The 'Field' in the Age of Intervention:
Power, legitimacy, and authority versus the 'local'.

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Abstract

This article highlights the semantic and socio-political meaning of the 'field', as a geographic and material, not disciplinary space, as it is used in both academic research and policy practices, elated to forms of intervention in IR. We argue that the notion of the 'field' carries colonial baggage in terms of denoting 'backwardness' and conflictual practices, as well as legitimising the need for intervention by peacebuilding, statebuilding and development actors located outside the field. We also show how academic practices have tended to create a semiotic frame in which the inhabitants of the research and intervention space are kept at distance from the researcher, discursively stripped of their agency. Along similar lines, policy-practice has reinforced the notion of the field as in need of intervention and making it subject to external control. This article challenges this and suggests that the agency of the inhabitants of the 'field' has to be re-recognised and de-colonised for political legitimacy to be recovered from 'intervention'.

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1. Introduction

Policy practice as well as academic research have long used the term 'field' to label a discursive and

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geographical space different from their own in which broad research and policy practices of intervention are seen as legitimate, often related to fieldwork in a case study country relevant to their work. The 'field' has become the standard referent in ethnographic practice, but also beyond ethnographic research. This frame of reference has travelled into International Relations, Development Studies, and Peace and Conflict Studies where it has become inextricably linked to policy practice, intervention, power and international order.[4] The field may well be an innocuous turn of phrase, or more likely a significant part of discursive geopolitical power frameworks. Thus we understand the notion of the field as upholding and perpetuating the workings of modern power, globalisation, global governance, and the liberal peace. It denotes a discursive framework that leads to securitisation and intervention.[5] The field is the place where power proves it is simultaneously benign and yet illiberal. The field serves as a tool to create security and maintain the *status quo*. It becomes an entity in which danger can be contained, as conflict is seen to be located in this contained field rather than in wider global networks of power.[6]

The instrumentalisation of the 'field' is not just a matter of policy-making and practice, but we also note a certain degree of complicity between academic research and policy-making processes, where the field is respectively used as a way of labelling, ordering, and othering. In academic research the field is connected to particular modes of knowing and to fields of knowledge, where such knowledge is achieved through "fieldwork". Non-liberalism, irrationality, and underdevelopment are all implied and regularly referred to in the academic discourse. It denotes a relatively undeveloped and insecure space where expertise is missing, and where knowledge is hierarchical, neo-patrimonial, tribal and pre-modern in its organisation. For mainstream academia, the field is a place where data can be gathered.

Against this background, we endeavour to examine how the concept of the 'field' stands as the building block for echoes of a mixture of colonialist, orientalist, and vanguardist modernisation thinking emanating from Eurocentric 'end of history' naturalism.[7] This article highlights the semantic and socio-political meaning of the 'field', as a geographic and material space as it is used in both academic research and policy practices, related to forms of intervention in international relations. We argue that the notion of the 'field' carries colonial baggage in terms of denoting 'backwardness' and conflictual practices, as well as legitimising the need for intervention by peacebuilding, statebuilding and development actors located outside the field. We also show how academic practices have tended to create a semiotic frame in which the inhabitants of the research and intervention space are kept at distance from the researcher, discursively stripped of their agency. Along similar lines, policy-practice has reinforced the notion of the field as in need of intervention

[4] D. Mosse, *Cultivating development: An Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice* (London: Pluto Press 2005); T. Murry Li, *The Will to Improve. Development and Practice of Politics (*Durham: Duke University 2007); M. Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations in Rwanda* (Ithaka, University Press, 2002); C. Nordstrom and A. C.G. M. Robben: *Fieldwork under Fire* (California, California University Press, 1995); E. Wood 'Ethnographic Research in the Shadow of civil war', in *Political ethnography: What immersion contributes to the study of politics,* ed. E Schatz (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009), L. Sion, 'Dutch Peacekeepers and Host Environments in the Balkans: An Ethnographic Perspective', *International Peacekeeping,* 15, no.2 (2008): 201-13; L.A .Fuji, 'Shades of truth and lies: Interpreting testimonies of war and violence', *Journal of Peace Research*, 47, no. 2 (2010): 231-241.
[5] B. Buzan, O. Wæver, and J. de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 25.
[6] C. Nordstrom, *Shadows of War* (Berkeley: University of California. Press, 2004).
[7] J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa (The Radical Imagination)* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2012).

and making it subject to external control. It is therefore no coincidence that the 'NATO CIMIC [Civil-Military Cooperation] Field Worker Course' is set up to train participants to "conduct CIMIC activities across the full spectrum of military engagement in a modern operational environment, up to and including corps/component command level."[8] The link between 'field work' and the need for intervention is evident in this context. In that respect, the agency of the inhabitants of the 'field' has to be re-recognised and de-colonised for political legitimacy to be recovered from 'intervention'. Thus, the field is read as the subject of power (that is, a site on which power can be projected) and simultaneously, the base of power (because of the liberal requirement for democracy, rights, and social contract). This tension and ensuing confusion means that it has become the methodological basis for a new trusteeship system which much foreign intervention, aid, statebuilding, and peacebuilding represents- a new version of counter-insurgency and con-current 'native administration'. Finally, we examine what this means for peace practices and research.

2. Locating the Field

The idea of a 'field' holds both spatial and discursive meanings and triggers associations with peasantry in the first place; that is, a space in which farmers cultivate and grow certain crops. Not only does this imply the possibility of controlling the field through machinery and technique, but it also suggests a notion of 'backwardness' and opposition to progress. Eventually it is a space, which serves the extraction of labour and goods. It also acts as a denial of culture and society and their complex meanings, which may be located in such fields.[9] Interestingly enough, the World Bank has a programme entitled 'Levelling the Field: Improving Opportunities for Women Farmers in Africa', in which the ambiguity of the metaphor 'field' becomes obvious. Does the term denote the fields or the 'otherness' of the location in need of external intervention? Indeed, the field has been used throughout history to denote the periphery, colony and hierarchy, indicating a space where autonomy, freedom, rights, prosperity are less than in the developed, urban, metropole or core.

2.1. The field in academic discourse
The 'field' carries specific meaning in research and it is connected to a particular mode of knowing and to fields of knowledge. Such knowledge is often achieved through ´fieldwork' where the 'field' and the 'fieldworker' are mutually constituted through the practice of fieldwork. This builds on a particular and asymmetric relation between the 'knower' and the 'object' and where the fieldworker is akin to the inquisitor.[10] Top-down power-relations and hierarchy are essential to how the field is generally conceived in knowledge terms, drawing on Foucault.[11] This makes possible and legitimates problem-solving research methodologies and depends on this epistemic and material hierarchy.

