Imagining Peace Outside of Liberal Statebuilding: Anarchist Theory as Pathway to Emancipatory Peacefacilitation

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Abstract
Critical scholarship on peace has coined the term liberal peacebuilding and proven that it is unsuccessful, even counterproductive, in achieving what it sets out to do—foster peace after violent conflict. The dominant part of this endeavor has been statebuilding. This paper adds to a slowly developing literature that starts to ask the question what an alternative to the reliance on statebuilding could look like. By employing anarchist theory, a new theoretical methodology is introduced to International Relations that allows to imagine forms of peace outside the liberal paradigm whilst preventing imperialistic claims. Such an emancipatory peace practice based on anarchism is envisioned as to build on prefigurative politics and direct action, strengthening autonomy, decentralization, and horizontality as well as challenge all structural forms of domination through radical forms of self-determination. Incorporating such an anarchist agenda offers one perspective on what fostering peace outside decontextualized and imposed liberal nation states could be. I argue that challenging statebuilding foreshadows a greater implication an anarchist research agenda promotes, namely, the need to move away from peacebuilding toward emancipatory forms of peacefacilitation.

Keywords
peacebuilding, statebuilding, anarchist theory, post-liberal peace, peacefacilitation

Introduction
Current attempts to create peace after violent conflict still heavily rely on “implanting democratic governance and economic liberalism through a broad range of interventionary practices” (Jarstad & Sisk, 2008, p. 112). A practice that has been described as liberal peacebuilding or liberal peace as it transports very specific political policies and values into societies (E. Newman, Paris, & Richmond, 2009, p. 12). A vast body of literature has engaged with the concept of the liberal peace and discussed its empirically sobering results as well as its theoretical and philosophical shortcomings.1 Whilst at best such peacebuilding prevents the immediate continuation of war, it does not address grievances or emancipate its subjects but rather maintains or creates new inequalities that leave communities

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vulnerable to conflict. In summary, liberal peacebuilding is “not compatible with the formation of peace” (Kennedy, 2016, p. 93). While the failures of the liberal peace are well documented, “there is a dearth of alternative visions” (van Leeuwen, Verkoren, & Boedeltje, 2012, p. 292) making the call to keep alternative understandings of peacebuilding alive of paramount importance (Barnett et al., 2007, p. 54).

This normative debate remains largely unaddressed since a post-positivists epistemology creates a reluctance to theorize alternative visions for fears of imposing new forms of domination. Accordingly, the critical peacebuilding literature remains often limited to the analysis of existing power structures and social relations at large, criticizing hierarchies, exposing exploitation and pointing toward previous blind spots of theories (Rossdale, 2010, p. 484). But struggles to overcome varying forms of eurocentrism (Sabaratnam, 2013, p. 260) and fail to formulate new ways of intervention (Chandler, 2015, p. 28) that positively implement its critiques. Within the study of peace this leaves us with a substantial “lack of […] critical alternative[s]” (Chandler, 2010, p. 153). The following section therefore discusses the state of the most prominent and comprehensive visions for a peace outside liberal peacebuilding within the literature whose critique underlined the need for an alternative in the first place. Thereby meant are visions that, following Cox’s differentiation, do not fall into the category of problem-solving theories as they propose fixes to an overall unchallengeable reality. But those alternatives which enable the possibility of normative choices for and against different political and social systems and attempt to “be a guide to strategic action for bringing about an alternative order” (Cox, 1981, p. 130). Currently, there are different paradigms that, to varying degrees, describe alternative orders to the liberal peace, such as resilience (Chandler, 2015), post-liberal peace (Richmond, 2011), hybridity, or the everyday (Mac Ginty, 2011; 2013; Richmond, 2009b). Yet, these approaches only produce a limited understanding of what an emancipatory peacebuilding would be, understandably fearing to foreclose bottom-up processes (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015, p. 184).

Anarchism can potentially answer to this dilemma, but whilst a limited engagement with this literature has begun, as section 3 shows (Jackson, 2018; Kennedy, 2016; Llewellyn, 2018), their conclusions remain similarly preliminary in outlining an emancipatory practice of peace that enables affected communities to reach new social relations without relying on methodologies of the liberal peace. As anarchism has always been confronted with dismissal as unachievable, being a naïve dream or a violent fantasy it has needed to formulate theories and practices that outline a vision for the future as well as ways of how to get there in order to respond to those critics without becoming itself a form of domination and contradicting itself (Prichard, 2010c, pp. 375–376). Anarchism thereby shares many attributes with postmodern theory, yet where the latter turned to cynicism, the former maintained its utopian imaginary (Seyferth, 2015, p. 30), contributing to post-positivist theory with “a more positive theoretical project of proposal and the study of alternative practices” (Reedy, 2014, p. 652).

To begin outlining the prospects of an anarchist research agenda that can contribute to envisioning an emancipatory future for peacebuilding, section four of the paper describes core concepts of anarchist philosophy that are relevant to the peacebuilding discourse. Such an anarchist contribution starts by emphasizing non-domination holistically, thereby countering the structural violence inherent in neoliberal politics (Llewellyn, 2018) that today’s peacebuilding accepts, even promotes and current alternatives struggle to overcome. A first touch point for such an anarchist research agenda is the widely dominant practice of statebuilding in post-conflict societies. Whilst a post-liberal peace has already been described to most likely be outside of what we understand as the Westphalian state...
anarchism can help us to envision forms of self-emancipation. To concretize, section 5 then introduces practices derived from anarchism that hold the potential to transform peacebuilding into peacefacilitation. Based on a commitment against vanguardism, hierarchy, and all other forms of domination, anarchist philosophy emphasizes practices of prefiguration and direct action, autonomy, decentralization and horizontality. Although anarchism will not insist on any specific institution that embodies these concepts, it does emphasize the need to build structures of highly localized self-governance. I argue that such an anarchist research agenda culminates in a new approach to post-conflict environments that can be described as peacefacilitation rather than peacebuilding. Instead of building institutions based on the expert knowledge of international “architects” an anarchist approach enables a practice of non-domination that empowers individuals to horizontally shape their responses to challenges of a positive peace whilst enabling practitioners and scholars to facilitate this process without reimposing their power.

The Limits of Post-liberal Peace(s)

Much work to date demonstrates the shortcomings of liberal peacebuilding well, but ultimately does not draw a new research agenda from these conclusions, remaining in a largely descriptive mode of analysis (Waldow, 2010). It is clear then that even if (liberal) peacebuilding is successful under its own terms, societies remain fragile as inequality and injustice are still persistent (Gready & Robins, 2014, p. 342) while the theoretical conceptualization of positive alternatives has remained inefficiently vague (Visoka, 2019, p.692). In the following, I aim to introduce briefly the current most prominent visions of alternatives to the liberal peace within critical peacebuilding literature, making visible the remaining gaps in fleshing out a peacebuilding practice that is different to current policies.

Critical peacebuilding scholarship has challenged “concepts such as power, legitimacy and agency” generally pushing “hard at the boundaries of liberalism” (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015, p. 179) in their effort to describe the reasons for the ongoing failure of the liberal peace project. Overall, the critical peacebuilding scholarship is quite careful to not engage explicitly in theorizing peace infrastructures that would replace the dominant liberal praxis. Whilst some are in doubt whether hegemonic power and knowledge relations can ever be overcome, “making any projection of the ideals of development or democracy potentially oppressive” (Chandler, 2010, p. 153),3 others are careful to premise that whilst they aim to formulate norms which could guide forms of post-liberal peace(s) they recognize the dilemma that it might be “misplaced confidence [to assume] that we have the legitimacy to recommend a type of peace for anyone else” (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015, p. 185). Therefore, they explicitly do not provide detailed prescriptions of how an emancipatory peace could look like (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015, p. 184), hoping to avoid the construction of yet another hegemonic blueprint approach. Left with intentionally vague descriptions, the search for a post-liberal peace has quickly found itself in a dead end. But to fulfill theoretical scholarships responsibility in formulating, as Cox said, choices between political systems a stronger imaginative and exemplary engagement has to take place so that this literature can make a positive impact on people’s lives.

