



Third Annual Conference

Summary Report



Third Annual Conference

date: July 2015



The Hague Institute
for Global Justice



Clingendael

Netherlands Institute of International Relations

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The Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, founded in 2012 by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aims to bring together a network of relevant communities of practice on the topic of security and rule of law in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. It provides for a meeting space - offline as well as online - and intellectual stimulus grounded in practice, for its network to share experiences, exchange lessons learned and discuss novel insights. This way, it strives to contribute to the evidence base of current policies, the effectiveness of collaboration and programming while simultaneously facilitating the generation of new knowledge. The Secretariat of the Platform is run jointly by The Hague Institute for Global Justice and the Conflict Research Unit of the Clingendael Institute.



Introduction

On 24 June 2015, the Platform hosted its third annual conference in The Hague. Bringing together policymakers, practitioners, researchers and private sector representatives from across the globe, the conference provided an excellent opportunity to take stock of the activities and research conducted by the Platform to date, and to explore where and how these different activities link up. As such, the conference allowed for a frank exchange of insights and experiences between the different Platform members, feeding into discussions on how to take the Platform forward.

This report summarizes the main messages and principal takeaways of the day, and is structured in line with the conference program.

Conference setup

The conference aimed to serve three purposes:

- To seek out the intersections between the innovative events and research of the Platform, to inspire participants in developing new ideas and to further deepen the thematic focus of the Platform.
- To build new connections between the participants and to reinforce existing ones, by providing ample room for networking and by actively engaging participants throughout the day.
- To involve participants in a critical reflection on the work and nature of the Platform to date, and on the ways forward.

The agenda of the conference was built around these three purposes. The keynote conversation and the breakout sessions invited exchange on the thematic program of the Platform. The conversation with the Platform's Steering Group engaged participants in evaluating the functioning of the Platform, and in identifying ways for further development. Furthermore, the analysis of the Reconstruction Tender was presented as one of the prime examples of how the Platform has contributed to rethinking interventions and informing policy, stimulating participants to reflect on the way programs strike the balance between accountability and flexibility.

The five interactive breakout sessions were designed to draw together insights from the numerous events and research activities undertaken within the Platform, and to underline how many of these activities are interconnected. Examples include the interaction between the local provision of security and of justice, or the application of insights from the Reconstruction Tender Working Group to the research on Employment and Stability. The sessions were structured along headers that reflect the three lines of the thematic program of the Platform:

- 1 Innovative solutions for security and justice
- 2 Testing assumptions: development and (in)stability
- 3 New crises? Dealing with transnational dimensions

This setup challenged the participants to draw lessons from the Platform's past and ongoing activities, and take these a step further in developing innovative future directions.

9.00 h	Registration
9.30 h	Welcome & opening
9.30 - 10.00 h	Anna Gouwenberg, <i>Head of Office, Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law</i> Petra Stienen, <i>Moderator</i> <i>Author, Independent Advisor and Former Diplomat</i>
10.00 h	Keynote conversation
10.00 - 10.45 h	Robert Serry, <i>Former Diplomat & UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process</i>
☰ 30 minutes	Break
11.15 h	Conversation with the Platform's Steering Group
11.15 - 12.15 h	An interactive conversation between the participants and the members of the Steering Group, on the work and progress of the Platform, and ideas for the future. Willem van Genugten, <i>Professor of International Law, Tilburg University</i> Anton du Plessis, <i>Managing Director, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria</i> Yannick du Pont, <i>Director, SPARK</i> Joost Andriessen, <i>Director, Stabilization and Humanitarian Aid Department, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs</i>
12.15 h	Deconstructing the reconstruction tender
12.15 - 13.00 h	In this session special attention will be given to a critical review of the proposals for the reconstruction tender, and drawing general lessons for the network of the Platform to increase the effectiveness of policy and programming. Jan de Vries, <i>Deputy Director, Netherlands Helsinki Committee</i> Marco Lankhorst, <i>Senior Research and Learning Officer, International Development Law Organization</i> Expert response by Rachel Kleinfeld, <i>Senior Associate, Democracy and Rule of Law Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace</i>
☰ 1 hour 30 minutes	Lunch Change of venues
14.30 h	Breakout sessions location: see page 14
14.30 - 16.30 h	Five parallel breakout sessions on the intersections of past and ongoing activities of the Platform. See menu of topics on page 7, 8, 9 and 10 See location of breakout sessions on page 14
☰ 45 minutes	Break Change of venues
17.15 h	Closure
18.00 - 19.30 h	Drinks

Program of the conference day



Plenary I

Keynote conversation

Robert Serry kick-started the day, sharing key insights from his extensive experience in conflict mediation, specifically in the Middle East peace process and in the 2001 insurgency in Macedonia.

He discussed the challenges of engaging in fragile contexts: How to deal with the fragmentation and multiplicity of parties in current conflict situations? Who do you talk to, considering the fact that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter?