The notion of the 'field' as a space in which ethnography can be conducted 'elsewhere', that is, outside the sphere of the researcher, has a long academic history. It is particularly through the

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[8] Civil-Military Cooperation Centre of Excellence, 'NATO CIMIC Field Worker Course', http://www.cimic-coe.org/products/training-education/course-landscape/nato-cimic-field-worker-course/ (accessed 04 May 2015).
[9] C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5.
[10] K. Hasterup, 'Getting it Right, Knowledge and evidence in Anthropology', *Anthropologica Theory*, 4, no.4 (2004): 455-471; F. Driver,'Editorial: Fieldwork in Geograpy', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 25 (2000): 267-68.
[11] M. Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry,* 8, no. 4 (1982): 777-795

ethnographic turn of International Relations that a more reflexive use of the term has become more prominent. In her research of US national security discourses, Cohn, for instance, moves from a clear distinction between her own positionality and the positionality of her interviewees to an insight into the striking "continuities across sites".[12] Vrasti makes sense of the attempt to reconcile theorising from a distance to working in 'the field' as a laudable, but also superficial approach.[13] She suggests that, indeed, even critical ethnography is still based on the notion of alterity,[14] which we can read as an attempt to deny agency from the 'field'. In her reading of Beier's *International Relations in Uncommon Places*, Vrasti contends that

> the boundary disciplinary IR imposed between a sovereign 'inside', where peace, community and progress reside, and an anarchic 'outside', where chaos and barbarism pervade, is in fact a historico-cultural division between 'modern' and 'pre-modern' forms of political existence.[15]

The 'field' as a term can be considered an imaginary construct, which is presented as natural and purely geographical to denote a particular locale and its social networks.[16] Labelling a space as a 'field' implies a notion of 'limitedness' and 'boundedness' and restricts power and agency to this very field, presuming that local power does not extend beyond the field and can thus be analysed in a contained framework. The concept is often used as a 'monolithic' construct.

We can therefore argue that the inclusion of ethnography into academic disciplines such as Politics or International Relations without acknowledging the legitimacy of resistance in an emancipatory and perhaps eirenist framework[17] also carries the risk of confirming, rather than breaking up, the power relations inherent in the field, further entrenching the distance between the researcher and those in focus for research purposes. Thus, the term "the field" can also be understood as a space of contestation. Against this background, the 'field' is not just shaped by external security, structural or governmental factors, but has dynamics on its own. It represents a discursive battleground of ideas and discourses for researchers and their research subjects. Who will have a voice in the field? Who will be heard or silenced?

2.2. The field in IR teaching and research

These reflections raise questions about the ways in which academia has been using the term 'field' in a context of research and teaching. The term is still widely used despite its colonial baggage. Recent publications, Ph.D. courses, summer schools as well as manuals are often circulated without problematising nor politicising the use of the term.[18] Even in academia, the term often triggers

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[12] C. Cohn, 'Motives and methods: using multi-sited ethnography to study US national security discourses', in *Feminist Methodologies for IR*, eds. B. Ackerly et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 91-107.

[13] W. Vrasti,, 'The Strange Case of Ethnography and International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 37, no.2 (2008): 279–301, p.285.

[14] *Ibid.,* p. 296.

[15] *Ibid.,* p.299.

[16] Cf. R. Scheyvens and D. Storey (eds), *Development Fieldwork. A Practical Guide* (London; Thousand Oaks; New Delhi: Sage, 2003).

[17] O. P. Richmond, 'Eirenism and a Post-Liberal Peace', *Review of International Studies,* 35, no 3 (2009).

[18] See, for instance, Scheyvens and Storey (eds.), *Development Fieldwork A Practical Guide*, or CIFAS, '5th CIFAS Field School in Ethnographic Research Methods', http://www.cifas.us/page/5th-cifas-field-school-ethnographic-research-methods (accessed 21 February 2014).See also University of Copenhagen mandatory Ph.D. courses at http://anthropology.ku.dk/PhD/courses_kopi/

connotations of being 'away', in some tribal community or village,[19] implying the notion of unsophisticated otherness, backwardness, and distance. Primarily, the field is seen at the bottom of the structural hierarchy of power in IR, by virtue of its under-development or conflict-affected nature.[20] Importantly, the field is produced not only through power and discourse, semantics and labelling, acting upon it through broad practices and discourses of intervention, but also reinforced through performance.[21] Both domestic and foreign actors act in the field, take on particular roles (of intervener or intervened upon) and thus make the relevant power structures work. Thus, the field is a concept that captures both practices and discourses as two key interlinked and reinforcing aspects of academic research practices.

The field is closely linked to the academic practice of 'doing fieldwork' common in many social science disciplines as well as in the humanities. It is only recently that anthropology, a discipline particularly reliant on the term, has tried to unpack this notion.[22] After entering the field, it is often assumed that the researcher will leave again, without being affected by his/her personal experiences in the terrain and without having altered the field through his or her presence, unless through a carefully regulated experiment designed to do no harm. Fieldwork is associated with methods of survey and statistical data gathering based on population, territory, property and material assets. It is also associated with field observation, participant observation, landscape assessment, interviews, focus groups, collecting oral histories and environmental autobiographies, digging through, collecting, sorting, classifying, as well as mapping and documenting what is observed and experienced and more recently investigating into the embodiment of the fieldworker. The 'other' in the field is thus kept at a distance, reflecting the interests of networks of researchers who claim to have a legitimate goal in analysing, interpreting and speaking on behalf of the field, but also want to avoid being influenced by the field (or 'going native', in colonial parlance). This has sometimes been framed as a danger of ethnographic seduction[23], a phenomenon which is viewed with considerable suspicion at universities (but perhaps more importantly in the military, donor circles, in diplomacy, and the international civil service) as it tends to reduce the well-established distance between knowledge, researchers, and the field and to challenge the notion of objectivity and objective facts. As these methods suggest, fieldwork produces an 'object-knowledge' – in the sense that it is "…attaching itself to objects, working by way of objectification, and itself becoming an object to be possessed and recycled".[24]

Observing the problems of the insecure other in order to solve them from the perspective of 'Kantian expertise' through modernisation models associated with liberal norms, neoliberal

[19] U. Hannerz, 'Studying Down, Up, Sideways, Through, Backwards, Forwards, Away and at Home: Reflections on the Field Worries of an Expansive Discipline', in *Locating the field,* eds. S. Coleman and P. Collins, ASA monographs 42, (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2006): 23-42, p.23.