Nonetheless, the most prominent authors of the field have throughout their work formulated at least some guardrails along which they envision a post-liberal peace. Such as that it has to foster autonomy over hegemony and address local as well as global inequalities (Richmond, 2011, p. 186). Since centralism (nationally and internationally), “individualism, inflexible territoriality, statism, neoliberal forms of citizenship, and homogenization are all targets of the post-liberal challenge, while also maintaining social justice, emancipatory forms of peace, and local tolerance” (Richmond, 2011, p. 187). This implies a re-politization of peacebuilding regarding the always existent hybridization between local and international projects to give much more room for contextual local agency and break open the currently so strongly fixed casket of liberal enclosure (Richmond, 2011, pp. 188–189).
In fact, the literature sees its role, rather ambitiously, to “be to move beyond negative hybrid peace [anything else] would mean accepting structural inequalities and latent tensions that pertain to conflict-affected societies” (Visoka & Richmond, 2016, 113). In pursuit of forms of positive peace, critical peacebuilding academia claims to “search for emancipatory forms of peace inside and outside the state framework” (Visoka & Richmond, 2016, 113), yet more often than not the literature is unable to overcome a state centrist perspective in analysis as well as proposal (Susanna Campbell & Peterson, 2015; Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 157; Millar, 2018, p. 2; Njeri, 2019; Richmond, 2011, p. 117). Absent a systematic critique of the state, seminal works call generally for a peace that enables its subjects to determine this peace themselves as otherwise assumptions and norms would once more be imposed from the outside (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015, p. 177), whilst simultaneously confronting the dilemma that such envisioned bottom-up peace(s) could be hierarchical or violent in themselves (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015, p. 184).

The emerged paradigms of local-, hybrid-, and everyday peace(s) (Mac Ginty, 2010; 2011; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Richmond, 2009a) remain to a large degree reliant on liberal institutions, prone to the disempowerment of local actors and struggle to identify the local agency which purports emancipatory change without relying on binary identities. Stressing this last claim Randazzo highlights “the need for a clearer exploration of what emancipatory peace building looks like within a theoretical framework that seeks to acknowledge multiplicity, contingency and the end of hierarchies” (Randazzo, 2016, p. 1362) marking the lack of theoretical engagement with the operationalization of the goals of post-liberal peace(s).

Persisting nonetheless on the need to overcome liberal forms of peace, it is commonly pointed out that an alternative positive peace has to eradicate economic and social inequality as well as to guarantee equal representation and subjects rights, a promise current peacebuilding missions do not deliver (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015, p. 178). Ultimately, the literature searches for multiple but not prescriptive conditions for post-liberal peace(s), openly challenging current hierarchies of power and understanding that conflict-affected societies or peoples in general do not wait to be managed by international or Western values and actors but demand freedom from violence and inequality (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015, p. 185). The current vision for an emancipatory goal of peacebuilding remains thereby purposely undefined, only framed by a few lessons, learned through the critique of the liberal status quo: It may be “open to alternatives and anti-hegemonic, bottom-up, freed from the constraints of statehood and imposed norms, and balancing needs with rights, rather than a homage to hierarchical order” (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015, p. 184).

Within critical peacebuilding scholarship this key discourse is contested by one other major line of argumentation. These authors, more generally cautious regarding the benefit of interventions, see two main problems the current critical alternatives face in overcoming the liberal peace. First, they run in danger of essentializing sociocultural differences and thereby creating a dichotomy between the liberal and non-liberal (Chandler, 2015). Second, through the focus on the (essentialized) subaltern and marginalized, “the status quo [is] naturalised or reified on the basis that difference is to be accepted as the hybrid product of local ‘resistances’” (Chandler & Richmond, 2015, p. 4), leading to a governmentality of biopolitics which does not challenge exploitative political or economic relations but intervenes in the private sphere framing the issue of peace as one of intersubjective rationalities not structural inequality (Chandler & Richmond, 2015, p. 16).

Confronting this challenge, these scholars propose not a post-liberal peace but a governance of resilience which focuses on effects and concrete “practices and strategies in relation to concrete problems” (Chandler, 2015, 39), privileging outcomes and relations instead of “imposing a universal framework over sociocultural difference, nor recognizing or privileging ‘local’ choices as emancipatory” (Chandler, 2015, p. 43). Through resilience “governance operates through societal processes rather than over or against them” (Chandler, 2015, 43) which bears the consequence that external interveners are not needed whilst simultaneously external accountability is greatly limited (Chandler,
Resilience ought to address the unknowability and rising complexity of interventions that take place within global crises and interconnectedness, by enabling governance to be self-reflexive and responsive (Chandler, 2014). Ultimately a decolonized practice of resilience, the potential to challenge engrained inequalities instead of rebuilding them, allows governance to remain opaque and thereby adaptable, being ultimately emancipatory as even through disasters new relations can be found (Chandler, 2021, p. 10).

With resilience quickly becoming a buzzword among peacebuilding practitioners, it is important to emphasize how a certain interpretation of resilience does little to move away from neoliberal politics and leaves the responsibility for dealing with crisis alone to affected communities—making self-responsibility out to be “self-determination” (Chandler & Reid, 2016) and erasing global “structural constrains and power relations” (Chandler, 2013, p. 284) instead of challenging them.

Scholars who attempt to reform peacebuilding, envisioning a post-liberal peace and scholars who are leaning more to the side of non-intervention proposing practices of resilience both emphasize the need to empower local communities, enabling them to realize the needed changes which address conflicts. Indeed, searching for forms of post-liberal peacebuilding in action Autesserre came to the conclusion that “[t]he people who have to live with the consequences of a decision should be the ones making it” (Autesserre, 2021, p. 163).

Such arguments or the repeatedly mentioned search for peace outside the Westphalian state mirror anarchist proposals in their focus on practices of self-determination, autonomy, decentralization, and rejection of statism. And yet, philosophical anarchism has barely been considered in this discipline, leaving critical peacebuilding unable to learn from a vast body of practical and theoretical knowledge regarding how to: realize self-determination, govern outside the state and domination, or enable the international community to facilitate peace without reproducing harm, outside of the liberal state framework.

**Limited Engagements With Anarchism in Peacebuilding Literature**

Instead of embracing these concepts some argued that anarchism would be impossible to realize without reimposing hegemony (Richmond, 2007, p. 259) and explicitly rejected an anarchist position, whilst simultaneously arguing that building peace might involve states to be deterritorialized and to negate their sovereignty (Richmond, 2011, p. 195). In contrast, others argued that even those who try to escape the liberal paradigm too often maintain an implicit and “modified version of state-building” (Jackson, 2018, p. 1) and are not taking “the ethical reading or political critique quite far enough” (Jackson, 2018, p. 6). Those who challenged the proposed post-liberal peace(s) as well as engage with, to varying degrees anarchist propositions for the first time shall be surveyed in the following part of the paper, revealing that still an anarchist research agenda and its core paradigms are not yet explored fully.

These notable exceptions are interventions from scholars engaged with pacifism and nonviolence. Central to this perspective is the critique of the modern state as an institution which manifests, centralizes and exerts direct and structural violence. If then (post-liberal) peacebuilding is greatly synonymous to statebuilding we are imposing institutions of violence in hope to create peace, a means-ends distinction that is rejected as implausible (Jackson, 2018, p. 5). Despite proposing a local, decentral, agonistic and participatory peace (Jackson, 2018, 1–2, 12–14) that works outside a hierarchical western state blueprint and “remove[s] the material ability and the ideological legitimacy of violence during the peacebuilding process” (Jackson, 2018, p. 12), Jackson does not considers his understanding of a post-state peace to be “anarchist” (Jackson, 2018, p. 10). A gap which Joseph Llewellyn fills by arguing for a politics of “anarcho-pacifism,” which according to him combines the effective abilities of nonviolence to topple violent regimes with anarchist insight in order to prevent physical, structural and cultural violence to take hold again (Llewellyn, 2018). He points
out how not only the state but in relation also capitalism are forms of violence that mutually reinforce each other and are in the way of an emancipatory peace (Llewellyn, 2018, p. 266). He further recognizes anarchism, “the politics of anti-domination” (Llewellyn, 2018, p. 264), as the appropriate tool to challenge not only the state and capitalism but all forms of domination such as sexism and racism on the path toward positive peace. However, whilst he points to current and past examples of anarchist organization such as “Food not Bombs,” Christiania in Copenhagen or the Free Territory in Ukraine, the description of institutions which would enable self-emancipation as argued for by anarchists remains too vague to theorize a systematic alternative to liberal statebuilding. The question of what practices enable such violence free organization remains open.

