Summary

This thesis sets out to explore the meaning of peace according to (some of) the people who make it. It empirically studies the visions of peace that are being held by peaceworkers from a mid-sized internationally active Western country – the Netherlands – and two (post-)conflict areas – Lebanon and Mindanao. Drawing on interviews with Dutch diplomats, military officers and civil society peace workers, as well as with civil society peace workers from Lebanon and Mindanao, it seeks to answer three main questions: 1) what are the different peaces professional peace workers are working on? 2) how are these visions different for different kinds of peace workers and peace workers from different countries? And 3) do differences between the visions of different groups of actors lead to complementarity, friction or blind spots on the part of these actors?

The literature suggests two answers to these questions: a ‘liberal peace consensus’ amongst Western peace workers and a divide between the visions of Western and non-Western peace workers. The first – a liberal peace consensus – was not found amongst the Dutch respondents, whose visions of peace are much more diverse than the liberal peace thesis suggests. The second – a divide between Western (i.c., Dutch) and non-Western (i.c., Lebanese and Mindanaoan) visions of peace – was found, but along different lines than usually proposed. Dutch peace workers envision peace primarily as a political phenomenon, whereas Lebanese and Mindanaoan peace workers see it primarily as a personal endeavour – a vision of peace usually not addressed in the peacebuilding literature. Additionally, it was found that governmental peace workers (Dutch diplomats and military officers) tend to see peace as an attainable goal, whereas civil society peace workers stress that it is a continuous process. Finally, there is a tension between the visions of civil peace, or good relations between all groups in a society, and peace-as-justice, which stresses that peace requires first of all that past injustices done to a marginalized group are corrected. The first of these two visions was found more often amongst peace workers from the dominant groups in the study (including all Dutch groups), whereas the second vision was found more often amongst peace workers from more marginalized groups.

The different chapters of the study can be summarized as follows. Chapter 1 introduces the research questions, elaborates on the research design, provides an argument for the selection of cases and respondents within these
cases and introduces the two methodologies used: semi-structured interviews and Q.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the way peace has been conceptualized by academics from the start of peace studies as a separate academic discipline to the present. It shows two things. First, that academic conceptualizations of peace differ along seven dimensions. The best-known of these is whether peace is a negative or a positive phenomenon, denoting the absence of something (armed conflict) or the presence of something (e.g., justice, equality or development). But peace is also conceptualized in different domains (e.g., as a political, a cultural or a psychological phenomenon); on different levels (personal, national, international); as a process or a goal; as something to be found in individuals or in institutions (or in structure or agency); as a short-term or a long-term goal; and as related to different other values (e.g., justice, order or harmony). Secondly, the chapter orders the swath of literature known collectively as ‘the liberal peace debate’, by suggesting that the participants to this debate actually defend five different visions of peace: the liberal peace (or more accurately peace-as-governance, as the specifically liberal character of this peace is also debated), hybrid peace, agonistic peace, welfare and everyday peace. Each of the latter four visions offers a specific critique on the liberal peace, that can be captured using the seven-dimensional conceptual framework.

Chapter 3 investigates which of these seven dimensions are most relevant in distinguishing the different operant visions of professional peace builders. To this end, a Q study was performed amongst 91 respondents from the five groups under scrutiny. They were asked to rank-order a series of statements about peace according to how well they described the peace they were trying to establish through their work. This study yielded five different visions of peace: peace as a personal endeavour, peace as a universal ideal, everyday peace, peace-as-process and peace-as-politics. These five visions differed along four dimensions. The dichotomous positive-negative dimension turned out to be rather a continuum of more or less holistic visions of peace (dimension 1: scope). The most prominent difference between peace on different levels and in different domains turned out to be a distinction between peace as a personal or a political phenomenon (dimension 2: personal/political). The difference between peace as a process or a goal was found to be a relevant dimension (dimension 3: ontology) as was the difference between looking for peace in individuals or in institutions (dimension 4: embedding).

