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CULTURE

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Report of the Independent Expert Group on

Culture for Peace

2025

The present report was prepared by an Independent Expert Group convened by UNESCO to gather views and ideas on culture for peace. In recognition of the central role of knowledge and ideas in transformation, this initiative reflects UNESCO's role as a laboratory of ideas. By generating novel insights, the document aims to contribute – among other sources – to the discussions at MONDIACULT 2025. Unless otherwise expressly stated, the findings, interpretations and conclusions contained herein are those of the independent experts who prepared the document and do not necessarily represent the views of UNESCO, its Member States, or any institution, nor do they commit the Organization in any way.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Culture is increasingly recognized as a powerful enabler of peace, not merely as a complement to established approaches but as a dynamic and evolving force that reshapes how peace is understood, lived and sustained. Prepared by the **Independent Expert Group on Culture for Peace (C4P)** convened by UNESCO, this report explores **how culture can be harnessed to advance just, inclusive and sustainable peace.**

Section I of the report provides an **INTRODUCTION**, setting the context and building upon MONDIACULT 2022's affirmation of culture's role in sustainable development and peace. It lays out the foundation for the document, emphasizing **peace as both an outcome and a process**, co-created across communities, institutions and generations - thus situating culture not at the margins of peacebuilding but at its core.

The **CULTURE FOR PEACE MOSAIC (C4P MOSAIC)** is introduced in Section II as a conceptual proposal, developed by the C4P Independent Expert Group to conceptualize how culture contributes to peace through an evolving mix of practices and approaches. It draws attention to the interwoven roles of **peace, justice, arts and culture, pedagogy, youth agency and digital innovation.** The C4P Mosaic captures the diverse and interrelated ways culture contributes to peace formation and opens space for plural and context-sensitive pathways to peace, challenging top-down strategies and encouraging reflection on how peace can be imagined, enacted and sustained at multiple scales - from local, everyday initiatives to broader transnational solidarities. Above all, the C4P Mosaic affirms that peace is not static but a **living process**, deeply connected with culture's capacity to bridge divides, rebuild trust and nurture futures grounded in justice.

Section III maps a range of **CULTURAL PATHWAYS TO PEACE** through a series of **VIGNETTES** - examples that bring the C4P Mosaic to life - presented across several thematic streams: cultural heritage and memory; creative expression and oral traditions; digital participation and documentation; education, pedagogy and intergenerational mediation; transnational solidarity; cultural diplomacy and peacebuilding; and advocacy, recognition, resistance and repair. A diagnostic reflection across these streams highlights that cultural peacebuilding is possible not by being universally replicable, but by being **deeply attuned to context.** This makes cultural initiatives both vulnerable to fragmentation and resource constraints, and powerful in restoring cohesion, empowering marginalized voices, and reshaping justice and belonging.

Section IV focuses on **YOUTH PERSPECTIVES**, emphasizing that while young people are recognized as agents of change, their contributions are often limited by surface-level inclusion and restricted evaluation measures. Youth engagement in cultural peacebuilding must move beyond symbolic inclusion to genuine partnership and leadership, recognizing the diverse forms of participation young

people are already pioneering. The report calls for institutions to think, engage and act differently with youth, ensuring acknowledgement not only as beneficiaries but as **co-creators of peace**.

Culture for peace offers both promise and limitations, as detailed in Section V on **OPPORTUNITIES, ASSUMPTIONS, CHALLENGES AND RISKS**. Key **opportunities** and assumptions for leveraging culture in peacebuilding are identified, including the centring of local approaches and marginalized groups; promoting intergenerational and intercultural dialogue; developing and strengthening collaboration and partnerships; embracing innovation for conflict transformation; and fostering recovery and resilience through cultural memory. On the other side, several **challenges** and risks are explored, evidencing sustainable and measurable impact; effective integration of new technologies; ethics and trust; power dynamics and instrumentalization; and the exploitation of heritage and loss of cultural diversity.

These inputs - along with the interwoven nature of opportunities, assumptions, challenges and risks - reinforce the need for **context-sensitive, ethical and community-driven approaches** to culture for peace.

Section VI provides **INSIGHTS FOR ACTION**, designed to inspire the operationalization of the C4P Mosaic in diverse contexts and centred around the following **core principles**:

- **Inclusion** - Placing marginalized voices at the centre.
- **Dialogue** - Fostering intercultural and intergenerational learning.
- **Solidarity** - Building ethical and sustainable partnerships.
- **Innovation** - Embracing complexity and responsible technology use.
- **Recovery** - Sustaining memory and cultural practices for healing.

Striving to **turn risk into resilience**, suggested policy responses are provided to encourage the translation of complex challenges into strategies for harnessing culture for peace. Several key **policy considerations** flowing from the C4P Mosaic are provided to inspire and support stakeholders seeking to leverage culture as a pathway to peace: supporting creative and cultural engagement to drive social transformation; developing critical peace pedagogy; engaging young people as agents of change; using digital innovation as a tool for sharing peace knowledge and practices; and fostering multi-level cooperation.

The **mobilization of diverse cultural stakeholders** is also emphasized, underscoring the roles that a range of stakeholders can play in advancing culture as a driver of peace. This includes alignment with ethical standards, upholding equitable and sustainable practices and embedding cultural peacebuilding into policies, laws and peace strategies, where applicable.

When diverse stakeholders come together in dialogue, solidarity and shared responsibility, we lay the foundations for embracing the full potential of culture as a force for peace. This report affirms that culture is not peripheral to peace but rather central to its formation and sustainability. Highlighting the imperative of harnessing culture for peace, it emphasizes **peace as a living and evolving process, where culture enables the imagination and enactment of just, inclusive futures**.

I. INTRODUCTION

A

Background

The World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development - MONDIACULT 2022 - recognized **culture as a powerful force for sustainable development, peace and stability**. It emphasized the importance of protecting and promoting culture 'to sustain cultural diversity and pluralism, the respect of which constitutes, today more than ever, a ferment of peace and a force for creativity and innovation to build a more sustainable world' (UNESCO, 2022a, p. 3), and reaffirmed 'the power of culture to renew and broaden bilateral and multilateral cooperation, promote multilingualism and a culture of peace' (UNESCO, 2022a, p. 1).

This resulted in the adoption of the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration,¹ in which over 150 Ministers of Culture of UNESCO Member States mandated the Director-General to coordinate, strengthen and develop instruments and mechanisms for the integrated analysis, monitoring and measurement of culture and to develop conceptual studies on the impact of culture in all its dimensions. Considering this mandate, the World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development - MONDIACULT 2025 - was convened by UNESCO to take place from 29 September to 1 October 2025 in Barcelona, Spain.

In light of this, the present report has been prepared by an **Independent Expert Group on Culture for Peace (C4P)**, to contribute to the

MONDIACULT 2025 conversation, aiming to inform, among other sources, current and future dialogues among Member States, Associate Members and all cultural stakeholders, and contribute to the promotion of culture for peace. In particular, the document provides insights to further refine their approaches and nurture policies towards linking culture, in all its forms, and peace by contributing to ongoing discourse on **how culture can serve as an effective enabler for peace**. It provides up-to-date information, considers key opportunities, assumptions, challenges and risks, and sets out policy insights that prioritize culture for peace.

Convened by UNESCO, the C4P Independent Expert Group included ten members covering different world regions (Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Europe and North America), collectively bringing diverse multidisciplinary and global perspectives to advance culture's role in peacebuilding, and underscore the importance of collaborating across generations. Among the experts were a Chair, responsible for leading the work of the group, as well as two youth representatives, in recognition of their key role in shaping a more peaceful world.

¹ <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/mondiacult-2022-states-adopt-historic-declaration-culture>

The intersection of culture and peace

The recognition of **culture as a global public good** is essential for building more inclusive, sustainable and peaceful societies, and ‘... preserving respect for cultural diversity and pluralism has become more imperative than ever for fostering peace and social cohesion’ (UNESCO, 2024a, p. 9). There are several international culture conventions aimed at protecting cultural heritage,² including in contexts of emergency and conflict. These conventions outline the need for a global commitment to protect heritage before, during and after situations of crises, and define central responsibilities suggesting mechanisms to strengthen international cooperation. It vital, however, not only to protect heritage and culture, but to understand their capacity to serve as tools for building peace, promoting social inclusion and cohesion³ and aiding in the reconstruction of communities.

Understanding and harnessing culture for peace is an urgent priority in the context of an increasingly unstable and violent world. As an illustration, the Rule of Law in Armed Conflict (RULAC)⁴ online portal monitors over

110 armed conflicts taking place around the world,⁵ and their devastating consequences for communities and individuals. Culture can be both a target and a resource, with the destruction of tangible and intangible cultural heritage through both explicit efforts and as collateral damage of conflict. Despite this, culture itself is also fundamental to peace. Both during and after violent conflict, culture can be a force for resilience, social cohesion, a means of contending with past legacies of violence, and a vehicle for fostering inclusive, just and sustainable peace for the future.

The **role of culture in relation to peace** has long been recognized at the international level. Established in 1945, UNESCO’s core mission is to ‘contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture’ (UNESCO, 1945, Article I.1). In 1999, the United Nations adopted the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture for Peace,⁶ International Year for the Culture of Peace (2000)⁷ and the International Decade for a Culture of Peace (2001-2010).⁸

² See: 1954 UNESCO Convention (<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-cultural-property-event-armed-conflict-regulations-execution-convention?hub=66535>) including its First (1954) and Second (1999) Protocols; 1970 UNESCO Convention (<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-means-prohibiting-and-preventing-illicit-import-export-and-transfer-ownership-cultural?hub=66535>); 1972 UNESCO Convention (<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-concerning-protection-world-cultural-and-natural-heritage?hub=66535>); 1995 UNIDROIT Convention (<https://www.unidroit.org/instruments/cultural-property/1995-convention/>); 2001 UNESCO Convention (<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-underwater-cultural-heritage?hub=66535>); and 2003 UNESCO Convention (<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-safeguarding-intangible-cultural-heritage?hub=66535>), among others.

³ In this report we have opted to use ‘social inclusion and cohesion’ instead of reconciliation. The term reconciliation, while often invoked in contexts of post-conflict peacebuilding, is both highly contested and ill-defined. For that reason, rather than use the term as a catch-all, we focus on the different aspects that contribute to processes of building and rebuilding broken relationships among individuals, communities and societies, such as developing a shared vision of the future, acknowledging and dealing with the past, building positive bonds based on trust, changing attitudes and fostering empathy and addressing structures of inequality and injustice. See: Hamber and Kelly (2018).

⁴ <https://www.rulac.org>

⁵ RULAC is an initiative of the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights: <http://www.geneva-academy.ch/>

⁶ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/285677?v=pdf>

⁷ <https://courier.unesco.org/en/articles/international-year-2000-peace-our-hands>

⁸ <http://un-documents.net/a56-349.htm>

Culture for peace is also strongly connected with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, as well as several other goals, such as SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

Across UNESCO's culture conventions, culture and peace are expressed in evolving ways. The 1954 Hague Convention⁹ and the 1972 World Heritage Convention¹⁰ frame cultural property and heritage as the common legacy of humanity, whose protection fosters international understanding and cooperation - foundations of peace (UNESCO, 1954a; UNESCO, 1972). The 2003 Intangible Heritage Convention¹¹ deepens this link by recognizing living traditions as a source of identity, dialogue, and mutual respect among peoples, highlighting their role in bringing communities closer together (UNESCO, 2003). Most explicitly, the 2005 Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions¹² affirms cultural diversity as indispensable for democracy, social justice, peace and security, and makes the promotion of a 'culture of peace' one of its objectives (UNESCO, 2005). Together, these conventions illustrate cultural heritage and diversity not only as ends in themselves, but as crucial means to building peaceful and inclusive societies.¹³

The experts in this group have discussed **culture for peace as encompassing a set of diverse initiatives and practices through**

which peace can be advanced through cultural and artistic means. Culture *for* peace is closely tied to the concept of culture of peace, which is understood as referring to a set of values, attitudes, behaviors and ways of life that promote peace, tackling root causes and disputes non-violently through dialogue and negotiation. While the concept of culture of peace has been widely contextualized and utilized by UNESCO,¹⁴ this report focuses on culture for peace, emphasizing the ways that culture can act as a catalyst for fostering and advancing sustainable and just peace. Here, we unpack how we, as a group of experts, understand and operationalize both culture and peace, recognizing that both are complex and contested terms whose application can be problematic.

Culture is understood by the Independent Expert Group as a broad and multi-layered concept that comprises both the tangible and intangible elements common to a group of people or society. On the one hand, the term refers to the face-to-face everyday interactions that structure and reinforce ways of living and dwelling in the world. In this sense, cultures are plural and diverse. Culture also includes the material basis of 'collective' life and social organization, the importance of language and communication, and the practices around defining 'identity' and 'difference.' UNESCO defines culture as 'the distinct spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features characterizing a society. Culture shapes individuals and societies, fostering unity through shared values and traditions' (UNESCO, n.d.a, para.1). In a sense, culture is about the meanings people and communities attach to their lived experience, from local to global. Furthermore, culture speaks to very particular forms of relationships, such as

⁹ <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-cultural-property-event-armed-conflict-regulations-execution-convention?hub=66535>

¹⁰ <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-concerning-protection-world-cultural-and-natural-heritage?hub=66535>

¹¹ <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-safeguarding-intangible-cultural-heritage?hub=66535>

¹² <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-and-promotion-diversity-cultural-expressions?hub=66535>

¹³ See also: 1970 UNESCO Convention (<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-means-prohibiting-and-preventing-illicit-import-export-and-transfer-ownership-cultural?hub=66535>); and 2001 UNESCO Convention (<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-underwater-cultural-heritage?hub=66535>).

¹⁴ See: UNESCO: Mainstreaming the culture of peace (2002); and UNESCO's Programme of action on culture of peace and non-violence (2012).

'coexistence,' 'community' and 'power' from a perspective that stresses the 'everyday as one of the main spheres of social reproduction.

The term culture also refers to particular kinds of creative practices or praxis generated by individuals and communities to articulate different languages of pain and hope while facing conflict and in post-conflict settings and deeply divided societies. Human beings tell their stories in culturally sensitive ways through music, visual arts, creative writing, performance and movement that reflects and shapes identities, an understanding of the past and the prospect of a future. Culture can also involve organized structures through which social norms, values and knowledge are transmitted, including educational and cultural institutions, and material or physical structures such as objects and artifacts, buildings and memorials. When linked with peace, culture becomes a foundation for policies and practices that promote human rights and sustainable development.

Peace is thereby understood as more than simply the absence of war; rather, it considers 'justice and equity for all as the basis for living together in harmony and free from violence, now, but even more so for our children and succeeding generations' (UNESCO, 2002, p. 1). Peace requires the promotion of local, non-violent, culturally informed methods for conflict resolution, as well as the promotion of social cohesion through mutual respect, trust and ritual, in order to address root causes of conflict, such as historical exclusion, chronic poverty, gender and ethnic inequality and environmental degradation. In this light, peace is inherently connected with advocacy for human rights, dignity and the inclusion of diverse voices in decision-making.

As will be presented in the following section, with regards to politics, decision-making and legitimacy, peace is formed through cooperation among communities themselves, as well as within and among countries. It is made along a continuum from preventing war and promoting non-violent solutions to dealing with its consequences. However, extrapolating from the reflective examples presented in the present report, peace is also built 'on a small scale,' where cultural mechanisms have a central role to bridge differences and reweave

the social fabric that is fragmented by war, armed conflict or deep social divisions.

