

Preserving the Everyday: Pre-Political Agency in Peacebuilding Theory

Gearoid Millar

University of Aberdeen

g.millar@abdn.ac.uk

Abstract

Quite a lot of recent peacebuilding scholarship has deployed the concept of ‘the everyday’. In an extension of the local turn’s emphasis on agency and resistance, much of this scholarship interprets the everyday as inherently a site of politics. It does so either by interpreting every act (no matter how motivated) as an agentic political act, or by equating agentic political acts (at the local level) with the quotidian activities which define the everyday. This paper argues, however, that representing the everyday in this way interprets both forms of activity in ways which have critical implications for peacebuilding theory, because both moves inadvertently strip everyday acts of the *emergent creativity* and *innovation* inherent to ‘everyday-ness’. Alternative understandings of and engagement with different forms of agency would encourage peace scholars to acknowledge the overtly political nature of peace projects and so to reserve ‘the everyday’ label for *pre*-political forms of action which may contribute to peace, but in a more unintentional, organic or emergent fashion. This is not to argue that everyday acts are *a*-political or non-political, but only that they do not have political motivations and are not themselves products of conscious will to power, or even to peace itself.

Keywords

The Everyday; Peacebuilding; Agency; Local Turn; Pre-Political; Emergence

Introduction

‘The everyday’ is referenced quite regularly in recent peacebuilding literature. While it means quite distinct things to different scholars (as will be discussed below), the concept has largely been deployed in an extension of the ‘local turn’ literature, which has grown in response to the failures of the ‘liberal peace’ project. As the liberal peace has failed in its goal to build peace, scholars have increasingly reversed the traditional ‘top-down’ perspective to focus instead on the potential of ‘bottom-up’ peacebuilding efforts, which have come more and more to be tagged with the ‘everyday’ label. This refocusing has increased attention on the informal activity of groups outside institutionalized politics. In this tradition the everyday is seen as a space of local pro-peace activity distinct from elite driven top-down politics which, for good or ill, is often considered disinterested in local processes (at best). This is the lynchpin, for example, of Richmond’s recent theory regarding “Peace Formation” (2016), but it is integral also to the contemporary debates emerging on the heels of the local turn regarding local agency, empowerment, inclusion and resistance.

The problem with this approach to the everyday, however, is that it has the potential to appropriate the concept for tasks for which it is not best suited within peacebuilding. Indeed, this can often be seen in uses of the concept that imply the ‘everyday-ness’ of what this paper will argue are not best viewed as ‘everyday’ events. Such uses have a tendency either to apply the ‘everyday’ label to politically motivated activities at the local level, or to interpret actions at the local level (no matter how motivated) as political. Both moves reflect what Brewer et al. described as “the disciplinary closure through which the concept of everyday life is understood” within International Relations (2018: 211), in that they have a tendency to deploy the everyday via a political lens; shorn of its ‘everyday-ness’, which I define here as the *pre-political character of emergent practice* (this will be revisited below).

Before proceeding further, I want to make it very clear that the intent here is not to argue that there is one correct definition of ‘the everyday’, or that X number of scholars are simply getting it wrong. On the contrary, just as has been true of other concepts that have been imported into peace studies from various other disciplines (hybridity, friction, complexity, etc.), the notion of ‘the everyday’ should rightly be debated within our field in order for peacebuilding scholars to learn to use it and deploy it to the best possible ends (theoretically, methodologically, pedagogically, and practically). My argument here, however, is that the concept of the everyday as it has been developed in disciplines outside IR provide it with substantially more value for peace theory than is provided by the tendency within IR to see everything through a political lens. As I will argue, this tendency to see everything as political inadvertently strips away the very everyday-ness that gives the concept so much of its value for the study of peace and peacebuilding. This everyday-ness is about the mundane, embodied, emergent character of everyday practice; the fluid, organic, and creative tactics individuals deploy to get along within complex socio-cultural milieu.

Echoing an older argument by Scott (1975: 293-294), it is important to preserve this everyday-ness specifically because the forms of agency and empowerment made visible, and even conceivable, through the everyday when conceived in this way are more distinct and potentially more revolutionary than those made visible when we see the everyday largely as politics played out in informal venues or on the micro-scale. This paper, therefore, takes a more sociological or anthropological approach to ‘the everyday’ which allows for the recognition of more diverse forms of response to complex assemblages of stimuli, and which may even sometimes even be unconscious (Millar 2014). While recognizing that such responses may have political effects – i.e. may influence distribution of power and authority – and should not, therefore, be considered a-political, this approach also does not assume that there will be any specific political impacts or that there is political motivation behind such action. This approach to ‘the everyday’, which is more protective of its *pre-political everyday-ness*, is therefore more likely to reveal the diversity of efforts towards living in peace that are possible within conflict affected and post-conflict communities; some of which will of course be political in motivation and character but, I argue, many more of which will not.

