

From Power-Blind Binaries to the Intersectionality of Peace: Connecting Feminism and Critical Peace and Conflict Studies

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Introduction: The pervasive power of dichotomies

In a context where the demise of the ‘liberal peace’ agenda is now almost consensual, critical peacebuilding research has slowly turned its gaze towards ‘how best to access all other narratives so far silenced.’¹ Moving away from the critique of the top-down, technocratic, ‘Western’ or ‘Northern’ agenda, critical peace and conflict research is increasingly focusing on local, alternative paradigms of the ‘everyday’. This (re)discovering of the ‘local’ has quickly been labelled the ‘local turn’ in the discipline,² with the ‘local’ becoming a ‘new object, a new domain or field for policy intervention.’³ This agenda has taken different forms. On the one hand, some of the critical peacebuilding research has rested on the traditional fault-line of the ‘international’ versus the ‘local’, even if this time focusing on the local side of the equation.⁴ On the other hand, for scholars wanting to emancipate themselves from the international-local dichotomy, this semantic move has so far held dubious results, with the same dichotomy creeping back in in many studies.⁵ One has to say that this is true for the proponents of the ‘local turn’, but also their critiques to a certain extent, who end up most of the time disaggregating the ‘local’ category into ‘national’ and ‘local’ categories and the international with ‘regional’ and ‘transnational’ categories; hence replacing a simple dichotomy with a set of slightly more complex dichotomies. As Julian et al show, these categories are based on hierarchical imaginations of local-international identities.⁶

One way to move this debate forward is not to reinvent the wheel, as Peace & Conflict Studies (PCS) scholars have been known to often do, but to open up to other subfields and highlight the possible connections between the epistemological debates in the different subfields. In line with the theoretical starting point presented in the introduction of this special issue, we posit here that feminist methodologies⁷ can help us apprehend the complexity of power relations, and help shed a new light on the old debates in PCS. A specific focus will be put on the concept of intersectionality in this article. Despite its potential in terms of understanding the complexity of power relations, the concept of intersectionality has mainly been used by feminist thinkers and has only sporadically found its way into other subfields. We argue that the concept of intersectionality can help inform the debates about binaries in the subfield of PCS and, in fact, provide a language which precisely avoids the reinforcement of such rhetorically-created binaries. What is more, an *intersectionality of peace* approach does not deny the hybridity of experience and allows to integrate research on the everyday and the narratives that emerge therein, yet without being blind to the power relations that shape the formation of identities in peacebuilding contexts. It is an approach that enables us to unpack the complex stacking of privilege or, to the contrary, discrimination, exclusion, marginalization and inequalities, both for researchees and researchers.⁸ In other words, the *intersectionality of peace* approach enables us to unpack power dynamics at play in PCS, analysing the compounded privileges and inequalities (or discrimination) experienced and lived by all parties, researchers included. It should be emphasised that this intersectionality is not simply a reflection of identities and representations, but also emerges from, and has ramifications in, the material conditions

specific to the complex assemblage of privilege and exclusion. These connections, which can be considered as different forms of *attachment* or *detachment*,⁹ help shape the socio-material world we live in, conditioning the social constellations we are situated in. They can ‘place us’ in closer proximity to some rather than to other actors, thus helping us to make sense of complex stories of inclusion and exclusion and underlining the power differentials at play in each of these stories. Hence, the *intersectionality of peace* approach contributes to our understanding of why specific voices are marginalised and silenced, when others are privileged and considered authoritative. Maybe more importantly, it also helps us to grapple with all the situations falling ‘in between’ these two extremes; situations that PCS have been struggling so far to conceptualise.

This article is a personal journey for the authors. We are two scholars whose work is generally associated with PCS, with a long-standing interest to fight the compartmentalisation and disciplinization of our subfield, whether it is through a renewed engagement with scholarship located in international law, sociology and anthropology, or political geography. We have followed debates in the feminist literature from afar, without feeling comfortable enough to engage directly with the debates. Understanding that this de facto position reinforces the actual division between the two subfields, we have decided to seize the opportunity offered to us by the guest editors and get outside of our comfort zone by engaging with feminist debates in order to highlight the bridges that exist between Critical PCS and Gender Studies. It is also important to underline the modest scope of this article. The main audience for this piece is not necessarily the feminist community of scholars, but our PCS colleagues who are maybe not familiar with this vibrant body of literature. Having said that, we think the article does offer a contribution to the field by highlighting the possible research avenues resulting from the interconnections between PCS and feminist methodologies. We suggest one such tangible avenue through *the intersectionality of peace* approach.

