Divided Cities

Governing Diversity

Edited by
Annika Björkdahl & Lisa Strömbom

Contents

List of abbreviations

ABI	Area-based initiative
AbM	Abahlali baseMjondolo
ACRI	Association for Civil Rights in Israel
ANC	African National Congress
APG	Alternative Planning Group
AWM	Abigail's Women's Movement
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CAA	Cypriot Architects Association
CCA	Center for Cultural Analysis
CMA	Census Metropolitan Area
COIA	Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement
DMU	Diversity Management and Community Engagement Unit
DPA	Dayton Peace Accords
EMU	Education for Mutual Understanding
EOKA	Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston (National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters)
EULEX	European Union Rule of Law Mission
GTA	Greater Toronto Area
ICAHD	Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions
ICO	International Civilian Office
IM	Islamic Movement
IPCC	International Peace and Cooperation Center
LIP	Local Immigration Partnership Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NMP	Nicosia Master Plan
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RHR	Rabbis for Human Rights

ROC	Republic of Cyprus
RS	Republika Srpska
SDP	Social Democratic Party
TCSA	Toronto City Summit Alliance
TMT	Turkish Resistance Organisation
TRIEC	Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNWRA	United Nations Work and Relief Agency

Governing contested issues in divided cities

Merging conflict resolution and public administration

Annika Björkdahl & Lisa Strömbom

Conflicts are part of everyday life, whether they are played out between the state and its citizens or among the citizens. They can be seen as a positive and dynamic aspect of life. However, negative aspects of conflicts are that their results may have severe consequences for the individual, the group, or society. Thus, a democratic society needs to be able to handle conflicts and address contested issues within the frame of democracy and its institutions, so that disagreeing actors do not resort to discrimination or even violence. Thus, strategies for addressing societal tensions are crucial to the achievement of democratic sustainability. Democracies are generally more likely than non-democracies to provide legitimate and sustainable solutions to potential societal conflicts. Even though democracy is understood as the primary principle for resolving conflicts, there are always contested issues over which societal tensions arise. These conflicts and their various manifestations are handled by public administrations with varying legitimacy, depending on the societal context and the ways in which they manage to satisfy different group interests.[1]

The public administration and civil servants, as representatives of the state, need to handle tensions and address contested issues in order to build a well-functioning and inclusive community. Thus the authors of this volume have a shared interest in furthering know-

ledge of how contested issues, and strategies to address them, might impact on conflict lines in cities. Actors in urban policy-making have an unexplored potential when it comes to creating an environment which is conducive to peace (cf. Cunningham and Byrne, 2006: 42). Yet, the challenge for public administration is to address contested issues in a constructive way, as well as addressing the unintended consequences of its practices. The public administration's often sub-optimal practices and strategies, in combination with its civil servants' often limited knowledge and training to resolve such conflicts, may possibly result in increased societal conflict and decreased legitimacy for the public administration. In many cities these tensions may occur along the contours of majority–minority relations or other asymmetric relations between various communities or groups in society.

Civil servants are expected to act in the interest of all citizens in the fulfilment of their duty to develop and implement policy and to distribute resources and services effectively and in an unbiased manner; in some cases, however, access to public services, education, housing, health care and employment opportunities are intentionally or unintentionally unequally distributed, which results in exclusionist practices. The role of public administration in general and civil servants in particular in solving issues that might be conflictual between institutions and citizens, and among citizens in divided cities, has attracted our attention. We are mainly concerned with *What tools, strategies and understandings of conflict resolution are available to civil servants and public administrations at different stages between conflict and stability.*

More specifically, each chapter aims to investigate the following questions through fieldwork and close readings of the city: *What issues have been contested in the city, by whom, through which strategies and to what effect? How has the contested issue been addressed, by whom and to what effect? How do the public administration's and citizens' strategies for addressing and resolving contested issues interact?*

Thus, this volume draws on theories of conflict resolution and public administration, while touching the surface of urban studies to bring new insights to public administration's ability to address contested issues and resolve conflict in divided cities. Furthermore,

the contributors to this volume bring together insights about how public administration theory might be better adapted to address conflict resolution in urban settings. Thus, theoretical understandings of conflict resolution are unpacked in relation to cities in consolidated, consolidating, and unconsolidated democracies, with a particular focus on how societal tensions are manifested and how contested issues are governed.