[20] R. Shilliam (ed.) *International Relations and non-Western Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

[21] S. Coleman and P. Collins, 'Introduction: Being where? Performing Fields on Shifting Grounds', in *Locating the field*, eds. S. Coleman and P. Collins ASA monographs 42, (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2006): 1-20. V. Amit, 'Introduction: Constructing the Field', in *Constructing the Field: Ethnographic Fieldwork in the Contemporary world*, ed. V. Amit (London, New York: Routledge, 2000): 1-18.

[22] U. Hannerz, 'Studying Down, Up, Sideways, Through, Backwards, Forwards, Away and at Home: Reflections on the Field Worries of an Expansive Discipline', in *Locating the field*, eds. S. Coleman and P. Collins, *Locating the field*, pp. 23-42.

[23] A. C. G. M. Robben, 'The Politics of Truth and Emotion among victims and perpetrators of violence', in *Fieldwork under Fire*, eds. C. Nordstrom and A. Robben (California, 1995): 81-103.

[24] K. Hasterup, 'Getting it Right, Knowledge and evidence', 456.

structural adjustment, and other more interventionary practices, including those associated with military intervention and counter-insurgency, is rightly often seen as an expression of governmentality.[25] Again, the concept of the 'field' is the subject of such power. It asserts the primacy of the researcher and their data over the subject who produces the data from which theories are developed in this process. Thus, the field corresponds neatly with the notion of 'southern data harvesting' to be used for metropolitan or northern theory production, which can then be turned into policy. Rarely are universities or academics based in field locations involved in such theorising, though they may be subcontracted in order to gather data. Thus, researchers will continue to apply for fieldwork funding and refer to the space and subject of inquiry as the 'field'. It is no accident that power solicits field research through grant-giving agencies and more direct state involvement in priority setting.[26]

Perceived in such a way the field is more than a spatial description of the afar. It is a subject constructed through interplays of social relationships performed and upheld by the researcher and the research participant/the subaltern/the local.[27] The idea of researchers performing upon the field moves 'the field' beyond the static notion of a spatially fixed place and suggests dynamic power relations as well as making the subaltern/local research participant complicit in the hierarchical relationship. This then makes it possible to place 'the field' anywhere where authority, development, peace and order are deemed to be in need of reconfiguring. Such constructed otherness of the field suggests that it is ripe for reform in order to be compatible with the global (hegemonic) order.

Thus, fieldwork as an academic practice is about performing spatial relations through the production of boundaries, binaries, hierarchies and cultural imaginings. The field becomes thus the raw material for researchers, where theories made 'at home' are projected onto 'the field', where data is collected.[28] We could argue that, here, the 'home' represents the comfortable armchair from which data can be gathered from a distance. In this context, but from a linguistic perspective, Clark and Bangerter distinguish between 'armchair', 'laboratory' and 'field' research.[29] The authors suggest that there has been an increasing move from armchair research to laboratory and, importantly, field research.[30] However, while this may imply a transformative research mechanism through a different methodological approach, we argue that this is less transformative in practice if the power hierarchies and theoretical frameworks manufactured previously in the global north are merely carried around the field. In fact, the 'field' is more often used as an alibi to equip certain projects with more legitimacy, while the theorisation still takes place 'at home'. In that sense, the field, in its mainstream use, can be considered an extension, rather than a subversion, of armchair or laboratory research. As a research space it holds the potential for exploitation of the subaltern/local.

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[25] I. Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, tr. and ed. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). M. Foucault *'Governmentality'*, trans. Rosi Braidotti and revised by Colin Gordon, in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality,* eds. G. Burchell, C. Gordon and P. Miller (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991): 87-104; T. Lemke, 'The birth of bio-politics: Michael Foucault's lectures at the College de France on neo-liberal governmentality', *Economy and Society*, 30, no.2 (2001): 190-207.
[26] For an excellent summary of this rationality, see L. Sun Wyler, 'Weak and Failing States: Evolving Security Threats and U.S. Policy,' Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, August 28, 2008
[27] Driver,'Editorial: Fieldwork in Geography'.
[28] J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Theory from the South.*
[29] H. H. Clark and A. Bangerter 'Changing ideas about reference', in: *Experimental Pragmatics,* eds. I. A. Noveck and D. Sperber, (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 25–49.
[30] *Ibid.*

It is the target of power, expertise, and the modernising vision. However, critical scholars and thinkers have long been aware of these dangers, and have (somewhat timidly) resisted calls for 'policy relevance', 'impact' and in general their complicity in the instrumentalisation of knowledge by power, to some degree at least.[31] Furthermore, feminist scholars find that fieldwork carries with it romanticized and masculine overtones and have called it into question.[32]

2.3. The field in policy discourse

The term 'field' has not only been influential in academic research, but also in policy discourse, as Bourdieu has explained. He argues that fields serve as platforms for governance as "the state is in a position to regulate the functioning of different fields". In that sense, the state can manage the 'field', that is, that which is beyond its institutional remit, through financial or juridical intervention.[33] In this way it forms the discursive foundation[34] for an international architecture of peacebuilding.[35] In this age of intervention, the 'field' serves to enable a conflation in the global north of humanitarianism, peace-making, assisting others, and lobbying for greater equality, with national interests, casino-capitalism, and modernising projects which profit northern multinationals, employment for northerners or cosmopolitan elites, but which visit extraction and disruption upon 'the local'.[36] Practices of intervention are meant to respond to the positionality of the field and the problems it is subject to, but it also confirms its subjugation. Liberalism and imperialism have become linked in the field, with the spatial connotation reinforcing the claiming to space through a process of labelling. In fact, the construction of a vocabulary drawing on the jargon originating in liberalism and colonialism indicates hierarchies and differences in status. 'Capacity building', 'good governance', 'local ownership' and so forth have therefore come to denote the necessity to remove agency from the field, framed as disabled, which is then constructed as in need of being acted upon. Thus, the field points to practices of trusteeship.

This is partly due to the fact that we ascribe such phenomena to certain fields, which are assumed to be closed in themselves and disconnected from the allegedly peaceful and progressive environment of international / western power. The 'field' therefore becomes a metaphor of distance determined in geographic and power frameworks, otherness and potentially of threat, which has to be kept at isolation from its surroundings. The UN's reports on human insecurity in fields such as Lesotho or the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are generally reflective of the implicit assumption that the field is conflict-torn and structured by imminent insecurities.[37] In an even more explicit way, the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has published a report entitled "Opera-

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[31] L.T. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (London: Zed Books, 1999); T. Asad (ed.), *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (New York: Humanity Book, 1973),

[32] G. Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) and D. Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies,* 14 no. 3 (1988): 575-599.

[33] P. Bourdieu, *Practical Reason. On the Theory of Action*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1998): 33.

[34] M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, tr. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1969): 193.

