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SCALING CONFLICTS THROUGH SYMBOLIC PLACE NARRATIVES: THE EMOTIVE GEOGRAPHY OF POWER DYNAMIC

Abdulhamid Aliyu

Department of Human Geography

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Examiner: Tomas Germundsson

Supervisor: Henrik Gutzon Larsen

Abstract

This thesis investigates the role of sense of place narratives in the scaling of conflicts, using the Israel-Gaza conflict as a critical case study. Existing literature has extensively discussed scale framing and the significance of scale in conflict resolution but has not fully explored the mechanisms through which the scaling of conflicts occurs. The study aims to address this gap by proposing an integrated theoretical framework that examines the interplay between sense of place narratives and scale framing processes. The research adopts a qualitative content analysis approach, drawing data from media articles and social media content related to the Israel-Gaza conflict. The analysis focuses on how different actors construct and communicate symbolic place narratives imbued with emotional resonance, and how these narratives influence the perception and scaling of the conflict from local to global levels. The findings reveal that symbolic places like homes and hospitals become central to the narratives employed by various actors, transcending physical boundaries and evoking universal human experiences. Marginalized groups leverage these symbolic place narratives to humanize the conflict and situate it within discourses of human rights and justice. In contrast, powerful actors utilize emotional appeals rooted in "otherness" to justify actions through security narratives. This study contributes to the theoretical development of scale framing and sense of place concepts by integrating the role of emotional dimensions, power and digital technologies. It highlights the power of symbolic place narratives in shaping public discourse, and the trajectory of protracted conflicts. The findings underscore the importance of empathetic, human-centered approaches to conflict resolution that consider the symbolic and lived dimensions of place. Future research could explore the role of digital technologies in shaping sense of place.

Keywords: scale framing, sense of place, symbolic Place narratives, conflict scaling.

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Contents

1. Introduction

The study of conflicts has long been a complex and multifaceted field, with various actors, interests, and narratives intersecting to shape the dynamics of conflict. One crucial aspect of conflict studies that has received increasing attention in recent years is the concept of scale framing. Scale framing refers to the process by which conflicts are framed and understood at different scales, from local to global. The topic of this thesis is the relationship between sense of place and scale framing in conflicts. Specifically, this study aims to investigate how sense of place narratives shape the scaling of conflicts from local to global. The problem that this research seeks to address is the lack of understanding of the mechanisms by which conflicts are scaled up or down, and how sense of place influences this process. Despite the growing body of literature on scale framing, there remains a significant gap in our understanding of the mechanisms by which conflicts are scaled up or down. This study aims to address this knowledge gap by exploring the relationship between sense of place and scale framing in conflicts.

1.1 Background and Context

Conflicts are complex phenomena that involve multiple actors, interests, and narratives, which often lead to devastating consequences for human lives and the environment (Kelsay, 1991). The alarming statistics on the impact of conflicts on human lives and the environment underscore the need for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of conflicts (Herod, 2009). One key aspect of conflict dynamics is the concept of scale framing. Scale framing theory, which is well-established in ecological and environmental studies, has been used to understand how issues are framed and understood, and how they scale up from local to regional or global levels (Larsen, 2008; Mansfield & Haas, 2006). Recent studies have highlighted the importance of sense of place in understanding conflicts. Sense of place refers to the emotional and symbolic attachment people have to a particular place, which can transcend physical boundaries and enable the scaling of conflicts (Cresswell, 2015). The concept of sense of place is crucial in understanding

how people perceive and experience their environment, and how this perception shapes their connections to a particular place (Tuan, 1977). However, the intricate relationship between sense of place and scale framing in conflicts remains largely unexplored. The spatial turn in Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) has emphasized the importance of space and place in understanding and addressing conflicts (Brigg & George, 2020). This spatial turn encourages researchers to consider how the physical and social dimensions of space shape the dynamics and experiences of conflict. Therefore, this study seeks to build on this perspective by focusing specifically on the concept of sense of place and its influence on the scaling of conflicts.

The study draws on the work of Neil Brenner (2001), who challenges the traditional understanding of scale as a pre-given, objective, and hierarchical concept. Brenner's perspective on the dynamic and relational nature of scale, and how it is produced and reproduced through social, political, and economic processes, is highly relevant to the proposed research questions. Additionally, the study builds on the work of Michael W. Longan (2002), who examines how the community networking movement has attempted to construct a "global sense of place" by leveraging digital technologies and fostering connections between local communities and the broader global context.

Furthermore, the existing literature on scale framing and sense of place has extensively discussed the role of scale in conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Herod, 2009; Larsen, 2008; Mansfield & Haas, 2006; Kelsay, 2015; Snyder, 1997; Pile, 2007). However, the mechanisms by which the scaling of conflicts is carried out, and the ways in which sense of place influences the scaling of conflicts, have received less attention. Studies on sense of place have highlighted its relational and dynamic nature (Relph, 1976; Massey, 2005). However, the intricate relationship between sense of place and scale framing in conflicts remains largely unexplored. Shaw and Akhter (2012) have examined the impact of drone warfare on human communities in Pakistan, highlighting the profound influence of conflict on sense of place and human experiences. Agnew and Corell (2015) have argued that place and scale are crucial for analyzing how contexts

shape events in international relations. Larsen (2008) has provided valuable insights into the concept of scaling and its relevance to understanding conflicts. Mansfield and Haas (2006) have highlighted the importance of scale framing in understanding conflicts over scientific uncertainty. Van Hulst and Yanow (2016) have argued that framing processes shape interpretation and narratives around public policy issues. Meinzer et al. (2010) have contributed to the understanding of conflicts within ecological contexts, emphasizing the impact of context and scale in conflict evaluation. Herod (2009) has analyzed globalization debates through a scalar lens, arguing that scale is not a fixed entity, but is constantly being constructed and contested. Taylor (1999) has examined the tensions between space and place in shaping modern identities and movements.

This body of literature suggests that sense of place and scale framing are closely linked, and that places are not static or bounded by geographical boundaries but are instead shaped by wider scalar processes and defined relationally within scalar hierarchies. This study aims to propose a framework that integrates the concept of scale framing with the relational aspects of sense of place. By examining how different actors construct and communicate sense of place narratives during processes of scale framing.

1.2 Research Questions

I. How do sense of place narratives shape the scaling of conflicts from local to global?

II. How does this impact the perception and understanding of conflicts?

III. What are the unique characteristics of sense of place narratives that challenge or reinforce dominant discourses and established scales of understanding in conflict situations?

1.3 Scope of the Research

This study will utilize the Israel-Gaza conflict as a critical case study to test the proposed theoretical framework. The selection of this case study is not intended to provide a comprehensive historical analysis of the Israel-Gaza conflict, but rather to employ it as empirical evidence to illustrate and test the validity of the proposed theoretical framework. This choice of a critical case study approach, as conceptualized by Bent Flyvbjerg (2011), is well-

suited to the current research on the role of sense of place narratives in conflict scaling. Flyvbjerg defines a critical case as one that has strategic importance in relation to the general research problem, and has the potential to confirm, challenge, or extend existing theory. The study's focus on the complex interplay between place-based identities, emotions, power dynamics, and the scaling of conflicts addresses a significant gap in the literature on scale framing of conflict, making it a critical case that can yield valuable and transferable insights. By adopting a critical case study approach, the research can provide an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon, generate logical generalizations, and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of place in shaping conflict trajectories.

This conflict has been shaped by multiple actors, interests, and narratives deeply rooted in the region's history, culture, and politics. One of the key factors contributing to the complexity of this conflict is the role of sense of place, which has been employed by different actors to shape public opinion, policy decisions, and the course of the conflict itself (Agnew & Corell, 2015).

1.4 Main Argument

The main argument of the thesis is that sense of place narratives plays a crucial role in shaping the scaling of conflicts from local to global, and that understanding the relationship between sense of place and scale framing is essential for conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives. The thesis argues that existing literature on scale framing has not fully explained the mechanisms by which conflicts are scaled up or down, and that the ways in which sense of place influences the scaling of conflicts have received less attention. This research argues that the relationship between sense of place and scale framing is complex and multifaceted, and that understanding this relationship is essential for conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives.

The first part of the argument is that the concept of scale framing is insufficient on its own to explain the scaling of conflicts. While scale framing provides a framework for understanding how conflicts are framed and understood at different scales, it does not capture the emotional and

relational aspects of sense of place that are critical in shaping the scaling of conflicts.

The second part of the argument is that the relational aspects of sense of place are essential in understanding the scaling of conflicts. Sense of place narratives are not just abstract concepts but are deeply rooted in the emotional and lived experiences of individuals. By combining the concept of scale framing with the relational aspects of sense of place, this research attempted to provide an explanation of the complex and multifaceted nature of sense of place narratives.

The third part of the argument is that the philosophical approach of combining critical realism and phenomenology provides a framework for understanding the social and material structures that shape the world, as well as the lived experiences and emotions of individuals. This approach allows for an understanding of the ways in which sense of place narratives shape the scaling of conflicts.

The final part of the argument is that the use of case studies as the methodological approach is suited for the research. Building on Flyvbjerg's (2011) argument that case studies are suited for generalization, testing of hypothesis, refining existing theory and theory development, this study is an attempt at generating and testing hypotheses in order to refine and extend the existing theory of scale framing and sense of place. This way, the use of case studies as the methodological approach provides a unique opportunity for generalization and theory development, allowing this research to contribute to the existing literature on scale framing and sense of place as well as refine and extend existing theory of scale framing

1.5 Thesis structure

The subsequent chapters of this thesis are organized as follows: Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework, wherein the study argues and proposes a new theory by integrating scale framing theory and sense of place. This chapter commences with an examination of scale framing, focusing on the power dynamics inherent in scale framing, followed by an exploration of the emotions inherent in sense of place theory. The theoretical framework is then established by contextualizing the conceptual linkage and integrating

emotions, sense of place, and power dynamics. Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology, commencing with an establishment and argument for the philosophical combination of critical realist perspective and the phenomenological importance of emotions and lived experience, which is in synchrony with the theory focus on scale and emotions. This is followed by a discussion of the methods, wherein the use of case study is established and argued for, building on Flyvbjerg's argument on the use of case study for generalization and theory development. The study utilizes the selected case study to generate and test hypotheses, refining and combining two existing theory and building a new framework, using document analysis of media articles. Chapter 4 presents the results and analysis of the content analysis conducted, utilizing the Israel-Gaza conflict as a critical case study, as argued for by Flyvbjerg (2011). This chapter presents the results of the thematic analysis of the data, identifying key themes and codes that emerged from the articles. Building on the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2.3, the analysis reveals five overarching themes: sense of place narratives, scale framing strategies, emotional dimensions, power dynamics, and dominant discourses and established scales. Then the findings were presented with a detailed summary provided in Table 1.0 without applying the theoretical framework or conceptual linkages. Then the I will extend the analysis into a broader examination, engaging with the previously presented literature to conceptualize the mechanism through which framing and scaling of conflict are facilitated. Chapter 5 is where I will re-examine the themes through the lens of the proposed theoretical framework, providing a deeper understanding of the findings and their implications. This discussion is also supplemented by two additional auxiliary theories (Larsen, 2024) - Orientalism (Said, 2009) and Political Symbolism (Said, 2023) - which, although not initially part of the theory, provided complementary insights that enhance the theoretical interpretation. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the thesis, summarizing the main findings and reiterating the significance of the study and its contributions to the field.

