

Introductory Essay

Title: Theorising Youth and Everyday Peace(building)

Authors: Helen Berents¹ and Siobhan McEvoy-Levy²

Helen Berents
School of Justice,
Queensland University of Technology
PO Box 2434
Brisbane, QLD, Australia 4001
+61 07 31387116
helen.berents@qut.edu.au

Siobhan McEvoy-Levy
Department of Political Science
Butler University
4600 Sunset Avenue
Indianapolis, Indiana, 46240, USA
+317-940-9465
smcevoy@butler.edu

¹ Corresponding author: helen.berents@qut.edu.au. Helen Berents (PhD, University of Queensland) is a lecturer in the School of Justice at the Queensland University of Technology. Her research examines questions of forced migration, peace and protracted conflicts, the politics of childhood and youthhood, and feminist discourses of marginalization.

² Corresponding author: smcevoy@butler.edu. Siobhan McEvoy-Levy (Ph.D., University of Cambridge) is Professor of Political Science, and Chair of Department, at Butler University in Indianapolis, Indiana. McEvoy-Levy’s research focuses on young people's narratives in contexts of political violence, peacebuilding, transitional justice and reconciliation.
Abstract: The introductory essay presents a locally-grounded theoretical framework for studying youth and everyday peace (building). Drawing on examples from fieldwork as well as insights from the articles to follow in the journal, the essay highlights three interrelated and overlapping spheres of inquiry. First, it makes the case for examining the age-specific as well as gender-, and other contextually-specific roles of youth as they relate to everyday peacebuilding. Second, the essay draws attention to how everyday peace is narrated by or through youth. It poses questions about what values, policies, and governmental structures are specifically being resisted and rejected, and how peace is conceptualized and/or hidden in the narratives of youth. Third, along with these concerns, the nexus of global and local (including discursive and institutional) structures that facilitate, curtail, and curtail everyday peace (building) practices are important to identify and evaluate for their impacts on the roles and ideas of youth. In proposing this theoretical framework that recognises the complex and multiple ways youth are engaged in their everyday worlds this essay asks how we can engage this recognition within knowledges and practices of everyday peace(building).

Keywords: young people, youth, everyday peace, liberal peace, peacebuilding
Introduction

While peacebuilding is supposed to heal the social wounds of war, fix the systems that create destructive conflict, and keep people safe, critical studies have exposed the limitations of statist, liberal peacebuilding projects in this regard. Despite this increased critical attention, youth voices and experiences are still far from integrated or understood in critical security or other scholarly deliberations about peace praxis. In response to this absence, this special issue brings together established and early career scholars whose empirical research on children and youth contributes to more grounded and inclusive theorisations of and engagements with peacebuilding. Recent critical international relations (IR) literature theorises the child as an actor in international political economy and international security and recognises the ‘everyday’ and ‘the local’ as important spaces of war/peace politics, knowledge-production, and potential emancipation. The special issue further demonstrates the importance of the ‘everyday’ and the ‘local’ in international relations. It builds on this work by offering both theoretical insights and empirical findings for improving both the practice and policies of peacebuilding.

This introductory essay presents a local, grounded theoretical framework for studying youth and everyday peacebuilding. In doing this, we recognise the complex and diverse ways in which young people are engaged in their everyday worlds, how their existence in processes of post-conflict and peacebuilding practices are multi-faceted and

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how their symbolic construction influences the ways in which they are read by other young people, adults, and the structures within which they exist. We ask how we can engage this recognition within knowledges and practices of everyday peacebuilding?

Recent years have seen increasing attention placed on the ‘everyday’ as a site for peacebuilding and resistance. A focus on the everyday can recognise those who the liberal peace often overlooks. De Certeau argues that everyday life responds to structural attempts to organise life, re-appropriating these spaces. For de Certeau this practice is a ‘surreptitious reorganisation of power’5. This reorganisation is not unconscious, but rather a knowing engagement with community, with daily experiences, and the maintenance of and attention to relationships within these spaces. A focus on the everyday practices of peacebuilding allows exploration of how the individual is able to ‘negotiate around violence, structural and overt, around material issues, or indeed deploys or co-opts these’6. The space of the everyday is thus a political space, where those who are most marginal and written out of formal political discourses, find collective meaning and organise in response to conflict, violence, and exclusion.