Culture for peace amplifies the importance of concrete cultural resources that a particular individual, community or society has at hand to imagine the future as a possibility. This 'social imagination of the future' encourages practices that embody new collective understandings about life that emerge in moments of historical transformations and uncertainties due to deep divisions and violence (Castillejo-Cuéllar, 2015). This perspective on culture and peacebuilding shows the complex interplay between meaning-making and peacemaking in concrete social and historical scenarios. It also demands a deeper sense of ethics and epistemic collaboration.

In summary, as a process, **peace is not simply a transition from direct violence to peace. Peace is rather understood in its broadest sense of justice.** Culture for peace is about how culture can bring creativity and innovation to enable a culture of peace that is connected (see Section II), locally and globally.



How this document is structured

This report is organized around six sections. Following this **introduction** (Section I), Section II introduces the **Culture for Peace Mosaic (C4P Mosaic)**: a concept to understand and define how culture can act as an enabler for peace.

Section III illustrates how the C4P Mosaic works in practice. Drawn from the collective experience of the members of the Independent Expert Group in different parts of the world, this section introduces a series of **reflective vignettes**, which narrate how culture and peace interrelate and integrate, while creating spaces full of potential. The section provides an evidence base on harnessing culture for peace, ranging from hyper-localized independent participatory projects to state- and international organization-sponsored initiatives.

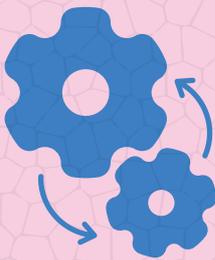
Approaching **youth perspectives** on culture for peace, Section IV proposes a critical view to the concept of political 'empowerment' to reimagine and reinvigorate youth agency in advancing culture for peace. It also offers powerful prompts for critical reflection on the utilization of the C4P Mosaic.

Building on the diagnostic discussion of the vignettes in Section III and the C4P Mosaic presented in Section II, Section V aims to draw out a set of **opportunities** for culture as an enabler for peace, along with their associated **assumptions**, and outline central **risks and challenges** associated with these efforts.

Finally, Section VI presents several **insights for action**, rooted in core principles, offering policy suggestions and encouraging diverse stakeholder engagement. Aiming to inform and inspire concrete policy commitments at MONDIACULT 2025, these insights strive to support diverse cultural stakeholders unlock and harness the power of culture for peace.



**COMPONENTS OF
A JUST PEACE**



**INSIGHTS
FOR ACTION**



**CULTURAL
ACTIVITIES
(VIGNETTES)**

**Goal:
A JUST
PEACE**



**RISKS
(CHALLENGES)**



**YOUTH
AGENCY**



**ASSUMPTIONS
(OPPORTUNITIES)**

II. THE CULTURE FOR PEACE MOSAIC

A

The C4P Mosaic

How can a culture for just peace be enabled in societies affected by conflict - not just as a goal but as an ongoing process?

Rooted in theoretical considerations, the **Culture for Peace Mosaic (C4P Mosaic)** is a dynamic proposal developed by the C4P Independent Expert Group to describe an evolving mix of practices and approaches pertaining to culture for peace, highlighting the complex nexus of **peace, justice, arts and culture, pedagogy, youth agency and digital innovation**. A conceptual proposal backed by theoretical considerations, the C4P Mosaic can be applied both globally and locally, while emphasizing not only a network of people but also actions towards peace formation.¹⁵

The C4P Mosaic questions top-down peacebuilding strategies, where they might be adopted, by pushing for a more inclusive approach from the ground up. Recognizing that peace must be legitimate, just and rooted in the lived experience of communities, and more than simply the absence of direct violence, the C4P Mosaic highlights the need for deeper changes in political and social systems and the reimagining of political order after conflicts.

In doing so, the C4P Mosaic offers **support for responding to the complex realities of addressing various forms of conflict** -

direct, indirect, cultural, structural, gendered or environmental - and draws on diverse cultural traditions and social histories of peacemaking. It encourages a broad reflection on local and 'small scale' peacemaking to develop innovative and scalable practices of peace formation.

This C4P Mosaic highlights how culture can significantly enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of peace formation and political order. These elements are central to how communities can effect societal transformation by fostering empathy and understanding, building networks and informal spaces for organizing and mobilizing around shared goals, offering non-violent solutions to entrenched problems, transmitting and disseminating knowledge across generations and building trust in institutions (Mitchell et al., 2020; Kerr, 2020; British Council, 2019; United Nations, 1966; Stubbs, 2021; Adorno et al., 2020; Groys, 2008; Apostolopoulou et al., 2022).

Central to this proposal is the understanding that **peace and justice are fundamental social values**, intrinsically linked and deeply embedded in culture. Situated **creative praxis**¹⁶ - which includes such practices as storytelling, art and education - can help connect, foster empathy and build trust across divides (Smith, 1999, 2011, 2024).

¹⁵ Peace formation is a term coined by Oliver Richmond to describe the interaction of processes of state formation, liberal peacebuilding and state-building with localized practices of peacemaking to form peace that can be both locally and internationally legitimate (Richmond, 2016).

¹⁶ Creative praxis is understood as the intersection of the best and most innovative theories and practices related to an active, dynamic process that integrates cultural and artistic expressions and is part of a larger ecology of creative, embodied and culturally meaningful action.

To be effective, such practices must operate through open networks of communication that transcend national or other firmly embedded social identities. This form of open, pluralistic communication has been termed a **'polylogue'**, meaning a multi-party conversation where a range of perspectives and ideas are expressed and explored (Kristeva, 1977). The C4P Mosaic applies the idea of a polylogue to reinforce the importance of a dialogical, non-hierarchical and culturally grounded approach that embraces rather than rejects difference.

The C4P Mosaic encourages and supports broader visions of peace, reflected in the evolution of research and practice in international relations and diplomacy. If peace is understood as more than simply the absence of violence or the imposition of victor's justice (Galtung, 1967; Bourke, 2017; Bevan, 2015; Richmond, 2005), it is clear that its scope goes beyond conflict termination; rather, peace is about transformation: creating fair and inclusive societies with dignity, human rights, democracy, equality, rule of law and sustainability (Paris, 2004).

Further to this, a **just peace** addresses historical injustices, gender and racial inequality and environmental concerns, and ensures fair and equitable economic distribution and political representation (Richmond, 2022c). The C4P Mosaic supports this vision of a globally just peace (Pogge, 2001), **connecting local and global** efforts, encouraging creativity and critical pedagogy, and supporting innovative tools and spaces for peace to be formed across and between networks of youth and social movements (Richmond, 2022a; Vogel et al., 2024). Peace, within this vision, is understood by the Independent Expert Group in two senses: as a wider process and context of non-violence in societies and across the world, and as a narrow process of dealing with violence after war through a peace process related to societal and intersocietal peace. Culture is essential in working towards this vision, where the arts and critical praxis enable just peace as a living and evolving process of formation rooted in non-violence,¹⁷ and allows for deeper connectivity across communities and generations.

Creativity and learning tend to be oriented towards a culture for and of just peace, encouraging reflection and the transformation of ideas and practices of peace and justice (Giroux, 1988; Freire, 1970). Significantly, culture can help foster the dissemination of empathetic and pluriversal knowledge through innovative **pedagogy** as well as **youth engagement** focused on global justice and injustice in an intergenerational context (UNDP, 2017; United Nations, 2021). In this light, youth movements, pedagogy and **new digital capacities** represent dynamic arenas for reshaping and disseminating concepts and practices of peace, highlighting its evolving nature and culture's role for facilitating its reimagination and enactment (Fairey et al., 2023). Further to this, digital technologies can enable more inclusive, adaptive and participatory peace processes through enhanced connectivity and innovative forms of collaboration.

Rather than being instrumental (King, 1998; Cameron, 2021), the complex dynamics involved in harnessing culture for peace are often sensory and intuitive, empathetic and relational. They operate in transversal (working from the bottom-up against dominant power relations [Spivak, 1988]), trans-scalar (working outside and around formal systems), and transnational patterns, broadening intergenerational trust and cooperation beyond that which national or elite systems and categories may achieve (Adorno et al., 2020; Groys, 2008; Apostolopoulou et al., 2022). Collectively, these transversal, trans-scalar and transnational approaches point to the evolution of non-violent political order beyond the existing states-system, and a related and expanding architecture of peacemaking tools embedded in both old and emerging systems and institutions (Richmond, 2022b). The C4P Mosaic brings together these considerations, recognizing the **diverse forms, spaces and systems through which peacemaking takes place**.

In short, the C4P Mosaic shows us that **peace is a living and evolving process rooted in justice, creativity and culture**. It aligns with evolving global understandings of peace formation and supports a shift to more inclusive approaches that reflect the experiences and aspirations of a broader range of people.

¹⁷ For discussion on the relationship between arts and peace, see: Möller and Bellmer (2023); Magowan et al. (2023); Breed et al. (2022); Richmond et al. (2023); Mitchell et al. (2020); Bleiker (2017); and Kerr (2020).

The C4P Mosaic provides a proposal for leveraging culture to build relationships, accommodate and recognize differences, work with complexity and across divides, and to imagine and create just and peaceful futures. This means investing in culture, engaging with young people and across generations, and enabling civil society to play a central role in the design of interventions that are not only effective, but also legitimate and sustainable in the long-term.

THE C4P MOSAIC ON A SMALL SCALE

The concept of '**peace on a small scale**' refers to the everyday actions of communities - especially survivors and grassroots actors who are marginalized - to build a 'social imagination of the future' after conflict or violence. These efforts are often informal, locally driven and deeply rooted in cultural and social practices. This 'social imagination of the future' embodies a *reweaving and mending* of the social fabric and damaged relationships impacted by many different forms of violence. It facilitates intergenerational dialogues, and when necessary, affirms culturally situated mechanisms dealing with the sustainability and legitimacy of peace based on the idea of 'polyphony': respect for the plurality of voices and ways of dwelling in the world. 'Peace on a small' scale is in reality an *ethical gesture of recognition* (Castillejo-Cuéllar, 2017).

As an integral element of the C4P Mosaic, peace on a small scale presents a critical opportunity to reflect how communities build legitimate and sustainable peace through everyday actions and initiatives that are embedded in local realities and respond to multiple layers of injustice. This can be used to inform more inclusive and responsive strategies to enable culture for peace at national and international levels.

WORLDVIEWS AND THE C4P MOSAIC

The C4P Mosaic recognizes that peace is indeed a cultural and ethical process, informed by traditions and belief systems. Religious, philosophical and cultural worldviews play a powerful role in shaping how communities understand and practice peace on a small scale, as well as nationally and internationally. Peace, justice, arts and culture, pedagogy, youth agency and digital innovation are not separable domains in this context, but are mutually constitutive and historically entangled. These worldviews and traditions function not only as systems of belief, but as cultural frameworks that shape ethical imagination, collective identity and the symbolic orders through which communities interpret the world.

Religious and worldview traditions continue to shape how notions of justice, peace and human dignity are lived, remembered and projected into the future. They transmit ethical values and social norms through narrative, ritual and embodied practices - sustaining memory, belonging and resilience, and presenting both opportunities and challenges. In today's deeply interconnected and contested global landscape, both 'traditions' and 'communities' must be understood not as fixed or homogeneous entities, but as dynamic, plural and often internally contested formations. While they can support cohesion and solidarity, these categories also risk reinforcing boundaries that exclude, essentialize or marginalize, and they can be used to justify exclusion, division or even violence. Thus, while traditions and communities can offer crucial ethical and cultural foundations for peace, they must also be sites of ongoing critique and renewal. Peace, in this view, is not a product of fixed identities but a dynamic, collective process - built through interconnected acts of justice, creativity and inclusion.

Contemporary peace frameworks increasingly acknowledge these tensions and try to mediate religious, Indigenous, ideological and other worldviews and traditions to inform models of peace and global justice. Diverse philosophical and spiritual traditions have links with peace - through harmony with the natural world, ancestors and community (Deloria, 2003; Cajete, 2000); ethical living (Flood, 1996); liberation from suffering through compassion and insight (Yeh, 2006); the centring of peace, wholeness and justice (Telushkin, 2000); the daily practice of mercy, charity and community dialogue (Kalin, 2005); and positioning peace as a divine gift and ethical commitment realized through forgiveness and love (Volf, 2016), among others.

The relevance of these traditions becomes particularly evident in Payne's (2020) analysis of faith-based actors in peacebuilding. Unlike dominant liberal peace approaches - which prioritize technical state-building, political and market reforms - locally grounded actors draw on ethical vocabularies and relational practices that resonate more deeply within affected communities. Payne shows how such actors contest depoliticized and externally imposed peace frameworks by grounding peace in moral legitimacy, cultural continuity and collective participation (2020).

These worldviews can bring depth and cultural legitimacy necessary for sustainable, just peace. These traditions possess a dual potential: they can serve as sources of solidarity, dignity and resilience, or they can be mobilized to justify exclusion and violence. Their inclusion should not be through uncritical affirmations, but as critically engaged cultural and ethical resources for building peace in pluralistic societies. They provide symbolic, pedagogical and moral foundations through which it can be possible for justice to become visible, livable and shared in everyday life.

What the C4P Mosaic means for redefining peace

The C4P Mosaic redefines how peace is understood and practiced. It moves beyond general definitions that equate peace with absence of conflict or the restoration of state authority and instead frames **peace as a dynamic, transformative, inclusive and justice-oriented process** rooted in innovation, legitimacy, social change, pluralism and political reform. Together these elements indicate 'pluriversalism' (Ali and Dayan-Herzbrun, 2025).

This expanded definition aligns with global policy shifts, such as those advanced by the United Nations Secretary General's report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace,¹⁸ which emphasized the importance of long-term, inclusive and locally owned peacebuilding and engagement with civil society, and the 2023 United Nations policy brief on a New Agenda for Peace,¹⁹ as a part of Our Common Agenda. The C4P Mosaic contributes to this by integrating culture as an enabler of sustainable peace.

Culture, cultural heritage practices, creative expressions and the transmission of community-based knowledge facilitate contact, communication and solidarity, enabling the 'excavation of injustice' (Spivak, 1988). Cultural practices such as storytelling, education and the arts can play a vital role in imagining better futures, bringing people together and helping transcend divisions. They may restore non-violence as a norm and restore empathy and humanity (United Nations Secretary-General, 2018; UNESCO,

1999a; Ramsbotham et al., 2025; Richmond and Visoka, 2021). They can help deal with uneven and unjust power relations (Spivak, 1988) via a perspective from below or within power structures and political systems. They offer an empathetic, relational and dynamic approach to bridge building, cooperation, repair and societal trauma-processing which formal approaches within and between states can rarely achieve. The C4P Mosaic emphasizes peacemaking as non-instrumental and intercultural. It is related to social and cultural texture, which is bottom-up, complex and has offered the potential to be innovative throughout history (Cortright, 2008).

The C4P Mosaic calls for **a shift in how peace is defined, measured and pursued**. It encourages a more holistic and inclusive approach, and one that is grounded in justice; shaped by culture and the pedagogic attributes of culture; and situated creative praxis, an appreciation for intergenerational norms and a concern with the long-term sustainability of social, political, economic and technological systems.

¹⁸ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1468106?v=pdf>

¹⁹ <https://dppa.un.org/en/a-new-agenda-for-peace>

From the C4P Mosaic to policy impact

The concept of the C4P Mosaic offers support for policy-makers seeking to design **more inclusive, legitimate and sustainable peace strategies**. It is especially relevant in societies where national or internationally-driven efforts lack connection with the lived realities of marginalized communities, thus impacting their ability to address those realities. The C4P Mosaic highlights how these communities - through creative expression, cultural heritage and critical pedagogy - already formulate powerful political claims to peace, justice, resilience, cohesion and non-violence.

