



KOFF Master Class

Urban Peacebuilding

26 April 2022, 2-5pm

The dynamics of conflict and violence are changing globally. Figures show that the majority of violent deaths no longer occur in traditional war situations. There is a growing consensus that urban areas in non-war contexts are becoming the future hotspots, as they emerge as targets and arenas of violence, with profound consequences for urban populations.

Against this background, the upcoming Master Class will shed light on the emerging field of urban peacebuilding. Since this approach is new to most KOFF members, we aim to introduce this research field in a KOFF Master Class format and explore its relevance for peace policy and practice. Especially for those interested in and working on safe, inclusive and resilient cities, urban peacebuilding might be of great relevance. The following questions will guide us through the Master Class

- ❖ What challenges do violently contested cities face? What kind of violence are urban areas confronted with? What does sustainable peace in urban contexts mean?
- ❖ How does urban peacebuilding contribute to more inclusive, safe and resilient cities and shape responses to crime and violence?

KOFF [Master Classes](#) are an exchange and learning format for the Swiss Platform for Peacebuilding KOFF members and other interested actors. The Master Classes provide a space to reflect and discuss topics of relevance to peace policy and practice, based on the expertise and knowledge of external experts from academia, policy, and practice.

Experts:

- ❖ [Claske Dijkema](#), Senior Researcher at swisspeace
- ❖ [Oliver Jütersonke](#), Head of Research at the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding of the Graduate Institute

Background

Urbanisation is advancing rapidly, with over half of the world's population now living in urban areas, and predictions show that this figure will rise to over 68% by 2050 (UN DESA 2018). Cities function as socio-economic magnets; they are predominantly portrayed positively as places of innovation and diversity, a source of endless opportunities (Wennmann 2019). However, cities are also characterised by poverty, exclusion and inequality. The result is increasing fragmentation of public space, a potential breakdown of social cohesion through new forms of spatial segregation and social marginalization, and negative impacts on citizenship and local democratic processes (Jütersonke & Krause 2013).

Due to these challenges in urban contexts, many cities across the globe are struggling with high rates of chronic violence. To date, considerations on violence, conflict and insecurity in urban areas have been mainly dominated by repressive or pacification approaches where state authorities seek to crush crime through "law-and-order" initiatives or under the banner of "war on drugs, crime or terrorism" (Wennmann 2019). It is still controversial how effective such repressive measures are in reducing the levels of violence and crime. However, even if they contribute to a reduction, it is at the expense of other aspects that are essential for sustainable peace. Such heavy-handed measures do not lead to peace but to pacification.

More and more cities worldwide pursue "local" peacebuilding approaches that seek to work with affected populations in specific communities to develop sustainable solutions and become safe, inclusive and resilient cities. These initiatives (i.e., UN-Habitat's Safer Cities Programme) address the complex vulnerabilities of city populations from a holistic and people-centred perspective.

Research on urban peace and conflict has focused primarily on cities in the global South. A recently launched research project ([Geographies of peace in the wake of violence in the city](#)) conducted by Claske Dijkema, Senior Researcher at swisspeace, uses a "geographies of peace" framework, which views peace as an everyday process of building ever-expanding networks that share life-affirming rather than life-destroying values. This innovative approach breaks with the tendency of peace and conflict studies to focus on the Global South and civil war contexts. Her research focuses on the neighbourhood of Villeneuve in Grenoble (France) as a case of violent urban contestation of state power and police behaviour. This marginalized social housing neighbourhood is one of the French state's special intervention zones with problems that have become typical for the "banlieue crisis", and has experienced high levels of violence between police and citizens. The project's results will help policymakers integrate urban peacebuilding initiatives of civilian actors into security policy.

Goal of Master Class

- ❖ Introduce the field of urban peacebuilding in a KOFF Master Class
- ❖ Provide resources for peacebuilding practitioners who have already some experience in peacebuilding in non-traditional war settings or affinities for urban settings
- ❖ Identify entry points for peacebuilding initiatives in urban contexts

Participants: The Master Class provides a learning space for practitioners from KOFF member organizations and beyond (i.e., the guest speakers' professional circles). Participants are asked to prepare for the Master Class by reflecting on achievements and challenges in their daily work, identifying questions they would like to bring up in the class, and reading some preparatory literature. The organizers collect these reflections and questions in advance to create a tailor-made workshop.

Output: Critical Reflection of the Master Class

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