This article is divided in three sections. In the first section, we look at three specific lenses or approaches dominantly used in PCS to overcome the binaries often used by researchers to make sense of local processes: the everyday, hybridity, and narrative studies. In doing so, we connect the scholarship on these three approaches with recent work done by feminist scholars. The second section looks at the intersectionality approach and connects it with PCS preoccupations, especially identity formation, power imbalances, and the move beyond the ‘local’ versus ‘international’ binary. The third section illustrates the usefulness of the intersectionality concept by discussing one of the author’s own fieldwork in South Africa by zooming in on the micro-space of the ‘guesthouse’. Methodologically, this move allows us to challenge the primacy of the public sphere, as we observe it in PCS. Instead, through a small-scale dialogical analysis of two narratives, we show that the intersectionality that can be observed in our case study in narrative terms highlights the ways in which inequalities overlap both public and private life and makes the distinction between those almost impossible. In that sense, the guest house as a meeting point between public activities (tourism) and private experiences (as they relate to guests and staff) helps us complicate simplified narratives of segregation in South Africa.

Hybridity, Everyday, Narrative: Using feminist approaches to challenge dichotomies

This section will cover three main areas of research in the PCS community: hybridity, the everyday and Narrative studies. Looking at each approach's answer to the dichotomy debate, we make three interconnected arguments: 1) the use of the concept of hybridity has not enabled scholars to fully emancipate themselves from the 'local' versus 'international' dichotomy; 2) the use of the concept of 'everyday' has diffused power relations to the extent that it becomes difficult to make a substantial analysis of the interplay of actors on the ground; and 3) Narrative studies have similarly risked to end up in many cases depoliticising the interplay of actors, individualising experiences to the extent that it becomes difficult to analyse and apprehend structural / collective power relations through them. We argue here that feminist approaches can help us bring back power considerations into our analysis and understanding of the 'local'; something that will also be further explored in the next section on intersectionality.

Hybridity

Hybridity has emerged as one of the all-purpose theoretical lenses, meant to reflect the everyday complexity of world politics. Migrating from the cultural and postcolonial fields, the hybridity lens has now permeated many disciplines, including IR and PCS. Fundamentally, hybridity theorists question the binaries often mobilized by researchers, such as the human-nature distinction, understanding it instead as hybrid networks of human and non-human elements,¹⁰ but also question other binaries such as 'modern-traditional', 'Western-Non-Western', 'international-local', 'centre-periphery', 'internal-external' or 'us-them'.

In PCS, two main and complementary strands of hybridity scholarship have emerged in the past few years.¹¹ The first one focuses on the interplay between international and local practices, norms and institutions as a way to emphasise local agency in its interaction with outside forces, and/or to engage with local actors beyond the nation-state.¹² The second strand of scholarship is more focused on transcending universalising theories to include the plurality of social orders.¹³ The first approach is a direct challenge to liberal institutionalism and suggests looking at the complex creations that emerge out of interventions. The second approach challenges (neo-)Weberian notions of the state as a lens through which we generate knowledge about post-colonial and post-conflict societies.¹⁴ As discussed above, this scholarship has faced an 'anti-hybridity backlash' in the discipline, with authors questioning the bundling of local actors together, or the quiet return to the old dichotomies that were meant to be overcome.¹⁵ It reflects to a certain extent the blatant absence of power considerations, which has led to overlook the power differentials behind the 'hybridization' processes.¹⁶ In that sense, hybridity has tended to assume a mix of things. It has done so without problematizing the underlying power relations that shape such mixing and often implicitly assumed that such power relations are evened out in the process of hybridisation.

In that context, the call to develop a feminist approach to hybridity seems particularly relevant. As Laura McLeod notes, the concept of hybridity echoes many elements of feminist scholarship on post-conflict, to the extent that the two literatures are almost 'mirror images'.¹⁷ McLeod notes that the concept of hybridity can allow to analyse the diversity of 'locals and internationals',¹⁸ even if in practice, and as discussed before, it tends to be stuck in this binary thinking. It can also highlight the interconnection between the personal, the political and the international, which is crucial to move beyond the unhelpful local-international binary.¹⁹ Furthermore, as Nicole George and Lia Kent also argue, a feminist approach to hybridity

highlights the fact that ‘the gendered restrictions of liberal peacebuilding are not easily overcome or minimised when local structures of authority or local governance practices are deliberately incorporated into peacebuilding interventions.’²⁰ Linked to this point, a feminist perspective on hybridity can help us to question how local actors are portrayed, especially through a ‘feminized’ portrayal of ‘local’ actors in certain cases.²¹ Finally, it can help put emphasis on the ‘affective and relational dimensions of peace’²² and especially the personal aspect of encounters between different actors, encompassed in affective notions linked to hybridity.²³ These works offer a substantial contribution to PCS by problematizing the construction of the ‘local’ and ‘international’ categories. However, the hybridity framework, even when power relations are brought back in through a critical approach,²⁴ is still arguably mired in this unhelpful dichotomisation, which we hope the *intersectionality of peace* approach can overcome.

