

Call for Papers

Space in Peace and Conflict

Zentrumstage 2018

Center for Conflict Studies, University of Marburg, Germany

18-20 October 2018

Space lies at the heart of peace and conflict studies. War zones, border disputes, fights over land and territory, out of area missions, inter or intra-state conflict, besieged cities, peace gardens and war memorials, and many other expressions make reference to spatial markers. This points to the fact that the conduct of violence and the maintenance of peace always has a spatial element to it, it would not exist without space. In other words, peace and conflict 'take place'; their practices are situated in space. Consequently, understanding peace and conflict requires incorporating a spatial perspective. In light of the increasing interest in the nexus between the social and space in recent years, drawing out its value for peace and conflict studies is only just beginning.

What has been largely neglected in peace and conflict studies, thus, is the application of space theories to conceptualize the location of peace and conflict. Since the early 1990s, disciplines such as geography, anthropology and sociology increasingly explore the spatial dimension of social action. The aim is to overcome the conception of space as a container or a static background and to move towards an understanding of space as shaped by ideas, experiences, practices and power relations. From this view, space is dynamic, relational, and has agency.

Moreover, in a circular motion, spatial theory can be used to analyze the social construction of physical materiality and its meaning. For peace and conflict studies, it offers an important tool for transgressing approaches which consider topography, resources or other spatial features as external to social action. People establish borders, define territories, develop war zones, and construct social, political and economic topographies, which are then fought over or which form elements in a peace process. There is thus a link between the production of space through agency and the occurrence of violent conflict or peace.

Our conference aims at discussing the emerging field of the spatialization of peace and conflict and asks which new insights can be gleaned by this spatial turn. We set out to critically investigate how space, scale and sites can be conceptualised and analytically employed in the study of peace and conflict. We are thus interested in novel theoretical frameworks of peace and war geographies, in-depth case analysis as well as a cross-case comparative analysis that explore peace and violent conflict through spatial approaches, both empirically and theoretically.

More concretely, the following topics shall be addressed:

- **spatial imaginaries:** conceptions of territory or even of de-territorialization, e.g. in refugee and migration contexts
- **contested spaces:** sites in which different actors' interests collide in controlling the space in order to control its meaning, conflicting cultural heritage policies

- **spatial politics/tactics:** uses of space in a strategy of power and social control, militarization of landscapes, construction and life with borders and boundaries
- **multi-scalar approaches:** frictions of scales such as local–global, e.g. projects focusing on the nexus of spatial production and materialization in terms of ‘new scales’, such as digital spaces
- **spatial materialities:** approaches regarding ‘new materialism’, such as infrastructures of peace and conflict or ontologies of spaces (e.g. rivers as legal subjects)

Prospective participants may send their abstracts (400 words) and bios (150 words) to space18@uni-marburg.de by 1 April 2018.

The conference language is English. Unfortunately, we cannot provide financial assistance for travel or accommodation.

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Stéphane Voell, senior research fellow and Coordinator of the Center for Conflict Studies

Website: <http://uni-marburg.de/JrUtp>