Serry emphasized the need for a patient, pragmatic and coherent approach to deal with non-state actors, sharing a number of main lessons:

- 1 The need to know history, goals, context, and methods of the organization: each non-state actor needs specific handling. It is imperative to develop a coherent international approach towards identifying the relevant non-state actors to involve in peace processes, understanding their key driving forces, and engaging them in a constructive manner.
- 2 Patience is crucial for mediators: “Quick fixes come back to haunt you!” In the case of Hamas, the dire situation of Gaza made it untenable not to talk to them. Serry explained how he made sure that he had the backing of the UN Secretary General, and how it is important to keep open lines of communication, especially when a military solution is not in sight.
- 3 It often takes time and bloodshed before governments realize it is better to talk, as was the case with the IRA in Northern Ireland. UN envoys should have latitude to talk with parties concerned, taking time to get to know the context and best methods.
- 4 A peace agreement that is not implemented can become a problem instead of the solution. High and low politics have to operate in tandem: if no link is made between the high geopolitics of the Israelis trying to yield as little as possible in negotiations, with support of the US, and the low politics of local Palestinian state-building and development processes with EU support, then this will not lead to sustainable change.

In the ensuing conversation with the conference participants, these lessons were emphasized and further explored:

- Not enough analysis is being done on the challenges of dealing with non-state actors, systematically analyzing the most effective ways of entering into dialogue with them.
- Counter-terrorism measures can be an obstacle in dealing with non-state actors, but they are necessary. According to Robert Serry, “Just because you need to talk to them does not mean you cannot be firm”, and “I would take risks with non-state actors if I believe they could help.”
- It is important to understand elite interests and to recognize that they may have divergent agendas on conflict resolution. International engagement should include as many contacts as possible with civil society, and should aim to be open and fair to all actors.



Plenary II

Conversation with the Platform's Steering Group

In a conversation with members of the Platform's Steering Group, conference participants were invited to share their experiences with and reflect on the Platform's work, and to share their ideas and ambitions for the future. In an open and frank session, participants discussed strengths, 'brilliant failures' and lessons learned, as well as future challenges, allowing the Platform to learn from its mistakes, and involving the network in the further development of the Platform.

Strengths

- The Platform succeeds in building relevant connections, linking timely research to policy and practice and contributing to the move away from ‘fact-free development aid’: work of (members of) the Platform has fed into programming of the MFA and certain aid organizations, as well as the development of the MFA’s Department of Stabilization and Humanitarian Aid’s Theory of Change on Security & Rule of Law

Challenges

- How do we remain innovative and relevant, and move beyond being a place for getting money for research?
- How do we ensure transparency and inclusion?
- We need to make a bigger effort to involve new parties: businesses, international organizations and development actors, partner organizations in the recipient countries

‘Brilliant failures’ & lessons learned

- The current open calls, a new model for shorter, smaller research projects, are a way to make research more relevant to changing realities, striving for short-term outcomes and long-term insights
 - The Platform Secretariat has an important role to play as propellant for the network and its activities: its thematic capacity has to be expanded, because it is currently too small to play that role
 - It takes time to get organized: it has taken time to develop the network and connections, and a coherent strategy and vision for the Platform that is shared by all members. Do not underestimate the value of being a functioning network!
 - It is important to internationalize the network, with members from both the Global North and Global South: international members provide new angles and expertise, challenging the closed Dutch development sector
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Remarks and points of advice on the role and focus of the Platform

- To ensure the relevance of research to the end users, can the Platform play a role in involving end users throughout the research process?
 - Make sure to involve different disciplines, to avoid reinventing the wheel.
 - Key partners and donors are very interested in understanding local contexts and effectiveness of policies and programming. We have a lot to offer in this respect, and need to get the message out.
 - There is a need for more research on inclusiveness in peace building: How to involve all parties instead of predetermining which parties to engage with?
 - Diplomats are willing to share their knowledge, but often suffer a lack of time. Embassies can play an important role in providing a link with local actors for identifying demand as well as dissemination of findings.
 - We also have to make knowledge more accessible: storytelling is key, sharing products in a quick and light way, also through local embassies and partner organizations.
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Remarks and points of advice on the functioning and process of the Platform

- In the past, changing conditions and requirements for participation were a challenge for those involved in developing the research agenda of the Platform. Make processes shorter and more transparent to deal with this.
- Make sure to remain a space for ‘constructive irritation’, with room for dissent and critical reflection.
 - There is a need for new ideas, and reflection on current practice may lead to irritating conclusions that we do not want to hear.
 - We should also collect local irritation, at the level of interventions.
- It would be good to do an exit survey among members of our network that no longer participate, to learn whether there are things the Platform should perhaps do differently.



Plenary III

Deconstructing the Reconstruction Tender

Marco Lankhorst and Jan de Vries critically analyzed the way the Dutch Reconstruction Tender (2012-2016) was set up, and suggested new ways to develop ambitious and realistic programs that strike the balance between accountability and agility.

The Reconstruction Tender was published in 2011, awarding €120 million to over 20 organizations in mid-2012. Lankhorst and De Vries explained that because of political considerations, the tender process was rushed through, which resulted in the fact that there was no common framework for monitoring and evaluation. For most actors, including the Ministry, the approach of combining rule of law and security was new.