**Roles and Contexts: finding youth in everyday peacebuilding**

Actions towards building peace in the everyday are fundamentally defined by the space they operate in and by who is acting. In situations of insecurity, violence, and conflict it is people within everyday structures who mobilise and act to minimise risk, to foster relationships and to build structures and practices of peace. Yet often these people

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6 Oliver Richmond, ‘Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism: Liberal-Local Hybridity via the Everyday as a Response to the Paradoxes of Liberal Peacebuilding’, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* (2009) 3: 331
confound notions of ‘best-suited’ citizens and are overlooked in discussions of building peace.

Consideration of the gendered dimensions of peacebuilding and the spaces created and supported by women in conflict and post conflict environments highlights the possibilities of conceiving of meaningful practices of peacebuilding at everyday levels. We understand peacebuilding as not only being gendered, but also as being youth-ed, or socially-constructed around age divisions and age-based vested interests and ideologies (such as adultism and securitization of youth). ‘Age categories are not natural’, as Alcinda Honwana notes, ‘they constitute cultural systems with particular sets of meanings and values. Age categories are embedded in personal relationships, social practices, politics, laws, and public policies’. Recognising that age categories are manipulations and a function of power relations, the papers in this special issue illuminate how, in different ways, age categories, interests, and narratives are embedded in and (re)constitute the politics, practices, and policies of peacebuilding

Considering the youth-ed dimensions of peacebuilding and the political spaces created and negotiated by young men and women in conflict and post-conflict settings, we note the survival strategies of actual young men and women. These survival strategies are also often political actions engaged in conflict transformation processes. For young people, everyday life in many cases is a constant negotiation with, and sometimes transgression of, expected norms; whether that is because they took up arms in the

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7 see for example: Laura Sjoberg, *Gender, War and Conflict* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014).
8 Adultism is defined by Barry Checkoway as ‘all the behaviors and attitudes that flow from the assumption that adults are better than young people, and are entitled to act upon young people in many ways without their agreement’ (*Adults as Allies*, (Battle Creek, MI: Kellogg Foundation 1996), 13).
conflict, or they are living with inadequate food and shelter, or are unable to access education, or are carers for other siblings or family, for example. We can trace their involvement in daily efforts to seek basic needs, to advocate for their rights, and to care for their families and communities. We can also identify and problematise the social conditions within which young people appear to be ‘stuck’ and ‘disappointed’ as spaces within which everyday peace is also possible as shown when youth reassert their own rights and voices in various ways despite being marginalized. The concept of ‘waithood’ which Honwana defines as an ‘involuntary […] suspension between childhood and adulthood’\(^\text{10}\) captures an important dimension of the experience of many contemporary youth. Young people’s developmental trajectories were once ‘normatively defined and institutionally structured’\(^\text{11}\). Now, these transitions are protracted for middle class youth, while working class and poor youth’s transitions to the social norms of adulthood are increasingly stalled due to the effects of neoliberal economic policies, their States’ political corruption and inadequate education. These forces, though affecting large numbers in certain regions of the global south, also affect some youth in all countries. Using a broad brush, Honwana argues that conventional forms of adulthood are being replaced with a ‘global waithood generation’\(^\text{12}\). This experience of stuckness in structural violence, along with experience of war and post-conflict, generates political meaning and actions.

