From Symbolic Violence to Symbolic Reparation. Strengthening Resilience and Reparation in Conflict-Affected Areas through Place-(re)making. Examples from the West Bank and Colombia

De la violencia simbólica a la reparación simbólica. Fortalecimiento de la resistencia y la reparación en áreas de conflicto afectadas por medio de la (re) creación de espacios. Ejemplos de West Bank y Colombia

Da violência simbólica à reparação simbólica. Fortalecimento da resistência e da reparação em áreas afetadas pelo conflito por meio da (re)criação de espaços. Exemplos da Cisjordânia e da Colômbia

Abstract

Based on examples from the West Bank and central Colombia, this paper investigates how, in conflict settings, symbolic violence affects populations and their perceptions of place, lifestyle and culture. It also looks at the potential that sense of place and place-making have to enhance conflict transformation and strengthen resilience and symbolic reparation. In extreme environments, symbolic violence in daily life and in daily practices has become way to actively impose social or symbolic domination; it can be challenged by community-based peace-building and place-making initiatives.

Keywords: symbolic violence, place-making, resilience, conflict transformation, West Bank, Colombia.

Resumen

Basados en los ejemplos de West Bank y Colombia central, este artículo investiga cómo en escenarios de conflicto, la violencia simbólica afecta a las poblaciones y a sus percepciones sobre lugar, estilos de vida y la cultura. De igual forma, también analiza el potencial del sentido de lugar y la creación de espacios que realzan la transformación del conflicto y fortalecen la resistencia y la reparación simbólica. En espacios extremos, la violencia simbólica en la vida y en las prácticas diarias se ha convertido en el medio para imponer activamente la dominación social o simbólica, la cual puede ser impugnada por los constructores de paz comunitarios y por las iniciativas de formación de paz.

Palabras clave: Violencia simbólica, creación de espacios, resistencia, transformación del conflicto, West Bank, Colombia.

Resumo

Baseados nos exemplos da Cisjordânia e da Colômbia central, este artigo pesquisa como em cenários de conflito a violência simbólica afeta a população e suas percepções sobre lugar, estilos de vida e cultura. Igualmente, também analisa o potencial do sentido de lugar e a criação de espaços que realçam a transformação do conflito e fortalecem a resistência e a reparação simbólica. Em espaços extremos, a violência simbólica na vida e nas práticas diárias transformou-se no meio para impor ativamente a dominação social ou simbólica, a qual pode ser contestada pelos construtores de paz comunitários e pelas iniciativas de formação de paz.

Palavras-chave: violência simbólica, criação de espaços, resistência, transformação do conflito, Cisjordânia, Colômbia.

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Introduction

Symbolic violence, as first coined by Pierre Bourdieu is defined as a "soft, insensible, almost invisible form of violence, exercised mainly by symbolic channels."[1] If physical and psychological violence are commonly understood and recognised, symbolic violence, which insidiously touches and threatens[2] groups, values, culture, lifestyle, spaces or world views is often unseen, neglected or minimised.

However, symbolic violence proves to have very long lasting impacts on populations and their environments and leads to marginalisation, exclusion, domination and discrimination through a process of normalisation. By impacting lifestyles, spaces and resources, this violence has consequences on socio-political conditions, culture and identities; and in extreme cases, it can cause "an identity impairment of social groups."[3] Although symbolic violence exists in every society, its scale is intensified in harsh situations such as protracted conflict, occupation, forced displacement and extreme marginalisation: situations in which it is no longer exclusively a tool to make soft domination acceptable, but it becomes a means to actively impose discrimination.