Connecting theory, practice and activism, the C4P Mosaic culminates in a nexus of peace, justice, arts and culture, pedagogy, youth agency and digital innovation - in the development of significant political claims about how and why to formulate peaceful policies in conflict-affected societies. This is disseminated in a wide range of forms, produced by social movements and civil society to influence debates on democracy, political reform and security at country and regional levels.

The C4P Mosaic is essential for both the formulation and legitimation of policy in and towards conflict-affected societies, yet much of what is produced is ephemeral and fragmentary due to local insecurity and a lack of resources across cultural, artistic and pedagogic platforms. Social movements, however, do archive and curate such resources, which span art works, theatre, music, banners, pamphlets, graffiti, cultural heritage and websites, as well as pedagogic resources. Digital and pedagogic innovations have offered the opportunity for producers and activists to archive, curate and disseminate such resources, bringing them to the attention of the wider public and policy-makers. Policy-makers need to be able to decode and understand these political claims and their innovative approaches to dealing with violence if policies are to be widely accepted and legitimate.

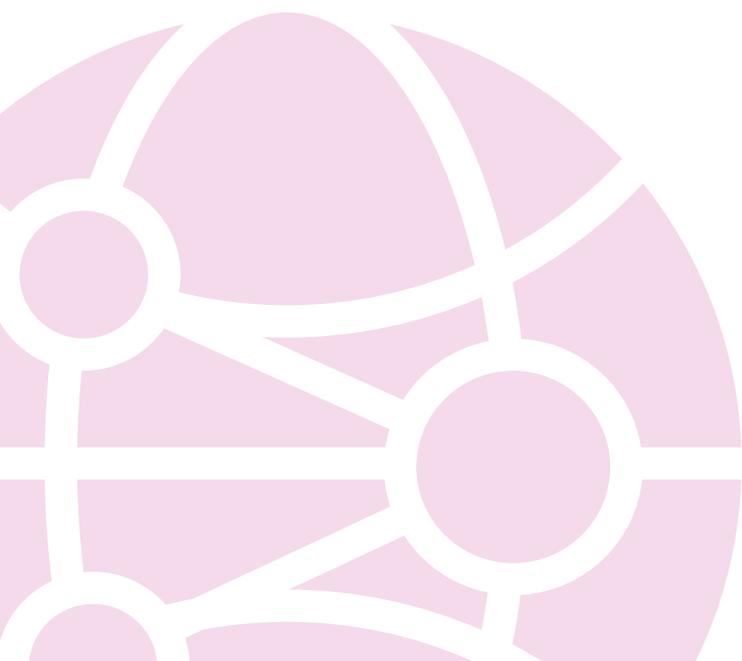
By engaging with the C4P Mosaic, policy-makers can better understand the cultural dimensions of peace and respond more effectively to complex challenges involved. This means adopting a broader and more integrated approach to peace, with an overarching goal of just peace integrating justice, arts and culture, pedagogy, youth agency and digital innovation, as well as themes of dignity, recognition, repair, inclusion and non-violence. The C4P Mosaic frames **culture for peace as a method, a process and a long-term commitment** that requires fostering intergenerational and intercultural dialogue, social cohesion, trust and empathy, voice and visibility, inclusive participation in conflict mediation, capacity-building and sustainable development.

Pertinent to this, the C4P Mosaic identifies several **key cultural enablers of peace**, whose careful comprehension is vital for advancing these efforts and shaping effective policies:

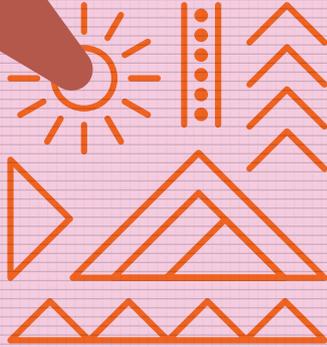
- Perpetuation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage and the right to cultural life.
- Conflict mediation through creative praxis such as storytelling and dialogue.
- Digital technologies and innovation for peace communication.
- Critical pedagogy for global citizenship and peace formation.
- Cross-cultural exchange and diplomacy.
- Advocacy, recognition and restorative justice (repair).
- Intergenerational learning and memory perpetuation.
- Justice in all its forms - historical, gender, ecological, epistemic, intergenerational and racial, among others.

Taking these into account, in sum, the C4P Mosaic puts forward a proposal for enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of policies and practices that leverage culture for peace. In doing so, it sets out **contributions for orienting culture as an enabler of peace that is just, sustainable, legitimate and deeply rooted in the values, voices and visions of the communities it serves.**

As is illustrated by the vignettes in the following section, the C4P Mosaic enables new imaginings of sustainable peace as a precursor for practice. It supports infrastructures for peace, contributes to gender justice, among other forms of justice, is enabled by cultural heritage and creativity and supports youth contributions to peacemaking, including through digital and other networks. We have identified these areas as crucial contributions to sustainable, globally just peace.



CULTURAL ENABLERS OF PEACE



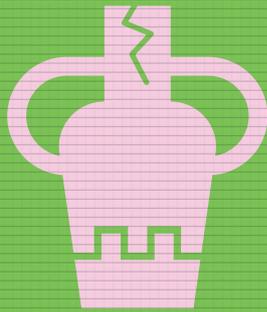
**CULTURAL CONTINUITY
& HERITAGE**



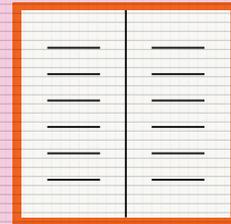
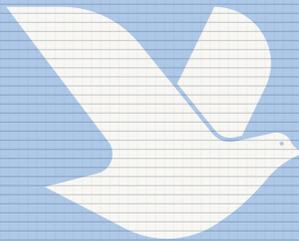
**DIGITAL
TECHNOLOGIES**



**CROSS-CULTURAL
EXCHANGE**



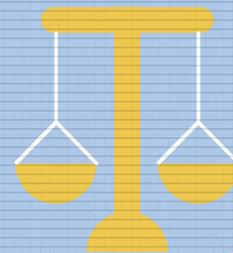
**REPAIR
& JUSTICE**



**PEDAGOGY
FOR PEACE**



**INTERGENERATIONAL
LEARNING**



JUSTICE

C4P MOSAIC

ARTS &
CULTURE

PEACE

CULTURE
FOR
PEACE

PEDAGOGY

YOUTH
AGENCY

JUSTICE

DIGITAL
INNOVATION

PEACE AS A LIVING PROCESS –
ROOTED IN CULTURE, CREATIVITY & JUSTICE

III. VIGNETTES - CULTURAL PATHWAYS TO PEACE

This section was designed to function as a diagnostic bridge between the conceptual proposal of the Culture for Peace Mosaic (C4P Mosaic) presented in Section II and the later sections which are oriented toward policy and programmatic insights (Sections V and VI). Rather than listing standalone cases or replicating earlier content, it draws **connections between diverse examples of cultural peacebuilding**²⁰ and extracts insights about why and how they work in their specific contexts. The analysis moves beyond static categorization to highlight tensions, gaps and innovations emerging from lived realities.

Across contexts of conflict, post-conflict recovery and ongoing contestation, this section presents **vignettes**²¹ that reflect a dynamic body of work where cultural practices are not merely symbolic, but strategic. Each contribution offers a window into how communities, institutions and individuals are reimagining peace - not in abstract terms, but through specific, situated and often complex acts of cultural resistance, repair and imagination.

While many of the examples are grounded in post-conflict or transitional settings, this section also intentionally gestures toward contexts of democratic erosion, polarization and social fragmentation in more stable environments. The aim is not to flatten distinctions between conflict and civic unrest, but to suggest that the cultural dimensions of peace, legitimacy, belonging, emotional repair

and generational learning are relevant across a spectrum of fragility and recoverability.

This section does not attempt to rank or exhaustively catalogue practices. Instead, it seeks to illuminate **recurring patterns, tensions and innovations arising from the lived realities of cultural peacebuilding**. Culture here is neither an accessory nor a neutral terrain, it is a site of power, memory, imagination, gendered authority and sometimes contradiction. The vignettes included do not form a definitive inventory of 'what works,' but they reveal how peace is being made, remade and questioned through cultural forms that are often overlooked, undervalued or dismissed - not only in post-conflict societies, but also in democratic spaces facing polarization, erosion of civic trust and emergent authoritarianism.

To maintain both narrative coherence and thematic specificity, the vignettes are curated into seven **intersecting streams**:

1. Cultural heritage and memory.
2. Creative expression and oral traditions.
3. Digital participation and documentation.
4. Education, pedagogy and intergenerational mediation.
5. Transnational framework for cultural solidarity.
6. Cultural diplomacy and peacebuilding vs. peace formation.
7. Advocacy, recognition, resistance and repair.

²⁰ In this report, cultural peacebuilding is used as equivalent to culture for peace.

²¹ In this report, vignettes refer to short, illustrative examples that highlight relevant themes. We do not purport to present comprehensive case studies or best practices.

These thematic streams are not rigid categories, but currents that flow across contexts. They reflect the diversity of practice while enabling conceptual bridges between past and future, between local realities and global relevance, between rupture and repair.

Each stream integrates selected vignettes and draws meaning from them. In this light, the vignettes presented under each stream are not simply illustrative or descriptive; they are diagnostic. They highlight how cultural work navigates complexity, asserts dignity, negotiates legitimacy and constructs new

spaces for justice. They show not only what is being done, but what it means when peace is approached through cultural form with all the symbolic, embodied and political weight that entails. While this section intentionally avoids direct recommendations, it surfaces signals and identifies patterns that can inform future decision-making, deepen practice and challenge assumptions about what culturally grounded peacebuilding looks like and where it is needed.

A

Cultural heritage and memory

In post-conflict societies, memory and heritage are rarely neutral. While they can serve as common ground, they are also often contested terrains invoked to consolidate peace or to retrench division; yet they also offer powerful entry points for imagining peace differently. In this stream, we examine how cultural memory and heritage practices are being reclaimed, reinterpreted and mobilized as mechanisms for truth-telling, symbolic repair and collective belonging.

The work of **Colombia's Truth Commission**²² offers one of the most striking examples of how memory can be made culturally resonant and politically plural. In its testimonial volume *When Birds Did Not Sing: Stories of Colombia's Armed Conflict*, the Commission undertook a radical approach to narrative justice and coexistence by including 'Conversations with Nature' (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022). This was developed in partnership with Indigenous, peasant and Afro-Colombian communities. By treating rainforests, rivers and mountains as sentient entities having a voice and

bearing the scars of war, and integrating sonic (Castillejo-Cuéllar, 2023a) storytelling into public readings, the Commission expanded the definition of testimony and created what it called an 'itinerant pedagogy for peace.' This approach redefined narrative legitimacy not only as human but ecological, and not only as factual but experiential.

Cambodian Living Arts (CLA)²³ operates from a different historical and geographic context, but with a parallel commitment to cultural heritage as a tool for healing and continuity. In the aftermath of genocide, CLA focused on reviving endangered art forms through master-apprentice programmes and intergenerational performances. Here, heritage was not frozen as a static relic but activated through embodied transmission. Through performances, education and storytelling, CLA has supported the rebuilding of not only Cambodia's cultural infrastructure but also its social fabric, restoring dignity through continuity.

²² See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmETaHXcNX4>.

²³ See: <https://www.cambodianlivingarts.org/en/>

In **post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, the reconstruction of heritage**²⁴ - from everyday community spaces to emblematic landmarks - became a crucial means of return, recognition and the pursuit of a just peace. Survivors led grassroots efforts to rebuild homescapes, restoring the physical fabric of daily life, and also processing cultural trauma and reclaiming spaces marked by violence and loss. Projects like the community-led rebuilding of the *Caršijska* Mosque in Stolac revived places of belonging and reopened pathways for social connection. These locally driven initiatives helped reweave trust, memory and cultural continuity, later informing national strategies such as Annex 8 of the Dayton Peace Accords. While the internationally supported restoration of sites like Mostar's Old Bridge and Sarajevo's *Vijecnica* became global symbols of liberal peacebuilding, it was the participatory repair of everyday heritage that rooted peace in lived experience - positioning culture as a powerful medium for justice, recovery and social repair.

The **INTIQAL-2030 programme**,²⁵ led by Première Urgence Internationale in the Gaza Strip, Palestine, stood out as a unique heritage-based approach to peacebuilding. Launched in 2017, the initiative focused on restoring key archaeological sites such as the Saint Hilarion Monastery and the Byzantine Church in Jabaliya - not just to maintain cultural landmarks, but to transform them into inclusive spaces for healing, learning and social connection. Grounded in the concept of historical trauma, INTIQAL aimed to address the psychological and social effects of prolonged conflict by offering safe environments - both physical and symbolic - where people could engage in meaningful cultural and educational activities.

Through psychosocial support sessions, vocational training, youth engagement and community-led events, the programme helped foster a sense of belonging, identity and recoverability. Prior to the escalation of violence in late 2023, INTIQAL had become a vital platform for empowerment and cohesion, demonstrating how cultural heritage could serve as a foundation for well-being and peace in a fragile and frequently disrupted context.

These vignettes show that heritage is not only about what is remembered, but how and for whom it is made meaningful. Whether sonic forests or disappearing art forms, or lost homes and places, these initiatives resist the notion that peacebuilding must choose between the symbolic and the structural. They demonstrate that when cultural memory is locally held and communally interpreted, it can become a stabilizing and generative force in moments of institutional fragility.

Cultural heritage initiatives confront historical injustices by reclaiming marginalized memories and identities, fostering social cohesion and repair through shared cultural practices. Creative methodologies - like ecological testimony and embodied storytelling - redefine memory work, situating heritage as a dynamic, participatory process. These efforts embody local pedagogies and share local knowledge that helps build peace and facilitate skills development for facing adversity, passing it from one generation to the next. It is also important that these efforts are supported at the international level and through partnerships that prioritize cultural agency and minority rights.

²⁴ See: Hadžimuhamedovic (2015).

²⁵ See: Elter (2025).

Creative expression and oral traditions

Artistic practice and oral tradition offer more than aesthetic value - they are mechanisms for political agency, social repair and cultural transmission and continuity. This stream of vignettes explores how poetry, multimedia storytelling and grassroots performance operate as cultural tools for peace.

The **Post-Conflict Research Center (PCRC)**²⁶ in the Western Balkans exemplifies how creative media can reframe historical wounds without erasing complexity. Through documentary films, multimedia exhibitions and interethnic youth workshops, the PCRC has built participatory spaces where young people become storytellers, not just subjects, of peacebuilding narratives. One of its flagship initiatives, **Ordinary Heroes**,²⁷ highlights moral exemplars from across ethnic lines, showing how personal stories can disrupt inherited narratives of blame and create new entry points for just peace.

This emphasis on visibility, dignity and empathy across differences finds a powerful parallel in **Pontanima**,²⁸ the interreligious choir founded by Friar Ivo Markovic in Sarajevo. Drawing on sacred music from Christian, Muslim and Jewish traditions, Pontanima creates a shared spiritual space that transcends religious boundaries and revives a sense of coexistence ruptured by war. Together, these initiatives demonstrate how culture - whether through narrative or music - can become a civic practice and a pervasive force for justice, healing and the rebuilding of trust in divided societies.

Buraanbur poetry²⁹ in Somalia, a gendered oral tradition once used to mobilize for war, is being reclaimed by women as a tool for mediation and dignity. At community dialogues facilitated by

women elders, poetic performance is deployed not as entertainment but as intervention - reframing the moral landscape of conflict and proposing new 'currencies of peace' rooted in accountability, land rights and joint decision-making. What is powerful here is not only the content of the poems, but the authority of those who perform them: elders, mothers, survivors, whose cultural capital enables them to speak into spaces where formal mediators cannot reach.

