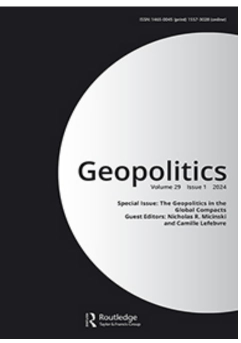

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Navigating Spaces of Everyday Peace and Violence: Societal Protest, Care, and Solidarity in Post-18O Chile

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ABSTRACT

Social justice protests that began on 18 October 2019 in Chile were greeted enthusiastically around the globe. The mobilisation 'woke up' society and contributed to the collective drafting of a new constitution for the country. Building on ethnographic insights gathered in January–February 2020, this paper analyses forms of violence together with relations of care and solidarity that emerged within the mobilisation. It walks the reader through central Santiago de Chile and discusses the praxis of conducting research in a non-war conflict site, embedded in relations of claiming space (both figuratively and concretely) and creating practices that contribute to greater social justice. Simultaneously, they are enmeshed with manifold forms of violence that need to be addressed for peace to become possible. This paper seeks to contribute to debates on the entangled forms of everyday peace and violence, drawing on feminist research and connecting these with critical geographies of peace.

Introduction

'Please be careful. The tree may fall on you, it's an old one' a middle-aged man warned us in passing. We looked at each other with María, we could not help smiling and once the man was distant enough, we burst out laughing, 'Wow, life can get dangerous around here!' We were sitting in the Lastarría neighbourhood, one of the posh, hipster blocks in central Santiago in early February 2020. The neighbourhood is located in close proximity to Plaza Italia, renamed during the protests Plaza de la Dignidad, the epicentre of the 18O protests. 18O refers to the beginning of the social uprising, *estallido social*, on the 18th of October 2019 and their aftermath. Lastarría served as a site of escape from the clashes that took place both at Plaza de la Dignidad and along the main Alameda boulevard. Many of Lastarría's buildings were covered by protest slogans and tags, and some buildings had also been damaged. That particular afternoon, however, the atmosphere was quiet with people enjoying

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a lazy summer afternoon and trying to cope with the hot weather. Many had escaped from the city heat to the coastline or to the mountains. With María we had just spent the day talking about the protests and their consequences on her family and friends. One of her nieces had been severely injured due to being hit by a rapidly reversing police vehicle and was learning to walk again after surgery on her back. Another niece of hers still needed someone to accompany her on any outings, due to an eye injury caused by being hit by an explosive during a protest. And there were more. We were also mindful of time passing, as I had learnt to return to my apartment either early, or wait until late at night, to avoid the practically daily protests in front of my building that I was not willing to confront unless absolutely necessary. And now the potential danger was not any of the protest-related issues, but the old tree under which we had sought shade that might end up falling on us. On other occasions, we might have thanked him for consideration and care, but now we could not help but laugh.

The above narrative illustrates many of the issues that this paper addresses: the uprising that began on the 18th of October 2019 in Chile, and prior to that date as a spontaneous protest by young people opposing the price rise of the metro ticket in Santiago, then spreading in a matter of days both to a broader stratum of the population and across the country, and how this transformed society and changed the urban landscape in multiple ways. People took to the streets calling for social justice, filled the squares protesting en masse, and discussed what a socially just society would look like. The authorities responded violently to the protests, and some protest actions were not entirely peaceful either. Simultaneously, protests and forms violence therein generated relations of care among people who had been hitherto unknown to each other. The same could also be said of matters distant from the protest itself: the warning of an old tree likely to fall could be interpreted as one way of making sense of how to get about amid the increased uncertainties of everyday life, learning to pay attention to one's safety. Sharing this reflection with other city dwellers, including previously unknown ones, could be interpreted as an expression of care. After having spent yet another afternoon discussing serious injuries, and both intentional and accidental violence, we found the warning hilarious; a concern that would have made more sense in another era, in another location. Reflecting afterwards, it seemed to testify to a heightened sense of care for strangers at such an unpredictable moment.

This event sets the scene for exploring a non-war context of manifold violence, and practices of care and solidarity that emerge within such a context. This paper argues that these situated practices constitute integral elements in *geographies of peace* (Williams and McConnell 2011) despite them being located within environments that are, in multiple ways, violent, or precisely because of the coexistence of practices of peace and violence in a given location (Koopman 2011; Krystalli and Schulz 2022). Williams and

McConnell (2011, 928) outlined the need to think about what 'peace' might look like, to engage with 'peace' as a process and as content, and how 'peace' may be enacted across various scales. Attuned with what Koopman (2011, 280) calls 'alter-geopolitics', feminist geopolitics is grounded in everyday life, in the forms of spatial peace and processes that lead to them. These can be apprehended by looking outside academia and by learning from those who not only think and write about these practices but who are actually enacting them. In this paper, I engage in these discussions by reflecting upon forms of care and solidarity that emerge among strangers, people without a predefined shared identity other than a sense of unpredictability and a lack of trust that the established institutions will provide safety. This is not to be confused with romanticising violence or violent protest as such. Nor do I claim that protest settings would be solely havens of care and solidarity or that all those who engaged in violent protest had similar goals in mind.