2. Theory

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework that guides the current study on the role of sense of place narratives in conflict scaling. The chapter begins by introducing the key concepts of scale framing and sense of place, and then explores how these two theoretical perspectives can be integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of conflict. Particular emphasis is placed on the interconnectedness of power dynamics, emotional dimensions, and the strategic use of place-based narratives in shaping the scaling and perception of conflicts. The chapter concludes by discussing the implications and opportunities presented by this integrated theoretical approach, setting the stage for the empirical investigation of the research questions.

2.1 Scale Framing

Scale framing refers to the process by which issues, and problems become framed at certain geographical scales over others (Herod, 2009; Larsen, 2008; Mansfield & Haas, 2006). This concept draws on critical geography scholarship, which reveals how scalar constructs are socially produced rather than given (Herod, 2009). For example, an environmental issue like deforestation may be framed at the local scale, highlighting the impact on a specific community's livelihood. Alternatively, the same issue could be framed at the global scale, emphasizing its contribution to climate change and the need for international cooperation. The way in which the scale of an issue is framed can have significant implications for how it is understood, prioritized, and addressed by different stakeholders. Scale framing encompasses both the vertical dimension of hierarchical scalar levels (e.g. local, regional, national, global) as well as horizontal interlinkages across places (Larsen, 2008). It examines how issues become framed at certain scales through discursive, political, economic, and social processes (Mansfield & Haas, 2006). Scale framing theory provides a valuable lens for understanding how the strategic deployment of scale can shape the perception, understanding, and resolution of various conflicts.

In the context of conflicts, different actors may employ scale framing strategies to reinforce or challenge the dominant understandings and scaling

of a conflict, thereby shaping public opinion, policy decisions, and the course of the conflict itself (Snow & Oliver, 2005). By framing a conflict at particular scales, actors can emphasize certain aspects, interests, and narratives, while obscuring others. This can have significant implications for how the conflict is perceived, understood, and addressed. Actors with greater resources, influence, and access to decision-making processes can strategically frame conflicts at scales that align with their interests and narratives, often marginalizing or obscuring alternative perspectives (Herod, 2009; Mansfield & Haas, 2006). This power-laden process of scale framing shapes the knowledge production, problem definition, and policy solutions surrounding the conflict. The power dynamics inherent in scale framing are a crucial aspect of this theoretical framework.

2.1.1 Power Dynamics and Scale Framing Theory

The strategic framing of scale has emerged as a critical concept in understanding the dynamics of power within various social, political, and environmental conflicts. According to scale framing theory, the scalar dimensions of a conflict or issue are not inherently given, but rather are socially constructed and strategically deployed by various actors (Oliver & Johnston, 2005). This means that powerful stakeholders, such as governments, corporations, or influential organizations, can leverage their resources, influence, and access to decision-making processes to frame conflicts at scales that are most advantageous to their interests (Mansfield & Haas, 2006). By emphasizing or downplaying the local, regional, national, or global dimensions of a conflict, these actors can shape public opinion, policy decisions, and the overall trajectory of the conflict itself (Larsen, 2008). For instance, a corporation may frame a local environmental issue as a national or global problem, thereby diverting attention away from its own responsibility and onto the need for broader policy changes. Conversely, a local community may frame a national issue as a local problem, highlighting the specific impacts and concerns of their community and demanding more localized solutions.

However, the strategic use of scale framing is not limited to powerful actors. Less powerful groups, such as local communities or civil society

organizations, may also employ "scale jumping" strategies to challenge the dominant scalar framings and bring attention to their concerns at higher or alternative scales (Smith, 1993). By reframing their struggles in this way, these groups can garner support and resources from international organizations, networks, or other stakeholders, which can help to amplify their voice and influence the trajectory of the conflict.

The power dynamics inherent in this process of scale framing are a crucial aspect of this theoretical framework. By emphasizing certain scalar dimensions over others, actors can shape the perceived scope, significance, and urgency of the conflict, as well as the range of potential solutions and stakeholders involved. This can have significant implications for how the conflict is understood and addressed, as well as for the eventual outcomes of the conflict. Powerful actors can use scale framing to justify certain policy interventions, resource allocations, or regulatory frameworks that are favorable to their interests, while downplaying or dismissing alternative approaches that may be more aligned with the needs and perspectives of less powerful stakeholders (Mansfield & Haas, 2006).

Furthermore, the strategic framing of scale can also serve to marginalize or obscure alternative perspectives that may challenge the dominant narratives of powerful actors (Agnew & Corell, 2015). By framing conflicts at scales that align with their interests, these influential stakeholders can effectively silence or sideline the voices and concerns of less powerful groups, such as local communities, environmental organizations, or marginalized populations (Herod, 2009). This can maintain existing power structures and reinforce the dominance of certain actors in the decision-making process, often at the expense of more equitable and inclusive approaches to conflict resolution.Ultimately, the scale framing theory highlights the critical role of power dynamics in shaping the understanding, scaling, and resolution of various social, political, and environmental conflicts. By strategically framing conflicts at scales that align with their interests, powerful actors can influence policy decisions, determine the outcomes of conflicts, and maintain their dominance over less powerful stakeholders. As such, it is essential to critically examine the scalar

dimensions of conflicts and the ways in which they are constructed and deployed by different actors to advance their respective agendas.

2.2 Sense of Place

Sense of place encompasses the subjective and emotional attachments that individuals and groups form to particular places, which shape their identities (Agnew & Corell, 2015; Massey, 2005). Sense of place can be shaped by a variety of factors, including emotions, personal experiences, cultural traditions, and historical events (Lewicka, 2011; Tuan 1997). It can also be influenced by the scale at which we perceive and interact with a place, ranging from the local to the global (Massey, 2005). This concept builds on humanistic geography traditions, emphasizing the emotional attachments and meaning bestowed upon places (Tuan, 1977). It recognizes the subjective and intersubjective experiences through which place bonds emerge (Relph, 1976) and sees identities as intertwined with place-based meanings and belonging (Massey, 2005). Sense of place is understood as relational, fluid, and contested across intersecting differences.

In the context of conflicts, sense of place can play a crucial role in how the conflict is perceived, experienced, and addressed. The emotional dimensions of sense of place, such as feelings of belonging, attachment, and connection to a place, are particularly salient in the context of conflicts (Lewicka, 2011; Massey, 2005). These emotional and symbolic attachments to particular places can become deeply embedded within the narratives and understandings of the conflict, shaping the actions and behaviour of different actors as well as influencing how it is perceived, experienced, and addressed.

2.2.1 Emotions and sense of place

The emotional dimensions of the sense of place have been a central focus in the work of several prominent geographers and place theorists, including Relph (1997), Tuan (1977), and Cresswell (2015). These scholars have contributed to the understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of the relationship between individuals and the places they inhabit. In this context, the concept of "place" is understood as a socially constructed and relational entity, imbued with meaning, emotion, and symbolic significance

for individuals and groups (Tuan, 1977; Massey, 2005). Place is not merely a physical location, but a complex amalgamation of the social, cultural, and political dimensions that shape people's experiences and attachments to a particular setting. The sense of place encompasses the subjective and emotional attachments that individuals and groups form to these particular places, which in turn shape their identities and lived experiences (Agnew & Corell, 2015; Massey, 2005). This concept builds on humanistic geography traditions, emphasizing the emotional attachments and meaning bestowed upon places (Tuan, 1977). It recognizes the subjective and intersubjective experiences through which place bonds emerge (Relph, 1976) and sees identities as intertwined with place-based meanings and belonging (Massey, 2005). Sense of place is understood as relational, fluid, and contested across intersecting differences.

A key aspect of the emotional dimension of the sense of place is the sense of belonging that individuals develop towards particular locations. Relph (1997) emphasizes the importance of this sense of belonging, suggesting that it is a fundamental component of the emotional connection that people form with places. This emotional attachment is often rooted in personal experiences, cultural traditions, and social interactions within a specific environment (Tuan, 1977). The sense of belonging can also extend beyond the individual to the collective level, as places can serve as "public symbols" that foster a shared sense of identity and community (Tuan, 1977). Groups, such as ethnic, religious, or cultural communities, may develop a strong emotional attachment to certain places that are imbued with symbolic meaning and serve as anchors for their collective identity and belonging. The emotional attachment that individuals develop towards a place is not solely based on the physical characteristics of the environment but also the symbolic and experiential meanings that they ascribe to it (Relph, 1997).

Cresswell (2015) further elaborates on this, highlighting how the sense of place is intimately tied to the values, traditions, and ways of life that are embedded within a particular place. These emotional attachments are shaped by the lived experiences of individuals, as they engage with the place through their everyday activities, interactions, and perceptions (Tuan, 1977). The emotional responses and feelings that individuals have towards a

place are central to the development and maintenance of the sense of place (Tuan, 1977). These emotional responses are influenced by the personal experiences, memories, and interpretations that individuals have within a particular environment (Cresswell, 2015). The emotional attachment that individuals form with a place can, in turn, shape their future interactions, behaviors, and perceptions within that location, further reinforcing the sense of place (Relph, 1997). This emotional dimension is integral to the multifaceted understanding of the sense of place and its role in shaping not just human-environment relationships but human society to society interactions. The sense of place is a dynamic and complex concept that is shaped by a variety of factors, including emotions, personal experiences, cultural traditions, and historical events (Lewicka, 2011; Tuan 1997). It can also be influenced by the scale at which we perceive and interact with a place, ranging from the local to the global (Massey, 2005).

2.3 Interconnectedness of Scale Framing and Sense of Place

The theoretical framework guiding this study is grounded in the interconnected concepts of scale framing and sense of place. This integrated approach is particularly well-suited to address the research questions, which aim to investigate how different actors construct and communicate sense of place narratives during processes of scale framing, and how this impacts the perception, understanding, and scaling of conflicts.

2.3.1 Theoretical framework and conceptual linkage

The combination of scale framing and sense of place into a single theoretical framework is justified and necessary for this research study. This is because, as Taylor (1999) argues, places can acquire contested meanings that become embedded within scalar narratives during framing processes, and place-based identities and attachments get implicated within vertically stacked hierarchies of scale frames (Herod, 2009). This relationship sheds light on how scale frames are constructed, negotiated, and contested by actors through place narratives (Taylor, 1999). In the context of conflicts, different actors may employ scale framing strategies to reinforce or challenge the dominant understandings and scaling of a conflict, while simultaneously drawing on sense of place narratives to shape

public opinion, policy decisions, and the course of the conflict itself (Snow & Oliver, 2005). The emotional and symbolic attachments to particular places can become deeply embedded within the narratives and understandings of the conflict, influencing how it is perceived and addressed.

Secondly, the integration of scale framing and sense of place provides a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of conflicts, which are inherently complex phenomena involving multiple actors, interests, and narratives. As Massey (2005) argues, places are not bounded, static entities, but are constituted through their connections and interactions with other places. This "global sense" of place perspective suggests that the sense of place associated with a place (conflict-affected region) is shaped by its broader global connections and the scale frames employed by different actors. By examining the interconnectedness of scale framing and sense of place, this study can reveal deeper drivers of conflicts and potential openings for resolution. The exploration of how different actors utilize sense of place narratives to reinforce or challenge the scaling and understandings of a conflict can shed light on the underlying power dynamics, contested meanings, and emotional attachments that shape the conflict's trajectory. Therefore, I will argue that the combination of scale framing and sense of place into a single theoretical framework is well-suited to address the research questions of this study

2.3.2 Integrating Emotions, Sense of Place, and Power Dynamics through Scale Framing

The focus on power dynamics and the emotional dimensions of sense of place is crucial for this research study. This relationship illuminates how scale frames are constructed, negotiated, and contested by actors through the strategic use of emotional place narratives (Massey, 2005). Similarly, the study by Åhäll (2018) and Hutchison and Bleiker (2014) highlights the significance of incorporating emotions and affect into the analysis of power dynamics and scale framing processes. These studies provide a strong theoretical and conceptual foundation for understanding how emotions and

affective experiences shape the construction and communication of sense of place narratives during conflicts and other political processes.