[35] O. P. Richmond, 'The Paradox of Peace and Power', *International Politics,* forthcoming 2015.

[36] M. Pugh, N. Cooper and M. Turner, *Whose Peace? Critical Perspectives on the Political Economy of Peacebuilding* (London: Palgrave, 200; D. Massey, *World City* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007): 184 & 200; A. Escobar, *Territories of Difference* (London: Duke University Press, 2008): 11-12.

[37] United Nations, 'Lessons from the Field. Applying the Human Security Approach through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security"' New York, 2013.
https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/HSU/Outreach/UNTFHS%20Booklet%20-%20FINAL%20March%202013.pdf
(accessed 23 February 2014).

tional Guidelines for Working in a Potentially Hazardous Environment", directed at "OSCE staff conducting field activities".[38] The notion of insecurity and danger in the field could hardly be more obvious.

2.4. The field in policy practice

As the peacebuilding industry encounters the field in terms of a post-conflict society, it has involved construction of the 'other' as living in blank spaces waiting to be filled in by the peacebuilders. In these spaces, the peacebuilding actors may write such things as "civilization, progress, modernization and democracy".[39] In a sense, peacebuilding and statebuilding practices are now transposed echoes of their origins in the *mission civilisatrice* of the colonial era, as well as echoing the structural adjustment policies of the 1980s. The policy of peacebuilding and statebuilding seeks to stabilize the notion that the international community has a duty or a moral obligation to modernise and democratise post-war societies. So what does such discourse mean in and to the field?

Members of the international community have a confusing view of the field, however. Some New York based UN employees ironically call the Geneva offices the 'field', but this is an unusual usage. Mostly, 'missions' take place in the developing world, and it is no accident that the vernacular of peacebuilding, statebuilding, and development generally follows that of colonial and military usage. The World Bank, for instance, has launched its 'Parliamentarians in the Field' programme, which aims to create networks between the institution and MPs in a variety of countries. Interestingly, the countries associated with the 'field' are in "Asia, Africa, the Balkans, Latin America and the Middle East".[40] This clearly suggests a near colonial world view, in which neither Europe nor North America is considered the 'field', while implying a notion of 'backwardness' of the regions mentioned above. Along the same lines, the IMF regularly publishes 'Letters from the Field', again denoting non-Western, poor or conflict-ridden countries as representatives of the field.[41] The European Union External Action Service's (EEAS) establishment of 'field offices' such as the three offices in Somalia, put in place to monitor EU funded projects to ensure quality, efficiency and efficacy of EU-funded interventions are examples of how such terminology traditionally is used.[42] The field operates as the subject of power, to be modernised and pacified through intervention.

Given that this is the case, it should also be no surprise that the policy response to their loss of legitimacy in conflict-affected countries is what Duffield has called 'bunkerisation'.[43] This growing security practice of cloistering offices in walled compounds with armed checkpoints, using armoured cars and armed guards for transformation and protection is used to impose a material and immaterial border and increase distance between the international and the local. The insecurity of

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[38] OSCE, "Operational Guidelines for Working in a Potentially Hazardous Environment", not dated. http://www.osce.org/cpc/74739 (accessed 23 February 2014).

[39] R. L. Doty quoted in S. Withworth, *Men, Militarism and UN Peacekeeping* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004): 39.

[40] World Bank "MPs in the field", http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/PARTNERS/EXTPARLIAMENTARIANS/0,,content MDK:23173308~pagePK:64165874~piPK:64165885~theSitePK:464534,00.html (accessed 21 February 2014).

[41] Cf. International Monetary Fund, "IMF Civil Society Newsletter", http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/cs/eng/index.asp (accessed 21 Feburary 2014).

[42] EEAS, 'Field Offices', http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/somalia/about_us/field_offices/index_en.htm (accessed 01 March 2014).

[43] M. Duffield, 'Risk Management and the Fortified Aid Compound: Every-day life in Post-Interventionary Society'. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 4 (2010): 453 – 474. See also P. Higate, & M. Henry, 'Space, performance and everyday security in the peacekeeping context', *International Peacekeeping*, 17, no.1 (2010): 32-48.

'field missions' increasingly reflects the shifting power relations of international relations, in that even internationally backed states frequently have limited control of security, while the privatisation of the means of violence has consistently found markets in the global south. From Timor Leste to Kosovo to Afghanistan, as well as to western-based institutions, the insecurity of the 'field' has been responded to by attempts to secure the representatives of external authority (UN, World Bank, donor, or diplomatic offices) as a substitute for a concerted engagement with the roots of conflict. This in turn leads to insecurity at home, explaining the increasing bunkerisation of the institutions of peacebuilding, development or peacekeeping in their northern bases (the UN, World Bank, EU, even INGO headquarters, etc). Headquarters of the institutions of the international system used to be reasonably welcoming and hospitable in the global north only 15 or so years ago. Now access is as heavily, if not more, regulated than it is at 'field headquarters', as anyone who occasionally visits the UN Secretariat in New York may recognise. As Donini and Maxwell suggest, this trend is in line with a wider policy trend, which views aid work (in their example) as increasingly dangerous and therefore calls for a need to create increasing geographical distance between aid workers and the receiving societies.[44] In that respect, early UN engagement in Afghanistan presented itself to a certain degree as 'remote management'[45], which, in the more recent phase of intervention, has taken shape as a policy of 'bunkerisation' during the course of which international policy actors pursue a policy of physical withdrawal,[46] which, however, is not a withdrawal in managerial terms. This approach symbolically implies that the 'field' is not yet ready to be included in the international system of governance due to its insecurities and lack of order. It justifies intervention to transform the field and to make it compatible with this system of order. This also reconfigures the relationship between 'victims' and those who want to assist, meaning that assistance can only be offered to the 'field' if it secures the core interests and values- and overall security of the global north, and chiefly its liberal and neoliberal architectures, as the basis for a global system of international relations.

3. The semantic power of the field

Language and power are directly linked,[47] in that the labels and frames attached to certain locales reflect implicit power relations about it. The field is rarely used as a term in policy documents, but the concept is forever present in the configuration of power relations they reify.[48] Governance becomes an exercise of creating distance between self and other in conceptual and geographic terms, given that governance can only work in a context in which boundaries between those holding authority and those subject to authority are clearly distinguishable. Power between the labeller and the 'field' can thus only circulate through the construction of distance and difference, with Bourdieu claiming that "the construction of the state proceeds apace with the construction of a *field of power.*"[49] This field of power can be considered to have historical depth. In that sense, it can be argued that the UN was founded to preserve a world order largely dominated by the UK and the US

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[44] A. Donini and D. Maxwell, 'From face-to-face to face-to-screen: remote management, effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian action in insecure environments'. *International Review of the Red Cross* 95 no.890 (2013): 383-413, p.385.