In this exploration, I decided to write a first-person narrative that enables reflection upon embodied dimensions of being in the field, making sense of the spatialities of the field as a profoundly situated praxis of knowledge production (Haraway 1988); situated not only in symbolic but also material terms (Katz 2001; Peake 2016). In this sense, one aim of the paper is methodological: it seeks to render visible the multisensory process of gaining an understanding of one's setting, namely the sense of unpredictability in a context that had transformed radically in a matter of months, caring for strangers and being cared for in such a context. By multisensory, I refer here to the embodied character of ethnographic research, namely sensory channels – eyesight, hearing, touch, smell – through which ethnographers pay attention to their research settings. These considerations are shaped by influential work by feminist geographers who have theorised the corporeal and the intimate (e.g., Fluri 2009; Hyndman 2004; Massaro and Williams 2013, Pain and Staeheli 2014; Pratt and Rosner 2006) and the multi-scalar geopolitical connections ranging from the body to the transnational.

I begin by contextualising the uprising, locating it in relation to earlier forms of protest, and then focus on the central claims of the mobilisation and the responses by the state authorities. In this contextualisation, the gendered dimensions of the claims are key, as well as explicit and implicit forms of gendered violence in the state reaction. Then, I walk the reader through the capital of Chile, seeking to illustrate the scene also for a reader not familiar with the context and to dig deeper into the place-specific characteristics of peace (Björkdahl and Kappler 2017; Megoran and Dalby 2018; Pearce and Perea 2019; Williams and McConnell 2011). My focus here is on the central part of the Santiago Metropolitan Area, more precisely the municipality of Santiago Centro, rather than the remote neighbourhoods that have already been the subject of eloquent studies (e.g., Han 2012; Risør and Arteaga Pérez 2018) that have proved vital for understanding the spatial distribution of

diverse forms of direct and structural violence over time, and the generational dimension of the eruption of the mass protests in October 2019. Focus on the central part of the capital city outlines the extraordinary nature of such continuous protest activity and the ways in which the protest gained space in areas where it had emerged to a more limited extent, an extent limited both in time and space.

In this exploration, I reflect on relations of solidarity and care that emerged within the social mobilisation. These surfacing relations of care, I suggest, can be conceptualised in terms of feminist ethics of care (Fisher and Tronto 1990; Gilligan 1982; Held 2005; Robinson 2011), even if not all the actors involved pursue an explicitly feminist agenda. Feminist care ethicists have explored, for example, uneven gendered distribution of labour and institutionalised arrangements of care. They have argued for care ethics to be an alternative to dominative and violent social relations, for recognising our fundamental interdependency and placing care at the centre of all social relations (The Care Collective 2020; Woodly et al. 2021). This ethos was important for at least some of those active in the uprising in Chile. Moreover, as the introductory vignette suggests, and as will be discussed in what follows, care needs and care responses emerged in response to different forms of violence. 'Care' is understood here, following Fisher and Tronto (1990, 40), as a broad set of activities that potentially include everything done 'to maintain, continue, and repair our "world" so that we can live in it as well as possible'. In this paper, I use 'Care' paired with 'solidarity' as entwined notions (also Spade 2020) to think about field observations. They both refer to forms of social empathy that do not require an identity of singular selves (Spivak 2005) or even narrowly defined agendas of care praxis but, rather, 'identification with the lived situation of others and with an appreciation of the injustices to which they may be subject' (Gould 2007, 156). A necessary backbone of care, in this analysis, is a sense of solidarity that refers to 'a disposition to act toward others who are recognised as *different from* oneself, by way of being differently situated' (Gould 2007, 156–157; Mohanty 2003). These situated practices and forms of mutual aid (Spade 2020) with previously unknown others, as exemplified in the opening extract from my field diary, form nodes through which geographies of peace are enacted, even momentarily.

Paths to 18O and its Transnational Resonances

The 30 pesos' price rise of the metro ticket served as the trigger for the mobilisation in October 2019. As such, it became a symbol of the 30 years since the end of Pinochet's dictatorship: 30 years of a democratic regime that had failed to deliver its promises to the broader strata of the population. Heralded as the most prosperous and stable country in Latin America, the image proved to be built on a myth (Nef 2003; Sehnbruck and Donoso 2020),

