Peace for Kashmir? Transnational civilian peacebuilding across the *Line of Control*
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Introduction

For seventy years now, Kashmir has been a serious issue of dispute between Pakistan and India and has been divided into Indian- and Pakistani-administered parts by a ceasefire and military control line. This closed and almost impermeable de facto border, called the Line of Control (LoC), has in important ways prevented Kashmiris from beginning, sustaining and restoring relationships and exchanging commodities, experiences and ideas across the LoC.

Although the ceasefire negotiated in 2003 has decreased the number of dangerous incidents between Indian and Pakistani soldiers and also entailed some confidence-building measures such as cross-LoC travel and trade opportunities for Kashmiris, interactions across the LoC have remained more symbolic than substantial. Besides, these measures have neither initiated nor further encouraged diplomatic attempts to bring Kashmiris and the Pakistani and Indian governments closer to a political solution to the conflict (Bali and Akhtar 2017; Mahmud 2018). Despite the end of war, peace in Kashmir has remained transitional and fragile due to repeated violations of the ceasefire and other serious incidents, such as the Mumbai attacks in 2008, carried out by Pakistani militants, and the killings of Kashmiri protestors and freedom fighters by Indian armed forces in Indian-administered Kashmir, that continue to strain the political relationship between New Delhi and Islamabad (Mahmud 2018; Mughal 2018a).

In response to the persisting political and violent tensions and the shortcomings of the state-approved confidence-building measures, international nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), such as the London-based Conciliation Resources – in collaboration with Kashmiri NGOs and activist groups in Britain, Pakistani- and Indian-administered Kashmir – began to address the situation of Kashmiris' separation and overall exclusion from conflict resolution. Under the banner of "civilian peacebuilding", initiatives are taken for, and by, ordinary Kashmiris to overcome the social divisions imposed by the Kashmir dispute and to enable relationships and collaborations between groups of journalists, traders, filmmakers, schoolteachers and youngsters from both sides of the LoC (CR 2018; Mughal 2018b; Ninan 2015).

What is striking about these initiatives for peace and conflict resolution is that they carefully avoid "politics" while operating across one of the most politicised and militarised borders in the world, aiming to bring together people that Pakistan and India are keeping apart for the purpose of consolidating their respective power in Kashmir. Against this background, my project studies the contradictions, dangers and possibilities of these "non-political" initiatives and aspirations for civilian peacebuilding in Kashmir from a transnational angle, asking questions such as: What peace? Whose peace?

Exploring the workings and entanglements of such transnational civilian peacebuilding with wider social and political processes of conflict and violence in and across places and contexts in Kashmir, Pakistan, India and Britain, my project aims to contribute ethnographically and theoretically to the emerging field of Kashmir studies (Duschinski et al. 2018; Zutshi 2018; Sökefeld 2012) and to the anthropology of peace and peacebuilding (Bräuchler and Naucke 2017) and interdisciplinary peace and conflict studies more generally. Despite the growing research on the "local turn" in international peacebuilding and on the related "frictional encounters" (Björkdahl and Höglund 2013) between global and local actors, practices and ideas that are seen as mainly responsible for failures of peace initiatives, the wider social, political and moral outcomes of civilian peacebuilding with regard to processes of conflict, violence and politics have remained relatively unexplored. What is missing is a more detailed understanding of how civilian peace initiatives moralise and tackle conflicts and thus draw boundaries between people and groups not only as "local partners" and "global professionals", but also as civilians, militants, Islamists and state soldiers, as political activists, terrorists, peace

workers and ordinary citizens. Drawing on current anthropological conceptualisations of civility (Thiranagama et al. 2018) as practices and ideas aimed at promoting restraint and respect in situations of threatening or actual dispute, my project critically examines claims to peace and civility "as the virtue of civil society" (Thiranagama et al. 2018: 159) in the Kashmir conflict. In this regard, Kashmiri and non-Kashmiri professionals and activists working for peace claim to be working for the common good of ending violence and preparing the ground for a peaceful resolution of the conflict that counters "militant" or "political" aspirations.