More explicitly anarchist in her references is Kennedy (2016). She outlines the prospects of an anarchist nonviolent social defense practice that highlights past, present and future peace infrastructures that truly meet the aim of a post-liberal peace. Kennedy sees nonviolent social defense and anarchism both join forces in the peace literature and praxis as social defense also wants “to change […] the status quo through autonomous forms of direct action” (Kennedy, 2016, p. 98). Further, both theories and her suggestion for a new peace infrastructure “are decentralized open to all, do not depend on official recognitions or funding, respect diversity of tactics, begin at local and often subaltern levels of society, acknowledge mutual dependency between localities and engage in direct action that is overwhelmingly nonviolent” (Kennedy, 2016, p. 102). These norms make any definition of peacebuilding and the production of a checklist for successful peacebuilding senseless as it would be statist and thereby a form of domination. She thus sees anarchism as an inspiration for prefigurative alternative politics that are autonomous, yet have seemed too radical as they are by definition outside, and in resistance to capitalist, liberal institutions (Kennedy, 2016, p. 101). According to Kennedy, a true post-liberal peace can only be imagined only through this complete rejection of liberal norms and institutions whilst pointing out that some in the post-liberal peace scholarship have “tentatively implied” (Kennedy, 2016, p. 101, emphasis in original) an anarchist philosophy yet not fully or comprehensively engaged with it.

Kennedy makes vividly the case that “anarchism(s) put into practice what those advocating post-liberal peace and its infrastructures suggest it might look like” (Kennedy, 2016, p. 102) and mentions important concepts of an anarchist peace such as an economy of commons, ending the nation state and borders, free association, mutual aid and prefigurative, anti-authoritarian, collaborative action. In this, she is going a lot further then previous authors in describing basic anarchist norms that are fundamental for understanding an anarchist vision of peace. However, similar to the previously surveyed literature, the paper cuts short here and does not take these theoretical insights far enough for a comprehensive understanding of what a different way of facilitating peace following anarchism could be. What would be new practices that embody this philosophy? What forms of institutions did anarchist employ in the past to realize their goals? And how would this not be another form of ideological imperialism, no matter how well intentioned?

Ultimately, these authors are linked in their recognition that any alternative to the liberal peace, be it resilience, the hybrid-, local-, or post-liberal peace(+), has indeed to overcome the capitalist state as we know it to move toward an emancipatory society. Whilst some engage with anarchism more directly than others, all propose alternative modes of politics that many anarchist could agree on in principal. However, I argue that the current state of the literature does not answer the question “what an emancipatory peace would look like” (Llewellyn, 2018, p. 260) sufficiently enough. We do not need an anarchist to-do-list that solves all problems of modern peacebuilding. The danger Richmond, Mac Ginty and Kennedy describe as defining a peace instead of enabling room for an endless variety of peace(s), is indeed paramount. Yet, an anarchist research agenda can still contribute more concretely to our understanding of an emancipatory society in peace and conflict studies without prescribing others what their peace would look like by drawing from emancipatory practices instead of finished institutions.
What we can then conclude is that the liberal peace is a dystopia, a vision for post-war societies that remains unrealized even within those western societies that propagate it (van Leeuwen et al., 2012, p. 311). It has been argued that an emancipatory peace “requires a move beyond a rationalistic imaginary of international politics, an engagement with culture, custom, and alternative epistemological systems” (Chandler & Richmond, 2015, p. 3) and that such a peace includes “locally formed and externally enabled peace arrangement[s] […] an inclusive type of statehood […] broad self-governance for minorities […] as well as a governance model that emancipates and empowers citizens while alleviating social inequalities” (Visoka & Richmond, 2016, 112). Studying critical peacebuilding scholarship one quickly gains the feeling “that anarchist principles are active in the aspirations and political action of people who have never heard of anarchism or anarchist philosophy” (Scott, 2012, p. xii). Yet even those who do engage with anarchist theory leave the topic under-theorized and remain vague when laying out the implications of an anarchist research agenda. Leaving the potential of anarchist theory in overcoming current impasses in peacebuilding scholarship such as: sociocultural essentialization (Chandler, 2015), reliance on capitalist and liberal relations of domination and a general under theorization of alternative approaches unexplored.

An Anarchist Lens for Peacebuilding

So how then can the anarchist contribution to peacebuilding be developed further? How does this perspective evade becoming yet another form of ideological imperialism, whilst still striving for a positive peace outcome and indeed operationalizing a path forward to that goal? The following two sections of the paper attempt to highlight anarchist responses to these questions by first engaging with the anarchist utopian imaginary and its core value of non-domination whilst secondly, in part 5, describing anarchist practices that form a radically new framework for facilitating peace.

As shown above, both, those who have engaged with anarchist philosophy and those critical scholars who have not, come to the conclusion that more often than not it is the nation state that maintains and perpetuates violence, thereby prolonging conflict. However, their comprehensive analyses concerning the state stop short of a complete anarchist research agenda. Such would not be sufficient in condemning the state but more fundamentally has to begin with anarchism’s “basic starting point, its ethical point of departure, this resistance to power” (S. Newman, 2019b, p. 82). Maybe better described as domination, anarchists understand all systemic structures that control, coerce, exploit, and discriminate (groups of) people as structures they seek to challenge and transform and whose oppressive synergies are subsumed by the word domination (Gordon, 2007, pp. 37–38). This goal directly links them to normative aspirations of feminist, postcolonial and post-structural critical theory. Peacebuilding, and statebuilding more specifically, is accordingly a field in which philosophical anarchism’s integration has long been overdue and to which it could contribute “a broader and more integrated array of social criticism and proposals for change” (Gordon, 2007, p. 47).

This is not to take away that the anarchist analysis identifies “the state as inherently violent” (Robinson, 2012, p. 131, emphasis in original). Defined by Max Weber through its centralization of all force (Baier, Lepsis, Mommsen, Schluchter & Winckelmann, 1992, pp. 157–160), the state poses a monumental risk to the safety and peace of societies, with anarchists pointing out the war-torn global history showcasing that it are more often than not state structures that are the cause of or involved in violence against people and communities (Loick, 2017, pp. 118–120). Further, the state is not only the main perpetrator of “external” violence (wars) but also structures and perpetrates violence and domination on an everyday basis against its own constituents by holding a monopoly on power and with it manifesting rather than eliminating deeply intrenched inequality (Roxburgh, 2018, p. 70). This web of domination is centrally made up of “heavily noncommunal and centralized economies which are seen to be mutually constitutive of concentrated state power, [furthering] […] not [the] decrease [of] violence nor inequality, but rather co-opts one (violence) for the defence of the other (inequality),
ensuring the persistence and preservation of both” (Roxburgh, 2018, p. 71). As it is the state that “discourages compassion and empathy by circumventing the need for community and promoting the citizen as an individual” (Roxburgh, 2018, p. 71) and who even “prevent[s] or negat[es] solutions to conflict or modes of actions and power that are outside of the disciplined reality of the state” (Roxburgh, 2018, p. 72).