In what follows, therefore, I will review some of the recent peacebuilding literature dealing with ‘the everyday’ and describe how much of that literature deploys the everyday largely as a scalar referent (i.e. to political action at the local or the micro scale), while a handful of scholars do retain some focus on the immanent or emergent creativity of the everyday free of political agency. After addressing the primary limitations of the former and the potential value of the latter, I will then explain further what I mean by the value of protecting the concept of the everyday as *pre-political*, which will require further exploration of this specific concept. With reflections from various cases and a number of disciplines, the paper will then elaborate on the emergent character of everyday life as pre-political responses to complex socio-cultural milieu, in order to evidence the value of this approach vis-à-vis the more politically oriented approach currently dominant within the peacebuilding literature. Hopefully, by the conclusion, the reader will be convinced not that this is the only or ‘right’ approach to ‘the everyday’ for peacebuilding scholarship, but that it is the approach which best allows the concept to be deployed usefully within the peacebuilding literature.

The Everyday in Peacebuilding Literature

It would be wholly inappropriate to set up some form of strawman here and argue that ‘the everyday’ is being used in one specific way or means one specific thing within the peacebuilding literature. As with various concepts that preceded it in the wider critical peacebuilding literature, its incorporation into the scholarship has somehow managed to be both hugely influential and quite diffuse; its importance is loudly declared and largely acknowledge, and yet it often remains undefined and it is deployed in various different ways. As a result, its specific meaning remains largely undetermined. The turn towards the everyday clearly follows on the heels of earlier conceptual deployments in the ‘local turn’ literature, including the concepts of emancipation (Theissen 2011; Leonardsson and Rudd 2015), resistance (Mac Ginty 2011; Kappler and Richmond 2011), hybridity (Mac Ginty 2010; Belloni 2012; Millar 2014), and friction (Millar, Van der Lijn and Verkoren 2013; Björkdahl and Höglund 2013). But to a great extent it has, at least so far, been subject to a lot less scrutiny while largely being accepted as an inherent good (Mitchell 2011: 1628).

The Everyday as Scalar Referent

However, this lack of scrutiny belies the fact that the concept itself is often deployed largely as a placeholder for ‘the local’; more as a referent to a scale of analysis than a substantive characteristic of distinct phenomena in their own right. In Richmond’s influential early work using the concept it is deployed largely descriptively and without much clear theoretical exposition (2009). In this work, admittedly only one of his many interjections in the debate, he describes the everyday largely in reference to the local. In his initial critique of international intervention as “not representing ‘the local’ or the really-existing ‘local-local’ and ‘everyday’ of post-conflict environments”, for example, the ‘local’ is described as “where everyday life occurs” (2009: 325). Richmond does note, with

reference to De Certeau (1984), that the everyday is usually deployed “in order to uncover structural or discursive forms of violence, and to emphasize resistance and solidarity” (ibid: 326), and, citing various other scholars such as Pouligny (2006) and Bleiker (2009), he goes on to describe how such conceptions of the everyday can connect with work on agency, self-care, and empathy. But there is little substantive discussion of what the everyday means, and throughout the article the concept is largely deployed as a placeholder for ‘the local’; i.e. when discussing local context (ibid: 327), local agency (ibid: 328), local dynamics (ibid: 329), local resources (ibid: 329), local life (ibid: 330), and local peace (ibid: 335). For Richmond, at least in this article, ‘the everyday’ was largely deployed as a scalar referent; a new perspective from which to view “peace and politics” (ibid: 331).

This pattern is repeated regularly in the literature. While Sending, for example, uses the term “everyday peacebuilding”, he deploys the everyday as a reference to the scale (local) at which the overt peacebuilding activities he discusses are occurring (2010) and there is no effort to draw on more theoretically rich discussions of the concept. The same can largely be said for Chandler’s references to ‘the everyday’ in his work on Resilience (2015). While this article does make some reference to “social practices and everyday tactics” that hint at a more sociological approach (ibid: 31), the primary use of the term is again synonymous with ‘local’ and for the most part echoes Richmond in the deployment of the everyday largely as a scalar reference; to where local contexts (ibid: 31), practices (ibid: 29), and life (ibid: 28) can be found and studied. Visoka’s presentation is similar in his more recent article on “the everyday politics of becoming a sovereign state” (2019). Visoka is clearly aware of other less political interpretations of the everyday in his discussion of “metis diplomacy” as “the knowledge ‘acquired through practice’ and the practical skills ‘to adapt successfully to a shifting situation’” (ibid: 5; citing Scott 1998: 313-315), but here too the nature of the topic under study (diplomacy) and the clear political motivation behind the actions examined (ibid: 15), steers the analysis away from a conception of the everyday as embodied, unconscious, or a-political, and towards ‘the everyday’ as analysis of political activity at a more local or micro scale.

It seems quite difficult, indeed, for critical peacebuilding scholars, usually working within IR, to maintain a focus on the non-political dynamics in everyday interactions. A great example is found in Berents and McEvoy’s contribution to a recent special issue on Everyday Peace and Youth, in *Peacebuilding* (2015). While these authors make reference to various dynamics of youth’s lives in conflict contexts which are outside of politics (their economic, familial, educational and social struggles, for example), the primary thrust of the argument presented is nonetheless to argue that “youth practices of everyday peace do not” ... “remain in the so-called ‘private’ realm” (ibid: 118). As if non-political experiences, activities, and struggles are somehow less worthy of study, the authors argue that “[t]he space of the everyday is a political space, where those who are most marginal and written out of formal political discourse, find collective meaning and organise in response to conflict, violence, and exclusion” (2015: 116). In such presentations, the pre-political realm is devalued as it is accepted that large-scale social movements, such as the Arab Spring or Occupy protests, are of more

value for peace than pre-political actions that do not give rise to collective protest (ibid: 118). The focus of such studies on youth in peacebuilding, according to these authors, must be on how youth activities at the local scale (framed as ‘everyday’ actions) feed into political movements.

