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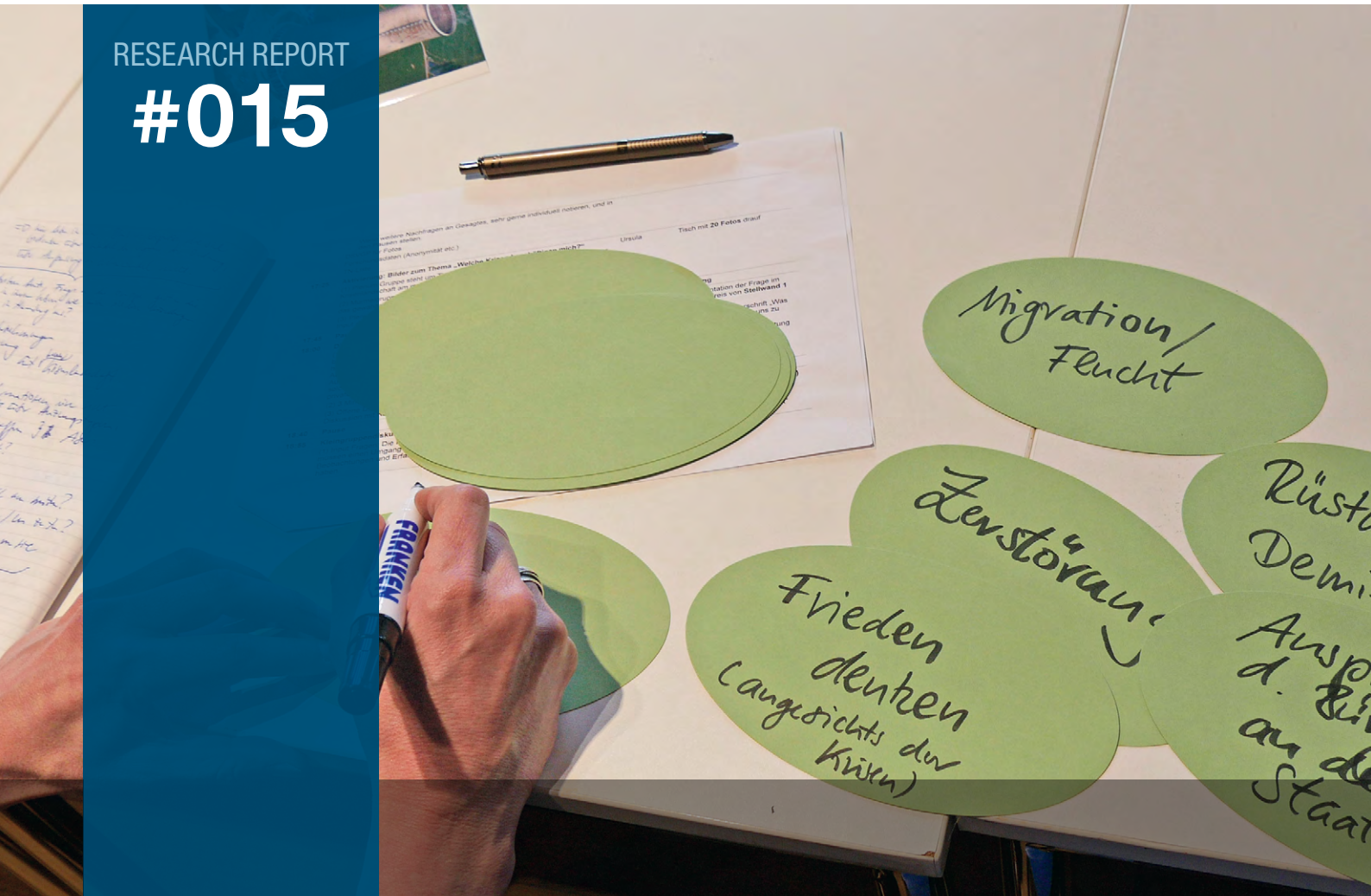

Doing Peace!
A Framework for Participatory Research in Peace and Security Studies

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Abstract

A new paradigm for the relationship between science and society has emerged in recent years. Approaches such as participatory and transdisciplinary research, citizen science or real-world labs, building on well-established methods such as action research or community-based participatory research, emphasise new forms of collaboration between researchers and stakeholders on the local level, identify mechanisms for knowledge co-creation and emphasize the importance of public engagement of science for addressing real-world challenges.

In the face of multiple crises and rising societal and political complexities, this report takes this new paradigm to the study of peace and security. Peace researchers have long understood that peace – as a value, practice and condition – cannot be observed at a distance or studied in the abstract. Instead, understanding how peace works requires close engagement with the actors, stakeholders and people in a given setting. Peace research, therefore, has a lot to offer when it comes to understanding how local and embedded practices enable and shape peaceful societal relations and constructive forms of non-violent conflict in different settings. Yet, participatory or collaborative methods are still rarely used. This is all the more true for the study of security – a field characterized by restricted access, secrecy and strong government interests. In this report, we propose a concept of participatory peace and security research that integrates findings from peace research with insights from critical security studies and broader debates on the merits and pitfalls of transdisciplinary research. Based on the underlying notion of peace and security as practice, our approach of *doing peace!* sketches out what new forms of knowledge co-creation, participatory research and critical engagement could look like in the study of peace and security and how they can contribute to studying peace and security with local stakeholders. To demonstrate the merits of this approach and to reflect on its ethical as well as practical challenges, we draw on several explorative projects of participatory peace and security research conducted at the IFSH from 2020 to 2025.

Keywords: Participatory research, collaborative methods, co-creation, peace research, critical security studies

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1 Introduction

How do individuals and communities navigate and sustain both peace and everyday security amidst multiple, intersecting crises that deeply affect daily life? This research report explores new perspectives on this important question under the heading *doing peace!*. It examines the potential of collaborative and participative research methods for studying local practices of coping with insecurity, as well as establishing, maintaining and sustaining peace in our everyday lives. Due to their emphasis on innovative forms of knowledge co-production and co-creation, collaborative activities with people and groups outside academic settings are especially promising for this endeavour. Our approach to *doing peace!* takes seriously the potential of participatory approaches for the analysis of everyday instances of establishing and maintaining peaceful relations. At the same time, our critical engagement with their epistemological and methodological premises points to some conceptual and operational limitations and emphasises the need for further engagement with the opportunities and challenges of participatory research on peace.

We hold that the nature of today's complex and intertwined peace and security challenges calls for new ways of studying their emergence, dynamics and management. Peace research provides a rich body of knowledge on the structural challenges for and conditions of peaceful relations within societies. These include the role of social justice, gender equality, political orders or societal participation, in zones affected by ongoing or past armed conflicts of varying intensities (e.g. Hegre 2014; Richmond 2016). However, we know much less about the processes and practices employed by actors during everyday situations for the establishment or maintenance of peace in ostensibly peaceful contexts. To analyse the local effects of our current complex crisis constellations, as well as to develop strategies for coping with them, new forms of knowledge and practice are needed. Complex crises challenge the established disciplinary and compartmentalised ways of knowledge production in academia.

The current confrontational political environment and the cascading number of crises that have entered our everyday life in the past decade contribute to this need to find new ways of knowing, talking about and practising peace and security in our own lives. The erosion of what we know as the liberal international order, the rise of authoritarianism and populism, as well as the emergence of new security issues, such as health or energy, challenge established understandings

of peace and security. Complex crises, such as climate change and pandemics, but also conflict-induced migration and many other issues, demonstrate that there is a blurring of lines between peace and conflict that also transcends established notions of 'here' and 'there' (Elbe and Buckland-Merrett 2019; Hönke and Müller 2012). Citizens navigate increasingly diffuse boundaries between 'normal' life and crisis 'exceptions' in their everyday search for resilience, while political actors and government agencies are confronted with growing demands for protection but also with increasing scepticism and fears (Boin et al. 2021). The current state of crisis is also shaped by the transnational and interconnected nature of these crises (Leonard 2021). For instance, the aggravation of the global food crisis triggered by Russia's war against Ukraine shows that peace and security are globally entangled matters. While they remain tied to distinct academic and political fields and logics as well as diverging normative orientations to some extent, peace and security increasingly diffuse in practice as well as in research. Their broadened understandings often overlap, for example, with a view to conceptions of human security and related forms of structural and epistemic violence. Due to their often non-linear development, today's challenges also do not fit established understandings of the sequencing of conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict peacebuilding. Representing 'wicked problems', these challenges also make it difficult to define effective responses in light of increasing societal politicisation and scepticism. Hence, while the fundamental impact of multiple crises becomes ever more apparent also in everyday experiences and various fields, established mechanisms for the peaceful and constructive conduct of conflict are more and more challenged.

Our approach to *doing peace!* starts from the assumption that for understanding how peace is established and maintained in times of crises, we need to pay closer attention to peace as practice and to peace processes located on the micro-level of everyday social relations 'at home'. The war against Ukraine most urgently showcases the nearly forgotten reality of interstate war in Europe. It also demonstrates the need to study how and why the European peace and security order has eroded, to identify avenues for preventing further large-scale violence in Europe and to develop solutions for sustainable crisis management. But beyond armed conflict and geopolitical tensions, the war against Ukraine contributes to a broader and more complex setting of multiple crises affecting Europe (Niemann and Schröder 2024a). The effects of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, social inequality and increasing costs of living, the rise of authoritarian populism or increasing political polarisation affect not only global political

dynamics but also the daily lives of citizens. They show that the 'everyday' and the 'local' also matter in established democracies beyond (post-)conflict settings. Our research report, therefore, focuses on peace and security in European and Western contexts.

To develop our own approach to *doing peace!*, we critically engage with a recent wave of interest in collaborative and participatory research strategies. A plethora of concepts, including participatory and community-based research, collaborative and co-creative knowledge production, citizen science and notions of transdisciplinary research showcase a trend to rethink how and with whom knowledge can or should be produced. Although these concepts differ in their respective epistemological and methodological premises, they nevertheless share several similarities about processes of mutual knowledge generation between researchers and non-academic stakeholders. This turn towards collaborative and participatory research strategies is motivated by the need to address the complexities of contemporary real-world challenges. This, however, does not only require acknowledging and taking seriously lay knowledge and identifying suitable formats of knowledge exchange between academic and non-academic participants. Instead, these research strategies also have a focus on transformation, practical doings and engagement with and for society (Grunwald 2015). Approaches such as real-world laboratories or citizen science projects often expand our notion of research through processes of actively designing or constructing objects, or by concrete physical activities such as walking, drawing, etc. Yet, there is no single approach to, method for or understanding of participatory research. In this research report we therefore use the term 'participatory research' to subsume in the broadest sense a set of approaches, research strategies and methods emphasising a direct engagement of stakeholders, communities, local priorities and perspectives in a research process, often designed with the normative goal of fostering equal participation in society and politics and motivated by an impetus to initiate social change in response to real-world challenges.