Åhäll's (2018) study, in particular, emphasizes how feminist scholars have used affect and emotion as a methodological approach to challenge dominant power structures and discourses in world politics. The study suggests that emotions and affective experiences can be used to uncover hidden narratives, challenge hegemonic representations, and engage in transformative politics. This aligns with the proposed research focus on how different actors construct and communicate sense of place narratives, and how this impacts the perception and understanding of conflicts and the scaling of these conflicts.

Hutchison and Bleiker's (2014) study further reinforce the importance of considering emotions in the study of international relations and world politics. The paper highlights how emotions shape and are shaped by various political processes, and how they can be used to understand and analyze the complex social and political dynamics that underlie conflicts and other international phenomena. This perspective is particularly relevant for the proposed research, as it suggests that emotions and affective experiences play a crucial role in the way different actors perceive, understand, and engage with the scaling of conflicts.

2.3.3 Interconnectedness and Research Implications

The integration of these two theoretical perspectives offers a nuanced and comprehensive approach to understanding the complex interplay between emotions, sense of place, and power dynamics in the context of various social, political, and environmental conflicts. Firstly, powerful actors can strategically leverage scale framing to shape the emotional narratives and sense of place attachments associated with a particular conflict or issue. By framing the conflict at scales that align with their interests, they can amplify or suppress certain emotional connections and sense of place attachments, thereby influencing public opinion, policy decisions, and the overall trajectory of the conflict.

Conversely, the emotional attachments and sense of place narratives constructed by local communities, environmental groups, or other marginalized stakeholders can challenge the dominant scale framings promoted by powerful actors. These alternative emotional and place-based perspectives can serve to counter the strategic scale framing of conflicts, potentially leading to more inclusive and equitable approaches to conflict resolution.

Furthermore, the interplay between emotions, sense of place, and power dynamics through scale framing can have significant implications for the perception and understanding of conflicts at varying scales. The way in which a conflict is framed in terms of scale can shape the emotional resonance and sense of place attachments associated with it, which in turn can influence how the conflict is perceived, interpreted, and addressed by different stakeholders. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the proposed framework can provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics that underlie the construction, communication, and contestation of emotional sense of place narratives, and how these narratives are leveraged by actors through strategic scale framing to shape the perception, understanding, and resolution of various conflicts.

2.4 Conceptualizing Conflict through the Interconnectedness of Sense of Place and Scale Framing

The growing body of research on the spatial turn in peace and conflict studies highlights the importance of considering the interconnectedness of sense of place and scale framing in understanding the dynamics and drivers of conflict (Brigg & George, 2020). This study's theoretical framework is particularly relevant in the context of the transformative impact of digital technologies on our understanding and experience of places.The emotional dimension of place attachment is crucial in shaping the way people perceive and respond to conflicts. When individuals or groups feel a deep sense of belonging and connection to a particular place, they may be more likely to perceive threats to that place as personal or existential, triggering strong emotional responses and a heightened sense of in-group/out-group dynamics (Wnuk & Oleksy, 2021). These emotional attachments can become a

significant barrier to conflict resolution, as they can make it more difficult for parties to empathize with or understand the perspectives of those outside their immediate community or territory.

Scale framing is closely linked to issues of power, as the ability to define the relevant scales and boundaries of a conflict can confer significant strategic advantages to certain actors. For instance, in the context of transnational activism and international relations, non-state actors and civil society organizations have increasingly challenged the traditional state-centric approaches to conflict resolution by framing issues at different scales, such as the global or regional level (Soetjipto & Yuliestiana, 2020). This has allowed them to mobilize support and resources across borders, and to exert pressure on state actors in ways that were not possible within the confines of the nation-state. The intersection of sense of place and scale framing is particularly relevant in the virtual realm, where the blurring of boundaries between physical and digital places has created new opportunities for people to connect and engage with each other, potentially transcending traditional power structures and scale framings (Cresswell, 2015).

This has the potential to play a significant role in conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives, as it can provide new avenues for dialogue, collaboration, and the sharing of diverse perspectives and scaling of conflicts. By conceptualizing conflict through the interconnectedness of sense of place and scale framing, with a particular focus on the emotional and power-related dimensions, researchers and practitioners can gain a more nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics and drivers of conflict. This approach can inform the development of more effective conflict resolution and peace-building strategies, which take into account the spatial, emotional, and power-related factors that shape the way people perceive and respond to conflicts. Moreover, the transformative impact of digital technologies on our understanding and experience of places presents new opportunities for leveraging these spatial and emotional dimensions in the pursuit of conflict resolution.

3. Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted in this study to investigate the role of sense of place narratives in conflict scaling. The research is grounded in a philosophical framework that combines the principles of critical realism and phenomenology, providing a foundation for exploring the complex interplay between subjective, lived experiences and the broader social, cultural, and structural factors that shape the construction and communication of sense of place narratives during processes of scale framing.

The chapter begins by discussing the ontological and epistemological foundations of the study, highlighting the critical realist perspective on the existence of an independent social reality and the phenomenological emphasis on the importance of subjective, embodied experiences. This dual approach informs the qualitative, case study-based research design, with document analysis as the primary method. This, I will argue, is a well-suited approach to capturing the nuances and complexities of the phenomenon under investigation.

3.1 Philosophy of Science

The study is grounded in a philosophical approach that combines critical realism with a phenomenological perspective. Critical realism involves an ontology, which acknowledges the existence of a social reality that is independent of our perceptions but is also shaped by the social, cultural, and historical structures that mediate our understanding of that reality (Bhaskar, 1978; Archer, 1999). This perspective recognizes that the social world is not simply a collection of individual experiences or subjective meanings but is also shaped by underlying causal mechanisms and generative structures that may not be immediately observable (Sayer, 2000). In the context of this study, this means recognizing that conflicts, associated sense of place narratives, and processes of scale framing are not merely subjective experiences but are also influenced by the broader social, political, and economic structures that shape the actors' perceptions and actions.

Phenomenology emphasizes the importance of subjective, lived experiences in understanding the world (Husserl, 1970; Colin smith, 2002). It

encourages a focus on how individuals and groups make sense of their experiences of place and how these experiences shape their perceptions, emotions, and behaviors (van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology also recognizes the embodied, sensory, and affective dimensions of experience, acknowledging that our understanding of the world is not just a cognitive process but is also shaped by our physical, emotional, and social interactions with our environment (Smith C., 2002).

The study proposes that phenomenology and critical realism can be combined as philosophical grounds for this research. While these two perspectives may appear to be at odds, as phenomenology emphasizes the subjective, lived experiences of individuals and critical realism acknowledges the existence of an independent social reality, they can be reconciled and combined in a way that strengthens the overall methodological framework of this study. The key is to recognize that while there may be a social reality, our understanding and experience of it is always mediated by our position, perspectives, and the structures that enable or constrain our actions. This is because while phenomenology tends to be overtly individualistic (Cresswell, 2014), critical realism emphasizes the importance of human agency and the role of individual and collective interpretations in shaping social reality (Archer, 1999). This aligns with the research focus on how different actors actively construct and communicate their sense of place narratives as a means of scaling up the conflict and connecting it to wider global issues.

Critical realism acknowledges the existence of an independent social reality, while phenomenology allows for a deep exploration of how individuals and groups make sense of their experiences of place and how these experiences shape their perceptions, emotions, and behaviors. By combining these two philosophical perspectives, this study aims to provide a rich, nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, while also acknowledging the role of social, cultural, and structural factors in shaping individual and collective experiences. This integrated approach enables me to examine the construction and communication of sense of place narratives during processes of scale framing, while also considering the broader social, cultural, and structural factors that shape these processes.

The result, I will argue, is a robust methodological framework that can generate valuable insights into the complex interplay between subjective experiences, power dynamics, and the scaling of conflicts.

3.1.1 Methodological Implications

The philosophical foundations of this research have several methodological implications. Firstly, the critical realist perspective necessitates an examination of the broader social, cultural, and structural contexts that shape the actors' sense of place narratives and the processes of scale framing. This may involve the use of document analysis, historical research, and the examination of relevant policies, institutions, media, and social media platforms (Sayer, 2000). In this study, document analysis from media outlets is the primary focus.

Secondly, the emphasis on subjective, lived experiences suggests the use of qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic observations, to capture the nuances and complexities of how different actors construct and communicate their sense of place narratives (Wnuk & Oleksy 2021). In the absence of interviews, I mainly on articles written about opinions and experts' interpretations or explanations of subjective reality. This approach maintains a degree of subjectivity or interpretation.

Finally, the combination of phenomenological and critical realist approaches requires that actors' subjective interpretations or experiences are situated within the social and structural contexts of scale framing processes. It also encourages a reflexive and iterative research process, where the actors (subject) and the researcher's (subject) own positionality and the role of the research context are explicitly acknowledged and incorporated into the analysis (Finlay, 2002). This is particularly important given the sensitive nature of the conflict and the potential power dynamics involved. By adopting this dual perspective, this research seeks to offer an understanding of how different actors construct and communicate their sense of place narratives during processes of scale framing, and how this impacts the perception and understanding of conflicts. Additionally, the study aims to explore the unique characteristics of sense of place narratives that challenge

or reinforce dominant discourses and established scales of understanding in conflict situations.

3.2 Case study

Case studies are a valuable research method in social sciences, offering a nuanced view of reality that is essential for understanding complex human behaviors. These behaviors cannot be fully captured by rule-governed acts or theoretical models, and case studies provide a detailed, context-dependent analysis that generates deep insights. Therefore, I will argue that the use of case studies as the methodological approach is also consistent with the philosophical approach of combining critical realism and phenomenology. This is because the way actors experience and interpret social reality is not devoid of their own emotions and lived experiences but is rather situated and connected with their position within the wider social and material structures of the world. This means that the philosophical underpinning of critical realism and phenomenology, which emphasizes the importance of understanding the social and material structures that shape the world, as well as the lived experiences and emotions of individuals, is complementary to the case study approach. In other words, the case study approach allows for a nuanced and detailed understanding of the ways in which actors experience and interpret social reality, while the philosophical underpinning provides a framework for understanding the broader social and material structures that shape their experiences and interpretations.

In terms of generalization and theory development, Flyvbjerg (2011) argues that case studies can contribute significantly to scientific development. Contrary to the common misconception, generalization is possible depending on the case and its context. Furthermore, case studies can challenge and refine existing theories through the process of falsification, where a single deviant case can have a significant impact. They are valuable at all stages of theory-building, from generating hypotheses to testing them. As discussed in Section 2.3, this study theoretically proposes combining scale framing theory with the concept of sense of place, arguing that it is, in fact, sense of place that enables the scaling of geographic

phenomena or issues, such as conflict. Consequently, the case study strategy is applicable to this research.

A particularly useful approach in case study research is the selection of critical cases, which this study specifically adopted. These cases have strategic importance in relation to the general problem being studied and are likely to provide rich insights into the phenomenon being investigated. For instance, selecting a location where a particular phenomenon is expected to be most pronounced can provide valuable insights and challenge or support existing theories. As Flyvbjerg (2011) notes, such critical cases are "strategically selected cases that have a high potential to provide insights into the phenomenon being studied" (p. 307). They are particularly useful when the objective is to test or refine existing theories or hypotheses and can allow for logical deductions of the type: "If it is valid for this case, it is valid for all (or many) cases." "If it is not valid for this case, then it is not valid for any (or only few) cases."