This cannot be separated entirely from other forms of violence as symbolic dimensions exist in all environments where power is coercively exercised and there are forms of social control, but analysing symbolic violence specifically adds another dimension to the understanding of violence by casting some light on an emotional control.[4] This aims to impose an intentional domination on specific groups through daily routines and rituals., which may create confusion for all those affected — victims, bystanders or perpetrators — blurring lines between normality and abnormality. "Symbolic violence silences injustices that collective violence tends to reveal."[5]

The aim of this paper is to investigate if and how this complex and neglected notion functions in conflict and post-conflict settings and how it adds another dimension to the understanding of conflict impacts on communities, spaces and place-making. Lands, territories, homes or their social meanings and the impact of violence on forced displacement and social fabrics have been widely covered in political geography research.[6] Using several examples from on-going research in the

1   Pierre Bourdieu also defines symbolic violence as a "soft form of coercion that manages to impose new social meanings, and these new meanings are legitimated as the power relations underneath the process are hidden". Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie*.

2   Piquard and Swenarton, "Learning from Architecture," 1-14.

3   Meszaros, "Les violences symboliques," 16.

4   Colaguori, "Symbolic Violence," 389.

5   Burawoy, "The State and the People," 1.

6   See, for example, in the case of the West Bank: Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, *A Civilian Occupation*, or for a more general approach: Giorgio Agamben, "Homo sacer". Regarding space and conflict in Colombia, see Ulrich Oslender, *Comunidades negras y espacio en el Pacífico colombiano*; Elsa Blair, "Memoria y poder".

Here you use both quotation marks and italics. Should you not be uniform?

West Bank and Colombia,[7] this paper investigates how symbolic violence instilled in daily practices alters culture and lifestyle but also self-esteem and self-perception. Once it is acknowledged, the process can be reversed, challenged or the impact of violence can be reduced, and communities can start to recover from it. In order to do so, culture, art and place-making can be used for resilience enhancement during conflicts and for symbolic reparation during the conflict transformation phases.

Imposing Symbolic Violence on Spaces, Lifestyles and Narratives

The notion of symbolic violence –which is primarily used to highlight hidden forms of domination legitimised by the social system and sometimes by law such as some gender discrimination or ethnic segregation– is also revealed directly or indirectly in the dialectic of space. This is due to the crucial role played by aesthetics and the perception of referential land and urbanscapes in the definition of collective identities: an aspect too often neglected in conflict or conflict transformation theories and practices.

Figure 1. Hebron: Old City check-point. Photo BSP

Figure 2. Hebron: Fenced Street in the Old Market. Photo BSP

Figure 3. Hebron: Salaymeh Destroyed Heritage. Photo BSP

7   The examples are taken from field work conducted in Hebron and the South Hebron Hills beginning in 2012 (Building Sumud Project) and in Valle del Cauca and in Tolima beginning in May 2014 (Observatory of Symbolic Violence). In both cases, a range of research methods were triangulated: interviews of affected populations, group discussion including members of local institutions; interactive participatory exercises, mainly with young people; and transect walks as well as participatory observations in different households. Students from Oxford Brookes University were associated with this research through field trips. The photos used in this paper are strictly for illustration. The author would like to thank the Hebron International Resource Network (HIRN) and the Hebron Rehabilitation centre (HRC) for their support in Palestine; and in Colombia, the University of Tolima in Ibague and Fecoop in Cali, as well as Kate Angus and Martin Dolan for their valuable comments.

Figure 4. Hebron: Affixing Symbols on Architecture. Photo BSP

Symbolic violence can be imposed in three ways. The first impacts the use of spaces and mobility (fig. 1). Imposing check points, road blocks, walls and fences using 'security' rhetoric leads to land grabs and symbolic redefinition of spaces and time.[8] Controlling public or social spaces either by changing shapes or locations, creating feelings of fear when using specific locations or restricting the presence of certain groups, hinders community dynamics (fig. 2). The second way is related to the destruction, re-appropriation or imposition of heritage and lifestyle. Built environment may be seized or destroyed. Restrictions on construction and maintenance may lead to the collapse of vernacular or historical buildings (fig. 3). Also, lifestyle may be changed by imposing different uses of space or cultural practices. Thirdly we have the imposition or restriction of narratives by places being renamed as a result of a new understanding of history or affixing symbols that indicate the dispossession of a social space or a forced reorganisation of public spaces (fig. 4). This impacts social links, resources and livelihoods through forced displacement; and leads to the discriminated use of spaces and the cultural imposition or restriction, resulting in marginalisation, stigmatisation and exclusion. It also regularly leads to the beginnings of physical violence.

