*** and local ownership perspective in this paper is *"Beyond scarcity: Rethinking water, climate change and conflict in the Sudans"* by Sellby and Hoffman. The article investigates environment-conflict relations, providing a critique toward dominant explanations such as state failure, scarcity, and underdevelopment. Instead, Sellby and Hoffman argue for explanations such as resource abundance and globally embedded processes of state-building and development. They conclude that when analysing conflict and environment, especially with climate change, more attention needs to be on the impacts of resource abundance, militarized state power and global political-economic forces (Selby & Hoffmann, 2014).

3.Theory

3.1. Literature review

The end of the cold war marks a time of changed warfare and new challenges. The world was faced with an upsurge in intrastate violence and what was deemed "state failure" (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015, p. 826). Two central and interconnected ideas of peacebuilding became dominant during this time, the idea of ***liberal peace*** and the idea of ***state-building.***

In 1992 the UN's Agenda for Peace was released, promoting diplomacy, peace-making and peacekeeping. The UN was to re-emerge as an international actor for peace and security, protecting freedoms and human rights through democracy. This aspiration was based on the idea that there was a shared moral perception in the world widely (United Nations Secretary-General, 1992). The UN launched a series of interventions resting on the idea of promoting liberal ideals, democratisation, and marketisation to achieve peace (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015, p. 826). This was the beginning of the idea of ***liberal peace***, a system intended to unite the world through liberal values and western-modelled epistemology, institutions, social systems, and economic systems (Richmond, 2011).

In 1995 a supplement to the Agenda for Peace was released in which the UN further argues that interventions should go beyond military and humanitarian assistance and encompass re-establishment of effective government (United Nations Secretary-General, 1995, §13). At the time, the idea of ***failed states*** needing rebuilding, such as presented by Helman and Ratner in "Saving Failed States" (1992), was gaining traction.

While seemingly benign, the state-building project ended in a series of failed interventions such as Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015, p. 826). While these, in many cases, managed to end the direct violence, they often failed to end the conflict and achieve a more positive peace. States were often caught in a no war-no peace state (Mac Ginty, 2006, Introduction).

Critiques toward state-building and the liberal peace project emerged. In *"New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding",* central critics Edward Newman, Oliver Richmond and Roland Paris question the effectiveness, legitimacy and appropriateness of liberal peacebuilding and the ideals it promotes in conflict societies. Arguing that the top-down nature of it and the lack of local ownership and community-driven peacebuilding puts the sustainability and durability of the peace into question. This book also mentions more cases of failed interventions, such as Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Timor-Leste, and Sri Lanka (Newman, Richmond, & Paris, 2009). Similarly, John Heathershaw argues that liberal peace is an international discourse environment that reproduces technical solutions that fail to address the underlying issues of conflict. He argues that liberal peace is sustained through discourse in spite of the disconnect between the liberal peace and the lived experiences in post-conflict environments (Heathershaw, 2008).

Statebuilding is still practised and there are systems in place to deal with outbreaks of violence within the UN and other international and regional organisations. However, Chandler and Sisk describe how state-building is practised today as state-building but in a more ***context-sensitive*** sense. The reasoning behind these approaches is often that post-cold war conflicts are almost exclusively intra-state and result in many civilian casualties. The state that is meant to protect these civilians cannot, struggles to or is not willing to. Another argument is the risk of spillover to neighbouring countries (Chandler & Sisk, 2013).

This context sensitivity in state-building comes from critiques from scholars in the ***local ownership field***[1]. Early scholars such as Lederach, Curle, Nordstrom, Boulding and Fetherton argued that there was peacebuilding potential in ***local communities*** and that different cultures had their tools for building peace. Using these, they argued, would lead to peace rooted in the local culture. International peacebuilding responded with missions with similar ideas and norms but involving the locals in the process. Despite these attempts, the missions were still criticised for, among other things being top-down and western (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015, p. 827).

The next step was a more significant focus on ***local governance***, involving subnational governments and decentralising the peace process, claiming that post-conflict state governments were often too weak and that legitimacy would arise from more local level governance. ***Decentralisation*** is contested, with several scholars arguing that decentralisation’s success depends on other factors and that reconstructing local governments poses risks to peace. On the other hand, scholars such as Menkhaus, Jarstad and Zürcher and Barnett highlight the importance of who is included and excluded, known as the ***horizontal dilemma***, arguing that local governance inclusion might pose a risk but also might be the only way to build peace. Chandler brought another vital point that this type of peacebuilding can transfer responsibility for failing missions from the UN or other international interveners to the local government, which poses an accountability problem (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015 pp. 827-830).

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[1] local ownership field and local ownership scholars here refers to all theories/scholars on this side of the debate, meaning both local ownership, local authorship, and similar theories.

Donais inspires a change of perspective, suggesting that international peace-operations should leave ***space*** for locally produced peace and that the peace created then should be a product of ***negotiation and contestation*** (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015, p. 831). The type of process which is later studied by Björkdahl and Höglunds using ***friction*** (2013), as well as through different notions of ***hybridity*** studied by scholars such as Öjendal and Ou (2013), De Coning, and Leeuwen (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015, p. 834).