Participatory and transdisciplinary methods have gained prominence across different disciplines, including sustainability and environmental sciences (Lang et al. 2012; Schneidewind, Singer-Brodokowski and Augenstein 2016), healthcare (Abma et al. 2017), critical geography (Shannon et al. 2021; Harney et al. 2016) and others. These strategies are also increasingly referred to in debates about research innovation, higher education and science politics, as well as relations

between science and society and debates about knowledge transfer being a 'third mission' of higher education institutions (Fam et al. 2020). Paradigmatic shifts in science-society relations have witnessed significant political support on European and national levels in recent years. Funding opportunities for scholars engaging publics in their research by the German ministry for research and education (BMBF) or the European Union, higher education strategies announced by the German Council on Sciences and Humanities (Wissenschaftsrat) or the German Rectors' conference (HRK), and online platforms such as *buergerschaffenwissen.de* as well as an array of newfound associations, academic journals and conferences on public engagement and new forms of knowledge transfer speak to this development.

The somewhat coinciding development of larger funding schemes that deliberately seek to promote the use of participatory research and the academic interest in such concepts has, in and of itself, been subject to debate and critique. Critical scholars in geography (Pain 2000), sociology (Lewin 1946), development studies (Chambers 1994), anthropology (Hemment 2007) or education (Freire 1970) have for a long time called for acknowledging and enabling alternative modes of knowledge production in academia to "decenter the academy as the ultimate producer of knowledge, while amplifying excluded voices and ontologies and promoting progressive social change" (Shannon et al. 2021: 1148).

Our approach of *doing peace!* contributes to this turn towards participatory and transdisciplinary research: it demonstrates for the field of peace, conflict and security research how these approaches can also provide useful opportunities for analysing peace and security – and how critical reflections from peace and security research can, vice versa, inform current methodological and conceptual debates about participatory and transdisciplinary approaches. We do so by bringing so-far largely disconnected debates from peace research and critical security studies together to demonstrate the utility of participatory methods for these fields as much as to propose to use our concept of *doing peace!* as an analytical starting point. Peace research has a genuine interest in contributing to the practical establishment and maintenance of peace (Krause 2019) and seeks to provide not only abstract research findings but also practical orientation and evaluation for policy and societies (Hegemann and Niemann 2021). However, the field largely focuses on the analysis of such issues in violent and post-conflict settings (Kreikemeyer 2020; Julian, Bliesemann de Guevara and Redhead 2019), instead of studying peace 'at home'. Critical security studies on the

other hand has been especially focused on identifying novel ways of knowledge production as well as innovative methods of inquiry (Aradau et al. 2015; Austin, Bellanova and Kaufmann 2019; Salter and Mutlu 2013) and the role of critique (Bargues-Pedreny 2019; de Goede 2020) but is sceptical about the promises and potential of transformative science.

Aside from focusing on the opportunities of participatory methods for studying peace and security, several other reasons call for more critically examining the blind spots and challenges of such research methods. First, the trend towards citizen science and public engagement intersects with the neoliberal restructuring of academia and society at large (Vohland et al. 2019; Jordan and Kapoor 2016). Second, many forms of innovative knowledge production have blind spots when it comes to questions of power and asymmetry in the research process (Fritz and Meinherz 2020). Third, the effects of secrecy, oppression, restricted access and related impediments of collaborative research in sensitive areas (Poopuu 2020) are largely absent from current debates about the opportunities and challenges of participatory and collaborative research. Our research report addresses these gaps by proposing an approach for participatory peace and security research that not only holds the potential for broadening the empirical scope of participatory and collaborative research methods to a key area of politics and society but also points to challenges and possible avenues for further debate about the conceptual potential of participatory and collaborative research strategies in the social sciences.

The remainder of the report is organised as follows. In the following section, we trace various traditions of participatory methods in peace research and discuss their commonalities and differences. In the third section, we turn to critical security studies, in which participatory approaches have long had less resonance. We explore recent work in this field that engages more deeply with security practitioners, using ethnographic methods and approaches of making and doing. The fourth section, then, synthesises these heterogeneous strands in peace research as well as critical security studies to develop our proposal for a participatory research programme. We use three research projects conducted within the *doing peace!* programme at IFSH from 2020–2024 to demonstrate the merits of this approach. The fifth section self-critically reflects on practical as well as ethical boundaries of participatory research. In the final section, we conclude by outlining prospects for the further development of our research programme.

2 Participatory Methods in Peace Research

The field of peace research is especially well suited for adopting participatory research methods for several reasons. First, there is the empirical subject of the discipline – peace – which seems to be both broader as well as more accessible for close field research compared to 'harder' research topics of neighbouring disciplines such as security or international cooperation. Commonly, peace is understood as a social condition characterised by the absence of either direct physical or indirect structural violence. While a negative understanding of peace refers to the absence of direct physical violence, a broader concept of positive peace defines it as a "condition of good management, orderly resolution of conflict, harmony associated with mature relationships, gentleness and love" (Boulding, 1978). Both negative as well as positive definitions of peace have been criticised for their elusiveness and epistemological and ontological flaws. If peace is defined in mere negative terms, as the temporary absence of war, it becomes impossible to identify any positive qualities of a peaceful society; positive peace, in contrast, "has no ontological existence at all" (Adler 1998: 166). As Väyrynen (2019, drawing on Shinko 2008: 489) argues, peace has become an elusive concept deployed to "bludgeon humanity with its extraordinariness, forever out of reach, elusive by definition, a dream too flatteringly sweet to be substantial."

Over the past decades, peace research has moved from its normative beginnings to the empirical study of the causes of conflict and conditions for peace. In these empirical studies, peace is understood less as a structural condition than as a continuous process, in which the absence of war is the beginning of a path (Czempiel 1998; Bonacker and Salehi 2024). At an empirical level, this was accompanied by a growing interest in different processes of making, keeping and building peace after the end of the Cold War (Darby and MacGinty 2008). Postcolonial and critical scholars have criticised this processual notion of peace, which draws on a liberal model of peace as the teleological endpoint of a linear development in non-Western countries. In particular, the idea that peace could be exported or even imposed via force was heavily criticised.

A second reason is the field's normative orientation towards practice and application, problem-solving and activism (Krause 2019: 294; Niemann and Schröder 2024b: 21). Peace research seeks to contribute to conflict transfor-

mation, post-conflict peacebuilding, reconciliation and social or transitional justice – which makes the idea of research as an intervention in and with society more acceptable and desirable. Given their immediate relation to practice, participatory research methods are well-suited to support such research endeavours. Making an active contribution to conflict transformation, collaborating with peace activists and following an "emancipatory methodology" (Fuller 1992) is deeply embedded in the identity of the normative strand of peace research. A substantial contribution to this line of thinking has come from research following the "local turn" in peacebuilding, which emphasises both the positive effects of local peacebuilding attempts (Autesserre 2017; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013) and the relevance of peace in everyday encounters (Firchow 2018; Randazzo 2016). It also establishes the benefits of researchers' proximity to local communities and the relevance of experiential knowledge for better understanding the conditions for establishing sustainable peace (Julian, Bliesemann de Guevara and Redhead 2019; Kreikemeyer 2020).

A final reason is the interdisciplinary nature of the research field, as scholars in the tradition of peace and conflict research appear to be genuinely more open to approaches from neighbouring fields. Methods such as ethnographic peace research (Millar 2018), visual narrative analysis (Ottendörfer 2020) or feminist research methods (Väyrynen 2019) have been used among others for revealing processes of knowledge production, the establishment and maintenance of social orders or relationships between local and international actors in situations of everyday peace and post-conflict peacebuilding.

Overall, peace research is a field that is characterised by methodological pluralism, but also by debates on how conceptual and theoretical innovations about peace can be translated into concrete methodologies (Jutila, Pehkonen and Väyrynen 2008; Söderström and Olivius 2022). Compared to neighbouring disciplines such as international relations or security studies, the use of participatory methods also has a much longer tradition in peace and conflict research. Nevertheless, as shown by the summary above, peace studies is a heterogeneous field in which competing definitions of peace as well as methodological approaches co-exist. In this context, participatory research is concentrated in a few communities and selected issues, while other strands of the literature, including more empirically oriented peace and conflict studies, have had little contact with transdisciplinary approaches. The following sections provide an overview of selected areas where and how participatory research has been

used in peace and conflict research and discuss what we can learn from these traditions and how to take research further.

2.1 PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AND (LOCAL) CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

A first area of research in which participatory methods are frequently used (and critically examined) is the role of local communities in post-conflict peacebuilding and conflict transformation. This research uses a variety of participatory methods in analysing the question of how local communities establish peace and overcome the experiences of violent pasts, for example by studying the effects of bottom-up everyday peacebuilding (Firchow 2019), relations between local and international peacebuilding actors (Carlane 1997), the re-integration of combatants (Bliesemann de Guevara and Krystalli 2022) or inter-generational conflicts (Paterson-Young et al. 2025). Scholars argue that communal relations are the key to successful conflict transformation (Zöhrer and Lusting 2023). Therefore, research methods that include communities as participants of the research process hold actual transformative potential (Kaye and Harris 2018: 62). One notable method for doing so is participatory action research (PAR), which emphasises that research findings should lead more or less directly to social action to the benefits of involved participants (Lewin 1946).

PAR has been used frequently in the field of conflict transformation (Carlarne 1997; Pace 2021). As Allen and Friedman argue (2021), conflict transformation shares an emphasis on participation and social justice with PAR; they both also value pluralism and multi-stakeholder approaches. Yet applying PAR as a method for studying conflict transformation comes with constraints and practical challenges. A study on reducing violence in Haitian communities by empowering stakeholders, especially youth as a key target group of local violence, for example, found that involved participants considered PAR useful because it gave communities the agency to identify problems and possible solutions themselves (Neufeldt and Janzen 2021: 101). At the same time, the project was shaped by conflicts within the communities, expectations from third parties and ethical challenges stemming from power relations that required continuously adapting research frameworks to local conditions (Neufeldt and Janzen 2021: 106). This resonates with assessments made by Kaye and Harris (2018) who argue that the

benefits and risks of participatory research need to be evaluated carefully given that it "is one thing to collect data from people to explore a problem, but quite another to involve them in using these data to plan, implement and evaluate an intervention" (Kaye and Harris 2018: 66). Therefore, studies using PAR methods in the field of conflict transformation emphasize the increased necessity of ethical reflection due to risks for involved communities, researchers' privileges and external constraints (Brabeck et al. 2015; Firchow and Gellman 2021).

2.2 PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AND ARTISTIC PEACEBUILDING

A second strand of literature that has mobilised participatory approaches in peace studies focuses on processes of knowledge production and alternative ways of knowing peace processes through arts-based methods to explore and engage with issues such as peacebuilding, memory, reconciliation or trauma. For example, several studies analyse how music contributes to peacebuilding (Bergh and Sloboda 2010; Hintjens and Ubaldo 2019), how theatre empowers victims of violent conflict (Premaratna 2018; Thorne 2022) and how art can be an intervention challenging colonial knowledge registers (Seppälä, Sarantou and Miettinen 2021), gives voices to marginalised groups of people (Harvey and Cooke 2021) or helps to deal with collective trauma (Tellidis and Glomm 2019) and crisis (Kosok et al. 2021). However, as research on the ambiguous meaning of memorials (Shim 2023) and the (public) controversy they may cause (Cole 2022) underlines, these are contested and often complex processes.