But, anarchism is not, as much of IR theory and the common understanding suggest, the propagation of lawlessness, chaos, extremism, “anything goes” or a barbarian rule of the strongest (Wigger, 2016, p. 129). In fact, anarchism rather stands for order in the absence of an external authority or ruler, thereby a social order of emancipation for the disenchanted (Kinna, 2005, p. 5; Prichard, 2010c, p. 376). Classical anarchism began its critique with the state. This criticism is not to be understood in modern anarchism as a call for its abolition and therefore within a state/non-state dichotomy, rather anarchism is the normative encouragement to investigate the state, or any structure, under the pretext of “which institutions do best by freedom” (Kinna & Prichard, 2019, p. 229), or how these institutions shall be redesigned to be non-dominating. In fact, domination and oppression (May, 2009; S. Newman, 2019a) are arguably two of the most central terms and concerns within anarchist writing. This are anarchism’s most powerful analytical tools to describe and address the described “power asymmetries” (Björkdahl & Gusic, 2015, p. 268) of peacebuilding that start with the norm setting by international actors (Coning, 2013, p. 3) and end with financial, governmental and militaristic resources employed in peacebuilding contexts. It is critical peacebuilding scholarships proclaimed goal to theorize alternatives for an emancipatory, diverse, anti-hegemonic, bottom-up, state, and domination free peace(s) (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015, 175, 184). Yet, some approaches rather promote reforms to the statist model whilst others argue for non-intervention; both however do not challenge the state or domination as such and thereby manifest forms of violence. Anarchist theory offers the possibility to not take the nation state as a given fixture but rather facilitate peace on the basis of non-domination, allowing radically participatory and horizontal institutions to take root.

Envisioning such an anarchist project runs soon into the danger of being seen as violent by replacing one dominant ideology with another in a single revolutionary act, a dilemma which holds many current alternatives back as explored in section 2. To avoid this danger, an anarchist agenda should be understood as “a continual invention and experimentation with new practices of freedom, conducted associatively, producing alternative ethical relations between the self and others” (S. Newman, 2012b, p. 277), stressing that “oppression can be overcome only by the free action of the oppressed” (Kinna, 2005, p. 125). Such a conceptualization of anarchism allows for the procedural realization of anarchist ideals within existing societies whose status quo may often contradict an anarchist vision. It does however also bring with it the danger of “softening” anarchism, meaning whilst some concepts are incorporated, a fundamental critique of the state and neoliberal economy are not maintained (Roxburgh, 2018). As I advocate for an approach that prefiguratively adopts anarchist principals in the here and now, leading to incremental steps toward an anarchist society, this concern directly speaks to this paper. However, anarchism as understood here is a project that never ends but continues to question its surroundings for forms of domination. This to some might seem as failing the anarchist ideal as it at times embraces state institutions when those are the current most emancipatory form of organization. But only in this way, anarchist philosophy avoids becoming itself oppression and remains applicable throughout global politics as it does not require a common starting point or narrow path forward and instead builds social structures that strive for self-determination based on any existing institutions.

A second way by which an anarchist philosophy circumvents ideological imperialism whilst equally avoiding to strengthen, instead of challenging, the neoliberal project is its emphasis and insistence on the utopian imaginary. Too often, as seen above, anarchism philosophy is dismissed as “all too utopian,” even those who are sympathetic to the idea see anarchism often as a naïve dream that cannot possibly be realized (Briese, 2017, p. 139; Prichard, 2020). And “allegations of utopianism
must be taken seriously, but not as the occasions for closure of debate and deliberation” (Falk, 2010, p. 398). Instead, anarchism sees the utopian imaginative as a resource that can help to formulate goals without preformulating static blueprints (Briese, 2017, p. 140). Challenges of philosophical anarchism as “utopian” are accordingly not only shortsighted by their negligence of lived anarchist experience in many aspects of our daily life but further as they negate the possibility of “an ongoing ‘critical morality’” (Foucault 1986 in: Johnson, 2013, p. 796) that imagines, shows and describes new avenues, a characteristic shared by anarchism and heterotopias. They can therefore act as a possibility to think collectively about alternatives to liberal peacebuilding without reimposing a dominant liberal meta-narrative (van Leeuwen et al., 2012, p. 311).

Or as Graeber summarized:

“Contemporary anarchist ‘theory’, such as it is, is most explicitly not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding that will instruct others in the proper conduct of revolution. It is not an ideology, a theory of history. It tends, rather, towards a kind of inspirational, creative play. It is more than anything else an extrapolation from and imaginative projection of certain forms of practice” (Graeber, 2009, p. 221)

Understanding anarchism not as an ideological set of beliefs established in a prescribed manifest of which people can be convinced of, but rather as a methodology for a practice of direct action and social organization that fights any form of illegitimate authority (Neal, 1997, p. 5), enables peacebuilding literature to be informed by anarchist theories but avoids the reiteration of forms of oppression by reintroducing a dominant ideology, which both peacebuilding and anarchist scholars do not aim for. Such a “post-ideological anarchism” freely draws from traditional anarchist philosophies and employs corresponding practices “flexibly and non-doctrinally, without necessarily identifying as anarchist” (Curran, 2007, p. 7).

Anarchism’s extrapolation and imaginative projection is only bound and guided by the core value of non-domination or in more detail its: “[O]pposition to hierarchy, [ ] decentralization, [ ] commitment to freedom and autonomy, and [ ] opposition to vanguardism” (Amster, DeLeon, Fernandez, Nocella, & Shannon, 2009, p. 3). It is along these lines that an anarchist (hetero)-utopia is build and by which anarchist theory and practice has to be measured. It shall accordingly not be an attempt to replace existing dogmas like “liberal peacebuilding.” Instead, anarchism can be understood as an ideal, a methodology, that informs peacebuilding.

Ultimately, anarchism will not provide a finished framework for peacebuilding. In fact, in one of the earliest attempts to incorporate anarchist philosophy, Richard Falks seventh and final reason for why anarchist philosophy holds such a potential for the study of IR is its “refusal to blueprint the future in a manner that precludes creativity within the eventual setting that will rise to the revolutionary possibility itself” (Falk, 1978, p. 71). He summarized that anarchism’s ability of “blending of critique, vision, and transition strategy” (Falk, 1978, p. 72) is what makes it so useful for the study of world order and peace. A blueprint approach to peacebuilding would be contrary to anarchist philosophy as it would put the author in an authoritarian position (Morland, 2004, p. 25). Instead, anarchism can be used to imagine alternative options from which policy makers and communities can draw inspiration, against which to critically examine current structures and which could provide a rough guideline for progress (Falk, 2010, p. 398). This necessarily being a normative project, anarchism does not promote a moral vacuum. On the contrary, an anarchist engagement with peace, whilst fundamentally open in its process, strives to facilitate the least oppressive outcome in that specific context. It has to trust in the competence of the individual to make the best moral and effective decision for her and her community, an ability that increases with the level of social equality (May, 1989, p. 171). Addressing one of critical peacebuilding’s dilemmas through such an anarchist research agenda enables us to formulate an alternative to the liberal dogma without replacing it with a new generalized theory. Instead, emphasis is placed on the
minimal value of non-domination, so that the subaltern, instead of being subsumed under one approach again, are to decide for their own (May, 1989, pp. 178–179).

**Practices of Peacefacilitation**

Instead of emphasizing non-domination, peacebuilding is still centered around practices of “state-building” by which it is the explicit goal to build structures which resemble state governance as in the Western hemisphere.9 With the liberal peace in decline and aiming to overcome “the ideological exhaustion of state-centrism as transformative nexus” (Falk, 2010, p. 390) new actors have seen a resurgence through the increasing prominence of the local turn. However, their inclusion has been led more by the motivation to improve the efficiency of international interventions not by localizing power structures and therefore remains a shallow and rather cosmetical improvement (Mac Ginty, 2015b, p. 846). However, current alternative conceptions to liberal peacebuilding remain unable to operationalize their goals and fail to describe how a new practice of peacebuilding would function. In this final section, a first set of practices an anarchist approach can contribute are introduced, which, when guiding post-conflict politics, could facilitate multiple and horizontal peaces outside of the liberal model to take hold.

**Prefigurative Politics and Direct Action**

Two related concepts that are central to anarchism need to be introduced first as they are fundamental to how we could think about fostering peace through anarchist philosophy. First, we need to relate this new form of creating peace to the concept of prefigurative politics. By searching for, creating and living anarchist ideals, anarchists create “potential models for replication as well as support for the theoretical orientation underpinning anarchist critiques” (Robinson & Tormey, 2012, p. 147). Prefigurative politics accordingly is a mode of politics that “seeks to create the new society ‘in the shell of the old’ by developing counterhegemonic institutions and modes of interaction that embody the desired transformation” (Leach, 2013). It can be understood as a mode of politics that emphasizes the necessity of designing processes in such a way that the path toward a goal already resembles the wanted final outcome, meaning “that the process of politics is essential—not just its results” (May, 2009, p. 16).