Geroid **Millar** praises the local level grounded theories such as hybridity and friction for showing the disconnect between local and global norms. He, however, goes on to criticise these theories for not recognising the broader ***legitimising structures*** that peace-work operates on. He argues that these structures legitimise prioritising some actors and institutions, thus prioritising peace for some at the expense of others (Millar, 2020).

Similarly, **Sabaratnam** criticises the friction literature for not recognising the systems in which friction operates but specifies these structures to be colonised. She argues that they study what seems to be “incompatibilities” between interveners and intervened on. Sabaratnam contends that these are not problems of compatibility but ***coloniality***, political systems of who matters, that underpin intervention (Sabaratnam, 2017, pp. 40,140).

Furthermore, Sabaratnam criticises many of the scholars mentioned above for being ***ahistorical***, for example, Björkdahl and Höglund and Chandler. More specifically, she criticises the local ownership literature for categorising all peacebuilding sites as “interchangeable non-liberal”, meaning the peace-building sites are still seen as blank slates (Sabaratnam, 2017, p. 40).

In general, Sabaratnam critiques current interventions and scholarly literature on them for being Eurocentric, lacking accounts of political dynamics and the significance of intervention. The decolonised approach starts from the historical presence, political consciousness, and material realities of the intended beneficiaries (Sabaratnam, 2017, p. 131)

As an option to typical peacebuilding theories, both the liberal and local ownership ones, Sabaratnam presents a theory of decolonised intervention, focusing on the roles of intended beneficiary and intervener and the mission’s objective (Sabaratnam, 2017). Based on her case study of Mozambique, she argues that an alternative structural explanation of intervention reveals intervention as constituted by global politics of coloniality and relations of colonial difference. She then explains that decolonising intervention requires fundamental structural changes, but that until this happens, smaller changes can be made to decolonise intervention or at least make room for more solidaristic political action (Sabaratnam, 2017, pp. 131-132).

A ***colonised intervention*** is described as follows. The intended beneficiary population, government and state are seen as failing and incapable of fixing themselves. The intervener provides aid, helping this incapable and dependent population, providing assistance from rich to poor. Western progress and moral are deemed a benchmark for “the other” to aspire to. Based on this view, a racialised hierarchy, the intervener considers themselves entitled to intervene and subordinate. The intended beneficiary is rendered chronically aid-dependent, as the intervener is creating the process. Intervener believes themselves entitled moral authority and offering expertise and guidance. Intervener considers themselves entitled to transparency and influence over the process. Dispossession (historical and current) is not recognised as a cause of humanitarian issues (Sabaratnam, 2017, pp. 142-145).

A ***decolonised intervention***[2] recognises the fundament of wester-progress as one of exploitation. Intended beneficiaries and their state is considered exploited but capable. The intervener is providing compensation rather than aid, paying a colonial debt and healing a colonial wound. The intended beneficiary is entitled to this compensation while the intervener is in debt rather than entitled to subordinate. The intended beneficiary has by this reversed understanding of entitlement the right to protagonismo, creating the process and producing independence. Interveners are not seen as a moral authority entitled to offer expertise. Instead, the cost of such offerings (namely administrative costs) is carefully considered to calculate the value of a programme. Dispossession and exploitation (historical and current) are recognised, and the focus of interveners is, therefore, on compensation (Sabaratnam, 2017, pp. 142-145).

Lastly, there is an essential distinction in need of mentioning within the local ownership literature between scholars who value local ownership as a means of emancipation and those who value local ownership for the results it produces (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015 p. 1). Coning and Leeuwen are examples of a radical focus on local ownership in the ***process*** regardless of the uncomfortable results which might arise (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015, p. 834)

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[2] This is based on the smaller interim changes Sabaratnam proposes, rather than the large structural changes she calls for.

3.2. Framework

The theoretical framework in this paper is built with two main theoretical aims and challenges in mind. The first is to engage theoretically with the ***postcolonial critique of local ownership*** literature. The second is addressing ***imbalanced power structures*** to understand ***climate peace***. The second aim rests on Millar's (2020) critique of the lack of structural perspectives in local ownership mentioned in the literature review as well as the recent paper *"Towards climate resilient peace: an intersectional and degrowth approach"* by Christie Nicoson which concludes the importance of addressing power structures to specifically understand climate peace (Nicoson, 2021). Thus, taking a departure from Meera Sabaratnams ***decolonised intervention*** perspective, I attempt to understand local ownership of climate peacebuilding in a postcolonial conflict state, addressing one of the possible power structures in this particular peacebuilding site.