Arts-based methods demonstrate how participatory research helps to better understand the complex processes of post-conflict peacebuilding in war-torn societies (Andrä et al. 2020; Cole and Mills 2021; Harrisson 2023). For example, textile-making practices, such as knitting, stitching or sewing, have been described as "ideal communal" activities because they are socially inclusive group experiences combining opportunities for sharing memories and talking to productive and creative forms of learning and doing (Shercliff and Holroyd 2020). Through textile-making, bodily activities, narratives or lived experiences and their translations into textile objects are interwoven. As a collaborative group effort, it therefore is especially interesting for participatory research in post-conflict settings, because when "carried out in groups, textile-making creates

relations of trust, affect and mutual care, which allows individuals to express their experiences and enables collectives to establish and/or resignify relations" (Andrä et al. 2023: 8). Using textile-making as a starting point for collaborative research allows researchers to understand the process of data generation itself as a process of "crafting stories". In these stories "semantic meaning becomes entangled with material traces of emotional, affective and embodied experiences of violence and its aftermath" (Andrä 2022: 494). Textile-making thus not only demonstrates the utility of arts-based research methods. It also renders visible the complexities of social life in post-war communities where combatants and their victims meet in everyday encounters by establishing connections between these groups.

Collaborative research processes between global North and South actors are particularly challenging and vulnerable to exploitation, but can also enable local collaborators to gain autonomy and agency in the research process (Bliesemann de Guevara, Furnari and Julian 2020). As Andrä points out, their collaborative workshops and exhibitions were inclusive and enabled marginalised community members to participate in group action, but they also "rendered more visible the military and patriarchal hierarchies structuring public life" (Andrä 2022: 515). Research on curating violence and protest also underlines that the meaning of curated objects is often ambiguous, spurring different forms of interaction with them, including affirmation and connection, but also contestation and counter-memorial practices (Cole 2022; Reeves and Heath-Kelly 2020). Participatory research using arts-based methods underlines the importance of research ethics.

2.3 PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AND PEACE EDUCATION

While the field of arts-based peacebuilding is especially interested in collaborative forms of knowledge production, participatory methods are also used in the field of peace education to analyse the transformative power of learning processes. Peace education presumes that teaching and learning about peace, how to achieve it and how to overcome root causes of violent conflict allows one to identify ways of dealing with interpersonal and group conflicts (Jäger 2014: 5; Harris 2004: 6). It is located in a broader field of various approaches that foster

transformation through teaching, education and learning, such as global learning (Eicker 2019), education for sustainable development (Barth 2016) or global citizenship education (Drerup 2020).

Collaborative learning and capacity-building processes can provide useful ways of increasing trust and dialogue as means of peacebuilding, despite practical challenges, for example, a lack of time and difficulties of participants in connecting with stakeholders (Gough et al. 2022: 122). Peace education also places a strong emphasis on empowerment and emancipation through mutual learning (Bajaj 2015: 155; Gough et al. 2022: 123). Given that it is often conducted in post-violent settings of countries in the Global South, it is important to consider the role of decolonial perspectives and questions of power (Hajir and Kester 2020). Instructors as figures of authority and the agency of young people in participatory projects call for caution to prevent exploitation and harm, while facilitating empowerment and social change (Spence and Makuwira 2005: 26). At the same time, calls for evaluating the effectiveness of such approaches have been raised as well (Maschietto 2020).

While peace education projects are often carried out in post-conflict environments (Lauritzen 2016), others have adopted such approaches for conflict prevention and preparedness (Jäger and Kruck 2020). Given the diversity of peace education as a field, it relies on a broad range of different philosophies and practices (Lauritzen 2016: 78). Nevertheless, its strong emphasis on capacity-building and change agents that are often grounded in Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and Johan Galtung's concept of positive peace would make it an especially relevant field for using participatory research methods (Bajaj 2015).

As demonstrated in this section, the use of participatory methods is well established in peace research. At the same time, its application is confined to a few narrowly defined areas and traditions of peace research. We found that most studies tend to focus on post-conflict peacebuilding in societies that witnessed violent conflict. Existing research is also largely driven by empirical interests and studies, and therefore rarely discusses the methodological or epistemological dimensions of such research methods. In the next section of our research report, we discuss how we can establish linkages between existing peace research using participatory methods and adjacent research in fields such as critical security studies and international practice theory for developing a broader and more holistic concept of participatory peace and security research.

3 Participation in Critical Security Studies

While there is a long tradition of participatory approaches in peace and conflict research, the situation is different in the field of security studies. For a long time, security was considered a matter for experts only. The field appeared too restricted and inaccessible, populated by generals and high-ranking politicians. The scope of security focused on national defence against external military threats. Security research required the systematic analysis of material capabilities and power structures in the international system or its regional subsystems. The participation of everyday citizens and affected stakeholders in these analyses seemed superfluous or even dangerous (e.g. Wolfers 1952; Almond 1956).

While 'classical' security research understood security as exogenous and focused on military threats, post-Cold War critical security studies began to open and broaden this limited understanding. However, new interests inter alia in introducing discursive and practice-based approaches to security studies did not translate into an increase in participatory research approaches. One reason may be a strong focus on discourses and speech acts at the time. Inspired by the broader theoretical current of the linguistic turn and equipped with the tools of post-structuralist discourse analysis, critical security researchers went out to deconstruct dominant security discourses and narratives. Even those works that used Bourdieu and other sociologists to rethink security as embodied and situated practice mainly relied on discourse analyses and other qualitative methods to study such practices. This points to a second reason for the relative absence of participatory research on security: secrecy and field access. Mediating the relationship between security and publicness (Walter 2015), secrecy complicates participation. Fostering broader participation in the study of security might in the end not be a revelation of its inner workings, but rather a telltale sign that what is made available to the public and what is not is shifting. Instead of researchers opening the black box of security through critical investigation, it may instead be the security actors who open parts of this black box for the participation of selected experts or the public. Furthermore, difficulties are arising in practice, since security scholars themselves struggle with gaining access to sites where the production of (in)security can be studied (de Goede, Bosma and Pallister-Willkins 2019). Participation in such research can be diffi-

cult to achieve, and the closer the participants are to these sites of (in)security, the riskier it might become to include them in research in these sites, and the more important ethical considerations become.

Despite these difficulties and hurdles, which have prevented a stronger transdisciplinary orientation of security research in the past, several recent debates point to an opening of the field in this direction, often in close dialogue with neighbouring disciplines such as development studies, (urban) geography or sociology. One of them is work that focuses on everyday and vernacular forms of security (Jarvis 2019). This literature seeks to overcome the elite-centeredness of established (critical) security studies to argue that everyday citizens contribute to security discourses and practices, for example, through their participation in social media or their participation in social movements. Studying 'non-elite knowledge' and everyday imaginaries in the construction of security requires new methodologies, as these articulations cannot be studied through traditional media or document analyses. Nymann (2021), for example, studies the everyday meanings of security in the dimensions of space, practice and affect through a participatory photography project with six ordinary citizens in Beijing. Participants were asked to contribute photographs, which were juxtaposed and interpreted in interviews with them. The images often show seemingly mundane situations in the streets, in the local transport system or at the supermarkets. Security, the author argues, "exists and is made and remade in concrete spaces, practices and experiences", requiring an adjustment of methodology and method (Nyman 2021: 333). This means moving beyond the array of research methods dominant in the field, which are designed to study elites and high politics.

Further work located at the intersection of development studies, urban studies, criminology and conflict studies includes local citizens as active co-researchers in the study of urban (in)security and conflict. Aiming at the transformation of local insecurities and conflicts, this work shares many similarities with the peace research approaches described above (cf. Abello Colak and Pearce 2021). This work champions participatory action research to facilitate the development of actors' understandings of security and to improve security for local actors affected by chronic violence. Chonka et al. (2022), for example, use participatory visual methods to study everyday security perceptions and experiences of insecurity in Somali cities.

Another avenue for opening security studies to participatory approaches is provided by the recent debate on the means and ends of critique (Austin, Bellanova and Kaufmann 2019; de Goede 2020). In their widely acclaimed paper "Doing and mediating critique", Austin, Bellanova and Kaufmann (2019) propose revitalising critical security studies through a stronger commitment to doing and making as a methodological principle and, associated with this, a more engaged, detailed critique of security practices. Methods of 'making' and 'doing' are adopted from science and technology research, digital media studies or the field of 'critical making'. Assuming that all security research is a practice – a form of doing – such approaches promise a different access to the field of security and thus at least partially reduce the problems of secrecy and publicness described above. From this perspective, the assumption that there could be any external perspective from which the critical researcher could deconstruct and critique security is an illusion. As researchers in this area, we are always already involved in its reproduction or "recomposition". If we are to think that security is a practice involving various actors or actants (Bellanova, Jacobsen and Monsees (2020) who are constantly involved in "doing security", we might as well get intentional about whose viewpoints, practices, experiences and contributions we enable, involve and allow into this web (or network or assembling) of security. To understand the increasingly complex, often technology-based, contemporary security practices, one must delve deep and engage with such approaches in detail. This is where methods such as critical making, reenactment or tinkering come into play. In a recent paper, Rothe et al. (2021), for example, experiment with remote sensing data and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to make sense of the increasing use of such approaches in the field of humanitarian governance. By tinkering with remote methodologies in refugee camp governance and thereby reenacting the humanitarian gaze enabled by such technologies, they can offer a much more nuanced and engaged critique of these approaches than would have been possible using other methods. Other current research projects tinker with approaches like digital mapping, documentary filmmaking or machine vision models. Working with computer scientists, engineers and artists, according to this work, enables access to and understanding of security technologies, which would otherwise remain inaccessible and opaque.

If we start from classical security studies – or the discourse-analytical variant of critical security studies – there are few points of contact for a dialogue with participatory peace research. However, the recent debates on everyday security, as well as doing and mediating critique, open new possibilities for bringing

the two fields together. *Doing peace!* is our attempt to do exactly this. Following our institute's DNA, we combine selected participatory approaches in peace research with the more recent debate on making, doing and engagement in critical security studies. For us, this involves more than just applying participatory methods to a new subject. Rather, the aim is mutual learning to mobilise the strengths of the different research traditions outlined. Peace research is strong on application and has a tradition of experimenting with participatory methods, often with a normative goal of empowerment. Theoretical discussions or ethical-methodological reflection often fall by the wayside in this explorative environment. Critical security studies, on the other hand, are strong in this regard. However, notwithstanding the recent calls for more engagement with and practical interventions into security contexts, actual examples of participatory research are still limited.

4 A Framework for Participatory Peace and Security Research

IFSH is an institute which, in addition to basic research on peace and security, is also active in knowledge transfer and public outreach on these matters. One of the main motivations behind our *doing peace!* programme, therefore, was to scrutinise what participatory research offers both as an approach to dealing with the complexity of current societal challenges and as an opportunity for social intervention through research. This, ultimately, would also open avenues for transformative change through our scholarly activities. Ideally, participatory research should thereby also provide grounds for a better and closer integration of research and transfer, which are often separate pillars of the work of institutions such as IFSH.

