

Education, urban violence, and youth: exploring pathways or roadblocks for peace in the city

Introduction by dr Joost Monks, Managing Director, NORRAG

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Outline and focus of presentation

- 1) the **changing nature of violent conflict**, from inter-state war, to civil war, to civic conflict in urban settings
- 2) historical and present understandings on **education in relation to (violent) conflict**
- 3) Making the connections: **urbanization, education, and (violent) conflict**
 - Urbanisation and education
 - Urban violence, (non-) formal education, and youth
 - Urban youth and civic conflict
- 4) An **emerging agenda for research, policy and practice**: youth in violent urban contexts, **roadblocks or pathways for peace?**

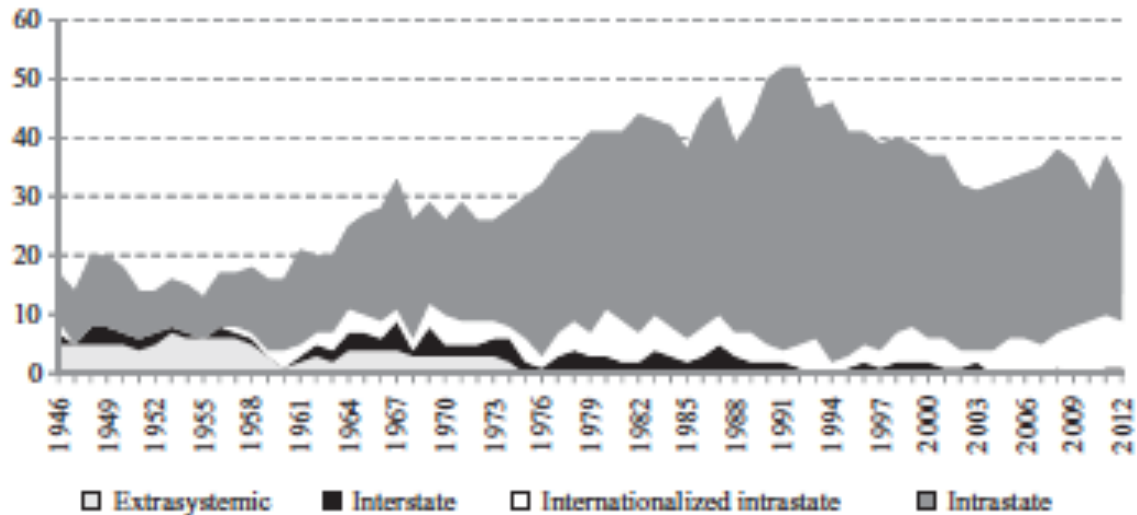
‘Conflict’, what is it?

- **Conflict** is always present and antagonistic but is not always violent (Gould, 2003; Rodgers, 2010a).
 - Conflict ≠ armed conflict or war
 - Other types of situations:
 - post-conflict environments,
 - cases of socio-political emergency or fragility,
 - settings witnessing high rates of (urban) violence.
- Under what **conditions** does conflict turn violent?
 - What role for education – mitigating and/or fostering conflict?

A younger, more urban world

- **The world is becoming younger...**
 - 3.1 billion people that are under the age of 25
- **...and more urbanized**
 - By 2050, two-thirds of the world's population will be living in cities (UN-Habitat 2013)
- **Extremely skewed transition...**
 - nearly 2.7 billion youth are living in the rapidly growing cities of Latin America, Africa, and Asia (UN-Habitat 2013; UNDESA, n.d.).
 - slums or *favelas* adjoining them the better off neighborhoods
- **Urban Violence**
 - urban youth (and males in particular) are not only more likely to be the perpetrators of urban violence, but to also to be victims of it