Dilemmas of Normalisation

The specificity and most ambiguous dimension of symbolic violence is its occurrence in daily life and common situations,[9] making it almost 'invisible' and insensible'. It becomes, therefore, a form of *habitus* through internalising the adaptation of practices and of social meanings and living in conformity with the dominant power, which is "both coercive and voluntary".[10] This leads to a process of the normalisation of injustice and domination by both the dominant and the dominated. This is described by Michel Foucault as the "routinization of coded practices that become a 'normal' part of institutional functionary".[11]

This acceptance or resignation can be considered to be necessary to withstand the daily harassment as well as a negative coping strategy. Thus, one needs to recognise that this process is inevitable, particularly for the younger generation who has never lived outside affected areas. Loss of self-esteem, reduction of resilience and lack of alternatives create the risk that makes people consider some forms of discrimination as bearable or as unavoidable. It can even lead to self-denigration when groups "create an internal complex of inferiority based on the imposed collective images".[12] The dilemma also lies in the need to create some consciousness for the exist-

8   For a further understanding of the unpredictability of mobility see Piquard, "The Politics of the West Bank", 25-35.

9   Examples could be: crossing checkpoints when going to school. having to mention a fake place of birth when searching for a job, bringing construction material into restricted areas or crossing invisible borders when working in the mountains.

10   Colaguori, "Symbolic Violence", 395.

11   Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir*. Bourdieu and Wacquant describe the same phenomenon as 'naturalisation' of violence as a strategy of power. See Colaguori, "Symbolic Violence", 395.

12   Burawoy, "The State and the People," 1. See also Zea, "Internal Displacement."

ence of symbolic violations, making them visible without hindering adaptations, disempowering already marginalised communities or even pushing them to use physical violence. The examples below illustrate this phenomenon. In the West Bank, the spatial occupation of land and the consciously planned narrative has fragmented, isolated and deconstructed spatial references. In Colombia, the struggle for land possession is central to the conflict but wide-spread violence from various groups and State neglect have stigmatised communities and territories and created losses of lifestyle.

Hebron's old City: Spatial Occupation and Symbolic Violence

Hebron is a clear example of community occupation that includes the full array of occupation of spaces in the Palestinian Territories, such as settlements, checkpoints, patrols and house grabbing.[13] Hebronites from the Old City face systematic direct and indirect forms of hardships in their daily lives, including verbal insults, stone throwing, shop burnings, the closure of roads or social services and an inability to fulfil cultural traditions. Occupation has also created economic vulnerabilities and engineered a demographic shift as many native families have been forced to leave the area while at the same time some poorer families have move into the old city.[14]

Parts of the built heritage have been destroyed to create roads that restrict settlers. This has isolated vernacular houses dating from the Ottoman period which cannot be maintained and, therefore, begin to fall into ruin. In order to avoid the confiscation of empty dwellings, houses have

Figure 5. Hebron: A Caged House on Shuhada Street. Photo BSP

Figure 6. Hebron: Settlers' Tour in Old City Palestinian Streets. Photo BSP

13   See AIC, *Occupation in Hebron* and and B'Tselem, *Ghost Town Report*.

14   Interview with the Social Department of the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, 23/01/2012.

been renovated, when possible, by the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC).[15] This has allowed families coming from deprived social backgrounds to settle there, but it has also created suspicion between neighbours who do not know or trust each other. Other mechanisms include: caging one's own home as a protective measure but at the same time turning a safe haven into a prison; destroying or denying access to places of memories; and undertaking constant observation and control, which results in cumulative stress (fig. 5). Step by step, communities and their heritage, tangible and intangible, are pressured to breaking point.