Similarly, in another article purporting to examine ‘the everyday’, Tellidis and Glomm’s (2019) focus on street art that nonetheless had an avowedly political purpose (in this case the art festival most closely examined was intending to promote universal human rights but then morphed into something else in response to terrorist attacks). But such art can hardly be seen as anything other than consciously political activity. Indeed, the authors themselves note that street art is related to other forms of what they call “everyday resistance,” such as the Occupy movement and the Arab Spring (ibid: 4). Hence in this presentation, much like that of Berents and McEvoy, they privilege the political. Tellidis and Glomm do cite de Certeau to note that ‘the everyday’ “is a site of knowledge, even if said knowledge is unconscious”, but they decline to fully engage with the potentials of such unconscious knowledge for pre-political agency or peacebuilding, instead arguing that the importance of ‘the everyday’ is largely located in the political agency ascribed via “the very consciousness of its acts/actions insofar as these aim at the alteration of power relations” (ibid: 3). Much like Richmond’s earlier work, therefore, each of these scholars use ‘the everyday’ primarily as a scalar referent for politics at the micro or local level.

While this is not surprising given that most of those cited above are international relations scholars and, as such, consistently turn their focus to the local politics of peacebuilding, it also highlights the “disciplinary closure” noted by Brewer et. al. (2018) and why that closure is not helpful to the field of peacebuilding or to our theorization of everyday peace. If the goal of these scholars is also to contribute to peace studies, to critical peacebuilding, or to the theorization of everyday peacebuilding generally, then surely it is important to note that the acts they are trying to frame as part of ‘the everyday’ were never really ‘everyday’ acts at all, but simply political acts at a local or micro scale. The key point here is that this disciplined lens fails to recognize alternative and pre-political forms of agency and peacebuilding as fully legitimate. In such work it seems that only political activity represents legitimate agency.

Alternative Discussions of the Everyday

Elisa Randazzo has recently provided a critique of the use of ‘the everyday’ which, while different to my own, nonetheless supports similar conclusions. She argues that the usual use of ‘the everyday’ in the peacebuilding literature always eventually turns to the “selection of appropriate forms of behaviour from unwanted ‘unbecoming’ ones” at the local scale (2016: 1361). As she describes, this is because the ‘local turn’ scholars within the peacebuilding literature are driven by normative emancipatory ambitions which tend, eventually, to turn always towards capturing or utilizing the everyday for the “linear telos of emancipation” (Randazzo 2016: 1355). In that context, she argues, there is a tendency within the scholarship to politicise ‘the everyday’ as “everyday agency” focused

on emancipation and resistance (ibid 2016: 1362). Although her focus is on this normative agenda within the everyday peacebuilding literature and not whether “the everyday” itself is being unhelpfully politicized, here conclusions nonetheless support my own contention that the analysis of the everyday consistently relies on an overly political lens; where the everyday is almost accidentally subsumed by politics through the assumption of a motivating political agency.

However, while I generally agree with Randazzo’s critique, she also fails to recognize that there are some approaches to ‘the everyday’ which avoid this politicisation. Audra Mitchell focused precisely on the problematic ways that ‘the everyday’ is defined and noted that the literature usually presents it as either a site of quality (the everyday as inherently good) or of control (the everyday as inherently subject to power) (2011: 1625). But, with insights from two case studies, she shows how the everyday in reality is neither of these and may, potentially, be both (ibid: 1633). Importantly, Mitchell explicitly argued against the use of the everyday simply as a signifier of locality, instead arguing that the everyday is more helpfully conceived as a more mundane “world building”, occurring at every level of analysis. In this sense, she argues, the everyday is more appropriately seen as “a dimension of human experience” (ibid: 1625), and not just political experience. Further, by describing the many ways that international peacebuilders, working outside the field of IR, have worked on what she calls “affective peacebuilding” – via processes often associated with conflict transformation, the positive peace, wellbeing, nurturance, or human flourishing (ibid: 1635) - she clearly highlights how my critique is pertinent to the IR based critical peacebuilding literature, but much less so to the extensive work on peacebuilding from within other disciplines which are often overlooked by those working within critical peacebuilding. In other words, when we look elsewhere (to Sociology or Social-Psychology) we see a very different kind of ‘everyday’ peacebuilding.

Mac Ginty’s contributions lean into this interdisciplinary approach, and this allows him also to turn firmly away from thinking about the everyday as simply a scalar referent and instead focus explicitly on “the social practices of everyday peace”, and “the routinized practices used by individuals and collectives as they navigate their way through life” (2014: 549). Clearly relating his own approach to that of Bourdieu (1977), Mac Ginty takes the helpful step of defining ‘the everyday’ as “the normal habitus for individuals and groups” (2014: 550) and presents a notion of everyday peace “as the coping mechanisms deployed by so-called ordinary people” in conflict contexts (ibid: 551). In this way Mac Ginty’s conception of everyday peace is quite explicitly not about “programmes, projects, initiatives, International non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and International Organizations” (ibid 551). As such, and by moving towards a more sociological perspective of the everyday, Mac Ginty is able to discuss the everyday in a way that breaks from many of the tropes regarding political agency and points towards alternative means of peacebuilding, such as conflict transformation (ibid: 559). While Mac Ginty does argue that everyday peace is clearly a form of agency (ibid: 550), he suggests that this is not an inherently political agency, even if it may reflect political realities and have political effects (ibid 552). As such, it is potentially outside of

politics. These insights have further been extended in Mac Ginty's work regarding the material turn (2017) and the "hyper-local" (2019), but, it is important to note, he does also recognize that to some extent such efforts are "stretching traditional IR perspectives" (ibid: 235).

