Working Paper #10

NORRAG

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

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March 2016

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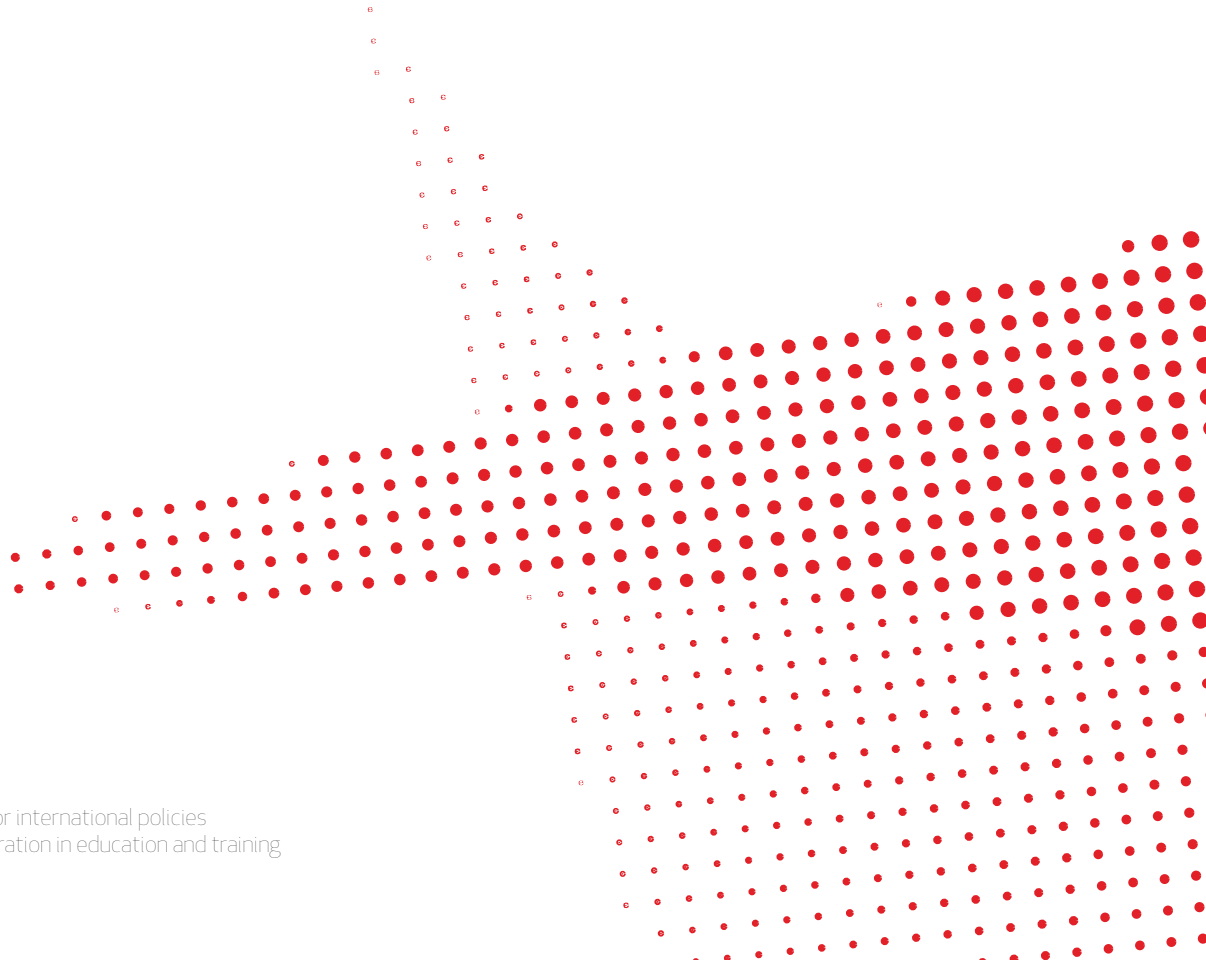

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Acknowledgments

This paper was initiated by NORRAG as part of its 'Urban Violence, Education, and Youth' programme of work and is developed in partnership with the Small Arms Survey and University of Amsterdam. The text benefitted from feedback received from Joost Monks, Michel Carton, Mario Novelli, and Zachariah Mampilly. We also thank Luisa Phebo and Genny Wenger for their research support during the preparation of this paper; and we are grateful for the comments and questions from fellow panellists and the audience present at the ISA conference in February 2015 in New Orleans and the INEE seminar on Education, Urban Violence and Violent Extremism in Geneva in October 2015. We are also grateful for the institutional support from NORRAG, the Small Arms Survey, and the University of Amsterdam which enabled us to develop this paper.

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Abstract: Although (violent) conflict and education still co-exist to a large extent in separate academic and practitioner silos, the linkages between them have begun to emerge as a central concern for a variety of stakeholders working on sustainable development and peacebuilding. Critically examining this relationship is important, especially in view of a range of societal changes taking place around the world: a growing younger population, rampant urbanization and spatial fragmentation, rising social inequalities, and high rates of (lethal) violence. This paper explores whether and in what ways education can play a role in mitigating or preventing urban violence that mainly affects youth. The paper also recognises the possible negative effects of education. Specifically, in combination with uneven urbanization, education – whether available or not – can lead to an increased sense of social exclusion among the urban youth, which, in turn, can foster violence in the city (i.e. civic conflict). This paper explores these positive and negative interactions between education, youth and urban violence, and develops an emerging research agenda in this specific subfield. We argue how an expansive rather than narrow methodological 'post-disciplinary' framing is essential to explore the relationships between formal and non-formal educational processes, various forms of urban violence and youth agency in relation to peace.

Keywords: education, urban violence, conflict, youth, peace building

1. Introduction

The past two decades have seen increased attention given to the topic of 'education and conflict' in the field of international development at the policy and academic level. In this process, connections are being explored and sometimes actively sought between other sectors connected to the international development agenda and more recently the sustainable development agenda, such as security or disaster risk reduction (Winthrop and Matsui, 2013: 14-16). Although it has been recognised that such collaboration is fruitful for broadening the scope of international education and fostering development, cross-silo cooperation has only to a limited extent materialised, despite individual and organisational efforts. Arguably, part of the explanation for this lies in the terminology, as stakeholders working in different sectors tend to use the same terms but different operational definitions. In our review of the relevant literature, we adopt a post-disciplinary methodological approach (Jessop and Sum, 2013) to bring together insights from a range of thematically overlapping, albeit often practically and discursively separate, policy and scholarly debates. By so doing, we aim to contribute to the conversation on the importance of educational opportunities for urban youth in an increasingly conflict-affected world, and to share these insights with a broad audience, including academics, practitioners and policy-makers working in (one of these) connected fields.

