Geneva: The “Infrastructure” of Peace?
Contextualizing urban and political geographies of global peacemaking in the city of diplomacy

Rushay Naik
MSc Student in Health Policy (Global Health), Dalla Lana School of Public Health
2019 School of Cities Fellow
Junior Fellow, Massey College
University of Toronto
What does it mean to ‘make’ peace?
Overview

• Framing Geneva as the centre of the interstate peacemaking process
• Constructing the ‘infrastructure’ of peace: from the Roman Empire to 1945
• Inverting the ’Infrastructure’: Geneva in the postwar liberal international order
• Tensions and Legacies – the case for reimagining power in the peacemaking system
What does it mean to ‘make’ peace?

- Conferences?
- Cities?
- Buildings?
- Finance?
- Treaties?
- Institutions?
- Laws?
- Ideas?
- Negotiations?
- People?
- Civilians?
- Combatants?
- Diplomats?
Tensions of the Urban and the Nation-State

Geneva (the city)
- financial capital
- market relations
- Protestant tolerance

Switzerland (the nation-state)
- Neutrality
- Defense
- Cultural and national identity
An ‘Inverted Pyramid’: Geneva as the Infrastructure of Peace
Geography as Infrastructure

- Lac Léman
- Le Rhône
- Le Jura
- Ponts de l'Île
- Le Salève
Culture as Infrastructure

- Gallic peoples
- Alemannic peoples
Religion as Infrastructure

Savoy

Southern wall (of the Escalade)

Fribourg, Bernese military allies
St Gervais (cabinotiers)

Commerce as Infrastructure

Place de Bourg-des-Fours

Carouge (quadrivium)
1858 Railway (to Lyon, Paris)

Bastions -> 1849 “ceinture Fazyste”

Architecture as Infrastructure
Statehood as Infrastructure
Int’l Law as Infrastructure

L’Hôtel-de-Ville (site of 1872 Alabama Agreement – first international arbitration: UK-U.S.)
Inversion of the pyramid
Tensions and legacies
reimagining power in the peacemaking system

• Robert de Traz, his 1929 “l’esprit de Genève”, and postcolonial white saviourism in the archetypal “hero of Europe”

“À Dieu, la créature fait face. [...] Le héros d’Europe n’accepte pas d’être anonyme, silencieux et contraint. Il jette son défi ou son appel à la puissance qui sans doute le vaincra, mais pas avant d’avoir entendu sa voix. Sa grandeur se mesure à sa résistance. Je l’appelle un briseur de fatalité, un ennemi irréductible de l’inertie, du néant (...). Tandis que le bouddhiste cherche à éliminer la souffrance en la considérant comme une chose étrangère, lui, ce chrétien de toujours, il l’incorpore, pour s’en enrichir, il s’en sert pour se transfigurer, et, traversant la mort même, pour devenir enfin la personne qu’il est.

L’esprit de Genève est né de cette tradition."
Tensions and legacies
reimagining power in the peacemaking system

• In *Extrastatecraft* (2014), architect Keller Easterling examines the impact of ‘ideologies’ on the ‘disposition’ of otherwise technically-neutral infrastructures in sociopolitical space:

> “Examining the power of the stories, persuasions, or ideologies that accompany a technology also helps in detecting disposition. For instance, infrastructure has often been groomed as either an instrument of militarism, liberalism, or universal rationalization. Yet we might question the dominance of these stories in organizing history. The pyrotechnics of war may distract from other more insidious forms of violence; theories of economic liberalism may ironically generate profound constraints on freedom; and dreams of universal rationality may sponsor their own forms of irrationality. Well-rehearsed theories, like those related to capital or neoliberalism continue to send us to the same places to search for dangers while other concentrations of authoritarian power escape scrutiny.” (p. 31)
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Thank you!

rushay.naik@mail.utoronto.ca
rushay.naik@outlook.com

T: @RushayNaik