This is often most apparent in anarchist forms of organization, which as they reject representative modes of democracy, rely on self-designed participatory, horizontal, consensual and non-representative decision-making mechanisms. One example is the World Social Forum (Maeckelbergh, 2011), whilst another are the many intentional communities that, with all the entailing compromises and complexities that building the envisioned society in the middle of the old bring, have proven to be fertile grounds for experimentation and implementation of anarchist philosophy (Firth, 2019).

Direct action, the second concept, fundamental to an anarchist approach to peace, relates to prefigurative politics in that it too calls for the creation of heterotopias where “the action […] is itself a model for the change one wishes to bring about” (Graeber, 2009, p. 210). However, it specifies that those who take part in changing their community and those who benefit from the potential change are the same people (Sparrow in Graeber, 2009, p. 202). It is seen thereby as an act that places power directly in the hands of the individual and stands in opposition to all institutions and hierarchies that take the power of others in order to act on their behalf (Sparrow in Graeber, 2009, p. 202). In fact, as anarchist strive to eliminate authority they uphold the ideal that the means must embody the ends, that is, the aim is to “build a new society in the shell of the old […] [or in other words] direct action is the insistence, when faced with structures of unjust authority, on acting as if one is already free” (Graeber, 2009, p. 203). It thereby goes further than civil disobedience in that it is not merely a protest that
appeals to (state) authorities but rather takes matters into its own hands and acts on the change that it wants to see (Graeber, 2009, p. 203). Both principals together, when translated into how we think about consolidating peace, change considerations of which issues are to be addressed, in which order and importantly how—namely, by affected people creating solutions to their current problems within their social context without betting on outside theories that promise ultimately emancipation, but require first domination.

How, through direct action and prefigurative politics, it is possible to realize emancipatory goals is evident in many of today’s political struggles. One such example is the occupation of the Hambacher Forst in Germany where the activists struggle against climate destruction is paired with enabling nonhierarchical ways of living (Kaufer & Lein, 2020). Another example are the countless mutual aid groups that organized during the Covid-19 pandemic bringing immediate help to people in need whilst at the same time building long-term structures of self-organization outside a neoliberal healthcare system (Firth, 2020).

**Autonomy**

To realize prefigurative politics and the principals of direct action, we have to challenge our understanding of autonomy within current peacebuilding. Whilst within anarchism, autonomy should not be equated with a state that is independent from other states or superior structures, the basic notion is indeed the same and applied throughout different levels. For example, workers unions are to strive for the autonomy of the workers from their bosses and the state, letting the remaining factories and groups “be free to manage [their] own affairs” (Mbah & Igariwey, 1997, p. 24). Indeed, one is only autonomous when able to make own judgments over whether something that they are supposed to do is right or not, instead of having to comply with orders of others, making authority and autonomy mutually excluding concepts (Kinna, 2005, pp. 53–54). Kinna defines autonomy as “the condition in which individuals determine their own affairs and subject their decisions to conscience or reason” (Kinna, 2005, p. 76). To which degree autonomy can be emphasized on an individual and/or communal level is one of the great dilemmas debated among anarchists (Prichard, 2010a, p. 452), generally however a maximization of autonomy is striven for. Yet, it seems clear that a neo-liberal economy and the state do not foster autonomy (Prichard, 2010a, p. 441), as they actively exclude people from taking decisions whilst still requiring adherence to the rules they generate. However, Prichard, in discussing Held’s work, stresses the argument that “participation is central to the development of our autonomy” (Prichard, 2010a, p. 448), both on a micro and macro level. An anarchist peace effort therefore challenges the traditional state in that it enables far greater participation in politics than current structures are intended to.

Such an understanding of autonomy can, for example, be found in the Zapatista movements aim to build “autonomous municipalities” within its territories to “create – with, by, and for the communities – organizations of resistance that are at once connected, coordinated and self-governing” (Casanova, 2005, p. 81). After the armed struggle it was through these institutions that indigenous communities were able to formulate alternatives to the neoliberal state (see Mora, 2007; Reyes & Kaufman, 2011). Allowing the people there to “self-organize education, health, justice and land issues” (Chatterson & Ryan, 2008, p. 120; Mora, 2015). As did the indigenous community in Cherán who, responding to organized crime and environmental devastation, reclaimed their autonomy through consensus and neighborhood-based assemblies which allow the community to directly address the problems they face without specialized intermediaries (Campbell, 2020).

Promotion of agency through a policy of autonomy expects individuals and societal groups to engage and take control over decision processes. This certainly is ambitious in our highly specialized economic and state accustomed environment. Yet, to strive for this ideal can challenge peacebuilding in two ways. First, to identify more and more areas which could be placed within the decision-making
power of local communities not international interveners or elites. Secondly, it can transform peacebuilding from a practice that attempts to find solutions to conflicts and applies them around the globe to a practice that searches for tools which can facilitate local processes that give autonomy to communities and foster emancipatory decision-making. With anarchism, questions about whom to provide with agency, with which local to cooperate and who to empower, can be broken down to a single principal: Any structure, individuals or campaigns that challenge any of the myriad forms of oppression existent in societies today should be included. Which form of domination, with which solution and to which degree is then contested, is up to the affected social group in question, yet the direction of the overall endeavor would be, under an anarchist vision, a self-determining society free of oppression.

**Decentralization and Horizontality**

If autonomy is created through anarchist efforts to enable peace on all social levels, this necessitates two fundamental principles of organization, namely, decentralization and horizontality. In fact, anarchists claim “an inherent internationalism that reflects a complex balance of local action within a globally connected network” (Amster, 2012, p. 119) for themselves. As we know, anarchism rejects the state due to its hierarchical and statist “coercive authority and pyramidal power structures” (Amster, 2012, p. 125) yet, this does not mean that anarchism is to equate with no governance at all rather that this is exercised in a decentralized fashion through “self-management, community-based decision-making processes and the active participation of all who will be impacted by any particular course of action contemplated by the group” (Amster, 2012, p. 125). As they argue that authority, centralization, and dominion are in fact inherent in the state and its form of governance, it is consequentially in the way of “the creation of a society of free and equal members based on a harmony of interests and the voluntary participation of everybody in carrying out social responsibilities” (Malatesta, 1974, p. 13).

Kinna, by drawing from anarchist writer Kropotkin, makes the distinction between government and self-government, whereby only the latter can be legitimate in an anarchist sense (Kinna, 2005, pp. 68–69). Decentralization is thereby a necessity to realize any form of anarchist organization, since self-government means the dispersion of power amongst societies and into the hands of those inhabiting them. This in turn leads to the creation of an abundance of different structures of self-administration on varying levels, through which the variety of identities, interests and geographical localities is represented. These units have to stay relatively small, yet anarchists recognize the need to coordinate and handle social problems also on a larger scale; therefore, individual units shall cooperate in a federalist manner, whilst maintaining their autonomy (Ward, 1966, p. 2). It is through this retainment of autonomy that the centralization of power and thereby a domination of some over others is made impossible.

Indeed, anarchists argue not so much for the adoption of such processes on national or even international scales but rather for the creation of structures that “can be mimicked and linked up, as opposed to scaled up” (Kinna et al., 2019, p. 358). A purely non-representational politics in a globalized world might be impossible yet by “maximizing participation and flattening social hierarchies […] [anarchism] has the ethical tools, practices and institutional experiences to make representation anarchist again” (Prichard, 2020, p. 35).

Further, peacebuilding has realized that its practice too often stabilizes old and brings with it new forms of hegemony that impede attempts to create peace. Anarchism challenges power imbalances at it sees them as a form of domination and promotes instead radical equality (Bottici, 2013). This is also resembled in its forms of social organization that fundamentally oppose power over others and even on higher levels of decision-making promote horizontality among participating groups. It is such careful attention to the structure of decision-making bodies that is crucial for an anarchist agenda to enable peace.
To ensure such principals are lived within anarchist structures of organization, varying strategies have been developed. These start with common-sense guidelines for assemblies such as that moderation, writing a protocol, etc. shall be jobs that are taken in turns by everyone, that tools, texts and other resources of the group are openly accessible for all, that meetings take place within such a schedule that all are able to participate and that initiative is encouraged, whilst errors or faults are accepted and in solidarity corrected instead of shaming those who tried to participate.