For five years, IFSH developed and curated a set of *doing peace!* projects to test out different ways of doing, creating and analysing peace in a more participatory way than we had done in much of our own research before. We understood these research interventions as smaller experiments in developing our own approach to doing research with society and in creating knowledge differently. Taken together, we were able to show that participatory, co-creative and co-laborative research is a fruitful way of engaging with a difficult present – and of bringing in new voices in research processes that often remain closed to outside participation.

With this set of projects, we aimed to show that security and peace are not abstract concepts, but lived reality here on the ground, in people's everyday lives in Hamburg. Which meanings do people in Hamburg attach to security and peace? What ideas do they have about constructive conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence within and beyond their local communities? Our premise was that the potential, but also the difficulties and setbacks, of peaceful and constructive conflict resolution can be seen directly on the ground, for example, in schools, in neighbourhoods or the engagement of citizens with national politics. Consequently, projects collaborated with civil society organisations, private foundations and neighbourhood initiatives to develop participatory research projects, in which citizens can play an active role (see Figure 1 p. 22 for an overview).

Figure 1: Overview of Selected Doing Peace! Projects

MUVE
UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH MULTIPLE CRISES

MUVE studied how people in Hamburg experienced the polycrisis in their everyday life and which coping strategies they developed.

Team: Ann-Kathrin Benner, Christine Hentschel (University of Hamburg), Holger Niemann, Ursula Schröder
Partners: Hamburg Public Library, State Agency for Civic Education Hamburg
Duration: December 2022 – November 2023
Funding: State Innovation Funding "Science for Society" (BWFGB)

PEACE JAM
INTERACTIVE ILLUSTRATION & GAMES MEET PEACE RESEARCH

Peace Jam was a collaborative project of peace researchers and game design students building prototypes for games about peace.

Team: Mareike Ottrand (HAW Hamburg), Aileen Hagen (HAW Hamburg), Janina Pawelz, Reem Ahmed
Partner: Sophie Mehner (Viva con Agua – Millerntor Gallery)
Duration December 2022 – November 2023
Funding: IFSH

UNLOCK EUROPE
THE ESCAPE GAME ON PEACE & SECURITY IN EUROPE

Unlock Europe is an escape game, developed in a collaborative process with stakeholders, to learn about what teenagers think about peace and security in Europe.

Team: Hendrik Hegemann, Holger Niemann, Alisa Rieth (BKHS), Julia Strasheim (BKHS), Merle Strunk (BKHS)
Duration October 2022 – December 2025
Funding: Zeit Stiftung Bucerius

SPACES OF PEACE
PEACE IMAGINARIES IN DIASPORA COMMUNITIES

The project studies concepts of peace with and among Russian and Ukrainian diaspora communities in Germany.

Team: Regina Heller, Christian Fröhlich
Partner: Regina Elsner (University of Münster)
Duration April 2024 – September 2026
Funding: German Foundation for Peace Research (DSF)

SECIMA
SECURITY IMAGINARIES OF CLIMATE MOVEMENTS

SECIMA analysed the visual narratives of climate activist movements in collaboration with activists from these movements.

Team: Delf Rothe, David Shim (University of Groningen), Noah Fischer, Kasia Lukowska (University of Groningen)
Partners: LichtZone Groningen, Non-Fiction Photo Leuven, Kreativagentur Hamburg
Duration January 2023 – December 2024
Funding: University of Hamburg; University of Groningen

DOING PEACE!
AMONG AND WITH REFUGEES

The project studied the local dimensions of societal peace in refugee communities in Hamburg with collaborators from these communities.

Team: Lea Brost, Lava Hosseini, Hasan Hüseyn-Öztürk, Anna Kreikemeyer, Lesya Mayevska, Tamim Wafa
Duration: October 2022 – June 2024
Funding: IFSH

Several projects focused specifically on issues of security and peace on the local level in Hamburg. The project *MUVE – Multiple Krisen verstehen und bewältigen (Understanding and Coping with Multiple Crises)*, for example, focused on crisis perceptions and crisis experiences of people living in Hamburg (see textbox 2 p. 32). The project *Doing Peace! Among and with Refugees exp*lored how refugees contribute to societal peace in Hamburg. The project brought together co-researchers from Afghanistan, Syria, Ukraine, Turkey and Germany to share their knowledge and experiences of peaceful coexistence. Participants used personal stories, pictures and photos to show what peace means from their perspective.

Other projects focused on collaborative processes of making and doing. For example, the project *Unlock Europe – The Escape Game on Peace and Security in Europe* used a collaborative approach for developing an escape game. To do

this, we brought together a professional serious games agency with high school students, teachers and scientific experts from various fields of peace and security research. The result of this collaboration is a mobile escape game that familiarises schoolchildren with topics such as climate security, international peacekeeping missions, fake news and disinformation, and health security in playful learning processes. In the *Peace Jam* project, IFSH researchers, together with students from the *Hamburg University of Applied Sciences*, developed prototypes for computer games that playfully address key issues of peace and security policy (see textbox 3 p. 37). In both projects, collaborative game development and the production of related objects were central to the participatory formats.

The main aim of the project *Security Imaginaries of Climate Movements* was to combine collaborative research on visual narratives with the development of an exhibition entitled "Climate no Future", which provided insights into the future visions and visual language of climate activists (see textbox 1 p. 26). The project explored how major climate movements in Germany and the Netherlands imagine the future in the context of the global climate crisis. In a collaborative process with climate activists, the project explored visual narratives in global politics, the (self-)legitimation of social movements as global political actors and visual methods in international relations research.

The ongoing project *Spaces of Peace – Imaginaries of Peace in the Russian and Ukrainian Diaspora in Germany and Their Potential for Conflict Transformation* explores everyday knowledge about ways and forms of peaceful coexistence in and between Ukrainian and Russian diaspora(s) in Germany. The project uses a participatory approach to collaborate with representatives from these groups to explore how these groups understand peaceful coexistence and how this translates into everyday practices and interpersonal relationships. Combining collaborative research on the meaning of peace and ideas of everyday conflict management in these communities with a future lab that seeks to utilise creative strategies for developing positive visions of a future peaceful co-existence between these communities, the project not only demonstrates how participatory research uses everyday practices as a starting point for both gaining more traditional research findings and for initiating transformative change. It also demonstrates how such methods can provide alternative ways of accessing research fields, such as violent conflicts, that are transported into other societal contexts through immigration and become interpreted and transformed by diaspora members of the conflicting societies.

In addition to these projects, researchers also carried out a variety of other activities in urban society as part of the project. These included cooperation with external partners such as museums, associations or authorities, for example in accompanying an exhibition on the subject of conflict in the *Museum der Arbeit Hamburg*; discussion events, for example on the role of future technologies; or collaborations with actors from the socio-cultural field, such as a participatory puppet theatre play developed with high school students about a post-apocalyptic scenario of a world covered by water.

As this brief overview of the *doing peace!* programme shows, the projects differed in terms of the approaches used, their scope, duration and degree of participation. Some projects pursued the goal of rethinking outreach and transfer activities and integrating them into research more effectively. Other IFSH researchers were keen to explore new methodological pathways, to engage with novel types of stakeholders or to reach a new audience. While some projects involved citizens in data collection, others chose an even stronger participatory approach by developing research questions and designs together with participating co-researchers. Still other projects involved citizens and experts in a process of co-creation that creatively united research and practice.

The exploratory projects described were embedded in a broader internal dialogue process in which the theoretical, methodological and ethical implications of participatory research methods were reflected upon. These activities included, for example, reading groups, guest lectures on specific topics and training in research methods. In this way, the conceptual framework of *doing peace!* was gradually fleshed out through an iterative interplay between theory and practice. This framework does not define or prescribe a fixed epistemological or methodological position. Instead, what emerged as the broad contours of our research programme are three central theoretical premises and methodological sensitivities. In the following, we outline these core principles of the *doing peace!* programme and use three selected projects to illustrate them.

4.1 DOING PEACE! STARTS WITH PRACTICES

First, the focus of our research, and the starting point for our work, is the notion of 'doing'. Both peace and security, as well as any research into these phenomena, essentially rely on social practices. Practices refer to the often mundane and overlooked, sometimes radical and highly visible acts that make peaceful and secure social orders possible. They also refer to the embodied, socially meaningful activities through which everyday citizens or highly specialised actors contribute to security – and make sense of the latter. Acknowledging that both peace and security are bound to specific temporal and spatial conditions, mobilising different participatory methods helps to better understand how peace and security are constituted and contested in different communities. Our premise is to defy an understanding of peace or security as stable conditions or abstract concepts and to think of them as being embodied in social practices instead. By zooming in on localised practices that do not follow a single script or linear arrow of time, *doing peace!* accounts for the multiple meanings and temporalities of peace and security as well as its opposites, that is, violence, escalating conflicts and insecurities. Understood in this way, participatory research can, for example, reveal the fragility of peaceful relations requiring constant reproduction and care. However, even security practices appear much less stable and consistent when examined closely through participatory engagement than they seem in security discourses and policy programmes. In facilitating these novel perspectives and encounters, *doing peace!* hence contributes to a richer and more diverse understanding of peace and security.

The *SECIMA* project shows how this orientation towards practice can be fruitfully combined with participatory methods. It studied how certain conflictual practices of climate protest are informed and shaped by imaginaries of uncertain and insecure futures. Conceptualising these future imaginaries as visual practices informed the choice of our methodological approach. With the help of participatory visual methods, we were able to reenact these ways of seeing the future. The collaboration between researchers and climate activists enabled, among other things, a critical reflection of these visual practices and the question of how they inform climate action in the present. For the involved activists, this provided valuable insights into campaign strategies and the question of what visual narratives the activists would like to use in the future. *SECIMA* also demonstrates how a processual understanding of peace is tied to specific times and spaces. Protest practices generate their meaning largely from the

context in which they take place. The visual narratives used by activists pick up on this and become meaningful only in context. This holds, for example, when climate change is visually framed as a threat to local cultural heritage or when fossil extractivism is presented as a threat to valued places such as the village of Lützerath, which was evicted to make space for continued coal extraction by the energy company RWE. Our participatory approach allowed us special access to these localised conflicts and associated visions of the future. Instead of being published as scientific articles behind a paywall, the project results were presented to a broader public in the form of an exhibition in Groningen and Hamburg. Putting knowledge on display enabled citizens to engage with it in novel ways. For example, many visitors to the exhibition entered dialogue with the project staff present or left comments in the guest book.

SECIMA – SECURITY IMAGINARIES OF CLIMATE MOVEMENTS

The collaborative project *Security Imaginaries of Climate Movements (SECIMA)* that was conducted jointly by the IFSH and the University of Groningen from 2023 to 2024 studied how major climate movements in Germany and the Netherlands imagine the future in the global climate crisis. Situated at the intersection of visual global politics (Benner and Rothe 2023; Shim 2018), social movement studies (Shim and de Vries 2021) and research on future imaginaries of climate change (Benner et al. 2020), we started from the assumption that climate activism revolves around a set of shared security imaginaries – imagistic representations of a catastrophic and violent planetary future – that often invoke emotions such as fear, despair, anger or hope.