The everyday

Whilst hybridity dealt with the more general ways of framing and dealing with post-conflict identities, it still struggles to state what that would mean concretely for the ways in which intervention is perceived, interpreted, complied with or resisted on the part of its respective host society. Hence, as part of IR’s and PCS’s attempt to engage with the lived realities of politics, we have seen an increasing focus on the ‘everyday’ sphere of intervention. There is a strong acknowledgement that intervention is no longer just a matter of high politics, but instead translates explicitly into everyday life.²⁵ At the same time, such debates have not just been limited to PCS, but have for some time also been picked up in IR more broadly.²⁶ Much of this work on the everyday goes back to Henri Lefebvre’s suggestion that the everyday can serve as a critique of politics, connecting ‘the particular and the universal, the local and the global.’²⁷ Such concepts rarely speak of power as they assume that the location of power at the elite levels of society is a result of social assumptions, and when we start acknowledging the power located in the everyday, this will be a form of empowerment in itself in terms of shifting attention to the agency located within everyday practices and discourses.²⁸ The recognition of local capacity and agency is the outcome of such processes.²⁹

Feminist scholars such as Elise Boulding or Sara Ruddick have investigated “daily social transactions”³⁰ as well as the power inequalities inherent in the “private” realm of the family.³¹ We therefore need to acknowledge that feminist thought has managed to cast light on the artificial binary between the public and the private, suggesting that the everyday work in the private scene is clearly shaped by power asymmetries.³² Susan Gal, for instance, points out that social relations and identities can never be situated in one of these spheres, but always transcend them.³³ Gal argues that the dichotomy between public and private is not just a rhetorical one but has actual impact upon everyday lives.³⁴ Ruth Lister goes further suggesting that this binary notion has framed our understandings of citizenship to the detriment of female notions of citizenship.³⁵ In that sense, the understanding of the public has tended to be considered a male domain, while women tended to be associated with the private domain. This was linked to an assumption that ‘intervention’, as a public, political phenomenon, could mainly be discussed in the public sphere, whilst its implications for individuals was given less attention – not least owed to the fact that the emotional effects of war and peace were sidelined from such debates.³⁶ However, through the work of feminists such as Christine Sylvester,

there has been an increasing emphasis on the connection between public and private phenomena – war as an experience rather than merely a matter of top-down decision-making.³⁷ Taking the experiential side of politics into account also means acknowledging the relevance of private experience for public phenomena (or war, in this case). Politics is thus no longer assumed to be limited to the public and collective, but also has its roots in the individual, private experience of it.

What feminist thought has managed to bring to the debate of the everyday is an account of the implicit power structures inherent in the ways politics is understood and conceptualised. Whilst the more traditional debates around the ‘everyday’ have managed to overcome some of the binaries (the local vs the international or global), they have, much like the hybridity debates, tended to become blind to power politics. There is an implicit assumption that power in the everyday is so dispersed that it can be found everywhere and has therefore almost become meaningless as an analytical category. This assumption risks projecting the illusion of equality (all actors are equalised as being situated in their own everyday) where there is inequality (where different everyday lives are privileged in different ways). Feminist thought as cited above, however, can be said to have challenged binary thinking whilst retaining the focus on power inequalities. There is recognition that, even in the merging between categories, subtle power structures remain active and translate into the gendered practices that conceptualise spaces across private and public spheres.

In this, feminist research has acknowledged the interplay between the symbolic and material dimensions of space. Nightingale, for instance, points to the ways in which the symbolic interactions within the space of nature are conditioned by its material, ecological properties.³⁸ By taking an intersectional perspective, she proposes to explore “the production of difference through the everyday movement of bodies in space to show how subjectivities are produced out of the multiple and intersecting exercise of power within socio-natural networks”.³⁹ In that sense, spaces materially *and* symbolically reproduce power differentials and therefore act as platforms on which inequalities can be read. The ways in which peacebuilding practices play out in people’s everyday lives is therefore spatially performed and expressed, as feminist geographers have shown particularly well.⁴⁰ We will elaborate in further detail below how a focus on the spatial dimensions of intersectionality can benefit PCS as a way to reposition the researcher in relation to the researchee.

Narratives

As we have argued above, dominant approaches in both IR and PCS have fallen into the trap of either dichotomising categories (local vs international) or, alternatively, downplaying the power differentials between different actors in the post-conflict landscape. Similarly, the concept of ‘narrative’ has become increasingly popular among scholars in the field over the past two decades, but this has not always and necessarily been accompanied by an active and critical engagement with its full ontological, epistemological and methodological implications.⁴¹ PCS scholars are increasingly interested in how narratives (or stories) as a “basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process, and change”⁴² can help us understand local reality on the ground. The process of narration is necessarily selective, because there is always more than one story to tell. These are primarily afforded by our multiple

social identities (e.g. white, male, female, disabled) and the public narratives of the communities in which they are embedded (e.g. family, ethnic group, nation).⁴³