The question, however, remains as to how such claims to peace and civility also affect conflicts and provoke new acts of violence. Against this background, my research aims to initiate a theoretical debate in the anthropology of peace and peacebuilding about how civility as a category of social and political practices creates new conflicts and solidarities between people and groups and possibilities for peaceful politics to emerge that alter processes of conflict and violence. At the same time, in debating civility as a provocative analytic conception in anthropology for grasping contemporary forms of politics and political subjectivities, I contribute to anthropological theory more generally.

Before discussing research questions, theoretical considerations and methods in more detail, I contextualise the project by providing insights into the current state of anthropological and historical research on local and translocal political processes relating to Kashmiris in Kashmir, India, Pakistan and Britain.

Background: Kashmir and the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India

Jammu and Kashmir (in short: Kashmir) was formerly a princely state of British India ruled by a local Hindu Maharaja under the auspices of British colonial rule. Both Pakistan and India regard Kashmir as an integral part of their respective nations and territories. When the colonial rulers left, they partitioned British India between Pakistan and India. Whereas Pakistan, understanding its formation as the long-awaited creation of a homeland for otherwise discriminated-against Muslims in South Asia, claims Muslim-majority Kashmir on religious grounds, India regards Kashmir's integration into the Indian nation state, with its Hindu majority, as a touchstone of its secular foundation. In the turmoil of partition in 1947, Kashmiri Muslims in the northwest started an armed uprising against the Maharaja. To suppress this local struggle for *azādī* (freedom), the Maharaja turned to India for military support and, under circumstances that are still contentious today, declared that Kashmir was joining India (Zutshi 2004; Snedden 2012). The resulting war between Pakistan, supporting the Kashmiri freedom fighters, and India ended in 1948 with a UN-negotiated ceasefire line that later became the LoC. Despite various UN resolutions and agreements between Pakistan and India, most notably on a referendum to allow Kashmiris to decide on the future of their state, this first war was followed by further wars and serious armed escalations of the conflict in 1965, 1971 and 1999. The promised referendum was never held (Snedden 2015).

After the third India–Pakistan war (which was not directly about Kashmir and mostly took place in East Pakistan), the Simla Agreement of 1972, signed by Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, formalised and renamed the ceasefire line as Line of Control, possibly with the intention of converting the ceasefire line into an international border at some later date. In any case, the Simla Agreement has marginalised Kashmiris politically, by stating that all disputes between India and Pakistan, including the dispute over Kashmir, are bilateral issues (Snedden 2015).

Despite the Simla Agreement, the LoC has remained militarised and was never normalised as an international border. Apart from secret crossings by militant freedom fighters and refugees and sporadic incidents of gunfire, state-approved movements of things and people across the LoC are still today limited to some traders and divided families who are allowed to use a weekly bus service between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar, which was introduced in 2005 as a confidence-building measure

(Khan 2008). Because the bureaucratic procedure for obtaining permission to travel by the bus is complicated and tedious for people with relatives across the LoC, the measure is often criticised as a mere "show off to the international community" (Bali and Akhtar 2017: 4). The closed de facto border between Pakistani- and Indian-administered Kashmir has obstructed the relationships of social and political groups in the region in substantial ways. The political hostilities between the two states continue to impose difficulties on Kashmiris from both sides of the LoC who wish to visit "the other side". Visa restrictions also make it difficult for them to travel to parts of Kashmir and to India or Pakistan via their ordinary international border crossing in Punjab.

Map of Pakistani-administered parts of Kashmir (Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan) and Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir (map created by the author using stepmap.de).