Too often, practices like buraanbur are dismissed within traditional women, peace and security frameworks as soft power or peripheral culture; but this overlooks their immense capacity to both rally and resolve. In Somalia, entire movements and moments of calm have been shaped by poetic cadence. What is sung is not just felt but followed; used to halt revenge killings, legitimize ceasefires or shame actors into restraint. That these performances are rhythmic, emotive and often entertaining does not diminish their potency; it heightens it. They channel collective sentiment, assign moral meaning and carry persuasive legitimacy in ways that formal declarations often cannot. To ignore this is to underestimate the cultural currency these gendered practices hold. Moreover, buraanbur and similar oral traditions also serve as informal education systems especially for youth in conflict-affected settings where institutional peace education is absent. For generations born into war, poetry becomes a way of imagining peace they have never seen but can still learn to speak. This reinforces that peace literacy is not always taught in classrooms. Sometimes, it is sung around fires, echoed in markets and carried in breath.

²⁶ See: <https://p-crc.org/our-work> ; Fairey and Kerr (2020); and Fairey (2023)..

²⁷ See: <https://p-crc.org/our-work/peace-education/ordinary-heroes/>

²⁸ See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LP2hUHmOALk>

²⁹ See: <https://www.noemamag.com/a-country-shaped-by-poetry/> ; <https://www.undp.org/stories/nation-poets> ; <https://www.c-r.org/accord/somalia/towards-culture-peace-poetry-drama-and-music-somali-society> ; and <https://www.interpeace.org/resource/women-poetry-and-video-the-success-of-an-inventive-peacebuilding-tool-in-puntland/>.

These vignettes show that creative expression is not merely a communicative device; it is a way of reconfiguring relationships. It allows for expansion of who gets to narrate conflict and who gets to envision resolution. The diagnostic power of these vignettes lies in their ability to make space for emotional, embodied and often unspoken dimensions of justice.

Creative praxis, through ever evolving creative and oral traditions, is understood as a non-instrumental form of knowledge that resists reductive utility while offering powerful anticipatory and affective experiences. Rather than conforming to dominant ideological frameworks, creative and oral traditions engage the world through sensation and relational means that allow for the recognition of differences and the imagination of alternative futures across boundaries - whether social, institutional, national, hierarchical or ecological. In this sense, the creative praxes do not merely supplement formal peace processes or pedagogy but function as vital spaces of intersubjective trust, intergenerational memory and innovative worldmaking - enabling forms of justice and coexistence that cannot be achieved through technocratic means alone.

Creative and oral traditions offer important but precarious sites of agency, especially for marginalized groups such as women and elders. However, their influence is frequently undervalued within formal peacebuilding frameworks, rendering them vulnerable to marginalization and tokenism. The emotional and embodied nature of these practices challenges institutional norms but also complicates their scalability and integration into policy. This tension reflects the struggle to balance cultural specificity with demands for measurable impact, raising questions about whose voices ultimately shape peace narratives.

C

Digital participation and documentation

While digital tools are often framed as accelerators of scale or innovation, they also reshape who can participate in cultural peacebuilding, how narratives are archived and what memories are made visible. The vignettes in this stream explore how digital approaches are used - not just to perpetuate³⁰ the past, but to reconfigure cultural inclusion in the present.

In Tunisia, the **DigiArt Living Lab**³¹ emerged after the 2011 Arab spring as a decentralized model for digital documentation and cultural participation. Through participatory mapping workshops and mobile documentation toolkits, the initiative captured contested heritage narratives that might otherwise be

erased. Crucially, it ensured that marginalized voices were not only heard but also became co-authors of the archival process. The ability to operate in an offline mode, along with the minimal technical training required, highlights the replicability of this toolkit for other contexts in the region, and beyond. The DigiArt Living Lab's use of low-bandwidth, offline-capable tools made it possible for digitally excluded groups to contribute - a reminder that innovation in peacebuilding is often infrastructural, not aesthetic.

The **Cyprus digital heritage initiative**³² takes this premise further, leveraging technology to document and share heritage through the creation of virtual models of cultural heritage

³⁰ Rather than preservation, this report refers to the perpetuating and maintaining of culture, with the aim of acknowledging its non-static and dynamic form.

³¹ See: <https://enoll.org/member/digiart-living-lab/> ; and <https://www.3dnetinfo.com/en/innovation>

³² See: <https://www.cyprusdigitalheritage.com/> ; and <https://www.undp.org/european-union/stories/cultural-heritage-goes-digital-cyprus>

sites. The initiative is run by the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage (TCCH), composed of Turkish and Greek community members and professionals. Using 3D modeling, drone mapping, and high-resolution imaging, the project captures detailed representations of historical sites that would be difficult to preserve through traditional methods alone. These digital records not only safeguard monuments against environmental damage, neglect or potential conflict but also make them widely accessible for education, research and public engagement, turning cultural memory into pedagogical engagement. Virtual tours and interactive platforms allow users to explore culturally significant structures remotely, offering an immersive experience that highlights architectural details, historical layers and artistic elements. By creating a dynamic, interactive archive, the project illustrates the use of digital technologies not only to physically perpetuate culture, but also to actively contribute to understanding,

dialogue and shared memory among diverse communities.

These vignettes reveal how digital tools can democratize the means of cultural production, but only when designed with ethical care and contextual sensitivity. They also highlight a shift - from technology as a delivery mechanism to technology as a space of negotiation. Yet, these tools are also vulnerable to surveillance, erasure and misinformation, making their legitimacy as fragile as the narratives they hold. Digital archives may amplify marginalized voices but can also freeze dynamic cultural expressions into static representations, raising concerns about authenticity and control in the digital mediation of memory and identity.

When done well, digital participation expands the archive of peace to include those previously excluded from authorship. It creates shared memory that is both plural and porous, a living document of coexistence.

D

Education, pedagogy and intergenerational mediation

If culture carries memory, education carries the future. This stream of vignettes explores how pedagogy and intergenerational transmission serve not just as technical tools of empowerment, but as deeply cultural processes for transforming inherited harm and cultivating new imaginaries of peace.

In rural Latin America, the **Escuela Nueva model**³³ stands out not only for its adaptive pedagogy, but for how teachers act as cultural mediators within contexts of extreme marginalization. In multi-grade classrooms, often in zones affected by armed conflict, teachers are not simply delivering curriculum; they are restoring a sense of possibility. Through murals, restructured lesson plans and improvised resources, teachers enact what one contributor calls 'creative mediation,' where education becomes a daily act of resistance, empathy and repair.

The **International Summer School 'Youth and Heritage' (ISSYH)**,³⁴ officially established in 2005, emerged from concepts operationalized in 1998 that framed heritage as an agent of just peace formation. Located in Stolac, Bosnia and Herzegovina, ISSYH functions as a global encounter platform where youth from conflict-affected regions engage with cultural heritage and traditional creative expressions to foster mutual understanding and counteract ignorance - recognized as a root cause of conflict. Through experiential learning-by-doing, participants restore heritage sites and revive local practices, facilitating intergenerational knowledge transmission and cultural resilience.

³³ See: <https://www.theglobaljournal.net/article/view/756/>; and <https://hundred.org/en/innovations/escuela-nueva>

³⁴ See: Hadžimuhamedovic (2020).

Similarly, the **West-Eastern Divan Orchestra**,³⁵ founded in 1999 in Seville by conductor Daniel Barenboim and scholar Edward Said, unites young musicians from Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Spain, Türkiye and Tunisia to promote dialogue and coexistence through music. Its summer school combines rigorous musical training with intercultural dialogue, fostering empathy and critical reflection on identity and history.

Neither the ISSYH nor the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra positions itself as a conventional peace project; instead, they confront prejudice by deploying heritage and music as fluid, border-transcending mediums embodying universal values (Barenboim and Said, 2008). Together, these programmes illustrate how education, creativity and cultural engagement build solidarity and cooperation in conflict-affected contexts, offering complementary, pedagogically grounded models of peace formation that address conflict's underlying social foundations.

The **En Sus Zapatos (In Their Shoes) programme**³⁶ uses theatre of awareness and emotional literacy to address school-based violence in Spain, Morocco, Colombia and Guatemala (Childhood Education International, 2025). By training teachers and students in socio-emotional learning and using dramatization as a reflective tool, the programme creates a full-circle community of practice. What makes it distinctive is that empathy is not taught as theory, but as embodiment. Participants move through scenes, rehearse compassion and carry that learning into classrooms and family systems. The initiative reframes peace education as affective infrastructure, not content to be taught, but capacities to be cultivated.

In contrast, the Somali diaspora practice of **Dhaqan Celis (Return to Culture)**³⁷ reveals the dangers of cultural transmission when coercively imposed. Originally intended as a reconnection mechanism for youth seen as

'losing their culture' abroad, it has, in practice, often resulted in forced return, isolation and trauma; and yet, even here, a reimagined form is emerging, one where voluntary return and cultural co-design between elders and youth creates space for healing and identity reconstruction. This vignette underscores a core diagnostic lesson that peace education must be culturally grounded, and rights based. It cannot presume harmony within tradition, but must constantly negotiate power, memory and voice.

The vignettes in this stream demonstrate that education in peacebuilding is not a neutral enterprise. It is deeply entangled with historical narratives, social expectations and the emotional impact and aftermath of conflict. When rooted in context and co-created across generations, pedagogy becomes not only a tool for change but a method for translating local moral imagination into scalable insight, not through replication, but through resonance. In its redesigned form, the practice now emphasizes voluntary participation, intergenerational dialogue and youth-led cultural co-design grounded in rights, belonging and mutual accountability.

Educational initiatives illustrate the promise of pedagogy as transformative cultural mediation but also reveal risks of reproducing power imbalances within traditions or imposing culturally alien frameworks. Peace education must navigate tensions between respecting cultural heritage and critiquing coercive or exclusionary practices. Pedagogical innovation requires continuous negotiation of memory, identity and power, emphasizing the fragility of peace education as a neutral or universally beneficial tool.

³⁵ See: <https://west-eastern-divan.org/founders>

³⁶ See: <https://programaensuszapatos.org/>; and <https://hundred.org/en/innovations/in-their-shoes-a-space-for-active-empathy-en-sus-zapatos>

³⁷ See: Bakaari and Escandell (2022); Tiilikainen (2011); <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/mar/12/somali-rehab-re-education-camps-where-children-are-locked-up-beaten-and-abused>; and <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/north-american-somali-communities-complex-mix-factors-influence>.

Transnational framework for cultural solidarity

Culture, heritage and creative praxis serve as vital instruments in advancing justice and peace across diverse conflict-affected contexts. Central to these efforts is the emphasis on participatory approaches, local agency and transnational solidarity, which together foster social cohesion and inclusion. This stream focuses on vignettes centred around these themes. By engaging communities directly in cultural production and design, such initiatives address material needs while simultaneously reclaiming cultural agency and resilience - foundations for just and lasting peace.

For instance, the **Design to Live project**³⁸ in Jordan's Al Azraq camp empowered displaced Syrians to co-create objects that foster collective care and self-determination. Similarly, **Sketch for Syria**³⁹ mobilized international architects to envision Syria's reconstruction, promoting cultural empathy and global solidarity. These projects illustrate how culturally grounded, participatory design bridges symbolic and material recovery, reinforcing both social cohesion and justice within displaced and post-conflict communities.

Building on such principles, the **International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH)**⁴⁰ exemplifies how independent and inclusive funding mechanisms can safeguard heritage in conflict zones as part of peacebuilding efforts. Prioritizing minority rights, ALIPH enables rapid, context-specific interventions that protect tangible and intangible heritage, thereby restoring community agency and reinforcing social bonds. This approach highlights the essential role of culture in achieving sustainable peace through funding frameworks that are locally engaged and globally supported.

Cultural Heritage Without Borders (CHWB)⁴¹ advocates for community-led heritage maintenance across regions including the Western Balkans, Asia and the Middle East. Its approach centres on respecting local knowledge, fostering ownership and building capacities to ensure heritage protection strengthens social cohesion and minority rights in fragile contexts. Through such grassroots empowerment, heritage becomes a vehicle for inclusion, social cohesion and justice.

Complementing these heritage-focused initiatives, **Manifesta**⁴² - the European Biennial of Contemporary Art - operates as a dynamic platform at the intersection of art, culture and society in evolving geopolitical landscapes. By organizing site-specific exhibitions and fostering community engagement, *Manifesta* addresses pressing social issues such as migration, identity and urban transformation. Its work exemplifies how contemporary art can catalyse social reflection, cross-cultural understanding and inclusive dialogue, thus contributing meaningfully to cultural diplomacy and peacebuilding.

Together, these diverse initiatives reveal interconnected themes, demonstrating how culture, when harnessed through participatory, community-centred and transnational frameworks, becomes a powerful force for justice, resilience and lasting peace. Achieving this requires well-structured and context-attentive transnational solidarity and responsibility - efforts that respect local realities while mobilizing global support to sustain cultural agency and social cohesion in conflict-affected communities.

³⁸ See: Akšamija (2021).

³⁹ See: Fabbri et al. (2018).

⁴⁰ See: <https://www.aliph-foundation.org/>; and ALIPH 2022 Annual Report (2023).

⁴¹ See: <https://chwbsweden.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CWwB-About-us-210408-v.1.2.pdf>

⁴² See: <https://manifesta.org/>

Transnational solidarity is critical but uneven and often fraught with contradictions. While international funding mechanisms and artistic collaborations offer material support and visibility, they may also reflect geopolitical interests or perpetuate dependency. These vignettes underscore the necessity of locally led, inclusive processes but also confront the practical challenges of sustaining solidarity across asymmetrical power relations and conflicting agendas. This highlights a potential tension between international support and local autonomy in cultural peacebuilding. Creative collaborations spanning art, design and activism foster innovative, participatory cultural production that resists homogenization.

F

Cultural diplomacy and peacebuilding vs. peace formation

As discussed in Section II, in contemporary peace studies cultural heritage is increasingly recognized as a relational and affective resource within peace formation, particularly in societies recovering from conflict and ethno-political division. However, most official interventions focus on the reconstruction and recovery of cultural heritage - particularly tangible heritage - rather than on creative or performative cultural expressions. Heritage initiatives have gained prominence due to their symbolic visibility, vulnerability to destruction and prosecution of heritage destruction as a war crime. Heritage is considered as a relational, pedagogical and justice-oriented infrastructure for peace, while recognizing the risks of technocratic or exclusionary approaches. When integrated meaningfully into local governance, legal frameworks and inclusion and social cohesion practices, heritage can become an infrastructure for recognition, dialogue and social repair; however, its role is not automatic. The vignettes in this stream reveal how heritage's peace formation agency is shaped by the extent to which it becomes participatory, inclusive and embedded in broader justice and pedagogical processes.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the **Commission to Preserve National Monuments**,⁴³ established under Annex 8 of the 1995

Dayton Peace Agreement represents a rare example of how institutional heritage policy evolved into a civic space of recognition and contestation. Initially a legal tool, the Commission enabled interpretive engagement with contested heritage sites across ethnic divides. Its processes allowed for ritual return, shared memory and interethnic coexistence. The 2010 Europa Nostra jury described it as pioneering in connecting heritage to peace and the rebuilding of civic trust⁴⁴ and emphasized its role for facilitating inclusion and social cohesion. This vignette shows how a technocratic mechanism can become a platform for dialogical justice, participatory pedagogy and creative reinterpretation.