social inequality had been spreading fast, with rapidly increasing living costs, while the average salary and especially the retirement benefits were severely lagging behind (Rodríguez 2021). These prevailing inequalities are multiple: they are related to access to education and health care; they concern the minimum wage, and especially the pension system that makes life untenable for the elderly in the face of rapidly mounting living costs; and they connect environmental issues such as severe drought and access to water with the privatised water system that benefits large agricultural enterprises, leaving large areas and their population suffering from lack of water. Particularly concerned is the central region that goes from the Santiago Metropolitan area to Valparaíso, which is home to the largest concentration of inhabitants in the country. One of the hardest hit areas is Petorca, where some 50,000 farm animals were reportedly suffering from the severe drought in 2019, the worst in the past 60 years following on from several already very dry years (e.g., Becerra 2019; Fajardo 2019; Montes 2019). In short, these issues were such that they necessitated a profound transformation, most productively one grounded in the feminist ethics of care (Fisher and Tronto 1990) and where interdependencies of care (The Care Collective 2020) – for the elderly, for the poor, and for nature as outlined above – would be central concerns.

The authorities could not grasp the depth of the protest they faced and responded with multiple forms of violence. President Sebastián Piñera declared that the country was at war, sent the army into the streets to stop the protesters, and imposed a curfew. This did nothing but fuel the protest, transforming its slogans into the war being the President's invention, the state declaring war on its own people, and multiplying the chants of the 'Right to live in peace' by Victor Jara in public places. People began calling for a new constitution to replace the one written in 1980, crafted under the military dictatorship. President Piñera's resignation became one of the central demands of the protesters. This same demand was aimed at the government overall as it was unable to meet the expectations of the awakened (*despertó*) population and soon broadened to encompass the ruling political elite in general. 'It may be radical to call for the resignation of the government', acknowledged Alondra Carrillo, the spokesperson and representant of the Coordinadora 8 M at the Forum Fabiola Campillai, a meeting of Latin American and Caribbean feminist organisations in Santiago on 26 January 2020. 'However, if a government declares war against its own people, that government must go'.

The uprising of 18 October 2019 and the diverse forms of mobilisation it generated did not appear out of nowhere. They were rooted in multiple, intersecting forms of mobilisation[1] by students (e.g., Guzman-Concha 2012; Stromquist and Sanyal 2013), feminist groups (e.g., Palacios-Valladares 2022), and by groups advocating for dignified accommodation (*vivienda digna*). The lack of decent accommodation is one of the shortcomings of neoliberal urban

planning, especially in the Santiago Metropolitan area (e.g., Han 2012; Navarrete-Hernandez and Toro 2019; Pérez 2017). Earlier forms of mobilisation had also been transversal, for example with the main trade union joining the student demonstrations in 2011 (Guzman-Concha 2012), and protests for dignified accommodation gathering groups with diverse affiliations. Some have been explicitly transnational, such as feminist protests that took place simultaneously in different countries with similar slogans, notably the *Ni una menos!* -protests in Argentina and Chile (Motta 2019).

Even if Chile had been a relatively safe country compared to most others in contemporary South America, violence by the state was not something that started with the clashes that occurred during the October 2019 uprising and its aftermath. Studies documenting and analysing Chilean student protests, for example, have shown how the violent response to by the authorities produced many kinds of injuries. *Wallmapu* (Mapuche land) or the Araucanía region has been hit particularly hard over the years, despite different programmes that have sought to mediate state action and advance the rights of the indigenous people (see, e.g., Richards 2013). At times, the context in some parts of the region has resembled a civil war as opposed to inter-state violent conflict, let alone peace.

Multiple forms of gendered violence, sexual abuse, and torture were an integral part of the state's response to the popular protest (e.g., Larsson 2020; Murillo 2019). Sexual abuse and humiliation targeted women and feminised men: allegations of rape and other forms of sexual abuse emerged early on in the uprising. 'No peace without justice' was an often-heard slogan in these protests. Nonviolent protests responded to with massive violence by the state authorities: the riot police and even the army were sent to the streets from the early days of the protest. Witnessing the repression of peaceful forms of protest, but also the riot police spraying tear gas and chemicalised water from tanks (*guanaco*)[2] on random passers-by, including families with small children, could incite any peaceful protester to grab a stone and act in order to demonstrate one's utter discontent with the repressive system and violence by the state. This delegitimization of the state calls for a rethinking of the role of the state, prominent in feminist and postcolonial agendas that both denounce the ways in which the state uses its monopoly of violence and calls for the state to act as a guarantor of rights, hence the call for greater accountability (Parashar 2016, 371–372). This process has been amplified since the uprising started.