Pakistan and India aim with such restrictions to prevent suspicious and dangerous categories of people – militants, spies or refugees – from entering and destabilising Pakistani- and Indian-controlled parts of Kashmir. Their governments also fear cross-border political mobilisation and the possibilities it entails of propagating politics of independence for Kashmir as a whole or parts of it. Because independence politics challenge existing power relations and the Kashmiris' marginalised position in negotiations about what the governments in Islamabad and New Delhi claim, and the UN confirms, is a bilateral dispute, whose solution lies in Kashmir as a whole joining either India or Pakistan, this kind of politics is largely suppressed on both sides of the LoC. In Pakistani-administered Azad (free) Kashmir, for instance, politicians and senior officials are required to confirm their desire for Kashmir to join Pakistan. This requirement, established in Azad Kashmir's constitution, has regularly prevented candidates from pro-independence groups from contesting elections in Azad Kashmir. Although Pakistan has granted the region some degree of political autonomy, the government and administration of Azad Kashmir are largely dependent on, and dominated by, Pakistani politicians and bureaucrats. Through formal constitutional and bureaucratic arrangements but also more informal measures such as the manipulation of elections and Pakistan's armed forces' and intelligence services' monitoring and pressuring of politicians and political groups, Islamabad makes sure that Azad Kashmir's leaders pursue pro-Pakistan (and anti-India) politics and refuse the idea of independence (Snedden 2012; Rose 1992; Schild 2015). In even more pervasive ways, New Delhi controls politics in Indian-administered Kashmir and represses political dissidents, most notably in the Kashmir Valley, where a large majority of Kashmiri-speaking Muslims live. Many of them oppose Indian occupation and demand *azādī* for Kashmir, with some preferring the region to join Pakistan and others wanting it to gain independence (Hussain 2018). From the beginning, after UN-led negotiations between Pakistan and India ended the first Kashmir war and determined a ceasefire line, India has ensured that Kashmiri Muslim leaders and parties who came to power were pro-India (and anti-Pakistan) and rejected independence. India had initially granted Indian-administered Kashmir some political autonomy. However, since the early

1950s, New Delhi has steadily diluted Kashmiris' autonomy, jailed their dissident political leaders and subordinated the region politically and administratively more and more to the Indian government (Zutshi 2004). This dilution, combined with severely manipulated elections and the high unemployment rates of young and well-educated Kashmiris, incited widespread political protests and resistance against the "denial of democracy" in the Kashmir Valley in 1988. The brutal repression of these protests by Indian security forces and the anti-India militants fighting the forces back, often supported by Pakistan from across the LoC with training, arms and ammunition, ultimately turned the anti-India uprising violent. Since the armed uprising began, militants and Indian security forces have killed some 50,000 Kashmiris. Over time and as Kashmiris' weariness of the war and their disillusionment with Pakistan and pro-Pakistan militants increased, Indian armed forces stabilised the Kashmir Valley. Although anti-India protests still erupt from time to time, most Kashmiris appear to be resigned to the fact that India will not meet their aspirations for *azādī* but will retain Kashmir, going so far as to use brutal and arbitrary violence against its people (Snedden 2015). As a result of the Kashmiris' failed uprising against India, Azad Kashmiris, who despite democratic shortcomings engage relatively peacefully with Pakistani domination, also came to realise that Pakistan would not be able to liberate "their brothers and sisters" across the LoC from Indian rule – neither by waging an open war nor by infiltrating the Kashmir Valley with militants.

Considering the seventy years of hostile relations, including several wars, between Pakistan and India, and given that the governments in Islamabad and New Delhi are facing no political pressure, nationally or internationally, to enter into serious negotiations with one another, a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute seems improbable. Besides, no international organisation or other powerful third party supports Kashmiris in opposing India and Pakistan, politically or militarily. Therefore, the Pakistani and Indian governments can ignore the desires and views of Kashmiris regarding the political future of their region. Because of the physical and social divisions imposed on them, Kashmiris remain politically unimportant for Pakistan and India and in the Kashmir dispute (Snedden 2015).

The limited understanding of the Kashmir dispute as only a conflict between Pakistan and India and Kashmiris' concomitant political marginalisation has not gone unchallenged, as demonstrated most notably by the long-standing uprisings of Kashmiris against Indian occupation in the Kashmir Valley.