I argue that this framework partly fits the ***local context*** and the ***wider structures*** it is situated in. Local context and wider structures include the history of colonisation of South Sudan (or the area that is now South Sudan) (Johnson, 2016, Self-Determination in the Twenty-First Century), the current dependence on aid (Lykes Washburne, 2014) and unmatched reliance on the export of oil (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, p. 35). The framework measures the space given for ***protagonismo***. In other words, how the climate/ peace recommendations analysed reflect how de-colonised the interaction between South Sudan and the UN is.

It is essential to clarify that how I present and use the framework differs from how Sabaratnam introduces and uses it. The presentation differs because I have modelled my interpretation of her theory on the structure and tradition of local ownership theories. Specifically, I use the concept of ***space*** inspired by Donais, asking what space is left for a decolonised interaction, rather than asking how the interaction looks (see literature review 3.1.). I made this adaptation because the material used results in a lack of direct access to intended beneficiaries and the process, making it farfetched to discuss the protagonismo in the process. Thus, examining the space these writings leave is more suitable. I create ideal types and indicators to create ***structure***, inspired by the presentation of theories such as friction by

Björkdahl and Höglund (2013) and Severine Autesseres theory in Peaceland (2014). Presenting theory like this in my experience makes theories easier to understand and gain an ***overview*** over. However, I do not assess exactly which category the intervention falls into. Instead, I discuss what indicators I see in the material.

Another necessary clarification is that this theory rests on the idea that ***local ownership*** of peace processes has a ***value of its own*** rather than being an instrument for building a higher-quality peace, a distinction explained in the literature review. While I do not reject the idea that local ownership might make a higher-quality peace, I reject the idea of measuring this in a universal manner and from an outside perspective. As Sabaratnam argues, there is a lack of moral authority on the matter (Sabaratnam, 2017, p. 143). Especially when lacking direct access to intended beneficiaries and their everyday lives, such measurements are inherently problematic. Even with access, it raises the complicated question of representation, which I discuss in the methods section and the reflection (4.2.1; 4.5 and 5.2.2.)

3.2.1. A framework of protagonismo

This framework is constructed to indicate what space is given for intended beneficiaries to create their climate peace, the space provided for ***protagonismo*** and thus what space is given for a decolonised interaction. The framework is based on the smaller interim changes presented by Sabaratnam, not the more extensive structural changes she calls for (Sabaratnam, 2017, pp. 131-132). Through an interpretation of the view on intended beneficiaries and the roles played by interveners and intended beneficiaries, an image of protagonismo is formed.

The framework departs from **Sabaratnam's** view of current interventions contrasted with her ***decolonised intervention***, as outlined in the literature review (3.1.). All factors are derived from her descriptions.

I created four ***ideal types***, the first mirroring the critique Sabaratnam presents toward the state-building liberal peace ideals (least decolonised) (2017, pp. 132-136). Two in the middle reflecting local ownership, one closer to local ownership and the other authorship, also based on Sabaratnam's critiques (2017, pp. 138-141). Lastly, the ideal decolonised intervention as presented by Sabaratnam (2017, pp. 142-145).

The categories are adapted to the climate peace research question and conceptualised as follows:

Imposition is an encounter where protagonismo is severely restricted. This form of intervention rests on a colonial notion of intervention, where the intervener is seen as entitled and functions as a moral benchmark.

Contextualisation is an encounter where there is room for intended beneficiaries to advocate for their notion of peace and their peace resources. In contrast, intended beneficiaries are still forced to compromise with the global notion of climate peace and the outer boundaries of that notion. The mission is seen as providing aid to an incapable government and population of a failed state, yet it is recognised that there are peace resources within that state, and local ownership is preferred. It rests on colonised entitlement but employs ideas of local ownership as an effective peace-building practice.

Assistance is an encounter where intended beneficiaries are offered aid to help them achieve climate peace. There is space for intended beneficiaries to shape the project, but the global notion of climate peace creates the outer boundaries of the local notion of climate peace. The view of intended beneficiaries nears a decolonised, where exploitation is recognised. However, the mission is seen as aid, and the intervener is still seen as an entitled moral authority.

Compensation is an encounter where intended beneficiaries are offered compensation for climate destruction and dispossession in the form of funds or other resources. There is complete space for intended beneficiaries to shape their notion of climate peace and be the protagonists of their peace-building. Compensation rests on a decolonised view of intervention where intended beneficiaries are entitled to compensation and protagonismo.

Protagonismo or lack thereof is characterised by the following: view of the intended beneficiary population and state, view of the mission objective, the role of the intervener and intended beneficiary, and who is entitled to what and who is the moral benchmark.

As I aim for a reflexive methodology and an open approach of interpretation (as described in the Methods section 4.1. after this section), I will not provide exact indicators of all factors in all categories, but rather reflect on how I interpret the material as evidence for a specific factor.