To inquire into these imaginaries of insecure futures, *SECIMA* explored new methodological pathways. Rather than studying visual discourses and representations at a distance, the project involved activists from three major climate movements – Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion and the Last Generation – as co-scientists. The participants were actively included in the entire research process: from the development of research questions to the collection of data to interpretation and analysis. Methodologically, we combined two approaches

from participatory visual research: photovoice and photo elicitation. The former approach involves participants using photography or other visual methods to capture their everyday lifeworlds, communities or experiences. The second refers to the use of images as stimuli in qualitative interviews or focus group discussions. It holds that visual prompts can encourage dialogue that might not occur through verbal questioning alone and thereby access affective or interpretive context.

Figure 2: Kick-off Methodology Workshop in Groningen, February 2023

Image: ©IFSH/Delf Rothe

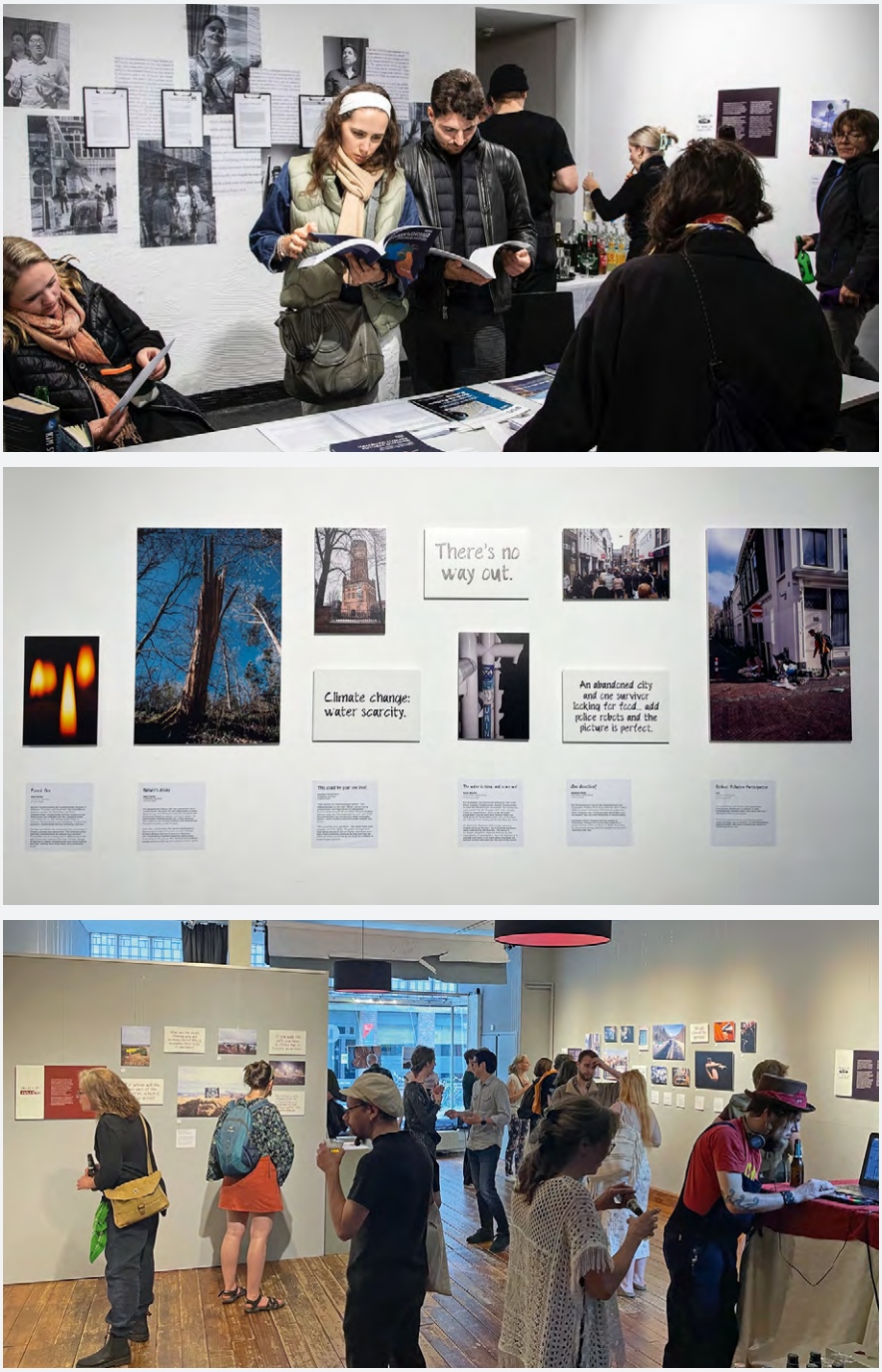
A kick-off workshop in Groningen in February 2023 brought the involved activists together to establish the research group and discuss project rationales and the applied methodology. We explained our research objectives from a scientific perspective and then discussed together what the project objectives and outcomes could be from an activist perspective. Finally, we used the workshop to collectively decide upon the practicalities and concrete steps of the data collection (e.g. how many images should be collected, where and by which media). Subsequently, the activists went into a three-month period of data collection, in which they took and collected pictures of climate futures in different contexts: during climate actions, in other activist contexts, but also their everyday life.

Figure 3: Analysis Workshop in Hamburg, May 2023

Image: ©IFSH

Following the data collection phase, participants were invited to a second workshop in Hamburg in May 2023 to collaboratively interpret and analyse the visual data. This process was facilitated through focus group discussions, progressing from descriptive observations to deeper reflection and interpretation. Initially, participants were asked to describe what they observed in the images. Subsequently, they were encouraged to articulate their emotional responses and consider the underlying representations within the images. Key guiding questions included: What is depicted here? How is the future represented? In what ways do these images convey perceptions of climate? The images were examined individually, with each photographer's work analysed separately. After the collective reflection, the respective photographer was given the opportunity to elaborate on their rationale for selecting and submitting images, as well as their interpretations of the visual material. The transcribed recordings of these discussions, along with the images themselves, served as the foundation for further analysis by the core research team. This analysis was conducted using MAXQDA and involved an open coding process applied to all collected materials.

Figure 4: Exhibition “Climate no Future”, October 2024



Images: ©Teodora Hofnăr/NonFiction Photo

In 2024, the findings from this study were translated into an exhibition displayed in Groningen in May and Hamburg in October. This exhibition was curated in collaboration with a professional agency based in the Netherlands. The exhibition featured clusters and collages composed of images and quotes, accompanied by captions and concise texts providing the scientific background for each thematic focus. Additionally, a research table was included as part of the exhibition, along with a guestbook to facilitate audience interaction and engagement. Through the analysis of visual data, five recurring thematic clusters were identified: (1) violence, (2) fear, (3) loss and extinction, (4) agency (or its absence) and (5) hope. These clusters represent distinct ways of perceiving and depicting the future, encompassing specific visual features, emotions and ideas. Furthermore, they are embedded within and revolve around competing imaginaries of the future shaped by the climate crisis.

In addition to the exhibition, the collaborative research project led to two scientific publication projects that are currently in the making. The first is a research note in which the collaborative approach is presented as a methodological contribution to the literature on climate movements and future imaginaries. The second is a visual essay in which different climate futures and underlying forms of visuality are explored and discussed primarily through the images of the project itself.

4.2 DOING PEACE! IS INTERESTED IN THE LOCAL AND EVERYDAY

Even if today's problems and dangers are of a planetary nature, their consequences are taking shape and gaining meaning at a local level (Hönke and Müller 2012). With its focus on everyday practices, *doing peace!* is able to trace how temporary, stable and peaceful social formations can emerge at the local level. From solidarity among refugee camps to the peaceful management of scarce resources, there are numerous examples of peaceful practices under conditions of extreme stress at the local level. And a focus on the production of social

conditions that work through practices avoids the fallacies of previous universal concepts, such as democratic peace or liberal peace.

'The local', in this understanding, is more than a specific configuration of formal and informal actors in local post-conflict settings or situations of fragility, as recent research suggests. Rather than studying practices of peace (only) in the Ferghana Valley or the streets of Bamako, we propose to study localised practices of peace and security in sites such as the United Nations Security Council, the negotiation rooms of post-INF arms control negotiations, or the online fora of peace activists. The local in this sense is not merely the opposite of 'the international'. Instead, 'the local' refers to the spatial scale at which situated practices and interactions take place (Jarvis 2019). It comes into being through these practices, is maintained and reproduced by them. The local, in other words, is a particular research perspective, which can be studied in different societal and political contexts around the world and at different levels.

The focus on the local and the everyday of peace on the ground was, for example, central to *MUVE*. The project aimed to understand how the supposedly abstract and complex polycrisis manifests itself in the everyday lives of people in Hamburg. It was a deliberate decision to limit the project's focus to local communities in Hamburg, thus enabling a micro-perspective on crisis perceptions. The project also emphasised that concepts such as the polycrisis are not universally useful, but that the current crisis constellations are understood differently and have varying effects on different people's lives. As *MUVE* demonstrated, people have fundamentally different understandings of the situation we find ourselves in. Another key finding of *MUVE* was that the local plays an important role in the everyday crisis management of people. For example, neighbourly help in Hamburg districts was described as an important part of people's strategies to cope with crises. Such a perspective can also help study local peace not only in conflict regions, but in supposedly peaceful and secure (Western) societies.

MUVE – MULTIPLE KRISEN VERSTEHEN UND BEWÄLTIGEN

Participatory research on experiencing the polycrisis in Hamburg

How did people in Hamburg experience the situation of multiple crises in their everyday lives? While there is a burgeoning literature on the polycrisis and the challenges it poses to politics and society at the macro level (Lawrence et al. 2024; Bergman-Rosamond et al. 2022), there is little research on the micro level of its impact on the everyday lives of ordinary people (Hentschel et al. 2023). The project hypothesised that the complex constellation of multiple, overlapping economic, environmental, political and social crises is particularly difficult to address in everyday life because of its pernicious and intertwined nature. *MUVE* did not seek to define the polycrisis situation itself, nor how the various components of the polycrisis are interrelated. Instead, the aim was to better understand perceptions and experiences of the crisis at a local level by working with citizens of Hamburg. *MUVE* was interested in how multiple crises became tangible in people's everyday lives, and what strategies they developed to deal with them.