David Graeber in fact defines anarchism in terms that mostly relate to their understanding of organization, namely, as in principle about “self-organization, voluntary association, mutual aid, [and] the opposition to all forms of coercive authority” (Graeber, 2009, p. 212). When responding to the current critical intervention through hybridity and the analysis that current practical peacebuilding operates on a “good enough” paradigm that not necessarily relies on the state, we need to bear these anarchist principles in mind in order to not get lost within the search among non-traditional organizational structures for emancipatory societies. And in fact, within anarchism, institutionalization, the fixture of any social structures, is generally observed with suspicion or openly contested.

Since “anarchism is a social philosophy [that] [...] is typified by free association” (Goodwin, 2010, p. 433), it could be argued that any formation of an institution or norm, however fluid and consensual it might be, cannot be anarchistic as it through its statism and hierarchy enforcement produces domination. This however is to understand anarchcy only as the total, inequivalent absence of all violence in the Kantian sense, meaning domination of some over others, and reduces anarchism to an irrelevant extreme (Seyferth, 2015, p. 10). More sensible however is to understand the call for an end to all domination of anarchism as an ideal type, opening up spectra between anarchistic and archaic ideologies by which to measure proposed ideas (Seyferth, 2015, p. 11). To envision anarchistic institutions for peacebuilding is accordingly not inherently a contradiction, yet it has to fulfill a very high standard. Namely, these have to be evaluated according to their “openness for the goals and talents of those, who live inside or are exposed to them” (Seyferth, 2015, p. 16), a status that is reached through these institutions, their practices and their form as well as their goals and rules which have to be definable and changeable by those who live within them (Scott, 2012 in Seyferth, 2015, p. 16). In other words, anarchist forms of organization have to remain negotiated “fluid processes whereby needs and desires are cooperatively formulated and met” (Reedy, 2014, p. 641). Whilst all rules within anarchist organization are produced collectively and can freely be accepted or rejected by individuals, anarchists are aware that oppressive tendencies might persist as for example through socialization yet remain committed to addressing and challenging these problems (Reedy, 2014, p. 645). Such reflective and fluid patterns make anarchist organization horizontal and decentral.

Such decentral and horizontal organization can be observed within many grassroot political organizations globally (Dupuis-Déri, 2019; Juris, 2009). One example is described by Maceckelbergh who dissects the 15 May movement in Barcelona where neighborhoods organized themselves in order to create consensus on common projects (Maceckelbergh, 2012).

Within this spectrum, anarchists have built and lived in a wide variety of forms of social organization such as community associations, networks, cooperatives, workers councils, social centers, affinity groups, etc., defying the notion that anarchism stands in contradiction to organization and can only remain an utopia making them actually heterotopias (Shantz, 2010, pp. 22–23). It is, however, not the point to build cozy alternatives in which the anarchist can live untouched by outside social inequalities but rather “to replace statist and capitalist relations and develop viable alternatives. The point is to change things” (Shantz, 2010, p. 25). It is therefore for horizontal institutions imperative to remain in constant flux as environments and individuals change, keeping up a constant process of practical experimentation that refuses to detach the ends from the means whilst striving for the ideal of “communal harmony and individual autonomy” (Reedy, 2014, p. 646). The goal of these concepts is to create diversity as it is seen that “it is diversity and not unity, which creates the kind of society in which you and I can most comfortably live” (Ward, 1992, 5). The main
The argument for these structures is that everybody affected by a certain decision should be included in the decision-making free from hierarchical power asymmetries, a radical horizontal form of local ownership that stands in contrast to peacebuilding processes which too often are led by outside actors and have difficulty identifying “the local” (Hirblinger & Simons, 2015; Mathieu, 2019; Simons & Zanker, 2014). Through decentralization and horizontality an anarchist agenda for peace would ensure that decisions would be locally tailored as they would be locally made, instead of generalized policies that are potentially distant from actual needs.

**Federating Councils**

Within anarchist philosophy a debate about how these principals translate into an alternative to the state are ongoing and widely varied. However, a common thread can be identified.

The core idea of many of these formulations is the attempt to not aggregate the political responsibility of the individual in one higher authority, enabling individuals to act collectively by free association without losing their autonomy (Loick, 2017, p. 133). Such is envisioned to be realized in the federation of decentral associations which shall consist of community councils that decide about everything that is their property and form administrations by the people for each province (Proudhon and Senft 2014, 165). Thereby, these associations give too little authority to the associations they themselves are in turn part of, denying any centralized form of power to form (Proudhon & Ausgewählte Texte, 1963, pp. 228–229).

Within councils, decisions can be chosen to be delegated to a representative, either to represent that view in other council bodies or to fulfill the task. However, the delegate remains the executing agent of the decisions taken by the community and does not do what she alone considers most appropriate (Mühsam 2009, 79). All participants of a council can be both, vote and be voted for, the decision of whom they choose as their delegate can be made on a basis of trust and expertise for the problem at hand, not based on where that person is on a hierarchical latter of party structures (Stowasser, 2016, p. 125). To guarantee that these delegates do not become some form of elite, it is important to note that they are not granted any special rights other than those needed to accomplish the task they are given, further, their status as delegate lasts only as long as it takes to complete the task and finally a delegate cannot take (major) decisions by herself but rather carries out what the council decides (Stowasser, 2016, p. 125).

It is the goal of such structures that people are able to truly govern themselves by creating local councils in their neighborhoods. These councils can make suggestions related to other councils, for example, to those of companies and other provinces. Mühsam argues that through this system the claim “everything by everybody for everybody” (Mühsam 2009, 84) can become reality. More recently, the term participatory politics has been coined that describes similar systems, as nested councils that are autonomous in matters pertaining to them and federally structured when concerning issues that affect more people than are organized in one council. This shall enable people to control their own political matters, recognizing “political participation [as] intrinsically worthwhile” (Shalom, 2008, p. 26), in contrast to representative democracies which often hinder participation and self-determination.

Gustav Landauer, building on an anarchist tradition, conceptualized the state not as a thing, something that could be simply destroyed, but rather was convinced that the state is made up by relations between people and our belief in the idea of the state itself (Wolf, 2015, pp. 192–193). In order then to get rid of the state and create new, more anarchistic, societal structures, we need to start changing our relations toward each other individually and gain back autonomy over our lives and our decisions. Landauer envisioned this change to include the gradual building of “cooperative and federal connected living environments” (Wolf, 2015, p. 193). Landauer was aware that this needed the formation of politically aware and independent subjects who would organize themselves from the
bottom up. He called for the slow creation of anarchistic structures outside, rather than within the existing state, municipalities being the rightful starting point for these subjects to take decisions, on a direct democratic basis. Within such local communities, social relations could be rebuilt into federal and basis oriented free spaces that will enable a social, anti-authoritarian, structural violence free anarchistic society (Wolf, 2015, pp. 193–201).

Whilst engulfed in war, similar institutions of non-domination have sprung up throughout Syria. Probably better known is Rojava, a territory in north and east Syria, in which people have organized themselves, creating a system of democratic confederalism in opposition to the nation state, patriarchy, and capitalist exploitation (Küçük & Özselçuk, 2016). Lesser known are the Local Administrative Councils which formed throughout all of Syria in the territory held by oppositional forces starting in 2012, filling the vacuum left by a retreating state (Hajjar et al., 2017; Kahf, 2021) with forms of self-determination that were supposed to realize autonomy for its communities outside of authority (Aziz, 2012; Woller, 2018, p. 53; Yassin-Kassab & Shami, 2018, 68ff).

In Rojava, an even more elaborate system of federalized councils has had the opportunity to develop. Starting with the commune of 150–1500 inhabitants communities federalize in neighborhoods, sub-districts, districts, cantons, and regions ultimately forming the “Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria” alongside the Syrian Democratic Council and Civil Society organizations (Rojava Information Center, 2019). In fact, if not without controversy Rojava is by many recognized as a real world implementation of anarchistic ideals (Cemgil & Hoffmann, 2016; Graeber, 2014; Jongerden, 2019) even described as an “alternative to imperialist intervention” (Hosseini, 2016, p. 263) that in the midst of ongoing war aims to create peace through local agency and has been a place of relative stability (Duman, 2017; Nordhag, 2021).