Factor/category	**Imposition**	**Contextualization**	**Assistance**	**Compensation**
View of IB population	Incapable, dependent	Incapable, dependent	Incapable, protagonist	Capable, protagonist
View of IB state	Failed	Failed	Failed due to dispossession and exploitation	Exploited, dispossessed, and owed
View of the mission objective	Aid	Aid	Aid	Compensation
Role of intervener	Plan, lead execution	Enforce boundaries, partial planning	Enforce boundaries, support	Compensate, support
Role of IB	Receive, execute	Plan details (within boundaries), execute.	Plan (within boundaries), lead execution	Plan, lead execution
Entitlement	Intervener	Intervener	Both	IB
Moral benchmark	Intervener	Intervener	Intervener	IB

Table 1.1. Protagonismo, categories, and indicators

*IB = intended beneficiary

4.Method

“... rationality is a question of reflection rather than procedure.” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p. 397)

In this section, I will outline the method used in this paper and the underlying approaches and choices, as well as the material used and potential issues with this material. The method used in this paper is reflexive interpretation, as outlined by Alvesson & Sköldberg. Reflexive interpretation is a highly interpretive and qualitative method, focusing on reflection rather than procedure (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018) (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017).

4.1. Overall approaches

Alvesson and Sköldberg argue that a ***qualitative*** approach should handle open and complex empirics through understanding rather than standardised coding and categorisation (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017, p. 398). This idea lies behind my overall approach.

Starting with the ***qualitative*** approach, I believe this approach suits the question as I am aiming for an understanding of a complex question in one case (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 6), as well as being open to complexity and ambiguity (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017, p. 11). Furthermore, the material available is reports, news and recommendations, more suited for looser coding (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 6) or, in this case, reflective interpretation.

Furthermore, an ***interpretivist*** approach is adopted, meaning I aim to understand through interpretation rather than explanation (Halperin & Heath, 2020, pp. 47-48). This choice is made because knowledge of the social world is never objective, and thus, should not aim to be conceived as such. What is presented in the analysis is interpretation and reflections on this interpretation. Interpretivism does not mean we cannot gain knowledge, but we need to be aware that knowledge is something we construct and that this construction should be transparent to those consuming the produced knowledge (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017, p. 9).

Based on this interpretive approach, I view the phenomena touched upon in this paper as unique and dependent on ***context*** and history, meaning my interest lies not in generalisations but the detail and not in the abstract but the context-dependent (Halperin & Heath 2020, p.49).

This approach allows for complexity and plurality by avoiding imposing pre-defined ideas (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 50).

The awareness of knowledge as something we construct warrants careful ***reflexivity,*** the methodological practice of interpreting and interpreting the interpretation. A reflexive methodology aims to challenge assumptions, allow complexity and search for mystery. Yet through the interpretation of the interpretation, this can be done transparently and critically (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017, pp. 19-22). I employ this methodology because I recognise the complexity of the climate-conflict nexus, building peace, and the global context in which this is situated. Therefore, a method prioritising an open approach to complex issues is used to attempt to gain understanding.

The article *"The good, the bad, and the powerful: Representation of the 'local' in peacebuilding"* (mentioned under previous research on local ownership in South Sudan 2.1.) inspired the methodology with arguments favouring ***reflexivity*** and careful representation in research on local ownership. The author argues that the widely recognised complexity of the local is still met with truth claims from researchers when the focus should instead be on perspectives on perspective, how representations relate to political agendas in peacebuilding. Furthermore, they argue that truth claims and representations through empowerment and disempowerment affect peace and conflict (Hirblinger T & Simons, 2015).

4.2. Reflexive interpretation

Alvesson and Sköldberg argue that ***theory*** can affect and govern data and that we need to ask how this process can be understood. How do conventions affect this and how can we produce alternative ways of making sense (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017, p. 12). ***Reflection*** and challenging assumptions are crucial to gaining knowledge in this area, particularly knowledge that does not just reproduce common conceptions. These have often been problematic, particularly when studying cultures commonly viewed as an "other".

Reflexive methodology continuously evaluates the relationship between knowledge and the ***production of knowledge***. It recognises how language, politics, social factors, and theory are intertwined and affect one another and then constructs the interpretation of empirical facts. A reflexive approach entails a belief that ***understanding*** through open interpretation is more valuable than producing a "truth" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017, pp. 20-21).

Reflexivity can be split into two parts, what Alvesson and Sköldberg call ***d-reflexivity*** and ***r-reflexivity***. The first deals with deconstruction and destabilisation, the questioning of established ways of thinking and assumptions. The second deals with reconstruction, re-presentation and rethinking, the creation of something new. Alvesson and Sköldberg argue that a dialectic between these two is ideal, moving between deconstruction and reconstruction (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p. 381). This process you will see throughout this paper, in the choice of theory and the way it is applied and used to interpret.

What then constitutes ***credibility*** in reflexive methodology? In short, it is the practice of reflection rather than the account of the procedure. There is a more unrestricted view on data handling but demands presentations on possible other interpretations. One should be open to the importance of interpretation when dealing with social phenomena. There should be critical reflection regarding political/ideological contexts and an awareness of the limited ability of language to convey empirical reality (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, pp. 370-371).