Opposing feminicide is a constant feature of Latin American feminisms. It was the theme around which the *Ni una menos!* -movement began in Argentina and spread across borders, including to Chile. It began from a form of necropolitics (Mbembé 2003) where the dead female body is politicised and purposefully unites activists in a common struggle (Sousa 2019). Using creative corporeal strategies, the feminist collective Las Tesis

began their activist endeavours in Valparaíso in 2018. Four feminists in their early thirties – Sibila Sotomayor, Dafne Valdés, Paula Cometa Stange and Lea Cáceres – decided to take statements by feminist authors out into the public by creating performances to reach more diverse audiences. These performances are choreographed to be short and concise, transmitting a clear message in an effective way (also Pérez-Arredondo and Cárdenas-Neira 2021). The rhyme in Las Tesis repeats how the way women dress or behave cannot explain or be used to excuse gendered violence. The wording is simple, and an important part of its performative power is drawn from the fact that the performers' eyes are covered with a black cloth. This hints at the constant need for women to look around, to be wary of potential attacks especially in narrow alleys hidden from view, or refrain altogether from walking alone at night. In so doing, the performance underlines gendered geographies of fear (Koskela 1997; Koskela and Pain 2000), while critiquing the ways in which states refuse to see and act upon violence against women in effective ways. The performers begin by moving their hips from side to side, and then squat with arms raised and hands behind their heads. Getting up from the squat, the women stand firm, eyes covered but looking straightforward, point their finger and say: 'The rapist is you'.[3] In a singular form, the Tesista boldly embodies the corporeality of the struggle and points her finger at the singular you, the rapist who can be anyone among the audience and the state structure not acting to prevent this, crystallising heteropatriarchy. Performing the act collectively renders such a corporeal struggle visible and audible to wider audiences as well as to the performers themselves, and gestures towards making space for peace, at least momentarily, during the performance.

The performance of Las Tesis on the 25th of November 2019, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, rendered the phenomenon viral. The performance was repeated in different cities across the globe, connecting the fight against sexual and gender-based violence and solidarity with the protest for social justice in Chile (López Ricoy 2021; Pérez-Arredondo and Cárdenas-Neira 2021). The performance traversed the globe during the following weeks, gathering feminists to denounce violence against women and to stand in solidarity with the popular uprising in Chile and their struggle for social justice. In this struggle, gender justice is a central issue, and even more so as sexual violence and abuse were a widespread part of the repression against demonstrators from the very start of the uprising, echoing similar practices found elsewhere around the globe (see, e.g., Human Rights Watch 2013).

Learning to Navigate the Protest

Having followed the protests from the moment that they erupted through daily contact with my friends in Chile, in early January 2020 I went to

Santiago. I stayed at what had become known as the *zona zero* next to the (by then closed) metro station Baquedano, located at Plaza Italia/Plaza de la Dignidad. *Zona zeros* are the epicentres of protest in a given city, and Plaza Italia had been the meeting point for different demonstrations long before the 18 October uprising. It was the place where I went in order to take part in the International Women's Day demonstration on 8th March 2019, the day after I first arrived in the country, marching on the main Alameda boulevard together with several hundred thousand feminists in a peaceful and joyful gathering. Later, I found out that this had been an unusually peaceful for a demonstration of its size, as the riot police habitually attack demonstrators violently in spite of the peacefulness of their action.

Picture 1: plaza de la Dignidad. Photographed by A.K.

The scene had changed radically since I had left the city in mid-September 2019. I began to learn to navigate the urban protest scene, observing at what time and in which direction to leave the apartment building to avoid either being caught in the spray of *guanacos* or being hit by stones thrown by protesters towards the police officers in their daily cat-and-mouse game. I learnt that burning barricades are not just friendly bonfires in the middle of the street, but they are built to serve a purpose: to stop the traffic in general, and the heavy riot equipment of the police in particular. Anything can be thrown in when building a barricade, and some of that stuff is likely to explode. I learnt to wear sports shoes when I knew I would be out in the late afternoon to run when need be, and carry a spare pair of eyeglasses in case mine got broken by rubber bullets, tear gas canons, thrown stones, or simply by loose stones bouncing off car tyres while traversing damaged streets. Quickly, I learnt to detect the smell of tear gas and to close windows before the gas spread through the whole apartment, listening to the sirens that cut off

the protestors' banging of any metal infrastructure and, when the crowd outside was large enough, ended in screams of people trying to escape the *guanacos*. I learnt to run with others when the tanks approached, whose side streets were still open for escape, and to hide behind the thick trunks of Chilean palm trees to avoid being caught by the chemicalised liquid. I learnt what it feels like to breathe the poisonous mist after the tanks have passed by, saw others burnt by the chemicals, and learnt what it feels like to be blinded by heavy tear gas in the unlit streets of central Santiago on weekend nights. Seeing a trembling little boy hiding behind a palm tree with his mother and myself, running away from the *guanaco* that had made a sudden U-turn to catch those of us on the other side of the main boulevard, made me understand why people are totally disgusted with police violence that brutalises the lives of even the youngest members of society. I felt ready to throw stones myself.