Creative practices of resilience such as collective defense through night commuting in Uganda\(^\text{13}\), and livelihood-making in informal economies, such cross-

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\(^{10}\) Ibid., 4.
\(^{11}\) Ibid., 31.
\(^{12}\) Ibid., 6.
\(^{13}\) Azar Eskandarpour, ‘The resilience of children and youth during conflict and its contribution to post-
border trading in Mozambique\textsuperscript{14}, are creating new dimensions and spaces, of everyday resistance and survival. Helen Berents’ paper in this issue shows that ordinary young people in Colombia create everyday peace within war and structural violence. These examples may not offer a Galtungian vision of positive peace, but they present tactics, strategies, and values of peace in action: they entail efforts to foster humane relationships, bridge differences, and counter structural violence, thought not through intentional/formal dialogue or development projects. These practices, at an everyday level, complicate the picture of notions of peace, and strengthen the case for considering the contextually-specific roles of youth in peacebuilding efforts.

Youth practices of everyday peace do not, however, remain solely in the so-called ‘private’ realm. Rather, we see young people mobilising through large-scale social movements and in doing so claiming public, political space in the discourse. From the Arab Spring protests, to global Occupy protests, young people joined others and were often leaders in responding to injustice. In conflict-affected countries, youth also join large-scale mobilisations. For example, the One Million Voices Against FARC (Un millón de voces contra las FARC) marches that took place in Colombia in 2008 were largely orchestrated by youth. Youth practices of everyday peace also collapse the public/private divide. For example, the everyday travel of young Palestinians, who conceptualize their persistence in crossing checkpoints to attend college, or in just practicing a musical instrument at home, as resistance to Occupation further show how

\textsuperscript{14} Honwana, \textit{The Time of Youth}

everyday life is reconfigured as space of political/personal resilience. While a politics of promise can be identified in the narratives of young Palestinians and Israelis experiencing ongoing conflict, the post-conflict period for Serbian youth is filled with a ‘politics of disappointment’: ‘the dual tensions of being disappointed and disappointing to others’. The politics of promise in the Israeli-Palestinian context is a mode of everyday peace (entailing resistance, resilience, and hope) and at the same time a mode of justifying intransigence and conflict reproduction. In Serbia, the ‘politics of disappointment’, Greenberg argues, is a politically-potent combination of cynicism and hope, prompting student activism as a ‘survival strategy’ and creating new forms of democratic agency. As all of this indicates, political activism can be a survival strategy, and creative livelihood-making in informal economies, as well as participation in research studies, can also be understood as political activism. However, we also suggest it is important not only to see resistance and resilience in such cases but also to further explore the new forms of peaceful participation beyond resistance that are being evoked and performed.

In the process of being interviewed for a scholarly research project, young people in Belfast and Israeli and Palestinian youth, attempted to asserted control over the narrative they wanted retold, they can be understood as adopting the roles of ‘organic intellectuals’, diplomats and negotiators. For example, Greenberg’s study of Serbian youth describes an interviewee as a self-aware ‘voice travelling from the periphery to an

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17 Ibid., 35
imagined global audience”\textsuperscript{19}. These conscious engagements by those being studied are attempts at ‘surreptitious reorganization of power’\textsuperscript{20}. Nevertheless, while youth activists around the world are speaking out in these different ways, their roles are rarely independent of mediation by others. We remain keenly aware of our privileged positions in this regard as we seek, with this issue, to push the discussion of young people’s political agency more thoroughly into the ambit of critical peace and conflict studies concerns.

\textbf{Narratives and Ideologies: The webs of ideas, assumptions and stories that frame, represent, and ‘discover’ everyday peacebuilding.}

Conflicts are reproduced through stories but the roles of youth in thinking through, and knowledgeably observing and speaking up about peace is under-appreciated. We propose examining how everyday peace is narrated including how the ideological content of youth practices of resistance, rebellion, and socio-political invention respond to the liberal peace. In the interventions of hip hop, for example, what values, policies, and governmental structures are specifically being resisted and rejected? How is peace conceptualized and/or hidden in the narratives of youth that young people both create (thought art, music etc) and embrace (in popular culture)? Youth agency for peace is not in need of ‘discovery.’ But further attention to the intentional roles of youth as knowledge producers and organic diplomats will weaken the barriers to youth being seen as already engaged in cultural, political and ideological interventions. We also see the

\textsuperscript{19} Greenberg, \textit{After the Revolution}, 17.
\textsuperscript{20} De Certeau, \textit{The Practice of Everyday Life}, 14.
need for more engagement with how youth recognize, engage with, and modify key concepts of orthodox and emancipatory peacebuilding, making them their own.