[45] Ibid., p.392.

[46] Ibid., p. 394.

[47] N. Fairclough, *Language and Power*, second edition (Edinburgh: Pearson, 2001).

[48] D. Yanow, 'A Policy Ethnographer's Reading of Policy Anthropology', in *Policy Worlds: Anthropology and the Analysis of Contemporary Power*, eds. C. Shore, S. Wright, D. Pero (New York and Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2011): 300-13

[49] Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, 42

and has eventually internalised this process. It has thus produced frameworks of intervention and governance that, at first glance, seem to promote modern norms such as human rights. However, this disguises the underlying power structures of such efforts, enabled through the language of the 'field' and its underlying discursive power relations.

The use of the term field smooths the path discursively for direct and governmental power to follow.[50] In this sense, intervention, development, peacebuilding and statebuilding research and practice have used the term to indicate a dysfunctional space, which might strive for progress, but does not deserve autonomy and should therefore be the subject of a wide range of interventions. From the root of the 'field' with all of its historical baggage, much of the discursive framework for contemporary international-local encounters emerges. It provides the legitimacy for many types of intervention, including development, humanitarianism, peacebuilding, and statebuilding [51] Discursive/ material frameworks like structural adjustment, good governance, capacity building, development, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR), democratisation, and marketisation, could not exist without an assumption of the field as a kind of bare life, or a space of barbarians, or as an absence of modernity, as an autonomous oasis of difference, where humans are second class in so many ways.[52]

It is important to note that underneath the high politics of international planning and state interests, the field is not just a notion of geography and topography, but it denotes a lived reality. High politics enables a vanguard of modernisation theories and actors to exercise direct and governmental forms of power.[53] Those actors tend to be seen as either homogenised, or considered powerful only in the sphere of conflict, yet without significant peace agency from an elite perspective. What is surprising is that on closer examination, this approach is far from new. It rests on a historical trajectory of power relations aimed at semantically authorising and legitimising a range of interventionary practices within and between states.

It is indicative of a certain well-meaning insensitivity that power continues to be exerted in this way, especially in the name of peace, development, and rights. Power often cautions us not to 'romanticise the local' if we appear to sympathise with the field and its 'undeveloped' nature. Less well-meaning is that this hierarchy requires a vanguard influenced by liberalism and neoliberalism rather than localised forms of legitimacy – including an international civil service, international and regional organisations, foreign policy actors, aid workers and knowledge producers. They act in terms of a combination of interest, normative and ideological preference, and knowledge so external actors can bring about 'self-improvement' for others in their 'fields'. This 'will to improve' reflects the international/external actors' programmatic agenda and practice for developing and governing 'the field' through disciplinary strategies.[54] Such an improvement agenda renders technical deeply political processes where improvers and their targets conform to appropriate

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[50] M. Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', in *Power: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault*, ed. J.D. Faubion (London: Penguin, 2002): 345.

[51] M. Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars* (London: Zed, 2001).

[52] G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford University Press, 1998).

[53] O.P. Richmond, 'The Paradox of Peace and Power'; M. Barnett and R. Duvall, 'Power in International Politics', *International Organization*, 59 (2005): 39-75; M. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation,* trans. AM Henderson and T. Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1947): 52; R. Dahl, 'The Concept of Power', *Behavioural Science*, 2, no. 3 (1957): 203; K. Booth, 'Security and emancipation', *Review of International Studies*, 17, no. 4 (1991): 313-26.

[54] T. Murry Li, *The Will to Improve. Development and Practice of Politics*.

transformations of the field. Fields of knowledge/power exist in the core, whereas fields of agrarian or urban *lack* of knowledge and powerlessness exist elsewhere. Legitimacy after the liberal interventionism and in the age of neoliberal globalisation remains tenuously linked to the marginalised. In this respect, it is important to reflect not only about the meanings of semiotics, but also the networks of actors perpetuating and sustaining them through varying types of power relations, which maintain inequality.[55] How are such associations being deployed and how are representations (re)generated?[56] This is crucial not least against the background that the 'field' has often been linked to the 'subaltern'[57] as denoting inhabitants of the former. However, rather than just serving as neutral labels, these terms carry certain meanings and vested interests in themselves.

In that sense, institutions create discourses of similarity to label the 'field' as a bounded and homogenous unit in order to establish difference between themselves and the 'field'. The latter is therefore viewed as containing the 'local' which is barely implicated elsewhere. A bounded local is constructed in opposition to a more universal global (mainly centred in the north but implicated further afield), which, however, is not labelled a 'field' in its own right. This certainly raises questions about why the international is hardly ever labelled as a field, but more as a normative, abstract space beyond geographical location. Again, we need to be aware of the power relations implicated in labelling and semantics. Furthermore, it is obvious that the field (in its external usage) has long been implicated in international and global relations.

In sum, the concept of the field is used to maintain and disguise existing power relations and the inequalities and injustices they perpetrate, including north south relations and the framework of sovereign states, both frameworks of which might be said to date from at least the 19th Century. This prevents an understanding of space and time in terms of scale and justice, which in turn would collapse territorial distinctions used to maintain existing power relations, the state, and global inequality.[58] The field in turn enables technocratic and bureaucratic rule and a broad range of interventionary practices over subjects.[59] In broader terms it allows a global vanguard of expertise to force along a modernisation project aimed at consolidating and extending the current international system, without necessary responding to conceptual or ethical critique or empirically observed flaws. From this a range of approaches has emerged which extoll the virtues of a particular modernisation project as if it were indicative of universal progress and a natural and much improved heir to the liberal colonial project.[60]

4. The Complicity between IR Discourses and Policy-Practice

Linguistic practices such as the use of the term 'field' in academic research and in policy discourse

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[55] B. Latour, 'On actor-network theory: A Few Clarifications', *Soziale Welt*, 47, no. 4 (1996): 369-81, p.374.

[56] *Ibid*., p.374.

[57] G.C. Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?,' in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), 271–313.

[58] Comaroff & Comaroff, *Theory from the South*, 86; D. Massey, 'A Global Sense of Place', in *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis University Press, 1994).

[59] T. Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 15.

[60] F. Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order* (Princeton University Press, 2011): 459; M. Mazower, *Governing the World* (London: Penguin, 2012): 21; D.C. North, J. J. Wallis, and B. R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders* (CUP, 2009): 11-12; B. Badie, *The Imported State* (Stanford University Press, 2000): 193.

authorize social activities (e.g. peacebuilding), and language ideologies systematically work to naturalise peacebuilding- and a broad range of- interventions into the field, and to justify the hierarchy between the intervener and the intervened upon that seem to have little to do with language. Agents of peacebuilding can thus, in an interactive way, evoke or create a social reality that seems to have been there already, and which these agents only seem to be labelling. This is not the mere enactment or performance of a social category as in Butler's conception.[61] Rather it brings about intervention creating the impression that current international power relations are necessary or uniquely justified and thereby legitimating social relations of power.