4.2.1. Reflexive interpretation in practice

This section will outline the ***steps*** used to apply interpretation in practice in this specific paper. This procedure is Alvesson and Sköldberg's ***four levels of interpretation***. However, it is worth noting that Alvesson and Sköldberg proclaim their work as a reaction against the obsession with technique (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p. 396), thus while this describes the procedure of interpretation, there will be no detailed coding or similar processes and thus no descriptions of such (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017, p. 398).

The method consists of four levels, which I have divided into two sections in the results. The first section, named ***interpretation***, will focus on interaction with empirical material and interpretation (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p. 331). In this part, the text is accompanied by quotes from or descriptions of the material analysed. The second section, named ***reflection***, will consist of critical interpretation and reflection on the text production. For example, this entails claims on authority and representation, which are made in my text (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p. 331).

Throughout, the process is a practice of ***leaving and returning*** to the primary way of interpreting, meaning that differing views will be allowed space in the paper and the primary interpretation will be approached critically. Mostly this will be done at the beginning and end of the process (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017, p. 399). When constructing my theory at the beginning of the process, I move away from my primary interpretation, local ownership, to employ decolonisation theory. At the end of the paper, I question this approach and discuss alternative interpretations for further research.

4.3. Case study and case selection

I believe a ***case study*** to be appropriate for two main reasons. Firstly, reflexive interpretation requires ***space*** for interpretation (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p. 393), making more than one case difficult to analyse adequately. Secondly, the theory I am using make a ***contextualised approach*** warranted, meaning case selection is justified by the theory used (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 194).

With a case study, I ***aim*** to do two things, 1. Say something meaningful about space for protagonismo in climate peace news, reports, and recommendations 2. Connect this to broader theoretical debates and adding to theory in a way that might shed more light on local ownership in postcolonial states and in such a way providing some external validity. (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 234).

South Sudan is also chosen based on the ***societal and academic relevance*** outlined in the introduction, in short, the academic relevance of being a potential sight of climate peacebuilding where local ownership has previously been studied, and the societal significance of the potentially harmful outcomes of the climate conflict nexus in South Sudan. The choice is also based on how climate and peace are often addressed together in the case of South Sudan both by the UN and other actors such as Sipri.

4.4. Material

This paper uses all available material on climate and peace from the UN South Sudan Country team, consisting of UNEP, UNDP, UNMISS, UNOPS and WFP. The material was found by looking through current projects in South Sudan on respective websites, searching on respective websites and finding reports mentioned in other reports. Search words used were "Climate", "Climate Change", "Environment", "South Sudan", "Peace", "Peacebuilding". However, the material used is mostly UNEP, because it addresses peace, climate and the environment. I also avoided material dealing specifically with food security as food security in relation to conflict and climate could constitute an independent report.

The material consists of two extensive reports (around 300 pages) and a handful of news and stories on the work. The material is as discussed below in 4.5. lacking in several aspects, the research, however, is in a pioneering and exciting field. In combination with the attention to future research in the area, this fact motivates going through with the study.

Lastly, I would like to note that this material represents how the UN writes about its work in South Sudan. It does not represent the views of the South Sudanese people or what may or may not be best for them, and it does not represent the on the ground realities of the work the UN does.

4.5. Discussion: Material and Method

One main problem with the material used in this paper is that some reports are co-written. It is complicated and problematic to analyse the space the UN is providing for protagonismo in material written both by the UN and South Sudanese agencies. The ***co-written reports*** are a flaw; however, since reports are accompanied by UN statements on these writings, I believe what can be done with the material available has been done. The UN co-writing reports cannot be an excuse not to study UN involvement. If it were an excuse, it would be easy for the UN to shift accountability. However, future research has an opportunity to provide a theory that can analyse these types of material better than that in this paper.

Another issue is the limited ***scope of the material***, which is partly a methodological choice. One needs to recognise the complexity of reflexive research and adapt the project to one’s ability and conditions and the research task. To make the research task feasible, one might need to limit the empirical work (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, pp. 393-395). Furthermore, one important question to ask when using the reflexive methodology is ***how much reflexivity*** can fit in this paper. Writing more about the reflexivity in the paper takes up more space but is more transparent. However, this forces us to use less material (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017, p. 413). In this case, due to the scope of the paper, engaging reflexively with the material meant being able to use less material. For someone that highly values empirics and contextualised approaches, this was a difficult choice to make. However, since this is a new and important research question and the material on South Sudan is generally limited, it seemed a good alternative to engage thoroughly with available materials and contextualise through a regionally adapted theory, rather than one first created in Europe.

This choice gave more space for reflection, but there was still a need to ***limit*** what made it from the process to the text. I focused, therefore, on reflections that would apply to the interpretations widely and avoided specificities. In addition, I narrowed down the subjects of reflection to how theory influenced the interpretation and discussions of representation and authority—neglecting essential aspects such as power and social reproduction. The reasoning behind what to include and exclude is based on Alvesson and Sköldbergs prompt to adapt the research to ones own abilities and conditions (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p. 395). The scope of this paper and my more extensive knowledge of representation (compared to social reproduction) guided the choice. Furthermore, the previous research highlighting representation also motivated the choice.

