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"Home" in Peace and Conflict Studies: A Site of Resistance and of Reform

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Abstract

This article aims to examine one aspect of the "local" that has been little considered in IR: the concept of *home* and its significance as a place of meaning and as a site of resistance. Existing studies of the concept of home in other disciplines include their study as "profound centers of human existence" in human geography and as the place of "many cultural practices that forge social memory." More recently, the plight of refugees has thrown into sharp relief both the need for an examination of home and its current under-theorization. After a wider examination of the meaning of home and in particular the significance of home in an IR context, this article will examine the construction of home in everyday life and its potential use as a site of resistance before analyzing the significance of this analysis to the wider field of IR.

Keywords: *home; resistance; place; local; liberal peace*

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Over the last two decades within the discourse of peace and conflict studies, an increasing preoccupation with the "local," and the "every day"—and with the potential that both have in developing conceptualizations of agency, power, and resistance in post-conflict contexts— has seen "local solutions to local problems" become a mantra that appears to offer a novel approach to the pursuit of a sustainable peace (Lederach, 1997). In reality however, there is growing recognition (see, for example, Richmond, 2009a) that the approach taken to the "local" by practitioners and policymakers, as well as much of the academic discourse, is a limited one. The neoliberal peace agenda may argue for the primacy of the rights of the individual, but in its theoretical reality, this individual is an amorphous one. There is no specific recognition of gender, sexuality, age, cultural and ethnic background, or socioeconomic status. The result is that those elements that may help to define us as individuals—and in turn how these elements may be socially constructed and the nature of the agency that we, as human beings, may be able to claim as a result—remain both under-researched and under-theorized. Indeed, this concept of the "individual" is itself a contested concept, with its construction at any specific point in time being of particular significance to the characterizations of the "local" (see, for example, Ferry & Renaut, 1990; Rosenau, 1992). Importantly, the role of the individual within the context of community, society, family, or any other social grouping within which an "individual" normally interacts remain under-examined, resulting in a methodology that is both narrow and rooted in the notion that human agency is best harnessed and contained within the overarching rationalist institutional framework that liberalism propounds. Thus, the agency of any one individual, or the consideration of how those individuals interact within the larger social groupings of family and community—particularly when speaking of those so often marginalized, or perceived as voiceless in international society (although of course voiceless-ness is a construction in that it is not that people don't have voices, but rather that those voices are not heard, or are not listened to)— remains contested, whilst the liberal ideal continues with solutions that, in advocating the need for strong markets, strong institutions, and the rule of law, remain overwhelmingly "top-down" in their approach.

There has been an increasing amount of research in recent years seeking to address the inadequacies of this perspective. Arguably the roots of the literature within peace and conflict studies lie in Kaldor's (1999) conception of "new wars" and the blurring of the lines between the civilian and combatant, public and private spheres, but we can see parallels, too, in a range of works across the cognate International Relations (IR) discipline and its sub-fields, including Robert O'Brien's (2000) analysis of the role of labor in the international political economy and Kerr and Foster's (2009) examination of how sexuality, particularly as seen through the lens of Queer Theory, may enrich our understanding of politics and IR by challenging the ways in which power relations are organized. These approaches—as well as other work being done, for example, on race and ethnicity, on the construction of childhood, and on the significance of migration—demonstrate the necessity of examining how individuals, societies, and communities interact and operate (Richmond, 2009b) not only in terms of academic discourse but also in practical policy terms. All write from the perspective that the dominant discourse is not enough, and that through our preoccupation with the global, we have lost our ability to consider the reality of conflict and its aftermath for those for whom it matters most: those individuals and communities who are impacted by the policy prescriptions that are put in place, and who, in turn, may resist them.