This corresponds to the research questions of this study, which focus on the role of sense of Place narratives in shaping the perception, understanding and scaling of conflict from local to global issues, as well as exploring the unique characteristics of sense of place narratives that challenge or reinforce dominant discourses around conflict. I aim to establish a connection between my empirical results and the underlying theoretical framework, with the goal of providing empirical evidence that validates and supports the proposed theoretical constructs. Case studies can incorporate evidence from a diverse range of sources (Yin, 2018). In the present study, a content analysis method is employed to gather data from various media outlets, including major news networks, major papers, and social media, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon.

3.2.1 Content Analysis

Yin (2018) observes that document analysis is a highly relevant and frequently utilized method in case study research, making it a valuable tool for data collection and analysis. Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2022)

argue that thematic analysis and content analysis share similarities, as both involve the systematic identification and analysis of patterns or themes within data. However, this study focused on using the step-by-step process outlined by Margrit Schreier (2018).

To conduct this analysis, a selection of data sources was made, comprising articles from prominent publishers such as The Guardian, as well as major news outlets including the BBC, ABC, and Al Jazeera. These sources were selected due to their extensive global reach and geographic diversity, which aligns with the research interest in understanding the global coverage and framing of the conflict. Social media content was also included in the data collection process, recognizing these platforms as new forms of place-making where individuals can share their lived experiences, emotions, and perspectives on the conflict in a more immediate and personal manner. The data collection process was deliberately limited to opinion writing, expert interpretations, and explanations of events, which inherently maintain a level of interpretation and subjectivity. This decision was made to ensure the authenticity and immediacy of the subjective interpretations captured in the data, consistent with the phenomenological approach of the study. Consequently, fact-checking and fact-reporting were excluded from the data collection process to maintain the focus on subjective interpretations.

Furthermore, a targeted search strategy within the above selected sources was employed to gather relevant data. The initial search terms utilized were "Israel," "Gaza," and "Palestine," which were subsequently refined by date to focus on recent events occurring from October 2023 to the present. This temporal delimitation was intentional, as the primary objective of this study is to use the Israel-Gaza conflict as a critical case study (see Section 3.1) to test the validity of the proposed integrated theoretical framework, rather than engaging in a historical analysis. Then the search results were further filtered to prioritize articles that presented opinions, analyses, and explanations of facts (social reality). This selection criterion was chosen because it allows for a degree of interpretation by the author, which, in turn, influences the social reality due to their positionalities. This approach aligns with the philosophical underpinnings of this study, which emphasizes the

importance of understanding the intersubjective nature of human experience within the context of power structures inherent during scale framing processes (see Section 3.1). It is also consistent with the proposed integrated theoretical framework, which posits that the sense of place (i.e., the intersubjectivity of human emotional experience) is shaped by withering power structures (political, economic, technological, and social) during scale framing (see Section 2.3.1). Through this targeted search strategy and article selection process, a comprehensive dataset was generated (see Appendix 1), which was then subjected to further analysis, involving segmentation and coding.

The coding frame was developed both inductively and deductively, based on the proposed theoretical framework, utilizing Margrit Schreier's qualitative content analysis framework. This framework was designed to capture the complex dynamics of sense of place narratives, scale framing strategies, emotional dimensions, power dynamics, and dominant discourses and established scales. Specifically, the coding frame consisted of five main categories: sense of place narratives, scale framing strategies, emotional dimensions, power dynamics, and dominant discourses and established scales. The sense of place narratives category comprised subcategories such as attachment to place, belonging and identity, and emotional connections. The scale framing strategies category included subcategories such as local/community scale, national scale, and global/international scale. The emotional dimensions category consisted of subcategories such as fear, anxiety, and resilience. The power dynamics category comprised subcategories such as marginalization, resistance, dehumanization, the dominant discourse and established scales category included subcategories such as geopolitical framing and securitization.

Finally, the data was segmented into meaningful units (paragraphs) based on syntactic and semantic criteria (Schreier, 2018). This allowed for a detailed examination of the content and ensured that each unit of analysis provided sufficient context for coding. A subset of the data was coded to test the reliability and validity of the coding frame. Adjustments were made based on the pilot coding results to better capture the nuances of the data. The refined coding frame was applied to the entire dataset. Each unit of

analysis was coded by assigning it to the appropriate category in the coding frame. Inter-coder reliability was calculated to ensure consistency in coding. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion and refinement of the coding frame. By employing this coding frame, the study was able to systematically analyze the data and identify patterns, frequency and themes from the content analysis.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are of paramount importance in this study, given the sensitive and highly contested nature of the conflict under investigation. As a researcher born and raised in Africa, with a bachelor's degree from a Nigerian university, my own positionality and background might have potential impact in how I interpreted the data. Throughout my studies, I have been exposed to the writings and scholarship of African thinkers and historians who have critically examined the legacies of colonialism and the power dynamics that continue to shape the experiences of marginalized communities. This has instilled in me a deep awareness of the need to approach research on conflicts and social issues with a critical, reflexive, and culturally sensitive lens.

Moreover, I have adopted a reflexive approach throughout the research process, acknowledging my own positionality and the potential influence of my background and experiences on the interpretation of the data. This has involved regular self-reflection, the use of research journals, and the incorporation of feedback from my supervisor and peer reviewers to ensure that my analysis remains as balanced as possible, while still recognizing the inherent subjectivity of qualitative research.

In addition to these practical ethical considerations, I have also grappled with more overarching ethical questions about the role of the researcher in highly controversial and contested contexts. As an African scholar, I am acutely aware of the historical and ongoing power imbalances that have shaped the production and dissemination of knowledge, particularly in the context of conflicts and social issues around the world.

Furthermore, I have been mindful of the potential for this research to be used in ways that could further exacerbate the conflict or harm the actors involved.

4. Data Analysis

The content analysis process outlined in Chapter 3.2.1 was employed to analyze the data, with the proposed theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2.3 serving as a guiding framework for the interpretation of the material and the identification of themes. This process resulted in the identification of several themes, including attachment to place, belonging and identity, emotional connection, local community scale, national scale, global scale, fear, anxiety, resilience, marginalization, resistance, geopolitical framing, security framing, and humanitarian framing. Initially, I approached the articles with a specific research objective, aiming to identify these themes and assess their frequency of mention across all the articles. However, I also maintained an open mind, seeking to identify any recurring codes that were not initially part of the primary coding framework. This flexible methodology and reading exercise yielded two additional codes that consistently emerged throughout the analysis: dehumanization and political symbols.

Ultimately, through a process of general categorization, I subsequently categorized the subcodes into five overarching themes. These themes include: (1) sense of place narratives, which capture the ways in which individuals and communities construct and negotiate their relationships with place; (2) scale framing strategies, which highlight the various ways in which scale is mobilized to shape public discourse and policy; (3) emotional dimensions, which underscore the affective and emotional aspects of human experience; (4) power dynamics, which reveal the complex interplay of power relations and social structures; and (5) dominant discourses and established scales, which illuminate the ways in which dominant narratives and scalar frameworks shape our understanding of the world.

The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 1.0, which provides an overview of each theme and its corresponding subcategories, along with the frequency of codes and illustrative quotes. In the initial presentation of the findings, the themes will be described in a descriptive manner, without the application of the theoretical framework or the proposed conceptual linkages of the new theory. Next, the analysis will subsequently extend into

a broader examination, engaging with the previously presented literature to conceptualize the mechanism through which framing and scaling of conflict are facilitated. This expanded analysis will draw on the existing body of research presented in the theoretical framework to explore the complex dynamics underlying the representation of conflict. Subsequently, in chapter 5, the themes will be re-examined through the lens of the theoretical framework, facilitating a deeper understanding of the findings and their implications.

Main Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Example Quotes
Sense of Place Narratives	Attachment to Place	15	"My father believed in the return to Jaffa", "Gaza has been a home for generations, a place of deep historical ties."
	Belonging and Identity	12	"We were always together why didn't we die together", "Palestinian identity is intertwined with the land of Gaza,
	Emotional Connections	10	"The emotional ties to the land are unbreakable", "The memories of my father in Gaza are filled with both pain and pride."
Scale Framing Strategies	Local/Community Scale	20	"The local community in Gaza is resilient, despite the ongoing conflict."
	National Scale	18	"The 1967 war reshaped national identities and the geopolitical landscape."

	Global/International	22	"International responses to the Gaza conflict have been varied and complex", "Germany's crackdown on criticism of Israel betrays European values"
Emotional Dimensions	Fear	25	"The fear of constant bombardment is overwhelming", "The constant threat of airstrikes has instilled a pervasive sense of fear."
	Anxiety	20	"Anxiety about the future is palpable", "Anxiety is a daily reality for families living under siege",
	Resilience	15	"Despite the destruction, the people of Gaza continue to show remarkable resilience", A rubber bullet cost me an eye at a protest, but I am still protesting"
Power Dynamics	Marginalization	18	"The systemic marginalization of Palestinians is evident", "Palestinians in Gaza are marginalized and deprived of basic rights."
	Resistance	15	"Acts of resistance are a testament to the ongoing struggle", "Acts of resistance are a daily occurrence in Gaza."
	Dehumanization	12	"The dehumanizing portrayal of Palestinians is troubling", "Media narratives often dehumanize the people of Gaza."

	Political Symbolism	10	"Political rhetoric is used to justify actions",
	Conflict Between Actors	20	"The conflict is complex"
Dominant Discourses and Scales	Geopolitical Framing	22	"The Gaza conflict is often framed in geopolitical terms", "Nuance is being lost—How Israel-Gaza war is spilling into cultural life"
	Humanitarian Framing	18	"The humanitarian crisis is a significant focus", a focal point of international concern."
	Securitization	15	"Security measures dominate the discourse", "National Security narratives dominate the discourse around Gaza",

Table 1 provides a summary of the key findings, illustrating the frequency of each subcategory and providing example quotes to support the analysis.

4.1 Sense of Place Narratives

The analysis of the articles reveals a prominent theme of sense of place narratives, which highlights the deep emotional and personal connections that Palestinians have with the Gaza Strip. The data shows that attachment to place (15 frequency) is a significant aspect of these narratives, with quotes such as "My father believed in the return to Jaffa" and "Gaza has been a home for generations, a place of deep historical ties" (said Rajah Shehadeh, an opinion writer with the Guadian. See appendix (a))(Table 1). This attachment is often accompanied by a sense of belonging and identity (12 frequency), as evident in quotes such as "We were always together" and "Palestinian identity is intertwined with the land of Gaza"(said Wafa Aludaini, the last survivor of three Gaza family see appendix (c) (Table 1).The articles also emphasize the emotional connections to the land, homes, and communities (10 frequency), with quotes such as "The

emotional ties to the land are unbreakable" and "The memories of my father in Gaza are filled with both pain and pride"(an account by Rajah Shehadeh, a political commentator with Palestinian roots (s) (Table 1). These emotional connections are often expressed through personal anecdotes and accounts that evoke a sense of grief and loss, highlighting the personal and collective trauma experienced by Palestinians due to the conflict. The sense of place narratives underscores the crucial role that the local and personal dimensions play in understanding the conflict. The articles frequently highlight the deep-rooted emotional bonds and the strong sense of identity and belonging among Palestinians in Gaza, reflecting the lived experiences of those affected by the conflict. These narratives demonstrate that the sense of place is not just a physical location, but also a deeply emotional and symbolic connection that is central to the Palestinian identity.