We use the 'city' as a prism through which to understand political processes of conflict, segregation, and division, as well as conflict resolution, democratisation, and governance in cities on different levels of conflict, located in different democratic contexts (Copenhagen, Malmö, Toronto, Belfast, Mostar, Cape Town, Mitrovica, Nicosia, and Jerusalem). The urban space is a convenient and tractable 'diagnostic site' to foreground the institutions of public administration and how they interplay with complex and multidimensional phenomena and processes in the cities. More specifically, the empirical analyses explore how urban governance is played out in different contexts and how contested issues within and between administrations and institutions as well as among citizens in these cities are governed.

Advancing the agenda

From the scholarly field of *peace and conflict studies*, we align with the theory of the conflict transformation paradigm, which views conflicts as part and parcel of the social construction of societies (Lederach, 1996: 8–9; Galtung, 1995: 53). This approach was originally developed by researchers to underline the processual character of conflicts, viewing conflicts as being in constant transformation even though at times they might appear to be static (Curle, 1971). This volume has a strong emphasis on process, stressing the dynamic interplay between actors and structures in conflictual change (Buckley-Zistel, 2008). If conflicts are conceived of in this way, new opportunities for transformation emerge, as they can then be un-, re-, or deconstructed. This contrasts with short-term 'conflict management', which mainly seeks to contain conflict by addressing its symptoms rather than its root causes (Miall et al., 1999: 29). Theories of conflict resolution provide us with a conceptual toolbox for

assessing conflicts and with both constructive and destructive ways of handling them. In the cities in focus for this study we look at conflicts arising out of incompatible goals and attitudes, and the ways in which these are handled. Constructive behaviour as regards the issues at hand might lead to peace formation, meaning that conflict between different parties is handled in a sustainable way in processes that strengthen institutions and pave way for the construction of a stable urban order. Conversely, destructive behaviour with regard to these conflicts may lead to further conflict formation, in processes which deepen cleavages and reinforce enemy images in the city (cf. Wallensteen, 1994: 55).

The literature on *public administration* shows that the quality of public institutions in democracies is of crucial importance to their citizens and in shaping their perceptions of whether society is, or is not, fair. In other words, the everyday service delivery or lack thereof by governing institutions, and the direct contact between citizens and civil servants, are of utmost importance in shaping popular perceptions of public institutions and the quality of governance. Most public administrators have to deal with disputes, performing a variety of roles: as facilitators, negotiators, mediators and intermediaries, or at times even as parties to disputes (cf. van Kempen and Murie, 2009). However, public administration literature lacks theoretical depth regarding the understanding of conflicts and ways to handle them (Lan, 1997). We need to understand the specific context of each conflict through in-depth studies at the local level, focusing on the institutional tradition and the roles and identities at issue. There is, for instance, the institutional history of ways to handle conflicts, depending how they are manifested: ingrained patterns, notions, habits, and attitudes that could prove especially useful (cf. Scott, 2008; Lundquist, 1998). Our focus is the everyday activity in local government institutions and administrations and their interaction with the surrounding society. There is an evident lacuna in the literature on public administration as regards understandings of strategies for addressing contested issues and handling conflicts, and the contributors to this volume therefore apply insights from the field of conflict resolution theory. In order to grasp the variety of actors involved in conflicts in the different

cases in the present volume, we draw on the concept of urban governance. This idea departs from an understanding of urban politics which enhances the agency of officials such as civil servants and street-level bureaucrats, as well as representatives of NGOs that might become involved in action in urban affairs (Bollens, 2007: 234). Thus, theories of public administration furnish concepts and perspectives concerning different institutional designs, the role of the civil servant as a street-level bureaucrat in the wider spectrum of urban governance, and the way in which institutions and civil servants can serve as drivers or barriers for conflict resolution. Moreover, these strands of literature offer perspectives on the roles and identities of the actors involved in handling public disputes, and on the way in which these perceptions impact on relationships among actors in the urban realm. However, the literature within the field of public administration on understandings of conflict has traditionally been much less refined theoretically (Lan, 1997: 27), although sporadic studies have described the conflict dimensions pertaining in the work of public administrators (see e.g. Lipsky, 1980; Forester, 2009).