The process of labelling as such in turn raises questions of the legitimacy of intervention, whether it be policy or research-driven. Does the semantic construction of the 'field' suggest certain forms of legitimate intervention on the part of the interveners? Is it an attempt to counter the formation of resistance in their areas of engagement through the reclaiming of frames on the part of the interveners? Discourse becomes material power, which in turn is met with insurgent knowledge and discursive and/or material resistance.

Networks of powerful external agencies help sustain the ideas of the 'field' as a laboratory that needs to be investigated, controlled and transformed.[62] Such networks include academics, activists and policy-makers alike, often without an explicit consciousness of the meanings the term carries, while at the same time cementing power relations on a global scale. This is not least due to the fact that processes of identity-formation need an 'other' to make sense of oneself. Jenkins, for instance, has suggested that "[d]ifference does not make sense without similarity."[63] Thus, the discourse of the field endorses power and knowledge relations between the subaltern-of –the-field and northern policy makers, researchers, relational-legal and bureaucratic forms of knowledge.[64] It does so in top-down hierarchical, state-centric, economic, and social ways that endorse north-south, rational-liberal versus non-rational, non-liberal, relations.[65]

This is essential for the legitimacy of the 'rule of experts'[66] that the international community deploys in post conflict sites, drawing on the legitimacy of the liberal peace to deploy the model of the neoliberal state transforming the post-conflict landscape to a 'labscape' for political and economic experiments. The paradoxically missing inhabitants of the field are considered parts of that seemingly clearly delineated area of engagement of the field and subject to experiments in research and policy-making. The field is thus an "ethics-free zone", from the perspective of policymakers and problem-solving scholarship, mostly concerned with effective and efficient governance. The label of post-conflict societies allows the researcher to describe first, then experiment with and steer the imagined space they are researching. The 'field' allows for the opportunity to step outside the terrain and ignore the role of the researcher as participant to the field.

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[61] J. Butler, *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of 'sex'* (New York, Routledge, 1993).

[62] Cf. the idea that communication in the 'field' needs to be controlled in order to promote peace in J. Burton, *Conflict & communication: the use of controlled communication in international relations* (Free Press, 1969).

[63] R. Jenkins, 'Categorization: Identity, Social Process and Epistemology', *Current Sociology*, 48, no. 3 (2000): 7-25, p.22.

[64] P. Darby, *At the Edge of International Relations: Postcolonialism, Gender and Dependency* (London: Pinter, 1997).

[65] R. K. Ashley, 'The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics', *Alternatives*, 12, no. 4 (1987): 403-34; R. Cox, 'Social forces, states and world orders: beyond international relations theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies,* 10, no.2 (1981): 126-155.

[66] T. Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*.

It emphasises the subject status of target populations and allows the researcher to adopt a position of unaccountable and executive authority.

5. Questioning the 'Field'

As outlined above, it is only relatively recently that critical thinking has begun to recognise the difficulties associated with the epistemological framework underlying the concept of the 'field', especially as the object and base of power. Long imprisoned within the boundaries of problem-solving approaches and orthodoxy, critical peace research has yet to grapple seriously with the challenges posed by the practice of fieldwork and how to move beyond and reconfigure the very nature of knowledge production, for example the labelling of the 'field', and the accumulation, classification, interpretation and representation of data from the 'field'. Clearly, critical research needs to more closely examine how to label and practice research that aims to translate experiences from interaction with local agents or 'knowers' and 'spaces of knowledge' into our understanding of knowledge production.[67] Which methods and techniques are suitable to such a process of generating knowledge that is subjective, reflexive and consenting to the notion of local agents as 'knowers'? Crossing these intellectual, temporal, spatial divides requires a move beyond orthodox approaches to 'fieldwork'. This is important if research and policy are to emancipate subjects from violence and poverty rather than to maintain structural violence.

If we read the field as a site of agency, knowledge and mobilisation, then we reverse 'intervention', and the state as well as the international community merely become the servants of the field, or rather the 'repopulated' political spaces they should have been designed to serve.[68] Enablement in a democratic context forms the basis of power structures, not antiquated and colonial notions of metropolitan,' liberal vanguard' versus 'illiberal peasant'. The field in critical terms denotes an inversion of discursively and practically constructed power structures and thus the potential to resist imposed structures of representation.

Hence, if the field is actually indicative of the maintenance of northern power relations, global inequality and related distributive injustice, then it becomes inevitable that the 'resistance of the field' must be considered as automatically legitimate if it involves a claim for emancipation. In other words, the natural result of any exercise of power is that it is naturalised if successful, but constant cycles of resistance can render this naturalisation illegitimate, and reveal that it is based only on a narrow consensus that survives solely by excluding the subaltern. Power may even realise its limits, or retract, as can be seen with the projects of modernisation, liberalisation, and neoliberalisation after recent intervention.[69] Thus, we can conceptualise the opposite dynamic through the resistance of the field: the field as networks of anti-power, anti-intervention, and autonomous agency: resistance simultaneous with dependency-creation. Though this appears to be

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[67] D. Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, 14, no. 3 (1988): 575-99; G. Rose, 'Situating Knowledges: Positionality, reflexivity and other Tactics', *Progress in Human Geography*, 21, no. 3 (1997); S. Thapar-Björkert and M. Henry, 'Reassessing the research relationship: location, position and power in field accounts', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 7, no. 5 (2004): 363-81. M. Henr., P. Higate, & G. Sanghera, 'Positionality and power: the politics of peacekeeping research', *International Peacekeeping,* 16, no.4 (2009): 467-82.

[68] See for example S.B. Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject (*Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

[69] D. Chandler, *International Statebuilding: The Rise of Post-Liberal Governance*, (London: Routledge, 2010).

an unnecessary binary, because power, intervention, and its response work on many scales, it may rather be described as hybridisation rather than a binary.