Why focus on youth? We argue that youth can be considered as (both passive and active) protagonists in the story of contemporary forms of urban violence. In addition, specifically with regard to conflict-affected contexts, youth-related issues are moving into the spotlight for policy-makers, practitioners and scholars alike as there is a growing recognition and concern for on the one hand the challenges of a large, often under-educated and un(der)-employed and potentially 'frustrated' youth cohort in a demographic sense in conflict settings, and on the other hand the potential of youth movement and 'agency' for peace.[1] Yet, there is a lack of consensus within the international community over the precise (chronological) definition of what we mean by *youth* (see UNICEF, 2009:11). The UN (2007) and World Bank (2007) define youth as those between 15-25, while the African Union (2006) and many African nations define youth as those aged between 15 and 35 (UNICEF, Larsen, 2009: 11). Meanwhile, UNICEF defines adolescents as children between 10 and 19 years (UNICEF, 2009:11). For the purpose of this paper, we have broadly defined youth as those within the second and third decade of life. We recognize that this is a culturally and contextually specific category of the population that needs an adapted working definition in each specific research location, while also realizing that non-age bound definitions might prove more appropriate in specific contexts due to marked *rites de passage* to 'adulthood' (Lopes Cardozo et al, 2015). That being said, we believe that the focus of this paper on young people who are in their teens and early twenties is justified by the evidence on lethal violence, which illustrates that it is this age category that it most likely to be affected by or engage in violence (both as perpetrators as well as victims) (GBAV, 2011: 113).

Why focus on violence in urban settings specifically? The world is facing an unprecedented demographic transition: it is simultaneously becoming younger and more urbanized than at any other point in history. This transition is skewed. Of the estimated 3.1 billion people that are under the age of 25, the majority (nearly 2.7 billion) are living in the rapidly growing cities of Latin America, Africa, and Asia (UN-Habitat 2013; UNDESA, n.d.). A disproportionate proportion of these individuals are not found in the better-off neighbourhoods of the emerging metropolises, but are instead located in the impoverished, unplanned, and often highly violent urban settlements (referred to as slums or *favelas*) that adjoin them (UNESCO GMR 2012: 257). In such contexts, disadvantaged (i.e. unemployed and un- or under-educated) urban youth are more likely not only to be the perpetrators of urban violence, but also to be victims of it (GBAV, 2011, 2015).

Given the above-mentioned demographic transition and specifically the fact that the most violence-affected cities have relatively youthful populations (Muggah, 2014)[2], it is not

surprising that the engagement of young people in violence is of concern around the globe, on multiple scales, and primarily in urban areas. Take for instance the high levels of violence among urban youth gangs in neighbourhoods in Central America, youth engagement in national level violent political unrest around election times in Kenya, regional cross-border militias in the African Great Lakes and Guinea Gulf regions, or youth drawn into Jihadi extremist movements (OECD, 2011). However, we need to stay away from over-simplifications that see (urban) youth – and especially young men – as inherently violent, and education as a solution to the problems facing today's cities.[3] Instead, we need to explore: why young people living in urban environments are affected by various forms of violence; if and why they turn to violence themselves; what role education plays in fostering attitudes of generative civic engagement or, conversely, how education content or pedagogy reproduces structures and attitudes of (in)direct violence; and finally, how the absence or poor quality of education leads to an increase in civil conflict.

Why look at the role of education? Inherent within many international policy debates is the assumption that education – broadly conceived to include formal and non-formal learning and training processes – can potentially play a key role in addressing the impacts of this demographic transition (UNESCO, 2014:2)[4]. Well before this perspective featured at the forefront of the international political discourse, education had been defined as a basic human right – something that is fundamental in today's youth claims. At the same time, in policy recommendations established by international organisations such as UN Habitat and the OECD, education is put forth as essential both for fostering economic development (by nurturing human capital capable of attracting investment, talent, and innovation) and reducing urban violence (by increasing the socio-economic inclusion and upward mobility of disadvantaged urban youth) (UN-Habitat 2013: xvii; OECD, 2011:11-12).

Yet, such a 'productive' emphasis on education rarely scratches beneath the surface to actually unpack its more complex role in society. The quality and availability of education can act as a mechanism for mitigating or sometimes fostering violence and conflict (and vice versa). There is little guidance (or evidence) on the kinds of formal and non-formal educational strategies national and metropolitan governments, school boards, youth movements and other civil society organisations and communities can (or should) develop and implement in order to respond to urban violence, by including various forms of education and training as part of a broader urban violence mitigation strategy. We will draw on connected, but not entirely similar debates, which focus on the role of education in peacebuilding in post-conflict situations. We will highlight how some aspects of these insights, for instance the need to address root causes and understand key drivers of violence and inequalities in and through education, are particularly relevant, while issues of reconciliation might only be relevant in certain specific urban situations, depending on the nature of the violence and the type of struggle or conflict present.

Obviously, the scope of this paper does not allow for a full exploration of the massive issues at stake. Hence, we have chosen to focus here on reviewing and combining the insights from various bodies of literature that engage with: 1) the changing nature of violent conflict, emphasizing the contemporary shift in the geographic distribution of (lethal) violence to urban areas (in both times of war and 'peace'), 2) historical and contemporary perspectives on the role and function of education in relation to processes of societal transformations as well as instances of violence; and 3) how education opportunities (or a lack thereof) for young people in increasingly urbanizing and violent settings press for an urgent research agenda on education for more peaceful cities.

2. The evolving nature of (violent) conflict: from inter-state war, to civil war, to civic conflict in urban settings

Within the field of international education the notion of conflict is often associated with rather narrow conceptualisations of inter- or intra-state war. Even when a broader concept is used,

such as 'emergency' or 'fragility', the emphasis is still on wartime itself or the immediate post-conflict period. Although this focus might echo the area of interest and expertise when it comes to education specialists working in the field of *education, conflict and emergencies*, it does not necessarily reflect the societal changes taking place globally – namely, that 'armed conflict, between or within states, is far from the most important risk of lethal violence that most people face' (Krause, 2009: 345). Taking this insight into account, it is clear that the conceptualisation of (violent) conflict, and its relation to education, needs to be rethought. There is also a need to examine where this continuously evolving interaction actually takes place (such as in urban environments) and how it affects particular sub-sets of the population (namely urban youth). This section therefore first unravels the concept of conflict, then looks at how it is connected to our thinking about violence, what this means for the demographic shifts of urbanisation and why there is a need to focus on urban violence specifically.

Conflict does not simply mean armed conflict or organised forms of collective violence. Rather, conflict needs to be conceptualized as an inherent part of society: conflict is always present and antagonistic but is not always violent (Gould – 2003; Rodgers, 2010a). Such a view of conflict enables an examination of political violence and contestation beyond wartime, including: post-conflict environments, cases of socio-political emergency or fragility, and settings witnessing high rates of (predominantly urban) violence. It also allows for unpacking under which conditions conflict *can* turn violent, and for an exploration of the role that particular programming interventions – such as the provision of education and training – may play in mitigating (but possibly also contributing to) the escalation of societal tensions into sustained inter-personal or even collective violence.