This article aims to examine one aspect of the "local" that has been little considered within the peace and conflict studies literature, but that has been subject to a range of studies across social, material, cultural, linguistic, and philosophical milieu: that is, the concept of *home*, and in particular its significance both as a place of meaning and as a site of resistance. (Note, this article will follow Jeanne Moore (2000) in italicizing *home* throughout the text.) If, as stated previously, we recognize the significance of examining how individuals, societies, and communities interact and operate, then we must consider, too, where such actions take place. By doing so, this article highlights that what is often ignored by researchers is not ignored because it lacks significance, but rather because it lies in areas that are customarily outside the researcher's gaze. As J. Russell Boulding (2017) noted when discussing the approach of his mother Elise,

> What was not seen by political-analytic eyes was not so much invisible as out of the range of vision of those who looked at the world through lenses crafted to a limited perspective, narrowed by patriarchal and other exclusionary world views, among them even some peace perspectives. (p. viii)

Thus, the focus on a "neoliberal peace" has resulted in the "reductive dichotomy" (Kirby, 2008) of the public/private binary, meaning that certain key actors and events, as well as "institutions, activities, dispositions and normative associations are allocated *a priori* to the public or private realm," a move that not only oversimplifies, but also fails to take into account the "plurality of differently constituted publics and privates performed in practice" (McGuirk & Dowling, 2009)

Thus, the neoliberal preoccupation with seeing *home* as being in the private sphere means that *home* as a space of belonging, or agency, or resistance, for individuals and for communities, is ignored. This is important because it means that everyday actions undertaken by "ordinary" people at *home* go unnoticed within the world of formal politics. Yet such actions may do more to redress the injustices that a contemporary social movement has highlighted than any formal government account (Mansbridge & Flaster, 2007). Moreover, the smallest act of everyday resistance may represent a challenge to what are perceived to be the accepted boundaries of political behavior and may lead us, in turn, to examine what is possible in terms of those elements of human behavior that would normally pass unnoticed in policy terms (Antoniades, 2008). Unless we look at families, and households, and communities, and the relations within and between them, it is difficult to understand how the rest of a society works, and how, if it is required, stability may be brought to it. By focusing upon the concept of *home*, this article argues that the peace and conflict studies literature would benefit from a much more micro understanding of the actors and environments that create the real "local," and in turn, how policy frameworks should be used to address the issues that they raise.

Home, Place, and Belonging

Existing studies of the concept of *home* in other disciplines include the "central focus" of the concepts of *home* and *dwelling* within phenomenology and philosophy, and their study as "profound centers of human existence" in human geography. *Home* has also been seen as the place of "many cultural practices that forge social memory" (Hadjiyanni & Helle, 2010), whilst within feminist literatures considerations of *home*, and of the related concepts of place and belonging, can be characterized as sites of resistance against mainstream culture, as well as sites that carry wider political significance. As [H]ooks (2008) notes:

> Talking about place, where we belong, is a constant subject for many of us. We want to
> know if it is possible to live on the earth peacefully. Is it possible to sustain life? Can we

embrace an ethos of sustainability that is not solely about the appropriate care of the world's resources but is also about the creation of meaning – the making of lives that we feel are worth living. (p. 1)

This idea of sites of belonging becomes particularly significant within the settler-colonial context. Moreton-Robinson describes this well in her examination of how settlers (in the case of Moreton-Robinson's research, white Australians) sought to both create home, but also to "determine the meaning and experience of 'home' for Indigenous Australians" in a "'violent process" that "detached individuals…from sites of Aboriginal belonging by alienating them from language, culture, and family" (as cited in Nicoll, 2004).

As a scholar working within the field of peace and conflict studies thinking about how we conceptualize appears then to me to draw on a number of disparate—though arguably connected—conceptual elements that are of increasing significance to the contemporary policy landscape. In addition to issues surrounding the "local" (to which this article will later return), there are elements that are important as a potential contribution to the discourse on culture, memory, and emotion; to that on trauma and loss; to the nature of political community; to the aesthetic turn; and, importantly, to the literature on the "everyday" in conflict and post-conflict zones. The discourse surrounding many of these could be usefully developed by using the concept of *home* as the lens through which to gaze. Moreover given that *home* is an emotive concept that is already written between the lines of the discourse—in issues, for example, of displacement and migration, of conflict and post-conflict settlement, of narrative and voice—a wider examination is merited in terms of its potential contribution in practical policy terms, not least because of its potential as a site for the practice of resistance in everyday life. Particularly significant here is how those disenfranchised from the public rights-claiming process, in whatever way, may turn instead to acts of resistance within what has traditionally been viewed as a *home* space—in a variety of forms—in order to attempt to realize their claim for access to a wider political space. Such actions have often been examined within the framework of a public-private binary, but that response displays the deep bias inherent within the neoliberal model, and the scholarship that has resulted from it. Patricia Hill Collins (2000), for example, notes that for African-American communities, the public-private discussion may be of no use because it focusses upon the "archetypal white, middle-class nuclear family." What is thus required is an alternative way to recognize *home* as a political space such that not only do we see the nature of existing everyday