In a recent publication, anthropologists Haley Duschinsky et al. (2018) examine how young Kashmiri women and men from Indian-administered Kashmir transformed the armed rebellion of the 1990s into "new modes of protest and resistance" (Bhan et al. 2018) in which music, literature, documentary film and journalism, as well as jokes, rumours, street marches and stone pelting are important forms of their political activism for a free (*azād*) Kashmir. These continuities and transformations in the culture of protest and resistance also form the background of the transnational peace initiatives and cross-LoC collaborations of Kashmiri journalists, filmmakers and intellectuals from the Kashmir Valley and Azad Kashmir (CR 2018; Ninan 2015; Mughal 2018b). Besides, in Britain, where an estimated 500,000 Kashmiri migrants, most originating from southern Azad Kashmir, live, political activists from groups such as the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) regularly campaign for support from the British government for a "Kashmiri" solution to the conflict – that is, Kashmir's independence from India and Pakistan. The JKLF, a secular-nationalist organisation established in 1977 in Birmingham by political activists from Azad Kashmir, operates in a transnational field and across the LoC, maintaining and connecting party branches in Azad Kashmir and the Kashmir Valley. With the support of Pakistan, the JKLF started the armed uprising in Indian-administered Kashmir in 1989, and was able to mobilise many Kashmiris in Britain, Azad Kashmir and the Kashmir Valley for the political solution of independence for Kashmir. Later, Pakistan changed its mind and started to support only pro-Pakistan militants, thereby weakening the pro-independence JKLF. From the early 1990s on, the organisation, which had also never gained the international support it desired, was

plagued more and more by internal conflicts and, ultimately, split into various factions. The idea of independence has remained relatively popular among Kashmiris in Britain, Azad Kashmir and the Kashmir Valley (Sökefeld 2016).

However, to designate the idea of independence as "the" Kashmiri solution to the conflict would be seriously misleading, as it reflects the desire of particular groups of Kashmiris mostly in and from Azad Kashmir and the Kashmir Valley. In contrast to them, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistani-administered Kashmir had always refused to be ruled by the foreign Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, they did not and still do not consider themselves Kashmiris (Sökefeld 2018). From the beginning of partition, the region has demonstrated a strong desire to join Pakistan. This has encouraged Pakistan to subjugate Gilgit-Baltistan more radically and directly to Pakistani rule than it has the region of Azad Kashmir (Sökefeld 2005). Most of the people of Jammu and Ladakh in Indian-administered Kashmir also reject the idea of independence. Hindus in Jammu and Buddhists in Ladakh mostly want Kashmir to join India or their regions to become independent from the politically dominant Muslims of the Kashmir Valley (Snedden 2015; van Beek 2000). These inconsistent political aspirations of the different Kashmiri social, religious and linguistic groups make a resolution of the Kashmir dispute difficult, encompassing as it does conflicting interests and grievances not only of Pakistan and India but also of the people who, by choice or not, belong to this region and are affected by the dispute in various ways.

Research questions and theoretical considerations: Kashmir studies and the anthropology of peace and civility

Against the background of these diverse social and political aspirations, identities and histories of Kashmiris, claims of international and Kashmiri NGOs and activist groups that they work for peace in Kashmir inevitably raises the questions: What peace? Whose peace?

The cross-LoC collaborations organised by these NGOs and activist groups avoid propagating a "political" solution to the Kashmir dispute such as those of the JKLF. Instead, the aim pursued seems to be more modest – to enable social and economic relationships between ordinary Kashmiris to emerge and prosper across the LoC. The question remains as to how these cross-LoC collaborations are entangled with pro-independence politics, claims to political power and more or less disguised intentions to prepare the ground for a Kashmiri political solution to the Kashmir dispute. The question also remains as to how such initiatives dissociate from "politics" and "militancy" to mobilise for a more peaceful and pragmatic resolution of the conflict – such as the final partition of Kashmir between Pakistan and India and the normalisation and transformation of the LoC into an international border that would enable Kashmiris to enter into more substantial and everyday cross-border relationships with one another.

