Peacebuilding and Spatial Transformation

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INTRODUCTION

Where does peace take place? Almost all processes including war-making and peace-making take place in a specific local setting (Koopman 2011; Megoran 2011, Björkdahl and Kappler 2017; Björkdahl and Buckley-Zistel 2016). Post-conflict power relations in cities such as Sarajevo or Nicosia can be understood through "landscapes of power", in which a variety of actors and stakeholders (re-)negotiate social relations. What is more, as material and emblematic assets, divided cities like Mostar or Belfast represent places in which identities are manifested, visualized and compete spatially. An airbase such as the one in Dayton, Ohio, can be a place for peace negotiations, thus giving its name to a peace accord. Conflicts manifest themselves in places, as does peace. Yet, whilst divisions are often clearly legible in space, the legacies of the conflict often obscure the visible and tangible materialisations of peace. Contemporary peacebuilding missions profess to bring about 'peace', but what exactly constitutes peace is seldom apparent to the people on the ground and at times only results in partial changes in urban and rural landscapes of power.

This section examines the interconnectedness between peace, and space and place in order to understand where peace 'takes place'. It suggests space and place to be vehicles through which peace and agency can be explored in the aftermath of violent conflict. The aim is to provide new insights into the transformation from war into peace by grounding the analysis of peace and peacebuilding agency in time and space. To do so, as we propose in previous research (Björkdahl and Kappler 2017), we explore the extent to which spatial transformation has taken place in a post-conflict setting as a marker of peacebuilding agency.

As there has been no sustained inquiry into the relationship of peace with space and place, spatial perspectives have received scant attention in the study of the contentious politics of peace. Spatial theory provides analytical concepts which have not yet been fully exploited in analysing peacebuilding and conflict dynamics. Yet, the organization of space is significant for the structures and functions of peace and war. Thus, this section investigates peace as it

is manifested in spatial practices, that is, in material and symbolic representation. The spatialization of Peace and Conflict Studies is advanced through the following questions:

- Where do peace and conflict take place?
- How we can understand peace and violent conflict in spatial terms?
- How can 'warscapes' become 'peacescapes', i.e. how are spaces and places tainted by conflict transformed to represent and manifest peace?
- How can peacebuilding agents be captured through a spatial analysis?

DEFINITIONS

Space and place are useful concepts to theorise peacebuilding agency. Space and place serve as vehicles through which peace and conflict can be explored. Following this, the transformation of space and place through processes of 'place-making' and 'space-making' practices can be understood through a focus on spatial agency. In this, we understand 'place' as a material, physically manifested location, whereas 'space' denotes its symbolic, ideational counterpart (cf. Björkdahl and Kappler 2017). Whilst the material and symbolic dimensions are inextricably linked, we suggest that the analytical distinction between 'place' and 'space' helps us understand the frictions between the ways in which places are built, as opposed to understood and used, and thus the role that human agency plays in translating one into the other.

Insert Table 1

SPATIAL AGENCY IN PEACEBUILDING

Agency can be expressed in various ways and in diverse enabling or disabling spaces and places (cf. Giddens 1984; Gregory 1981: 16). Agency may be exercised for driving change, but also to uphold status quo, and thus reproduce continuity. Thus, the notion of spatial agency is careful not to foreclose the constantly changing and multi-layered expressions of agency. To explain social and material transformation, then, is to understand the interplay between space and place through the agency of those working in them. Agency can thus be seen as situated in the tension between place and space, and such spatial agency can be found in the capacity to transform place into space (through the (re-)creation of its meanings and possibilities) on the one hand, and the capacity to transform of space into place (by rendering ideas into material reality) on the other hand. Such processes of transformation reflect the

extent to which power relations, and thus conflicts and peace(s), are located in spatial practice. By situating peacebuilding agency in spatial practice, we point to the fluidities of agency in its ability to move between practices of peacebuilding and conflict-inducing dynamics. Places are never pre-determined as either conflictive or conciliatory, but always have the potential to host practices related to peace and conflict, even at the same time. In that sense, bridges can act as dividing spaces as much as walls can bring people together. The bridge across the river Ibar in Mitrovica, Kosovo/a, for instance, has long served as a border in the divided town, whereas the militarised buffer zone in Nicosia, Cyprus, is increasingly seeing a presence of NGOs engaged in peace work. A spatial analysis of peacebuilding scenarios thus points to the continuous ambiguity of agency in its ability to activate a variety of discourses and practices. Thus, the ability to transform space into place and vice versa is a clear marker of agency, particularly against the background that 'space' does not necessarily equal 'place'. However, the agency deployed 'in-between' determines what kind of place is produced from imaginary spatial ideas, or, alternatively, what kinds of imaginary spaces emerge from a physical construction of a place. Such processes are always dependent on the kinds of agency that surround the contested landscapes of (post-)conflict zones and reflect the different interests at stake in negotiating the economic and socio-political structures of power at play.

PLACE-MAKING

Place, as a material phenomenon, expresses a sense of belonging and is seen to provide a locus of identity. Thus, it defines who is 'in place' and who is 'out of place' (Creswell 1996; 2004). Contemporary politics of peace are 'held in place' by sites. Place may stabilize and give durability to social structures such as peace and re-arrange post-conflict power-relations. In a sense, place can sustain both imagined peace(s) and the materialised everyday peace by routinized daily practices, and by embodying the meanings ascribed to them. Place is thus where peace and conflict affect people in their everyday and it matters to people's experience of conflict dynamics and peacebuilding. Place produces power, reflects and reinforces hierarchy and hosts power-laden social relations. Thus, place is the locus of complex intersections and outcomes of power geometries that operate across many spatial scales, from the body to the globe.