resistance, but we become even more aware that the discourse of conflict and its aftermath lies not only in boardrooms and on battlefields, but also at *home* and in what Sennett (2008) has described as "the thousand little everyday moves that add up in sum to a practice" (p. 77). Thus, by recognizing the significance of *home* we also recognize, and further interrogate, the significance of individuals both to the conditions of conflict and to the practice of peace. It allows that praxis to incorporate, in other words, an additional site of knowledge.

The Meaning of Home

Mention *home* and we are immediately confronted with our own personal experience of what *home* means. *Home* is something that, whoever we are, and wherever we live, has meaning for everyone. For me, *home* is a place of routine and stability, a feeling reinforced after a period of homelessness as a child. That homelessness only lasted for a few months but the feeling of not having somewhere permanent to stay and of never knowing where you were going to sleep, and of feeling unwelcome in the places that you did sleep, continues to impact upon my personal conceptualization of *home*, leaving me both reluctant to frequently go through the process of changing homes, and also with a feeling that any *home* I am in, no matter how long I have been there, is not permanent. This experience is, of course, nothing compared to the homelessness and instability that so many people across the globe face as a result of conflict and structural violence, but it does highlight that how we perceive *home* at any point in our lives is a function of the experiences that went before. In settler states, the contemporary experience of *home* for Indigenous Peoples continues to be impacted by both historic trauma and present-day racism such that the "structural violence imposed by reserve systems, residential schooling, and the state's broader project of cultural genocide has increased [Indigenous] peoples' risk of becoming homeless as well as experiencing other health and social challenges" (Distasio, Sylvestre, & Mulligan, 2005; Menzies, 2006). Those who have experienced *home* largely as a site of oppression and abuse, have a very different view on the nature of *home* than do those who have not.

Thus, although in simplest terms it may be assumed to be only the physical space that we privately inhabit, in reality *home* is less about physical surroundings, and more about the activities that take place there, and the emotions—either positive or negative—that these activities engender (Mallett, 2004). Blunt and Dowling (2006) argue that *home* is best understood as the relationship that exists between a variety of material, socio-cultural, and political-economic dimensions. Thus,

in material terms *home* represents a physical, and practical, structure that is used for a variety of functions—as a place, for example, to sleep, to eat, to wash, and to dress. In socio-cultural terms, analyses of *home* recognize that it is also a place where a variety of relationships, emotions, meanings, values, cultural, and religious practices are played out; whilst in politico-economic terms a *home* may also represent the space in which a variety of decisions—for example, consumption choices, employment, political allegiance, religious practice—may be made that will impact across a range of political and economic domains. *Home* may also be a place that acutely signifies the nature of political dispute—of occupation, migration, healing, refuge and protest, as a site of surveillance, of assimilation, or of violation. Taken together, these dimensions suggest that the meaning and significance of *home* appears difficult to underestimate. Indeed, as Blunt and Varley (2004) note:

> …[a]s a space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear, the home is invested with meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life. (p. 3)

Bourdieu, in his now famous examination of the Berber house, revealed how everyday activities within a *home* represent a microcosm of all symbolic relations (Low & Lawrence-Zunigais, 2003), as well as being a subtle, but powerful, way by which knowledge surrounding social relations and the local worldview is both acquired and shared (Low & Lawrence-Zunigais, 2003). More than this, however, the practices that take place at *home*, and the material cultures and social relations that they engender are significant within the context of the international system in that they resonate far beyond the borders of domestic life, to encapsulate and represent a set of power relations that are important not only in terms of the political-economic dimensions of *home*, but also for the home's relationship with the wider economy and the state.