The project was designed as a series of workshops in the form of citizen science labs using collaborative methods such as world cafés, scenario thinking and visual analysis with people from three different neighbourhoods in Hamburg (Blankenese, Mitte, Wilhelmsburg). Participation mainly took place on the level of agenda setting and joint problem identification. Dialogue between participants and the project team, self-reflection and the exchange of experiences and perceptions were at the centre of the workshops. To ensure that participation was inviting and inclusive, the workshops took place in the local branches of the Hamburger Bücherhallen (Hamburg Public Libraries). Although the project did not aim to be representative, these neighbourhoods represent quite different socio-economic environments. The project attracted around 100 participants, some of whom attended several of the workshops, others only one. By focusing on individual perceptions of multiple crises, the project was at times confronted with conspiracy theories, for example, about

responses to the pandemic or the neutrality of public media. At the same time, the project demonstrated that people were motivated and interested in participatory exchanges with academics to discuss the conditions of their everyday lives and how to improve conditions in their neighbourhoods.

Figure 5: Science Café at the Blankenese Branch of the Hamburg Public Libraries, May 2023

Image: ©IFSH

The workshops were organised around several key themes reflecting experiences of the polycrisis: narratives, images, objects and temporalities. For example, participants were asked to bring objects that they felt represented their personal situation during the polycrisis. Artefacts such as a roll of toilet paper or a mobile phone were used to illustrate the experience of running out of basic necessities or the loneliness that many participants associated with the global pandemic. In some workshops, participants were also confronted with a selection of images representing crises to discuss why and which of these images participants considered appropriate visualisations of crises, and how their perceptions overlapped and differed from crisis visualisations in the

media. In other workshops, participants used participatory storytelling to reflect on their experiences of the polycrisis and how they associated emotions such as despair or confidence with particular situations of experiencing crises, such as the climate protests or the housing crisis in Hamburg.

In addition, workshops aimed to develop visions for the future in times of increasingly complex crises. Considering the pervasiveness of crises, these workshops asked how people in Hamburg envisioned their future lives. The project used the method of "backcasting": a retrospective view from the future enabled a better understanding of how today's strategies for coping with crises should be tailored. Workshop participants, for example, discussed both utopian and dystopian scenarios for the neighbourhood of Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg in 2040 to identify pathways for transformative change in the present.

Figure 6: Science Café at the Mitte Branch of the Hamburg Public Libraries, April 2023

Image: ©IFSH

MUVE was designed to initiate a collaborative dialogue rather than to identify a toolkit for local crisis response. Nevertheless, the project did provide insights into what people considered to be important conditions for coping with future crises based on their experiences of the polycrisis. These findings included, first and foremost, an emphasis on the importance of local strategies and crisis

responses. Participants argued for strengthening local agency and increasing opportunities for participation in political processes at the local level. They also saw a need to better support civil society organisations and neighbourhood associations, which were often seen as better placed to provide immediate support to people in their communities in times of crisis. Participants also stressed that clear and engaged communication by state actors is essential to building trust among citizens. More generally, the project addressed the ambiguity of the role of the state and state actors in times of crisis and ways to enhance the agency of social actors and improve local and community relations.

MUVE led to the publication of a project brochure (Hentschel et al. 2023), which presented the project's objectives and methods, discussed the findings of the collaborative workshops and made recommendations for improving participatory approaches to local crisis response. An article by a colleague from the project partner Hamburger Bücherhallen discussed the role of libraries as a site for collaborative research projects (Instinske 2023).

4.3 DOING PEACE! TAKES RESEARCH AS INTERVENTION INTO THE WORLD

Doing peace! does not only imply a shift in perspective, it also requires adopting a novel research posture. Peace and security as embodied practices cannot be studied at a distance or in the abstract. It requires peace researchers to become embedded in and to engage closely with the communities or actor-networks in the analysed fields. Following Austin, Bellanova and Kaufmann (2019) we hold that critical peace and security research is a very practical activity – it is, indeed, "engagement all the way down" (Stengers quoted after de Goede 2020: 103). From critical making studies, we adopt the assumption that research is always an intervention into the subject under investigation. It can help to remake security programmes or rethink peacebuilding instruments to tailor them more to the needs of local populations. But it may also contribute to the proliferation of insecurities or reinforce the interests of ruling classes. Tantamount in participatory

research is thus reflexivity on both the premises of our research as well as the implications of it for the world outside. If our research subject cannot be identified by applying discrete categories of analysis and fixed concepts of the world, we constantly need to reflect on the process of doing research. This includes reflecting on how far our analyses are affected by our normativities, identities or socialisations. Such an understanding is by far a novel one, but has been a key part of critical peace research for many decades (Senghaas 1971: 19; Galtung 1985: 143). *Doing peace!* moves further by underlining not only the inevitability of this posture, but its productivity for the making of peaceful and secure social orders.

In the case of the *Peace Jam* project, researchers intervened directly in the world by co-developing prototypes. The resulting prototypes not only show the multiple meanings of peace and security that can emerge from a series of collaborative exchanges between peace researchers and gaming students. Rather, the act of making and prototyping itself was already a collaborative local practice that required, but also fostered, understanding and mutual exchange between those involved. As the co-development of computer games was largely based on the peace and security expertise of the researchers involved, the process allowed them to bring their particular concepts and meanings of peace and security to the table. Gaming is also a very direct intervention in people's everyday lives, as the use of these games confronts them with these very concepts of peace and security. Therefore, the example also illustrates the importance of reflecting on the underlying motivations and normativities of researchers. While the collaborative game jam at the center of *Peace Jam* is long over, the prototypes developed a life and temporality on their own. They still can be played long after the game jam and every new iteration of playing these games provides an opportunity to experience again the reproduction of multiple meanings of peace associated with these games. As this example shows, participatory research as an intervention has not just a one-off impact on the world, but an ongoing one, for example, when created prototypes circulate through schools and online spaces. Participatory work, hence, has a certain responsibility and requires an awareness of the implications of its actions. This includes, almost in a process similar to the immersion of ethnographic work, finding ways to avoid role and identity conflicts.

PEACE JAM – INTERACTIVE ILLUSTRATION & GAMES MEETS PEACE RESEARCH

Computer games have an immense appeal – more than half of all Germans play them. At their core lies the digital creation of innovative lives and imaginative creatures, new forms of social interaction and participation and previously unknown rules and norms. These elements are central to their role as engines of innovation, trailblazers and social catalysts. The project *Peace Jam – Interactive Illustration & Games Meets Peace Research* built on these premises of games and used them in a collaborative effort to explore how they can be used to capture and (re-)imagine specific notions of peace and (in)security. In games, new concepts for society and democracy, wars and frontlines, political alliances and the very foundations of international relations can be dismantled and reassembled. Their creative potential includes serious games and indie games, which serve as playful lessons in history and are increasingly being used in the prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE). At the same time, first-person shooter games – and more recently, right-wing terrorist attacks staged in a video game aesthetic – have raised troubling questions about the darker side of digital gaming culture. Peace and gaming, hence, may seem like unlikely partners, but new forms of collaboration and digital innovation may also reveal their immense potential to envision new ideas and question existing paths.

Peace Jam was an interdisciplinary project in which students of interactive illustration and games, political scientists and peace researchers collaborated to design new computer games based on their joint discussions of current issues of peace and security. The project was developed in cooperation with the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW) and the Millerntor Gallery.

Game jams are “alternative formats” and “dynamic and targeted events that encourage teamwork and interdisciplinary collaboration,” fostering creativity, mutual learning and the production of “playable research” (Cook et al. 2015: 1). While still very rare, some researchers have used game jams to co-create collective knowledge and develop game prototypes (Balli 2018; Cook et al. 2015).

First, game jams function as a participatory method of data collection, enabling individuals to contribute their ideas and perspectives. Second, they facilitate communication and learning, promoting the exchange of information and creative problem-solving. Game design is a highly collaborative and imaginative process, providing a safe space to experiment with concepts relevant to society and democracy. By initiating this game jam, we aimed to break down barriers by working together creatively with different groups, challenging stereotypes, encouraging inclusivity and diversity, and engaging in discussions about the challenges of democracy. The game development process facilitated a multidirectional learning and exchange process, as researchers learned about game design from scratch. In line with the innovative and experimental nature of the project, *Peace Jam* was designed to initiate a collaborative dialogue between peace researchers and game design students.

Figure 7: IFSH Researcher Debating with Students during Game Jam, February 2023

Image: ©IFSH/Timo Knorr

The starting point for the project was the assumption that thematic exchange between scientists and students in small groups – and their joint discussion of peace policy issues – could co-produce knowledge for the conception of games. Ideas for design, themes and avatars were collected and then implemented by researchers, students and programmers during the workshop.

In a two-day workshop (Game Jam), IFSH researchers met with students and researchers from HAW and representatives of the Hamburg-based social non-profit organisation Viva con Agua to translate ideas and themes from peace research into creative computer games. The event kicked off with presentations on the thematic diversity of games on war and peace, as well as in-depth insights into how right-wing extremists use gaming platforms and instrumentalise gaming communities. IFSH researchers then gave short presentations on the topics of political polarisation, constructive conflict management, online extremism, perspectives and framing in times of war. In small groups with a total of 26 students, the researchers discussed their topics further and developed ideas for computer games in a first joint brainstorming session, in which everything revolves around turning opponents into allies and achieving a common goal through mutual assistance. At the end of the Game Jam, the small groups presented their game prototypes. The development of the small groups was continuously documented photographically in order to create portraits of the groups and their games. In the following weeks, the game prototypes were developed into playable computer games.

Figure 8: Student Groups Presenting Game Prototypes, HAW Hamburg, February 2023

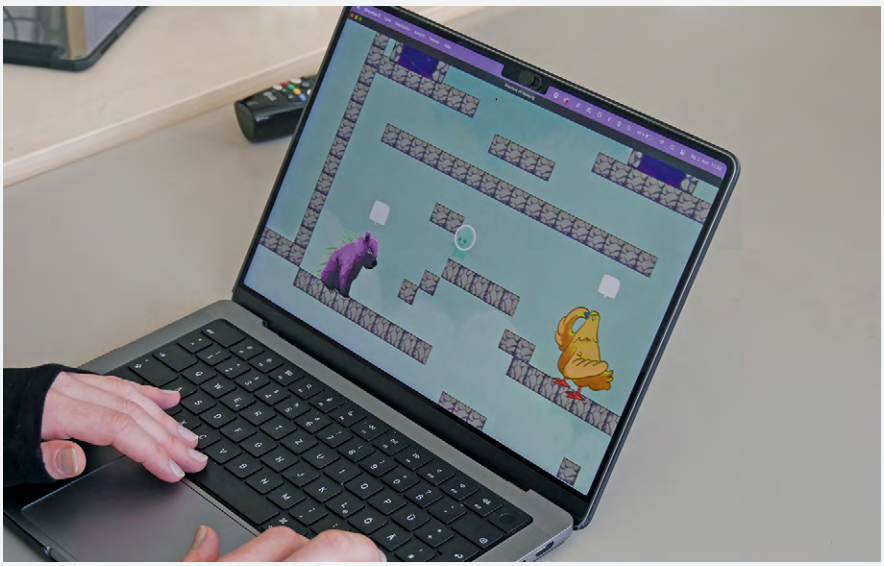


Image: ©IFSH/Timo Knorr

The final products were six playable computer games, each subtly reflecting aspects of political and social problems and conflict resolution strategies. For instance, in the platformer Shards, players explore a strange, machine-like world inhabited by mysterious creatures. While some of these beings appear hostile, taking the time to help them unlocks crucial clues and reveals deeper layers of the world's mystery. The game prototype aims to encourage non-violent solutions by blending classic 2D platforming with puzzle and riddle elements.