5. Analysis

In this section, I will interpret the material listed above based on the protagonismo framework. Furthermore, I will provide a secondary interpretation, reflecting on the primary interpretation and other ways to interpret the material. Lastly, I use this secondary interpretation to give suggestions for further research.

5.1. Interpretation

5.1.1. View of the intended beneficiary

The ***view of the intended beneficiary*** in some instances seems to be capable. For example, the need to use South Sudanese expertise and knowledge sharing is mentioned in several reports. South Sudanese, in this case, mainly refers to elite expertise, that of researchers such as those of the SUDD institute, and knowledge produced by CSO's. There are also mentions of NGO and civil society capacity and the need to use these (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, pp. 32, 282; Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP & GEF, 2018, p. 26).

Another indicator of an idea of the population as capable is the way the report emphasises traditional governance structures and their importance. Both how they need to be incorporated because of the legitimacy they hold but also how they and the population have traditional methods of resilience that can help deal with climate change (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP & GEF, 2018, pp. 26, 185, 186; Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, pp. 32, 282). While this is not the population at large, the material indicates that the population is not viewed as incapable.

On the other hand, the same report has some noteworthy formulations. Firstly, it states:

> *"The National Communication (NC) process included individual and public consultation with representatives from government institutions, academia, the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), in order to capture their opinions and ensure inclusiveness."*.

- (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP & GEF, 2018, p. 2)

The reason I find this interesting is because of the word "opinions". Instead of using words such as "their knowledge and viewpoint". This formulation also makes it sound like inclusiveness for the sake of inclusiveness rather than the positive outcomes this may lead to. Moreover, they use formulations such as *"…households attach a high value to their animals and will therefore be severely affected as a result of any climate change impacts on livestock"* (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP & GEF, 2018, p. 6). Thus, I interpret it as attaching the high value as a (potentially irrational) choice. Formulations such as "households are dependent on livestock" would perhaps indicate a different view of the population.

Another observation in the material is that some news stories paint strong portraits of the South Sudanese people, indicating a view of them as capable despite harsh circumstances. For example, a WFP article contained this segment:

> *"Achol Mabior has seen it all in Makuach village in Aweil Centre, 300 km south of the Sudan border. However, she has not seen rain this heavy in decades. She recounts the days when it rained, and flood waters rose and swept through her homestead.*
>
> *In an act of defiance, however, she vowed to stay, and has not moved since.*
>
> *'This is my home, the flood came but we stayed,' says Achol…"*
>
> - (WFP, 2019)

There are also contradicting ***views of the state***. On the one hand, most recommendations are for the government to do various things, and it is mentioned in the initial communication report that the government is the best institution to handle climate change, which means that there is a belief in the capacity to develop sustainably. Furthermore, the policies and laws written on the environment are also often mentioned as good and comprehensive (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, Chapter 11 Outlook and Recommendations; Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP & GEF, 2018, pp. 3, 12, 25).

In the state of environment and outlook report, there is also a weak recognition of exploitation, while the link is not drawn when discussions of, for example, oil-dependence are made, there is recognition that South Sudan is suffering the consequences of climate change they did not cause (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, p. 54).

On the other hand, there are many references to the government as weak, of limited capacity and lacking technical skills. Similarly, the legal framework is deemed weak, and there is a difficulty in approving and implementing policies and a need to strengthen institutions. The initial communication also states that the limited government capacity renders South Sudan currently unable to manage the impact of climate change. Continued armed conflict is also said to be hindering development and thus the handling of climate change. Moreover, the risk of short-term actions from the government when faced with upsurges in violence is also mentioned (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP & GEF, 2018, pp. 3, 12, 17, 19, 20, 171-172; Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, pp. 32, 283, 289).

5.1.2. The mission objective

The word ***aid*** is not used to describe the ***mission objective***. Instead, the most common terms used to describe the objective are ***support*** and ***provide***. Such objectives include but are not limited to: support capacity enhancement/building, provide technical assistance, provide for additional costs, support attracting investors and donor support, provide technical assistance in writing documents that will enable funding and donor support (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, pp. 202, 282, 283, 289; UNEP(a), 2017; UNEP, n.d.; UNEP(b), 2017; UNEP(c), 2017). Likewise, there is a recommendation to donor agencies (including the UN) to contribute technical and managerial expertise and financial support (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, p. 289). Another objective is to widen stakeholder engagement, identify priority mitigation/adaptation and present recommendations through INC report, assist in report writing, critical climate policy guidance to secure GEF money (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP & GEF, 2018, pp. 2, 20, 24, 176, 177).

One example of a typical objective formulation is this:

> *"International organisations should provide support on all the above focusing on:*

-Technical support in institution building;

- and Mobilising financial resources from international sources."

- (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, p. 21).