This is true also of Autesserre's influential work, which similarly deploys the everyday in a manner which consciously and directly acknowledges what I would describe as the pre-political drivers of many everyday phenomena. While her work is known for its examination of the micro-politics of peace operations, Autesserre does not deploy the everyday purely as a placeholder for politics at the micro or local scale. Quite to the contrary, many of the "everyday elements" she describes are explicitly not politically motivated or even clearly agentic. Similar to Mac Ginty's conscious reference to Bourdieu, to Autesserre many everyday elements are "routine activities that are socially meaningful and have an un-thought character"; they are "automatic responses to the world" (2014:6). While they may have political effects (largely the failure of peace interventions), it is quite explicit in her work that these "everyday modes of operation" are both pervasive and informed by motivations outside of politics; related, for example, to identities and relationships (ibid: 2). In many ways, therefore, Autesserre's work goes beyond a discussion of the "everyday politics" of peacebuilding as noted in her title, and the deeper contribution is found in the analysis of dynamics which are not about rational, agentic political decision making, but about the un-thought "practices, habits, and narratives" that constitute the everyday (ibid: 20).

Finally, Björkdahl's work on *Urban Peacebuilding* takes a similar, initially even more forcefully a-political approach, in repeatedly arguing that the everyday is more than political activity and that it includes "issues such as infrastructure, housing and schooling" ... "to improve the conditions of everyday life" (2013: 211). Echoing those who focus on the complexity of everyday contexts, she sees the everyday as better recognised as the "self-ordering"... "micro-practices of self-governing" ... "developed as a coping mechanism of post-conflict societies" (ibid: 210). Indeed, in the effort to bring together critical peacebuilding and urban studies scholarship, Björkdahl emphasizes primarily the many ways in which social and physical structures together make manifest the everyday free of explicitly political motives (ibid: 2014). However, she nonetheless argues that it is necessary also to "acknowledge political actions that would not traditionally be considered political, to uncover the workings of power relations in both conflict and peace processes" (ibid: 220), and in this step she joins other feminist scholars such as Åhäll (2019) and Väyrynen (2019) who see the everyday as embodying invisibly political structures which have problematically become normalized (Åhäll 2019: 152). While such scholars recognize the lived and embodied nature of the everyday as a site where action may occur without conscious political intent (Väyrynen 2019: 20), it is for this very reason, they argue, that the everyday is a site of such political importance and why it must be actively re-politicized (Åhäll 2019: 152).

The Pre-Political Everyday

But it is exactly this argument which I believe can be problematic for peacebuilding theory. For authors such as Mac Ginty or Autesserre, deploying ‘the everyday’ serves to introduce alternative dimensions of lived reality that might be considered outside of politics and ideas about agency that are not reliant on political motivation. In such uses, the everyday is seen to work parallel to or around politics, providing a dimension of social reality that is more about mundane day-to-day life. Further, the everyday is considered a site of “considerable innovation, creativity and improvisation” (Mac Ginty 2014: 555), or as a “wellspring of immanent creativity”, as Mitchell describes it (2011: 1627). It is associated with the “power of imagination” in complex modern society (Appadurai 1996: 54), giving rise to what Mac Ginty elsewhere called “organic, everyday citizen action” (2011: 87). This perspective connects usefully to various interpretations of the everyday outside political science and IR, from scholars such as Bourdieu (1977), Vaneigem (1983), or de Certeau (1984), and opens for consideration a realm of quotidian activity outside the scope of politics; or, at least, outside the scope of conscious political motivation. But in arguing that ‘the everyday’ must be *re-politicised*, there is the concern that analysis such as that proposed by Åhäll (2019) or Väyrynen (2019) may inadvertently strip the everyday of this organic, emergent creativity; characteristics which provide valuable means by which individuals act, survive, cope, endure, flourish, struggle, or express themselves in conflict-affected or post-conflict contexts.

By critiquing the drive to re-politicize the normalization of ‘the everyday’ I do not mean to argue that ‘the everyday’ is not the result of politics. Indeed, I would agree that the everyday (the mundane, quotidian getting on with life) is always already a product of power previously applied (historical, social, economic, cultural and political). However, while Åhäll (2019) and Väyrynen (2019) arguing that the everyday *must* always be considered a site of politics – of competition over the distribution of power and authority – and be analysed as such I would resist the temptation to give in to this false dichotomy which assumes that all phenomena within the realm of ‘the everyday’ either are *or* are not political. This choice provides no real place for organic, emergent creativity, or for innovation or tactics as are discussed by others as the stuff of the mundane, quotidian everyday and which provide a conceptual anchor for alternative ideas of agency, action and peace. And, indeed, the available evidence from post-conflict societies seems instead to indicate that this dichotomy is false. Indeed, while it may be counter-intuitive, the evidence indicates that everyday phenomena are *both* political *and* a-political. In other words, and echoing Guillaume and Huysmans description of the everyday as “ephemeral politics”, it may be best to recognize that what is or is not political is “inherently unstable, fleeting, heterogenous [sic]” (2019: 292).

