

## **‘PEACE INITIATIVES AND THE URBAN SPACE IN THE LONG 20TH CENTURY’**

### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

*Arbeitskreis Historische Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, Annual Conference 2017, in cooperation with Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis, Berlin*

Berlin, September 28 and 29, 2017.

Recent historical and geographical scholarship posits cities and towns as objects of militarisation, as potential or actual sites of wartime destruction, and as targets of nuclear attacks. However, this ‘propensity for urban life to be attacked, destroyed, or annihilated in acts of organized violence’<sup>1</sup> has also encouraged manifold initiatives seeking to prevent urban destruction and fostered campaigning for nonviolence, disarmament, and peace from an urban point of view.

Amid such endeavours, cities and towns – with their particular histories, spatial peculiarities, material characteristics, and myriad human populations – operate as more than places in which activities for peace and disarmament can take place. Concrete urban settings rather serve as objects of reflection and become sources for negotiations concerning peace, reconciliation, and nonviolence in people’s everyday lives.

The conference will investigate the dynamic between urban space and initiatives for peace and disarmament that has emerged throughout the long 20th century and continues into the present. It will explore how towns and cities have assumed the role of a counterforce against tendencies towards militarisation, destruction, and violence, thereby aiming to widen and enlarge our perspective on creating peace in relation to urban life and urban space.

We invite contributions from scholars across a broad range of disciplines, including history, sociology, political science, peace and conflict studies, geography, urban studies, architecture, religious studies, anthropology, and media studies.

Topics for papers include, but are not limited to:

*Grassroots Urban Peace Activism and Its Local/Global Interconnections.* As a first analytical focus, we invite contributions discussing the rich history of *grassroots urban peace initiatives* and peace activism in towns and cities. When, where, and how did urban grassroots peace initiatives emerge and evolve, and in which spatial interrelations and broader organisational frameworks did these activities develop? In which ways were such activities backed by cities' 'peace' traditions, and how did these traditions contribute to interpretations of both local and national history?

*Peace and Disarmament in Official City Policies.* As a second analytical focus, we encourage contributions exploring how *local municipal officials and elected bodies* have been involved in urban actions for peace – for instance via town twinning and city networks, through adopting peace resolutions, or in local nuclear-free zone initiatives. Where, when, and why did urban representatives and urban elected bodies engage in 'local foreign policy' initiatives? Which roles did prominent local elected officials assume in such endeavours, for instance in groups as 'Mayors for Peace'? How was promoting peace and disarmament localized via initiatives such as the establishment of peace awards?

*Peace and the Symbolism of Urban Geographies.* As a further strand of discussion, we suggest investigating interconnections between the design of concrete urban spaces, and discussions about peace, nonviolence, antimilitarism, and disarmament. How did debates about peace, reconciliation, and nonviolence engage with the symbolism of urban geographies – for instance in discussions about street naming or monument erection and in practices such as peace garden design or tree planting ceremonies? How did material interventions into the urban space negotiate local cultures of remembrance, and how did they draw on and engage relics and memories of urban violence and wartime destructions? How did and how does architecture reflect themes of peace and reconciliation in concrete urban settings – be it with famous buildings such as the Peace Palace in The Hague or more mundane settings that serve everyday purposes?

*Cultures, Imagination, and Aesthetics of Peace.* How did initiatives try to foster a local culture for peace, for instance via the organisation of cultural events or the establishment of local peace museums? How do imaginations and aesthetics of peace look when viewed through the lens of urban studies? Which kinds of media were used in urban initiatives for peace and disarmament, and how did specific media approaches shape the relation between peace and the

city? How do predominantly visual media such as photography and film reflect on the interconnections between peace and the city? How are relations among cities, peace, and conflict discussed in art, literature, poetry, and music?

*'Peace Cities.'* Finally, we invite presenters to offer general and theoretical reflections on notions and concepts of the relation between towns and cities, peace and conflict. Is there such a thing as 'peace cities' or 'cities of peace', and if so, in what sense? How can we relate this mode of characterising cities and towns to modes of describing the urban that focus on war and conflict (for instance the 'postmortem city', the 'post-catastrophic city', or the 'Cold War city')?

These questions are meant to be interpreted broadly, and applicants are encouraged to submit brief proposals for papers addressing the conference's title themes. We hope that exploring the interconnections linking disarmament, nonviolence, peace and the city encourages research that avoids dichotomies of micro and macro and that uses specific case studies to reflect concrete urban settings in their interrelations with broader social phenomena and their theoretical descriptions.

### **Submission Guidelines**

If you are interested in participating, please send an abstract of 200–300 words and a short biographical note to [akhf@mail.de](mailto:akhf@mail.de) by January 15, 2017.

There is no conference fee, and we intend to cover all accommodation costs and most meals, pending the availability of funds. We also offer travel grants to participating scholars, particularly to those without institutional resources to cover travel expenses.

Questions regarding the conference may be directed at any time to:

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The *Arbeitskreis Historische Friedens- und Konfliktforschung* (AKHF) is the German Association for the Historical Study of Peace and Conflict. For more information, please visit [www.akhf.de](http://www.akhf.de)

The conference will be hosted by the *Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis*, Berlin / Heinrich Böll Stiftung, which also subsidises the event with funds. <https://www.boell.de/de/stiftung/archiv-gruenes-gedaechtnis>

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<sup>i</sup> Stephen Graham, 'Postmortem City', p. 173.