A focus on individual narratives can help us distract our gaze from our preconceived categories of ‘local’ vs ‘international’ and instead allow us to read intervention from the eyes of those experiencing it. Narratives can therefore act as gazes into the everyday of international relations in their ability to connect space, time and emotions in a grounded way.⁴⁴ This is so because, instead of theorising peace and conflict as abstract concepts, narratives situate them in a given time, in a given space. They make those concepts graspable and relevant to the host societies as they connect to their subjective realities and contexts. The narrative approach to peace, recently promoted by researchers including Molly Andrews, Jenny Edkins, Naeem Inayatullah and Elizabeth Dauphinee appears to us as essential in accessing humane expressions of post-conflict identity formation.⁴⁵ Yet, there is a risk that narrative research may individualise an experience that is collective or structural in nature. If oppression is perceived as a ‘one-off’ experience, a deviation from normalcy, it is easier to write it off as an exception. Narrative research can indeed be said to have made it possible to gaze at a collective experience through the lens of an individual, yet this can only happen when a narrative is presented and contextualised in a way that de-essentialises and de-individualises the experience by looking at the structural factors that helped the narrative emerge. It is at this stage where feminist approaches inspire us to not stop at the individual (private) experience and instead look at the ways in which this is co-produced by politics and economics. Feminist approaches that investigate the securitisation of narratives that are often constructed vis-à-vis groups of women have pointed to the inherent power structures within these narratives and their associated “grammars of insecurity” as well as discursive representations of danger.⁴⁶ In this vein, Wibben reminds us of the importance of language when it comes to understanding the ways in which security discourses are constituted, shaken and challenged.⁴⁷ Furthermore, as the work done by Maria Stern with Guatemalan women revealed, women and members of marginalized ethnic groups experience (multiple) forms of insecurity that do not neatly fit into prevailing security discourses,⁴⁸ constraining the possibilities of discursive practices of and on (in)security.

Having outlined the value and shortcomings of ‘hybridity’, the ‘everyday’ and ‘narratives’, we now turn to the concept of ‘intersectionality’ to investigate the ways in which the concepts above can be revisited in a meaningful way, attentive to power inequalities and therefore of key relevance to PCS.

Using Feminist approaches to investigate intersectionalities

Whilst feminism has made a range of contributions to the social sciences as highlighted above, one of its very important ones is the concept of *intersectionality*. Leslie McCall even suggests that “[o]ne could even say that intersectionality is the most important theoretical contribution that women’s studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far.”⁴⁹ Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw and based on the insight that different women are affected differently by multiple forms of discrimination and inequality, *intersectionality* opposes the reduction of identity categories to a single one (e.g. gender or race).⁵⁰ Instead, the concept denotes the complex ways in which people are affected by power structures based on their multiple identities, without automatically privileging one over another. In that sense, power is seen as differentiated not only between, but also within identity groups, that is for Crenshaw, not all

women are equally oppressed, and not all Black people are in the very same societal position. Instead, inequalities are understood to be differentiated along multiple lines, presented in different forms and modes.⁵¹

Therefore, intersectionality allows for multiple levels of analysis⁵² and an understanding of inequalities as embedded in the interplay between different power systems. Intersectionality brings together a number of ‘intersections’ (race, class and gender are most often cited in this context) to investigate their mutual interaction whilst supporting “the deconstruction of binaries, normalisation theories and homogenising categories.”⁵³ We therefore suggest that intersectionality challenges identity politics, group essentialism and assumptions of in-group uniformity.⁵⁴

There have been initial efforts to explore intersectionality in transitional justice, for instance by investigating the effects of peace agreements and transitions on poor women.⁵⁵ Such studies remain close to the early questions that Crenshaw posed with the introduction of the concept. From a legal context, she had shown how Black women’s everyday lives are shaped by the way they are represented (both in culture and politics and law) and how this shapes how they can interact within and outside their community.⁵⁶ At the same time, it is important to be aware that the concept of intersectionality does not just refer to gender and race (although they seem to be addressed most often), but includes many more facets of identity and difference, such as class, nationality, disability, sexuality and so forth – or, to speak in Butler’s terms, the “etc” that she reads as a “sign of exhaustion as well as of the illimitable process of signification itself”.⁵⁷ On the other hand, of course, keeping the list inconclusive also allows for the integration of multiple identity categories as they become salient over the course of time, and thus avoids fixating or privileging some identity categories over others indefinitely.

We argue that, based on the previously outlined critique of ‘hybridity’, ‘the everyday’ and ‘narratives’, a refocusing of these three concepts with an intersectionality lens enables us to address their shortcomings. Our proposed intersectionality of peace approach means that we can 1) understand hybrid identities without dichotomising them; 2) read the everyday yet with a clear intention of understanding power differentials therein; and 3) understand narratives not as individualised experiences, but instead as ways of accessing larger structural inequalities.