Symbolic violence in Hebron is constituted not only by architectonic artefacts but also by conflicts around differing narratives that impose a different historical reading and understanding that symbolically contest ownership of the land. The landscape has been redesigned by the single ideological rhetoric of a 'promised land without people for a people without land', thus imposing a single interpretation of the landscape based on a unilateral perception of 'authentic ownership'.[16] One of the most striking examples of the dispossession of narratives can be found in a 'settlers' tour' conducted by every Shabbat in the main streets of the old city (fig. 6). This entails a massive military and settler presence, along with blocking the streets, searches of houses and the closure of shops. Is purpose is to revisit the history of the architecture of the old city in order to find 'evidence' in symbols or facade details of an on-going Jewish presence, thus denying Palestinians' historical and cultural existence.

Forms of normalization can be witnessed in an 'abnormal normality' during this daily struggle.[17] Impacts are minimised and presented as 'part of life'. In order to resist this constant pressure, Palestinians find ways to avoid confrontation: alternative routes are established to avoid checkpoints (by creating passages through houses, rooftops and internal courtyards). Any areas where confrontation is possible are deserted and no-go zones are created, or daily activities are planned taking into consideration searches at check-point.

Central Colombia: Stigmatisation of Spaces and Communities

Colombia has suffered decades of conflict over land (this is perceived as being related to livelihoods but is also related to cultural values and emotional attachment). This has led to the worst forms of violence. Symbolic violence and its long lasting impacts on populations living in affected areas or those forcefully displaced are widespread. This is clear in the re-organisation of social spaces such as the replacement of the front door open space by backdoor closed spaces for security and visibility reasons. Thus, connectedness is reduced between neighbours and invisible boundaries are created. These are virtual spaces of fear that lead to changes in lifestyle and livelihood when people abandon mountain fields or neighbourhoods. There is also change in cultural traditions, such as mourning time, in order to avoid public activities after sunset. However, the most striking consequence of symbolic violence in Central Colombia is the stigmatisation of individuals, community and spaces in rural 'red zones'. This is particularly prevalent for recognised minority groups such as Afro-Colombians or indigenous groups affected by the 'inaugural violence' of colonisation, but it also affects informal communities such as *campesinos* (farmers) and *cafeteros* (coffee producers) or internally displaced groups who are seeking a rural life (fig. 7).[19]

15   See http://www.hebronrc.ps/index.php/en/, accessed on March 20, 2015.

16   Jewish settlers in Hebron base this assumption on Genesis, 13:18, which states that Abraham settled in Hebron. Roislien, "Living with Contradictions," 172-173. Italics or ""?

17   Van Teeffelen & Giacaman, "Sumud - Resistance in daily Life," 24. Ibid.

18   Bourdieu states that symbolic violence is often based on an inaugural violence, which is a root cause and the origin of domination and injustice. Colonisation was an important factor for this in Colombia as well as the lack of agrarian reform. In the West Bank, however, the creation of the State of Israel and Jewish waves of migrations are forms of 'inaugural violence'. Burawoy, "The State and the People," 5. Ibid.

19   Our investigation took place mainly in Florida, Restrepo, Bajo Calima, and Trujillo in Valle del Cauca and in Natagaima and Ortega in South Tolima. It is not representative of all the Colombian rural realities; however, the elements mentioned in this paper were commonly witnessed in all our field observations.

