Reclaiming Everyday Peace: Local Voices in Measurement and Evaluation After War, by Pamina Firchow, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 158 + Appendices + Bibliography + Index, £24.99 (ppbk), ISBN 978-1-1084-0276-7

The 'local turn' in peacebuilding has focused valuable attention on the need for sensitivity to the perspectives of conflict-affected communities in designing and evaluating peacebuilding strategies. But what does this mean in practical terms? In *Reclaiming Everyday Peace*, Firchow takes many of the conceptual and theoretical insights gleaned from the local turn and applies them to concrete efforts to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives. The result is a truly pioneering experiment in the use of community-generated indicators of peace and an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the more conventional criteria employed by international agencies.

Firchow's approach is innovative and well thought out. Using a matched case research design, Firchow selected four communities, two each in Uganda and Colombia, that were demographically similar and had similar histories of violent conflict and displacement but that differed with respect to the degree of 'post-conflict' external engagement each had experienced. Within each community her research team conducted focus groups with men, women and youth concerning *their* understandings of peace and the tangible factors that *they* use in their everyday lives to determine whether and to what extent peace has been established in their communities. Individuals identified factors as varied as the ability to walk freely or sleep safely at home at night, access to potable water, local businesses booming, the emergence of new leadership, the development of roads, and reparations by armed groups. The indicators served to inform the design of surveys that her team then conducted of the villagers in the four communities regarding their experiences and perceptions of peace. With the survey data in mind, Firchow grouped the indicators into macro categories such as security, human rights, and development to gain an understanding of villagers' broader policy priorities and to facilitate comparisons across the four different communities.

On the basis of these findings, Firchow examines the community-generated policy priorities in relation to the measures undertaken by external actors implementing peacebuilding programmes. 'Conducting such a gap analysis gives us a better understanding of why community-level interventions have often fallen short in addressing community level concerns', Firchow contends. 'It demonstrates that in large part the constituents and distribution of many interventions after war are not in tune with the specific needs and priorities of communities' (p.130). In El Salado in Colombia, for instance, Firchow found that in defining peace community members put the emphasis on cohesion and interdependence (e.g., trust in the public sector, respect among members of the community) but these were areas that international actors had largely ignored, notwithstanding the considerable external support which the village had received. Firchow found that some interventions actually increased conflict in El Salado, as with the reparations scheme, which generated resentment on the part of non-beneficiaries.

Firchow provides three main findings based on her study. First, and rather paradoxically, while localities with greater international involvement experience higher levels of development compared with communities with little intervention, they also experience higher levels of insecurity. The reason for this discrepancy, Firchow postulates, is that often not enough is done alongside development assistance to promote healing and the reconstruction of social ties. Firchow's second main finding, similar to the first, is that communities with higher levels of international intervention do not experience higher levels of peacefulness, the reason being that 'there are disparities between

what communities need and prioritize when defining peace and the interventions external actors prioritize in peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts' (p.148). These are both sweeping claims and the salient issue with regard to both of them, it would seem, is not the degree but the nature of international engagement. Firchow's findings are valuable, however, because they highlight that the design of particular policy instruments employed by international agents may be inadequate even if, in other respects, they reflect community priorities.

Firchow's third main finding is that community members tend to prioritize factors associated with improved welfare and positive peace as opposed to favouring more narrowly construed security-oriented factors. Peacebuilding organisations, too, for the most part predicate their engagement on broad conceptions of peace. The question is, what distinguishes indicators of peace from indicators of development? There may be a deeper lesson here, which is that the security-development nexus is in fact tighter than we sometimes acknowledge: access to potable water, for instance, can mean the absence of poisoned wells or a secure route to the well and not only the availability of fresh water. The virtue of Firchow's granular approach is that it can provide useful clarification in these and other particular contexts.

There is enormous value to Firchow's approach. This is not to suggest, however, that there is no place for other approaches. Locally generated indicators should complement not replace other factors of analysis, including large-N quantitative studies that may generate relevant factors beyond the reach of local apprehension. But anyone reading Firchow's pathbreaking study will find it hard to ignore the importance of taking local perceptions into account when it comes to efforts to design and evaluate the tools of peacebuilding in specific contexts.

Richard Caplan

Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford

richard.caplan@politics.ox.ac.uk

Richard Caplan http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4117-597X