Listening to the forms of explosions, I did not learn to distinguish between their different sources. The daily sonic landscape is constituted of a cacophony of sirens and explosions. In the late afternoons when the conflict resumed outside my building it usually began with screams of 'death to the cops!' followed by the sound of stones landing, which had been thrown at the police stationed further down in the street. Then, the *guanaco* moved forwards, and right before it began to spray its liquids sounded an alarm siren, though as far as I was able to observe it was always on too short a notice for the protestors to escape. Being or becoming a front-liner was also an act of such bravery that one was ready to not only temporarily sacrifice respiration but, as the weeks passed and the number of injured grew, one's eyesight or a limb. During one of the weeks I stayed in Chile in early 2020, five persons lost their lives as a result of direct or indirect violence by the police. It was clear that the protest was far from a peaceful one, and the response by the authorities at the time was even more violent.

One of the central pillars of statehood is holding the monopoly of violence: control of the legitimate use of force in society. In a democratic society, this use of force must be proportionate, it can only be used in clearly defined situations, and always with caution. This has not been the case in Chile where, while the police used to hold a relatively respected and trustworthy position compared with the police in other countries in the region, the abuse of force against protestors but also random civilians never fully disappeared after the end of the military dictatorship (see, e.g., Han 2012). With the popular uprising and more people in the streets conducting popular, largely peaceful demonstrations, and thanks to social media networks that enabled sharing the scenes in a matter of minutes (see also Liu et al. 2022), this abuse became visible to a broader stratum of population. The state lost its legitimacy through its repressive tactics and the police became the symbol of that violence that must go; hence, the multiple slogans on the walls of central Santiago denouncing police violence and even calling for death to the police forces – 'A good

cop is a dead cop',[4] whistling in chorus when the police passed by in the street, and the front liners confronting the police corporeally on a daily basis.

Emblematic Sites and the Prevalence of the Struggle for Social Justice

In Santiago, some locations of the city have retained their significance as emblematic memorial sites from the period of the military dictatorship, such as the National Stadium (*Estadio Nacional*) and Villa Grimaldi (Aguilera 2022). The National Stadium was a central location when the military dictatorship was installed in 1973, serving as a detention centre for those considered political dissidents. In 2019, the National Stadium served as the stage for a collective Las Tesis performance, with the choreography of the dance speaking back to continuities of gendered violence (Pérez-Arredondo and Cárdenas-Neira 2021) both in time – from the military dictatorship to contemporary gendered violence in protest settings – and in space – ranging from public space to the intimacy of the home. These spatio-temporal layers rendered the site and the performance therein thick with meaning, attesting to historical and geographical interconnections in an embodied and material praxis (Peake 2016, 834).

On 4 December 2019, this symbolic stage was again reconquered by women, most of them 40 years or older, who performed what became called Las Tesis Senior (Flores 2019). They claimed the space of this current sports stadium and, by performing Las Tesis, used their collective corporeal choreography to make a statement concerning the new social order they are fighting for, illustrating by their corporeal presence how the mobilisation was transversal also age-wise. These collective performances became an example of a novel form of subversive politics, one that is not based on the individual but the collective formed for the shared choreography, one simple enough to be learnt for a brief gathering. In its simplicity, it is a powerful way of occupying space.

The struggle for social justice was present practically everywhere in central Santiago, rendering the city centre overall an emblematic site of the ongoing revolution. The number of street-vendors had multiplied since I had last left the country in September 2019, a month before the uprising started. Many were selling memorabilia of key events or figures that had appeared during the protest months. Some of these were fridge magnets with protest figures or emblematic sentences such as lyrics from the song 'Right to live in peace' by Victor Jara, played and sung over and over again, becoming an integral part of the soundscape. Others were key chains with the revolutionary street dog, the *Perro Matapacos*, who had appeared in protests and fought fiercely by the side of protestors. He was a big black dog, wearing a similar triangle-shaped scarf to the ones human protestors were wearing. As a stray dog, he came to symbolise many of the demands raised by the protestors: decent accommodation,

unforgiving anger for the violence perpetrated by the special forces of the riot police, but also care and protection for the others joined in the struggle. He too was fighting for the right to live and breathe in peace.

In the streets of central Santiago, feminist slogans were highly visible among the changing landscapes of graffiti covering the walls. One of the sites reconfigured daily were the outer walls of the Gabriela Mistral Cultural Centre (GAM), a couple of 100 m from the Plaza de la Dignidad. The oppressive state against which the Chilean people woke up (*Chile despertó*) was compared to a macho rapist violating feminised bodies. An often heard slogan that the revolution must be feminist to succeed[5] was also written on many walls, at times modified with transgender and anti-racist qualifiers as a reminder of the intersectional struggles for social justice.

On the GAM wall there were also pictures of some of those killed during the past months, illustrating the lethal necropolitics of the struggle. One of them was Daniela Carrasco, a street artist whose dead body was found tied on a fence, raped and wounded, in the early days of the protest. In the pictures, someone had written: 'so that these deaths were not in vain'.[6] These images illustrate the corporeality of resistance; a bodily form of gendered protest that at times ends in the protagonist being raped and killed. Another image portrays five women of different generations, reminding the spectator that women are always on the front line, whether fighting in the street or in the home.