In the subsequent case-study chapters (4-8), both the post-sorting interviews from the Q study and 87 additional semi-structured interviews with a further
65 respondents are used to provide an in-depth understanding of how the different groups envision the peace(s) they are working on. Chapter 4 shows that Dutch military peace workers work on three visions of peace, that most of them see as three steps in a multi-stage process – or 'stairway' – of peace. The most common vision – or the first step on this stairway – is *freedom from fear*. In their own words, this means they are working on an environment in which individual people feel safe from harm. According to some respondents, *freedom from fear* can only be guaranteed in the longer run if there is a *functioning state authority* – the second vision and next step on the stairway to the kind of peace we enjoy in the global West. Interestingly however, virtually all military respondents stress that they can only play a limited role in such statebuilding processes and that these should be left mostly to the local population. In this, they are more relativist than any of the other groups. Finally, some military officers stress that peace is not so much something they ‘bring’ to conflict affected areas, but rather something they defend ‘at home’ – in the Netherlands. The interviewees who have this vision, define peace very broadly as the *freedom* that inhabitants from Western countries enjoy in their everyday lives. This freedom is the final step on a (much longer) stairway of peace. In line with the observed relativism about their role in statebuilding (but contrary to the liberal peace thesis), they stress that they cannot impose that same freedom on people in conflict areas. This means that when it comes to the peace they build, *freedom from fear* is the primary military vision of peace.

Chapter 5 shows that when Dutch diplomats talk about peace, most of the time they talk about governance. The resulting vision of *peace-as-governance* is the only vision that stresses that peace is found in institutions rather than in individuals. Although this is a more ambitious goal than the establishment of freedom from fear, it still has a rather narrow scope, especially when compared to civil society visions of peace. Diplomats stress that peace primarily means the absence of armed conflict and that adding too many other aspects risks a loss of focus that might endanger the establishment of any kind of peace. In the short term, stopping armed conflicts requires the signing and implementation of peace agreements, a vision I have labelled *peace-as-agreement*. In the long run, the sustainability of peace depends on the build-up of effective (state) institutions: *peace-as-governance*.

Chapter 6 shows that many of the Dutch civil society peace workers interviewed have a vision of peace that is the opposite of the diplomats’. Instead of conceptualizing peace as a limited institutional goal, they regard peace as a holistic all-encompassing vision that implies not only that armed conflicts
are ended, but also that their root causes are solved: (political) oppression, human rights violations, unequal income distribution, underdevelopment and even (for some) interpersonal conflicts. I have labelled this vision *Peace Writ Large*. When asked to operationalize this broad vision, interviewees come up with two other visions of peace. The first is *peace-as-process*, which treats peace as a never-ending process (both political and interpersonal) that requires continuous dialogue, monitoring and intervention. The specific short-term objectives of this process are less relevant, what matters is that ‘the conversation is kept going’. When they do think of peace as a goal, they tend to agree with the military that the first priority is for people in conflict areas to experience *freedom from fear*. However, in contrast to the military respondents, they conceptualise freedom from fear as a political (or policy) goal rather than an individually felt experience. The difference is captured in the study by calling this vision *human security*.

Chapter 7 discusses the visions of peace found amongst Lebanese civil society peace workers. The interviewed Lebanese work on three visions of peace, none of which is a political goal per se. Rather, they stress first of all the importance of *civil peace* (*silim* in Arabic): the quality of the relations between the different groups that make up Lebanese society. Second, moving even further away from peace as a political phenomenon, they say that they work on *peace as a personal endeavour*: what every individual can do to maintain peaceful interpersonal relations. The few peace workers I interviewed who do have a political view of peace stress that they see peace primarily as a method (*non-violent activism*), with ‘justice’ – rather than peace – as its goal.

Finally, chapter 8 reports that a similar set of concepts, but with a slightly different focus, was found on Mindanao. Civil society peace workers there insist that the signing and implementation of a political peace agreement – in their case the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro – in itself is not sufficient to speak of peace. Nor is *freedom from fear*, although some respondents stress that ordinary people might consider this to be all the peace they want. Civil society peace workers, however, work on three other visions of peace. First, *peace-as-justice*, similar to non-violent activism in Lebanon, but with more stress on the desired outcome (‘justice’, meaning self-governance and a larger share of the natural resources on Mindanao) rather than the process. Secondly, *peace of mind*, a mostly indigenous vision that stresses the priority of good relationships over (political or economic) gains. Finally, like their Lebanese colleagues, Mindanaoan peace workers with a non-indigenous background stress that in the end all three groups should live together in *civil peace*.
Chapter 9 presents the conclusions that were already summarized above. Specifically, it introduces the idea that Dutch peace workers tend to work on what is called *Security Council peace* – peace as a political phenomenon – whereas the Lebanese and Mindanaoans work primarily on *UNESCO peace* – peace ‘in the minds of men and women’. It then goes on to compare the findings from this study to the different critiques on the liberal peace, arguing that the concept of ‘agonistic peace’ comes closest to what peace workers from marginalized groups say they are working on (*peace-as-justice*), whereas the concept of ‘everyday peace’ comes closest to what the Lebanese and Mindanaoans are working on: *peace as a personal endeavour*. 