Specifically, peace and peacebuilding are emplaced and constituted in part through location, material form and their imaginings (cf. Appadurai 1995). Place-making refers to the processes of geographically anchoring an abstract idea in a material location. Places are made as people ascribe a physical venue to abstract social ideas and norms. Thus, it is possible to read agency from the process during the course of which actors are able to give

physical presence to an ideational space. The more relevant and visible a place can be made, the more powerful it will be in the transformation of people's everyday lives. In a sense, a place is a space filled with people, things, practices and representations. People ascribe attributes and qualities to places; ours or theirs; safe or dangerous; public or private; unfamiliar or known; accessible or inaccessible.

SPACE-MAKING

Space, in our definition, is the symbolic and ideational counter-part to place. It denotes the meanings and interpretations that accompany any spatial practice. In that, it is a product of social interactions and their associated understandings of a particular locale. Space-making, therefore, describes the complex ways in which materiality is given meaning in a specific context and from the perspective of the surrounding actors. Space-making is therefore a process that takes as its point of departure the physical, material place and, through meaning-making processes, transforms the former into an abstract, ideational social space. Space can be viewed as the imaginary counterpart to place. It is the ideational extension of physical presence i.e. place. In the words of de Certeau (1984: 117), 'space is a practiced place'. How the construction of a new set of monuments, for instance, is received locally, nationally or globally, is indeed not a given, but a process of ambivalent outcomes through spatial negotiations. Understanding such negotiations as they take place in peacebuilding contexts can therefore be an important step in analyzing the competing agendas that meet in a given arena of peacebuilding.

SUMMARY

Peace and conflict represent two sides of the same coin and often take place in parallel. In the midst of violent conflict there are islands of peace, and in times of peace there are outbreaks of violent conflict. By applying a spatial perspective, this section is able to capture the mutual constitution of material place and symbolic space in our reading of sites where peacebuilding takes place. It becomes clear that the politics of transition from war to peace and the transformation of warscapes into peacescapes can be read spatially. Based on our earlier work on spatial transformation (Björkdahl and Kappler 2017), the section evidences that processes of peacebuilding unfold in place-specific forms and spatial combinations. The complexity of spatial practices as situated in a jigsaw of human agency thus blurs the

distinction between 'warscapes' and 'peacescapes' and shows that the function and outcomes of spatial peacebuilding is always a result of the engagement of a variety of peacebuilding agents.

Table 1:

Key term	Definition	Empirical Examples
Place	- geographical location - has "material" properties, i.e. physicality - expresses a sense of belonging and is seen to provide a locus of identity - is the locus of complex intersections and outcomes of power geometries that operate across spatial scales, from the body to the globe.	- The Old Bridge in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina - The 'ghost town' of Varosha, Cyprus - The peace walls of Belfast, United Kingdom - The Youth Cultural Centre Abrašević, in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina - The 'Sarajevo Roses; in Bosnia-Herzegovina - Robben Island, South Africa - Mother Teresa Boulevard, Kosovo/a - The buffer zone in Cyprus - The District Six Museum in Cape Town, South Africa
Space	- is the ideational extension of physical presence i.e. place - is the realm which extends to meanings and interpretations of place - the product of interrelations and	- peace - reconciliation - bi-communalism - anti-apartheid - inter-ethnic collaboration - conflict transformation - conflict prevention

	- constituted through interactions - a platform on which social relations can form and develop	memory
Spatial Agency	- is situated at the intersection between place- and space-making - refers to the capacity to transform place into space (through the (re-)creation of its meanings and possibilities) - refers to the capacity to transform of space into place (by rendering ideas into material reality)	- International and regional organisations restructuring urban landscapes of peace and conflict - State elites restricting access to zones of protest - NGOs rebranding places of conflict for communal use - Community-based organisations engaging in urban protest - Artists redesigning public spaces
Space-making - turning place into space	- the process of making a physical place relevant and meaningful to societal and political discourses - the enactment, use and interpretation of a place by turning it into a space that is meaningful to its users and audiences	- the Occupy Buffer Zone Movement in Cyprus, which aimed to overcome the existence of a buffer-zone dividing the North and the South of Nicosia and the Island of Cyprus. - the redrawing of the peace walls in Belfast to change the symbolic boundary lines into zones of contact and cooperation
Place-making – turning space into place	- refers to the processes of geographically anchoring an abstract idea in a material location - locating an abstract idea such as peace in a material place.	- the idea of reconciliation between Bosnian-Croats and Bosniaks translated into a physical place by rebuilding the Old Bridge in Mostar. - Giving the idea of a Kosovo/a state physical presence at the Boulevard of Mother Teresa in

		- Pristina through the erection of monuments - Finding a mnemonic anchor for the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement at the Maze/Long Kesh Prison, Northern Ireland

Table adapted from Björkdahl and Kappler (2017).

CROSS-REFERENCES

Everyday Peace
Human Geography and Peacebuilding
Divided Cities
Street Art and Peace
Urban Peacebuilding

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