Young people’s contributions are perennially overlooked or viewed with suspicion within the structures, actors and processes of the liberal peace. This is unsurprising, perhaps, given that many would agree that adultism involves a form of colonial conduct\textsuperscript{21}. However, the marginality of youth voices and ideas is further compounded by an at once contradictory and expected ideological centrality of youth, as colonized subjects of the liberal peace project. Indeed, the scarcity of theoretical engagement with youth in the IR and conflict resolution literatures until very recently is all the more surprising given the focus of so much conflict resolution theory and practice on fostering long-term, intergenerational change in attitudes and behaviour through social learning at the local level. For example, the main theories of practice in ethnic conflict resolution are, according to Ross: the theories of community relations, principled negotiation, psycho-analytical identity, human needs, intercultural miscommunication, and conflict transformation\textsuperscript{22}. Aside from principled negotiation and conflict transformation, we note that all of these other main theories of practice rely upon ideas of social change wrought through fulfilment of everyday needs or socialization through learning in informal or formal education settings. These theories therefore heavily rest upon youth subjects as those that may be moulded and are the future.

Therefore, implicit in the orthodox theories of peace most used at the local level, is the veiled belief that youth will inevitably need and benefit from training in peace. Far

\textsuperscript{21} Gill Jones, Youth (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), 18.
\textsuperscript{22} Marc Howard Ross, ‘Creating the conditions for peacemaking: theories of practice in ethnic conflict resolution’, Ethnic and Racial Studies 23, no. 6 (2000): 1002-1034.
from being a space of emancipation, then, the local is a mechanism for placing both the blame for conflict and the burden of breaking cycles of political violence on youth. So, the liberal peace, as a set of processes, structures, actors and values, not only overlooks some people, it also often misunderstands or mischaracterizes those that it does see: the young people of the ‘youth bulge’, for example. The interruptions of critical peace and conflict studies against these assumptions and the larger international umbrella project of peacebuilding, have begun to expose and challenge such contradictions. There have been limited expositions of how youth are narrated in the liberal peace but to date we have not engaged thoroughly enough with the processes of how youth are woven into the master narratives of war and peace as the justifications, prizes and foes of each.

How do young people understand and explain their experience in contemporary conflicts as reflected in a variety of narratives that make up complex social worlds? To what extent do these narratives shape and reflect actions and identities of young people themselves, and their friends, families, wider societies, the state and the international structures and beliefs of the liberal peace? For example, Donna Seto’s paper in this issues suggests that a critical approach should not just identify how children are symbolically deployed within the war system but also how they are potentially bridging opposing forces and fostering peace. What are the frames, images and narratives that policymakers use when designing youth policies in the context of peacebuilding?

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Empirically and symbolically who are youth in conflict, and why are we asking these questions at all?

Although they may assert their independence from states and an international community that they perceive has already largely rejected them, through everyday practices of creating relationships, speaking up about rights and empathy, and through political protest, the ideological core of youth resistance is more complex. There is more than strategy or parody in the appeals of Tunisian rapper El General when he castigates his ‘father,’ President Ben Ali, for a broken social contract. Young Muslims in France reject US foreign policy but do so as expressed through hip hop cultures that draw on Malcolm X, US Civil Rights and racial integration as models of emancipation. Young people are able to ‘see through’ the disciplining aims of orthodox, liberal peacebuilding discourses without necessarily rejecting liberal peace as a set of values and practices within which they can and want to be employed (in both senses of the word). Similarly, youth activists who identify as socialists are not all describing the same ideology nor are they inevitably embracing ‘scientific socialism’ but, as shown in Jessica Taft’s study of girl activists in the Americas, understand socialism as equality, Christianity, peace, happiness ‘fairness, inclusion, and a life free from exploitation.