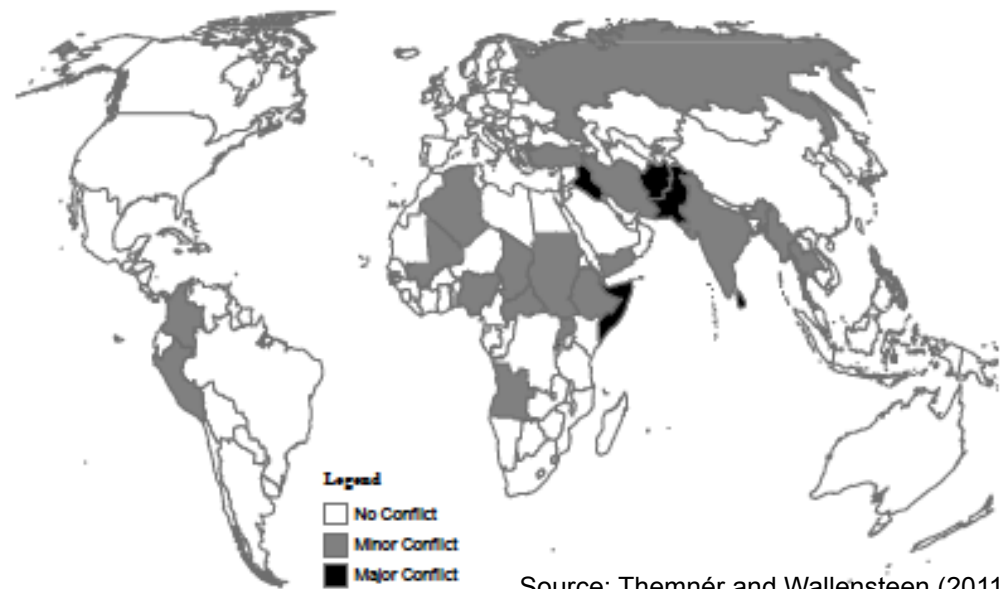
Evolution of Violent Conflict



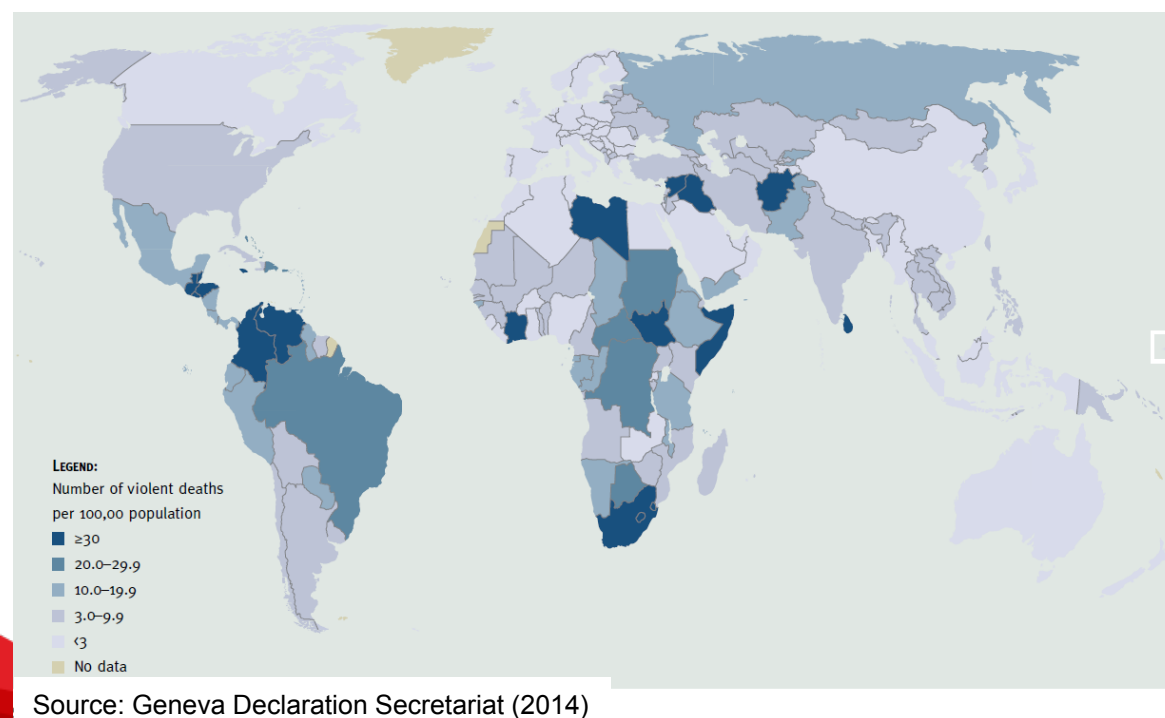
Source: Themnér and Wallensteen (2013), p. 512.

- Decrease in inter-state conflict = increase in intra-state conflict?
- Increase in non-state based conflicts
- Armed conflict is becoming less lethal
- Armed conflict is becoming more localized

- Areas affected by conflict (2009), attention on battle death (more than 1000 deaths/year)
- 1970s most wars were in Asia
- By the 1990s, it was Africa
- Post-2001 Middle East



Source: Themnér and Wallensteen (2011).