Understanding transnational civilian peace initiatives for Kashmir in terms of practice theory, I assume that their aims, values and arrangements in the form of cross-LoC meetings and collaborations are continuously negotiated in and across diverse places and contexts in Britain, Kashmir, India and Pakistan and thus between Kashmiri and non-Kashmiri NGOs and activist groups, whose experiences and ideas of peace, conflict and violence differ. Therefore, such initiatives pursue more than one and, at times, conflicting interests – and this often with unintended outcomes for social and political processes and power configurations in Pakistani and Indian parts of Kashmir. My aim is to study these initiatives as a peace *in the making*, an aim that requires exploring "peace" as a category of social and political practices that inform, and are informed by, various local and translocal, national and transnational processes and power relations. The importance of national political contexts for such peace initiatives becomes clear, for instance, with regard to the Pakistani and Indian governments and authorities that are restricting collaborations and relationships between Kashmiris across the LoC. In a meeting in January 2018, journalists from both sides of the LoC formed the Jammu and Kashmir Joint Media Forum with the aim of improving the exchange of news and information. The meeting was held

in Bangkok (!) (Mughal 2018b). By refusing to issue visas to journalists from the other parts of Kashmir, Pakistan and India complicate such cross-LoC meetings and collaborations.

With regard to transnational civilian peace initiatives, notions of "the local" and "civility" and related social and political positions of people, activist groups and NGOs taking part in peacebuilding are crucial to an understanding of how a "peace" for Kashmir is imagined, mobilised and practised and how it becomes entangled with processes of conflict and violence in and across places, societies and nation states. As I elaborate below, ideas and practices of "civilian peacebuilding" are based on ideas about civilians as a group of (local) people that share a certain moral and peaceful or civil way of acting in conflict situations: a way that detaches peacebuilding from the state and from claims to political power in order to obtain a civilian position against violent state and non-state actors.

The main research questions that my project addresses can be summarised as follows:

- o How is "civilian peacebuilding" achieved and negotiated between Kashmiri and non-Kashmiri NGOs and activist groups? How are common aims, values and arrangements in the form of cross-LoC collaborations established, and contradicting interests brought in line?
- o How are these negotiations determined by broader social, political and economic power relations and positions of groups and individuals within them? How do these positions and configurations of power relate not only to class, gender and ethnicity but also to notions of civility, politics and militancy and to ideas of the local and global? Who is included and excluded in "civilian peacebuilding"?
- o What does "civilian peacebuilding" mean and "do" in and across places and contexts in Britain, Kashmir, Pakistan and India? What old and new local and translocal conflicts and inequalities, solidarities and possibilities for peaceful politics result from cross-LoC collaborations between so-called "civilians" – journalists, traders, filmmakers, schoolteachers and other ordinary Kashmiris?

In order to answer these questions, my research – inspired by George Marcus' (1995) multi-sited ethnography – departs from the peacebuilding of international NGOs and follows peace initiatives and their actors, ideas and practices to different social and political contexts and places. Adopting a transnational perspective, I study cross-border processes of peace and peacebuilding between non-state and civilian actors, while at the same time investigating how nation state categories and structures determine their practices.

My research sustains an integrated anthropology of Kashmir that epistemologically moves beyond the divisions that the LoC has imposed on Kashmiris and thus also on anthropologists working with and about them. Studies on Kashmir mostly focus on the Indian side of Kashmir and the Kashmir Valley, often with only evasive mentions of the Pakistani side. Apart from the social and political divisions of Kashmiris, the difficulty of undertaking cross-LoC ethnographic fieldwork has kept anthropologists, historians and sociologists from studying Kashmir as a "whole" (exceptions are Zutshi 2018; Sökefeld 2013; 2015). Assuming the "wholeness" of Kashmir does not mean ignoring that the former princely state was an artificial entity created by the colonial rulers and has remained a socially fragmented region of "dispute and diversity" (Sökefeld 2013), but recognising that the Kashmir conflict is a shared predicament of people and groups in all parts of Kashmir (Sökefeld 2015). Thus, questions of peace and conflict resolution in one way or another are crucial to all their lives.