How can a critical peace perspective take us beyond considering youth as actors (and their roles in context) and even beyond youth as agents in the narratives, to decolonized and decolonizing engagements with young people in creating new

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24 Hisham Aidi, Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture (New York: Pantheon, 2014).
25 For an example of this see Berents, From the Margins, 170-187
knowledges about peace? We do not claim to fully respond to this here, but offer this issue as call to action and a stepping off point for further discussion.

**Structures and Spaces: The nexus of global-local structures that facilitate, curtail and curtain everyday peacebuilding.**

While young people are actively involved in their everyday lives and practices of peacebuilding, and although these engagements are often critical and responsive to their environment and circumstance, the structures and systems that they operate in function to both enable and hinder their actions. In some circumstances the mundane practices of everyday life facilitate youth organising for peace. Youth also find ways of communicating across distances and difference, particularly taking advantage of opportunities afforded by technology and social media. In some cases this is organisation for direct action: the mobilising via technology of bodies on the street—as we saw in the Arab Spring protests, and in more localised responses. In others, it provides a network of like-minded youth who organise to create change; McEvoy-Levy’s work looking at youth networks that form around popular culture such as the Harry Potter series (in this issue) is a good example of this. Transnational, informal networks enable young people to share ideas, successes, and form community. Recent use of the Hunger Games salute by Thai protesters also illustrates synergies between global imaginative networks and local political bodies. The term ‘organic globalizer’ has been offered to describe the expansion of hip-hop as a world political force27: ‘hip-hop ultimately remains—and we argue,

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should remain—a grassroots phenomenon that is born of the community from which it permeates’. In a slightly different way, we can think of youth activists more broadly as organic globalizers. More so than for other social groups, wired youth do not experience everyday life and the local as synonymous. Everyday life is a local/global space. Critical peace studies and the elicitive peacebuilding approach, valorises and centres the grassroots as the locus of useful knowledge and of social change. But a youth lens brings into sharp focus conflicts within the space of the local.

Formal structures can also enable and amplify youth voices for peace. High-level meetings and gatherings of United Nation (UN) bodies have provided youth opportunities to speak to an international stage. The UN hosts annual meetings of youth delegates from around the globe who gather to speak about global issues and their everyday consequences; it also provides a platform for exceptional youth advocates such as Malala Yousafzai who addressed the UN General Assembly in 2013 after recovering from being shot in the head by the Taliban over her campaign for girl’s education in Pakistan’s Swat Valley. However, a word of caution is required in considering these instances; reflection on how, why, and where youth appear in ‘formal’ politics reveals that often their voice functions to reinforce existing, sanctioned messages. Perhaps public appearance of youth in formal political spheres legitimates certain actions of youth and excludes others; the consequences of this are open for interpretation and consideration.

Structures of power and politics, whether formal or informal can also serve to exclude or discount youth from consideration. The ‘innocent’, ‘damaged’, ‘victimised’ youth is a powerful rhetorical tool that operates in conflict and post-conflict and obfuscates the lived experience of youth in these circumstances. While it cannot be
denied that young people suffer and are victims of conflict and violence, this conceptualisation erases and denies the multiple experiences of youth as peacebuilders who negotiate complex systems of risk and oppression to act for peace at local, national, and international levels.