It is for this reason that I would argue that peacebuilding scholarship would be best served by resisting the temptation to assert the dichotomy and instead define everyday phenomena as *pre-political*. This indicates that such phenomena are not a-political or non-political, and recognizes that the everyday may embody the echoes of earlier struggles for power, while in turn, inadvertently effecting the future distribution of power. Hence, I would argue that they are “pre-political” in a

variety of senses. They are pre-political in the way that Rossi and Sleat describe “ethical ideals such as happiness, equality or autonomy” which “float free from the forces of politics” and “are assigned a foundational role insofar as they have antecedent authority over the political” (2014: 689). But they are perhaps more similar to how Ekman and Emnå describe pre-political acts as doing “a lot of things that may not be directly or unequivocally classified as ‘political participation’, but at the same time could be of great significance for future political activities” (2012: 287). To these scholars, pre-political acts are evident when people “engage socially in a number of ways, formally outside of the political domain, but nevertheless in ways that may have political consequences” (ibid: 288). We can see such activity in daily practices of recycling or veganism which may not be motivated by climate politics, but nonetheless may aggregate to political significance.

This form of pre-political action is more consistent with Scott’s use of the term in his critique of arguments that postulate “real” resistance based on politically motivated activity and “token, incidental, or epiphenomenal” resistance based on “unorganized, unsystematic, or individual” acts (1975: 292). Such token acts, while motivated by self-interest and not politics, may nonetheless aggregate to substantive political effects. As such, however, as they are not politically motivated pre-political acts do differ from what Scott himself later described as “infra-politics”, or the hidden “unobtrusive realm of political struggle” (1990: 183). Indeed, this may be the key difference between the pre-political action I am describing – perhaps eventually influencing, but itself unmotivated by politics – and the politically motivated activity at the micro or local scale described by most scholars writing about everyday peacebuilding . The first is pre-political, while the second is a form of infra-politics; and these are not the same thing. Further, this definition of pre-political also does not deny Åhäll’s assertion that the everyday is the site where the political has been normalized (2019: 151). Actions or events within the everyday are the result of prior political developments and so we could describe the everyday as post-political as well as pre-political. In that sense, it may be best if peacebuilding scholarship came to recognize that everyday phenomena occupy a kind of *superposition*, in that they can be seen as holding more than one status, and, again echoing Guillaume and Huysmans (2019: 280), it is the observation of the phenomena itself – in this case from a disciplinary perspective – which serves to define that status.

Through this lens we can easily see how the disciplinary positionality of the observer clearly plays a substantial role in determining how peacebuilding scholars characterize observed phenomena within the literature on ‘the everyday’. Scholars who come at the problem as analysts of politics see the everyday as politics at a local or a micro scale. But this forecloses other interpretations of what is happening and, thus, limits the scope of the possible when we try to conceive of peace and peacebuilding. Seeing everything always through the perspective of politics serves to under-appreciate the social and social-psychological activities which have been central to much of the “affective peacebuilding” described by Mitchell, which has been foundational to conflict transformation approaches theorized and developed by scholars such as Allport (1954), Boulding

(1988), Lederach (1997), Fisher (2001), or Kelman (2004), and largely outside the realm of IR. However, if we recognize that actions within the realm of ‘the everyday’ are neither political *nor* a-political, but pre-political, then we can be open to the possibility of alternative motivations for action at the micro or local scale. Indeed, if we conceive of the potential array of motivations for peace as just as broad, diverse, intricate and complex as the motivations for conflict and violence, then we should recognize the economic, social, cultural, and individual motivations just as much and as readily as we do the political.

Pre-Political Peacebuilding

Everyday phenomena, by this definition, are explicitly those actions motivated, stimulated, or provoked by concerns parallel to or outside politics – by social, cultural, economic, religious, psychological, or other dimensions of life – and everyday peacebuilding is composed of exactly such actions inspired by precisely such motivations. Some of these phenomena are purposeful. There is a very well-developed literature, for example, regarding religion and peace, based largely on spiritual or theological motivations for pursuing peace and peacebuilding (Appleby 1999; Omer, Appleby and Little 2015). This literature does not assume that peace and peacebuilding must be driven by political agendas or have political ends. Similarly, there is a less well-developed literature regarding Business for Peace, which is based largely on the idea that peace, in general, will be valuable economically to business interests (Fort and Schipani 2007; Fort 2010). Again, while nobody would deny that both religion and economics have been closely intertwined in history with conflict as well as with peace, fundamentally both of these fields deal with motivations outside politics (faith and profit). Those who would argue that religion and economics are just politics by other means would largely be proving Brewer et al’s point regarding the “disciplinary closure” on the topic of the everyday within the peacebuilding literature (2018: 211).