What we suggest in this article is what Baukje Prins calls the British approach to intersectionality, that is, to treat intersectionality as a social construction.⁵⁸ This does by no means signify a demotion of intersectionality as ‘not real’ or only imagined, but instead as part of everyone’s identity in relation to the societal constellations in which such intersectional oppressions are continuously produced and reproduced.

In this, the intersectionality approach as such does not prescribe a set methodology as it can be studied in different ways, quantitatively and qualitatively. At the same time, some feminists interested in intersectionality have taken an interest in narrative studies to explore the complexity of identities.⁵⁹ And whilst intersectionality approaches can resort to a variety of methodologies⁶⁰, both quantitative and qualitative, they often start from a narrative angle. Personal narratives investigated through an intersectionality lens allow us to view the individual experience as a specific translation of wider structures of disadvantage and privilege. They consider the experience not as anatomised one, but instead as a peephole through which the ‘worlds’ of violence and peace can be explored.⁶¹

It is specifically the multi-layered and complex nature of inequality that arises out of intersectional (rather than binary representations of) identity that can be accessed through narratives as the latter tend to allow for complexity – as opposed to the reductionism of other forms of data collection. At the same time, relying on narratives to understand intersectionality allows us to not only account for *structures* of domination, but at the same time also for the narrator's *agency* in dealing with and resisting them on an everyday basis:

According to the constructionist perspective [...] the processes by which individuals become subjects do not merely involve 'being subjected to', in the sense of being subordinated to a sovereign power or anonymous system. It also implies that the individual is 'becoming a subject', i.e. made into a source of his or her own thinking and acting."⁶²

Put in dialogue with the socio-economic and political contexts in which they emerge, expressions of intersectionality can shed light on where different intersectional processes produce multiple layers of oppression or privilege. They can show how the layering of different identities represents more than the sum of their layers. Actually, these different identities, whether they are linked to gender, class and social provenance, being considered 'disabled', one's citizenship or national 'affiliation', the colour of one's skin, or the language one speaks more fluently, 'stack up' or are compounded in complex assemblages, constituting a mix of different forms of privilege or exclusion. In a field like PCS, where identity-formation has long been seen as a binary phenomenon, focusing on the ways in which intersectionality is narrated can provide a constructive challenge to an otherwise black-and-white representation of conflict and peace alike. Putting the findings of an intersectional focus on narratives in the context of the material structures of inequality from which they emerge allows for a power-aware gaze on a political scenario. This process can cast light on the hybridity of the experience of war and peace, whilst avoiding the flattening out of power inequalities. We will therefore now zoom in on the space of the South African guest house as a way of engaging with intersectional power relations as they emerge in its material and symbolic dimensions. We will show how an intersectional reading of post-conflict violence helps us understand the ongoing challenges that South Africans face, more than twenty years after the transition from apartheid to democracy. It also helps us understand questions of disadvantage and privilege as they emerge from the research process itself.

The intersectionality of peace: a conversation around the South African guest house

Let us now turn to investigate how the *intersectionality of peace approach* can help highlight the power dynamics in a specific context, where matters of gender, race and class have continued to play a major role in the ways in which transitional justice and peacebuilding discourses play out. Indeed, South Africa has long been shaped by multi-dimensional inequalities and has not always, but often been reduced to a black vs white binary when it came to understanding society or, when taking the intersection of race and class into account, inadvertently subordinating gender divisions to a third, lesser rank.⁶³ It is important to understand that the multiple dividing lines that shape South African society are key to understanding its systems of inequality and, therefore, also the complex manifestations of violence that are still at play over twenty years after the formal end of the apartheid state.

However, despite the hope that had been placed into the transition to democracy in 1994, the post-apartheid state has failed to reduce or deal with those multiple inequalities, as they specifically affect black women from economically deprived backgrounds. Certainly, women have meanwhile gained almost equal representation in government positions as well as parliament and the Black Economic Empowerment laws, which incentivise the recruitment of black South Africans into the labour force, have, albeit only to a small extent, generated hope for a less unequal future for the most disadvantaged South Africans.⁶⁴ The image of the “rainbow nation” indeed instils the vision of a diverse and peaceful society where everyone enjoys equal rights. At the same time, the realities of everyday life hold very different prospects for many: high levels of unemployment, a lack of housing for the economically deprived, inequalities in land distribution as well as skyrocketing levels of crime continue to impede prosperity for the majority of South Africans.⁶⁵ Certainly, the latter must be seen in connection to such intersectional inequalities.

So, if we, as researchers, are to find a ‘local’ South African experience, what would that be? The experience of a white owner of a guest house in Cape Town? Or that of a township inhabitant without access to running water and electricity? Or instead of a miner who works for little money in one of the mines on the outskirts of Johannesburg? Or would we be interested in the lived experience of a migrant worker from Zimbabwe who just earns enough money to send back a little to their family abroad?