Source: Geneva Declaration Secretariat (2014)

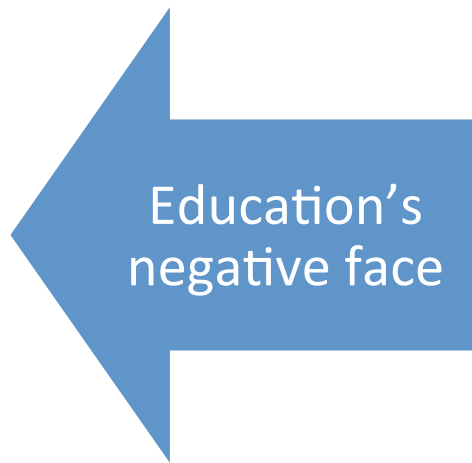
- A wider conceptualization of violent death (2004-2009)
- Shift in areas characterized by high levels of lethal violence
- The trend is expected to continue

Civic Conflict

- “violent expression of grievances (which may be social, political, or economic) vis-à-vis the state or other actors” (Beall et al., 2013)
 - diverse forms of violence
 - such as organized crime, gang warfare, terrorism, religious and sectarian rebellions, or riots
 - two things in common:
 - **urban settings**, and
 - they do not aim to take control of the state (Beall et al, 2013: 5).
- Urban violence particularly a problem in Central America and Latin America (GBAV, 2011: 70)
 - especially in Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Jamaica

Evolution of 'education' in relation to (violent) conflict

- Historically, education has played a key role in the transformation of societies...
- ...however, education alone is rarely the panacea for societal and conflict transformation...
- ...paradoxically, the functioning of education available in violence-struck cities may render it to do more harm than good (→ negative face).



Galtung's **violence** triangle & Salmi's forms of **violence in education**



Source: Galtung (1969).

1. Direct violence ("deliberate injury to the integrity of human life")	e.g. effects of violent conflicts, weapons and violence in the school, corporal punishment, sexual abuse, suicide of students due to failure
2. Indirect violence ("indirect violation of the right to survival")	e.g. illiteracy, inequality of access to education, inequality of education opportunities, insufficient educational infrastructure (lack of hygiene etc.)
3. Repressive violence ("deprivation of fundamental political rights")	e.g. absence of democracy and co-determination opportunities in schools
4. Alienating violence	e.g. culturally biased curricula (dominance culture), suppression of:

Source: Salmi, in Seitz (2004).

Carapic & Lopes Cardozo

Understanding conflict & education – a continuum



Source: Davies (2006).

Urbanization and Education

- Urban life → educational advantage...
- ... **but** in reality → urban fragmentation and inequality **undermine access to education** and training (UNICEF, 2012: 28; GBAV, 2011)
- **Education as key aspect of urbanization**
 - education → nurturing **generative civic engagement** & attracting investment, talent, and innovation
 - prosperous and productive cities (UNICEF, 2012: 28; GBAV, 2011).
- **Negative effects of urbanization on education**
 - the rapid influx of population → shortage of (public) schools and well-trained teachers /staff
 - Increase in urban private schools and public-private partnerships → equal access? students as consumers or reflexive citizens?
 - undermining of more indigenous notions of education, often derived from rural or indigenous forms of learning

Urban Violence and Education

- **Youth** are most likely to be **perpetrators and victims of urban violence**
 - higher levels of homicide tend to occur in urban places that register lower levels of educational attainment/enrollment (GBAV 2011:157-158)
 - **socio-economic exclusion** resulting from a lack of education pushes youth towards entering the illicit economy, engagement in delinquent behaviour, and gang membership (GBAV, 2011: 156; Barakat & Urdal, 2009)
 - **high dropout rates and school delay** in Latin and Central America are seen as key factors leading to the involvement of out-of-school youth in the perpetration or other indirect experiences of violence (UNESCO, 2014: 4).

Urban youth and civic conflict: roadblocks to peace?

- Low educational attainment → exacerbated segregation and exclusion → increased grievances → *civic conflict*
- But: we need to avoid all too simplistic views...
 - 'youth bulges' ≠ armed conflict
 - violence in the city ≠ a simple by-product of a large youth population
 - education ≠ only solution to urban violence
 - lack of education ≠ only driver of urban violence

Emerging insights: pathways to peace in the city?