In terms of ***compensation***, this is not mentioned. Instead, most ***financial support*** is, to varying degrees, conditioned. As mentioned above, it is recommended that donor agencies provide financial support. However, a central part of the reports is about securing funding and donor support, usually through writing documents and creating programmes. For example, a list in one report suggests actions to attract donor support (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, p. 298). There is also a need to work on securing investments to develop sustainably and build capacity (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, pp. 16, 32, 64, 276, 283).

5.1.3. The roles

Many of the recommendations in the reports are highly detailed, which one could argue indicates that the UN sets ***outer boundaries*** of what can be done in South Sudan (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP & GEF, 2018, p. 185; Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, pp. 291, 292). While these are only recommendations in the reports, South Sudan is dependent on financial support, which is usually conditioned. Meaning when suggestions are made on how to receive donor support, these cannot be considered only suggestions. The way financial supports is contingent is also indicative of setting outer boundaries.

The role of IB seems to be drafting documents and policies as well as implementing these and influence funding and attract support from the donor community (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, pp. 292-293, 298; Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP & GEF, 2018, p. 21). In general, in all material, the implementation mainly lies within the responsibilities of the government of South Sudan, while the UN is a more significant part of the planning stage. A section also recommends agreeing to roles and responsibilities within the network (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, p. 295). There are, however, some examples where the UN takes on a more active role.

A formulation that stands out is the following:

> *“Specific to the UN system, it is recommended that UN Environment work with the UN South Sudan country team (UNDP, UNOPS, UN-MISS, and WFP) and others to identify synergies between conflict and post-conflict activities, and package them for possible donor support.”*
>
> - (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, p. 282)

The quote stands out because here it is the UN that is “packaging for donor support”, suggesting that there in some cases could be more independent work by the UN country team. The same part of the report says the UN can determine how current humanitarian relief funding could be adjusted (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, p. 283). Another example of greater involvement is that UNDP, WFP, FAO and humanitarian organisations, NGOs and INGOs are implementing a food-security and emergency flood response and recovery project (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP & GEF, 2018, p. 179).

5.1.4. Entitlement and moral benchmark

On ***entitlement,*** there are arguments to both sides. Firstly, UN agencies are seen as stakeholders in South Sudan, suggesting some entitlement there. (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, pp. 283, 289, 291; UNDP, 2021). Furthermore, given that donor support is conditioned, it seems the international community does not view South Sudan as entitled to compensation. This conditioning is despite the same reports stating that South Sudan needs such funding to build climate change resilience, and although South Sudan did little to contribute to climate change (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP & GEF, 2018, pp. 8, 21, 24, 26, 183-186; Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, p. 54). It seems that little attention is given to the administrative costs of such projects and reports, something Sabaratnam deems vital in a decolonized intervention.

Furthermore, one UN news story contained the following statement:

> *“‘South Sudan’s leaders will understand that donor fatigue is real,’ said WFP Executive Director David Beasley on a recent visit to the country. ‘If we don’t get the money we need, they are going to have greater problems than they would have ever imagined. So, they need to bring peace.”*
>
> - (WFP, 2019)

For clarity, donors, in this case, does not refer to WFP but other undefined donors. Nevertheless, this statement shows that the donor community and perhaps the WFP Executive Director require peace before the assistance. Before this quote, the text lists the reasons for food shortages to be flooding and drought (WFP, 2019). This writing is intriguing as flooding and drought are climate-related, and as shown by Tiitmamer, Mayai and Mai, they exacerbate conflict in South Sudan (2018). Based on these circumstances, I interpret this quote as a potential sign of UN entitlement. To elaborate, the UN sees itself as entitled to peace before assistance instead of South Sudan as entitled to compensation before creating peace.

On the other hand, another article by WFP recognises that South Sudan is free from guilt for much of its problems. *"Through no fault of its own, South Sudan is now suffering from the vagaries of a changing climate…"* (WFP, 2019)

In terms of ***moral benchmarks***, I find the material hard to interpret. Something that caught my attention was that there are several sections where the causes of environmental problems are listed, but the causes seem isolated to factors within South Sudan. This action could be because 1. The South Sudanese government can affect factors within South Sudan and is thus the relevant factor to mention, and 2. The factors might be the most applicable for the issue. I lack the scientific knowledge to assess that. Because it is hard to interpret, I will insert two examples to leave room for the reader to make their assessment.