There is a huge degree of differentiation between those different locals and the ways in which they go about their everyday lives. This diversity would be impossible to capture through a hybridity lens in which we look at the ways in which these experiences hybridise with each other. How would that help us understand why the township inhabitant may have never set foot into a city centre, or why the guesthouse owner may never have seen one of the many South African townships? We can clearly identify the huge differences in those peoples’ everyday lives, but how can we make sense of them to understand the ways in which economic, political and social inequalities impact upon their social relations and identities? Here, the intersectionality of peace approach can help us not only to grasp the multiple dividing lines that shape the manifestation of violence in South Africa, but it can also zoom in on the intersectional inequality between researcher and researchee. It is important to be aware of one’s own privilege as part of the research project. Our positionality is not outside the field that we research, but instead part and parcel of the research process. It shapes our gaze on what we consider relevant as object of inquiry on the one hand. On the other hand, it reflects the extent to which the experience of the researcher intersects with those we interact with and places our position within wider unequal power structures. Especially in PCS, where we are always at the search of local and global identities, the intersectionality of peace approach will be particularly helpful in shedding light of the nuanced and multi-dimensional inequalities that are at the core of our research process within a broader social context.

Through a conversation between the field notes of one of the authors, a white female researcher (WFR), as well as a published narrative account of a black, male South African, we look at the ways in which a focus on the ‘guest house’ can complicate our understanding of the ‘local’ and its everyday experience vis-à-vis the researcher. The South African tourism sector itself is a representation of power differentials and, in letting narratives speak to each other, we understand the intersections of race, class and gender in this particular sector as they become salient in the field research process – in a way, a form of academic tourism.⁶⁶

The WFR has noticed throughout various research trips to South Africa that it is indeed the norm to see white guests in guest houses and that cleaning and the provision of breakfast as well as night shifts tend to be done by black female housekeepers. She writes in her 2017 research diary:

It feels weird to be a white researcher from abroad, writing about the detrimental effects of colonialism and social inequality, and at the same time sitting at the breakfast table of a guest house, being served by a black housekeeper who tells me that she has not seen her children in months as they are in Zimbabwe. I checked out later and made sure the white, male owner of the guest house has received the money from my research budget.

Mvuselelo Ngcoya in his account of being a tourist, writes of his experience as a tourist in South Africa in 1983: “We always stepped aside when a white person appeared. [...] Tourists were white and I was black.”⁶⁷ Ngcoya goes on to show how what he experienced in 1983 had not changed at all in 2014, when he was a tourist in his own country again and witnessed how a B&B owner referred to the housekeepers as “my girls.”⁶⁸ This certainly has both a gender component (being possessive of women) as well as a class component that is inextricably linked to skin colour – it is indeed proportionally more common for white South Africans to own property than for Black South Africans. Ngcoya confirms that “success is often equated with whiteness. At the petrol station for example, I cringe when the attendant refers to me as *mlungu wami* (my white man).”⁶⁹

The WFR was regularly told by white South Africans, male and female, to watch out and not walk around on her own. Many times, the black housekeepers of the guest house, when asked, said that they were not so worried, not least as they are exposed to a very different set of dangers when walking around. Those who do not live at the guest house where they work are confronted with a lack of public transport, which is often too expensive in relation to the little money that they earn.⁷⁰ This creates a particular infrastructure of threat narratives, held by people in relation to their own exposure to threat levels. From the diary of the WFR:

Today, we [a white local student and myself] booked a walking tour through the inner city of Johannesburg. After quite a few people came up to us and told us it was not safe to walk around there as white women, the student asked our [black] guide why people kept telling us this specifically in relation to us being white. Was it more unsafe for us to walk around than for black women? The guide responded that we were more likely to become victims of theft and robbery, but black women in other parts of the city faced the constant danger of being abducted and trafficked.

That of course tells us not only about the different effects that urban geographies have on individuals, but also about the implications of the failing public transport system and the low salary of housekeepers (who will not be able to afford a car as most white people do) on those black women’s lives. Whilst the threat of being mugged is something publicly articulated to white women, black women in other parts of the city who are at risk of being abducted will rarely be warned. Instead, the elevated level of danger to them is accepted as part of their daily lives.

It becomes clear that the location of the South African tourist guest house provides a glimpse onto a space in which we can read intersectionality: through the pressures imposed on black female housekeepers, through the ownership of property, usually by white owners, as well as of the complicity or a white female researcher in a colonial-style system of inequality that she is trying to resist. The everyday lives of the housekeepers are a particular ‘local’ that emerges from the political economy of the guest house and from the intersection between different categories of oppression. Theirs is a completely different local experience than that of the guest house owner, who will in fact spend the best part of every day in the same location. The housekeepers’ everyday life maybe shaped by the hybridity of identities that surrounds her work, but can only be understood in the light of the multi-faceted power relations that intersect her life – usually in dependence on an insecure job, exposed to increased levels of danger and without regular contact with her family. This inequality is not merely a matter of representation, but is engraved in the material substructures of a larger system of inequality. In the interplay between the material underpinnings of the guest house – expressed in ownership and physical location – as well as the symbolic transactions that take place within it, the space of the guest house becomes a sphere in which we can understand intersectional inequality.