A similar, though structurally distinct trajectory unfolded in Cambodia, where the **post-conflict safeguarding of Angkor Wat**⁴⁵ became central to cultural diplomacy and national recovery. UNESCO-led conservation efforts throughout the 1990s helped restore Cambodian heritage and rebuilt domestic conservation institutions. Long-term collaboration between international experts and local teams prevented further heritage loss. However, this process also highlighted the limits of state-centric heritage narratives. While reinforcing a unifying Khmer identity, the Angkor project left little space for grassroots social inclusion and cohesion

⁴³ See: Hadžimuhamedovic (2009; 2018; 2020).

⁴⁴ See: <https://europeanheritageawards-archive.eu/laureates-1978-2022/detail/commission-to-preserve-national-monuments-sarajevo>

⁴⁵ See: Winter (2015); and Byrne (2014).

or diverse cultural expressions. Here, heritage stabilized national identity but fell short of activating peace formation through inclusive pedagogy or participatory justice.

In Mali, the **destruction of mausoleums in Timbuktu**⁴⁶ in 2012 marked a turning point in the legal recognition of heritage as a victim of war. The International Criminal Court's *Al Mahdi* case, the first to treat the intentional destruction of cultural property as a war crime, set a precedent for heritage-based justice. In parallel, UNESCO and local communities collaborated to reconstruct sites and digitize ancient manuscripts. These efforts demonstrated the convergence of international legal redress with community-based resilience. This alignment allowed heritage to function as both reparative justice and a symbol of enduring local dignity - a powerful example of creative praxis, legal accountability and cultural pedagogy woven into peace formation.

Cyprus offers a quieter, but deeply significant case of heritage diplomacy as a space of encounter. Since the island's division in 1974, the bicomunal **Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage (TCCH)**⁴⁷ has restored shared cultural sites with support from United Nations Development Programme and the European Union. These projects facilitated cooperation between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, enabling heritage to be re-signified through participatory stewardship. Rather than simply maintaining monuments, the committee fostered trust and dialogic engagement, promoting local empowerment and the cultivation of peace from the ground up. The process cultivated co-authorship of meaning, not just co-management - illustrating how heritage diplomacy, when embedded in pedagogy and relationship-building, can enable civic rehearsal and social healing.

In contrast, the solution offered to Kosovo reveals the **limitations of cultural heritage mechanisms divorced from relational processes**.⁴⁸ Annex V of the Ahtisaari Plan established a legal framework to protect Serbian Orthodox sites during Kosovo's supervised independence. However, many sites were militarized and enclosed, reinforcing spatial and social separation. The legal protections,

while technically effective, became symbols of exclusion rather than inclusion and social cohesion. This case underscores how heritage can harden divisions when it is secured without inclusive dialogue, grassroots engagement or shared ownership. The absence of pedagogical interaction and justice-based relationality diminished the potential for peace formation.

These vignettes, while illustrative, do not exhaust the landscape of cultural diplomacy in post-conflict settings. They have been selected to emphasize how heritage - as one of the most visibly targeted and emotionally charged cultural expressions in conflict - can serve as both a material and symbolic domain for peace-related practice. The prominence of heritage over other cultural forms in official peacebuilding frameworks may reflect its legal visibility (especially after the International Criminal Court's prosecution of heritage destruction as a war crime), its embodied representation of pluralism and its susceptibility to ideological targeting.

Crucially, these vignettes demonstrate the distinction between peacebuilding and peace formation, as discussed in Section II. Where heritage initiatives moved beyond perpetuation and maintenance into realms of community co-production, creative reinterpretation and public pedagogy - as seen in Bosnia, Mali and Cyprus - they aligned more closely with peace formation. Where they remained instrumentalized, isolated or technocratic - as in Cambodia and Kosovo - they struggled to activate deeper social transformation.

In policy terms, these insights highlight both the possibilities and constraints of cultural diplomacy. They call for a cultural peace policy that transcends maintenance and protection, embedding heritage in participatory frameworks that cultivate recognition, pedagogical engagement and creative co-authorship. Such a policy would view culture not as an accessory to peace, but as a powerful driver of its ongoing formation.

⁴⁶ See: Eloundou (2022); and <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=otp-stat-al-mahdi-160822>

⁴⁷ See: <https://www.tcchcyprus.com/>

⁴⁸ See: Hisari and Fouseki (2020).

Advocacy, recognition, resistance and repair

Evaluation of the role of culture and creative praxis in peacebuilding, transitional justice and inclusion and social cohesion has focused on the power of art to fulfil several distinct functions: breaking silences, transforming relationships, communicating across divides and providing a means of dealing with trauma and restoring human dignity. In particular, culture and creative praxis have enabled powerful responses addressing legacies of conflict-related sexual violence and addressing the continuum of violence against women and girls in war and peace. Artists have used their practice to raise awareness, resist gendered stereotypes, promote healing and repair and advocate for a gender just peace. Feminist ‘artivism’ can mobilize memory and commemorative practices to open the past and transform the future (Hirsch, 2019). This stream brings attention to notable examples surrounding these topics, highlighting their power for imagining and driving more just and peaceful futures.

Thinking of You⁴⁹ was initially conceived by artist Alketa Xhafa Mripa in response to the ongoing traumatization and social exclusion of the more than 20,000 survivors of sexual violence in the war in Kosovo (Xhafa Mripa, 2024). The giant art installation of thousands of dresses and skirts hung on washing lines was first exhibited in the football stadium in Prishtina in 2015. It has since become a symbol of remembrance for survivors of sexual violence worldwide. In June 2024, in collaboration with the Mukwege Foundation, Xhafa Mripa collected thousands more garments from survivors of sexual violence globally and hung them in lines along the Lange Voorhout and in the City Hall in The Hague (Mukwege Foundation, 2024). *Thinking of You* draws attention to the reality of sexual violence in

conflict and its human consequences. It sought to challenge a global audience to think more deeply about the lived realities of survivors around the world and call for stronger action in preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence.

The **REDress Project**⁵⁰ initiated by Métis artist Jaime Black, is a powerful example of how cultural expression can function as a powerful tool for peacebuilding by centring truth, justice and remembrance within a decolonial framework. Through the public display of empty red dresses symbolizing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people (MMIWG2S), the project confronts the continued impact of colonial violence on Indigenous communities in Canada, interrupting everyday spaces with a call for recognition and accountability. Highlighting gaps in addressing gendered colonial violence, it uses visual symbolism to foster public engagement, collective mourning and cultural resurgence while reclaiming public space as a site for memory, protest and healing. The project demonstrates a transformative vision of peace rooted in a drive for structural change and cultural recognition.

Chronicles of Silence⁵¹ demonstrated how poetry can work as a form of testimony. In a series of participatory workshops facilitated by the poet and activist Pranika Koyu, and organized by Voices of Women Media (VoW Media)⁵² women survivors of gender-based violence in Nepal created poetry that was eventually published in an anthology.⁵³ The impetus for the research was to support women survivors of Nepal’s ‘People’s War,’ for whom there has been inadequate recognition, reparations and justice. In the absence of formal transitional justice or accountability

⁴⁹ See: <https://www.alketaxhafamripa.com/thinking-of-you-2024>

⁵⁰ See: <http://www.theredressproject.org/>; CBC (2015); Gallagher (2020); Kerr (2021); and Lesco (2018).

⁵¹ See: <https://www.voicesofwomenmedia.org/project/chronicles-of-silence-the-smoldering-embers/>.

⁵² See: <https://www.voicesofwomenmedia.org/>.

⁵³ See also: <https://www.artscabinet.org/imaging-gendered-violence/i-have-become-a-poet-now>

mechanisms, there has prevailed a culture of impunity for perpetrators with little public conversation about the enduring legacy and harms of the conflict. The project sought to break the silence and social stigma around gender-based violence and provide a safe space for expression. Using poetry as testimony created a safe space for survivors to share their experience and support one another. It protected the anonymity of participants while also ensuring that their voices were amplified. The anthology was distributed widely and used in various forums to highlight the survivors' stories and needs, but as well as demonstrating the potential, it also draws attention to the limits of culture as an enabler where it is ignored.

The **production company 'Deblokada'**,⁵⁴ led by director Jasmila Žbanic, makes visible and audible the experiences of women and civilians affected by the 1992 to 1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The company also exposes audiences to crimes that had long been silenced or denied, especially wartime sexual violence, forced disappearances and genocide. *Grbavica: The Land of My Dreams*⁵⁵ was awarded the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival. The film remains a seminal work in feminist and transitional justice cinema, offering an urgent counter-narrative to dominant, often masculinized accounts of war. It contributed to public debates that led to the adoption of the Law on the Protection of Civilian Victims of War, granting legal status to survivors of sexual violence. *Red Rubber Boots*⁵⁶ explores maternal pain, childhood loss

and the discovery of mass graves, while *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*⁵⁷ addresses the politics of silence surrounding rape camps and atrocities.

Another Deblokada production, *Quo Vadis, Aida?*⁵⁸ (40 wins of 43 nominations) - the best European film in 2021 (including the best European director and the best European actor), shortlisted for an Academy Award and nominated for a BAFTA in 2021 - foregrounds the Srebrenica genocide through a feminist reframing of atrocity through the intimate lens of maternal loss. As a work of creative praxis, the film powerfully interrogates the failures of both international institutions and local societies to reckon with mass violence, rendering it a landmark in post-conflict cinema and gendered memory politics. Crucially, these creative praxis of *Deblokada* have also reached audiences in communities where perpetrators originate, where wartime propaganda and an informational blockade limited public awareness of these crimes, advocating for reflection and healing (Jelaca, 2016; Simic, 2020).

Together these projects demonstrate the potential for creative praxis to be an enabler of peace through advocacy, recognition, resistance and repair; but they also highlight important questions about the politics of visibility, the role of art and artists in activism, the ethics of representation and the challenges of ensuring meaningful change for survivors.

⁵⁴ See: <https://www.deblokada.ba/>.

⁵⁵ See: <https://mubi.com/en/ba/films/grbavica-the-land-of-my-dreams>

⁵⁶ See: <https://deblokada.ba/red-rubber-boots/>

⁵⁷ See: <https://www.deblokada.ba/for-those-who-can-tell-no-tales>

⁵⁸ See: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8633462/>

H

Diagnostic reflection

The vignettes in this section offer more than narrative diversity. They illuminate a critical insight: **cultural peacebuilding works not because it scales universally, but because it resonates deeply within specific social, emotional and historical landscapes.** What succeeds is not replication, but attunement - the ability to root peace practices in place while drawing out insights that inform broader strategies. This process reflects the approach set out in the C4P Mosaic, where culture is not simply an object of maintenance but an active medium for justice and peace through participatory, creative engagement and experiential learning.

Whether through sonic archives, participatory digital tools, poetic mediation, reconstruction of heritage sites or reimagined pedagogies, the creative praxes described here operate within and against the conditions of fragmentation, exclusion and contested belonging. These artistic means function as vital places of creative praxis where communities reclaim agency, rebuild trust and reassert their narratives - processes that are both pedagogical and reparative. Legitimacy in peace processes often emerges not from institutional mandate, but from narrative resonance, symbolic authority and communal trust, cultivated through inclusive participation that bridges generations and honours local knowledge.

This section does not present solutions; rather, it presents signals: signals of where cultural innovation is already addressing complexity; signals of what legitimacy can look like beyond formal structures; signals of how emotional, artistic and relational methods must be taken seriously as diagnostic tools for sustainable peace. The vignettes also highlight the C4P Mosaic's strength in integrating justice, peace and creative praxis through culture and pedagogy - by centring learning-through-doing, fostering intergenerational transmission and situating cultural heritage as both a laboratory and living resource for social cohesion and resilience.

These signals matter not only for communities living through conflict, but for policy-makers, funders and institutions seeking to support peace in ways that are adaptive and dignified. Read together, the vignettes in this section sketch a map of possibility, not of fixed routes, but of navigational markers. A landscape of lived cultural intelligence, ready to be engaged on its own terms. This cultural intelligence is grounded in humility and a recognition of the layered, sometimes contradictory dimensions of memory, identity and resistance, all of which C4P Mosaic helps to illuminate and operationalize.

While many of the vignettes in this section are rooted in contexts of conflict and post-conflict transition, the diagnostic patterns they surface about legitimacy, memory and cultural repair are equally relevant in societies grappling with rising authoritarianism, fractured civic discourse or contested narratives of belonging. **Culture is not only a tool for *rebuilding* peace where conflict has occurred, but also for *sustaining* peace where it is quietly unraveling.** This underscores the critical importance of well-structured and context-attentive transnational solidarity and responsibility, which support culturally grounded interventions that nurture agency, inclusion and cohesion amid complexity.

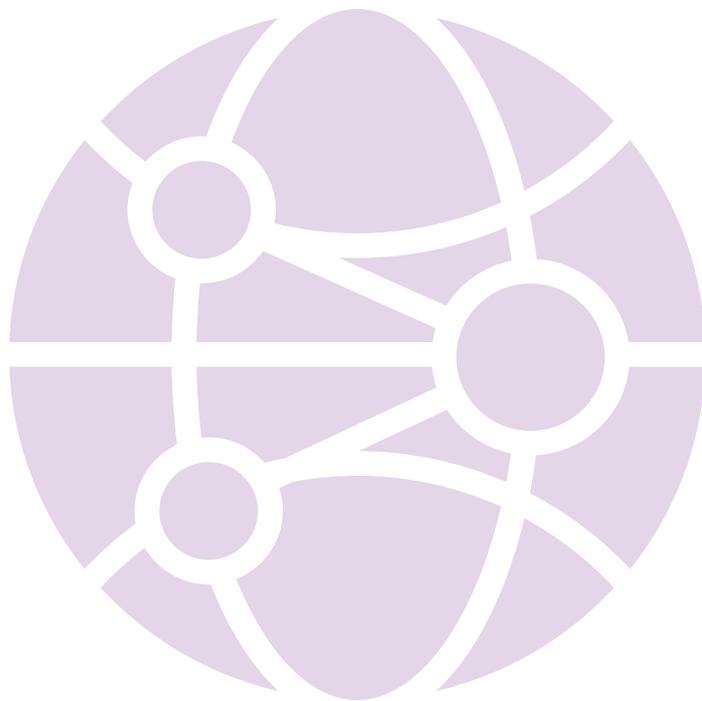
The diagnostic reflection highlights key challenges intrinsic to cultural peacebuilding. The fragility of legitimacy - rooted in narrative resonance and communal trust rather than formal authority - makes peace processes vulnerable to the instrumentalization of culture and the marginalization of certain groups. The complex, fragmented social landscapes revealed by the diagnostics require interventions that are deeply attuned to local realities and historical contexts. Resource

limitations, institutional fragmentation and the complexities of equitable transnational solidarity further challenge the sustainability and inclusiveness of cultural peacebuilding initiatives.

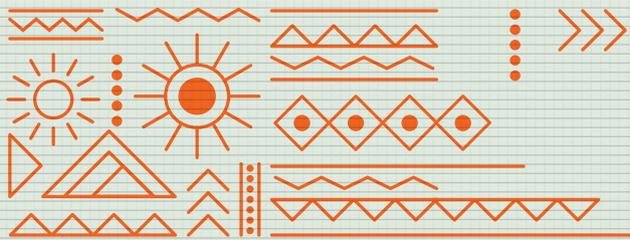
Yet, these same diagnostics also reveal compelling opportunities. The diversity of creative and pedagogical practices demonstrates culture's power to restore social cohesion, foster inclusive identities and empower marginalized voices. Emotional, artistic and relational methods serve not merely as symbolic acts, but as essential pathways for social justice and communal empowerment, as supported by the proposal of the C4P Mosaic.