Informal structures can also delegitimise youth engagement in peace practices. Robin Turner’s discussion of youth mobilisation in a rural traditional community in South Africa (in this issue) demonstrates the complexities of intergenerational negotiation and the powerful organising forces of established structures. In addition to the exclusion and delegitimisation of youth, we see the compartmentalization of youth peace practice in certain spaces of the local and the everyday. As the intended targets of official peacebuilding programs in Bosnia and Northern Ireland, for example, young people are collectively a receptacle for the dreams and anxieties of local adults and international actors and a site of social engineering. We are thinking of peace and coexistence programming that is delivered via schools, community groups, and youth centres, which far from being neutral spaces are ideologically loaded and may obscure their status-quo enforcing aims. Consider a youth centre in a post-conflict setting: funded by governments or outside agencies, its programming shaped by consultants and professionals, and even the doors to the building open and close by choice/timing of adults. Other spaces such as parks, street corners, are policed and/or dangerous. If everyday resistance becomes simply daily resistance, coping with exclusion through marking territory and forming gangs, the notion of everyday peace as being a practice of negotiating with violence becomes its own mode of oppression. The space of youth practices of everyday peace, are pushed back to the private, to the home, which is also
not always a safe space; and further inward, to the imagination. De Certeau’s take on reading as deterritorialization, discussed in McEvoy-Levy’s paper (in this issue), suggests the imagination as both the last as well as the first refuge of youth seeking everyday peace. But other papers in the issue offer new insights about how to transform structured youth spaces to be more gender inclusive (Pruitt) and, noting the limitations of existing policies, why political participation programs should respond to youth needs rather than youth violence (Kurtenbach and Pawelz). In their peace-work young people in diverse circumstances around the globe encounter discursive and structural forces that both enable and limit their engagement and potential for action. In considerations of how best to write youth into discussions of peace at everyday levels and in everyday ways an acknowledgement of these systems, discourses, and structures is crucial.

**Contributions to this special issue**

In the articles that comprise this special issue children and youth are contextually-defined and analysed as complex sites and (re)producers of knowledge about conflict and peace. Some papers are country-based case studies, in which the contributors present results of fieldwork with youth in Colombia, South Africa, the United States, or explore the literature on particular cases in Guatemala and East Timor. Other papers engage conceptual or theoretical questions, posing an idea of ‘child’ as a symbolically loaded construct that can be operationalised for war or peace, or challenging understandings of how youth read and engage global pop culture for peace. The articles identify the multiple forms of violence and marginalisation experienced by youth, their many modes
of agency and resistance, and their contributions to the ‘politics of peace’ at local and
global levels.

In the first article, the idea of youth as active in responding to structural violences,
and as contributors to peace practice, is explored by Robin Turner through her research
with youth who mobilised in Supingstad, a traditional rural community in South Africa.
Turner’s research draws particular attention to the actions of the state in sanctioning
violence and circumscribing space for youth action. It also highlights intergenerational
tensions faced by youth when they mobilise for peace and constructive change in their
community.

Considerations of young people’s involvement in peacebuilding necessitate
consideration of their formal status in post-conflict states. Sabine Kurtenbach and Janina
Pawelz link youth peacebuilding with contestations over political citizenship in the
contexts of Guatemala and Timor Leste. This exploration highlights the danger of
ignoring youth engagement and the needs of young people in post-conflict environments,
pointing to the potential for renewed conflict as a consequence of marginalisation. The
arguments forwarded by Turner, and by Kurtenbach and Pawelz highlight the complex
but crucial role youth play in negotiating everyday peacebuilding between local,
community and national levels. These explorations contribute to more complete
theorising of young people’s presence and active role in peace.

Young people’s experiences of building peace are not homogenous. Age, class,
race, and gender affect the experiences of youth in conflict and thus their engagements in
peace. Lesley Pruitt’s research with young women leading peacebuilding programs built
around dance and creative movement highlights the particularly gendered challenges of
peacebuilding. In forwarding a notion of ‘gender-inclusive hospitality’ Pruitt moves consideration of everyday peace from ‘fixing’ the exclusion of individuals to an argument for recognising and engaging notions of equity in peacebuilding programs aimed at youth.

The particularly liminal state of some youth is sharply articulated by Donna Seto, who questions the absence of children born of wartime sexual violence from discourses of recovery and peacebuilding. In uncovering youth in theories of everyday peace, Seto’s paper poses important challenges to the symbolic construction of ‘the child’ in post-war recovery. This exploration provokes consideration of how notions of youth and child operate powerfully in narratives about peace, stability and nationhood. In different ways Pruitt and Seto ask how dominant structures shape the ways we engage youth in peacebuilding praxis, and the way we theorise their presence in post conflict environments.