Building on this conversation, we would like to suggest that the intersectionality of peace approach can present useful research avenues for PCS scholars. For one, it helps desegregate the pervasive binaries present in many analyses by focusing on lived experiences of different actors on the ground – from precarity to privilege, or from insecurity to safety. As such, we agree with Marta Iñiguez de Heredia about the general “absence of class and privilege” in peacebuilding studies,⁷¹ and we believe that the concept of intersectionality can contribute to redress this. In the conversation above, we hint at how the everyday lies at the intersection of categories of oppression (gendered, racial, economic, political), but also categories of privilege, and how these different categories can intersect. A WFR is, for instance, a very good example of an intersection between privilege (the intersection between whiteness and the social and economic capital coming with UK-based higher education) as well as femininity, associated with ‘weakness’ and the perceived need to be protected as well as the lived experience of insecurity.

Whilst this discussion is based on a personal, lived experience, it is not meant to simply reflect the general tendency in the literature for constant self-reflection; we believe that the intersectionality of peace approach can help us broaden our understanding of the material power relations as they are lived and experienced on the ground by a variety of actors, including researchers and interveners. The concept hence intends to highlight these dynamics in a way that *hybrid orders* or *hybrid forms of peace* didn’t manage to completely achieve, at least in the way that the concepts were used in the PCS community. The *intersectionality of peace approach* instead helps underline the fact that categories such as race, class and gender structure social relationships in South Africa, and power relations lie at the intersection of multiple identities. The recent history of South Africa is a series of well-known attempts from multiple actors to overcome institutionalized racial discrimination, before and after the apartheid regime, but less known are the fact that some of these attempts have resulted in the bolstering of patriarchal power relations.⁷² As Beth Glodblatt and Sheila Meintjes argue, ‘patriarchy was embedded within the social fabric of apartheid in particular ways and meant that women and men from different racial, class and cultural backgrounds experienced life very differently.’⁷³ At the same time, a mono-dimensional focus on race or gender as analytical

categories only disguises the extent to which the transition from apartheid to democracy has further complicated oppressions. Whilst the abolishment of formal segregation was certainly to be welcomed, there are continuing power inequalities that derive not only from racial, but also gendered and economic discrimination. As researchers, we find ourselves in the midst of and complicit with such inequalities. Intersectionality, as an analytical tool, can help unveil those categories of oppression that tend to be overlaid and disguised by simplified binary explanations that place the origins of oppression within a single identity category. It thus serves as a lens to identify structures of inequality – which can be seen as a key issue for the ongoing manifestations of violence on different levels in South African society.⁷⁴ Investigating the ways in which inequalities intersect thus allows for a more nuanced understanding of the multiple factors that shape people's everyday lives, impact upon the research process, organise the manifestation of violence in society, and eventually, the ways in which peacebuilding often fails to address underlying and intersectional discrimination.

Conclusion

This article tried to shed new light on the heated debate regarding the use of, and the attempt to overcome, dichotomies in PCS. By doing this, we have noted the limits of three recent strands in the PCS literature, focusing on the everyday, hybridity, and narratives. The three approaches, each in their own ways, tend to either reproduce binary logics they attempt to overcome, or risks glossing over power considerations. Hence, this article is an attempt to (re)connect the PCS scholarship with the feminist literature, which has been discussing and debating these issues for quite some time. We have particularly highlighted the potential of the concept of intersectionality to bring a fresh perspective on this debate. An intersectional analysis of narratives, we argue, can reap the benefits that narrative approaches have brought into PCS whilst casting light on the politicised nature of identities that emerge from those. In that sense, narratives are no longer seen as individualised, exceptional experiences, but as products and co-producers of systems of inequality. To investigate this process, we have provided an illustration of the potential of intersectionality as an analytical tool by putting in conversation one of the authors' field notes from South Africa with a published narrative on the power relations within South Africa's tourism sector. Our small-scale case study shows that the complication of conflict narratives is necessary to understand the different effects that structural inequality has on the reproduction of violence in the everyday of public and private arenas.

It is important to note that the *intersectionality of peace* approach allows one to argue the relative importance of one source of privilege or discrimination over others when trying to understand specific phenomena – the key here is to acknowledge, understand and analyse these various sources rather than simply imply that one is more important than the other. As such, it would be unfair to criticise interdisciplinarity scholarship on the ground that it does not allow one to argue for the pre-eminence of a source of privilege and discrimination over other sources. What seems important here is to note that the *intersectionality of peace* does not run against these approaches. We want to bring power back in the conversation, and we believe that intersectionality does contribute, along with other approaches, to take a hard look at power dynamics at play in the (re)production of social structures.