Beyond this regional research focus, my project contributes ethnographically and theoretically to current debates in the anthropology of peace and peacebuilding (Bräuchler and Naucke 2017; Bräuchler 2015) and interdisciplinary peace and conflict studies in general, using "civility" as an analytical conception to study more closely how ideas and practices of civilian peacebuilding affect, and are affected by, political conflicts and power relations (Thiranagama et al. 2018).

The failures of international peacebuilding have led peace workers and researchers in the last ten to twenty years to question and criticise the idea of "liberal peace" which proposes that democracy and economic development ultimately create peace (Trimikliniotis 2016; Richmond 2011). However, critics of the critics of the liberal peace have come to argue today that their criticism has brought about the discovery and invention of a mostly unspecified local in international peacebuilding and peace and conflict studies, prompting peace workers and researchers to draw increasingly on "local" notions and practices of conflict resolution, peace initiatives "from below" and collaborations with "local partners" in order to rescue top-down peace interventions (Bräuchler and Naucke 2017: 423). I agree with anthropologists who maintain that the so-called "local turn" in international peacebuilding and interdisciplinary peace and conflict studies calls for ethnographic research that critically engages with, and challenges, conceptualisations that often ignore diversities, hierarchies and translocal connections of what is considered to be "local". Maintaining notions of local communities as geographically and culturally bounded entities, such conceptualisations often fail to understand the particular positions of local partners in political conflicts and thus in the societies they are expected to represent as a whole in transnational peace initiatives.

Taking the criticism of the local turn in peace work and research seriously, my project studies the encounters in peacebuilding between local partners and international professionals as "frictional encounters" (Björkdahl and Höglund 2013; Björkdahl et al. 2016) in terms of their often unexpected and contradictious outcomes. While Anna Tsing's (2005) conception of friction – as "the awkward, unequal, unstable and creative qualities of interconnection across differences" (Tsing 2005: 4) – has been useful to examine peacebuilding as conflicting entanglements of local and global actors, ideas and practices in and across places and contexts, more sound theoretical considerations of the social and political processes underpinning, and resulting from, civilian peacebuilding in local and translocal contexts of conflict and violence are missing. The concern with frictional global-local encounters has basically remained an attempt to explain and prevent possible failures in international peacebuilding without necessarily questioning peacebuilding as a moral political and postcolonial undertaking that is connected to global structures and power relations and affects rather than simply resolves (or fails to resolve) local conflicts (Jabri 2016).

Besides, what has also remained underexplored in anthropology and peace and conflict studies are the notions and practices of civility that are entangled with conceptualisations of the local in peace work and research. The idea of, and demand for, peaceful local civilians to be included in conflict resolution becomes clear in relation to transnational peace initiatives for Kashmir organised by the London-based Conciliation Resources in collaboration with local NGOs in Britain, Kashmir, India and Pakistan. The South Asia Programme Director sees the global peace organisation's main responsibility as mobilising the local "civil society" for low-threshold confidence-building measures and in facilitating cross-LoC collaborations and exchanges of ideas and experiences between ordinary Kashmiris such as journalists, youngsters, traders and schoolteachers rather than only politicians and political activists. Rejecting radical political activism and militancy against Indian and Pakistani occupation in Kashmir, civilian peacebuilding reclaims a position outside of violence and political power struggles by promoting ideas and practices of "civil" conflict resolution and of "civil society" to designate the people and groups who, in contrast to political and violent forms of resistance, demonstrate restraint and respect and work for peace in Kashmir in peaceful and civil ways.