Additional examples are found in the literature on the turn toward indigenous processes of reconciliation and cleansing. Honwana’s description of the rituals of reincorporation in Mozambique as rooted in local approaches in which “the whole symbolic array of spirits, family traditions, and prayers to God” were brought into the rituals, is one example (2006: 121). She highlights how “war-affected populations have to start from scratch to try to rebuild their lives, make sense of their present, and regain their dignity” and how the rituals of reintegration and healing are constructed on the foundations provided by “local worldviews and systems of meaning” (ibid: 133-134). Studies describing the use of Mato Oput in northern Uganda or of Fambul Tok in Sierra Leone communicate similar themes. The former utilizes deeply contextualized ritual practice in order to “restore social harmony and promote wellbeing of the people concerned within the general society” (Ochen 2007: 245), while the latter draws on “local culture and traditions” to develop a ceremony which will be salient within specific communities (Hoffman 2008: 133). All such processes, and there are many (see Quinn 2009; Shaw, Waldorf and Hazan 2010), are grounded in underlying cosmologies and

traditional conceptions of the world which are not local forms of politics but parallel to or outside of politics (see Millar 2014). This is not to argue that such rituals were never themselves influenced by politics, or that they have no political effect or influence. It is, however, to argue that those who go through them believe deeply in them, their motivation for participating is not political, and the healing and cleansing they experience are not politically derived.

But perhaps the best illustrations of *pre-political emergent practices*, which evidence the real added value of a pre-political conception of the everyday for peacebuilding theory, are found not in the literature regarding purposeful peacebuilding processes (however motivated) as described above, but in studies of the unintentional and unrelated activity that comprises the mundane or quotidian reality of the majority of individuals who live in conflict affected and post-conflict countries. The work of Veena Das is a touchstone to many in this regard. Das's work on recovery and survival in the face of violence, whether the violence associated with the partition between India and Pakistan or the historical sectarian violence within Indian cities, highlights both how "violent memory is buried in everyday life" (2007: 11) and "how everyday tasks of surviving – having a roof over your head, being able to send children to school, being able to do the work of the everyday without fear of being attacked" – allow the reconstitution of the self in post-violence society (ibid: 216). In recognizing the power of everyday tasks to allow women specifically to incorporate pain into the reality of their lives, Das recognizes how responses to violation unmotivated by and wholly unaware of politics can serve as a means by which to move on and recover.

These ideas are echoed in Susanne Buckley-Zistel's research in Rwanda (2006), Rosalind Shaw's work in Sierra Leone (2007), Peter Uvin's study of Burundi (2009), Kimberly Theidon's work in Peru (2013), and in many others besides. My own research into the experiences of reconciliation in post-conflict Sierra Leone illustrates the ways that the mundane acts of getting on with life allowed individuals to recover from the violence of the past. Quite simple mechanisms of economic support, for example, helped victims of the war to "overcome a 'bad situation'" and assisted them in "reconstituting life" (2011: 527; see also Millar 2015). This study evidenced just how much regaining the basic necessities (a job, a house, a bicycle) for oneself and providing for one's children can promote an acceptance of what has come before and a form of peace born of rebuilding what was lost. This is not peace born of politics, but peace as a result of the slow incremental reconstitution of economic, social, and cultural capital. These two sets of examples, the former of how the everyday can be the site of recovery in and of itself – as in Das's conception of a "descent into the ordinary" (2007) – and the latter of how non-political activities undertaken for non-political motives can provide for healing, cleansing and reintegration, should indicate some of the scope and variety of options for peace and peacebuilding which are eliminated when we limit our perspective only to the political.

Importantly, everyday phenomena arise from the creative, imaginative, and strategic responses defined by the ever-present "gap between a norm and its actualization" (Das 2007: 63). In this sense, everyday acts are also performative and, much as Goffman described the performative

generation of identities, they always embody both the expectations of the contexts which inspire them, as well as the potential for new emergent realities. As Goffman described, a man's actions are always driven by a socially constructed "mask of manner," or the "standards we unthinkingly apply" (1959: 55-57) but such structures, in turn, "commits him to what he is proposing to be", or the role he performs (ibid: 10 – gendered language in the original). All such performances are pre-political in the sense described above, in that the context or social structures which inform them may be the products of past applications of power and in that they themselves may have further political impacts, but the acts performed are not themselves motivated by political intent. They are driven by motivations parallel to, outside of, or now floating freely from, politics.

This conception of 'the everyday' as *emergent practices* echoes quite a lot of earlier work on the concept by scholars outside of political science and international relations. De Certeau, perhaps the most famous contributor to the debate, described everyday social practices as occurring within "the order constructed by others" which serves to create "at least a certain play in that order, a space for maneuvers (sic)" (1984: 18). De Certeau also implicitly relates his conception of 'the everyday' to performativity (much like Goffman), in comparing his social practices to performative speech acts (ibid: 33). Both, as he describes, are at one and the same time performed within the structures or systems developed over time, and also alter those structures from within through innovation and emergent creativity. They are, therefore, structured by power and they may have political effects. However, they are not politically motivated. Quite on the contrary, social practices are most easily identified as know-how which "takes on the appearance of an 'intuitive' or 'reflex' ability, which is almost invisible" (ibid: 69). Indeed, citing Bourdieu (1977), De Certeau explicitly asserts that "it is because subjects do not know, strictly speaking, what they are doing, that what they do has more meaning than they realize" (1984: 56). It is exactly the reflexive, intuitive response to structures and systems – the *pre-political emergent practices* – that generates the "element of play" (Vaneigem 1994: 134) and "subterranean creativity" that can serve to "overthrow the world of hierarchical power" (ibid: 182).