We therefore aim to highlight the need to go beyond the ‘self-reflective’ move, which tends to be associated with a very self-centred, auto-ethnography approach, to discuss what the complexity of categories means for actors on the ground, but also for us researchers. This is a call to discuss the various forms of privilege – in its ‘local’ and ‘international’ components as much as along the lines of gender, race, class, disability and other forms of social differentiation – and to highlight the complexity of the dynamics associated with this privilege. Inequality in power status is thus no longer assumed to eventually be evened out, or hybridised as some scholars would postulate, but as perpetuated through social practices and discourses. It is indeed surprising that the notion of ‘privilege’ has long been used in different feminist research traditions, yet has rarely been used in Peace and Conflict Studies. If one was cynical, one could raise the question about the researchers’ complicity and power relations and the associated reluctance to dismantle systems of power that have kept the discipline in an alleged position of superiority. Feminist approaches can provide the language and tools to open up such Pandora’s boxes to address questions of complicity, not only in the realm of identity-formation in (post-)conflict zones, but also on the part of the researchers of the discipline. They help us zoom in on the social systems that reproduce unequal power relations and are swept aside in traditional PCS, which often focuses on the hybridisation of two oppositional identity categories. Drawing on the feminist approach of intersectionality helps us understand identities not as oppositional, but as transversal and multi-directional, at the same time viewing gender not as the only, but as one of several categories of differentiation. A more nuanced understanding of the social settings in which violence is exercised between social groups can thus be crucial for peacebuilding to capture the multi-faceted nature of conflict and violence.

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² Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver P. Richmond, “The Local Turn in Peace Building: A Critical Agenda for Peace”, *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 5 (2013): 763-783.

³ David Chandler, *Resilience: The Governance of Complexity* (London: Routledge, 2014), 82.

⁴ Annika Bjorkdahl and Kristine Hoglund, “Precarious Peacebuilding: Friction in Global-Local Encounters”, *Peacebuilding* 1, no. 3 (2013): 289-299; Nicolas Lemay-Hébert, “The Bifurcation of the Two Worlds: Assessing the Gap Between Internationals and Locals in State-Building Processes”, *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 10 (2011): 1823-1841; Nicolas Lemay-Hébert and Stefanie Kappler, “What Attachment to Peace? Exploring the Normative and Material Dimensions of Local Ownership in Peacebuilding”, *Review of International Studies* 42, no. 5 (2016): 895-914.; Kristoffer Liden, “Building Peace Between Global and Local Politics: The Cosmopolitan Ethics of Liberal Peacebuilding”, *International Peacekeeping* 16, no. 5 (2009): 616-634.

⁵ For an overview of this critique, see: Shahar Hameiri and Lee Jones, “Beyond Hybridity to the Politics of Scale: International Intervention and ‘Local’ Politics”, *Development and Change* 48, no. 1 (2017): 56-59; John Heathershaw, “Towards Better Theories of Peacebuilding: Beyond the Liberal Peace Debate”, *Peacebuilding* 1, no. 2 (2013): 275-282; Andreas T. Hirblinger and Claudia Simons, “The Good, the Bad, and the Powerful: Representations of the ‘Local’ in Peacebuilding”, *Security Dialogue* 46, no. 5 (2015): 422-439; Charles T. Hunt, “Beyond the Binaries: Towards a Relational Approach to Peacebuilding”, *Global Change, Peace & Security* 29, no. 3 (2017): 209-227; Randazzo, “The Paradoxes of the ‘Everyday’”.

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- ¹² Roberto Belloni, “Hybrid Peace Governance: Its Emergence and Significance”, *Global Governance* 18 (2012): 21-38; Oliver P. Richmond and Audra Mitchell, “Introduction – Towards a Post-Liberal Peace: Exploring Hybridity Via Everyday Forms of Resistance, Agency and Autonomy”, in: O. Richmond and A. Mitchell (eds) *Hybrid Forms of Peace: From Everyday Agency to Post-Liberalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), 1-38; Roger Mac Ginty, “Hybrid Peace: The Interaction Between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace”, *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 4 (2010): 391-412.
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- ¹⁶ For an overview of this argument, see: Jenny Peterson, “A Conceptual Unpacking of Hybridity: Accounting for Notions of Power, Politics and Progress in Analyses of Aid-Driven Interfaces”, *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* 7, no. 2 (2012): 9-22. 48-69
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- ¹⁸ McLeod, “A Feminist Approach to Hybridity”, 51.
- ¹⁹ Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 348; Laura McLeod, “Gender and Post-Conflict Reconstruction”, in: Laura Shepherd, Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry (eds), *Handbook of Gender and Security* (London: Routledge, 2018);
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