There is a resonance here with the work that has been done on the role of the family in the history of English political thought. In his 1975 article *Leviathan Writ Small: Thomas Hobbes on the Family*, for example, Richard Chapman (1975) notes:

> A close analysis of all that Hobbes says about the family… shows a most unusual conception, both in the history of political thought and in seventeenth century England: Hobbes saw the family as a diminutive state, as *Leviathan* writ small. He uses the family

constantly as an analogy for the state, as justification, as historical example, as a heuristic device to explain political structures and functions, and as exhortation… (p. 77)

Thus, if it is recognized that *home* is not simply a physical place and a product of collected material objects but, equally, also of the actions through which meanings are ascribed to this *home,* and if we recognize too that, in turn, such actions are conditioned by wider social, cultural, economic, and political practice, then examining the very diverse meanings of *home* means also understanding the practices by which that *home* is made, and recognizing and exploring the significance of these practices to wider political life. In this way, "home is not a private, static, taken-for-granted entity, but something that represents the dynamic interchange between the individual and the world, inside and outside, private and public, individual and community (Hooks, 2008). Indeed, *home* may thus, even indirectly, be a site that characterizes more than any other the dilemmas that face the liberal project and its critical examination. Much has been made of the need to include issues of gender, age, class, and ethnicity in the examination of conflict and post-conflict settlement, and of the need to hear alternative voices in order to construct a more realistic narrative (Tickner, 2003). Part of the reason why these voices are not currently heard is because the sites in which we listen are so limited—and *home* is not one of them. Thus, because the discourse remains largely confined to "public" fora, the potential for political agency in alternative, less public sites, remains undeveloped, and those who are marginalized as a result are further dehumanized. For example, in the case of women's voices, as Iris Marion Young (2005) noted, *home* is a gendered construct that has contributed to the way in which both men and women are perceived. This culture may equate women with *home*, and with an expectation that women serve men (and children) within that space, thus: "If house and home mean the confinement of women for the sake of nourishing male projects, then feminists have good reason to reject home as a value" (p. 115). Young also, however, recognized the difficulties inherent in such a rejection in that "it is difficult even for feminists to exorcise a positive valence to the idea of home. We often look forward to going home and invite others to make themselves at home. House and Home are deeply ambivalent values" (p. 115). Thus, if we recognize the significance of *home* to human existence and to social roles and their construction, we must also recognize that, within the context of ongoing examinations of the international system, the time is long overdue for an examination of *home* and its meanings, particularly when so many elements of everyday human existence and practice are now so central to the critical study of peace and

conflict. For example, in examining the role of trauma and emotion, we need to recognize that the concept of *home* may play a significant role. We may, for example, grieve in that *home* for the loved ones who shared it, and we may grieve for its loss when it is destroyed. *Home* may also represent something else entirely—a site where mental and physical suffering has taken place, the memories of which need to be overcome before healing can take place. Either way, the need for *home* remains paramount. As Vanessa Pupavac (2002) notes, in her work on psycho-social recovery in post-conflict Kosovo:

> …despite the systematic promotion of psycho-social programmes, local take-up of trauma counselling is far less than one would expect from agency projections of trauma. When interviewed, locals consistently prioritise material assistance over psycho-social support. Sevdije Ahmiti, who is running a women's centre in Pristina, argues that "people here don't need the psycho-social counselling offered by lots of aid groups. What they need is jobs and homes to live in." Her view is echoed in the findings of the IRC needs assessment report. The team found that when you ask people what psycho-social problems they have, they invariably say, "give me a roof over my head for the winter, then I will talk to you about psycho-social problems." (p. 499)

For individuals living in post-conflict environments, *home*, then, becomes central to the creation of a sustainable post-conflict settlement and to the notion of political community. *Home* also then becomes important to the wider examination of human rights (and the liberal concept of "human security") more globally and to its place within the critical caucus. Relevant here too, as Davies and Niemann (2002) identified, is Lefebvre's analysis of the significance of everyday life that recognizes that "the potential for emancipatory action is created through the recognition of the contradictions between the hegemonic claims about life in capitalist societies and the actual experience of everyday life" (p. 559). Davies and Niemann's work acknowledged that International Relations':