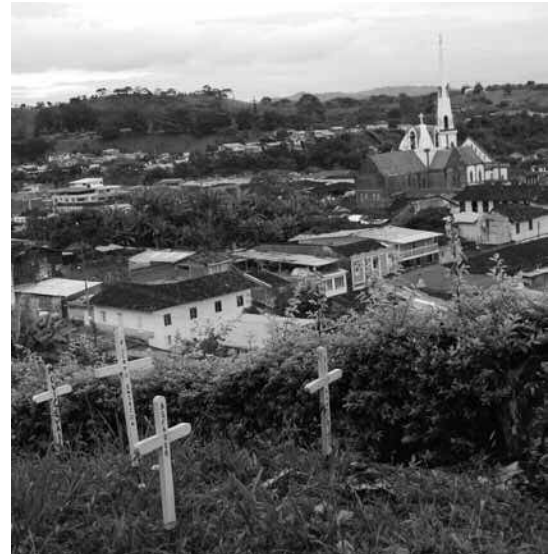Figure 7. Trujillo: Military Presence in Rural Areas. Photo ObsSV

Figure 8. Valle del Cauca; example of stigmatisation tree. Photo ObsSV

Trujillo in Valle del Cauca is a characteristic red zone. The perpetuation of this classification, State financial compensation policies for civil servants accepting to work there and the related stigma is embedded in people's minds to the extent that people hide the place they are from and change busses several times in order to not be identified as coming from Trujillo. People are very aware that social interactions with people from red zones are feared by outsiders. Young people are conscious of the lack of opportunities and fear the risk of being attracted by drug trafficking; however, they have found that this is unavoidable due to self-stigmatisation (fig. 8). Trujillo is known for its surrounding coffee growing landscapes that are listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Despite this status and its potential for tourism, the on-going narrative of violence and fear reinforces stigmas and negative mental images and prevents economic development.

Another emblematic example is the Cauca and Magdalena Rivers, which are so important for the lifestyle, the cosmological beliefs and the identity of populations living nearby (fig. 9).[20] The worst forms of violence have occurred near rivers that are used as 'dumping' sites for the corpses of murdered members of communities. Due to these types of violence, the relationship with the rivers has changed. Fish consumption reduced drastically due to the corpses and consequently traditional livelihoods were destroyed. Furthermore, the sight of the rivers is a constant reminder of horrific events, thus those places of life have been transformed into places of horror and death.

The symbolic violence that has been inflicted on indigenous communities is linked to the loss of lifestyle associated with their environment and land (fig. 10). As a result of the displacement of part of the communities, divides have emerged. Non-displaced persons would like to keep the land organised as a large, collective territory, but those willing to return claim individual plots of land for compensation. This puts the traditional organisation of spaces at risk. The way of life of the more 'urbanised' displaced returnees is perceived as a loss of authenticity whilst those who stayed, who have often been pauperised, are labelled as 'seekers of social benefits unable to adapt to new life circumstances'. Indeed, symbolic violence sometimes involves the "moral imposition of irrational beliefs on others",[21] such as the laziness of displaced populations or the internal violence of rural inhabitants. These perceptions are acknowledged and sometimes internalised by the victims who change their behaviours accordingly.

20 Ulrich Oslender mentions the importance of the logic of rivers and the sense of aquatic space in her research related to Afro-Colombian population of the Pacific. Errejon Galvan, "Geografías del terror," 178.

21 Colaguori, "Symbolic Violence," 389. See also Zea, "Internal Displacement." Ibid.

Figure 9. Tolima: Magdalena River. Photo ObsSV

Figure 10. Natagaima: Focus Group with Pijao Cabildos. Photo ObsSV

Reducing Impacts of Symbolic Violence by Strengthening Resilience

During conflicts, populations cope and adapt to the impacts of symbolic violence and build on their resilience.[22] This can be enhanced by different factors that were identified throughout our field research; they are grouped into four categories (fig. 11).[23]

The existence of social capital: community, neighbourhood or family cohesion, and connection between groups to united in the face of hardships is very important. Also, counting on the 'outside world' (international community or the national government) to be heard or helped is clearly a pre-requisite that is required by affected populations to become resilient in the face of adversity.