Another example of federal local organization can be observed in Sudan where, as part of a vast array of emerging political actors, neighborhood resistance committees have taken a central role in organizing protest against the military rule. Whilst their political outlooks vary highly and organized networking between them is often fragile, some call for fully federalized forms of horizontal organization on the basis of these committees and unions as a way of tackling the constitutional crisis and violent conflict the Sudanese people experience currently (see Maiurno Resistance Committee, 2021).

Neither such examples nor philosophical anarchism have made a significant impact on current theorizations of peacebuilding. Instead, current concepts such as a local-, hybrid-, everyday-, or post-liberal peace do not fully abandon the state but present modifications to the existing system, thereby often reproducing an environment that enables violence (Jackson, 2018, p. 8). In their rejection of the state, anarchists repeatedly point out that it is the state who is the perpetrator of violence and not a force of peace. Llewellyn, focusing on security studies, cites in this context a study stating that between 1900 and 1987, it were governments that murdered 170,000,000 people, noticeably outside of wars (Rummel 1997,1998 in: Llewellyn, 2018, p. 265) combined with the estimated 10 million deaths annually due to capitalist structural violence that is embedded in the state system (Llewellyn, 2018, p. 265), making it evident that peacebuilding, is it to enable peace, has to begin to search for alternatives.

Rather than to parachute into post-conflict societies with an elaborate idea of how this society could be transformed into a state, an anarchist approach would start by asking what structures do exist? How are they complicit in enforcing and maintaining inequality? And only then: How can the particular community change this societal web into a more and more domination free space? With critical peacebuilding leaving it unclear how the envisioned emancipatory bottom-up peace(s) are to be realized without imposing an outside vision, the discussed anarchist practices enable us to begin debating structures that tackle inequality, power hierarchies and matters of participation through the action of the subaltern itself. In this endeavor, the international or external intervener is more a facilitator, supporter and access provider with a general normative vision of where the project could go.
Instead of local communities being included in the decision-making process, as often also called for by critical peacebuilding literature, it shall be them who may include international outsiders. A politics of prefigurative and direct action, autonomy, decentralization, and horizontality as well as local councils is able to empower communities’ post-conflict to realize emancipation without interveners imposing new forms of domination, transforming peacebuilding into a practice of peacefacilitation.

Conclusion

This paper has built on the widely shared finding that statebuilding dominates peacebuilding practices today (Campbell & Peterson, 2015). Within “template-style liberal peace interventions” a “fetishization of state and institution-building” (Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 157) has taken place that emphasizes security and stability, is technocratic and top-down in nature and fails to recognize its own biases as well as local preferences. Liberal peacebuilding has become subservient to statebuilding, merging the two projects inseparably and reproducing sovereign territoriality, hierarchies of modernity and inherent structural, cultural, physical and economic violences (Richmond, 2011, p. 117). Even scholarship on peacebuilding is itself state-centric (Mac Ginty, 2008; Millar, 2018, p. 2; Njeri, 2019; Richmond, 2019, p. 2).

We know that local preferences and structures are ignored and replaced with a foreign understanding of the state (Campbell & Peterson, 2015, pp. 339–340) leaving those installed states without legitimacy amongst their constituency (Campbell & Peterson, 2015, p. 341). In fact, statebuilding “efforts often fail to build either an effective state or sustainable peace” (Campbell & Peterson, 2015, p. 343). Moreover, such structures are often challenged locally by subversion and decentralization (Richmond, 2011, pp. 186–187), also described as localization (Acharya, 2004), vernacularization (Levitt & Merry, 2009), or hybridity (Jarstad & Belloni, 2012; Mac Ginty, 2010). Yet, whilst the literature is able to identify and conceptualize power imbalances (Björk Dahl & Höglund, 2013, p. 298), scholarship often remains that if statebuilding would allow for more informal local institutions, understand better the ways institutions gain legitimacy and paid more attention to society-state relations, it could be improved and beneficial (Campbell & Peterson, 2015, p. 344).

On the other hand, many suggestions by critical scholarship on peacebuilding that challenge the state are very close to or mirror anarchist philosophies as explored in the second part of the paper (Autesserre, 2021; Bojicic-Dzelilovic & Martin, 2018; Chandler, 2015; Donais, 2012; Mac Ginty, 2013; Richmond, 2011; Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2015).

In beginning to describe the scope of an anarchist research agenda for peacebuilding, I suggest that peacebuilding should be thought of rather as peacefacilitation14 as it enables a normatively based vision of peace but does not predetermine the outcome of this social transformation. It would not start with a finished vision of a “peaceful” society and its institutional characters, like liberal peacebuilding that dreams of the western state, but instead would start to strengthen social relations based on existing structures that aim for organization outside of domination, freely created along the way by those inhabiting their communities.

It is such an anarchist research agenda that allows to navigate the thin line between three dangers: One the continuation of neocolonial interventions, second the introduction of a new dominating meta-narrative, a danger with depoliticizing and counterproductive effects (Richmond, 2009b, p. 570) and third oppressive local governance. Anarchist theory offers thereby critical scholarship in peacebuilding and IR a vision ahead and opens an entirely new field for research. For peacebuilding such a theoretic endeavor enables a few strategic moves that further our understanding of peace.

First, and more generally, might be the acknowledgment that critical scholarship which dares to engage with the question of what could be instead, what would be better, is needed. Academia neglects its societal role and responsibility if it does not seek to engage in the debate of how to end structures of oppression but only satisfies itself with mapping out systems of injustice. Simultaneously, “the problem of
hegemonic relations of power and knowledge cannot be overcome, making any projection of the ideals of development or democracy potentially oppressive” (Chandler, 2010, p. 153). However, whilst anarchism through its policy of prefigurative politics, direct action, and focus on societies without domination maintains a vision of the goal, it does not propose specific and universal tools and institutions from which we can build peace. Instead, anarchism provides a range of practices that aim to empower communities to govern themselves whilst minimizing domination. By employing this anarchist framework, actors for peace can facilitate a positive peace without reproducing violent hierarchies.

This relates to a second debate to which anarchist philosophy can contribute, namely, the discourse around the local and local ownership. Both terms have become buzzwords whose implications are often lacking in praxis but also conceptionally the terms have drawn criticism for romanticisation and under-complexity. Instead, an anarchist form of peacemaking that stresses the importance of decentral, horizontal, and autonomous organization identifies the local as those individuals who are affected by a specific problem. And indeed such a “management of resources through participatory decision-making by those who use them results on the whole in better care for them than is the case with either private or state management” (Clark, 2013, p. 10). But it also fundamentally changes the position of the outside intervener in post-conflict environments, whilst the liberal peace builds on the expertise of outside experts, giving them often the sole power to decide on policy, through an anarchist lens such power could only be held by people who live within these communities. The intervener is then rather an enabler and facilitator.

Peacefacilitation thereby challenges the current conviction that creating peace relies on elite level negotiations (see Papagianni, 2009) instead, anarchists by referring to horizontality explicitly argue for “the active creation of nonhierarchical relations through decision-making processes” (Maeckelbergh, 2012, p. 211). It is anarchisms intend to create equality and thereby abolish domination by equating the bodies that act and those who make decisions. Committing to such an approach would prefiguratively align the goal of a society with less oppression with a means to reach that goal. Peacefacilitation thereby takes up the long-shared understanding that liberal statebuilding by outsiders is none functional and instead aims to enable affected people to reclaim their political self-determination and realize peaceful societies on their and not international experts terms, whilst equally the responsibility of the international community to support such transitions is not lost. Peacefacilitation is to encourage structures that enable self-emancipation without dictating the end result, leading us far beyond the nation state.