Picture 2: women are always on the front line. Photographed by A.K.

The protests in Chile were also connected with and inspired by social mobilisations occurring in other countries. In a conversation with a street-vendor one evening, I learnt that a Frenchman had stopped by 1 day and bought 70 scarves with different protest slogans to bring

back to his friends protesting with the yellow vests (*gilets jaunes*) against the rising cost-of-living and the pension reforms in France. This elderly woman had learnt that while many of the Chilean protestors had eye injuries from rubber bullets containing not only rubber but a combination of metals or by tear gas canisters, in France many had injured their hands. These moments of sharing experiences and tactics had become familiar to me in my diverse interactions and connections with protests around Europe, North Africa and the Mediterranean more broadly, and it was happening again in the here and now in Santiago in early 2020. Shared experiences and connections forged in this way attest to what feminist geographers have analysed as alter-geopolitics (Koopman 2010, 2011), not necessarily confrontational against or simply resisting traditional geopolitics, but happening in parallel with different agendas and practices in everyday life, often involving diverse forms of care and solidarity.

Many people I met or even overheard in the streets and cafés were discussing events related to the mobilisation and the societal demands they wanted to pursue. Most impressively, they were discussing the constitution: critiquing the existing one, drafted and approved under the military dictatorship and the kinds of principles that should form the backbone of a new one. These debates went on across society: these issues were discussed and debated on the television and in written media, academic seminars were organised on these themes from different disciplinary perspectives and introductory books and booklets explaining what a constitution is were sold in bookstores and in the street. Neighbourhood associations and groups organised discussion events and training sessions to prepare the population for the referendum on whether or not a new constitution was necessary, scheduled for late April 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the referendum was postponed until October 2020, and it resulted in a massive majority across the Chilean territory in favour of drafting a new constitution.[7]

Spatialities of Urban Protest and Unfolding Relations of Care

Something surprising about the spatial distribution of the protest was the difference between diverse locations of the city with regard to the intensity of the protest, or even the general awareness of it continuing on a daily basis at the *zona zero* around Plaza de la Dignidad. The protestors clashed with the police every afternoon or evening around the Plaza and particularly in Ramón Corvalán Melgarejo, a street crossing the main Alameda boulevard and its parallel street, Los Carabineros de Chile. This latter is the main station for police vehicles, and thus the location for the front-liners to come and fight.

Picture 3: daily protest at the crossroads of Alameda and Ramón Corvalán Melgarejo. Photograph by A.K.

The Baquedano metro station had not been reopened since the protests began in October, but it had become a living outdoor museum capturing memories of the early weeks of protest. Prior to 18O, Baquedano had been a major transit point as it was where you could change between metro lines 1 and 5. In the evenings when the protests spread down the Alameda, also the Universidad Católica station and, less frequently, Santa Lucia ceased to operate. However, a few blocks away from Alameda, life in the neighbourhoods of Lastarría and Bellas Artes continued as usual, with people enjoying their dinners and drinks out on the terraces. There, despite the visual presence of protest slogans on buildings, the occasional smell of tear gas and the noise of the crowd fighting the police, life seemed to have eluded the violent protests. In Providencia and Las Condes, middle or upper middle-class neighbourhoods, the only indication of continuing protest was the echo of sirens from either the police or the firefighters, which hinted at something going on in the centre of the city. While these latter areas had occasionally been the scene of active protest in the last quarter of 2019, by January 2020 life continued as usual, and here most graffiti had been painted over. Unlike in the centre where new slogans and graffiti appeared daily, or were painted on top of earlier ones, the walls remained empty. On Sundays however, there were bicycle protesters riding in massive groups along the quiet streets of Las Condes, reminding the residents of these areas of the continuing struggle for social justice.

One division within the city centre ran along the green artery of the centre, the Parque Forestal. On the side of the park flanking Plaza de la Dignidad all the benches had disappeared, perhaps burnt in barricades. The ground was brown and churned up, run over by the protesters escaping from the police, and the police driving their *guanacos* and

zorrillos[8] and occasionally on motorbikes, seeking to catch and arrest protestors. The next part of the park, however, began to resemble life as usual and by the time one reached the Museum of Contemporary Art, Bellas Artes, the grass was well maintained, and the benches were there as normal. The walls of the museum building, however, were covered with protest signs that rendered contemporary street art also visible outside the museum.

There were many lessons to be learnt to navigate the violent everyday. Most of us in the centre were carrying scarves and other protection against tear gas and smoke from the barricades, thrown stones that might randomly hit a passer-by or wearing long sleeves to protect from the chemicalised liquid sprayed by the *guanacos*. Although the smell of tear gas was a daily visitor to my apartment, worse was the chemicalised liquid that caused severe burns if it touched bare skin. While I was lucky enough to manage to escape each time a *guanaco* was touring around and spitting its poison, I saw other people getting hurt.