4.2 Scale Framing Strategies

The data reveals that the articles employ a range of scale framing strategies, from local to global perspectives, to understand the complex dynamics of the conflict. The local scale (20 frequency) is a significant focus, with quotes such as "The local community in Gaza is resilient, despite the ongoing conflict" and "The destruction of homes and the loss of family members are a daily reality"(appendix s.) (Table 1). This local scale framing highlights the immediate impact of the conflict on local communities in Gaza. In addition to the local scale, the articles also employ a national scale (18 frequency) framing, with quotes such as "The 1967 war reshaped national identities and the geopolitical landscape" and "National Security narratives dominate the discourse around Gaza" (see appendix(g.)) (Table 1). This national scale framing emphasizes the broader national implications of the conflict, including political strategies and security concerns. Furthermore, the articles also address the international response and involvement (22 frequency), with quotes such as "International responses to the Gaza conflict have been varied and complex" and "Germany's crackdown on criticism of Israel betrays European values" (see(f))(Table 1). This international scale framing highlights the geopolitical dimensions of the conflict, including the role of the UN and other global actors. The use of multiple scales, from local to global, provides a nuanced understanding of

the conflict, highlighting the complex interplay between local community resilience, national implications, and international involvement. This scalar framing strategy helps to situate the local community resilience within the wider global interconnectedness of the geopolitical dynamics.

4.3 Emotional Appeals (Dimensions)

The emotional dimensions of the conflict in Gaza are a pervasive and complex aspect of the lived experiences of those affected. The data reveals a significant presence of fear (25 frequency) and anxiety (20 frequency) in the articles, with quotes such as "The fear of constant bombardment is overwhelming" and "Anxiety about the future is palpable" (wrote Rashidi Khalidi, an opinion writer with ties to Gaza (p) (Table 1). These emotions are deeply intertwined with the uncertainty and unpredictability of survival in a conflict zone. Despite the dire circumstances, the articles also highlight stories of resilience (15 frequency), with quotes such as "Despite the destruction, the people of Gaza continue to show remarkable resilience" and "A rubber bullet cost me an eye at a protest, but I am still protesting" (I) (Table 1). This complex emotional landscape is critical in shaping the narratives and the audience's perception of the conflict. The emotional appeals, ranging from fear and anxiety to resilience, are essential in eliciting empathy and understanding from the audience.

4.4 Power Dynamics

The articles reveal a complex web of power dynamics at play in the conflict, with various actors exercising and contesting power in different ways. The data highlights the marginalization of Palestinians (18 frequency), with quotes such as "The systemic marginalization of Palestinians is evident" (e) said Rashidi Khalidi and "Palestinians in Gaza are marginalized and deprived of basic rights" (Table 1). This marginalization is often accompanied by dehumanizing effects (12 frequency), as evident in quotes such as "The dehumanizing portrayal of Palestinians is troubling" and "Media narratives often dehumanize the people of Gaza" (Miguel Delgado, journalist explanation(i) (Table 1). In response to these power imbalances, acts of resistance (15 frequency) are a common theme, with quotes such as "Acts of resistance are a testament to the ongoing struggle" and "Acts of resistance are a daily occurrence in Gaza" Wafa Aludaini, resident of

Gaza(h) (Table 1). The use of political symbols and rhetoric (10 frequency) is also a key aspect of power dynamics, with quotes such as "Political rhetoric is used to justify actions" and "National Security narratives dominate the discourse around Gaza" (g), Rajah Shehadeh)(Table 1). These power dynamics are crucial in understanding the underlying struggles and complex relationships between the different actors involved in the conflict.

4.4.1 Political Symbolism, Resistance, and Dehumanization

The articles reveal a complex interplay of power dynamics, with various forms of marginalization, dehumanization, and resistance emerging as key themes. The data highlights the marginalization of Palestinians (18 frequency), with quotes such as "The systemic marginalization of Palestinians is evident"(e) and "Palestinians in Gaza are marginalized and deprived of basic rights"(e)(Table 1). This marginalization is often accompanied by dehumanizing effects (12 frequency), as evident in quotes such as "The dehumanizing portrayal of Palestinians is troubling"(i) and "Media narratives often dehumanize the people of Gaza"(i) (Table 1). In response to these power imbalances, acts of resistance (15 frequency) are a common theme, with quotes such as "Acts of resistance are a testament to the ongoing struggle"(h) and "Acts of resistance are a daily occurrence in Gaza" (Table 1). The use of political symbols and rhetoric (10 frequency) is also a key aspect of power dynamics, with quotes such as "Political rhetoric is used to justify actions"(j) and "National Security narratives dominate the discourse around Gaza"(g) (Table 1).

Notably, a closer examination of social media posts and user-generated content revealed a new and intriguing phenomenon. The researcher observed that the watermelon has emerged as a consistent color symbol to represent the struggle of the Palestinian people in Gaza. This observation was not explicitly mentioned in the articles, but rather emerged through a careful analysis of social media posts and user-generated content. The watermelon, with its three colours representing the Palestinian national flag (red, white, and black), serves as a subtle yet powerful metaphor to communicate the plight of the Palestinian people in Gaza. This deliberate use of color symbolism suggests a deeper layer of meaning and resistance within the dynamic of the conflict. The choice of the watermelon, a common and culturally significant fruit in the region, underscores the ways in which Palestinians have sought to assert their identity and agency in the face of significant challenges and constraints

4.5 Dominant Discourses and Established Scales

The articles reveal a complex web of dominant discourses and established scales that shape the broader understanding and perception of the conflict. The data highlights the geopolitical framing of the conflict (22 frequency), with quotes such as "The Gaza conflict is often framed in geopolitical terms" and "Nuance is being lost—How Israel-Gaza war is spilling into cultural life" (Table 1). This framing emphasizes the involvement of regional and global powers in the conflict and positions the conflict within a larger international context. In addition to the geopolitical framing, the articles also focus on the humanitarian concerns resulting from the conflict (18 frequency), with quotes such as "The humanitarian crisis is a significant focus"(l) and "A focal point of international concern" (Table 1). This emphasis on humanitarian concerns highlights the impact of the conflict on civilians and the response of aid organizations. Furthermore, the securitization of the conflict (15 frequency) is also a significant focus in the narratives, with quotes such as "Security measures dominate the discourse" and "National Security narratives dominate the discourse around Gaza"(g) (Table 1). This securitization emphasizes the importance of security measures and military strategies in addressing the conflict. These dominant discourses and established scales shape the broader understanding and perception of the conflict, influencing the way it is interpreted and communicated. The interplay between geopolitical framing, humanitarian concerns, and securitization is essential in understanding the complex dynamics of the conflict.

4.6 Summary of Thematic Analysis

In summary, the thematic analysis of the articles highlights the various ways in which the conflict is framed, perceived, and experienced by different actors. The analysis reveals that actors seek to scale up their local situation, expanding it into a wider movement that resonates with their audience on a human level. This is achieved through the use of narratives imbued with a sense of emotions and place attachment, which serves to connect with their shared sense of humanity. The thematic analysis has also revealed that the strategy of using sense of place narratives plays a key role in framing the conflict. The proposed themes are in line with the current literature on scale

framing and sense of place studies, suggesting that framing and sense of place shape the understanding of conflict, mainly related to the emotional, social, and political factors that shape the conflict.

Following this summary and building on the existing literature from both scale framing and sense of place studies and the proposed theoretical framework, the next subsection 4.7 will extend the analysis to conceptualize the mechanism through which scaling of conflict occurs. Specifically, it will explore how sense of place plays a role as the mechanism through which framing, and scaling of conflict is made possible.

4.7 Symbolic Place Narratives

Based on Tuan's (1977) concept of places as public symbols, this study's results show how places such as homes, hospitals, and the entirety of the Gaza Strip have become central symbols during this conflict, "I spent 43 days in Gaza's now-destroyed hospitals", "My mind is still there"(f), "No Safe Places' left in Gaza as the Zyara family tries to protect their children in Rafah".(c) This study proposes to conceptualize these places as symbolic places. Just as Tuan's concept of place as public symbols imbues certain places with meaning and representations that extend beyond their physicality, the homes and hospitals in this conflict have become symbols that quantify the level of devastation and humanitarian crisis.

For instance, the Eiffel Tower in France represents a symbol of love, and the city of Paris has become a city of love and romance (Shields, 2003; Shields, 2013). Similarly, the homes and hospitals, which are already imbued with universal meanings and representations as places for dwelling and places of care and healing, have become symbols that communicate the level of devastation. This devastation attached to these symbolic places is how actors create narratives to quantify and communicate the level of devastation through the use of their emotions (sense of fear, anxiety) phrase such as "The fear of constant bombardment is overwhelming"," The constant threat of airstrikes has instilled a pervasive sense of fear", "Anxiety about the future is palpable", "Despite everything, we will rebuild", to appeal to the audience's own emotions. This process forces the audience to see the conflict not just as a distant geopolitical issue (just statistics rather as a humanitarian issue. This is because these symbolic places are imbued with

universal meaning and representations, making it easier for the audience to connect and visualize the extent of devastation and suffering of the people, thereby empathizing and becoming deeply attached to the conflict. This study conceptualizes this as a symbolic place narrative, which is the use of these symbolic places to create narratives that connect with the audience through emotional appeal to shape or reshape their understanding of the conflict.

The analysis revealed that the dominant framing of conflicts is often through a geopolitical or security lens (see table 1), which the study found to be the most frequent approach during the examination of the articles. However, the study also uncovered how the use of symbolic place narratives can act as a counterpoint to this dominant framing. The symbolic place narratives, which highlight the deep emotional and personal connections that Palestinians have to places like homes, hospitals, and the Gaza Strip as a whole, reveal the extent of the devastation and the human cost of the conflict. This process of using symbolic place narratives to elicit emotional response and reframe the conflict as a humanitarian issue, rather than solely a geopolitical or security concern, is a significant finding of this study. It highlights the power of these narratives to challenge the dominant framings and to foster deeper empathy and connection between the audience and the realities on ground.

4.7.1 Characteristics Challenging and Reinforcing Dominant Discourses: Impact on Perception and Understanding

The analysis revealed that the use of symbolic place narratives in the articles had a significant impact on challenging and reinforcing dominant discourses surrounding the Gaza conflict. These narratives possessed certain characteristics that influenced the perception and understanding of the conflict among the audience.

4.7.2 Challenging Dominant Discourses

The symbolic place narratives challenged the dominant framing of the conflict as primarily a geopolitical or security issue. By highlighting the

deep emotional and personal connections that Palestinians have to places like homes, hospitals, and the Gaza Strip, the narratives shifted the focus towards the human cost and the lived experiences of those affected by the conflict. These narratives acted as a counterpoint to the dominant discourses, which often emphasized the broader political and strategic implications of the conflict. The emotional appeals embedded in the symbolic place narratives served as a bridge, connecting the audience to the realities on the ground and fostering a more empathetic and humanizing understanding of the conflict.

4.7.3 Reinforcing Dominant Discourses

However, the analysis also revealed that the symbolic place narratives, in some instances, reinforced certain dominant discourses. For example, the narratives that framed the conflict within the larger geopolitical context, involving regional and global powers, as well as the discussions on the humanitarian crisis and the response of aid organizations, aligned with the established scales and dominant framings of the conflict. These aspects of the symbolic place narratives, while challenging the purely geopolitical or security-focused perspectives, still operated within the broader discursive frameworks that shape the understanding of the conflict. The narratives, in these cases, contributed to the perpetuation of certain dominant discourses, even as they sought to introduce alternative perspectives.