> …hegemonic claims about the nature of global politics can be overcome through the recognition of the contradictions between the reality of global politics in everyday life and the theoretical claims which reserve this area of social relations to elites in government and business. (p. 559)

Politics, in other words, is about more than policy. It is also about the impact that the decisions made within policy arenas have upon the ordinary everyday lives of women, men, and children and their lives at *home*, as well as upon the potential for resistance that policy decisions might have. It is also about what knowledge is lost when decisions are made without reference to those sites upon which such decisions will impact. It is to an examination of these issues that this article now turns.

Home: "Everyday Life," IR, and Resistance

In their examination of the wider discourse of international relations, Davies and Niemann (2002) have recognized that in order to fully take a concept such as "everyday life" into account, a change in attitude is required. They stated, "For such concepts to be relevant to the study of international relations, international relations must be seen as social relations. However, …the elitist bias of IR theory mystifies international relations by hiding their social character" (p. 576).

Within peace and conflict studies, the potential in examining everyday life within discussions of the local has begun to be highlighted (Richmond, 2008). Such discussions are important and are often centered around local actors, agencies, and customs and their capacity to interact and impact upon the post-conflict context. *Home* as a site in which such interactions take place remains rarely mentioned, however. Yet, arguably *home* should be seen as the ultimate site in which everyday life takes place. In *Making Sense of Everyday Life*, for example, Susie Scott (2009) highlights Auge's definition of *home* as the ability to make oneself understood, and to understand others, within a social network. In this sense, *home* becomes much more than just a place. As Wardhaugh (1999) argued, "home is … rather a state of mind, marking the boundaries between inside and outside, private and public" (p. 95). Such a formulation owes much to the social construction of "home" with the latter representing a site of crucial interface between the community and the individual. As Sven Eberlein notes (2012):

> The yearning to live in community is not a new one. Human beings evolved sharing common space, resources, and neighbourly support, not only for physical survival, but for a sense of togetherness. But modern society values autonomy, often at the cost of the social connection offered by traditional communities. (para. 5)

Recent research on the nature of empathy has also highlighted how the experience of a society in which living is collective, as opposed to the highly individualized neoliberal model, may result in a greater empathy for mass suffering.

Home, then, is invested with a variety of cultural meanings. Within households, the "key dimensions" of gender and age result in different perceptions of the meaning of *home*, whilst across cultural and social settings, geography, class, ethnicity, and housing tenure help to explain some of the differences in the construction of the meaning of *home* that exist between households (Mallett, 2004). In their seminal article in *Housing Studies*, Saunders and Williams (1988) remind us that *home* is a complex concept:

> A place invested with special social meaning and significance where particular kinds of social relations and activities are composed, accomplished, and contextualized. Peace and tranquility may pertain for some, sometimes, but conflict, violence, and tension are also characteristics of the home. (p. 82)

Of course, *home* can mean something else entirely when considering the occupants of "institutions" such as boarding schools and prisons. Susie Scott (2009) considers what *home* means under these circumstances. Those living in institutions will often be there by coercion rather than by choice, thus making their experience of everyday life much more likely to be one of regimented routines, schedules, and predictability, rather than individual choice. Foucault (1979) talked about such institutions as one of the sites in which "disciplinary power" was exercised over minds and bodies: a faceless set of rules and obligations that could determine how people behaved when, where, and why. In the face of such power, wherever *home* may be, resistances will take place. One clear example of this lies in the documented resistance practices that took place in the Residential School system in Canada where First Nations, Inuit and Metis, children had been removed from their family homes to instead be "educated" and thus assimilated into Canadian culture. As Celia Haig-Brown's (1988) examination of the residential school system in British Columbia highlighted, "[t]he most outstanding feature which is revealed by this study is the extent and complexity of the resistance movement which the students and their families developed against the invasive presence of the residential school" (p. 25).