Building on this, the conceptualisation of Davies (2004) of 'positive conflict' is helpful, as it allows for a broader understanding of how the *way in which conflict is handled* is crucial. The use of cooperative, non-violent ways of critical encounter and dialogue – also termed 'interruptive democracy' in educational spaces – *can* result in a process of 'positive' conflict and transformation of the status quo (Ibid.). The other qualification that is connected to this understanding of how conflict can be a force of positive change is whether it contributes to a situation in which we could speak of a so-called 'positive peace' (Galtung, 1976; 1990), which means the absence of structural violence, the conditions to eliminate the causes of violence and as such the establishment of social justice. Hence, we suggest understanding conflict for the purpose of this paper by placing it along a spectrum, ranging from *negative forms of conflict* to more *positive forms of conflict*.

Violence, then, should also be understood in its many forms and dimensions. Galtung (1990) has visualised a triangle with the more visible, *direct forms of violence* at the top, complemented by the less visible but equally damaging forms of *structural* (or *indirect*) and *cultural violence* at the other two corners of the pyramid. While a more gender-specific analysis is needed to complement a full understanding of these various forms of violence (Confortini, 2006), these dimensions are crucial when looking at the relation to young people's lives, as well as the interrelations between such forms of violence and how they relate to education (discussed in the next section) as well as (negative) forms of conflict.

The past 25 years have witnessed not only a decline in the number of armed conflicts (Sundberg et al., 2012), but also a drop in the associated number of violent deaths (i.e. their intensity) (Themnér and Wallensteen, 2013: 511). The Geneva Declaration's *Global Burden of Armed Violence* (GBAV) *2015* report has found that between 2007 and 2012, about 508,000 individuals died annually as a result of violence. Of these, only ten per cent can be labelled as armed conflict or war-related deaths, while the rest resulted from violence in so-called non-conflict settings (i.e. situations where no war was taking place) (GBAV, 2015: 51). Two of the most violent countries in the world were Honduras and Venezuela (with death rates of 90.4 and 72.2 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants, respectively), neither of which experienced an armed conflict during the reported period. Moreover, the levels of violence in these countries were surpassed only by the war in

Syria, where the death rate was estimated to be 180.2 per 100,000 inhabitants (GBAV, 2015: 52).

The geography of armed conflict has also changed. While for the last two decades civil war has continuously outnumbered instances of inter-state war, it has been suggested that in the future armed conflict is going to become even more 'localized'. Specifically, scholars and analysts have argued that war and other forms of collective violence are more likely to take place in cities (Harroff-Tavel, 2010; Rosenau, 1997; US Government, 2011). As mentioned previously, part of the reason for this has to do with demographics. Today, for the first time in history, the majority of the world's population is living in urban centres, and current projections indicate that by 2050, two-thirds of the global population will be living in cities (UN-Habitat, 2013).

Urbanization also exists along a spectrum, and despite the common perception of urban spaces as sprawling city landscapes with skyscraper skylines, cities come in all shapes and sizes. It is thus perhaps best to daw on Wirth's (1938) definition of urban spaces as 'relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement[s] of socially heterogeneous individuals' (Wirth, 1938: 8). This definition is useful as it situates the city within its surrounding contexts, emphasizing the 'relative' distinction between the urban space and rural areas. In line with this view, we do not assume that urban violence is an intrinsic feature of urban spaces – in the world one can find extremely violent cities as well as relatively peaceful cities (for a good discussion see Rodgers, 2010a). Rather than simply equating cities with violence, the emphasis here is on understanding the manifestation of violence in urban spaces. In this sense, urban violence manifests itself in many forms and needs to be seen as part of a continuum, one that goes from anomic violence (crime and delinquency) to urban warfare or insurgency (Rodgers, 2010b; Beall et al., 2009; Staniland, 2012; Carapic, 2015).

Urban violence needs to be situated in relation to other forms of (violent) conflict present in society. Here we follow Beall et al (2013), and distinguish between sovereign conflict, civil conflict, and civic conflict. Unlike sovereign conflict (i.e. inter-state war) and civil conflict (i.e. civil war) where the aim is to achieve some (or total) control over state power, civic conflict involves political contestation over how the state functions (i.e. the distribution of and access to resources). Beall et al (2013: 5) define civic conflict as the 'violent expression of grievances (which may be social, political, or economic) vis-à-vis the state or other actors'. Specifically, the term refers to diverse forms of violence (such as organized crime, gang warfare, terrorism, religious and sectarian rebellions, or riots) which seem to have two things in common: a) they predominantly take place in urban settings, and b) they do not aim to take control of the state. Although civic conflict is 'linked' to state or municipal weakness and often involves economic motivation on the part of the violent forms of organization engaged in it, it is not a simple by-product of weakness or financial desire. Rather, civic conflict is the (often, yet not always) violent expression of daily urban politics – as attempts by the urban population (mostly youth) to alter the power relationships within cities.

The issues underpinning the emergence of violent civic conflict are thus social issues related to the nature of urban spaces – such as density, diversity, and compressed inequality – and to demands for citizenship rights in urban areas (Lefebvre, 1996 [1967]). In other words, if the avenues for non-violent contestation over civic issues (i.e. 'generative civic engagements') are blocked, there is a possibility for grievances and contestation to transform into violent civic conflict (Beall et al., 2013: 12; UN-Habitat, 2013: 135). This is especially so in view of the claim that 'political violence often spreads during periods of protests. It frequently develops inside social movements and is indeed (although not often) a (most visible) by-product of their actions' (della Porta, 2014: 163). Despite being economic and social, many civic conflicts are thus also inherently political (Beall et al., 2013: 5). Hence, civic conflict can be perceived as a 'negative' form of conflict, when it involves the resort to violence as a form of resistance. Nevertheless, civic conflict aimed at altering existing (unjust, unequal and discriminatory) power relationships in urban settings could be perceived as contributing to a process of 'positive peace'.

This begs the question: what are the available mechanisms for fostering non-violent generative civic engagement, specifically in urban settings? The international community has repeatedly presented education as a potential key element in fostering peace, as is illustrated by the increasing leverage of the work of the International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE).[5] Yet the jury is still out on the role of education in the reduction of urban violence – especially since in some countries there seems to be a clear mismatch between educational advancements or improvements and levels of lethal violence. In the last few decades, access to schools in Latin and Central America has greatly improved, resulting in the achievement of nearly universal access to primary education and dramatically increasing rates of secondary level enrolment in the region (UNESCO, 2011b:11; UNDP, n.d.). Despite these improvements, urban violence has continued to persist in these regions, and in some countries even increased.[6] This trend does not seem to be unique to the Latin American context, and its contemporary and global relevance urges us to further explore the relationship between education and violent conflict, to which we now turn.