In part because of this process, a number of assumptions underlying a majority of the projects in the Reconstruction Tender were insufficiently explicit:

- Most projects focus on the delivery of basic services. However, from a security and rule of law perspective, the delivery of basic services only partly addresses the key issues at stake. The assumptions underlying the linkage between basic service delivery and strengthening security and rule of law need to be critically assessed.
- A great deal of interventions are set up in a rather traditional manner, with NGOs working through local partners, increasing their capacity to achieve change. No organizations work directly with the central government and little work is done with other government agencies or with private entities (such as businesses). Why is this the case? And how is this affecting the effectiveness of interventions when the aim is to strengthen security and rule of law in a specific setting?
- A major factor determining the capacity of local partner organizations is their space to operate. Yet, creating and enabling space for civil society to operate is largely ignored in the proposals for the Reconstruction Tender.

For future tender processes, Lankhorst and De Vries called for a different structure. A balance needs to be struck between flexibility and the need for generic, abstract and stable indicators of progress:

- This means focusing on outcomes (rather than outputs) is key - only a few organizations identified these correctly in their proposals for the Tender, so it is important to think further on how we identify these.
- There is also a need to develop a common understanding of Theories of Change, and how to implement them.
- Projects funded in these fragile settings should be understood as experiments: no outcome is guaranteed, and these projects form a big learning laboratory.
- There is an important role to play for the Platform in testing Theories of Change and stimulating thinking on analyzing the projects and learning from this.

VIDEO RESPONSE BY RACHEL KLEINFELD

In a [video response](#), Rachel Kleinfeld underlined this message suggesting that our interventions should move more like [sailboats instead of trains](#), moving towards the same long-term end goal, with a flexible and adaptive route. Kleinfeld explained how we need to build flexibility into our programs:

- Donors and practitioners should focus on outcomes, not activity sets or outputs.
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- This means no prearranged budgets along lines of activities, but rather justification of budgets after the fact.
 - Instead of working with many implementing organizations, flexibility means working with a few contractors with multiple activity sets, with the expectation that some sets will close during the grant period.
 - Let the contractors close activity lines that are not working well, and reprogram the budget to other activities. This means the stigma of failure should be removed from closing activity sets.
 - We should focus on local capacity: the reforms we aim for take up to 50 years, while we work with 2-3-year grant periods, so this requires long-term local interest.

Research shows that outcomes that specifically focus on changing incentive systems, or rules of the game, can have far-ranging positive repercussions, for example increasing the access of women to jobs.

It is important to take into account the political economy of donors as well: it is often our own political agenda that drives our decisions, rather than what is best for the countries that receive aid. For our aid to be more effective, the system of aid has to change: so that people are no longer rewarded for big and expensive projects, but for good projects; so that we reward the recognition that projects need to be adapted along the way; and so that we can provide recipients with a stable and sustained flow of aid.

The ensuing discussion highlighted the impact of the analysis of the Reconstruction Tender on the development of the Theory of Change of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the need for early engagement of implementing organizations in designing the next tender (which is expected to come out in 2016).

- A suggestion was made to involve organizations in working groups formulating ideas for action, so that projects of these organizations are better interconnected.
- The discussion also underlined the need for more experiment-based thinking in designing projects, and space for innovation.
- Lankhorst concluded that Theories of Change should be key in the next tender procedure, allowing for a degree of uniformity, and that these should include an explanation of an organization's own role in creating change.
- In closing, De Vries emphasized the need to accept and work with unexpected developments: "We need to embrace chaos."



Afternoon breakout sessions

In the afternoon, the approximately 100 participants split up into interactive breakout sessions where they were challenged to draw lessons from the Platform's past and ongoing activities, with the aim of harnessing new insights to chart innovative future directions. Splitting up into smaller groups per session, participants were enabled to share their rich experience and knowledge.

The breakout topics focused on the intersections of past and ongoing activities, organized around three headers: 1) Innovative solutions for security and justice, 2) Testing assumptions: development and (in)stability, and 3) New crises? Dealing with transnational dimensions. The following represents the highlights of each breakout session, outlining aim, inputs, and principal takeaways.



Innovative solutions for security and justice

Security and rule of law interventions are traditionally state-centered, but at local levels a wide range of alternative actors are involved in the provision of security and justice. How do citizens deal with this variety of actors? Where do they turn with their security and justice needs, and what is the role of elites and politics in this process? How do these dynamics affect international efforts to effectively support citizens in their quest for security and justice?

Citizens seeking justice and security in fragile contexts | Facilitated by Rob Sijstermans, Cordaid

This session brought together and contrasted knowledge and experience about how citizens gain access to justice and the provision of security in fragile contexts, and the implications of this for programming. Drawing on a number of research projects on justice and security provision, the session opened with several short presentations:

- Leiden University set out the plans for their two-year research project on people that are displaced in the DRC, investigating what happens to people that are displaced, with a focus on access to justice.
- In Lebanon, International Alert is involved in a similar research project studying access to justice for Syrian refugees.