Another game, the 3D exploration game Rabbit Hole, inspired by Alice in Wonderland, casts players as Alice, a British schoolgirl. After a backstage commotion during a school play, she follows a mysterious figure in a rabbit mask into a surreal mirror world. As Alice delves deeper into this distorted environment – reflecting the polarised, rumour-driven reality of her school – players uncover the roots of conflict among the students. The game uses the absurd logic of the Alice novels as a metaphor for a worldview turned upside down by unfounded claims. In Weakbeak, a pigeon named Weakbeak is destined to bring peace and banish hatred from the world. Despite his limited abilities on the ground, he fearlessly faces growing threats, never losing sight of his mission. The game loosely explores how the idea of peace can be coopted or manipulated for personal or even harmful purposes.

The *Peace Jam* project also had a significant public impact. Hamburg residents had the opportunity to discover the games – and with them, the collaborative project and the research institute – in an entirely new context. Local NDR television reported on the project, concluding: "The shared message from game developers and peace researchers comes across with charm and a touch of subtlety – not as a moralising lecture. Perhaps this marks the beginning of a new trend."

The finished games were presented at an international art, music and culture festival, the Millerntor Gallery, at the FC Sankt Pauli football stadium. Visitors to the festival were able to play the finished games on site from 13 to 16 July 2023.

Figure 9: Presentation of Games at Millerntor Galery, July 2023

Image: ©IFSH

In short, *doing peace!* is a research posture that requires both engagement as well as self-reflexivity. We have operationalised this posture through the adoption of various participatory methods in the projects described in this chapter. These participatory approaches, we argue, enable us to develop both a richer understanding of peace (and its limits) as well as a more nuanced and informed form of critique. At the same time, they also pose questions regarding research practices, ethics and ultimately the role of reflexivity in doing participatory research that we will discuss in the following section.

5 Ethical and Practical Challenges of Doing Peace!

What can we learn from our experience of participatory research on peace and security? In this section, we argue that our *doing peace!* framework provides us with a number of insights into the ethical and practical challenges of doing participatory research. The section begins by discussing these challenges before concluding with more general insights into the ethical implications of participatory research on peace and security.

A first and noticeable challenge in several of our projects was attracting participants. As is often the case with participatory research (Burns, Howard and Ospina 2021: 25), finding co-researchers from the general public or specialised communities was crucial to the successful implementation of our projects. Especially projects like *MUVE*, *SECIMA* and *Doing Peace! Among and with Refugees*, which started with open calls for participation, required considerable effort to get people on board. A key learning from these projects was that there are fundamental differences in the motivations for taking part in such research. Researchers have a vested interest in the success of their projects and are also interested in attracting enough participants because the success of their projects depends on it. Participants do not necessarily share the researchers' vision of the project's success. Participants in our projects had much more diffuse motivations for taking part, ranging from curiosity to gain insight into research processes to the desire to learn about topics that were of direct relevance to them. Of importance for many was that their perspectives were to be included. For example, in the case of *Spaces of Peace*, several participants from the Russian diaspora expressed the desire to counteract the public image of their communities in Germany through their involvement in the project. In some projects, however, there were those who had no interest in participating at all, which in the case of *MUVE* went so far as to have passers-by actively shouting that they did not want to be approached by researchers (Hentschel et al. 2023: 25). Furthermore, those who joined us as co-researchers, sometimes found it difficult to contribute because earning a living, care work duties or other commitments made it impossible for them to devote time for research. Some projects, like *Spaces of Peace*, found a way to at least partly compensate for this by paying collaborators honoraria for their engagement.

And even though all projects were ultimately able to recruit sufficient co-researchers, the specific composition and lack of diversity of these groups remained an issue. This was particularly important for *MUVE*, which sought to attract participants who were directly affected by the polycrisis in their everyday lives. To increase the diversity of these citizens, we collaborated with public libraries in different city districts – from very wealthy, privileged neighbourhoods to socially disadvantaged areas. In the *SECIMA* project, we used an online form that allowed interested activists to apply anonymously and explain their motivation and background. This enabled us to achieve a certain degree of diversity in terms of gender and age. Nevertheless, in both projects, the groups remained rather uniform, consisting mainly of academically educated, politically interested, white, middle-class members (except for one city district involved in *MUVE*, where participants' backgrounds were more diverse). In other projects, including Space for Peace, the groups of participants were more heterogeneous, reflecting the broader diversity of the Russian and Ukrainian diasporas in Germany. In all contexts, the variety of perspectives participants brought to the discussions proved to be an important and valuable contribution. Applying implicitly preconceived notions of diversity to such projects proved not only an unnecessary concern but was challenged by the participants' interventions.

A second challenge identified by the projects relates to the different roles of researchers and other participants in transdisciplinary research. Again, our projects confirmed known findings from the existing literature on the conduct of participatory research, highlighting the challenges of roles and boundaries in a collaborative research design (Defila and Di Giulio 2019: 99). At the heart of participatory research lies a contradiction: On the one hand, this form of research is usually initiated by researchers motivated by a particular scientific interest. On the other hand, the actions of participatory research are based on the premise that non-scientific knowledge and expertise are equivalent to their academic counterparts. In the practical implementation of our project, this created a tension that affected not only the perception of the different roles of the actors involved but also the way the research was conducted. This was most visible in the *MUVE* project, which demonstrated the difficulties of all actors involved to overcome the structural differences between participants and researchers, as most of the workshops involved university professors. Some of the workshops were intentionally designed to centre their expertise, while others weren't, and yet participants expressed a strong interest in hearing the professors' assessments in a variety of formats, actively seeking out their perspectives. Overcom-

ing binaries such as ‘experts’ and ‘non-academics’ has been a challenge in several of our projects.

Despite all the talk of collaboration, transdisciplinary projects are characterised by power hierarchies and potential role conflicts (Fritz and Binder 2020). These must always be reflected upon and considered in the project design. Clear ethical guidelines and principles (e.g. do no harm) are important here (see further below). Equally important are measures to reconcile and align different ideas, knowledge bases and interests of all involved participants. In the *SECIMA* project, a complete two-day workshop was dedicated to this goal. It began with an explanation of the project's basic research assumptions and objectives, followed by a joint discussion of the practice-oriented objectives from an activist perspective. These included, for example, gaining a better understanding of the effectiveness of certain visual representations of climate change in campaigns. In the following research phases, we took care to give equal weight to these competing project objectives. Flexibility in research design also proved key in the *Spaces of Peace* project. In an exploratory phase, the initial research questions were iteratively refined in several feedback loops involving focus groups with members of the Ukrainian and Russian diasporas and discussions within the steering group.

Another measure that has proven effective in bridging the gap between researchers and participants is the involvement of key agents who acted as intermediaries, for example, because they were particularly committed to the project’s themes. A good example is the Space of Peace project, in which this role of mediator was taken on by members of the Russian and Ukrainian diaspora who themselves had a scientific background. In the project *Doing Peace! Among and with Refugees*, this function was taken over by refugee organisations, in some of which the researchers themselves were actively involved. The example demonstrated that key agents are also crucial for establishing relationships between researchers and participants, building trust and providing the necessary informal contacts with communities.

In the best case, the blurring of boundaries between researchers and participants can be empowering. In the *Peace Jam* project, for example, the participating gaming students were not simply the ones who translated the ideas of the involved peace researchers into game designs. *Unlock Europe* provided teenagers with an opportunity to actively contribute to the development of a game addressing their peers. These students actively used their agency as game

experts in the room to facilitate their ideas about how the games should be designed. At the same time, as much as participatory research seeks to empower participants, it also runs the risk of becoming an obstacle to successful project facilitation. For example, individuals who hijack workshops, either by dominating discussions or by trying to push through particular agendas, can not only become difficult to manage but can also affect project outcomes. Ultimately, this also points to the fact that power imbalances in participatory research can never be fully overcome. Academics in such projects have different backgrounds and skills than young activists, refugees or single parents, and issues such as income, language barriers and time availability have certainly affected who participates in our projects and how.

Third, our projects have highlighted some very practical challenges in implementing participatory research. The latter is a time-consuming approach that often requires unusually high levels of effort and resources. This holds for the setup of the project group and the recruitment of collaborating citizens. Projects like *MUVE*, *SECIMA and* the *Spaces of Peace* project used promotional flyers, websites, telegram chats or public advertisements in the local news to attract the attention of interested participants. Our projects also faced simple logistical challenges. It furthermore involves maintaining contact, for example by socialising with the groups and individuals both inside and outside of work (hours) and remaining visible in the participating communities – be it local climate activists, diaspora groups or communities of refugees. In addition, finding meeting places that were affordable and easily accessible was sometimes difficult. The *MUVE* project, for example, deliberately chose to work with the Hamburger Bücherhallen (Hamburg Public Libraries), organising its workshops in their local branches to make them accessible. An important part of the *SECIMA* project was a public exhibition, which meant finding a suitable exhibition space and promoting the exhibition accordingly. Working with established local actors, such as the Millerntor Gallery in the case of *Peace Jam*, helped overcome at least some of these practical challenges. More generally, timing was an important feature of all projects, as building trust between participants, organising suitable venues, but also ensuring that participants could find the time to attend project meetings, demonstrated to researchers the need to plan with sufficient time.

Our projects also demonstrated the need to adopt a flexible and resilient attitude when conducting participatory research. In several cases, projects had to adjust their objectives or methods to participants' preferences. Anticipated

project objectives also had to be adapted because, in some cases, participants performed their tasks differently or with less commitment than the researchers had originally anticipated. As we learned from the *Unlock Europe* project, young people see peace and security issues as crucial to their future (Rieth et al. 2024). However, working with young people meant that we had to adapt our formats to their preferred way of engaging, including the pace of in-depth discussions. In some of our projects, certain methods also proved to be much more effective than others. In the *MUVE* project, for example, scenario thinking was not part of the original project outline but proved to be a very useful method as participants found it both understandable and insightful. In the *SECIMA* project, we deliberately kept the research questions open and used the kick-off workshop to collectively refine and revise them to address the special interests of the activists. For example, many involved activists were particularly interested in the visualisation of various forms of violence, which we adopted as a distinct theme in the analysis phase. Flexibility, both in terms of project objectives and methods, was therefore essential in our projects.

Fourth and finally, our *doing peace!* projects have also highlighted some challenges that are more specific to the field of peace and security. Peace and security are often described as essentially contested concepts (Jutila, Pehkonen and Väyrynen 2008). The ambiguity of these key terms in our research programme was also evident in our projects. Not only did the projects vary in their approaches to peace and security, ranging from those focusing on societal peace *(Spaces of Peace* and *Doing Peace! Among and with Refugees)* to everyday security *(MUVE)* and planetary perspectives *(SECIMA)*. The projects themselves were also driven by competing understandings of peace and security. Participants in *MUVE*, for example, tended to be agnostic as to whether discussions focused on peace or security, while the *Spaces of Peace* and *Doing Peace! Among and with Refugees* projects were shaped by diverse understandings of peace. These understandings revealed not only differences in the underlying concepts, e.g. a more positive or negative concept of peace. They also revealed quite different levels of scale. In the *MUVE* project, for example, participants oscillated between concepts of security that ranged from the level of their immediate everyday lives and how this was affected by crises, to issues of global security and how the climate catastrophe or the growing polarisation of world politics related to the polycrisis.