3. Historical and present conceptualisations of education in relation to (violent) conflict

For the purposes of this paper, education *is not* taken to simply mean schooling. Drawing on the work of Robertson and Dale (2014: 150), in this paper education is conceptualised as an *ensemble*, a notion that:

> 'reflects the fact that education represents, and is reflected, in crucial multiple relationships with, and within, societies; it is a complex and variegated agency of social reproduction. Thus it cannot be reduced to 'a system', or 'an agent' of socialisation and social selection, or indeed a provider of vocational qualifications.'

Robertson and Dale (2014) argue how not all of what goes on in any education ensemble is visible. As a result, our explanations of education ensembles needs to take into account those mechanisms and processes that are not observable, but which have real effects.

Historically, education has played a key role in the transformation of societies. While a full intellectual history of the concept of education and its evolution over time is beyond the scope of this paper, a brief overview of the changing nature of education during the second half of the 20th century and the first 15 years of the 21st century is necessary for understanding its increased role in the international development agenda, and its current rise within the field of conflict and security.

While education, or the restricted access to certain forms of education, was often used as a political tool to 'divide and rule' during colonial times, following World War II, the 1948 United Nations (UN) Declaration of Human Rights established education as a human right (Shields, 2012). The initial post-war period was also characterized by emerging international aid flows to education in 'developing countries', as education was seen as a useful tool for the modernization of 'under-developed nations'. During the Cold War, this relationship took a turn for the political as educational aid also became a geopolitical tool, for example by USAID in printing anti-Soviet textbooks for distribution in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2008).

Starting in the 1960s, human capital theory and modernisation thinking inspired a process of economic reductionism and a technical approach to the (economic) function of education, with a strong role for the state. The 1970s brought about a more holistic and critical understanding of education (see for example, Freire, 2000 [1970]; Illich, 1971; Reimer, 1971; Dore, 1976), whereby education included training and cultural re-learning in formal, non-formal and informal environments, often with social justice objectives. Beginning in the 1980s, however, the rise of economic neoliberalism overshadowed this broader conceptualisation and impacted the interaction between education and development through an increased emphasis on schooling and results (Shields, 2012). As the state was seen as the problem rather than

the solution, public spending was reduced, followed by decentralisation and privatisation of education and other social services. This was often linked to Structural Adjustment Programmes enforced by the major Bretton Woods international financial institutions. Rates of Return Analysis marked the link between neoliberalism and Human Capital Theory, leading to a narrow focus on education's economic returns and the prioritisation of basic education over higher levels of schooling (Robertson et al, 2007).

Furthermore, globalisation, which has intensified and changed in nature since the 1990s, has had a huge effect on both the governance and emergence of global agendas for education and development. In response to the 'lost decade for development' of the 1980s and the failure of the neoliberal policies to either improve development processes or educational access and quality, a range of international commitments were established in the 1990s and 2000s. Both the Education for All (EFA) movement launched in Jomtien in 1990, and advanced in Dakar in 2000, and the Millennium Development Goals accepted by the UN in 2000, further changed how the relationship between education and development is understood by putting emphasis on rights-based education and focusing mostly on universal primary education with special attention to girls. At the same time, from the early 2000s the realisation grew that more than half of all out-of-school children were situated in conflict-affected areas, which resulted in a targeting of these contexts by development practice and funding (UNESCO GMR, 2011).

If we draw on the (former UN Special Rapporteur Tomaševski's (2003) definition on the right to education – which includes the premise that education must be *available*, *accessible*, *acceptable*, and *adaptable* to all learners (the 4As), there are millions more children and young people effectively excluded from schooling in conflict-affected societies by the form, function and purpose schooling takes. This is particularly concerning given that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, Art 29.1) identifies that education *should* prepare all children for a 'responsible life in a free society in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin'.

Geopolitically, the post-Cold War era saw an increase in the so-called (intra- instead of inter-state) 'New Wars', which went hand in hand with United Nations driven interventions in humanitarian crisis and conflict situations (Duffield, 2001). As a result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 and the subsequent 'war on terror', the merging of security and development programming and funding, or a 'securitisation of aid to education' further intensified the interest in education in fragile, conflict and post-conflict settings, in the sectors of policy, academia and media (Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2008). Subsequently, the global economic crisis from 2008 onward has brought about a plunge in aid to education (GPE, 2013; UNESCO, 2013), and thus an even more results-driven agenda for education aid. This has resulted in new policy rationales and an increased merging of security and development budgets and practices of (traditional) donor countries such as the U.S., the U.K. and the Netherlands. In this new integrated or '3D' rationale – where development, diplomacy and defence converge – education mostly features in donor countries' strategies as having 'benefits' to other sectors or areas that are prioritised over education, including the economic, security and humanitarian agendas (Lopes Cardozo and Novelli, 2010; Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2012). Future analysis will need to shed light on the question of whether the SDGs could partially revisit this perspective, as both education and youth are being (re-)considered as priority fields of intervention.

The dialectic relation between education, (violent) conflict and processes of peacebuilding is a highly complex one, and far from easy to 'measure' in terms of any direct causal relationship. Since the landmark report of Bush and Saltarelli (2000), there has been a growing acknowledgement of both the positive as well as the negative impact of education on (violent) conflict, the so-called 'two faces of education'. Under certain circumstances, both formal and non-formal education initiatives might contribute to violence and conflict within

society (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2004; Lopes Cardozo, 2008). On the positive side, education and training have been noted to have an important role in processes of social cohesion and reconciliation, through the messages and shared values they can promote (Tawil & Harley, 2004). In post-conflict periods, education can provide for psychosocial recovery, normalcy, hope, and the inculcation of values and skills for building and maintaining a peaceful future (Sommers 2002, p. 18).

These particular functions of educational spaces can apply to violent urban settings as well, yet the success of such learning spaces in mitigating the various forms of violence depends on their availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability. For example, children and young people in crisis and violent situations are particularly vulnerable to physical and emotional harm, and need new and different knowledge, skills and learning experiences to cope with these issues. Matters such as health education (water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) or HIV/AIDS education), disaster preparedness (earthquake safety, for example), and psycho-social healing after traumatic experiences are critically relevant in and after such moments (Kirk, 2006).

Education alone is rarely the panacea for societal (and conflict) transformation, and paradoxically, certain aspects of the functioning of education and training available in cities may cause it to do more harm than good. Drawing on the work of Salmi (2000 in Seitz 2004), we view education as related to violence in two significant ways:

1. as *direct violence*, where schools become ideological battlegrounds for control and/or where physical harm is being done (e.g. physical punishment or attacks (on students and teachers), violent battles fought out at school premises), or alternatively where schools perform a protective function against such conditions; or
2. *indirect violence*, through which social injustices and inequalities are perpetuated and legitimized in discriminatory or (culturally, linguistically, politically) biased schooling practices, provoking social exclusion and the seeds of further violence, or alternatively where schools actively seek to redress such conditions through more inclusive schooling practices (Shah and Lopes Cardozo, 2015).