Conclusion

As noted in the introduction, the purpose of this paper was not to argue that there is one correct way to describe and deploy 'the everyday' within the peacebuilding literature. The purpose, instead, was to argue that the concept of the everyday as it has already been developed in other disciplines (primarily in fields outside IR) provide it with substantially more usefulness for peacebuilding than is provided by the tendency within IR to see everything through a political lens. To accomplish this task the paper first reviewed some of the recent peacebuilding literature dealing with 'the everyday' and showed just how often those uses display a tendency either to a) apply the 'everyday' label to politically motivated activities at the local level and, thus, to largely consider 'the everyday' as a purely scalar referent, or b) to interpret actions at the local level (no matter how motivated) as agentic political acts. I noted that

there are some approaches which have instead made reference to conceptions of ‘the everyday’ as it has been developed outside IR, but that these latter uses have, for the most part, been overwhelmed by the former due to the “disciplinary closure” Brewer et al identify (2018: 2011).

I then proceeded to explain what I believe is a concept of ‘the everyday’ which could be more valuable for the field of peace studies and peacebuilding. Specifically, this concept is reliant on protecting its *everyday-ness*, which I define as the *pre-political character of emergent practice*, in which pre-political is defined as action which is outside the realm of political activity and motivated by forces with antecedent authority over the political even if those activities may have later political effects; i.e. influence over the distribution of power and authority. The latter portion of the paper argued in support of this alternative conception of the everyday, noting specifically that the field of peacebuilding would be best served if we avoided the usual dichotomy which sees actions as either political or a-political. With reflections from the literature across a number of disciplines outside IR, the paper then further elaborated on the emergent character of everyday life as pre-political responses to complex socio-cultural milieu in order to further evidence the value of this vis-à-vis the more politically oriented approach currently dominating the ‘everyday turn’ within the peacebuilding literature. The central goal of these final pages was to convince the reader of the importance of creative and emergent potentials, located in the mundane responses to the challenges to life and wellbeing in conflict and post-conflict contexts, but which can only be recognized and identified if we learn to see beyond the political and to value alternative motivations and forms of agency.

At this point, and by way of conclusion, I hope that the reader is convinced not that this is ‘the right’ approach to ‘the everyday’ for peacebuilding scholarship, but that it is an approach which allows the concept to be deployed in such a way which it is best suited for theorizing about and helping to build ‘everyday peace’. The goal of the article has been to serve as a corrective to an unconscious and distinctly disciplinary bias which would not itself be such a problem if there were more voices from outside IR active within the critical peacebuilding literature. Indeed, if there were more recognition and incorporation of the various alternative literatures Mitchell describes as the “affective peacebuilding” literature (2011: 1635) that has long emanated from fields such as Sociology, Social-Psychology and Theology, then potentially such disciplinary biases would be avoided and the field as a whole could more easily self-correct. Similarly, if critical peacebuilding scholars writing within the ‘local turn’ were to engage more rigorously with the grounded and deeply descriptive work of Anthropologists such as Das, Theidon, Shaw, Ochen or Honwana (all cited above), then perhaps the limits of a purely politicized framework for understanding the motivations and impacts of action and practice would be more apparent. In other words, at the end of the day, while this article has hoped to serve a corrective purpose, peacebuilding scholarship more broadly would benefit from the built-in corrective of a more inter- or trans-disciplinary approach to research and theory.

References

- Åhäll L (2019) Feeling everyday IR: Embodied, affective, militarising movement as choreography of war. *Cooperation and Conflict* 54(2): 149-166.
- Allport G (1954) *The nature of prejudice*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Appadurai A (1996) *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Appleby RS (1999) *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- Autesserre S (2014) *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Belloni R (2012) Hybrid peace governance: Its emergence and significance. *Global Governance* 18(1): 21-38.
- Berents H and McEvoy-Levy S (2015) Theorising youth and everyday peace(building). *Peacebuilding* 3(2): 115-125.
- Björkdahl A (2013) Urban peacebuilding. *Peacebuilding* 1(2): 207-221.
- Björkdahl A and Höglund K (2013) Precarious peacebuilding: Friction in global-local encounters. *Peacebuilding* 1(3): 289-299.
- Blieker R (2009) *Aesthetics in World Politics*. London: Palgrave.
- Boulding E (1988) Image and action in peace building. *Journal of Social Issues* 44(2): 17-37.
- Bourdieu P (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brewer JD, et al. (2018) *The Sociology of Everyday Life Peacebuilding*. Cham: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Buckley-Zistel S (2006) Remembering to forget: Chosen amnesia as a strategy for local coexistence in post-genocide Rwanda. *Africa* 76(2): 131-150.
- Chandler D (2015) Resilience and the 'everyday': Beyond the paradox of 'liberal peace'. *Review of International Studies* 41 (1): 27-48.
- Das V (2007) *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- de Certeau M (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ekman J and Amnå E (2012) Political participation and civic engagement: Towards a new typology. *Human Affairs* 22(3): 283-300.
- Fisher RJ (2001) Social-psychological processes in interactive conflict analysis and reconciliation. In: Abu-Nimer M (ed.) *Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence*. Lanham: Lexington Books, pp. 25-45.
- Fort TL (2010) Peace through commerce: A multisectoral approach. *Journal of Business Ethics* 89: 347-350.