The vignettes also map a terrain of tensions and potential, underscoring the necessity for peacebuilding policies and programmes to engage in culturally sensitive, participatory and adaptive approaches that respond to their contextual realities. This alignment ensures that cultural peacebuilding can act as a dynamic, context-sensitive force - bridging the emotional, symbolic, and material dimensions of peace - and thus contributing to sustainable and just outcomes across diverse and evolving conflict-affected and fragile settings.

The diverse thematic streams and their diagnostic reflections converge within the nexus of the C4P Mosaic and help us to envision the **diverse cultural pathways to peace**. These inputs shape the remaining sections of this report, connecting with youth perspectives, exploring key opportunities and challenges and ultimately offering insights for action.

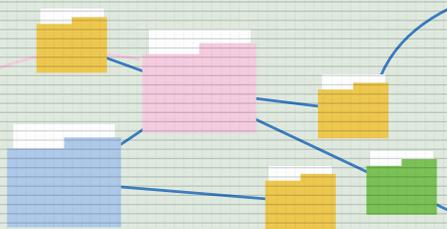


CULTURE IN MOTION – WOVEN PATHWAYS TOWARDS PEACE



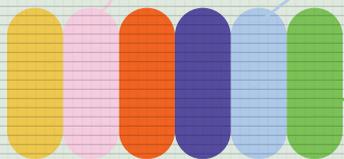
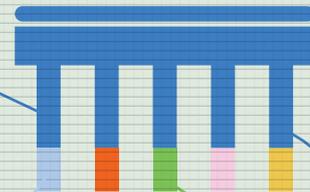
**Creative expression
& oral traditions**

**Cultural heritage
& memory**



**Education, pedagogy
& intergenerational
mediation**

**Digital participation
& documentation**



**Cultural diplomacy
& peacebuilding**

**Transnational
cultural solidarity**



**Advocacy, recognition,
resistance & repair**



IV. YOUTH PERSPECTIVES

A

Rethinking youth engagement in peacebuilding

Youth⁵⁹ play an important role in contributing to peace. They hold unique knowledge and experience and act proactively as change-makers and peacemakers in local and global communities (UNESCO, 2019). Young people have the right to have a voice in and processes that affect their lives. They must be part of decision-making tables, as signalled by the adoption of Resolution 2250⁶⁰ by the United Nations Security Council in 2015, and its urge to set up mechanisms that allow young people to meaningfully engage in peace processes (UNESCO, 2002; United Nations Security Council, 2015).

When we talk about **youth engagement in cultural peacebuilding**, it is important to consider the diverse spaces and forms of youth engagement, and the agency and leadership that youth can have in such processes. Young people engage with culture boldly, creatively and differently; but here's the thing: the world doesn't always see youth engagement that way. Youth engagement is often expected to look structured and limited into pre-designed frameworks and approaches that can actually hold young people back, instead of recognizing their engagement in all its diverse and dynamic forms.

This is also reflected in how we define and measure impact: traditional approaches often rely on rigid indicators that fail to capture the relational, emotional and transformative nature of cultural peacebuilding led by youth that often don't fit these metrics and overlook their real value and impact. One example to highlight here is the *Ordinary Heroes* initiative, where youth take the lead as storytellers (see Subsection III-B). They document and share personal stories that challenge inherited narratives of blame and use culture as a civic space for empathy and healing through the use of creative tools like film and interethnic workshops. Efforts like these show us that youth are not just participating - they are reimagining peacebuilding in ways that traditional metrics may fail to see.

This invites us to take a moment and reflect on the following:

- Are we truly recognizing and engaging youth as **equal partners, leaders and stakeholders in their own right** in cultural peacebuilding, with their own experiences and knowledge, or are we still treating them in a top-down way, merely as beneficiaries, passive participants, minor contributors?
- Are we **measuring what truly matters in youth-led efforts** for peacebuilding, or are we allowing narrow indicators to overlook the deeper impacts?

⁵⁹ 'For statistical purposes, the United Nations defines "youth" as persons aged between 15 and 24. However, this definition is not universal. As the experience of being young can vary substantially across the world, between countries and regions, we consider "youth" as a flexible category. As such, context is always an important guide in UNESCO's definition of youth' (UNESCO.n.d.b).

⁶⁰ <https://press.un.org/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm>

B

Insights for a youth-centred perspective

It is key to recognize that not all methods are the same when talking about youth participation in cultural approaches to peacebuilding. Perspectives vary in theory and practice depending on how we engage with and address the following questions.

- What does participation look like through the lens of youth?
- What mechanisms are used to promote youth participation in cultural peacebuilding?
- How is youth participation put into practice?

1. WHAT DOES PARTICIPATION LOOK LIKE THROUGH THE LENS OF YOUTH?

Youth participation, from the perspective of those expected to participate, is most meaningful when it moves beyond symbolic involvement and is rooted in partnership. UNESCO's Toolbox for Youth Policy and Programming⁶¹ outlines two complementary approaches in this regard: institutional collaboration with young people to co-design and co-deliver initiatives, or supporting young people to design and lead their own initiatives. Both approaches affirm young people as civic actors and knowledge holders, rather than passive beneficiaries. To avoid tokenism, youth engagement must be guided by core principles such as agency, inclusion, rights-based participation and shared responsibility, ensuring that young people are recognized as partners in decision-making processes and are equipped to influence outcomes in ways that are both substantive and sustainable (UNESCO, 2023).

2. WHAT MECHANISMS ARE USED TO PROMOTE YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL PEACEBUILDING?

Official discourses, generally defined by top-down perspectives, suggest recognizing

participation through youth empowerment for peace. From some official perspectives, this is understood as the process of strengthening capacities, confidence and agency that allows young people to positively affect their environment. By framing empowerment within the idea of capacity-building, these perspectives tend to automatically link it to the education agenda, aiming to incorporate the teaching of capacities, values and skills in school curricula to equip students to practice peace. In this scenario, youth remain the beneficiaries of services, learning and training without a real opportunity to meaningfully engage or lead action.

3. HOW IS YOUTH PARTICIPATION PUT INTO PRACTICE?

In the current discourse, youth engagement is frequently reduced to simplistic categories of victims, perpetrators or passive participants, particularly neglecting young women's agency in shaping peace processes. Furthermore, by often framing youth engagement predominantly as non-political cultural activities, peacebuilding initiatives inadvertently marginalize youth as authentic political and civic actors.

Youth participation in peacebuilding can be viewed in different ways. Sometimes, young people are simply included. This tends to be a top-down approach that states how and when youth can be taken into account, usually inviting them to join existing structures, but not intending to give them enough power to co-lead peace processes. On the contrary, **youth-centred peacebuilding** stands apart by giving young people the space to lead, decide and drive change, through co-shaping institutional initiatives or leading their own. Initiatives such as *Drop the Gun, Pick Up the Pen*⁶² in Somalia illustrate youth reclaiming culture as critical infrastructure to reconstruct identity, foster belonging and exercise political agency. These

⁶¹ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387755>

⁶² See: <http://elmanpeace.org/our-work/drop-the-gun-pick-up-the-pen/>

initiatives exemplify meaningful engagement, involving agency, inclusion, shared responsibility and valuing youth contributions. Ensuring autonomy, safety, access to information and adequate support further enables youth to meaningfully influence processes and build relevant capacities (UNESCO, 2023).

Critical Questions to Consider:

- How do young people perceive the role they currently play in **shaping decisions and actions** in cultural efforts for cultural peacebuilding, and what role would they like to have?
- To what extent do certain **groups or affiliations of young people** take priority in being empowered for peacebuilding? How can we assess whether those being targeted are the ones situated in contexts where such empowerment is most critically needed?
- What are the most direct and effective ways for young people to **develop their confidence, capacities and agency for peacebuilding**? Which pathways, environments or experiences best support this development?
- What does the ability to share **power and resources for youth-centred participation** rely on? What determines their participatory role in peacebuilding?

C

The reality check - Critical reflections for meaningful youth participation

At the heart of the debate to understand youth participation, we can find the spaces where young people construct, reconstruct and reinforce their practices and active involvement. This issue involves a complex combination of variables, mechanisms and social processes that differ according to the social context. Although education plays an important role for meaningful engagement, it is also easy to find virtual settings and community participation as strong spaces of youth influence, inviting us to rethink and open our imagination of the spaces, processes and mechanisms for promoting youth participation in peacebuilding.

Another key consideration are the contexts in which young people are willing to and/or in need of participating. It is important to identify the characteristics of the scenarios and young actors that are expected to participate in peacebuilding, as well as to determine the access mechanisms that enable the public sector to reach them. This is especially relevant when working in settings where enclaves of violence diminish state legitimacy and power of the state, thus increasing the challenge of ensuring effective means and mechanisms for youth participation.

Finally, youth participation seen from the agency to enact an active role in peacebuilding raises the following question: what does such ability depend on? Certainly, if that power depended only on the drive of individuals, then strengthening youth capabilities would suffice for their

participation to take place. However, it is essential to consider the exercise of power to social, institutional, financial and cultural legitimizing structures that constantly mediate and define youth participation. The vignette on *Dhaqan Celis* (see Subsection III-D) is a powerful case in point: once experienced by many young people as a coercive cultural imposition, it is now being reimagined as a space for intergenerational healing and identity co-creation and power sharing, a space that is co-designed by youth.

Think about it:

- Are we focusing too much on shaping youth through formal systems while ignoring the **organic ways they use their agency**?
- When was the last time we asked young people **what they think their participation looks like**?
- Are we considering the **structural enablers** that promote or hinder youth participation?

D

It's time to think, engage
and act differently

Let's be clear: youth-led cultural initiatives are redefining peace. Yet, despite the power of youth contributions, they often still face what feels like an old structure built without them: scarce resources, where creativity is treated as extra, not essential; shrinking civic space, where expression becomes a risk; tokenism, where they're invited but not trusted; and systems not built to let them lead, still too rigid to hold their vision.

Thinking differently means stepping back and letting youth lead on their terms - messy, bold and beautiful. Engaging differently means listening without fixing; supporting without directing. Acting differently means not adding youth at the end of the process but co-creating with them from day one. It is about standing beside them, not just as allies, but as listeners, witnesses and co-dreamers of a peace rooted in culture, and alive with courage.

Ask yourself:

- Are we just giving youth a platform to speak, or are we **sharing power** so they can co-shape and lead solutions with all groups in society?
- Are we prepared to let youth (co-)shape the agenda, even if it **disrupts traditional approaches?**
- How can we ensure that youth-driven cultural peace initiatives receive **long-term support** rather than one-off recognition?

1. RESOURCES TO HAVE A LOOK ON

- United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250⁶³
- UNESCO Toolbox for Youth Policy and Programming⁶⁴
- Youth Score Card⁶⁵
- The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security⁶⁶
- Youth-Centered Peacebuilding Framework⁶⁷
- Principles and Barriers to Meaningful Youth Engagement⁶⁸
- UN Youth2030 Toolkit⁶⁹



⁶³ <https://press.un.org/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm>

⁶⁴ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387755>

⁶⁵ <https://ocdc.coop/resource-center/u-n-youth-score-card>

⁶⁶ <https://unoy.org/downloads/the-missing-peace/>

⁶⁷ <https://cnxus.org/resource/youth-centered-peacebuilding-framework/>

⁶⁸ <https://www.unmgcy.org/meaningful-engagement>

⁶⁹ <https://www.unyouth2030.com/toolkit>

YOUTH AS A FORCE FOR CULTURAL PEACEBUILDING



V. OPPORTUNITIES, ASSUMPTIONS, CHALLENGES AND RISKS

Picking up on insights from the vignettes and youth perspectives discussed in Sections III and IV, this section draws out a set of specific opportunities (assumptions) and challenges (risks) for enabling culture for peace and operationalizing the Culture for Peace Mosaic (C4P Mosaic).

As has been discussed in this report, culture, creative praxis and pedagogy can work together to support peace in both local and global settings. Creative praxis can help both to understand and to change narratives, support learning across generations and help build empathy and understanding within and between communities. There is a continuum of practice across contexts of conflict and peace and from local, grassroots efforts to structural support such as ensuring fair legal frameworks, funding and inclusive policy-making.

Culture for peace is a powerful enabler of a different kind of peace formation, toward a culture of peace - but it is not a given, nor is it without risk. Building peace through culture can be fragile because it relies on shared stories and community trust; it can also be 'messy', as discussed in Section IV on youth perspectives. This can render it susceptible to misuse, tokenism and appropriation or instrumentalization. Moreover, since cultural work is deeply tied to local context, it can be hard to scale up. Limited resources and isolated institutions also make it harder to ensure the continuity of culture-based peacebuilding activities.

The current section excavates both the wide range of **opportunities** for harnessing culture for peace as well as the **challenges** faced in this endeavour, setting out the key elements in ensuring change will happen (**assumptions**) and elements that could challenge these assumptions and undermine the C4P Mosaic (**risks**). These form the basis for the collection of insights for action to be presented in Section VI.

A

Opportunities and assumptions

This subsection sets out five key elements that must hold true in order successfully to harness culture as an enabler of peace: inclusion, dialogue, solidarity, innovation and recovery.

1. INCLUSION - CENTRING LOCAL APPROACHES AND MARGINALIZED GROUPS

Harnessing local agency, especially of youth and marginalized groups, presents perhaps the most significant opportunity for shaping

culture for peace; however, this must be facilitated through participatory approaches that respect participants' rights to partial visibility or 'opacity' (Glissant, 2024) as a means of perpetuating dignity and autonomy and protecting complex identities.

The concepts of culture and peace, when integrated into formal and informal peacebuilding initiatives, involve engaging with interculturality, which can present a strong opportunity for promoting global awareness

that recognizes local identities. Increasingly, the connection between these two concepts suggests the need for recognizing the active participation of distinct social groups in both shared and independent spaces. This approach allows communities to navigate the complexities of their contexts as profound social transformations unfold toward the sustainable construction of peace.

Participatory practices can build trust and advocate co-production, empowerment through education and citizen-led digital initiatives as mechanisms for inclusive peacebuilding. The shift from top-down to community-led models is critical, with cultural programmes offering safe, expressive spaces and fostering cohesion.

Key insights:

- **Active participation from a local perspective** - particularly in long-term processes - implies collective engagement that creates an emotional and communal buffer effect. This helps to mitigate the potentially harmful effects of peacebuilding policies and programmes among vulnerable people or victims of violence, while also helping to protect the participants' personal, physical or psychological well-being.
- **'Opacity'** functions as a protective mechanism that safeguards participants' dignity and autonomy by allowing them control over their own narratives, recognizing their right to withhold aspects of their identity or story (Glissant, 2024). It perpetuates the richness of lived experience and prevents reductionist storytelling, allowing individuals to retain control over how they are represented.
- Shifting away from extractive research, **co-production** can allow vulnerable communities to shape how their experiences are documented and interpreted in peacebuilding efforts.
- The incorporation of **decolonial approaches** can open pathways for peace

grounded in multiple ways of knowing and being (Azarmandi, 2023). Focusing on **local agency and Indigenous knowledge** helps to decolonize cultural narratives and privilege lived experience, and grassroots initiatives can reclaim ownership of cultural memory and resist externally imposed narratives, especially in co-production processes.

- **Locally grounded approaches** challenge traditional notions of empowerment, whereby the participation of marginalized groups - such as youth in peacebuilding - is mediated by structural forces such as education, policy access and social legitimacy. Agency requires not only the capacity to think about how to enact change but also the power to execute such change (Sen, 1999).⁷⁰
- **Digital platforms** can enable community control of heritage. Tools like digital incubators and citizen documentation efforts help communities maintain and share culture on their own terms.
- Cultural programmes can be outlets for expression, tools for **civic engagement** and platforms for reclaiming agency.