Research in this particular field has generally been too focussed on approaching the issues of education, violence and conflict from a problem solving approach – namely by identifying how to get the socio-political system back up and running – and has failed to pay close enough attention to education's location within a quest for innovative education approaches and spaces as part of a broader governance and social change agenda (Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2008). In order to remedy this disparity, recently there has been a push from critical scholars within the field of international and comparative education to situate education within a broader set of processes – or to see it as an 'education ensemble' as explained above (Roberston and Dale, 2014). Internationally set agendas, including the recent Sustainable Development Goals, still view (formal) schooling as the main conduit for education – leaving the needs of marginalized youth and adults largely untackled.

Closely connected to this argument is the notion that '[violent] conflict and its resolution is shaped by a range of structures, institutions and agents that operate below, around, above and beyond the nation-state (local government; national state; neighbour states; regional agreements; supra-national bodies; other nation-states)' (Novelli, 2011: 7). This means that rather than being removed from the processes that foster and mitigate conflict, education (both in terms of access and quality) is an integral part of them. Recent literature on the role of education in post-conflict peacebuilding processes sheds light on some of these issues. One of the main arguments within this section of the literature is that education can mitigate the relapse of (violent) conflict only if educational reforms are embedded within the broader set of policies and programmes aimed at the diverse processes of peacebuilding being implemented in society (Novelli and Smith, 2011: 12). Yet, the role of non-formal education or schooling otherwise organised outside of the formal state system should also be acknowledged as providing a potentially important contribution to processes of transformation, or setbacks to

various forms of violence (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000: 23-27).

Peacebuilding education programmes are a rather new approach (Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2008), but are gaining momentum. The work of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) programme, which was established in 2011, is one example of such implementation in the field (UNICEF PBEA, 2013). Such programmes demonstrate that there is a shift underway, moving beyond the notion of a 'do no harm' approach to a 'do good' or more transformative approach to education and development in conflict-affected contexts.[7] When education policy and programming seeks to support processes of social justice, it can effectively contribute to what Fraser (1995, 2005) termed a 'transformative remedy'. Following Fraser's three-dimensional conceptualisation of social justice, and adapting this to education (Shah and Lopes Cardozo, 2015) requires *redistribution* of educational resources (between poorer and richer parts of the city), *recognition* (and making education more *acceptable* and *adaptable* to serve a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-religious urban population), and *representation* (of multiple political perspectives, ensuring democratic participation of all (youth) constituencies in the urban space).

Such a social justice framework enables consideration of education's role in a more sustainable peacebuilding that works towards positive peace (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith, 2015). Obviously, and in connection to our conceptualisation of conflict above, there is a realisation that such transformative processes are of a longer-term nature, and require a constant engagement to explore and address older and potentially new root causes of social injustices and violent conflict, including civic conflict in urban settings. Hence, while the insights from the literature on education's role in peacebuilding might not be entirely applicable to our analysis here of education's role in urban settings of violence, we see a commonality in the understanding that social injustices are both *drivers* and *expressions* of the various forms of violence. We will now further explore the specific dynamics and challenges for education's role in addressing (violent) conflict in urban environments.

4. Making the connections: urbanization, education, and (violent) conflict

As mentioned previously, within the next three-and-a-half decades the majority of the global population will be living in urban settings – with the majority of this urbanization taking place in Africa, Asia and Latin America (UN-Habitat, 2013: 25). Evidence suggests that education plays a key role in the overall process of urbanization and the political, social, and economic transformations it brings about (UN-Habitat, 2013: xiv; UNESCO, 2014: 2). And, while the jury is out on the claim that the process of urbanization itself leads to higher levels of violence, it is clear that if it is poorly managed it can be socially disruptive, and potentially lead to instances of civic conflict (Fox and Beall, 2012; Rodgers, 2010a, 2010b). These insights raise a number of questions: *How does urbanization affect education, and vice-versa? Can education (in its broadest definition) 'address' the impacts of urbanization such as potential higher levels of violence?*

4.1 Urbanization and Education

The process of urbanization implies a transformation of society and changing distribution of public infrastructure and goods. Evidence suggests that education is a fundamental aspect of this process (IIEP-UNESCO, 1999; Burns, 2002; UNESCO, 2014: 2). One of the most often-cited examples is the role of education in the transformation of society in industrializing Britain, where education was seen not only as a means for obtaining industrial and commercial competence (i.e. getting a job) but also as a means for climbing the social ladder (King, 1967: 440). But while education in a context of industrializing and urbanizing Britain fostered the development of the middle class, upward mobility was limited to those who could afford to obtain an education, resulting in the isolation of particular sectors of the population (especially the poor menial workers who filled the factories) (King, 1967).

Similarly, education played a key role in the

nature of urbanization in the United States during the first half of the 20th century (Havighurst, 1967). The pattern of education at the time was such that cities became stratified along socio-economic lines, with working-class families and the poor living in downtown areas and wealthy individuals settling in the suburbs. The result of this stratification was not only a difference in the number and quality of educational facilities (with school quality increasing as one moved from the inner-city, to the outer areas of the metropolitan area, to the suburbs) but also limited interaction in schools, so that children and youth no longer engaged with their counterparts from different socio-economic backgrounds.

In today's developing cities, education is often put forward as essential not only for fostering socio-economic inclusion and upward mobility (i.e. nurturing generative civic engagement) but also for attracting investment, talent, and innovation – all factors that can lead to the development of human capital which, in turn, fosters the creation of prosperous and productive cities (UN-Habitat, 2013: xvii). Urbanization – especially in low and middle income countries – has been found to have a number of important effects on education, as in particular cases it has been shown to improve education outcomes, such as performance and completion rates (Jayasuriya and Wodon, 2003; Peng et al., N/D).

Yet, as mentioned before, education is not simply about fostering human capital. If education's role is to be taken seriously within the process of urbanization and societal transformation, we need to move beyond the simplistic view of education as only fostering 'productive' citizens and societies. Instead, we need to take into account the range of mechanisms and actors that constitute an 'urban education ensemble'. In addition, while education is often portrayed as a way of creating human capital and generative civic engagement in today's developing cities, the international community tends to occlude from analysis the negative effects of urbanization: the rapid influx of population leads to a shortage of (state-funded) schools and well-trained teachers and other educational staff; the expansion of cities leads to a strain on public institutions, as well as a fragmentation of urban space and 'educational' authority; and finally the undermining of more indigenous notions of education, which often involve or are derived from rural or indigenous forms of learning (Qian and Anlei, 2014; Rodgers, 2014).

The resulting lack of accessible and available state-funded schooling, supported by the above-mentioned neoliberal global reductionist agenda to educate for the realisation of productive citizens, led to the creation of urban private schools and public-private partnerships (PPPs), also for the poor. As analysed by Roberston and Verger (2012), while much is dependent on *how* and *by whom* these PPPs are created, it can be argued that the framework adopted by global education PPP-entrepreneurs is often grounded on market-based logics and forms of accounting rather than publicly oriented ones. As these partnerships represent a narrow view of education, students are all too often being trained to be consumers rather than social and political subjects, which undermines the ability of young people to act as capable, reflexive actors in generative civic engagement.