- In Afghanistan and South Sudan, the Van Vollenhoven Institute and Cordaid are researching local dispute resolution and legal pluralism, comparing a number of cases in both countries.
- The Conflict Research Unit (CRU) of the Clingendael Institute investigated how citizens determine which security provider to turn to with security issues, and what enables Beirut to be such a safe city.
- Finally, Cordaid briefly discussed a research project in which they collaborate with CRU on improving community security programming, also in Afghanistan and South Sudan.

The breakout session also built on Platform events such as the online debates, All for the few and the few for themselves, and Big Cities: Sources of and solutions to new insecurities.

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

- There is little evidence available on what actually happens to people when they are displaced, specifically on how they arrange access to justice.
- Where there are multiple justice systems available, such as formal and customary systems, citizens are generally very pragmatic in choosing which justice system to resort to.
- In Beirut, local-level security arrangements are integrated into higher-level political pacts, granting these arrangements stability and legitimacy.

EXPERIENCES WITH RESPECT TO CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND SECURITY PROVISION

- It is important to be transparent on the research goals toward the people that participate in the research.
 - Hiring local people increases access to areas where you cannot go, and to people you cannot talk to.
 - Be aware with whom you are speaking, the necessity to interview ‘terrorists’, and keep in mind how this influences you and your research, and also what your influence is on the local context.
 - Working in a consortium has most value when interaction between the partners is maintained throughout the entire research project, instead of at select moments during the research. Suggestions to enhance this are the incorporation of regular feedback loops, and making time towards the end to re-evaluate findings.
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Visual interpretation of breakout session: Citizens seeking justice and security in fragile contexts

Avoiding political entanglement, or embedding justice in politics? | Facilitated by Bart Weijs, Platform Secretariat

This session sought to discuss how to deal with politics, and to identify appropriate levels and scope for engagement.

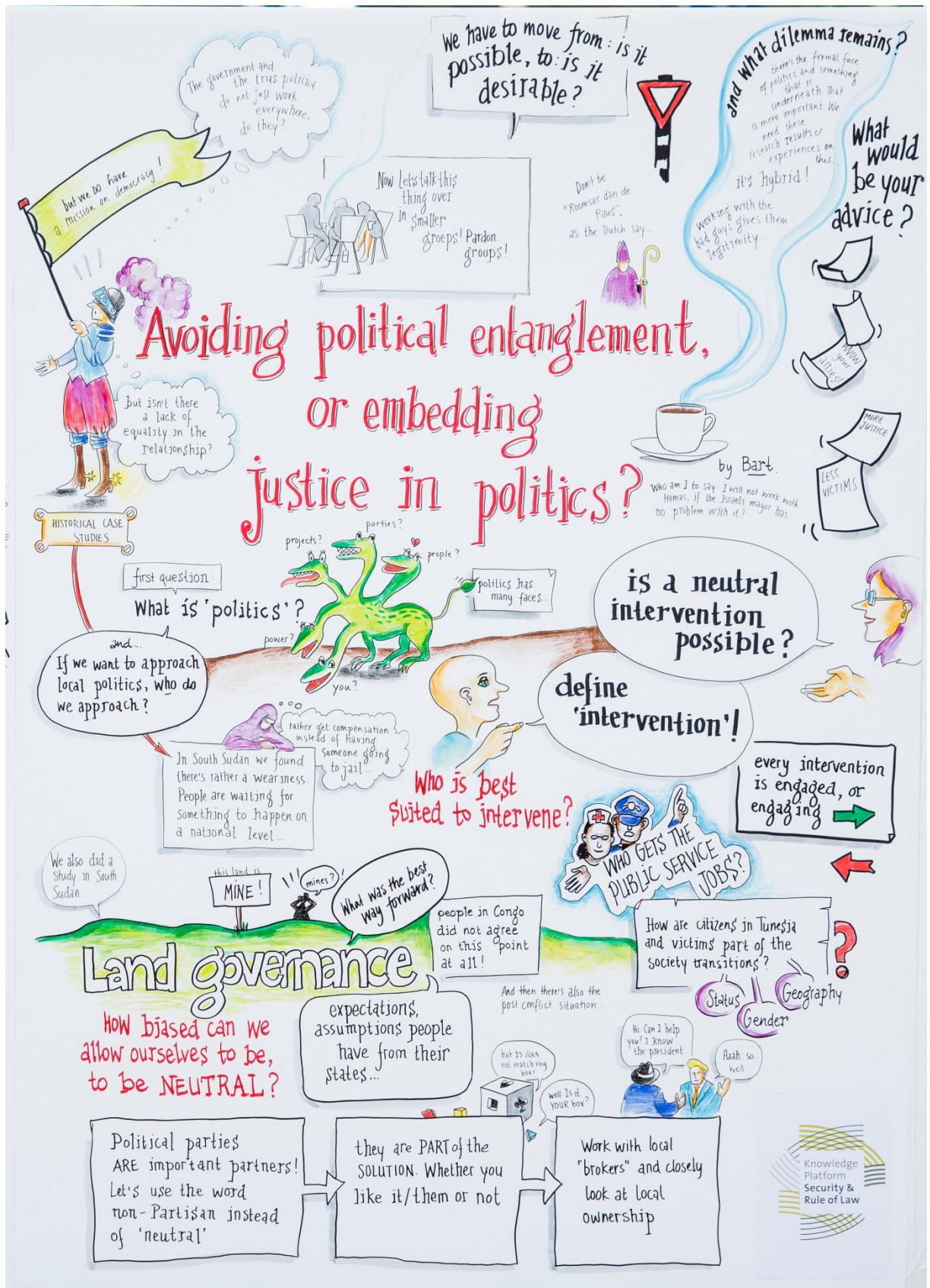
- The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) underlined the importance of engaging with political parties: interventions often focus on the executive part of the government or on civil society, ignoring political parties, while these are key to long-term stability.
- UPEACE presented their research on transitional justice in South Sudan, finding a striking weariness concerning the conflict, with people waiting for something to happen at the national level. With civic space shrinking, people are afraid to engage in justice and truth finding.
- Impunity Watch described their research on transitional justice in Tunisia, where the process of transitional justice has been captured by the political competition between Islamist and leftist groups.
- The Centre for International Conflict Analysis & Management (CICAM) explained how in DRC and South Sudan, land governance is a major source of injustice at local level. First findings include a large variation in views among intervening actors on what is the best way forward.