This does, however, raise certain key questions, most notably whether those actions that can be characterized as everyday small resistances function collectively and intentionally to affect real change. That they function collectively can be anecdotal, however the question of intent is a much more complex one, and indeed, what is significant is whether or not change can occur in the small incremental acts of agents who do not necessarily realize the aggregated consequences of

their individual actions. This idea of an awareness of impact is a telling one and is similar in tone to Daniel Lerner's (1958) construction of a theory of political empathy, with empathy being defined as the ability of citizens both to relate to, and to understand, events and issues outside their immediate life space. Indeed, some scholars have argued that liberalism itself could actually become compatible with a real notion of political community if it was "appropriately modified by a communitarian principle of political empathy" (Ward, 1994). Ward continues with the proposition:

> Add empathy to liberalism and stir, to yield a form of liberal community that would simultaneously respect equality and individual diversity and avoid liberalism's "flaws" selfishness, atomistic separatism, and emotionless abstraction. By engaging all citizens in efforts to understand and relate to others of different backgrounds, interests and convictions, empathy would serve as the theoretical glue to bind together the halves of the liberal communitarian vision. (p. 931)

Although this is a highly optimistic view of the liberal model, it arguably harkens back to a conception of collective living arrangements that would seem to suggest a greater imagination to take into account the interests of others. Barber (1996) wrote compellingly of this when he argued that it is:

> …through imagination that the welfare of the extended communities to which we belong is recognized as the flourishing of our own interests. What is the bigot other than the man without imagination? The woman unable to see beyond her own colour or religion into the kindred soul of a being different but the same? The public voice grows out of imagination and nourished imagination. It permits a private self to empathise with the interests of others, not as an act of altruism but as a consequence of self-interest imaginatively reconstructed as common interest. (p. 279)

Thus, everyday actions in the *home* undertaken by "ordinary" people might go unnoticed within the world of formal politics, but such actions can help to redress those injustices that a contemporary social movement may have highlighted (Mansbridge & Flaster, 2007). Moreover, the smallest act of everyday resistance may represent a challenge to what are perceived to be the accepted boundaries of political behavior and may lead us, in turn, to examine what is actually possible in terms of those elements of human behavior that would normally pass unnoticed in policy terms (Antoniades, 2008). Our everyday actions also have important consequences for the

constitution and transformation of the local, national, regional, and global contexts. How, what and with whom we spend, save, invest, buy, and produce in our ordinary lives shapes markets and in turn how states choose to intervene in them (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007)—yet these practices of resistance may go largely unnoticed, and therefore lie largely out-with mainstream examination. Particularly, such practices may involve utilizing the experiences, skills, and labor that are taken for granted in the everyday lives of individuals in a society, for actions that are minor in an ostensibly peaceful environment but that take on much greater significance in a place of conflict. Allan Wade (1997) considered "everyday resistance" in terms of his observations of personal conflict as a family therapist, but his treatise rings true in political terms too, when he said, "Whenever persons are badly treated, they resist. That is, alongside each history of violence and oppression, there runs a parallel history of prudent, creative, and determined resistance" (p. 23). Wade also offered some interesting insights into why what he terms "small acts of living" have been ignored even within the field of psycho-therapy:

> …[i]t can at first be difficult to identify resistance to sexualized abuse, wife-assault, racism, and so on, because what counts as resistance, at least in North American popular culture, is typically based on the model of male-to-male combat which presumes roughly equal strength between combatants….Unless a person fights back physically, it is assumed that they did not resist. (p. 25)

Bearing this in mind, how easy it is, then, for small acts of everyday resistance within the international system to be ignored because of the lack of a recognized political voice in those perpetrating the act of resistance, or because the site of resistance is not recognized as a "valid" political space.

This issue of the "recognition" of a voice as political is an important one. Within Western feminist literatures, there is a significant amount of debate regarding social class and resistance practices. As Reissman (2000) notes, "…[t]o simplify, some claim that women at the bottom of the social hierarchy are silent because they often do not see domination, whereas others argue that working-class women not only see it but speak about it and organize" (p. 123).