Despite the protests lacking a formal structure and leadership from the outset, relations of solidarity and care including with previously unknown others were a fundamental element of the Chilean uprising. These relations came to the fore spontaneously. From early on medical students and health professionals teamed up and volunteered to take care of those wounded in the protests. Their role became pivotal as the numbers of injuries skyrocketed. Bleeding eyes became symbolic of the uprising as eye injuries were common: if the police were not deliberately shooting people or throwing tear gas canisters at their faces, bouncing items in the middle of the protest could easily hurt the eyes. A student from the Academia de Humanismo Cristiano located in the Yungay neighbourhood of central Santiago lost the sight in both of his eyes because of violence inflicted by the police. Teachers from the University took the time to go and visit him at home as it was difficult for him to take public transport to access the University premises, and began learning and teaching him Braille to enable him to continue his studies.[9]

Ordinary people brought food and drinks to firefighters who volunteered and whose contribution was essential to controlling and putting out fires resulting not only from barricades but also from tear gas canisters that the police threw at protesting crowds. Ordinary people also supplied the front-liners with food and drink,[10] as they were the ones confronting the police directly, and their contribution was indispensable to keeping the mobilisation going. The front-liners put their bodies at risk, equipped with scarves and many with thick gloves and protective glasses, for example swimming or ski goggles. Indispensable were also the above-mentioned forms of support by people not engaged in the violent protest, and especially by those who were there to provide care for the wounded and create safety amidst violent clashes by their corporeal presence (Koopman 2011; Spade 2020).

Returning to my building one evening while the protest was at its peak, I experienced first-hand how the Blue Cross, one of the two primary first aid groups, was able to manage the violent conflict. As my front door was located in the primary confrontation area where fights between the front line and the police occurred daily, there were evenings that I simply could not access the building on my own. That evening I really needed to go in but, terrified by the *guanaco* spraying its liquids right at the front door, I did not have the courage to approach the building. Two Blue Cross volunteers wearing gas masks, protective glasses and carrying shields marked with a blue cross offered to help, asked the protesters to stop the fight for a moment and, respecting their sign, also the *guanaco* temporarily halted its spray. One of them, holding the arm of the other Blue Cross volunteer and taking shelter behind his shield, walked me to the door, and I was safely home. What seemed like a random riot indeed had a logic, as I had been told earlier, and the protestors were careful to not let passers-by get hurt inadvertently when they could avoid it. Blue Cross volunteers, actors accompanying yet not partaking in direct confrontation, engaged in different forms of care ranging from medical care to doing what they could to protect bystanders from being harmed. These practices were such that I would suggest they formed an integral part of everyday geographies of peace (Koopman 2010) a theme to which I will turn in the following section.

Geographies of Peace Amidst Non-War Violence

Latin America, where drastic socio-economic disparities correlate with diverse forms of violence, has formed a particularly intriguing context for peace researchers interested in non-war violence (Pearce and Perea 2019). As for political geography, Megoran and Dalby (2018) discuss how questions of social justice and positive peace have been a part of political geographical thinking going beyond analyses of outright wars, albeit less explicitly at times, but that more emphasis should be put on geopolitical concerns and groups of actors. In the context of Chile much has been written on the US influence in the country, as well as the aggressive takeover of basic infrastructure by transnational companies during the military dictatorship (e.g., Han 2012). As for the uprising in 2019, it occurred simultaneously with other similar mobilisations elsewhere around the globe, with similar demands for greater social justice and fulfilment of basic rights for all, and with similar forms of activist praxis (e.g., Liu et al. 2022). There were also forms of action that grew from the Chilean context but quickly became a global phenomenon, such as Las Tesis' performance 'Rapist on your path' described earlier, combining fight against gender-based violence prevalent everywhere and solidarity with the uprising in Chile. For feminist peace researchers interested in the spatial (e.g., Björkdahl and Kappler 2017) and geographers engaging with the corporeal and the intimate (e.g., Fluri 2009; Hyndman 2004; Massaro and Williams 2013;

Pain and Staeheli 2014; Pratt and Rosner 2006) these are as geopolitical aspects of geographies of peace as would be roles of international organisations in different locations, for example.