The field therefore is the subject of top-down and governmental power relations in addition to its structural marginalisation, and of the attempt to naturalise hierarchy, which also carries implication for the dominant understanding of space and culture as ordered in various unchallengeable ways. In this way the field becomes the problem of international relations, not power relations, hegemony, inequality, or multiple levels of discrimination, as in other disciplines such as anthropology or sociology:

> "Spatial encapsulation and bounding of culture have been key to two central, analytical practices within anthropology. First, they have helped to reinforce assumptions of internal consistency and external difference that can permit, even encourage, comparison. (…) Second, they have helped to constitute the 'problem' of context …. – the key epistemological weapon in anthropology's conventional defence of its methods."[70]

Likewise, the field is therefore central to orthodox understandings of international relations as dominated by key states, organisations, norms, and interests, and peace and conflict in the field are ordered accordingly. A mixture of realism, liberalism, and neoliberalism, are held up as foils for the anarchy and poverty of the field, and applied for its reform. As the material base of international relations the discourse of the field leads to a neo-colonial impulse. Yet, while the label 'field' seems to imply relative powerlessness and a lack of agency, critical research in IR, peace and conflict, development studies, history, sociology and anthropology has rightly begun to unpack naturalised power-relations, with a few to developing emancipatory theory. They question the notion of the field in terms of suggesting almost disguised power structures, which are present but not easily visible to field researchers.[71]

6. Reconceptualising Disciplinary Uses of the Field and Fieldwork

These reflections have a substantial impact upon the ways in which academic disciplines and policymakers need to rethink their use of the concept of the 'field' as well as the associated practices the term seems to evoke. It requires a consideration of positionality and global inequality, which the 'field' is the unconscious victim of. The term, redolent of top-down and externalised power relations in history, is no longer suited to an emancipatory agency, nor to the development of a positive and hybrid form of peace.[72] We are also concerned about the discursive frameworks of development, which are related to it, and in particular its naturalisation of a marginal and exposed position in the international political economy. The term refers to wider discursive practices of 'othering' in its attempt to label a particular peace space as isolated and bounded. It places the liberal peace system on a plinth. In this context, Stallybrass and White allude to the discursive production of sym-

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[70] S. Coleman and P. Collins, 'Introduction: 'Being … Where?',.8.
[71] Cf. H. Lefebvre, *Critique of everyday life*, vol.3; translated by Gregory Elliott, with a preface by Michel Trebitsch, (London: Verso, 2008): 16.
[72] O.P. Richmond, *Failed Statebuilding* (Yale University Press, 2014).

bolic space:

> "[…] 'place' is not merely a name but something like a mode of discursive production and also a psychic content – and for which exclusion may be more crucial than presence – the whole question of *displacement* has to be rethought. The question arises of *the gradient and direction of flow of metaphor and symbolic substitution from one domain to another.*"[73]

This quote points to the power of exclusion that spatial metaphors bring up, which connects networks of actors – including academics- as well as the need to rethink the travelling of metaphors in such networks. Against this background, the term 'field' is illustrative of and can be used to uncover implicit power structures (which are present also in supposedly more sensitised approaches such as in peace and conflict studies), as well as among international policy actors in the field. It highlights the extent to which many disciplines in the Kantian university system, as well as most international institutions, are still influenced by the remnants of a colonial project, by a modernising project, still beholden to the 19th century state project, and to the 20th century liberal international project.[74] The tensions between these different temporal epistemologies cause implicit degrees of discursive structural violence.[75]

Unchallenged in the discourse of the 'field' is 'the silence of continuity' in much social science scholarship, including International Relations, and Peace and Conflict Research.[76] Central to various wings of International Relations, the use of the concept of the field betrays its fear of the other as well as its trusteeship approach to much of the global south and post-colonial world. IR and associated disciplines need to interrogate theories of peacebuilding and statebuilding, development, and other approaches to order and peacemaking in order to unmask their hegemonic discourses, reveal power relations, and thereby recognise that theories are always particularistic and associated with power. In so doing, theory becomes recognized as always having been conceived as a political intervention. What gives theory its power is that it partly constitutes reality and it has a presupposed capacity both to transform the existing structures of power and to create alternative social arrangements. It seems that abstract theory has never had such a hold on the material and social reality of the world as today.

To mitigate such strategies designed to maintain existing power relations (by saying the liberal peace does not exist, or there is no alternative), for example, sub-disciplines such as Peace and Conflict Research could, in critical terms, juxtapose the peripheries of the discipline (i.e. the 'field' and the knowledge it produces) against its centres where conventional knowledge is produced, theory made, and policy developed. In doing so, theory-making and conceptualization could be read from the positionality of the subaltern and their real-life everyday experiences (in their own voices) rather than the alien, rural, backwards, 'field'. Thus, indirectly 'the field' produces- through its own critical contradictions- a radically new kind of work in theory-making.[77] A reflexive theorization is

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[73] P. Stallybrass & A.White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986): 196.
[74] M. Mazower, *Governing the World* (London: Penguin, 2013).
[75] This is reminiscent of colonial anthropology. T. Asad (ed.), *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*.
[76] Robbins cited in S. Coleman and P. Collins, 'Introduction: Being where?.
[77] J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Theory from the South*.

proposed that relates to **grounded theory** to make sense of the times and places we explore, experience or live in. Power relations, progressive politics, and the necessary conditions for emancipation must be part of this process.

Disciplines claiming to offer emancipatory theory- whether from war, poverty, or other structural problems, should reflect upon their metaphors, concepts and terms in order to develop a new lexicon that makes new thought, even moments of polyphony, possible. Such new language would make it clear where power lies, and what peace work/ theory is actually emancipatory, empathetic, and is not contaminated by historical patterns of power. Currently, it probably points towards issues of discursive equality, material equality, difference, hybridity, and the production of post-liberal forms of state or polity, driven by the 'field' where much of the world's population currently deals with everyday problems of development and conflict, and enabled by the state and the international.

Re-examining, deconstructing and challenging the field debate on power, agency, spatiality and the politics of location and positionality of researchers is quite different from dismantling them in research practices. Fieldwork is a common and standard research practice in many disciplines, and 'science' in the field is institutionalised beyond the social sciences. Complex methodological and ethical debates are required to suggest reflexive, emancipatory, collaborative and participatory methodologies for investigating spaces of interest at home and afar. Mainstream IR should reassess their starting premises from the perspectives of 'research with' rather than 'on', and collaborative, egalitarian projects rather than 'case studies' and 'fieldwork'. A critical reassessment of contemporary methodologies for fieldwork brings to the fore the construction and maintenance of dichotomies of here and there, at home and away, us and them, as well as dualistic models of interaction between research and researched, and between researcher and research participant. Furthermore, such reassessment of methodological discussions will reconstruct the uni-directional circulation of power in the research process and reconceptualise the binary construction of the researched/powerless and the researcher/powerful while still acknowledging that there are power gaps, differences and inequalities between the researcher and the research participant.[78] Thus, by unmasking the field as a site of power production, critical research can support a closer investigation into the construction of power allowing the research space to be seen as one of complex power relations where power is put in play by a number of different actors.