> *"However, such biodiversity, including wildlife, is currently under threat, due to weak environmental regulation, poor development planning, fires, and most importantly, fragility resulting from conflict, instability and insecurity."*
>
> - (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP & GEF, 2018, p. 6)

> *"Although climatic factors are the main drivers of climate change, natural ecosystem conditions, human activities and low adaptive capacity in South Sudan will further aggravate its impacts. Fragile land and water resources, resource management and poor land-use practices are key factors that will influence climate change. Due to South Sudan's lack of diversified sources of income, food insecurity, political conflicts, high poverty rates, poor infrastructure and limited government capacity to manage fragile natural resources and cope with climate change*

> *variability, the country has a limited capacity to adapt to impacts, which will worsen the situation."*
>
> \- (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP & GEF, 2018, pp. 19-20)

With the reservations made above in mind, I will argue that this phrasing does not place South Sudan as the moral benchmark because it recognises their behaviour as more relevant than global climate change in this instance. Furthermore, it does not recognise South Sudan as entitled to compensation. In a sense, the way this is written recognises global climate change as the problem but does not recognise that countries not responsible for but more vulnerable to it could deserve compensation. Another such indicator is the way it is recognised that traditional systems of governance are essential. However, it is also mentioned that they are problematic due to being patriarchal, indicating that the UN sees itself as a moral authority on the matter (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, p. 32; UNEP(a), 2017). Lastly, another indicator is a statement by the Country Programme Manager of UN Environment on the launch of the State of Environment and Outlook Report *"If today you think it is not your problem, I am certain, tomorrow it will be yours"* (UNEP(a), 2017). On the other hand, as mentioned above, it is stated several times that South Sudan contributes little to climate change yet is vulnerable to impact, suggesting that South Sudan, in some sense, does not deserve the difficult situation it is facing.

5.2. Reflection

The reflection is intended to provide transparency and inspire different views. In each subsection, I will propose further research based on these reflections, the purpose of this being to show which perspectives did not fit into this paper and open up alternative interpretations in further study.

5.2.1. How theory influenced the interpretation

The theory has naturally influenced the interpretation in this paper significantly. Here I will give some examples of aspects influencing the interpretations and future alternative interpretations. Firstly, neglecting to use ***a gender lens*** in this paper has made some aspects of intervention invisible. For example, governance structures in South Sudan were evaluated in the *“South Sudan: First State of Environment and Outlook Report”*. One section informs how traditional local systems are essential for South Sudan governance but are patriarchal. These systems are not discussed from a feminist perspective using the framework in this paper. Sabaratnam’s book does involve feminist theory, meaning this is at least partially about the choices made in this paper. My suggestion for further research is to investigate what we neglect to see in this case when a feminist lens is not used (Ministry of Environment Republic of South Sudan & UNEP, 2018, p. 32).

Secondly, one problem with the theoretical construction was the way it constructs space as non-negotiable. In one sense, by attempting to create a framework situated in global power structures ***agency*** of the intended beneficiaries was overshadowed. Initially, I thought this was necessary given the material analysed. However, since much of the material was co-written, I am unsure whether this was necessary. Perhaps comparing documents with different authors would have been an option if access to the writing process was unavailable.

Nevertheless, if material that can determine contestations and compromises on the ground would be available, there is a need to incorporate theory that considers the agency of intended beneficiaries. ***Friction*** is one good example of such a theory that could be brought into the framework. However, the critiques and ideas presented by Sabaratnam and Millar could be incorporated. ***Friction*** would then be recognised to operate in an asymmetrical structure legitimised by systemic factors, including but not limited to colonial structures (framed by Sabaratnam as coloniality of power). This theory would allow us to see the dynamic nature of this complex interaction by highlighting both the space given and the potential of actors to affect the initial space.

Lastly, this paper looks at colonial structures, but other global power structures influence intervention, peacebuilding, and climate action. One such structure I found missing was the global economic system, a factor discussed in relation to peace in Nicoson’s paper (Nicoson, 2021) and in general by, for example, Jason Hickel (Hickel, 2020). Since much of the interpretation touched upon the international donor systems and how South Sudan was recommended to gain funding, such a perspective could have increased understanding of the situation and potentially been the background of a different interpretation.

5.2.2. Representation and authority

An aspect of this paper, the theoretical construction and the material used that I find problematic is representation. For clarity, this is not about who is presented in the material, as I did narrow down who/ what this material represents in the study (see material 4.4.). Instead, the problem of representation is with the choice of theory and approach. In it lies an assumption that 1. Emancipation has a value of its own, independent of results and, 2. There is a need to take a particular historical fact into account to understand. Now for the people studied or the state, these assumptions might not hold, perhaps for them, the result is more important, or some other factor is. While I view the choice more as a theoretical attempt rather than a production of definitive fact, we need to highlight representation. Because in one way or another, we will speak for someone, about someone, with someone or alongside someone, and which one matters (Ruby, 1991)[3].

This paper avoids distinctions between good and bad locals, acknowledging that there is no moral authority on that matter. Thus avoids the issue of valuing the local as described by Hirblinger and Simons discuss. This paper, however, gets stuck in the second representation problem presented by them, namely using the local to forward politics on good and bad peacebuilding (Hirblinger T & Simons, 2015, p. 423). Representation is important in and of itself. However, Hirblinger and Simons also argue that representations of the local have affected peacebuilding outcomes, thus highlighting the importance of transparency and discussions on this issue (Hirblinger T & Simons, 2015, p. 423).

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[3] This article is about representation in ethnographic film, the citation only refers to the anthropological terminology speaking for, about, with or alongside

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