Emily Martin (2001) presents these polar positions and argues for additional possibilities:

> Women may know their oppression but choose not to speak out about it, judging the risk
> to be too great. They may do nothing or, operating stealthily in the interstices of power,
> they may resist through devious ways of speaking or acting. (p. 182)

The same is true for other marginalized actors. As blogger Jessica Morrison (2011) recounts in her account of a trip to Palestine:

> We met Abed…[who] has a house and shop opposite the Ibrahim Mosque. He was
> offered $100 million dollars to sell his shop to Zionists, so they could expand the Jewish
> part of the city. He refused. So every day he goes to his shop, in an area that Palestinians
> are not allowed, and where few tourists come because of the security situation. He has
> shunned the opportunity to become a rich man because of his commitment to his right to
> live in his home. (para. 3)

Attempting to live the life he would have led had the conflict not taken place is, for Abed, both a recognition of the significance of *home*, and an act of resistance against those who seek to take that from him. Continuing everyday life in the face of trauma becomes something much more than private practice, but rather a public statement of defiance in the face of an occupier. Michel de Certeau (1984), in writing of everyday life, addressed the "subtle ways" in which resistance by ordinary people takes place. Rather than seeing oppression, he saw possibilities in the everyday and in the performative strength of mundane activities. Actions in the private sphere become opportunities for agency as opposed to oppression (Pink, 2004). In the study of politics, this everyday is of increasing significance. In the writings of de Certeau the everyday can be a site of resistance, revolution, and transformation despite the strictures imposed by those in power (Franklin, 2004). The discourse of politics is thus situated in everyday life because its many "ways of operating" constitute what de Certeau called the "innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by the techniques of sociocultural [and political economic] production…" (p. xxiv). In the light of the hegemony of capitalism, de Certeau recognized the narrow margins of maneuver for those who are not privy to the advantages that accrue through power and privilege. The result is non-elite "tactics of consumption and ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong and thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices" (p. xvii). Reifying the everyday in this way means that such small acts take on a much greater political significance. Chris Cullens (1999) has recognized this within the context of non-conflict environments, something he describes in terms of the recent emergence of a "New Age

cult of daily life mindfulness, which . . . encourages making home, garden, table, and body alike a temple consecrated to the simple pleasures of moment-by-moment experience." For Cullens, the appropriation of the term "Zen" has become a byword to characterize the "conscientious tending-to of the 'rituals' of daily life." In part this is because, as recognized in research like that of Lydon (1997) and Murphy (2002), it is consonant with social trends towards "cocooning," downscaling, or slow living. The media often links these with a post-9/11 context (Oestreicher, 2002) and a return to the past and what has been the historical everyday lived experience of many older generations. But in political terms, this slow living is something more in that it is based on practices characterized by "proximity, honesty, simplicity, and perhaps most importantly, conviviality, which imaginatively resolves the contradictions and dislocations of postmodern culture," as stated by Parkins (2004).

In a highly insightful analysis of the politics of the everyday, Brigitte Bargetz (2009) recognized that some feminists, whilst acknowledging that the private sphere may be a site of patriarchy, oppression, and even violence, also support "a more ambivalent vision of the private by emphasizing its empowering potentials." In this regard, Bargetz cited the work of [B]ell [H]ooks, who recognized that home can be a site of resistance and of "self-conscious constructed identity"…

> …[h]istorically, African American people believed that the construction of a home place, however fragile and tenuous (the slave hut, the wooden shack), had a radical political dimension. Despite the brutality of racial apartheid, of domination, one's homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist. (para. 10)

Glenda Gilmore (2006) wrote in a similar vein when she argued that "[f]or most black women politics began at home, blending the public and the private" creating a movement of politics that employed notions of the *home* and family and "realized the practical importance of the group over the individual" in issues such as voting rights, education, and political leadership. Yet, as Mallett (2004) argued, academic discourse most commonly focuses on "broadly white Western conceptions of home [that] privilege a physical structure or dwelling" (p. 65). The result is a conception of home that privileges "certain societal interests at the neglect of those whose own conceptualizations of home might not subscribe to the same material ideals" (Veness, 1993). The result is that *home* is largely discounted as a site of policy and praxis, not simply because

neoliberalism focuses largely on the public domain, but because even if *home* began to be more deeply conceptualized within neoliberal frameworks, it is only certain types of domestic space that would be considered. The result is the loss of opportunities to consider the making of resistance practice in sites other than what we have come to consider as standard, and in turn how such resistance practice may alter the boundaries of knowledge with the discourse of peace and conflict studies.