CENTRAL OPPORTUNITY FOR INCLUSION: **Reinforcing locally anchored efforts and centring marginalized voices**, prioritizing agency and meaningful cultural engagement for peace.

⁷⁰ Amartya Sen suggests linking the notion of capabilities to the exercise of power, as one thing is having the capacity to think about influencing a certain sphere, but another is having the power to execute such influence (Sen, 1999).

2. DIALOGUE - INTERGENERATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE

Intergenerational and intercultural exchange offers a profound opportunity to harness culture as a force for peace by fostering mutual understanding, healing and solidarity across age groups and cultural communities. Amid widespread challenges to global peace, ‘...investing in intercultural dialogue and in culture as a unifying force is also a critical lever to foster social cohesion and reduce societies’ vulnerability to conflict, forging the conditions for lasting peace’ (UNESCO, 2024a, p. 7).

Grounded in participatory and inclusive practices, these exchanges enable elders to share traditional knowledge and lived experience, while empowering youth to engage with heritage and reimagine it in contemporary contexts. Such engagement supports the transmission of values like empathy, tolerance and responsibility, which are vital for social cohesion in divided and plural societies.

Through a convergence of digital and traditional forms of cultural transmission, new modes of cross-border and intergenerational engagement are possible with digital tools. Programmes involving elders and youth in documenting heritage can support knowledge transfer, while diaspora engagement via digital platforms enables cultural reconnection and strengthens transnational identities.

Collaborative cultural activities - such as storytelling, community rituals, arts-based practices and co-created performances

- create spaces where diverse voices can be heard and respected. These shared experiences build bridges across generational and cultural divides, reinforcing collective memory and nurturing a shared vision for peaceful coexistence.

Key insights:

- **Education and pedagogy** can be a gateway to intercultural understanding, with formal and informal learning spaces as venues for social cohesion (UNESCO, 2024b) and peacebuilding.
- Intergenerational and intercultural dialogue foster **shared ownership of cultural narratives**, encouraging mutual respect and reducing generational and cultural divides.
- **Cultural co-creation** can empower both elders and youth, allowing traditional knowledge to remain dynamic and relevant while giving younger generations a meaningful role in peacebuilding processes.
- **Digital cultural engagement programmes**⁷¹ can foster cultural reconnection and foster intergenerational knowledge transfer via digital methodologies and tools.
- **Arts, creative practice and cultural exchange** provide spaces where individuals and communities can use their voice, as well as an outlet for non-violent resistance - fostering intercultural collaboration, empathy and respect across cultural divides.

CENTRAL OPPORTUNITY for DIALOGUE: To build inclusive and lasting peace by **fostering mutual understanding, shared cultural ownership and collaborative engagement** across communities and generations.

⁷¹ See, for example, Dive into Heritage: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/dive-into-heritage/>

3. SOLIDARITY - COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

There is a significant opportunity to develop partnerships across a range of stakeholders at different levels to mobilize culture for peace while maintaining foundations in ethical collaboration. Cross-cultural collaboration and partnerships can challenge hierarchies and structural inequalities (Funk and Said, 2010), and incorporate diverse epistemologies, leading to the promotion of more inclusive and effective outcomes.

Paulo Freire's (1970) concept of dialogical action advocates for a collaborative process rooted in dialogue, mutual respect and the co-creation of knowledge. This enables us to frame models of equitable cultural collaboration, based on horizontal exchange rather than vertical knowledge imposition. Intersectional approaches can support this by informing and addressing how different aspects of a person's identity - such as race, gender, class, age, ability, sexuality, religion and migration status - interact and overlap (Crenshaw, 2013). Taking on such intersectional approaches helps to ensure that frameworks and collaboration on cultural peacebuilding acknowledge and address the diverse experiences, needs and perspectives that are required to shape lasting peace (Stavrevska and Smith, 2020).

Long-term engagement, shared authorship and mutual learning must be prioritized over

extractive or hierarchical models. The success of cultural partnerships for peace relies on trust, co-authorship and sustained relationships, encouraging a rethinking of ownership and authority in cultural processes (Castillejo-Cuéllar, 2023b).

Key insights:

- **Ethical collaboration** grounded in dialogical action (Freire, 1970) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2013) provides inclusive framing based on mutual learning rather than transactional outcomes, ensuring that collaborations are inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of all participants.
- **Long-term engagement** rooted in the foundations of conflict and local context (Bodie et al., 2023) can contribute to building trust, fostering ongoing relationships and ensuring sustainability, with initiatives that are **resilient and adaptable to changing social contexts.**
- **Co-production and co-authorship** can be reimaged and decolonized, recognizing the 'fabric' of testimonies, vignettes and fragments that make up a shared creative process that can transform both the method and the meaning of peacebuilding work.

CENTRAL OPPORTUNITY FOR SOLIDARITY: Shift from **project-based collaboration to deep, sustained engagement**, rethinking traditional models of authorship, ownership and authority in cultural partnerships.

4. INNOVATION - CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

Technology is reshaping how communities safeguard heritage, engage in peace dialogues and resist cultural erasure. While the rapid evolution of digital technologies introduces risks that must be managed responsibly, digital innovation has strong potential for expanding access and can provide transformative opportunities for supporting and strengthening cultural resilience.

Innovations such as immersive documentation, AI interpretation and low-resource technology create opportunities to expand access and impact. Emerging technologies designed for low-connectivity and limited infrastructure environments can support communities and widen access. Furthermore, virtual platforms enable cultural exchange across borders, while digital curation and transnational networks foster pluralistic narratives. Merging traditional knowledge with digital tools enhances both environmental and cultural peacebuilding.

Key insights:

- **Immersive documentation technologies** like 3D modelling and virtual reality have expanded our capacity to document and archive cultural heritage at risk. These technologies can allow for precise digital perpetuation that captures not only visual elements but also spatial relationships and material properties.
- Distributed ledger technology such as Blockchain technology can offer new and innovative approaches to **protect cultural heritage from tampering**.
- **Satellite imagery and analysis** can provide support for proving or disproving damage to cultural sites and calm tensions or assumptions.
- **AI pattern recognition** can reveal

previously unrecognized connections between cultural practices and process large quantities of information to generate new insights.

- **Cross-border digital cultural engagement** can create possibilities for cultural exchange and collaborative digital curation.
- **Culturally adaptive and responsive digital interfaces** can enhance adoption and engagement of cultural initiatives.
- Digital tools have **democratized cultural participation** post-COVID-19, creating space to reclaim ownership of cultural memory at the grassroots level and resist externally imposed narratives through virtual storytelling, online festivals, digital archives and activism on social media.

CENTRAL OPPORTUNITY FOR INNOVATION: Growth of **digital cultural diplomacy**, virtual storytelling and decentralized cultural archives to support memory work and dialogue across divides.

5. RECOVERY - CULTURAL MEMORY PERPETUATION

The recovery of cultural memory through shared historical narratives and cultural expressions can be a key tool for peacebuilding and healing, especially in contexts marked by conflict or violence. As highlighted by UNESCO's Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence,⁷² this kind of memory work opens up space for empathy by bringing attention to voices and stories that have often been silenced or overlooked (UNESCO, 2012).

Traditional rituals, storytelling and arts are key tools for healing and rebuilding collective identity. Community-led archives and oral histories hold the ability to facilitate empowerment for traditionally marginalized individuals through a sense of being heard and acknowledged (Kahale, 2021). This can help to

connect divided societies and work towards decolonizing narratives to promote grassroots agency, ensuring memory work reflects lived experiences and supports sustained peace.

Key insights:

- Memory and heritage play **therapeutic and unifying roles** in societies emerging from conflict and trauma, particularly through informal practices (Rugo and Parish, 2021).
- Rituals, storytelling and traditional practices offer **non-institutional pathways for healing**.
- **Creative practice** facilitates emotional recovery and identity reconstruction in fractured societies.
- Practices involving the **decolonization of memory** allow communities to reclaim narratives and challenge-imposed histories.

⁷² <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000217786>

CENTRAL OPPORTUNITY FOR RECOVERY: Re-centring **community memory** as a vital element of long-term restoration and repair, with emphasis on participatory maintenance methods.

B

Challenges and risks

This subsection discusses five key risks that could undermine the success of culture as an enabler of peace: scale, technology, ethics, power and exploitation.

1. SCALING - BUILDING SUSTAINABLE AND MEASURABLE IMPACT

The sustainability and capacity to measure the impact of cultural approaches to peacebuilding are a central challenge. There are considerable difficulties associated with the assessment of peacebuilding in and of itself. The multidimensional complexity of peace processes makes them complex to measure (Brusset et al., 2022), as it is difficult to establish comprehensive indicators that capture the individual, social, political, cultural and emotional dimensions involved, most of which are predominantly qualitative in nature. Evaluation tools for peacebuilding initiatives may only measure impact through the number or nationality of participants involved, for example.

Cultural peacebuilding, then, is even more difficult to evaluate. Although cultural diversity has the potential to serve as a strong catalyst for reshaping global approaches to development and peace (UNESCO, 2009), existing metrics and funding models tend to focus on short-term impact, rather than being calibrated for long-term societal change or cultural resilience, thus impacting their sustainability. Furthermore, existing impact assessment tools fail to capture long-term or nuanced outcomes, making it difficult to secure future investment (Fairey et al., 2020).

Long-term planning and sustainable funding models are crucial for cultural peacebuilding, as is the inclusion of qualitative and participatory methods that can address forms of transformation that are difficult to quantify, particularly those linked to everyday practices, such as shifts in attitudes and the rebuilding of social trust.

Key insights:

- **Project and funding cycles** commonly only last up to a couple years, hindering their financial sustainability and limiting their impact due to insufficient time to gain traction and show meaningful results (United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, 2019).
- **Overreliance on external and international funding** can weaken local legitimacy and inhibit grassroots mobilization. Furthermore, the issue of local ownership can arise in cases where the transfer of ownership to local institutions or communities has not been taken into consideration in the planning of cultural projects for peace, thus undermining their sustainability.
- Cultural efforts for peacebuilding at the state level often take place in more **informal ways** (Wrobel, 2018), and cultural approaches are often not explicitly embedded within national peacebuilding strategies but are rather derived at international levels and can subsequently lack rootedness in the cultural context. **Lack of specific and directed attention** to cultural approaches to peacebuilding

within national contexts weakens and dilutes its potential impact.

- Security is often a predominant focus of peacebuilding efforts at the country level, and **perspectives of culture as 'soft'** can

reduce the likeliness of its incorporation into formal peacebuilding approaches.

- **Ethical engagement** requires sustained commitment beyond project cycles.

KEY TAKEAWAY ON SCALING-RELATED CHALLENGES: There is a need for **new evaluation frameworks** that respect cultural complexity and long timelines for peace impact, and investment in culture as a powerful mechanism for peace.

2. TECHNOLOGY - INTEGRATING NEW TECHNOLOGIES

While technology opens new pathways to harness culture for peace, it also introduces new risks such as cultural distortion by AI, dependence on external technical support and exacerbating digital divides. Issues of consent, data ownership and accessibility remain under-addressed. Infrastructure limitations and fragmented legal frameworks further complicate implementation.

The rise of digital technologies in cultural work increases the importance of associated ethical considerations. This includes issues of uneven access and equity, ensuring that technological tools are used to enhance rather than hinder participation, protecting creativity and human agency in tech-driven processes and the risk of digital cultural extraction. As a result of these concerns, there is a risk of digital technology acting as a disruptor to peacebuilding efforts. These issues must be addressed if technology is to be embraced for the effective, sustainable and ethical advancement of peace.

Key insights:

- As digital technologies become increasingly integral to cultural production, the **ethical implications** of their use become more acute and require substantial consideration when applied to peacebuilding efforts.
- AI algorithms predicated on Western cultural data can **misinterpret or misrepresent** cultural expressions from other traditions, which can reinforce rather than challenge cultural biases.
- Communities risk becoming **dependent on external experts and suppliers**, which has financial and political implications.
- The use of digital technologies like social media can **enhance divisions and exploit cultural heritage** through the manipulation of data and images, spreading disinformation and selecting narratives to support exclusionary claims.
- **Governance and regulatory frameworks** have not kept up with the rate of technological development and struggle to bridge multiple jurisdictions.
- **Energy and environmental costs** of sustaining digitization and digital curation can be high.

KEY TAKEAWAY ON TECHNOLOGY-RELATED CHALLENGES: Without ethical safeguards and capacity-building, **technology can exacerbate existing inequalities** in cultural representation and peacebuilding.

3. ETHICS - ETHICS AND TRUST

As discussed in the text on opportunities and assumptions (Subsection V-A), decolonizing collaboration and embracing ‘opacity’ are ethical imperatives. However, in many cases current governance structures lack robust ethical guidance for cultural peacebuilding projects, especially regarding consent, representation and ownership. Linguistic exclusion, algorithmic bias and unequal access reinforce systemic inequities, and marginalized communities are thus at risk of exclusion or misrepresentation. True ethical practice in cultural efforts for peacebuilding must prioritize long-term, community-driven engagement over superficial compliance.

Key insights:

- A lack of **systemic ethical guidance** for cultural peacebuilding efforts poses risks for exclusion and misrepresentation, among other issues.

- Local cultural initiatives interact with larger funding and state institutions in the face of development-oriented policies, which can lead to power imbalances that challenge the **ethics of collaboration**. Decolonial considerations and justice-oriented frameworks are required to ensure that peacebuilding partnerships are rooted in ethics and community-led values and approaches.
- Established **ethical frameworks for cultural heritage have not kept pace with technological developments**, and inequity in access to digital technologies presents challenges to inclusive cultural peacebuilding.

KEY TAKEAWAY ON ETHICS-RELATED CHALLENGES: **Trust-building** is not procedural but relational; ethics must be embedded from project design through implementation and legacy.

4. POWER - POWER DYNAMICS AND INSTRUMENTALIZATION

Culture can be weaponized and manipulated to reinforce exclusionary or nationalistic narratives, which can amplify divisions, rather than heal them, particularly in fragile or conflict-affected contexts. This manipulation of culture can obscure uncomfortable truths, silence marginalized voices or serve propaganda purposes under the guise of unity.

In many fragile contexts, there is the risk of censorship, political pressure or lack of freedom of expression, where artists and cultural workers who address sensitive histories or advocate for justice may be silenced or targeted.

Without safe spaces or legal protection, it becomes difficult for culture to fulfil its role in truth-telling and democratic participation. Dominant power structures may co-opt

peacebuilding for political agendas. Censorship and surveillance threaten the safety of cultural actors, particularly in authoritarian or fragile contexts. It is necessary to promote and facilitate ethical collaboration that challenges, rather than reproduces, these dynamics.

Key insights:

- Culture can be **co-opted by state actors or institutions** to reinforce hegemonic narratives or suppress dissent.
- **Artistic freedom is threatened** in contexts of censorship and surveillance. Without strong legal and institutional protections, those using culture to speak truth or challenge injustice may be placed at personal risk.
- **Power structures** shape who can participate and whose narratives dominate.

KEY TAKEAWAY ON POWER-RELATED CHALLENGES: Peacebuilding must **actively resist the instrumentalization of culture**, advocating for strengthened artistic freedom and structural transformation.

5. EXPLOITATION - EXPLOITATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND LOSS OF DIVERSITY

Commercialization risks reducing cultural practices to commodities, especially when tailored to funder expectations. Intellectual property frameworks are often inadequate for protecting traditional knowledge, and subsequent gaps and performance pressures can strip communities of ownership and authenticity. Cultural commodification can distort or displace authentic local practices. Furthermore, globalization can homogenize traditions and undermine cultural specificity, which is essential for meaningful intercultural dialogue and peace rooted in mutual respect.