I follow anthropologists Sharika Thiranagama et al. (2018) in understanding civility as "a range of practices and norms aimed at promoting restraint and respect in the face of difference" (Thiranagama et al. 2018: 156) that is linked to histories of colonialism and class domination. Against this background, anthropologists such as James Holston (2011) have been suspicious of claims of civility, pointing out the ways in which such claims sustain certain regimes of citizenship and legitimise

violence against "uncivil" dissidents. While there is indisputably a long tradition of using civility to silence political protests, "often recasting disagreement in terms of etiquette and manners" (Thiranagama et al. 2018: 154), civil rights movements also demonstrate that civility is not always restraining and conservative, but can also be used to contest social and political inequalities and reclaim a position of resistance (Thiranagama et al. 2018: 154-155). Drawing on civility as a category of social and political practices, I study transnational peace initiatives for Kashmir and cross-LoC collaborations between civilians in terms of the boundaries that are drawn, redrawn and blurred between social and political actors and categories such as professionals, activists and militants, local and global, state and civil, violent and peaceful. In this regard, I aim to demonstrate how peace initiatives – desired, planned, negotiated and contested – also emerge as social and political struggles among Kashmiris and between Kashmiris and non-Kashmiris over boundaries and the questions of how to work for peace and for what peace and political future of Kashmir.

Due to the contradictious meanings and workings of civility in social and political life, the conception is useful as a "theoretical provocation" that resists distinctions between an anthropology of violence and suffering and one of peace and wellbeing (see Ortner 2016) "to take both violence and its counters seriously" (Thiranagama et al. 2018: 157). In this regard, civility as an analytic conception also extends anthropological theory more generally by providing insights into the conflicting and ambivalent processes of contemporary politics and political subjectivities.

Claiming a "peace" for Kashmir includes a positioning in the Kashmir dispute against the Pakistani and Indian governments. Such claims, despite their counterclaims as being "non-political" and rejecting political power struggles, are political in the sense that their actors by means of civilian peacebuilding and cross-LoC collaborations aim at changing power relations in Kashmir, Pakistan and India. As Naucke and Halbmayer (2011: 142) demonstrate with regard to civilian peace initiatives in Colombia, forms of resistance against violence can aspire to alter the social, political and moral order without a claim to political power. In the case of Kashmiris, peace initiatives are connected with, among other things, aspirations for freedom (*azādī*) – in a broad sense – and practices of resistance to democratic shortcomings (in Pakistani Azad Kashmir) and political violence (in the Indian Kashmir Valley).

Against this background, I also agree with Sherry Ortner (2016) who has argued (again) for ethnographic studies, exploring possibilities for resistance to inequalities in the world. Exploring cross-LoC collaborations and peace initiatives is then "important not only for understanding the extraordinary range of creative ways in which challenges to the existing order can be constructed, but also for understanding the alternative visions of the future in such movements" (Ortner 2016: 66) – in my case, visions and possibilities of a civil and peaceful politics of "peace" for Kashmiris that moves beyond the historical political dispute between Pakistan and India and counters violent practices of conflict resolution and resistance against Indian and Pakistani occupation in Kashmir.

Methods and research strategies: multi-sited ethnography

To explore transnational and civilian peacebuilding across the LoC, I plan to conduct multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in and with international organisations and peace professionals and their Kashmiri partner organisations in Britain, Pakistan, India and Azad Kashmir and the Kashmir Valley. Inspired by George Marcus' (1995) methodological considerations, which have prompted anthropologists ever since to study transnational processes by following people, things, stories or conflicts to the many places they are connected with, my research for this project departs from peace initiatives of international NGOs such as Conciliation Resources and follows them and their partner organisations to various social and political contexts and places. My ethnographic fieldwork will concentrate, as a first step, on international NGOs – most notably Conciliation Resources' South Asia programme – and Kashmiri groups in Britain to explore these initiatives with regard to the social and political context of international peacebuilding and transnational Kashmiri politics, and include

attending meetings and events, conducting interviews and documenting life stories of professionals and activists. Later it will be complemented with ethnographic research in Pakistan, India and Azad Kashmir and the Kashmir Valley. With regards to Azad Kashmir and Azad Kashmiris in Britain, I already have contacts with local NGOs from previous ethnographic fieldwork in Azad Kashmir (Schild 2015). I worked with, among others, the journalist organisation Press for Peace, which has been committed to cross-LoC relations between Kashmiris, but after the earthquake turned for some years to other social and political issues in Azad Kashmir, such as the delay, caused by Pakistani authorities and politicians, in the reconstruction of the capital Muzaffarabad.

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