The war that the then President Piñera declared in the early days of the protests seemed to reach its conclusion, from his perspective, in the early days of COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, when he posed in front of the covered statute of General Baquedano at Plaza de la Dignidad (Elmostrador 2020). Smiling and congratulating the police and the military for keeping the square empty, something that seemed to denote (spatial) peace for him after months of societal unrest and confrontations in the public space, he posed as a winner and posted the image on social media. Yet, at that point in time, this 'peace' had been achieved by obliging the population indoors due to the global pandemic. The response by different audiences was full disagreement, and the President was made to apologise. Despite restrictions of physical access to this emblematic space for the public, the calls for greater social justice were never silenced. Some also took to the streets despite mobility restrictions, with additional discontent generated by the ways in which the pandemic was handled (Donoso et al. 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic altered the protests, and it also impacted my possibility to continue my fieldwork in Chile. Chile was quick to impose full lockdowns in mid-March 2020, it closed borders to foreign nationals until December 2020, and reopened and closed for shorter periods occasionally after that. Pandemic mobility restrictions fluctuated from phases 1 to 4, depending on the region or municipality's level of infections, ranging from full lockdowns to something resembling a relatively normal life despite closures of certain services and the obligation to wear a mask in public space. Changes were made on a short notice, especially for those trying to plan international travel. Due to these restrictions, my University's strict rules concerning international travel, and family commitments that created the need for some sort of certainty of returning home, I was not able to go back to Chile after February 2020. However, as in other cases, colleagues and civil society actors in Chile were quick to mobilise online, which made it possible to follow and attend events remotely. For the societal uprising, this was indispensable for keeping the debate alive, as mobility restrictions also heavily impacted those situated physically in the country. Resorting to remote connections can be argued as having democratised participation for those who live outside the Santiago Metropolitan region. As elsewhere, most events are concentrated in the capital city, and travel may be a difficult issue for those willing to attend but located in other locations across the territory that extends some 6,500 km along South America's western coastline. Remotely organised events also became spaces of care as everyone was impacted by mobility restrictions

and other measures to contain the pandemic in one way or another, hence the shared sense of solidarity (also Román Brugnoli and Ibarra González 2022) and, perhaps, opened a way of thinking about geographies of peace beyond shared physical locations.

Concluding Remarks

This paper addresses the geographies of peace in the context of non-war violence (Pearce and Perea 2019) through the case of 18O urban protests in Chile. Through multisensory ethnographic insights, the paper seeks to materialise the site and convey the feeling of what it means to navigate such environments as part of the everyday. In other words, what such a praxis teaches us to prepare for at a very mundane level: watching one's surroundings for potential dangers even if one did not have a direct relation to violent struggle and learning the signs and schedules of potential danger. These everyday encounters, namely the randomness of state violence that manifested in physical wounds of passers-by and occasionally unbreathable air in large areas of the city, rendered understandable protesters' reasons for undertaking violent actions; and the cycle continued.

Contested notions of spatial justice and, indeed, spatial peace were at the heart of the Chilean uprising from the outset. These ranged from the distribution of wealth and the wealthy across the country and beyond its borders, the question of who controls the use of natural resources and most importantly water and the daily contestation of urban space between citizens and the police, these latter supported by the military.

As I have sought to illustrate, everyday life even close to the epicentre of the societal unrest was not one only of violence. Instead, it was also energised with broadly shared enthusiasm for large-scale societal change in the making, where everyone should be included and could play a part. It was also the manifold relation of care amongst people often previously unknown to one another, situated in geographies of peace in the midst of non-war violence. It is these small acts of kindness and care that deserve more scholarly attention as they form an integral but at times unnoticed part of at the daily life within wars but also in contexts of non-war violence, as this paper has discussed. With this, I join the call of other feminist peace researchers (e.g., Vaittinen et al. 2019) pointing out the need for sustained analyses of care in all its dimensions and across diverse sites. Together, these relations and their analyses compose relations of solidarity that consolidate interpersonal, societal, and transnational bonds that are key for envisioning more socially and globally just peace.

Notes

1. For a comprehensive overview of different movements, see Donoso and von Bülow 2012.
2. Guanaco is a nickname for the tank waggons used by the riot police. Literally a synonym of llama, this refers to the spray of liquids the waggons disperse, resembling the way llama spits.
3. El violador eres tu.
4. Un buen paco es un paco muerto.
5. La revolución será feminista o no será.
6. Que estas muertes no sean en vano.
7. At the beginning of September 2022 a plebiscite for accepting or rejecting the new constitution was organised in Chile. Participation in the plebiscite was mandatory to guarantee that it reflected the majority opinion in society. Contrary to the polls, which in the weeks before the plebiscite suggested a victory for the new constitution, it was rejected by a considerable margin. As the need for a new constitution had been affirmed two years earlier, this rejection did not indicate a return to a pre-uprising context despite the initial disappointment for those in favour of the new constitution. Instead, it attested to the need to carefully reflect on how a new draft would be formulated. However, the result was unexpected, especially in that the proposed text was rejected also in regions that were the most concerned by aspects now remedied in the draft constitution. To do away with privatised natural resources, the proposed text had ecological values in the forefront. As discussed earlier, access to water is fundamental and it has become a massive issue especially in areas suffering the most from the continuous drought, but the draft constitution was strongly rejected there (De Guio and Parra Galaz 2022).
8. Zorrillo, literally a skunk, is a nickname for an armoured police vehicle.
9. Notes from a discussion with a fellow student from the same University, 15 January 2020.
10. These forms of 'commoning' are frequent in such settings, see for example Ticktin's contribution in (Woodly et al. 2021).

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