Helen Berents argues for the importance of considering the idea of ‘everyday peace’ as an embodied, lived, experience amongst violence; in doing so she centres the bodies and experiences of young people who are often marginalised or rendered passive in discussions of the challenges they face. Berents draws on fieldwork with youth forcibly displaced by Colombia’s long running conflict to draw out young people’s understandings of peace built within daily experiences of violence in order to argue for a more complex rendering of everyday peace.

Engaging the notion of the everyday through popular culture, Siobhan McEvoy-Levy directs attention to the influences of popular media on youth engagement with everyday peace practices, located fundamentally in complex resistance and tension with
militarised narratives that are commercialised and valorised in society. McEvoy-Levy considers the work of JK Rowling and Suzanne Collins in the context of everyday militarisation, and argues for the importance of considering youth engagement with pop culture for peace formation.

Through these papers the notion of the everyday is illuminated as embodied practice, as the site of intergenerational tension, and as a political space for contestations of belonging. The everyday is rendered complex and diverse through considerations of gendered politics and the symbolic power of certain iterations of childhood. It is located as a transnational, subversive, mediated space led by young people themselves. This special issue offers peace and conflict studies new lenses to consider everyday peace as more complete, complex and contested. The articles reflect on and animate the boundaries between the local and the global, between orthodox and critical peacebuilding approaches, and between children, youth, and adults as people, and as political constructs, within their local, national and international orders. They show how the resilience, resistance and compliance of youth within these political systems involve complicated, partial, conditional, diagnostic, and prescriptive interpretations of everyday peace.

Conclusions

Survival strategies of youth are forms of political action. Political activism is also a survival strategy. Everyday peace is not a destination but always in the process of becoming. Still, we need to move beyond the comfortable academic trap of seeing
survival/resistance as a good in itself, and as evidence of the well-being of postliberal peace processes, hidden but vibrantly and valiantly enduring, in the romanticized communities of the local. Is everyday life really a space of freedom for youth to engage in political manoeuvres and can these negotiations really be termed peacebuilding? Just as gendered tropes justify and perpetuate war, youth-ed tropes abound in the discourses of peacebuilding and of structural violence. These tropes put youth in their places as a containable danger, on the one hand or, after some more training, a future force. Context is crucial in considering whether or not everyday life is composed of spaces that are particularly open and malleable to youth. The papers in this special issue show how this is never un-ambivalently the case. Such an appearance of freedom may be merely in contrast to the exclusion of youth from formal structures of power. While youth are able to find collective meaning and organise in response to conflict, violence, and exclusion in ‘surreptitious’ manoeuvres in everyday life, this does not mean that the local or informal it is always their preferred space of action, or that their needs and interests will reach fruition. Indeed, reliance on such modes as the street protest, the artistic revolution, even those that become mass movements as we have seen recently in the Arab Spring, often results in youth interests being overtaken by older, more savvy, connected, and resourced actors who manoeuvre in to steal the election, revolution or peace. If, at the international policy level, young people’s tactics, knowledge and practices of building peace are institutionally ignored, or misunderstood, a pattern of exclusion and colonial interventions for youth continues.

The ‘politics of peace’, as Jabri asserts, ‘is located primarily with individuals, communities, and social movements, involved in critical engagement with the multiform

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28 Sjoberg, Gender, War and Conflict.
governance structures, as well as non-state agents, they encounter in their substantial claims for human rights and justice. Deliberately seeking out and recognising the multiple, contested, and challenging ways youth involve themselves in myriad forms and spaces of everyday peacebuilding is a response to the ongoing exclusion of the experiences of youth in peacebuilding practices. We explicitly ask difficult questions about the inadequacy of current conceptions of peace by noting that youth are present. This special issue poses questions about the content, actions, and intent of young people’s engagement in everyday peacebuilding and simultaneously poses questions about the limits of understandings of everyday peace that do not take young people’s engagements seriously. The contributions to this special issue demonstrate the value of taking children and youth seriously in peace and conflict studies, and together the collection compelling argues for a more complex, nuanced, and representative understanding of the everyday in considerations of peacebuilding.

29 Jabri, War and the Transformation of Global Politics, 268