Education – as part of a bottom-up “peacebuilding in the city” (Jütersonke and Krause, 2013)

- ✓ forms of learning as a potential part of innovative approaches to building peace in the city with a **focus on social sectors and social movements** – moving away from a focus on the state-level, market and security sectors only (liberal peace)
- ✓ need to **address root causes that drive civic conflict in cities** → one of the root causes of exclusion, marginalisation and frustration is a lack of available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable (Tomaševski, 2004) **education**
- ✓ primary aim of peacebuilding in the city is to **foster (non-violent) generative civic engagement** or what Davies (2004) would call ‘**positive (non-violent) conflict**’ – i.e. to **transform** power and resource (re)distribution in the urban environment by encouraging wider socio-economic and political change that is demanded by younger (and older) generations **through (new) forms of education**

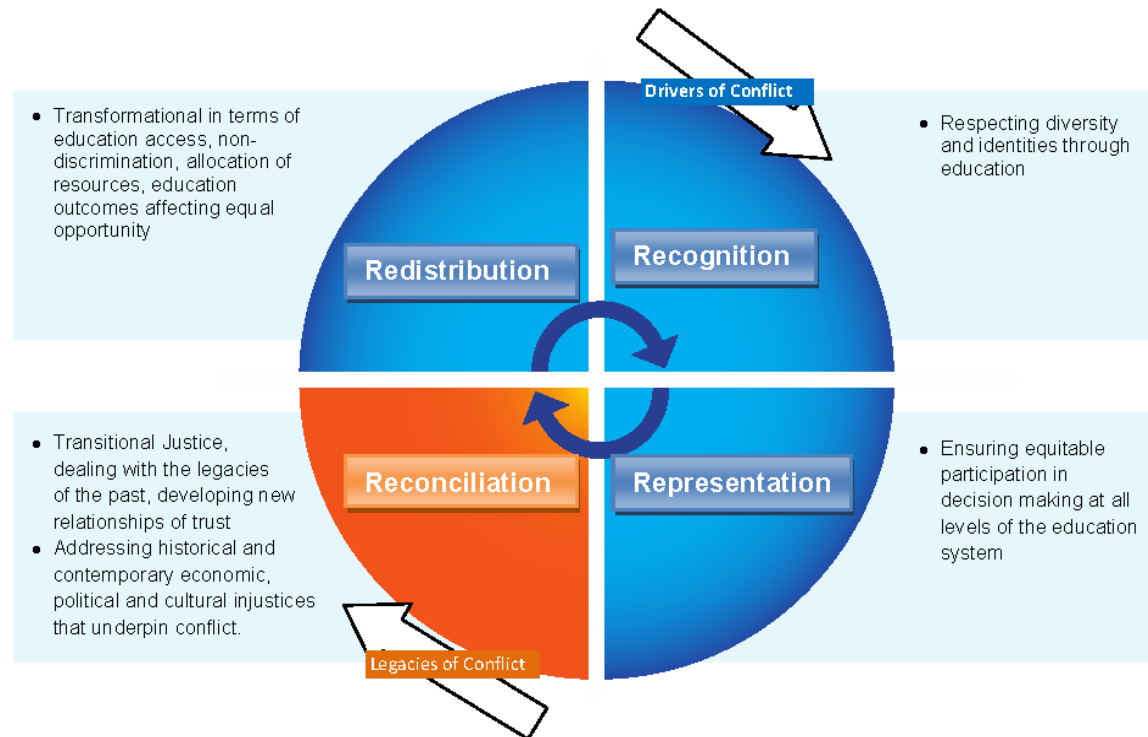
Education, Urban Violence & transformation?

While acknowledging the need to solve problems quickly...

...there is a need to pay attention to education's location as part of processes that foster and mitigate violence...

...and to move beyond the notion of 'do no harm' to 'do good'...

...towards a more transformative approach to education in relation to building peace.



Source: Novelli, Lopes Cardozo & Smith (2015), PBEA Research Consortium

Education, urban violence and youth: *a new agenda for research, policy & practice*

- ✓ Need for rigorous, longitudinal, evaluative **data** on the role and function of (formal and non-formal) **education for youth in violent urban settings**
- ✓ More attention should be paid to **specific marginalised youth constituencies**, including: girls/young women; those with low socio-economic status; disabled populations; ethno-linguistic-religious minorities; LGBT; urban (and rural) youth; and those living in situations of armed violence/conflict (UNESCO, 2013; Lopes Cardozo et al, 2015)
- ✓ need for serious engagement with **youth voice** and building on **youth-led initiatives**
- ✓ Attention needed for **multiscalar nature** of complex relations between **education, social (in)justices and violence**

Thank you

- Comments are welcome
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