4.2 Urban violence, (non-) formal education, and youth

The nature of social exclusion and socio-economic inequality in cities is characterized by proximity to, but inability to attain, the many benefits of urban life, especially education. Individuals living in urban areas are generally considered to have an educational advantage, but in reality urban fragmentation and inequality fundamentally undermine an individual's access to education and training (UNICEF, 2012: 28). The process of urbanization is rarely even, as a result of which the distribution and quality of education, and other public goods and services, varies across the city landscape. Thus, while good schools and training facilities are likely to be found all over the city, individuals coming from lower socio-economic backgrounds often have limited access to them (UN Millennium Project 2005: 15).

Children and youth coming from poorer neighbourhoods are especially likely to miss out on educational opportunities. While in most cities children living in poorer communities have access to primary levels of education, the

quality of it is often questionable. When combined with poor living conditions, pressures to support family livelihoods, and high levels of violence in the neighbourhood, the probability that children will drop out of school also increases (GBAV, 2011: 157-158). Consequently, while living in poor urban areas is not correlated with lower primary school attendance, it has been found to be a significant factor in predicting lower secondary enrolment and completion (Lewis, 2010).

This trend seems to be especially prevalent in settings affected by high levels of lethal violence, and following Tomaševki's (2004) rationale, signals a need for diversified secondary education and training that is *available* (also after basic compulsory levels), *accessible* (inclusive and non-discriminatory for all youth constituencies), *acceptable* (safe and relevant), and *adaptable* (made relevant to the needs and challenges of different groups of learners). This is supported by the claims made for ensuring accessible, quality and relevant secondary education for all, while designing particularly inclusive strategies for disadvantaged youth (UNESCO GMR, 2012: 226). Yet, while diversifying the formal secondary curriculum by introducing technical and vocational education or expanding and supporting the availability of non-formal, non-governmental or youth-led spaces for learning seems a crucial short-term strategy to meet youth's learning needs, the gains 'should be weighed against what could be gained by investing the same limited resources in raising the quality of teaching in core curriculum subjects' (Ibid. 2012: 241).[8]

As mentioned previously, Central and Latin America are some of the most violent regions in the world, while at the same time being characterized by low levels of secondary school enrolment and completion. According to UNESCO (2012: 34), around 17% of students in Latin America and the Caribbean leave school before completing primary education. The figure is even higher when secondary education is taken into account, and according to estimates produced by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB, 2012), nearly 50% of students in Latin America do not finish secondary school. Focusing in on some of the world's most violent countries, the lack of school enrolment and completion among poor urban youth becomes even more apparent. In El Salvador, for example, 42% of children from the poorest households complete primary education, compared with 84% of those from the richest households. In Guatemala, almost three-quarters of the rich achieve basic skills in mathematics, reading, and writing compared with just one-quarter of the poorest. In both countries, the biggest reason for this disparity is mainly related to the fact that those coming from poorer households do not complete primary education (EFA 2014: 4). Honduras is expected to achieve universal lower secondary school completion in the 2030s. This, however, is only projected for the richest sector of the population. When the poorest youth are taken into account, the projections indicated that universal secondary education will only be reached by 2130 (EFA 2014: 1).

This raises the question: what does low (secondary) school enrolment and completion in urban poor areas have to do with violence in the city? Available evidence suggests that there is a likely relationship between education and violence in urban settings: higher levels of homicide tend to occur in places that register lower levels of educational attainment (especially in terms of primary education enrolment ratios) (GBAV 2011:157-158). This implies that 'the inability of a society to keep its youth in the education system during a particularly risk-prone age can make them more predisposed to violence' (GBAV 2011:156).

Although the exact mechanisms through which out-of-school youth become perpetrators of violence vary across cases, there is an indication that the 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; also see Barakat and Urdal, 2009) – all three of these elements are closely correlated with the perpetration (but also victimization) of violence by individuals between the ages of 15 and 25. In line with this finding, 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 of violence or in other indirect experiences of

violence, including for instance discrimination or stigmatisation (UNESCO, 2014: 4). However, care is needed not to simply equate out-of-school youth with a stigmatisation of potential perpetrators of violence, as is further detailed below.

4.3 Urban youth and civic conflict

Implicit in much of the previous discussion on the evolution of the fields of education and (violent) conflict, and the relationship between urbanization and education is that 'youth' must be taken seriously. This is especially true when bearing in mind that a large youth population in society has been linked to high levels of urban violence or even the onset of civil war. Research suggests that young people are most likely to engage in violence (both as perpetrators but also as victims) (GBAV, 2011, 2015). For instance, in 2012, Brazil had a national homicide rate of 29.0 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants. When youth (as defined above) are taken into account, the homicide rate jumps considerably: among youth aged 15-19 and 20-24 the violent death rate was 53.8 and 66.9 per 100,000 inhabitants, respectively (Waiselfiz, 2014: 69; Carapic, Phebo and dos Ramos, 2015: 3). To put this in perspective: these rates are much higher than the rates of intentional homicides and civilian casualties recorded in Afghanistan and Iraq in the same year (6.5 and 8.0 per 100,000, respectively) (UNODC, 2014: 22; also see GBAV, 2011: 52, 5).

The relationship between large youth populations and the onset of armed conflict is more complicated, however. While some scholars and analysts have claimed that there is a robust correlation between countries with 'youth bulges' and conflict (Esty et al, 1998; OECD; 2011b: 3; Urdal, 2004: 16), others have not found any relationship (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon and Laitin, 2003). Hegre et al (2013) have found that youth bulges are not correlated with high intensity conflict such as civil war, but do appear to matter for low-intensity conflict and may even play a role in the tendency of low-intensity conflict to escalate into war.

What these studies point to is that viewing the impact of 'youth bulges' on armed conflict only in terms of overall population change is far too simplistic, as it fails to capture the complex relationships involved in the transformation of contentious politics into organized or collective violence. The same argument can be made when looking at urban violence: violence in the city is not a simple by-product of a large youth population; nor is the engagement of youth in urban violence simply the result of the lack of educational attainment. Rather, the inability of local governments – or other non-governmental actors – to provide education (and other goods and services) to citizens living in poorer urban communities exacerbates the feelings of segregation and exclusion. This in turn can lead to the increased possibility of violence understood as civic conflict – i.e. the 'violent expression of grievances (which may be social, political, or economic) vis-à-vis the state or other actors' (Beall et al, 2013: 5).

While there needs to be a certain density of youth in order for organised violence to take place in society, it matters where the 'youth' are located. Take for instance one form of urban violence, namely youth gangs. While the involvement of youth in urban violence can take many forms – from domestic abuse, to deaths during legal interventions and repressive juvenile systems – attention tends to focus on a particular type of violence in the city, namely the youth gang phenomenon (Rodgers and Jones, 2009). Gangs are a collective phenomenon, requiring a significant concentration of (often young male) individuals in a particular location in order for them to form. Urban spaces, which tend to be highly concentrated localities, are 'breeding grounds' for the emergence of gangs (Rodgers, 2010a).