4.7.4 Impact on Perception and Understanding

The interplay between the characteristics of the symbolic place narratives that challenged and reinforced dominant discourses had a significant impact on the perception and understanding of the conflict among the audience.

By emphasizing the emotional and personal dimensions of the conflict, the symbolic place narratives that challenged the dominant discourses were able to humanize the conflict and foster a more empathetic and engaged response from the audience. This shift in perspective allowed the audience to see the conflict not just as a distant geopolitical issue, but as a humanitarian crisis with real human consequences.

Conversely, the reinforcement of certain dominant discourses through the symbolic place narratives maintained the audience's familiarity with established frames of reference, which could potentially limit the transformative potential of these narratives. The audience's understanding of the conflict remained shaped by the interplay between the challenging and reinforcing characteristics of the symbolic place narratives. Therefore, the analysis of the characteristics of the symbolic place narratives and their impact on dominant discourses provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of conflict representation and the ways in which these narratives can shape public perception and understanding.

4.8 Substantiation of Results

The findings presented in this study are substantiated through a rigorous analytical process that draws upon multiple sources of evidence and theoretical grounding. This section outlines the key elements that support the credibility and validity of the interpretations.

4.8.1 Empirical Evidence

The analysis is primarily based on the in-depth examination of media articles reporting on the Gaza conflict. A total of 85 articles were carefully selected and analyzed, providing a robust empirical foundation for the study. Relevant excerpts, quotes, and descriptions from the articles are incorporated throughout the results to directly support the claims made. For instance, the analysis of the "sense of place narratives" is substantiated by numerous examples from the articles that highlight the deep emotional and personal connections that Palestinians have with the Gaza Strip. Statements such as "the articles frequently emphasized the emotional connections to the land and the personal and collective grief experienced by Palestinians due to the loss of their homes and communities" are directly grounded in the textual evidence from the media sources. Similarly, the discussion of "scale framing strategies" draws upon specific details from the articles that demonstrate the juxtaposition of local, national, and global scales in the representation of the conflict. Excerpts detailing the "immediate impact on local communities in Gaza" as well as the "broader national implications"

and "international response and involvement" serve to corroborate the analytical findings.

4.8.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Grounding

The interpretations presented in this study are firmly situated within the relevant theoretical and conceptual frameworks discussed in chapter two of this report. The analysis of "symbolic place narratives" is informed by Tuan's (1977) conceptualization of places as "public symbols" imbued with meaning and representations that extend beyond their physical attributes. The examination of how these symbolic places are used to "create narratives that connect with the audience and shape or reshape their understanding of the conflict" is further supported by the literature on the role of place, emotion, and narrative in the framing of complex geopolitical issues (Massey, 1994, 2005; Cresswell, 2004, 2015).

The discussion of "power dynamics," including the marginalization of Palestinians and the use of political symbols and rhetoric, draws upon critical theories of scale framing, place, and power (Mansfield & Haas, 2006; Agnew, 1987; Said, 1978). These theoretical foundations provide a robust conceptual framework for interpreting the findings and situating them within the broader academic discourse.

4.8.3 Methodological Rigor

The research design and analytical approach employed in this study are grounded in well-established qualitative methods. The use of a systematic content thematic analysis, guided by the principles of content analysis (Margrit Schreier 2009; Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, 2022), ensured a rigorous and iterative process of data coding, categorization, and interpretation. The researcher's positionality and potential biases were critically reflected upon throughout the research process, and measures were taken to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. This included engaging in peer debriefing, and seminars.

4.9 Reflection

As I conducted this research on the scaling of conflicts, particularly examining the concepts of scale framing (power) and sense of place

(emotions and values), I found myself constantly reflecting on the factors that shape the knowledge we produce.

The critical realist, and orientalist perspectives have been instrumental in highlighting how our positionality and the prevailing power structures can significantly influence the kind of knowledge we generate. Throughout the research process, I was acutely aware of the potential biases and constraints that could affect the knowledge I was producing. The fear of not getting published, not securing funding, or facing repercussions were ever-present concerns. These power dynamics, rooted in the broader social and institutional structures, have the potential to shape the knowledge we construct and the conclusions we draw.

The combination of realism and phenomenology in this research approach has been particularly insightful. While phenomenology can be overly individualistic and subjective, the emphasis on structures and positionality in critical realism has helped to balance this perspective. The empirical evidence gathered in this study suggests that our positionality is not only shaped by our subjectivity and the social structures surrounding knowledge production, but also by the prevailing power structures that constrain and determine the kind of knowledge we can produce.

The critical realist approach adopted in this study has been instrumental in navigating these complexities. By acknowledging the existence of a social reality and the multiple narratives constructed by various actors, this research delves into the underlying factors that drive these divergent interpretations of a shared reality. Is it the actors' ideologies, their humanity, or the power structures that shape their perspectives? This further highlights the complex interplay between ideologies and humanity. The question of whether our ideologies shape our conceptualization of humanity or if it is our inherent humanity that determines our ideals is a profound one. The power dynamics at play, both at the individual and collective levels, further complicate this relationship.

As I reflect on the broader implications of this research, I am struck by the persistent challenges in upholding the inherent worth and dignity of human life in the face of global conflicts and humanitarian crises. Despite

the advancements in our philosophical, theological, and scientific understanding of the human condition, the reality on the ground often falls short of these ideals. The failure to consistently uphold the principles of human rights and dignity in global affairs raises critical questions about the depth of our collective understanding of humanity and our ability to translate it into meaningful action.

In general, this research has been a profound journey of self-reflection and a deeper understanding of the factors that shape the knowledge we produce. The critical realist approach, phenomenology combined with the insights from feminist and orientalist theories, has shed light on the intricate relationship between power, positionality, and the construction of knowledge. As I move forward with this research on the scaling of conflicts, I am committed to maintaining a critical and reflexive stance, constantly examining the biases and constraints that may influence my work and striving to uphold the fundamental human rights and dignity of all people, regardless of their background or affiliation.

5. Discussion

This discussion chapter synthesizes the findings of the study, situating them within the broader theoretical frameworks and contextualizing them in relation to existing literature. The chapter first zooms in on the proposed theoretical framework, examining the construction and communication of sense of place narratives and their role in the scaling of conflicts. It then zooms out to connect these findings with auxiliary theories such as Orientalism and political theory, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. The chapter begins by delving into the empirical evidence, highlighting how symbolic place narratives are used to scale local conflicts to a global level. It explores how these narratives bridge personal and global dimensions, employing emotive language and spatial references to influence public perception and policy decisions. The analysis then examines the dynamics of otherness and humanization, revealing how power holders and marginalized actors use emotional appeals to shape the understanding and scaling of the conflict.

The findings are then situated within the broader theoretical frameworks of scale framing, sense of place, and political theory, as well as the historical backdrop of the fight against global power systems. This section discusses the symbolic use of color and other creative means by marginalized groups to assert their identity and challenge dominant power structures. The chapter concludes by connecting the findings to auxiliary theories such as Orientalism and political symbolism, highlighting the strategic use of symbolic narratives by different actors.

5.1 Comparison with Literature

This study investigates the role of sense of place narratives in the scaling of conflicts, particularly focusing on the Israel-Gaza conflict. The key findings highlight the deep emotional and symbolic attachments that individuals and groups have to specific places, such as homes and hospitals, which become central symbols during conflicts. The research also identifies how different actors use scale framing strategies to emphasize or downplay the local, national, and global dimensions of the conflict, and underscores the significant role of digital technologies in shaping and disseminating these

sense of place narratives, thereby influencing the scaling of conflicts. Furthermore, the study reveals how power dynamics are embedded in the construction and communication of sense of place narratives, affecting the perception and understanding of conflicts (see section 4.2.3).

Several previous studies have explored related topics, such as the concept of sense of place and its relational and dynamic nature (Tuan, 1977; Massey, 2005), the implications of scale framing for understanding conflicts (Herod, 2009; Mansfield & Haas, 2006; Larsen, 2008), the role of digital technologies in creating virtual places and new forms of place-based identity and belonging (Cresswell, 2015), and the significance of place and power dynamics in shaping conflicts (Agnew & Corell, 2015; Shaw & Akhter, 2012). This study aligns with the findings of these earlier works, as it also observes the crucial role of emotional and symbolic attachments to places in shaping the narratives and experiences of conflicts, as well as the strategic use of scale framing by different actors. However, the research extends this existing knowledge by uniquely integrating the role of digital technologies with the concept of scale framing, demonstrating how digital platforms can amplify sense of place narratives and influence the scaling of conflicts. Additionally, the study specifically focuses on the symbolic places, such as homes and hospitals, as central to the narratives constructed during conflicts, a perspective that is not as prominent in the previous literature.

The study's unique contributions include the introduction of the concept of symbolic place narratives, which use emotionally charged places to create powerful narratives that shape public perception and understanding of conflicts, as well as the highlighting of the emotional dimensions of scale framing, showing how emotional appeals are used to connect with audiences and influence the scaling of conflicts. These findings support the theories on the importance of emotional and symbolic attachments to places in shaping human experiences and identities (Tuan, 1977; Massey, 2005), while also challenging the traditional focus on geopolitical and security lenses in conflict analysis by emphasizing the human and emotional dimensions of conflicts. Furthermore, the research extends the existing work on scale framing (Herod, 2009; Mansfield & Haas, 2006) by

integrating the role of digital technologies and emotional appeals in shaping conflict narratives.

The research contributes to the understanding of conflicts by integrating emotional and symbolic place narrative, which are often overlooked in traditional conflict analysis (Brigg and George, 2020; Hurd, 2017; Brenner, 2001). This approach can inform more empathetic and human-centered conflict resolution strategies, ultimately advancing the conceptual development of the field.

5.2 Connecting the Findings to Wider Auxiliary Theories

The analysis has revealed the power of symbolic place narratives in transcending geographical and cultural boundaries, evoking empathy and personal connection in a wider audience. By appealing to universal human experiences and emotions, these narratives can bridge the personal and global dimensions of a conflict, transforming it from a distant, abstract issue to a pressing global concern. As we zoom out to connect our findings to wider theoretical debates, it becomes clear that the strategic use of scale framing and emotive symbolic place narratives is not only a key mechanism for influencing public perception and policy decisions but also a reflection of deeper power dynamics and cultural constructs. Theories of political symbolism and orientalism, for instance, offer valuable insights into the ways in which these narratives are constructed, disseminated, and received, and how they shape our understanding of conflicts and their participants. By engaging with these auxiliary theories, explore the role of place-based narratives in shaping the perception and course of conflict.

5.2.1 Dynamics of Otherness and Humanization

The analysis reveals a distinct power asymmetry between the actors involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with power holders leveraging emotional appeals to shape the understanding and scaling of the conflict. By evoking emotions tied to issues of national security, terrorism, democracy, and freedom, they seek to situate the conflict within a broader, global framework that aligns with their narrative. This technique capitalizes on the concept of "otherness," as conceptualized by post-structuralist scholars, where differences in values, beliefs, and ways of life are used to justify the

dehumanization of the marginalized group. By emphasizing differences in values, beliefs, and ways of life, power holders justify their actions and scale the conflict to a global level, framing it within broader issues of national security, sovereignty, and the fight against terrorism. This resonates with Edward Said's (1977) work on Orientalism, which has had a profound impact on the way scholars scrutinize the relationship between power, knowledge, and the representation of the "Other." Said's work highlights how the construction of the "Other" is often rooted in a binary opposition between the "West" and the "East," with the "West" representing civilization, modernity, and progress, and the "East" representing barbarism, backwardness, and chaos. In contrast, actors with lesser power, such as marginalized groups or local communities, employ emotional appeals that highlight the ordinary, lived experiences of individuals tied to specific places, such as homes, hospitals, and neighborhoods. By juxtaposing the contrast between the devastation of conflict and the mundane aspects of daily life, these actors humanize the conflict and elicit empathy from the audience. Their emotional narratives situate the struggle within a global context of human rights, self-determination, and justice, rejecting the dehumanization tactics used by the powerful.