A re-imagined epistemic framework for knowledge in IR, development, peace and conflict studies, and other disciplines would recognize the 'field' as a space of knowledge and acknowledge local agents as knowers – active agents in the process of knowledge production. An underlying egalitarianism would be an expectation of such a progressive methodological stance. This approach blurs the assumption of subject/object dichotomy, as the research encounter is an intersubjective process where both the researcher and the researched are subjects with agency and whose subject positions are constantly negotiated and where the politics of the broader context are played out at a micro scale. Such 'fieldwork' encounters provide space for the researched to frame their subjectivities, and thereby mitigate the power relations inherent in knowledge. Such an epistemic framework avoids reifying power structures where direct, structural and governmental forms of power maintain historical hierarchies while aiming to make the weak 'resilient' rather than

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[78] S. Thapert-Björkert and H. Marsha, 'Reassessing the research relationship: location, position and power in fieldwork accounts', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 7, no.5 (2004): 363-81.

supporting their emancipation.

Critically reconceptualising the field also means rethinking the ways in which we label the 'non-field'. Often, in academic circles, people find it amusing when one considers seemingly 'progressive' places such as New York or Brussels as places in which 'field work' is conducted. The academic resistance to labelling places in the global north as 'fields' is not least due to the perception that they are free of the type of problems that can be solved through academic research or policy intervention. Therefore, an attempt to rethink the ways in which we label particular locales in academic terms allows for a nuanced understanding of the politics of meaning underneath academic labels.

7. Conclusion

In this article we have explored the underlying power structures inherent in labels of spaces. 'Fields' and 'fieldwork' are not natural, but political, categories reflecting networks of academics and policy-makers who have an implicit interest of maintaining relations of dominance between themselves and the subjects of their intervention. By labelling places of investigation as 'fields', actors give the latter a meaning of being backward, problem-ridden and in need of external analysis and support. This privileges western-centric epistemologies and reinforces hierarchies, whether those are based on subject-object, male-female, or victim-saviour binaries. Fields are the site of data to be harvested for northern theory production, and where in turn, experimentation in development, peacebuilding, or development may take place. Ultimately, the goal is the establishment of global governance in metropolitan terms; a post-modern form of native administration in post-colonial terms, whilst appearing to do as little harm as possible. A broad range of interventionary practices maintains top-down power relationships by simultaneously transforming and maintaining the field. Such an ethically dubious project may be in line with Enlightenment progressivism, but it is also a denial of alterity, non-western agency, politics, and any emancipatory goals they may claim.[79]

The term represents a historical extension of the metropolitan, and neoliberal, sensibility that frames contemporary practices of intervention: the distance which is artificially created between those allegedly in need of intervention, and those believing themselves capable of implementing this has been filled with 'trusteeship' approaches to peace, development, and security. Trustees need local elites who are willing sub-contractors, which has become the goal of policy focused on 'local ownership', 'participation', development, good governance, peacebuilding and statebuilding. The field is the site of neo-native administration, in other words. The term 'field' also denotes the assumption that externals are free of conflictual policies and must be considered as key actors in the resolution of conflict. This requires more reflection about the ways in which we, as academics, imagine and represent our research locales. Rather than considering those as laboratories for our work, we need to unveil the hidden power structures as well as the binaries of representation as imminent in our research. Researchers are always part of certain 'fields': we impact upon the power relations within and beyond. A dichotomisation of the 'field' and 'non-fields' thus becomes untenable and needs to be object of critical scrutiny. At the same time, in the light of such neo-

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[79] E. Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 2006); E. Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene* (London: Verso, 2002): viii.

colonial structures, new forms of agency (subjectivity) from outside of the global north have discursively unpacked this hierarchy and are mobilising against it. Thus, the 'field' may also turn out to be the agential basis of networks of counter-intervention, new forms of resistance and emancipation.

The field and the fieldworker are co-constructions and the knowledge produced between them reflects the materiality and mutability of this relationship. The field assumes meaning by virtue not just of its content, but of its context and positionality, and the way in which it points to the non-field as the opposition, the core of knowledge and power. However, the line of demarcation between the field and the non-field is not actually drawn in a stable way: it is at best porous, broken and often illegible. In short, there is much more 'field' in the 'non-field' and more 'non-field' in the field than is recognized by dominant discourses of the field. Again, the fuzziness of the line between the field and the non-field is a structural and governmental articulation of power and knowledge relations that subsumes the knowledge and power as well as the subjects, voice and agency inherent in 'the field'.

Networks of connected terms indicate an assumption of liberal/ international legitimacy displacing local forms: the international acts upon the local, according to power, and does so in a more legitimate way than under historical practices of colonialism. Nevertheless, if we unpack this, it is an impossibility: one cannot assume international/ liberal legitimacy displaces the local without local consent, which cannot be provided fully, especially in crisis moments. Thus, the field as a term is simply one part of a wider discursive apparatus of power. It signifies power relations that allow hierarchies like 'good governance', 'capacity building', and development to be used without consultation with local partners, or embarrassment, through exercises of unaccountable power. This occurs partly because our problem solving methods, and colonial history, or liberal upbringing does not allow us to see or value other systems of governance.

The construction of the field implies no previous or alternative viable system exists, and also that conflict systems can exist in other locations without simultaneous peace systems developing. This is not the case according to anthropologists.[80] But conflict systems may advance more than peace systems, due to their connection with political and industrial power, global markets, arms, and more. In other words conflict in the field is not because of the other, but perhaps because us/self. This may well explain why the age of intervention, which describes structural adjustment and development, peacekeeping, liberal peacebuilding, more recently neoliberal statebuilding, nested in a system of globalisation and global governance, has given rise to 'hidden forms of resistance', networks of counter-intervention, once again fiercely debating the pros and cons of non-violent resistance, emancipation, and insurgency.[81] It also explains the convergence between foreign policy, development, and peacebuilding with trusteeship and counter-insurgency. It helps us to understand the loss of legitimacy of the post- Cold War era's discursive framing of peace, security, and stability from those who deem themselves outside of the field, and who practice the art of governance. The field, fieldwork, fieldworkers, and their various discursive frameworks underline the limitations of post-colonial thought and practices of intervention aimed at neo-native administration supported by

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[80] D. Fry, *The Human Potential for Peace: An Anthropological Challenge to Assumptions about War and Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
[81] J. C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

external trusteeship. These have been created with existing power structures in mind, without acknowledging the autonomy and rights or the political, social, and material aspirations and strategies of their subjects. It might be said that top-down discourses of the 'field' recreate an old power relationship between native administration and trusteeship under the rubric of global governance and peacebuilding, and may actually help generate insecurity and cycles of securitisation rather than peace or order.