However, the presence of a large youth population in cities – and its propensity to form gangs – does not fully explain the complex dynamics of violence in urban settings (Rodgers, 2010a). Specifically, this observation obscures the effect of socio-economic and political exclusion, the lack of educational and training opportunities, and for the most part the lack of substantial policy efforts to generate an educated and trained young population capable of obtaining employment (if jobs are available at all) and fostering generative civic engagement. All of these are crucial factors

for understanding the link between youth and violence and (a lack of) social services and educational opportunities – i.e. for unpacking the notion of civic conflict.

This being said, more emphasis must be placed on understanding education and the needs and wishes of today's youth, in order to counteract this current obscurity. Echoing the finding on urban violence and education presented above, research conducted by Barakat and Urdal (2009) provides quantitative analysis concluding that large, young male populations increase the risk of violence where male secondary education opportunities are low, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Their study also suggests that, regardless of the challenges of ensuring educational quality while rapidly expanding educational access, poor countries need to urgently prioritise post-primary education for large youth cohorts. While recognising the limitations of this large-N (120 countries) study, these outcomes support our proposition above that education – if truly available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable - *can* provide gateways for young people to become engaged in non-violent generative civic engagement, rather than resorting to violence.

Taking a cue from the attempts to deal with urban violence in cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York, some of the contemporary attempts to deal with urban violence involve the creation of school-police partnerships: these involve an increased presence of police personnel in schools as providers of security, supporters of educational staff in the classroom, and as 'educationalists' themselves (especially in after-school activities). The inherent assumption behind school-police partnerships is that the engagement of police in the educational and personal development of students will not only increase the level of security in the school but also prevent pupils from dropping out (Jackson, 2002; Brady et al., 2007). The last two decades have also seen a rise in school-police partnerships in Central and Latin America and South Africa. Through a 'citizen security approach', in countries like Brazil police are increasingly involved in formal schools and non-formal educational components (especially football and martial arts) in an effort to prevent urban violence and provide protection to local communities (Dos Ramos and Muggah, 2014; Carapic, Phebo and dos Ramos, 2015).

The increased reliance on school–police partnerships is controversial, however. One of the reasons for this is that what little evidence exists regarding these arrangements suggests that they are not particularly effective. A recent study in New York, for instance, found that despite increased police presence, students enrolled at schools with school-police partnerships continued to experience higher than average problems in school and were still more likely to engage in future criminality (Brady et al, 2007). While studies evaluating the effectiveness of school-police partnerships in Latin and Central America and South Africa are currently lacking, the increased presence of security personnel in schools has been described as problematic, largely due to the history of 'heavy-handed' policies and abusive actions undertaken by police and military in these countries (Jütersonke, et al). In addition, the presence of security personnel on school property has not only led to the militarization (Looft, 2012) of schools in countries like El Salvador, but has also made facilities and students more likely to become targets (UNICEF UK, n.d.).

The rise of civic conflicts suggests that the critical question of *urban politics* has to be taken into account. Key here is the role of civic conflict (conceived as contentious politics among urban groups for re-negotiating the social arrangements of the city) and education (in its broad definition of the 'education ensemble') in shaping the circumstances under which 'urban political processes can channel social conflict into nonviolent forms of generative civic engagement with the potential to stimulate dynamic and inclusive development in fragile settings' (Beall et al, 2013: 2). The previous two sections aimed to bring together a number of different sets of literature in an effort to elucidate the evolution of the fields of education and (violent) conflict in light of socio-demographic changes taking place globally, namely rapid urbanization and an ever younger population. Inherent within this discussion is a novel research agenda on the role and relationship between post-primary

education and instances of urban forms of violence.

5. An emerging research agenda – youth in violent urban contexts: what role for education?

Cities that are situated in developing and emerging economies are increasingly characterised by a continuously growing younger population, rampant urbanization, rising social inequalities, and often increasing rates of (lethal) violence. This paper explored both the complex relationships between the potential positive as well as negative impact of (a lack of) educational opportunities for the younger generation in addressing urban forms of violence. We aimed to bring together a range of insights from various bodies of literature that were subsequently discussed in four sections: the changing nature of conflict (section 2); the changing conceptualisations of education's role in societal processes of transformation over time (section 3); and the connections between urbanisation, education and violent conflict (section 4).

The arguments presented thus far are timely given the debate surrounding the declaration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015 (SDKP, n.d.). Of the seventeen goals, four are of particular interest to our current discussion:

- Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all;
- Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
- Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; and,
- Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Reflecting the current importance of education, urban space, a growing youthful world population and the need for peaceful societies in the international development agenda, the rest of this paper will sketch out a range of issues we see as important features for an evolving research agenda.

Firstly, the above discussion has illustrated that education – in its broadest sense, and including (non-)formal training and learning – *can* and *should* be a key component of a comprehensive, bottom-up and sustainable analysis of and approach to 'peacebuilding in the city' (Jütersonke and Krause, 2013). While education has a transformative element and can potentially foster upwards mobility, employment opportunities, and social cohesion, at the same time the unequal distribution of resources within cities often means that the positive potential of education is undermined or lost altogether. In some instances, the lack of quality (available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable) education has even resulted in an increase in violence and civic conflict.

Hence, in order for education's 'positive face' to contribute to sustainable forms of peacebuilding in the city, a comprehensive understanding of the full complexities *and* potential of the 'education ensemble' is needed to move beyond a narrow, neoliberal-inspired efficiency model of education that merely aims to develop productive citizens to continue a highly unequal status quo. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that in unstable, rapidly changing and violent urban (and rural) settings, doing full justice to this idea of peacebuilding education is not an easy, quick or straightforward task. Immediate 'problems', such as rising illiteracy, youth unemployment and increased instances of violence (against and by youth), need adequate responses within the wider educational space. What this looks like and how this is enabled or restricted is an area that is urgently in need of context-specific and context-informed (locally-embedded) research that is theoretically and historically grounded, yet policy- and practice-friendly at the same time.

Secondly, while it is generally recognized that 'youth' need to be the focus of peacebuilding and educational strategies for dealing with urban

violence, in order for policies and programmes to be effective they need to be tailor-made to particular constituencies. Academic and policy debates thus often choose to focus on specific sub-sets of the overall youth population, with decisions on 'who' to target being made based on calculations or perceptions of 'vulnerability', 'marginalisation' or 'at-risk' groups that vary according to their education opportunities and 'positioning' within (violent) conflict dynamics (Lopes Cardozo et al, 2015). Reflecting the themes of this paper – (violent) conflict, education, and urbanization – the groups most emphasised in emerging research and policy within this framework include: girls/women; those with low socio-economic status; disabled populations; ethno-linguistic minorities; religious minorities; those living in urban settings; and those living in situations of armed conflict (UNESCO, 2013c).