The Practice of *Home* and its Relevance to Peace and Conflict Studies

There are a number of ways that the relevance of *home* as a site of meaning can be examined in terms of practice. First, if peace and conflict studies—and the notion of a "sustainable peace" —is predicated on the practices of the "local" and of the everyday, then the discourse must actually examine in detail what the "site" of the local and of everyday praxis actually is. The neoliberal preoccupation with seeing *home* as being in the private sphere, and any attempt to politicize that space as thus only being an extension of the feminist idea of the personal being political, means that the site of *home* as a space of belonging, or agency, or resistance, or education for both individuals and the communities of which they are a part, is ignored. The result of this is that the peace and conflict studies discourse remains preoccupied with the "local" (in the form of local elites for the most part male), negating the reality of everyday actions that take place in a more clearly domestic setting. This preoccupation, in itself, reflects a bias within the prevailing neoliberal western discourse—one that sees the complexity of communities both under-recognized and under-theorized.

In class I often use the example of a "Parent Teacher Association" to reflect how much information about a community we lose if we only use the knowledge of those who have self-selected as representatives. If, for example, a researcher came to my own part of the North-east of Scotland in order to examine education in that community, it is likely that a researcher would talk to teachers, possibly to students, and might feel that the parental community voice was captured in the knowledge that the Parent Teacher Association could provide. On the face of it an approach like this would be laudable, but how many narratives would be lost by focusing on a self-selecting group. What this means therefore in practice for the peace and conflict studies discourse is that a change in focus in the fieldwork approach is required—to one that is inclusive and collaborative, foregrounding the voices of those who have been marginalized by existing discourses (Collins & Watson, 2018). This is necessary because even when policymakers do pay lip-service to the importance of understanding the "local" and the "everyday," the nature of both remains defined by a very rationalist, Western perspective not only with whom we may most appropriately communicate, but of how this communication takes place. Thus, our conceptions of what peace means, or of what resistance

entails, and who does that, and where it happens, is very much informed by a narrow view of political action and activities. If, however, we believe that widening the parameters of legitimate political space is the only way to achieve sustainable political settlement, then practices that would normally be part and parcel of creating home should be highlighted for their ability to offer a connection to other forms of political behavior and agential change.

Conclusion

Examining the meaning and validity of *home* as a site of resistance opens a number of potentially valuable ways to consider a number of key issues in the international system. Thus, issues of advocacy, resistance, of the significance of everyday life to international relations, of the importance of land, and of community relations can all be considered through the theoretical lens that an examination of home provides. The question remains, however, how to advocate for the significance of such an examination whilst at the same time operating in a system in which contemporary conceptualizations of power and agency still focus too much upon standard state-based notions of transformation and change. The significance of *home* remains peripheral to their thoughts, and yet so many of the major issues within the contemporary global context are related in some way or another to the significance to people's lives of the *homes* that they create. Disputes over land, and the phenomenon of land grabbing, whereby marginalized peoples are often removed from their traditional lands are, at their heart, about a consideration of place and of communities' attachment to that. The refugee crisis, and the rise of the far right that has accompanied it are, in the former case fundamentally about the loss of *home*, and in the latter case fundamentally about the unwarranted fear that incoming refugees threaten the context of place and belonging in in terms of where the existing inhabitants live. Arguments about the environmental impact of big business are also frequently about the ways in which communities' living arrangements may be fundamentally altered, and their attachment to place and to the lands that they steward, damaged. Home—and the experiences we have there—are fundamental to every human being, and to the communities we inhabit. As such, it should be fundamental to the study of conflict and its aftermath too. That it is *not* says less about its actual significance, and very much more about the limited nature of the peace and conflict studies discourse itself.

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