Participatory research on peace and security also faces certain challenges since projects in these fields often deal with sensitive issues. While the existing literature often discusses how, for example, issues of secrecy or denied access to security complexes pose challenges to research (Aradau et al. 2015), our *doing peace!* projects were particularly affected by the fact that several of these projects involved the participation of vulnerable people, whose emotional and psychological well-being was a particular concern during these projects. The *Spaces of Peace* project, for example, aims to create spaces for interaction between members of the Russian and Ukrainian diasporas in Germany. It therefore must address not only issues of vulnerability, but also the potential for re-enactment of feelings and positions of division. The *MUVE* project has also been occasionally confronted with conspiracies or racist assertions, underlining the need to create safe spaces for participants, especially when vulnerable groups are involved.

What implications do our *doing peace!* projects have for the practical and ethical challenges of participatory research on peace and security? In the next three sections, we briefly discuss the implications that we have identified as relevant to setting up participatory research projects on peace and security.

5.1 THE NORMATIVE COMMITMENT OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

Participatory research is grounded in the principle of mutual learning and collaboration between researchers and stakeholders. Collaborative research creates opportunities to generate knowledge that is richer, more contextually grounded, and often inaccessible through conventional methods – drawing on lived experience, local insight and diverse forms of expertise. At the same time, the research process is designed to be meaningful and empowering for those involved, aiming to support community priorities, inform policy and contribute to positive social change. This reciprocal approach values all participants as co-creators of knowledge and change. However, it can be overwhelming for researchers to deliver on the promises resulting from a serious commitment to these normative ambitions. As we have discussed in the previous section, participatory research is fraught with expectations from participants, unclear roles and high demands on time and resources, which can pose ethical and prac-

tical challenges to participatory research. Participating citizens or stakeholders not only pursue their own goals that can be different from the research aims, but they might also sometimes take positions or voice opinions that are antithetical to the normative goals of the research project. However, responding to these ethical challenges by developing project designs that are only half-heartedly committed to the normative ambition of participatory research does not seem very effective. It actually would run the risk of having the opposite effect.

A first implication for participatory research is hence to take seriously the normative commitment of participatory research. In line with our understanding of peace and security as a practice, and of research as intervention (see section four), we argue that participation requires 'staying with the trouble' (Bellanova, Jacobsen and Monsees 2020). Staying with the trouble means remaining attentive to localised realities that might be much messier and complex than envisaged. It means being open to surprises and failures. It implies approaching those involved without prior judgement (de Goede 2020). It does not mean, however, that every normative position encountered must be treated equally – in other words, it is about promoting epistemic tolerance rather than normative relativism. Failing to do so would not only be a missed opportunity in terms of the social impact of research, but more importantly, it would be an injustice to the commitment that participants bring to the collaboration. We found that they were often very motivated and eager to work together. They brought with them certain expectations that were challenging at times, but their commitment also demonstrated their belief that this kind of research could make a difference to them. Given the contested nature of peace and security, it seems important for participatory research in these areas to actively address the underlying normative commitment of participatory research, rather than trying to tone it down.

5.2 A RELATIONAL APPROACH TO MINIMISING HARM

Due to its normative ambitions, participatory research is particularly vulnerable to unintended consequences. As an intervention into localised practices (see section 4), such approaches must ensure that their impact does not disadvantage involved participants or other affected people. A second implication is therefore to place the principle of "do no harm" at the heart of any participatory research design. On the one hand, this plea follows an ethical principle that has

a long tradition in research on peace and security that directly involves people, from qualitative interviews to ethnographic fieldwork (Bliesemann de Guevara and Boas 2020; Brewer 2016). On the other hand, as our *doing peace!* projects have shown, the principle of "do no harm" becomes both more urgent and more difficult in participatory research. This is particularly true when vulnerable groups are involved, as our *Spaces of Peace* and *Doing Peace! Among and with Refugees* projects demonstrate, but also *Unlock Europe*, which involved working with minors. It seems only logical to design research projects to minimise the risk of harm or trauma to participants, and a growing body of formal regulations aims to ensure the implementation of this principle in research practice. At the same time, participatory research, especially in the field of peace and security, often tests the boundaries of ethical principles. Instruments such as informed consent or anonymity of participants are often of limited value because such research often takes place in situations where participants cannot make informed choices, or their anonymity contradicts the principle of co-creation of research results (Bussu et al. 2021). Research findings may be contested by participants as they may not accurately reflect their perceptions of these findings. It is also sometimes difficult to identify who may be at risk, especially when long-term and societal effects are also considered. Therefore, there is no alternative to following the principle of trying to minimise risk for the participants involved. Researchers have identified different ways of doing so, based on a relational understanding of risks and ethical requirements (Bussu et al. 2021; Hugman et al. 2011). This research confirms not only that the principle of "do no harm" should be central to participatory research, but also that participatory research on peace and security cannot simply apply supposedly universal principles and ethical rules. Instead, it requires a context-sensitive, adaptive and relational way of minimising harm based on the specific circumstances of each project.

5.3 THE NEED FOR CRITICAL SELF-REFLEXIVITY

Ensuring that ethical challenges are properly addressed requires reflexivity about contexts, circumstances, research goals, personal and social relationships, etc. A third implication, therefore, is that participatory research builds upon practices of critical self-reflexivity. As von Unger (2021: 186) argues, "ethical reflexivity involves considering the social and political implications of research, avoiding harm and ensuring the rights of participants while striving

for accountability in the pursuit of scientific goals". This is an ethical implication because of the aforementioned normative impetus of participatory research. As a form of doing and making (see section 4), it values the involvement of participants differently from, for example, traditional qualitative research methods, which often take a parasitic, extractive position to harness knowledge from interlocutors (cf. Austin 2019). Questions about the context and social conditions of research are, therefore, particularly relevant here. This refers first and foremost to issues of power (Burns et al. 2021: 20). As we have discussed in the presentation of our *doing peace!* projects, the most obvious aspect here is asymmetries in privilege between researchers and participants, especially when vulnerable or marginalised groups are involved. Issues such as unclear boundaries and roles, the difficulties of bridging the gap between academic and practical expertise, or issues of gender, age and other socio-economic factors, require a critical and reflexive approach that is sensitive to intersectional vulnerabilities and formal and informal power constellations. At the same time, critical self-reflexivity also means taking seriously the fact that participatory research has an empowering dimension and being open to very different forms and modes of power in the collaborative research process (Fritz and Binder 2020: 2).

We therefore consider this last implication to be particularly relevant for researchers, but also for participants. In particular, if the project sees the collaboration as one of equal partners, ideally, participants will also reflect on their role and position in the research process. In the best case, such reflections are built into the research process as a joint enterprise of all actors involved. Our *doing peace!* projects have also demonstrated a well-known finding from the existing literature: participatory research requires flexibility, as it constantly needs to adapt to changing circumstances. This again emphasises the need for critical self-reflexivity, which provides a way of reconsidering and contextualising decisions about research design or the research process in a way that adequately addresses the ethical and practical challenges at stake. Ideally, such a critical self-reflexive approach leads to transparency and accountability on the part of researchers, providing the basis for an ethic of care and ultimately a relationship based on mutual respect as a driver of participatory research (see also Bussu et al. 2021; von Unger 2021).

6 Conclusion

In this report, we outlined a new framework to study peace and security in times of multiple crises as well as deep political and societal challenges by drawing on methods and approaches of participatory and transdisciplinary research that have risen in prominence in many fields but remain scarcely used in peace and security research. Peace research has a long tradition of analysing the 'everyday' and 'local' dimensions of peace and conflict beyond structural conditions and geopolitical shifts as well as of tackling intricate normative issues and practical problems, engaging with diverse audiences and practising methodological pluralism. Based on this, parts of the field also have experience with participatory and transdisciplinary approaches, for instance in education and conflict transformation. However, the utilisation of such approaches remains limited, and there is no larger debate about their potential and challenges for the field.

We, therefore, suggested that peace research could benefit from an exchange with recent debates in security research that draw on insights from science and technology studies, political geography, sociology and related fields. This research particularly elucidates everyday and vernacular forms and understandings of security and engages with the analyses and critique of practices of "making" and "doing" security. We at IFSH used these approaches to start a series of projects under the label *doing peace!* that experimented with different participatory and transdisciplinary methods of research and exchange. They were oriented towards three main themes: they analysed the mundane practices of peace and security in collaboration with those directly affected by them, for example, regarding (in)security imaginaries of climate activists. They focused on peace and security in their local and everyday settings, including in European contexts beyond areas of imminent violent conflict, for instance, through exchanges about crisis experiences and visions for the future in selected Hamburg neighbourhoods. And they furthered more direct forms of intervention in real-world social settings and engagement with societal actors, for example, in a project co-developing prototypes of computer games on peace and security.

Our projects confirmed the potential of participatory and transdisciplinary research for the study of peace and security in times of multiple crises. Yet, they also revealed several practical and ethical challenges, some of which are known from other areas and some of which are more specific to the studied field. Attracting interested participants who are able and willing to engage in

the often time-consuming research can be very difficult, and some people were even directly hostile towards research and researchers in general. Ensuring a diverse composition of the groups was especially challenging. In addition, power hierarchies and role conflicts between researchers and non-academic participants often proved to be very resilient and hard to overcome. The sensitive and contentious nature of many of the included topics required particular care and caution. However, the project teams also used several measures and tools that were quite helpful in navigating and alleviating some of these problems. This included, amongst other things, working with mediators and intermediaries from participating communities, collaborating with established actors in the field that can provide access or safe meeting spaces and adopting flexible and open approaches that are constantly adapted to the needs of participants and contexts. In a dynamic and contentious field like peace and security, participatory research requires a commitment and openness that takes seriously the normativity of this approach, close attention to unintended consequences and potential harms, as well as critical self-reflexivity regarding design and methods.

When these implications are considered, participatory and transdisciplinary methods have great potential to enrich the study of peace and security, especially in times of severe and interconnected crises. Such complex and fundamental problems like climate change, pandemics, digital transformation or the rise of new authoritarianism affect nearly every aspect of society, while their implications for individuals can differ significantly and are subject to contentious interpretations. In this environment, traditional research focusing on structural conditions, general patterns and direct effects reaches its limits, and established boundaries between academic research and lay knowledge are challenged. Participatory and transdisciplinary methods speak directly to the need for innovative and experimental ways of engagement beyond existing trajectories in such a condition and can contribute to the search for transformative paths of development that not only acknowledge but directly include the needs and perspectives of those experiencing and navigating the current multiple crises in their everyday lives and local communities.

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