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New Political Geographies of Conflict and Resistance: An Introduction

Jana Hönke

(short version, see full introduction in German pp. 3-14)

The governance of transnational supply chains and large economic projects put traditional ideas about political space into question, as does the movement of refugees and migrants. Among the crucial issues are who governs where, who should be governing, and how is inclusion in political communities and access to rights decided. Despite a comprehensive discourse of global responsibility for fighting violent crime and human rights abuses, the practice of such responsibility is a different matter. And virtual mobility enabled through the internet and social media shape conflict and resistance across state boundaries in new ways.

International Relations struggle with adequately capturing and understanding these dynamics fully. Some approaches struggle because they carry the tradition of methodological nationalism (Chernilo 2006); others because they concentrate on formal political institutions. This special issue suggests a change in perspective. It draws on critical geography (Aminy 2002; Massey 2005; Allen 2011) and sociological and ethnographic approaches to international relations (Vrasti 2008; Büger & Gadinger 2008; Adler & Pouliot 2011; Hönke 2013; Hönke & Müller 2012; 2016) to explore and theorise less visible but highly relevant social processes and practices that challenge our understanding of political geographies of conflict and resistance (see also Featherstone 2008; Cumbers et al. 2008; Smirl 2015; Björkdahl & Buckley-Zistel 2016). Focusing on the traditional margins of International Relations theorising, the contributions also shed light on different experiences and practices of 'the global' (Muppidi 2004). As Pinar Bilgin recently argued: "[w]e often take for granted the meaning of 'the global' in IR. However, [...] the very meanings that we take for granted are those that have come to be accepted by overlooking the contributions and contestations of 'others' who also constitute 'the international'" (Bilgin 2016: 174, see also Grovgoui 2006).

The articles in this special issue address three core questions. First, how can shifting political geographies, for which binary categorisations such as local/global, inside/outside and online/offline have proven unhelpful, be described and conceptualized? And how can critical political geography,

ethnographic and practice-theoretical approaches, contentious politics, and peace and conflict studies offer alternatives? Second, what are the violent contradictions of multifaceted political geographies today, in particular with regards to the coexistence of a state-based international order with too often ineffective, selective and Eurocentric global governance institutions? Third, what are alternative, emancipatory spaces and practices that emerge in everyday practice?

The special issue presents the results of a one-year research seminar conducted in the context of the MA Peace and Conflict Studies run by the Conflict Research Centre, University of Marburg. The participants grew into a very productive, inspiring and mutually supportive research group, whose impressive research results are presented here. Each paper is based on original theoretical and empirical work. Together, the articles contribute to better understand and rethink new political geographies of conflict and resistance.

The German introduction reviews the literature on political geography in International Relations, conceptualises how to think political spatialities as process and practice, and introduces the methodological building blocks of the special issue. The research papers deal with the production of stateless people in Myanmar and their ‚expulsion‘ into physical and social margins (Valeria Hänsel); the broken promises of an international responsibility to protect in the case of the political economy of human trafficking, torture and extortion of Eritrean refugees on the Sinai, and the alternative structures of support and protection that have emerged in the diaspora (Lucia Heisterkamp); the spatial imaginaries and experiences of refugees along the Balkan route, exploring the potential of participatory counter-mapping (David Scheuing); the ‚in-between-space‘ of on- and offline resistance, investigated through the case of a resistance movement against mineral extraction in Wirikuta, Mexico (Alexandra Engelsdorfer), and the making of autonomous spaces and emancipatory politics in El Alto, Bolivia (Matthias Krams). A further paper of the research seminar was not reworked into a journal article, but is available as a report. It analyses why transnational solidarity remains so ineffective exploring the conflictive engagement between German and Pakistani trade unions in supporting the victims of a disastrous fire in a Pakistani textile company (Maria Hartmann).

Dr. Jana Hönke is Rosalind Franklin Fellow at the Department for International Relations and International Organizations, University of Groningen. Previously, she was visiting professor at the Conflict Research Centre of University of Marburg, at the University of Edinburgh and Freie Universität Berlin. She is the author of *Transnational Companies and Security Governance. Hybrid Practices in a Postcolonial World* (2013), and *The Global Making of Policing. Postcolonial Perspectives* (2016, with MM Müller), and has published in *Security Dialogue, Governance, African Affairs, Peacebuilding and Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, amongst others. Her work can be followed on Twitter @PoCoSecurity, <http://rug.academia.edu/JanaHönke>, and www.newpoliticalgeographies.com.

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