Future research needs to further explore context-specific perspectives and needs as expressed by a wide range of (marginalised and elite) youth constituencies themselves, and ensure that such a youth voice is shared with relevant policy-makers and practitioners (including educators, youth and health workers, and so on) at the city level, state level and globally. It could be argued that researchers need to live up to a knowledge-sharing practice that follows Tomaševski's (2003) logic of the right to education in designing, developing and disseminating research findings that are available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable. This entails the use of, among other strategies, participatory research methods and an engagement with youth researchers (Dunne et al, 2015) as well as conflict-sensitive (doing no harm) and context-specific ethical consideration of research.

Thirdly, looking at youth through a 'gendered' lens should be at the heart of both future research and policy approaches. While young males are most likely to be perpetrators and victims of violence (GBAV, 2011; GBAV, 2015), young women and girls are also affected. Recent research from the field of civil wars studies seems to suggest that while men are more likely to be killed in times of armed conflict, women are more likely to experience other forms of violence, such as sexual violence (for instance, see Cohen and Nördas, 2014). This same trend is present in highly violent settings such as Central and Latin America, where young men are more likely to die violently than females but where women and girls are increasingly experiencing gender-based violence, such as rape, femicide and even school-related gender based violence (GBAV, 2011, 2015; also see Carapic and Dönges, 2015). School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), especially, 'has become highlighted as an important arena for prevention and intervention in the education sector but there is little collected intelligence to date on best practice' (Leach, et al., 2012). While 'gender justice' is gaining some momentum in academic research, often little attention is paid to contextualised and local conceptualisations of gender justice, with a tendency to see the 'western' conceptualisation and 'model' as superior and leading (Bano, 2009; Srimulyani, 2007). Therefore, our future research agendas suggests the need to apply a critical, gender-informed analysis that acknowledges 1) how notions of gender are a social construct embodying relations of power; 2) how our understandings of the world are gendered and how they are key to the production and reproduction of violence at all levels; 3) how gendered language defines the (im-)possibility of pursuing different visions of conflict and peace; and 4) how violence produces and defines gender identities and, in turn, is produced and defined by them (Confortini, 2006).

Fourthly, processes of teaching and learning are important in exploiting the potential of (non-) formal education to enhance young people's agency for generative civic engagement which supports peacebuilding in the city. From a review of the current literature (Lopes Cardozo et al, 2015), several issues emerge that are in need for further exploration and action: 1) the teaching/learning of history; 2) recognising the affective dimensions of teaching and learning for/about peace; 3) providing opportunities for critical reflection of political/religious/ideological/media messages; 4) encouraging mutual understanding, respect and prejudice reduction; and 5) triggering attitudinal and behavioural changes in people, e.g. inter-personal skills, changing perceptions of themselves and other people, and mental and emotional well-being and healing.

Such new directions for education to better support youth as potential peacebuilders call for a context-specific analysis and approach. Recent empirical data collected among youth respondents from Myanmar, Pakistan, South Africa and Uganda indicate that youth themselves are largely frustrated with their (formal) education experiences and are demanding more relevant, inter-active and diverse ways of teaching. The teaching of history was seen by several youth movements in Mon state in Myanmar as a crucial avenue to build mutual understanding, respect and reconciliation. Furthermore, while youth clearly indicated the need for an education that supports their future livelihoods and career, at the same time it was apparent that an absence of job opportunities after vocational skills training can exaggerate feelings of frustration even more. Finally, there is a clear need for formal and non-formal education programmes to move beyond a narrow focus on 'economic agency' to increase young people's livelihoods, by providing complementary training and educational support for political and socio-cultural aspects of youth's agency (Lopes Cardozo et al, 2016 forthcoming).

Finally, there has been recent attention to the notion of 'peacebuilding in the city' (Jütersonke and Krause, 2013). Arguably, the reason for this interest is that there is a need to move beyond traditional understandings of (liberal) peacebuilding that aim to develop institutional arrangements that foster generative civic engagement and positive peace at the state level. Peacebuilding efforts thus far rarely take into account urban politics and the inclusion of social sectors, and rather focus on establishing stable markets and security systems. Yet in a world where violence and conflict are increasingly taking place in urban centres – as the above discussion has shown – peacebuilding needs to be rescaled to the city level in order to address the root causes that drive civic conflict. As established above, one of the root causes of exclusion, marginalisation and frustration is a lack of available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable (the 4As of) education (Tomaševski, 2003; 2004).

In addition, if civic conflict becomes the violent expression of grievances regarding the distribution of power and resources in the urban environment, then the 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 relations in the urban environment by encouraging the wider socio-economic and political change that is demanded by younger (and older) generations. In other words, strategies to build peace need to be implemented in the political, social and physical space where civic conflict actually takes place and where the potential for building peace rests: the city (Björkdahl, 2013). They also need to be inclusive of education and other social sectors (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo & Smith, 2015) in order to better support young people in building more sustainable and peaceful lives.

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Endnotes

[1] In moving beyond narrow perceptions of youth agency and a 'youth bulge' as mere threats to peace, and inspired by work of Jessop (2005) and Hay (2002), for this paper we define youth agency as the room for manoeuvre available to young people (in their second and third decade of life) in developing conscious or unconscious strategies that either support or hinder peace in relation to the broader cultural political economy context (see also Lopes Cardozo et al, 2015).

[2] Robert Muggah, TED talk 2014, *How to protect fast growing cities from failing*, available at https://www.ted.com/talks/robert_muggah_how_to_protect_fast_growing_cities_from_failing?language=en.

[3] This is not to say that women are not at risk of violent victimization in urban settings. Young women experience gender-based violence, including sexual violence and femicide (GBAV; 2015) and can also partake in acts of violence.

[4] http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/integration/pdf/unesco.pdf.

[5] http://www.ineesite.org/en/who-we-are.

[6] Honduras is one of the most violent countries in the world, with homicide rates climbing from 30 to more than 70 deaths per 100,000 between 2004 and 2012 (GBAV, 2011:67). Although in recent years the homicide rate in the country has dropped, it still remains in the high 60s per 100,000 (Gagne, 2015). Homicide rates in El Salvador have also increased recently, despite the ongoing 'truce' between competing gang factions. According to authorities, homicides in El Salvador increased 57 percent in between 2013 and 2014, translating into a homicide rate of 63 per 100,000 (Gagne, 2015).

[7] For example, Novelli and Smith (2011); Affolter (2013); Hoffmann (2013).

[8] 'In Benin, Chad, Guinea, Mauritania and Togo, the cost of technical and vocational education and training is more than three times that of upper secondary general education' (Kamano et al., 2010, in UNESCO GMR, 2012: 241).

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Design: David de Siebenthal

Editing: Kathryn Rowan

Layout: Aude Mellet

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