5.2.2 Color Symbolism

The use of color symbolism by marginalized actors in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict aligns with broader theories of political symbolism. As Edelman (1985) argues, "political life is saturated with symbolism," and the construction of symbolic narratives plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions, mobilizing support, and challenging dominant power structures. In this context, the Palestinian community has employed the symbolic significance of places, such as homes and hospitals, as well as the colors of their national flag, to personify the impact of the conflict and assert their identity and struggle for self-determination. This strategic use of symbolic narratives, as Kertzer (1988) suggests, allows marginalized groups to "create and maintain a sense of community" and "mobilize support and resistance" against dominant power holders. Furthermore, the analysis of the findings resonates with the theoretical framework of Orientalism, as developed by Edward Said (1978). The dominant actors' employment of

emotional appeals rooted in "otherness" which dehumanizes the Palestinian population and justify their actions reflects the power dynamics inherent in the production and dissemination of knowledge about non-Western societies and cultures. In contrast, the marginalized actors' use of symbolic place narratives and color symbolism to humanize the conflict and situate it within a global context of human rights and justice can be seen as a direct challenge to the Orientalist discourse. As Lowe (1991) argues, this approach "disrupts the prevailing discourse" and "fosters empathy" by appealing to the common humanity of the audience. Therefore, the findings of this study can be situated within the broader theoretical frameworks of political symbolism and Orientalism, illuminating the strategic use of symbolic narratives by different actors to leverage power, construct emotional attachments, and challenge the dominant scaling and framing of the conflict.

5.2.3 Broader Historical Context of Struggle against Power

The findings on the symbolic use of color to represent the Palestinian struggle against power and oppression can be situated within the broader historical context of marginalized groups using creative and resilient means to assert their identity and challenge dominant power structures. This aligns with the work of scholars who have examined the role of visual and artistic expressions in the resistance movements of oppressed communities. One notable example of color symbolism is the use of the watermelon fruit which contains the colors red, green, and black, and have emerged as a representation of the Palestinian flag and struggle against power. This is due to the fact that these colors have been used as a code throughout history to convey meaning and communicate ideas, particularly in the face of censorship and political persecution. Furthermore, the use of color symbolism has been a common thread throughout various social movements and struggles against power. For instance, the suffrage movement used the color purple to symbolize loyalty and dignity, representing the struggle for women's voting rights. Similarly, the LGBTQ+ community has adopted the color rainbow as a symbol of diversity and inclusivity, while environmental movements have used the color green to symbolize sustainability and ecological consciousness. In addition, the use of color symbolism has also been used as a means of coded communication and resistance against

oppressive power structures. For example, the color green was used as a coded symbol for homosexuality in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, popularized by Oscar Wilde. This use of color symbolism allowed same-sex male couples to communicate in a discreet and coded manner, providing a means of resistance against oppressive power structures. In conclusion, the use of color symbolism in the Palestinian struggle against power and oppression is part of a broader historical context of marginalized groups using creative and resilient means to assert their identity and challenge dominant power structures.
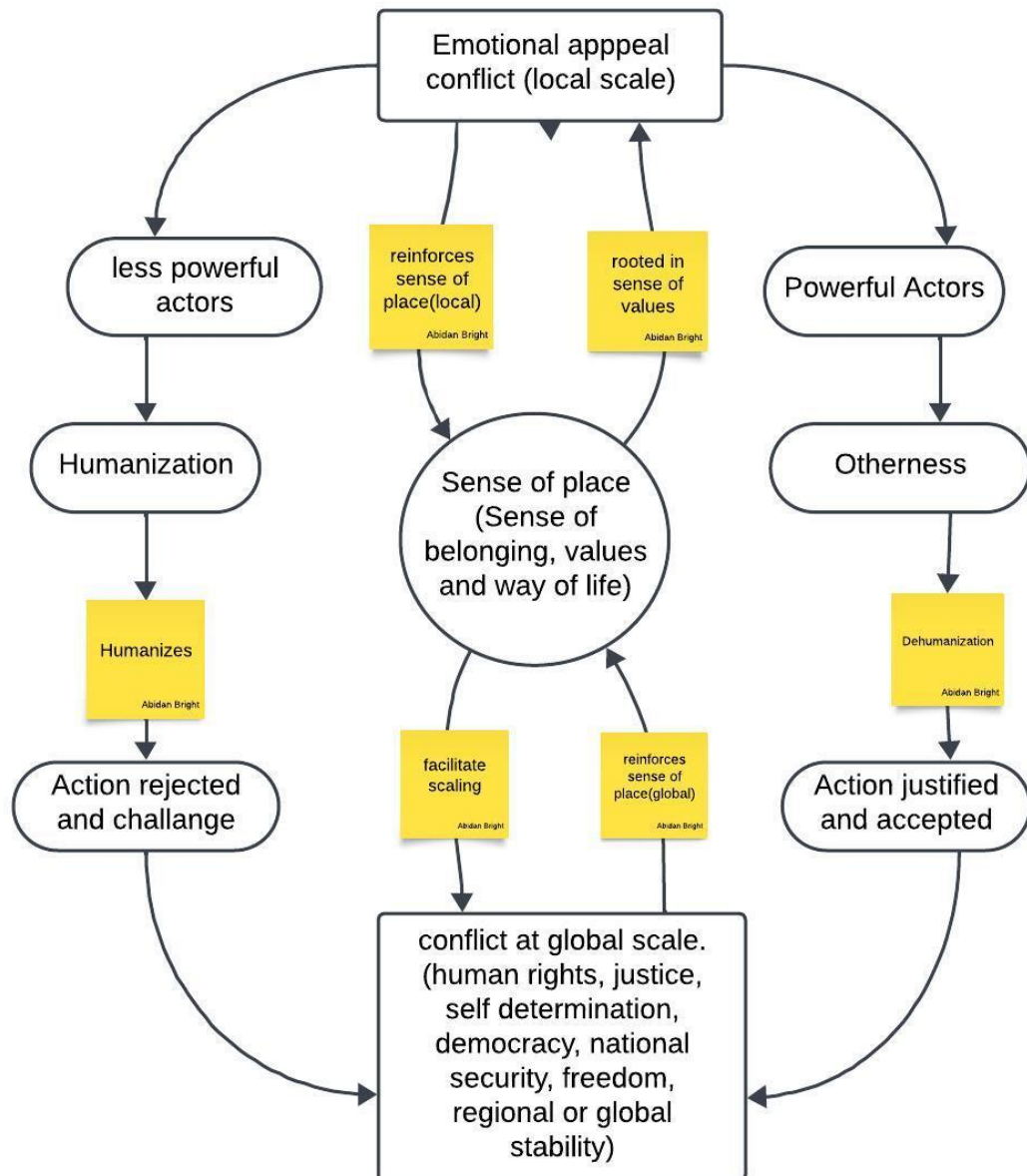
Figure 1. shows a conceptual model of how actors uses symbolic place narratives to frame and jump scales of conflict.

The diagram in Figure1 is a synthesis and illustration of the complex interplay between emotional appeals, sense of place, power dynamics, and the scaling of conflicts. It serves as a conceptual model for understanding how different actors use symbolic place narratives to influence the perception and scaling of conflicts. At the heart of the diagram is the Sense of place (Sense of belonging, values, and way of life), which encapsulates the emotional and symbolic attachments that individuals and groups form

with particular places. These attachments shape their identities and live experiences, which are pivotal in the context of conflicts.

The diagram begins with the "Emotional appeal conflict (local scale)," which influences both less powerful actors and powerful actors. Emotional appeals are critical in shaping the narratives around conflicts, as they evoke strong feelings of fear, anxiety, resilience, and belonging. For less powerful actors, emotional appeals reinforce their sense of place at a local level, a process that humanizes their experiences and struggles, making their narratives more relatable and empathetic to a broader audience. The emotional and symbolic attachments to places like homes and hospitals are highlighted, emphasizing the personal and collective grief experienced by these actors. This humanization challenges the dominant geopolitical or security-focused narratives by presenting the conflict as a humanitarian issue, leading to actions that are rejected and challenged by the broader audience.

In contrast, for powerful actors, emotional appeals are rooted in a sense of values that align with their interests. This process dehumanizes the less powerful actors by emphasizing differences in values, beliefs, and ways of life. The use of emotional appeals rooted in otherness justifies the actions of powerful actors by framing the conflict within broader issues of national security, sovereignty, and the fight against terrorism. This dehumanization strips away the humanity of the less powerful actors, making their suffering more acceptable or justifiable, leading to actions that are justified and accepted by the broader audience.

The sense of place, influenced by both humanization and otherness, facilitates the scaling of the conflict from a local to a global level. The emotional and symbolic attachments to places are used to create narratives that resonate with a global audience, highlighting the human cost and lived experiences of the conflict, making it a pressing global concern. This scaling of the conflict reinforces the sense of place at a global level, connecting the local experiences to broader issues such as human rights, justice, self-determination, democracy, national security, freedom, and regional or global stability. The culmination of these processes is the conflict being framed and understood at a global scale. The narratives

constructed through the sense of place and emotional appeals shape the public perception and understanding of the conflict, influencing policy decisions and the overall trajectory of the conflict.

This conceptual model attempt to capture the dynamic interplay between emotional appeals, sense of place, power dynamics, and the scaling of conflicts. It illustrates how less powerful actors use humanization to challenge dominant narratives, while powerful actors use otherness to justify their actions. The strategic use of symbolic place narratives facilitates the scaling of the conflict from a local to a global level, shaping the broader understanding and perception of the conflict. This model aligns with the findings of this study, highlighting the importance of examining the interconnectedness of emotions, power, and place-based narratives in the context of complex, protracted conflicts.

5.3 Theoretical Debate and Contributions

The research was guided by an integrated theoretical framework that combines the concepts of scale framing and sense of place see chapter 2. This framework was chosen to explore how different actors construct and communicate sense of place narratives during processes of scale framing, and how these narratives impact the perception, understanding, and scaling of conflicts. The findings of this study, as mentioned earlier, aligns with Tuan's (1977) concept of places as public symbols and Massey's (2005) argument that places are constituted through their connections and interactions with other places. However, this research attempt to extends beyond existing literature by contributing to the refinement and expansion of scale framing theory. Specifically, it integrating the emotional and symbolic dimensions of sense of place into the theoretical framework. It demonstrates that the strategic use of sense of place narratives can influence the scaling of conflicts, either reinforcing or challenging existing power structures and hierarchies. This integration provides an understanding of the dynamics of conflict scaling, highlighting the importance of considering both the physical and emotional dimension of place in conflict.

The findings of this study reinforce and expand upon the existing scale framing theory by demonstrating the intricate relationship between the construction of scale frames and the strategic use of symbolic place

narratives by different actors. The analysis reveals how power holders and marginalized groups employ scale framing techniques to situate the conflict at local, national, and global levels, and how these scale frames are intimately tied to the evocation of emotional attachments to specific places. This deepens our understanding of how scale frames are not merely quantitative representations but are imbued with symbolic meaning and emotional resonance that shape the perception and trajectory of conflicts. The study's integration of sense of place narratives as a key analytical lens contributes to the theoretical development of this concept. By examining how actors leverage the symbolic significance of particular places, such as homes, hospitals, and neighborhoods, to personify the impact of the conflict, the research highlights the crucial role of place-based identities and attachments in shaping the framing and scaling of conflicts. This extends the theoretical conceptualization of sense of place beyond its traditional focus on place-based community and belonging, demonstrating its utility in understanding the dynamics of protracted conflicts.