- Fort TL and Schipani CA (2007) An action plan for the role of business in fostering peace. *American Business Law Journal* 44(2): 359-377.
- Goffman E (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- Guillaume X and Huysmans J (2019) The concept of 'the everyday': Ephemeral politics and the abundance of life. *Cooperation and Conflict* 54(2): 278-296.
- Hoffman E (2008) Reconciliation in Sierra Leone: Local processes yield global lessons. *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 32(2): 129-141.
- Honwana A (2006) *Child Soldiers in Africa*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kappler S and Richmond OP (2011) Peacebuilding and culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Resistance or emancipation? *Security Dialogue* 42(3): 261-278.
- Kelman, H.C., 2004. Reconciliation as identity change: a social-psychological perspective. In: Bar-Siman-Tov Y (ed.) *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 111-124.
- Lederach JP (1997) *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace.
- Leonardsson H and Rudd G (2015) The 'local turn' in peacebuilding: A literature review of effective and emancipatory local peacebuilding. *Third World Quarterly* 36(5): 825-839.
- Mac Ginty R (2010) Hybrid peace: The interaction between top-down and bottom-up peace. *Security Dialogue* 41(4): 391-412.
- Mac Ginty R (2011) *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Mac Ginty R (2014) Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict affected societies. *Security Dialogue* 45(6): 548-564.
- Mac Ginty R (2017) A material turn in international relations: The 4x4, intervention and resistance. *Review of International Studies* 43(5): 855-874.
- Mac Ginty R (2019) Circuits, the everyday and international relations: Connecting the home to the international and transnational. *Cooperation and Conflict* 54(2): 234-253.
- Millar G (2011) Local evaluations of justice through truth telling in Sierra Leone: Postwar needs and transitional justice. *Human Rights Review* 12(4): 515-535.
- Millar G (2015) Performative memory and re-victimization: Truth-telling and provocation in Sierra Leone. *Memory Studies* 8(2): 242-254.
- Millar G (2014) Disaggregated hybridity: Why hybrid institutions do not produce predictable experiences of peace. *Journal of Peace Research* 51(4): 501-514.
- Millar G, Van der Lijn J and Verkoren W (2013) Peacebuilding plans and local reconfigurations: Frictions between imported processes and indigenous practices. *International Peacekeeping* 20(2): 137-143.

- Mitchell A (2011) Quality/control: International peace interventions and 'the everyday'. *Review of International Studies* 37(4): 1623-1645.
- Ochen EA (2014) Traditional Acholi mechanisms for reintegrating Ugandan child abductees. *Anthropology Southern Africa* 37(3-4): 239-261.
- Omer A, Appleby S and Little D (2015) *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Poulin B (2006) *Peace operations seen from below: UN missions and local people*. Bloomfield: Kumarian Press.
- Quinn J (2009) *Reconciliation(s): Transitional Justice in Postconflict Societies*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Randazzo E (2016) The paradoxes of the 'everyday': Scrutinising the local turn in peace building. *Third World Quarterly* 37(8): 1351-1370.
- Richmond OP (2009) Becoming liberal, unbecoming liberalism: Liberal-local hybridity via the everyday as a response to the paradoxes of liberal peacebuilding. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 3(3): 324-344.
- Richmond OP (2016) *Peace Formation and Political Order in Conflict Affected Societies*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rossi E and Sleat M (2014) Realism in normative political theory. *Philosophy Compass* 9(10): 689-701.
- Scott JC (1998) *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scott JC (1985) *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Scott JC (1990) *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Sending OJ (2010) *Learning to Build a Sustainable Peace: Ownership and Everyday Peacebuilding*. CMI Report, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.
- Shaw R (2007) Memory frictions: Localizing the truth and reconciliation commission in Sierra Leone. *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1(2): 183-207.
- Shaw R, Waldorf L and Hazan P (2010) *Localizing Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities After Mass Violence*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Tellidis I and Glomm A (2019) Street art as everyday counterterrorism? The Norwegian art community's reaction to the 22 July 2011 attacks. *Cooperate and Conflict* 54(2): 191-210.
- Theidon K (2013) *Intimate Enemies: Violence and Reconciliation in Peru*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Theissen C (2011) Emancipatory peacebuilding: Critical responses to (neo)liberal trends. In: Matyók T, Senehi J and Byrne S (eds) *Critical Issues in Peace and Conflict Studies: Theory, Practice, and Pedagogy*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 115-140.

Uvin P (2009) *Life after Violence: A People's Story of Burundi*. London: Zed Books.

Vaneigem R (1983) *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. London: Rebel Press.

Väyrynen T (2019) *Corporeal Peacebuilding: Mundane Bodies and Temporal Transitions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Visoka G (2019) Metis Diplomacy: The everyday politics of becoming a sovereign state. *Cooperation and Conflict* 54(2): 167-190.

Author Biography:

Gearoid Millar is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the Institute for Conflict, Transition, and Peace Research (ICTPR), University of Aberdeen. He is the author of *An Ethnographic Approach to Peacebuilding: Understanding Local Approaches in Transitional States* (Routledge, 2014) and editor of *Ethnographic Peace Research: Approaches and Tensions* (Palgrave, 2018). His research focuses on post-conflict peacebuilding, justice and Development, and he has previously published articles in the *Journal of Peace Research*, the *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, *International Peacekeeping*, *Memory Studies*, the *Journal of Human Rights*, the *Journal of Agrarian Change*, *Third World Quarterly* and *Cooperation and Conflict*.