Besides these three research projects conducted under the Call for proposals on Embedding Justice in Power and Politics, this session also built on previous Platform events such as the online debates, and reports, for example, Elites, Power and Security. How the organization of security in Lebanon serves elite interests.

PRINCIPAL TAKEAWAYS

- There is overall consensus that engaging in politics cannot be avoided. What are alternatives to neutrality? A start is being aware of and explicit about your own agenda: “Embrace your bias.”
- Be pragmatic in engaging with local actors, keeping your end goal in mind. Be aware that you will also be instrumentalized.
- It is one thing to work on transitional justice and truth finding at the local level, but higher political levels can severely constrain local space for change, as is the case in South Sudan: political will is crucial.

A blog post was written on the basis of this session.



Visual interpretation of the breakout session: Avoiding political entanglement, or embedding justice in politics?



Testing Assumptions: Development and (in)stability

The relationship between development and stability is complex. Many programs and policies focus on stimulating economic development to increase stability and to contribute to peace. But what are the assumptions underlying our interventions, and how can these be tested?

Testing assumptions: the private sector's contribution to peace and stability Facilitated by David Bremner, Cordaid

This session aimed to bring out and investigate the assumptions underlying interventions focusing on employment with the aim to increase stability, including assumptions guiding three research projects on Employment for Stability.

- The Hague Institute for Global Justice presented the research project 'Does opportunity reduce instability? A meta-analysis', which investigates two important assumptions: 1) there is a causal relationship between interventions and economic impact, 2) there is a difference between job creation and employment training.
- In the discussion of Wageningen University's research project 'Entrepreneurship training, social cohesion and horizontal inequality in Rwanda', two assumptions were identified: 1) a strong national economy automatically means a strong local economy, and 2) ethnicity is too sensitive a topic to be included in the research.
- The Bonn International Center for Conversion presented the research project 'Conflict-sensitive employment under construction', which investigates the assumption that Small

and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) can work in a conflict-sensitive way, in the sectors of construction, infrastructure, and transportation.

- The scoping study 'Theories of Change linking Employment for Stability' found a need for more micro data on employment. It also identified a need to improve knowledge of what works and what does not in conflict areas.
- An overview of the work of the Working Group Employment for Stability led to the questions: Is there a concrete example that employment really creates stability? What kind of employment at what cost? And what happens down the chain, what challenges do businesses face?

The breakout session also built on private sector development and stability events that have been organized at the Platform, and the preparatory study Business versus Development Approaches on Employment Creation in Fragile Contexts. The session was informed by the work on Theories of Change by the Reconstruction Tender Working Group of the Platform.

PRINCIPAL ASSUMPTIONS

- Businesses have an interest or are interested in employment for stability.
- A business case can be made for businesses, without involving them.
- Local SMEs create more stability through employment than multinationals.
- More is needed than employment alone, in order to enhance stability; for example recognition, quality of work, good governance.
- Vocational training without opportunities does not create employment, and training without job opportunities does not help stability.

QUESTIONS AND REMARKS

- When we think about jobs, should we focus on individuals or communities?
- In the focus on employment and stability, what is the problem you are trying to solve and what caused it?
- What exactly do you expect from employment – what needs does it satisfy? What are social elements and psychological elements?
- When you train people and promise a job, deliver! Or this will also cause conflict.

A [blog post](#) was written on the basis of this session.