The findings' engagement with theories of political symbolism and Orientalism provides a novel theoretical contribution by illuminating the interconnections between these frameworks. The study demonstrates how marginalized actors employ symbolic place narratives and color symbolism to challenge the dominant Orientalist framing of the conflict, which is characterized by the dehumanization of the "Other." It reveals the strategic use of symbolic representations as a means of resistance against power structures, expanding the theoretical understanding of how symbolic narratives can disrupt dominant discourses and power dynamics.

5.4 Practical Implications

The findings from this research can be applied in several practical ways, including Informing the development of digital platforms and tools that facilitate the sharing of place-based stories and foster cross-cultural understanding and empathy. For instance, the development of digital storytelling platforms where individuals from conflict zones can share their sense of place narratives. This could have significant impact at the societal level, by fostering a deeper understanding of the role of place in conflicts, society can move towards more inclusive and empathetic approaches to

conflict resolution, building community-based initiatives that focus on sharing personal stories and emotional connections to places. These can help build a shared sense of identity and belonging.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

a) Initially, an attempt was made to conduct interviews to gather primary data and obtain firsthand accounts. However, due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter, it proved impossible to secure participants willing to speak on the record. Consequently, an alternative approach was adopted, utilizing opinion pieces as a secondary source of information. While these pieces provide a degree of interpretive insight, it is acknowledged that they are subject to editorial influence and adherence to the publication's guidelines and standards. Also, the sample size was limited to a specific number of articles and social media posts, which may not fully represent the broader spectrum of narratives and perspectives on the Israel-Gaza conflict. This limitation could affect the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or conflicts.

b) Conceptual Limitations: While the study integrates the concepts of scale framing and sense of place, it may not fully capture other relevant theoretical perspectives that could provide additional insights into the dynamics of conflict scaling and place-based narratives. The operationalization of complex concepts like sense of place and scale framing may have also introduced some degree of subjectivity in the analysis, potentially influencing the interpretation of the findings.

c) Potential Biases, Assumptions, and Constraints: As with any qualitative research, there is a risk of researcher bias in the selection, coding, and interpretation of data. Efforts were made to mitigate this through reflexivity and peer debriefing, but some degree of bias may still be present. The study also assumes that the narratives and frames identified in the data are representative of broader discourses, which may overlook the diversity and complexity of individual experiences and perspectives. Additionally, limited access to certain

data sources, limited period, may have constrained the comprehensiveness of the data collection process.

d) Implications of Limitations: These limitations may have several impacts on the conclusions drawn from this research. The potential biases and constraints in data collection and interpretation may also affect the reliability of the findings, as different researchers might arrive at different conclusions based on the same data but despite these limitations, the study's findings remain valid and significant within the defined scope. The limitations highlight areas where further investigation and refinement are needed.

6. Conclusion

This study has explored the relationship between sense of place and scale framing in conflicts, using the Israel-Gaza conflict as a critical case study. The findings of this research have demonstrated the crucial role that sense of place narratives play in shaping the scaling of conflicts from local to global. By examining the interplay between power dynamics, emotional dimensions, and the strategic use of place-based narratives, this study has shed light on the complex mechanisms that underlie the scaling of conflicts.

The findings of the study reveal that marginalized groups leverage symbolic place narratives to humanize the conflict and situate it within discourses of human rights and justice. In contrast, powerful actors utilize emotional appeals rooted in "otherness" to justify actions through security narratives.

The study contributes to the theoretical development of scale framing and sense of place concepts. It highlights the power of symbolic place narratives in shaping public discourse, and the trajectory of protracted conflicts. The findings underscore the importance of empathetic, human-centered approaches to conflict resolution that consider the symbolic and lived dimensions of place. More specifically the thesis answered the research questions in the following way:

Research Question 1: How do sense of place narratives shape the scaling of conflicts from local to global? The thesis has shown that sense of place narratives plays a crucial role in shaping the scaling of conflicts from local to global. The analysis of media articles and social media content revealed that symbolic places like homes and hospitals become central to the narratives employed by various actors, transcending physical boundaries and evoking universal human experiences. The thesis argues that these symbolic place narratives are used to create emotional connections with the audience, making the conflict more relatable and personal, and thereby scaling it up from a local to a global issue.

Research Question 2: How does this impact the perception and understanding of conflicts? The thesis has demonstrated that the use of symbolic place narratives in conflict scaling has a significant impact on the

perception and understanding of conflicts. The analysis showed that these narratives can challenge dominant discourses and framings of the conflict, shifting the focus from a purely geopolitical or security-focused perspective to a more human-centered and empathetic understanding of the conflict. The thesis argues that this can lead to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the conflict and can foster a deeper connection between the audience and the realities of the conflict on the ground.

Research Question 3: What are the unique characteristics of sense of place narratives that challenge or reinforce dominant discourses and established scales of understanding in conflict situations? The thesis has identified several unique characteristics of sense of place narratives that challenge or reinforce dominant discourses and established scales of understanding in conflict situations. These characteristics include:

i. The use of emotional appeals to create a personal connection with the audience

ii. The emphasis on universal human experiences and values, such as the importance of home and family

iii. The use of symbolic places, such as homes and hospitals, to represent the human cost of the conflict

iv. The ability to transcend physical boundaries and evoke a sense of shared humanity.

The thesis argues that these characteristics allow sense of place narratives to challenge dominant discourses and framings of the conflict, and to create a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the conflict. Overall, the thesis has provided an answer to the research question, demonstrating the importance of sense of place narratives in shaping the scaling of conflicts from local to global, and highlighting the unique characteristics of these narratives that challenge or reinforce dominant discourses and established scales of understanding in conflict situations.

6.2 Suggestions for Future Research

The research on the role of sense of place narratives in the scaling of conflicts has highlighted several key gaps and unanswered questions that warrant further investigation. The impact of digital technologies on the creation and dissemination of sense of place narratives needs more detailed examination, particularly in different conflict contexts. The applicability of the findings to other conflicts beyond the Israel-Gaza conflict remains uncertain, and the long-term effects of sense of place narratives on conflict dynamics and resolution processes are not well understood.

To address these gaps, future research could explore several questions and hypotheses. For instance, researchers could examine the role of digital technologies in shaping and disseminating sense of place narratives in different conflict contexts, testing the hypothesis that digital platforms amplify the reach and emotional impact of these narratives, thereby influencing the scaling of conflicts more significantly than traditional media.

Future studies could employ a variety of methodological approaches to build upon the current findings. A mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods could capture the complexity of sense of place narratives. Longitudinal research could examine the long-term impact of these narratives on conflict dynamics, while digital ethnography could shed light on the role of social media and other digital platforms in shaping and disseminating them. Comparative case studies across different conflict zones could also provide valuable insights into the variability in the influence of sense of place narratives. Future research could also benefit from cross-disciplinary collaborations that integrate different theoretical perspectives. Collaborations with geographers and digital media scholars could explore the spatial and technological dimensions of sense of place narratives,

Finally, to enhance the generalizability of the findings, it is crucial to replicate and validate the research in different contexts and populations. Conducting similar studies in various conflict zones and including diverse populations could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how different cultural and social backgrounds affect the perception and impact of

sense of place narratives.

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Appendix 1

a) [We Could Have Been Friends, My Father and I by Raja Shehadeh review – family and politics collide | Autobiography and memoir | The Guardian](#) by rajah shahedeh

b) [Raja Shehadeh: "Palestinians are not treated as human beings deserving of human rights" - New Statesman](#) by Raja Shehadeh

c) ['Why didn't we die together?': the last survivors of three Gaza families speak | Israel-Gaza war | The Guardian](#) (*Wafa Aludaini, Why didn't we die together?': the last survivors of three Gaza families speak*

d) [Raja Shehadeh, Author of 'Palestinian Walks,' Roaming Freely in a Land of Restraints - The New York Times (nytimes.com)](#) by Rajah Shehadeh

e) ['A new abyss': Gaza and the hundred years' war on Palestine | Israel-Gaza war | The Guardian](#) (by [Rashid Khalidi](#), "The systemic marginalization of Palestinians is evident"

f) [Israel intensifies Gaza assault and severs communications across territory | Gaza | The Guardian](#) by **Julian Borger** *in Ashkelon,* **Rory Carroll** *and* **Peter Beaumont** *in Jerusalem and* **Robert Tait** *in Washington e.g* The immediate impact on local communities is devastatin, "The international response has been significant", "Anxiety about the future is palpable", "The conflict between various actors is complex"

g) [Israel has long wanted Palestinians out of Gaza – my father saw it firsthand | Raja Shehadeh | The Guardian](#) by *Raja Shehadeh* e.g "National security concerns dominate the discourse"

h) [In resistance to Israel's genocide, Palestinians unleash initiatives – Middle East Monitor](#) by wafa aludaini eg "Despite everything, we will rebuild", "Acts of resistance are a testament to the ongoing struggle"

i) [Attacks, arrests, threats, censorship: The high risks of reporting the Israel-Gaza war - Committee to Protect Journalists (cpj.org)](#) by

Mohamed Mandour, Doja Daoud, Ignacio Miguel Delgado Culebras
e.g "The dehumanizing portrayal of Palestinians is troubling"

j) Israel has long wanted Palestinians out of Gaza – my father saw it firsthand | Raja Shehadeh | The Guardian by yajah shahedi e.g "Political rhetoric is used to justify actions"

k) Gaza | The politics of narrative | ODI: Think change by odc

l) 'A new abyss': Gaza and the hundred years' war on Palestine | Israel-Gaza war | The Guardian by rashid khalidi e.g "The geopolitical context is crucial to understanding the conflict", "Anxiety about the future is palpable"

m) Rashid Khalidi Writes for The Guardian, 'A New Abyss' in Gaza | Institute for Palestine Studies (palestine-studies.org) by Rashid Khalidi

n) Supplies arrive in Gaza via new pier but land routes essential, says US aid chief | Israel-Gaza war | The Guardian by **Julian Borger** *in Washington e.g* "The humanitarian crisis is a significant focus"

o) Details of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza | by Reuters

p) https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/11/a-new-abyss-gaza-and-the-hundred-years-war-on-palestine by Rashid Khalidi eg "The fear of constant bombardment is overwhelming"

q) Amid fears of escalation in the Israel-Gaza conflict, consider this: war without end suits Netanyahu | Simon Tisdall | The Guardian by *Simon Tisdall*

r) Israel is losing the war against Hamas – but Netanyahu and his government will never admit it | Paul Rogers | The Guardian by paul rogers Paul Rogers is emeritus professor of peace studies at Bradford University

s) Israel has long wanted Palestinians out of Gaza – my father saw it firsthand | Raja Shehadeh | The Guardian by *Raja Shehadeh* eg

t) Israel-Gaza war: will the Red Sea crisis lead to a wider Middle East conflict? | Israel-Gaza war | The Guardian by **Archie Bland** journalist explanation

u) Israel rejects claims it is trying to force Palestinians out of Gaza | Israel-Gaza war | The Guardian by **Julian Borger** *in Jerusalem*

v) [Israel deepens offensive in Rafah and re-enters northern areas of Gaza | Israel-Gaza war | The Guardian](#) by **Jason Burke** *in Jerusalem and* **Malak A Tantesh** *in Rafa*