Keeping a 'sense of place' based on environment and culture is the second main factor to stay resilient: particularly the connection and deep affinity with the land and its surroundings, as well as the home and attachment to place. During periods of crisis, staying on the land of origin and continuing traditional activities, maintaining landscapes, master planning and rebuilding home and heritage are sensitive issues as most of the collective identities are embedded in precise territories. Place attachment is reflected in community

struggle for the right to remain or for displaced members to return.

The third factor is the existence of a 'locus of control',[24] found in activism and new livelihood activities. This control refers to the degree individuals feel they can control certain aspects of their life by planning activities, perceiving a future, making choices, visualising alternatives and making decisions. Keeping the traditional means of livelihood alive and being able to diversify them, even in red zones or in occupied locations, and being able to choose locations and plan activities such

Figure 11. Building Sumud Project: 9 Factors of Resilience

22 Resilience can be defined as "the ability of a person, a system or a community to resist, accommodate to and recover from the effects of crises in a timely, ethical and efficient manner." See UNISDR, "Terminology on Disaster."

23 Building Sumud Project, *Existence is Resistance*.

24 Rotter, "Generalized Expectancies."

Figure 12. Hebron: Roof Gardens Project, BSP. Photo Simon Harris

Figure 13. Bethlehem: Moments of Exception. Performance Near the Separation Wall. Photo BSP

as the creation of roof gardens, are activities necessary to maintain dignity (fig. 12).

The last factor that improves resilience is linked to capacity building and ability to express feelings, perceptions or grievances or to give testimonies through education, art, communication and moments of exception.[25] The use of cameras to film events, daily life or abuses; use of social media; the creation of installations, exhibitions or performances in disrupted spaces; schools providing refuge to support younger generations are all important means to seek international recognition and security. They also help to visualise alternatives and reinforce self-esteem. This creates moments of exception, which allow affected populations to remove themselves from the ever-present hardships and distressing pressures; they also aid to bond social relationships (fig. 13).

Towards Symbolic Reparation

If resilience allows people to keep on going despite symbolic violence, some processes can help repair damaged social fabrics, collective identity, sense of place and collective self-esteem.

Symbolic reparation can principally be understood as the re-creation and the reconstruction of a collective (often national) narrative showing that the nation is overcoming the past. It is also a move towards restoring dignity and re-assuring non-repetition in order to instil trust in the peace process.[26] These general considerations are, of course, essential but they can have limitations. All too often, peace processes are limited to the revision of the past and old narratives through a "process of remembering, expressing, understanding and commemorating the pains of the past."[27] Exhumations, memorials, renaming places are indeed fundamental elements that allow 'acknowledgment', 'mourning' and 'closure' (fig. 14). However, limiting symbolic reparation to an official process simply remembering suffering and pain runs the risk of only focusing on victims of physical violence, without referring to the resilience of ordinary people. Symbolic reparation seeks to avoid legitimizing the history of the majority group or the ruling elite. Instead it allows marginalised groups to express their opinions and understanding -their history-, as well as the positive memories of resilience and adaptations that have helped them thrive (fig. 15).[28]

25 Csikszentmihalyi mentioned some characteristics of moments of exceptions: an intense focus on the present moment, merging action and awareness, a sense of personal control on the situation, and the experience of the activity as something that is intrinsically rewarding. Csikszentmihalyi, *Beyond Boredom*, 36.

26 Naidu, "*Symbolic Reparations*," 1. See also Dudai, "Closing the Gap."

27 Naidu, "*Symbolic Reparations*," 2. See also Dudai, "Closing the Gap."

28 Numerous local initiatives in Colombia are taking place. An example is AFAVIT's work on memory in Trujillo, which is based mainly on suffering memories. http://afavit.galeon.com/