Visual interpretation of the breakout session: Testing assumptions: the private sector's contribution to peace and stability



New crises? Dealing with transnational dimensions

In a world of unprecedented flows of finances, information, people and goods, increasingly complex transnational crises challenge the adequacy of the existing toolbox for international engagement in fragile and conflict-affected situations. How to effectively integrate policies and interventions focusing on migration, countering violent extremism and criminal justice with the existing comprehensive approach? And how to deal with issues like coordination and coherence in an increasingly crowded and entangled policy field?

The current crisis in Burundi: the effectiveness of international engagement Facilitated by Suying Lai, Oxfam Novib and Gabrielle Solanet, Search for Common Ground

This session discussed whether the Dutch comprehensive strategy for engagement in Burundi, focusing on Security Sector Reform (SSR) and development more broadly, was the right approach. It aimed to reflect on the way forward, and what lessons need to be taken up to further work on peace and security.

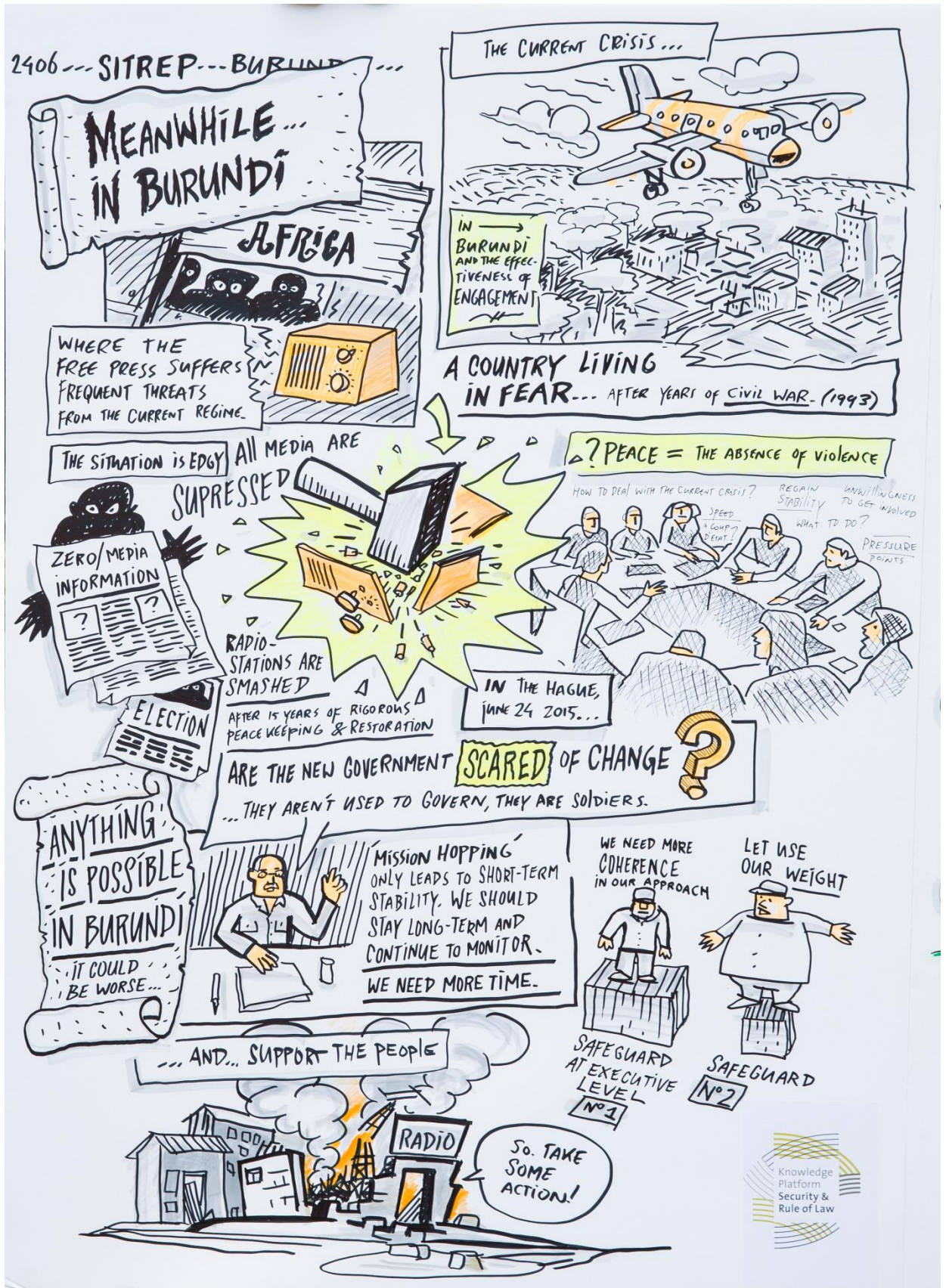
Speakers highlighted the role of the media and civil society in Burundi, the regional implications of the current political turmoil and lessons for the international community's engagement with the region. Media and civil society have played a crucial role in the peace process in Burundi in the last two decades, and these have been hit hard in the current crisis. The destruction of independent media and exile of journalists and civil society activists has led to a lack of information and fear among citizens. Few people are left to document human rights violations, and hundreds of thousands of people are displaced. The situation in Burundi in the past years has showed many early warning indicators for civil war and atrocity crimes.