   In order to investigate local public administration processes of conflict transformation, we tap into the subfield of *urban studies*. It offers ideas on the arrangement of urban spaces in order to create inclusive procedures that allow for the constructive tranformation of societal conflicts. Iris Young (1990), for example, argues that if a democracy is to thrive, people must inhabit the same public spaces, in order to relate to one anothers' experiences and create a shared future of the society. Other scholars argue that being in the same everyday is key to challenging feelings of 'us' and 'them' and enabling empathy for others to develop, since 'we cannot expect the outcomes of democratic politics to be just in a society that contains large numbers of people who feel no sense of empathy with their fellow citizens and do not have any identification with their lot' (Barry, cited in Hromadzic, 2011: 272). Within the theoretical debates in urban studies, there has been an increasing focus on interactive governance activity in complex conflictual and dynamic environments (Healey, 2003). Public participation through the use of deliberative processes is currently widely promoted as a means of

enhancing institutional legitimacy, bringing about an engagement in the constructive handling of contested issues, reducing conflicts and raising citizen influence, social responsibility and learning (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003). Here there are many resemblances with the theories of deliberative democracy (Dryzek, 2000), concerned with how to create fair and just institutional settings for deliberation, with the overall objective of bringing major stakeholders together and, through deliberative processes, addressing contested issues and hopefully solving societal tensions (Allmendinger, 2001).

This volume addresses gaps in research by applying the insights of conflict resolution to the domain of public administration. These strands of research intersect in theories of urban governance, thereby unlocking understandings of how contested issues are addressed by various actors in the urban milieu. Through a synthesis of theoretical perspectives we explore various contested issues, actors and agency, institutional design, and democratic quality in urban spaces (Healey, 1997: 2003; Allmendinger, 2001).

Towards a theoretical framework

Based on this transdisciplinary approach we develop a theoretical framework that deepens conflict resolution research with insights from research on public administration and urban studies. This framework maps contested issues and situates local contestation, conflict, and conflict transformation in the urban realm.

Conflict and contested issues

Conflict is an expression of the heterogeneity of interests, values, and beliefs that arise when new formations generated by social change come up against inherited constraints (Ramsbotham et al., 2005). Conflicts emerge when different parties have incompatible goals (Wallensteen, 1994). Although the processes of conflict escalation and de-escalation are complex and unpredictable, this volume distinguishes between constructive and destructive ways of handling conflicts, and takes into consideration the narrowing of the political space as the conflict escalates.

All conflicts, no matter which society they are played out in, are always manifested in the real world of politics. Of particular interest in this present volume are contested policy issues in divided cities that materialise power asymmetries and conflict lines, because they tend to point at broader adversarial or antagonistic discourses. Issues such as planning, the use of public space, cultural markers, land rights for social communities, language policy, or educational curricula can all be centres around which divergent interests and identities circulate (Cunningham and Byrne, 2006: 44). A contested issue as it is understood here is characterised by strong disagreement, divergent interests, and positioning that inevitably involves disputes on the part of the actors that may, if not addressed in a constructive way, pave the way for the emergence of higher levels of conflict, meaning conflict escalation. Thus the behaviour of actors in conflict may contribute to achieving a more stable relationship among parties, if they find ways by which the contested issue can be addressed constructively. Conversely, relationships may deteriorate and lead to conflict escalation if actors fail to address the conflict in a manner that takes into consideration the interests and identities of the different parties (Cunningham and Byrne, 2006: 47). This can imply vertical and/or horizontal escalation, i.e. that the contestation increases and/or that more parties or issues become engaged in the conflict. Contested issues should not be analysed in a vacuum, but in interaction with a changing context, where altered circumstances and relationships are mirrored in changes with regard to contested issues. Empirical examples of contested issues foregrounded in the analysis of divided cities are, for example, policies regarding practical issues such as housing (discrimination in the provision of housing or housing segregation) and urban planning, often in combination with segregation (where to live, work, and go to school), governance (access to and representation in democratic institutions), as well as access to public services and employment.

Addressing contested issues and transforming conflict

When investigating strategies for addressing conflicts on the urban arena, we map the concrete practices adopted by representatives of the public administration, such as civil servants and street-level

bureaucrats, and how they relate to actors within the wider realm of urban governance. At the elite level, there might be attempts at negotiation and/or deliberation within the public administration leadership and between the public administration and various stakeholders. There might also be efforts in the middle-range level, where senior civil servants set up different forms of problem-solving workshops and invite stakeholders to participate, or establish commissions created to handle contested issues. At the grass-roots level, we might find street-level bureaucrats, ordinary citizens engaged in NGOs, community developers, local health officials, police officers, teachers involved in programmes targeting prejudice, psychosocial work, and local confidence-building measures to overcome social tensions and to address contested issues jointly.

We believe that the three levels of elite, middle-range, and grass-roots must be comprehensively addressed and interconnected in order to transform conflicts successfully, building long-term, inclusive, and legitimate democratic procedures. The levels and examples of activities are illustrated in the triangle below.