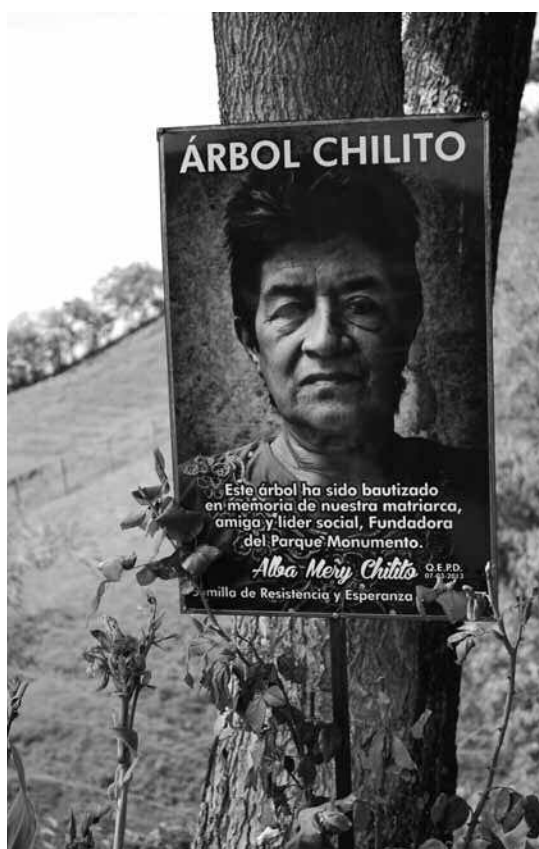Figure 14. Trujillo: Memorial Created by the Victims' Families. Photo ObsSV

Figure 15. Valle de Cauca: Informal Place of Memory. Photo ObsSV

A second form of symbolic reparation can be found in the process of challenging discrimination and thus normalisation. This is possible by reclaiming, or temporarily re-occupying, contested or marginalised spaces in order to organise rewarding activities to contest the perception of fears, give pride and re-create self-esteem. An example is a tourist project[29] in Natagaima, south Tolima, which presents some of the local indigenous community's folklore by reviving the popular figure of Matachin. In this case, Matachin is perceived as a carnival embodiment of the 'devils of the past', and making fun of him is a way to publicize an alternative image to the violence and to reduce people's fears. It is also a way to 'de-marginalize' the Pijao culture, which plays a central role in the area.

Finally, following our findings on resilience, the (re)creation of public spaces is essential to reduce normalisation and stigmatisation. These social places allow people to meet within the communities, and attract visitors, members of neighbouring communities, external actors and newcomers in stigmatised areas (fig. 16). Those public places

29 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P14OCd307EE. This project has not actually taken place. It was quite likely too ambitious; however, it represents an interesting local participatory initiative containing all the essential elements of symbolic reparation. The project 'plug in Hebron' from Building Sumud also proposes to recreate a hub in Hebron in order to maintain heritage and reinforce social capital. See http://openarchitecturenetwork.org/node/13412

Figure 16. Building Sumud Project: Plug-in Hebron. Photo BSP

should, of course, be living spaces and places for collective activities. Finally, all symbolic reparation projects should be considered holistically, taking into consideration economic needs and aspirations for capacity building. These projects can constitute collective empowerment strategies (education, tourism and dialogue), be places for civic debates and dialogue and emphasise the capacity to choose (through consultation and participation) in order to strengthen the locus of control.

Conclusion

It is now well understood that conflict or extreme deprivation not only affects populations materially or tangibly, but it also impacts the social fabric of a society, identities, spaces and natural environments. These effects are not the most spectacular or the most horrific but they create lasting invisible wounds that may hinder efforts to create sustainable peace. Root causes of these wounds can be found in the impacts of symbolic violence that affects communities as much as it does individuals. Symbolic violence does not only come from outstanding events but it is found principally in daily life; it affects people's

sense of belonging and forces the displacement of dominated and stigmatised groups. All too often minimised or normalised even by its own victims, symbolic violence is clearly a 'real' form of violence. Reducing symbolic violence through attempts to preserve deep roots with land or the culture, home or place attachment is essential to avoid the full normalisation of the process.

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