At the same time, mass demonstrations like now have never happened before, and there is no ethnic dimension to these current protests. At the regional level, there is a risk of armed groups crossing borders. Burundi can be seen as a test for what will happen when elections come up in Rwanda and DRC.

This country case brings together different elements of the thematic program of the Platform: the work on understanding deeper drivers of conflict in the form of the relation between private sector development, employment, and stability; and also the work on the comprehensive approach. It also links to research on local security provision and the role of elites.

PRINCIPAL TAKEAWAYS

- Democracy has not changed politics in Burundi. The structural causes of conflict need to be taken into account.
 - Durable peace in one country depends on the other countries in the region.
 - Economic development is an important factor. Regionally, Burundi is the weakest link in the East African Community. Within the country, family-based networks constrain access to employment. Nevertheless, international approaches to economic development in Burundi have been rudimentary and simple. There is need for a more level playing field, both nationally and regionally.
 - Security sector reform is necessary: at the same time, without the SSR program funded by the Netherlands, the situation could have been worse.
 - The international community's response has not been uniform and consistent enough, leaving room for maneuver for the government. "The international community's response has been too little, too late."
 - Political will is key, both internationally and nationally. There must be political will from donor countries, to set up a coordinated and long-term effort. It is also necessary to work on the political culture in Burundi.
 - "It seems we are waiting for the violence to become ethnic before it is bad enough to intervene under R2P."
 - The elections should be pushed back. But the international community should also prepare a plan B and a plan C.
 - It is important to stay engaged with all parties - but this should not be confused with supporting all parties.
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Visual interpretation of breakout session: The current crisis in Burundi: the effectiveness of international engagement

Migration: exploring the potential of the comprehensive approach / Facilitated by Anna Knoll, ECDPM

This session explored the dimensions of the current migration crisis in the Mediterranean, discussing the European approach and investigating where we can draw lessons from our experience with comprehensive approaches.

TNO shared its experience with comprehensive approaches, as member of the Working Group Comprehensive Approach to Human Security. The presentation included a pilot on joint analysis of crises, focusing on the situation in Somalia, the Common Effort 2015 in Berlin, and the Mali dialogue gathering actors in the Netherlands involved in interventions in Mali.

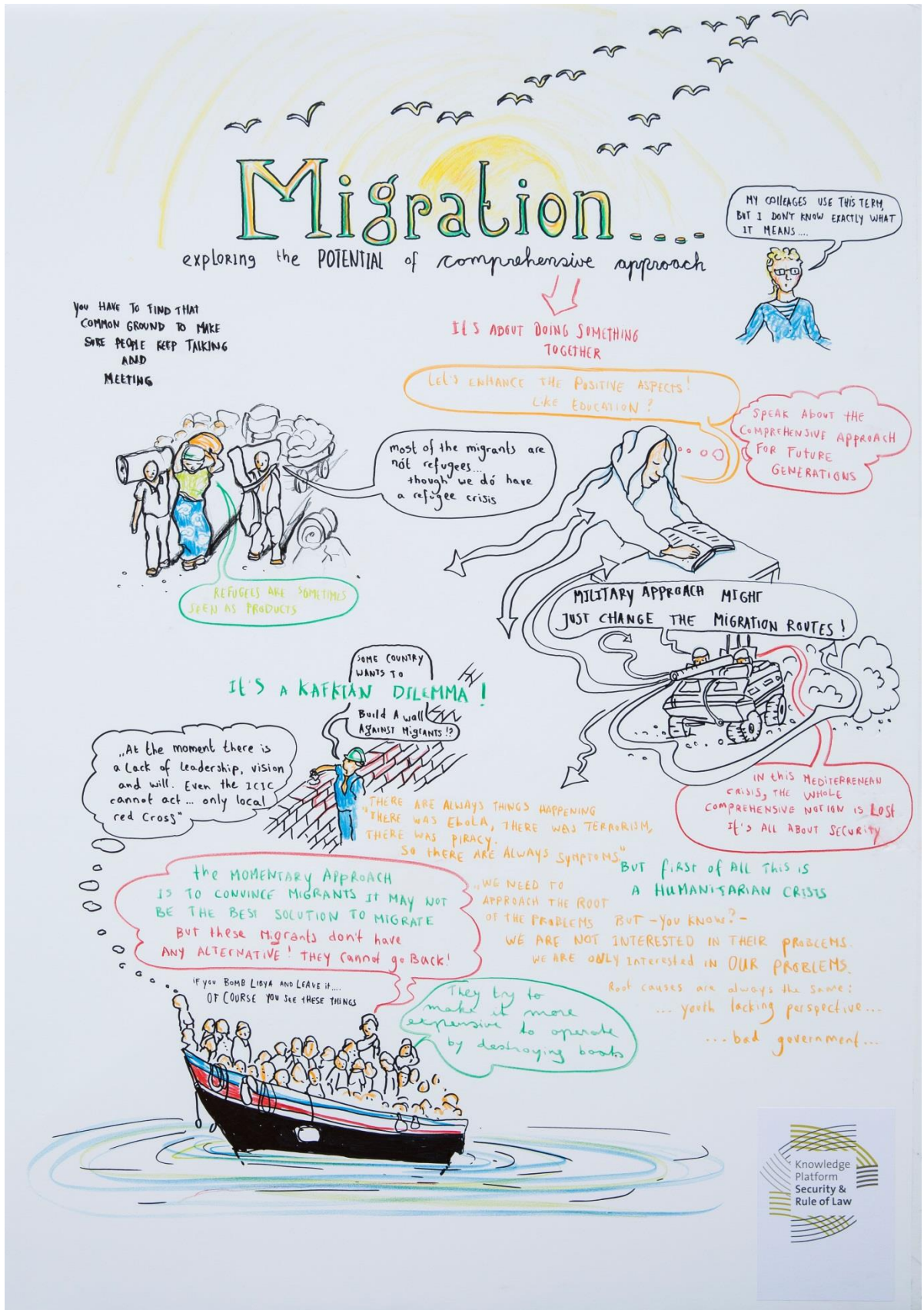
ECDPM highlighted their study on how different EU member states deal with the comprehensive approach, showing there has been development in the past 15 years, but also a wide divergence. This was followed by an introduction to the current migration crisis and the various responses that have been undertaken at EU level.