Lastly, this paper started from the skepticism that critical peacebuilding has toward the state and statebuilding but indeed dares to take up the anarchist quest in looking for alternatives. Especially exporting and imposing state institutions can be detrimental as also Kropotkin noticed as an army officer in the Far Eastern provinces of the Russian Empire where he was enraged

“at seeing how central administration and funding destroyed any improvement of local conditions, through ignorance, incompetence and universal corruption, and through the destruction of ancient communal institutions which might have enabled people to change their own lives” (Ward, 1992, p. 7).

In response, anarchists attempt to “theorize order without an orderer” (Havercroft & Prichard, 2017, p. 4) which may ultimately lead to considerations like the introduced federal council systems but can also recognize other forms of self-management like unions as a first form of anarchism that works already within states (Chomsky & Pateman, 2005, p. 214). And whilst this paper has engaged closely with the statebuilding literature on peacebuilding, the need to simultaneously consider anarchist philosophy in regard to not only the state but also questions in relation to political economy and transformative justice is very much apparent and something future research should consider.15

For not inventing just another form of Western imperialism, it is necessary to contextualize any anarchist theory to a specific place and time. Whilst within the context of the global north debates concerning the limited emancipatory character of democracies might be warranted, the same might not
be true in a post-conflict environment in the global south. There, democracy might be a first and necessary step after, for example, authoritarian rule (Purkis & Bowen, 2004). In fact, it seems unfeasible to end all forms of oppression simultaneously (Autesserre, 2021, p. 148). Creating contextualized, highly local, and realpolitikal anarchist forms will always be a compromise between utopia and reality, between “pure” anarchist philosophy, heterotopias, and existing structures of violence. This entails also embracing the state where it exists and reformulating its functions through the anarchist lens. Indeed, the struggle for a society that is increasingly domination free, that reaches for a positive peace, legitimizes improvisations (Purkis & Bowen, 2004, pp. 228–229) if its methods remain emancipatory.

Just because peacebuilding can occur by “invitation” of a host country, it is not a benign and violent free endeavor (Cooper, Turner, & Pugh, 2011, p. 2000). A variety of violent side effects are attached to peacebuilding practices which affect post-conflict societies almost indiscriminately. Peacefacilitation must incorporate conflict as transformative progressive aspect (Jackson, 2018, p. 10). To engage with conflicts constructively, the means have to fit the ends of an emancipatory politics. An imposed peace that is not truly made by those who are supposed to live by it can neither be emancipatory nor sustainable. Anarchist philosophy provides the right means to that end. Is it possible then to imagine peace outside of liberal statebuilding? If such is meant to be a blueprint for society, then no such an imagination is destined to remain an endeavor of oppression. However, an anarchistic paradigm of peacefacilitation might enable environments within post-conflict societies to take form that allow for the imagination of social relations outside of violence to take place, transforming conflict from within.

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Notes
1. The liberal peace has been criticized as a one-solution-fits-all method, emphasizing that its praxis of statebuilding promotes an institutional and centralized Western template rather than contextualizing peace efforts according to local needs, structures and culture (Jackson, 2018, p. 2; E. Newman, 2009, pp. 42–43; Richmond, 2011, p. 117). Thereby these interventions “shift[] important aspects of domestic policymaking into transnationalized or transnationally regulated spaces of governance” (Hameiri, 2013, p. 53; Hameiri & Jones, 2016) putting them outside local accountability and taking autonomy and self-determination away rather than promoting it (Chandler, 2010, p. 148). Within this analysis the liberal peace presents a form of imperial order that is neither effective nor legitimate, leaving it “in disarray, if not in crisis” (Richmond, 2009b, p. 557). Influential works among this canon are: (Autesserre, 2017; Campbell et al., 2011; Chandler, 2013; Hameiri, 2011; Jahn, 2007; Mac Ginty, 2015a; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; E. Newman et al., 2009b; Pugh et al., 2008; Richmond, 2006; 2009b; Visoka & Richmond, 2016).

2. With anarchism slowly gaining prominence in International Relations, Kazmi (2019; pp. 46–47) and Prichard (2010b; p. 34) notice the severe lack of consideration of this field in the past. Notable exceptions are the early works of Falk (1978), Turner (1998), and Weiss (1975).

3. For an even more skeptical position on interventions generally as well as peacekeeping missions more specifically, see, for example, Cunliffe (2016, 2017, 2018).
4. Chandler argues that the emancipatory potential of resilience can be actuated when the concept is read not through an Eurocentric lens that promotes a “bouncing back” to a status quo on a linear trajectory of modernity but instead as a form of governance that welcomes contingency and indeterminacy, understanding the world less as knowable and causal given construct but more as fluid experimentation of relation (Chandler, 2021).

5. Whilst an ethical resistance to power might indeed be a shared starting point among anarchists, most issues within anarchism continue to be much debated (see Kinna (2019)). However, as a discussion of each anarchist position would overwhelm the scope of the paper, the positions described in the following should be seen as widely shared within anarchist philosophy but not to represent consensus in any way.

6. However, Roxburgh warns vehemently against any attempt to cherry pick aspects of anarchism and apply them to the current state of order without radically challenging the existing and any forms of domination, especially the state (Roxburgh, 2018, p. 73).

7. Between anarchist authors the relationship of the state with violence and war is described in varying ways but in his in-depth discussion of anarchist/autonomist literature reaching from Kropotkin, Bakunin and Goldman to Chomsky and Deleuze, Robinson carefully lays out how for many the logic of the state is one “which drives towards domination, control and authoritarian social relations, and which thus produces violence as a necessary effect” (Robinson, 2012, p. 150). A violence that is directed against other states as well as its own population, “even as peace bringer, the state is a negative force both because it imbalances the conflict towards one side and because its imposed peace is a generalized disempowerment in a ‘colorless lifeless whole’” (Robinson, 2012, p. 135).

8. That in fact the project of anarchism will, in its own right, never be finished was already succinctly summarized by Malatesta: “Therefore, the subject is not whether we accomplish Anarchism today, tomorrow, or within ten centuries, but that we walk towards Anarchism today, tomorrow, and always” (Malatesta, 1899).

9. As Mac Ginty points out, the War on Terror, for example, was very much also a war on statelessness—pressuring all entities even further into this narrow concept (Mac Ginty, 2015b, p. 844).

10. Mentioned are often the protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle 1999, the People’s Global Action network, the Animal Liberation Front or groups such as the Black Rose collectives, Anti-Racist Action and Anti-faschistische Aktion, but anarchist forms organization are not unique to the global north (see, e.g., Ramnath (2011)).

11. Next to Proudhon, Landauer and Mühsam also foundational thinker Kropotkin similarly imagined small-scale communities that are self-governing, and are created by the free will and cooperation of their members (Ward, 1992, pp. 7–8).

12. The development of such specifically anarchist forms of organization is by most authors traced back to the influence of Abdullah Öcalan on the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), who after supporting a rather Marxist-Leninist politics was inspired by the writings of ecological anarchist Murray Bookchin leading the PKK to abandon statist politics and adopt an insurrectionary praxis of non-domination (Potiker, 2019, p. 80).

13. This includes discussions around nationalistic narratives of the Kurdish majority, the personality cult around Öcalan, militarization, true “stateless”; political party involvement, and ambiguities within political ideologies themselves as well as in relation to praxis (Dinc, 2020; Galvan-Alvarez, 2020; Leezenberg, 2016).

14. When we “build” things, like a train station, there are a lot of individual experts involved who all have total control over their area of expertise such as architects, investors, interior designers, and city planners. In this way, a plan is decided upon and implemented that in its basic processes is similar to previous projects but those who eventually work in and travel through this public building had no impact on its design and functionality. A practice of facilitation would enable those who will work and live in such a metaphorical building to decide on all matters of its creation and be put into a position where they themselves can realize its construction.

15. For anarchist literature on justice, law, transformative justice, and conflict resolution consult: Amborn (2016); Chartier (2012; 2013); Dürr (2019); Loizidou (2019); S. Newman (2012a); Russel (2017); Schuhmann (2019); Zucca-Soest (2019). Regarding alternative, economic models consider the critically debated theory of ParEcon (Albert, 2003, 2006) as well as more generally on anarchist economics: Albert et al. (2012); Bookchin (1986); Gordon (2012); Harvey (2010); Jakobsen (2019); Knowles (2000); Seyferth (2019); Shannon (2019).
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