

Navigating “the local”

Municipal engagement in Lebanese local peacebuilding

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Abstract

The last decade or so, there has been an increasing disappointment in and critique towards the way peace is built. As peacebuilding is critiqued for being too shallow, too centralised and neglecting local contexts, "the local turn in peacebuilding" has increasingly gained ground, stressing that peacebuilding requires locally embedded practices and space for local agency. Through an empirical study of three Lebanese municipalities, the aim of this study is to contribute to the understanding of the role of local governments in local peacebuilding within a world that is globally connected but which increasingly pays attention to the particular.

Taking the local turn seriously, this thesis analyses three peacebuilding functions that incorporate core ideas of the local peacebuilding literature. First, service-delivery highlights the need to satisfy local needs in order to address grievances and discontent. Second, citizen-local state interactions emphasise the need to include the local population in order to build meaningful and locally grounded peace. Third, vertical relationships emphasise the interconnections between different actors on different levels that allow local governments to play a role in building peace. Analysing the peacebuilding functions through the perceptions of local government officials and local stakeholders, the thesis asks, *how can we understand the role of Lebanese municipalities in local peacebuilding?*

Overall, the study deepens our understanding of the role of local governments in local peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts. In particular, the study emphasises the need for contextualising peacebuilding and highlights that "the local" is also a political and dynamic space. Thus, in Lebanon, the local government is understood as one actor in local peacebuilding, but an actor that gains its importance depending on the local context at hand and its connections to local, national and global arenas.

Keywords

Local peacebuilding, local government, service delivery, citizen-local state interactions, vertical relationships, Lebanon.