This session further builds on the following studies and activities: Preparing for Interaction - A comparative study on the different ways Dutch actors prepare themselves to work in the Comprehensive Approach, Comprehensive Approach to Human Security Research Report, the online debates, Panel Discussion on 'Local' Conflicts in Transnational Entanglements, Upgrading Peacekeeping - 5 Essential Actions.

PRINCIPAL TAKEAWAYS

- Currently, the main discourse is on stopping migration and security. EU member states find it difficult to commit to solving this problem, and the current discourse and the way it is portrayed in the media are not conducive to a comprehensive solution. A comprehensive approach may therefore need to include efforts to change the discourse, and focus on positive aspects of migration.
 - A comprehensive approach would need to extend the tools used beyond primarily focusing on security aspects and root causes in order to respond to the humanitarian crisis and irregular migration flows.
 - A comprehensive approach should consider the actions of civil society and private individuals who assist the migrants on the ground. At the same time, we should not idealize the role of civil society: there are also organizations that turn against migrants.
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- Local voices are not being heard enough: it is important to involve knowledge from NGOs, academics and other experts in the countries of origin of the migrants, to ensure that policy action against irregular migration does not do harm and protects the rights of migrants.
 - We need to work on the security of the migrants themselves, for example lone children. For this we need a better understanding of the networks through which they move.
 - Dilemma: we need a comprehensive approach in order to address the multiple dimensions of the crisis, but how to make sure it does not become too holistic and loses meaning? We need a focused approach, but at the same time remember the interactions between the various issues and policies.
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Visual interpretation of breakout session: Migration: exploring the potential of the comprehensive approach



Concluding remarks

The conference highlighted the need to develop new approaches to the way we design and evaluate security and rule of law interventions, and emphasized the centrality of Theories of Change and the importance of questioning our assumptions. A cross-cutting theme was the call for more long-term involvement, and accepting that projects funded in these fragile settings should be understood as experiments, with no guaranteed outcomes - the need to allow for taking risks and making mistakes (a learning laboratory), and the necessity to reassess the aid system. Robert Serry said “Quick fixes come back to haunt you”, Rachel Kleinfeld stated that real reforms take fifty years, and the breakout session on Burundi concluded “we ask too much in too little time”.

Similarly, the political nature of our interventions and the importance of political will was often brought to the fore. Robert Serry explained how high and low politics must go hand in hand, and in various breakout sessions problems were related to a lack of political will, either at the level of the countries we work in, or at the level of the donor countries.

With over 100 participants and a wide representation of the network, the Annual Conference provided ample space for networking, to develop new connections and to create momentum to take ideas forward. The conference successfully involved the nine international research consortia engaged under the two first Calls for Proposals launched in 2014, in the interactive breakout sessions. In this way, the conference contributed to strengthening the links between the research consortia, and created an opportunity for the researchers to test their ideas and initial findings against policy and practice.

The event was set up to create an open environment, with learning as a principal aim, both in terms of our thematic program and in terms of the functioning and positioning of the Platform. Some of the main takeaways for the Platform are that we need to continue to “search for irritation”, avoid heavy structures, share knowledge products more interactively and tailored to specific audiences, and make sure to connect and engage with international stakeholders - both from the Global North and the South. The statement that “we need to embrace chaos” is applicable to the Platform, in the sense that we have to balance the flexibility to respond to emergent issues and opportunities, with the need to maintain thematic focus. The many constructive comments, inspiring ideas and novel insights that emerged from the discussions will be taken along in further developing the focus and activities of the Platform.



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