When cultural practices are stripped of context to meet external demands, their power to heal, connect and foster dialogue is diminished. Reshaping cultural expressions to fit donor-defined outcomes can result in their loss of original meaning, context and community relevance. This erodes authenticity and can alienate the very communities meant to benefit from cultural peacebuilding efforts.

Key insights:

- Globalization and external influence may erode local diversity and cultural

specificity, weakening the grounding of peacebuilding in lived cultural realities.

- Dependence on **external-driven models and funding** can result in local peacebuilders adjusting their activities to appease external parties (Cohen, 2014), which can pressure communities to perform culture in ways that align with outsiders' expectations. Subsequently this can disempower and marginalize traditional knowledge holders and reduce the effectiveness of cultural peacebuilding efforts.
- Colonial legacies often underpin cultural collaborations. Decolonizing collaboration also means being mindful of **cultural appropriation** and striving for genuine cultural exchange rather than exploitation, particularly in peacebuilding contexts.
- If culture is instrumentalized without care, it **risks becoming a hollow performance rather than a transformative force for peace**. Recognizing this is essential to design more respectful and sustainable cultural policies and programmes for peacebuilding.

KEY TAKEAWAY ON EXPLOITATION-RELATED CHALLENGES: Cultural peacebuilding must **perpetuate diversity** and be **community-driven**, resisting market-driven distortions and impacts.

Cross-cutting themes

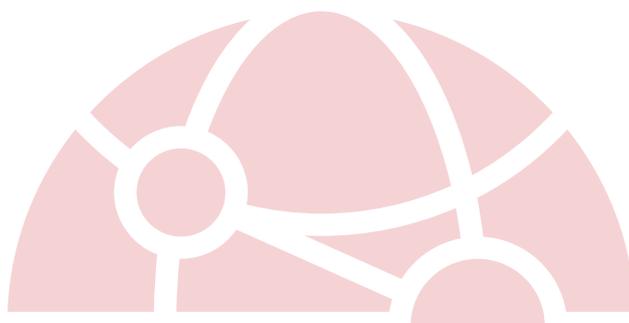
This section of the report has offered a robust foundation for advancing culture for peace by embracing opportunities to:

1. **Centre local and marginalized groups** through inclusion and the embedding of their voices.
2. **Build trust** through intergenerational dialogue and exchange.
3. **Reimagine ethical collaboration** through solidarity.
4. **Embrace complexity** through cultural innovation in conflict transformation.
5. **Foster social cohesion and repair** through cultural memory recovery and perpetuation.

It has also introduced several key risks and challenges associated with utilizing culture as a tool for peace:

- Measuring the effectiveness of cultural peacebuilding against quantitative metrics designed to evaluate scale and impact can lead to **short-termism and privilege externally driven models**, which often lack community ownership, leading to fragile outcomes and erosion of cultural diversity.
- **Uneven access and equity** in respect of harnessing digital technology can hinder participation, creativity and human agency in tech-driven processes and exacerbate the **risk of digital cultural extraction**.
- Foregrounding ethics and trust-based approaches demand more than procedural compliance and require ongoing, inclusive and equitable collaboration to **prevent manipulation and ensure mutual respect**.
- Cultural interventions must pay attention to and confront **power** imbalances to **ensure that local communities retain control**, voice and benefit.
- Commercialization risks exploitation, **reducing cultural practices to commodities**, especially when tailored to funder expectations.

Overall, the panorama of opportunities (assumptions) and challenges (risks) outlined in this section underscore the necessity of a **paradigm shift** - from extractive, short-term interventions to inclusive, respectful and resilient cultural ecosystems as the basis for sustainable peace. The following and final section translates these inputs, as well as those from all previous sections, into **insights for action** on harnessing culture for peace.



CULTURAL CURRENTS TOWARDS PEACE – INTERSECTIONS OF RISK AND POSSIBILITY

OPPORTUNITIES

Shared action
& partnerships

Local focus
& inclusion

Exchange
across cultures
& generations

Innovative
solutions

Keeping cultural
memory alive

CHALLENGES

Ethics & trust

Fair & equitable
technology
integration

Misuse of power

Measurable &
sustainable impact

Exploitation &
loss of diversity

VI. INSIGHTS FOR ACTION

This final section presents several insights to support diverse cultural stakeholders including policy-makers operationalize the Culture for Peace Mosaic (C4P Mosaic) in diverse geopolitical and governance contexts. Grounded in practice and research, these contributions provide useful orientations and core principles for embedding culture in approaches to peacebuilding. They strive to inspire decision-makers - in national governments, international organizations, civil society, cultural and peacebuilding institutions and more - to design actionable strategies and tools that harness culture as an enabler of just, sustainable and inclusive peace.

These **insights for action** call for bold measures and the application of creative imagination to utilize culture as the 'critical yeast' (Lederach, 2005) to activate a culture of peace that is more than simply the absence of violence, but the foundation for resilient communities, rooted in trust, dialogue and justice.

⁷³ See, for example, the 1954 UNESCO Convention (<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-cultural-property-event-armed-conflict-regulations-execution-convention?hub=66535>); 1972 UNESCO Convention (<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-concerning-protection-world-cultural-and-natural-heritage?hub=66535>); 2003 UNESCO Convention (<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-safeguarding-intangible-cultural-heritage?hub=66535>) and 2005 UNESCO Convention (<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-and-promotion-diversity-cultural-expressions?hub=66535>).

Core principles

Inspired by the opportunities presented in Subsection V-A, the text below outlines a set of **core principles** offering a strong basis to draw on culture and its transformative potential for driving just and sustainable peace. While rooted in the C4P Mosaic, the principles share common ground with UNESCO's cultural conventions,⁷³ specifically regarding shared responsibility, the centring of communities and affirming cultural diversity as essential for peace and sustainable development. These principles reaffirm that safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage and diversity is a pathway to just peace as reflected in the C4P Mosaic.

INCLUSION Centring local agency and marginalized voices.

- Move beyond narrow confines and parameters of peacebuilding to embrace inclusive practice.
- Support traditionally marginalized groups - such as youth, Indigenous Peoples, displaced communities, among others - in shaping cultural narratives and peace initiatives.
- Embrace participatory models that allow for 'opacity' and complexity, and community control of identity representation.
- Prioritize co-designed cultural programmes over externally imposed models.

DIALOGUE Fostering intergenerational and intercultural learning.

- Invest in intergenerational engagement and knowledge sharing - from youth to elders - including the use of digital tools.
- Bridge cultural divides through joint artistic creation, intercultural exchanges and cross-border digital platforms.
- Develop regional frameworks and tools for knowledge exchange.

SOLIDARITY Building ethical, sustainable partnerships.

- Embed intersectionality and long-term engagement into project design.
- Support shared authorship models and reframe ownership to prevent cultural extraction or elite control.
- Develop funding as well as monitoring, evaluation and learning models that support and enhance sustainability, capacity-building and employment.
- Incorporate reflective practice at the core of evaluation processes.

INNOVATION Embracing complexity and ethical use of technology.

- Expand access to digital cultural tools in low-resource settings.
- Develop cultural AI ethics committees and community consent protocols for digital heritage projects, especially those related to peace.
- Promote ethical AI and blockchain applications for the maintenance of memory and narrative plurality.
- Support digital cultural incubators and low-bandwidth tools designed for fragile contexts.
- Develop legal and policy frameworks for digital cultural heritage curation.

RECOVERY Fostering social cohesion and repair through perpetuation of cultural memory.

- Fund community-led archiving, oral histories and traditional healing practices.
- Promote culture as both a mechanism of collective mourning and a foundation for post-conflict identity rebuilding.

B

From risk to resilience - Strategic responses

To address the challenges and risks introduced in Subsection V-B, the table below highlights central areas, related challenges and potential policy responses for cultural peacebuilding. Intended to spark reflection, ideas and action, the outlined measures aim to translate complex issues into concrete strategies to harness culture for peace.

RISK AREA	CHALLENGE	POLICY RESPONSE
SCALE and Sustainability	Short-term funding on peacebuilding efforts undermines long-term cultural impact.	Develop multi-year funding models with built-in capacity-building and impact evaluation.
Integration of TECHNOLOGY	Algorithmic bias, digital colonialism and capacity gaps.	Promote community-led technology adoption and open-source cultural maintenance tools for peacebuilding; invest in digital literacy.
ETHICS and Governance	Lack of consent protocols, digital exploitation and power imbalance.	Establish clear ethical standards for digital heritage work; prioritize co-governance with affected communities.
POWER and Instrumentalization	Potential for cultural work to be co-opted for political ends; suppression of dissent.	Safeguard cultural freedom in programme and policy mandates; provide protection mechanisms for at-risk cultural workers.
EXPLOITATION, Commodification and Homogenization	Culture repackaged for donor optics and eroding authenticity.	Require cultural relevance criteria and anti-extractive funding conditions for peacebuilding efforts and support diversity-centred programming; support community-led curation of cultural value.

Grounded in both the collective work and the individual expertise of the experts in this group, and flowing from the C4P Mosaic, the following **key policy considerations** have emerged. Firmly aligned with the core principles set out in Subsection VI-A, these overarching insights are offered to support stakeholders seeking to activate culture as a pathway to peace.

1. Support for **culture and creative engagement through situated art praxis** as vital for enacting societal transformation, building trust, social cohesion and non-violence.
2. Develop **critical peace pedagogy** across all ages to move beyond abstract learning to include practical, everyday actions that embody peace and justice.
3. Engage **young people as key agents of change**, supported by education, digital platforms and leadership opportunities.
4. Harness **digital innovation as powerful tools** for archiving, curating and sharing peace-related knowledge and practices across generations and geographies.
5. Foster **multi-level cooperation** across local, national and international levels, addressing structural conditions and human relationships.

Engaging diverse stakeholders to harness culture for peace

If developed in siloes, national strategies and policies related to culture for peace risk disconnection from local realities (UNESCO, 2024a), thus limiting the effectiveness and sustainability of their potential impact. For this reason, engagement of a diverse range of stakeholders should be considered in national and international efforts, which can benefit from the insights for action provided in this section.

1. NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

Although a range of relevant stakeholders are instrumental in these efforts, countries can play a distinct role in harnessing culture as a tool for peace. National governments and Ministries of culture are encouraged to embed community-led cultural practices into national policies, legal frameworks and peace strategies, recognizing culture as a foundational pillar of peace, healing and social cohesion. To advance the insights outlined in this report, national governments and Ministries of culture are encouraged to take a leadership role in fostering inclusive, cross-sectoral collaboration.

This can begin by empowering **local governments** to implement community-led cultural initiatives that reflect local identities and promote healing. Through decentralized funding and supportive frameworks, local authorities can become key actors in translating national policies into place-based cultural practice.

Engaging **civil society organizations** is essential to ensure that cultural approaches to peacebuilding efforts remain rooted in justice, representation and community agency. Governments are urged to build long-term partnerships with CSOs - particularly those working with marginalized groups - and embed their voices in national

cultural and peace strategies. **Youth and intergenerational networks** play a critical role, and should be supported to lead cultural innovation, storytelling and dialogue across generations as part of a future-oriented peace agenda. To improve the meaningful inclusion and integration of young people in peace processes, countries are called on to develop or strengthen national youth policies, support youth-led actions for peacebuilding and implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250.⁷⁴

At the global level, collaboration with **international organizations** can help align national efforts with ethical standards and global frameworks while supporting knowledge exchange and sustainable funding. Similarly, working with the **private and technology sector** can expand access to inclusive digital tools that perpetuate cultural memory and promote dialogue, provided they are developed through ethical, community-centred approaches. Importantly, collaboration with private and technology sectors must be guided and regulated by clear legal frameworks, international agreements and policies, ensuring that innovative efforts align with peacebuilding objectives, and prioritize human rights and cultural integrity. For example, countries are invited to consider the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence⁷⁵ when engaging with these sectors on efforts related to culture for peace.

Finally, **academics, media and artists** are instrumental in shaping public understanding and perpetuating collective memory through research, narrative and creative expression. Governments are encouraged to consider investing in these cultural actors as peacebuilders, supporting freedom of expression and platforms for cultural reflection.

⁷⁴ <https://press.un.org/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm>

⁷⁵ Policy area 7 (culture) is particularly relevant for this work; however, the full recommendation should be taken into consideration as a key international resource on ethics and AI. (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381137>)

By strategically engaging across these sectors, national governments can embed culture as a driver of peace - creating resilient, inclusive societies grounded in a shared cultural life.

2. HOW DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS CAN ENGAGE WITH THIS DOCUMENT

To ensure effective cultural approaches to peacebuilding, all stakeholders are urged to consider the C4P Mosaic and engage with the core principles presented in Subsection VI-A. The table below provides ideas for how different groups of stakeholders can engage with these insights to embrace the power of culture for peace.

STAKEHOLDER	SUGGESTED ENGAGEMENT
<p>Local governments and communities - frontline actors in translating cultural diversity into tangible peace outcomes at the community level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate grassroots cultural expression as a means of healing, dialogue and preventing community-level tensions. • Support intercultural and interfaith programming that fosters peaceful coexistence and brings together divided communities. • Invest in local digital infrastructure and partnerships to sustain culturally rooted peacebuilding efforts.
<p>Civil society organizations - anchoring peace in culture by ensuring that cultural rights, justice and local agency are at the heart of peacebuilding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead community-based cultural initiatives that elevate marginalized voices and foster dialogue in fragile or conflict-affected contexts. • Use memory work, oral history and traditional healing practices as mechanisms for shared storytelling and community dialogue. • Advocate for ethical, participatory and locally owned cultural peacebuilding practices in policy and funding spaces.
<p>International organizations - ability to champion inclusive cultural peacebuilding by resourcing ethical, locally led and globally connected practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support locally driven cultural peacebuilding models through long-term, flexible funding and normative guidance. • Facilitate regional and global platforms for intercultural learning, memory exchange and healing across borders. • Uphold and promote ethical standards in the maintenance of cultural heritage, especially in conflict-affected or displaced settings. • Advance in the recognition of artists and cultural professionals as vulnerable actors in emergency and conflict situations.
<p>Youth and intergenerational networks - key to sustaining peace by shaping future-oriented, culturally grounded visions of justice and healing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive narrative change and peace advocacy through digital storytelling, artistic collaboration and cultural activism. • Facilitate intergenerational cultural learning to bridge historical divides and foster continuity in peace narratives. • Co-create inclusive cultural initiatives that reflect youth identities and contribute to long-term peacebuilding.
<p>Private and technology sector - ability to align innovation with cultural inclusion and peace outcomes to avoid harm and foster digital equity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow legal frameworks, international agreements and policies to ensure ethical approaches to cultural innovation for peace. • Design and support ethical digital tools that perpetuate cultural memory and amplify peace-centred narratives. • Invest in inclusive, community-developed cultural platforms that contribute to dialogue and resilience. • Address risks of digital colonialism by co-creating technologies that serve peacebuilding in marginalized or conflict-affected communities.
<p>Academics, media and artists - powerful agents in shaping cultural consciousness and truth-telling processes essential for lasting peace.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce reflective, justice-centred research and storytelling that challenges dominant narratives and promotes cultural peacebuilding. • Create and support artistic and media platforms that enable healing, dialogue and resistance to violence through cultural expression. • Develop participatory methodologies that elevate lived experience and cultural memory as peacebuilding assets.

Conclusion

This Report of the C4P Independent Expert Group on Culture for Peace has explored the strategic potential of culture as a powerful enabler for peace.

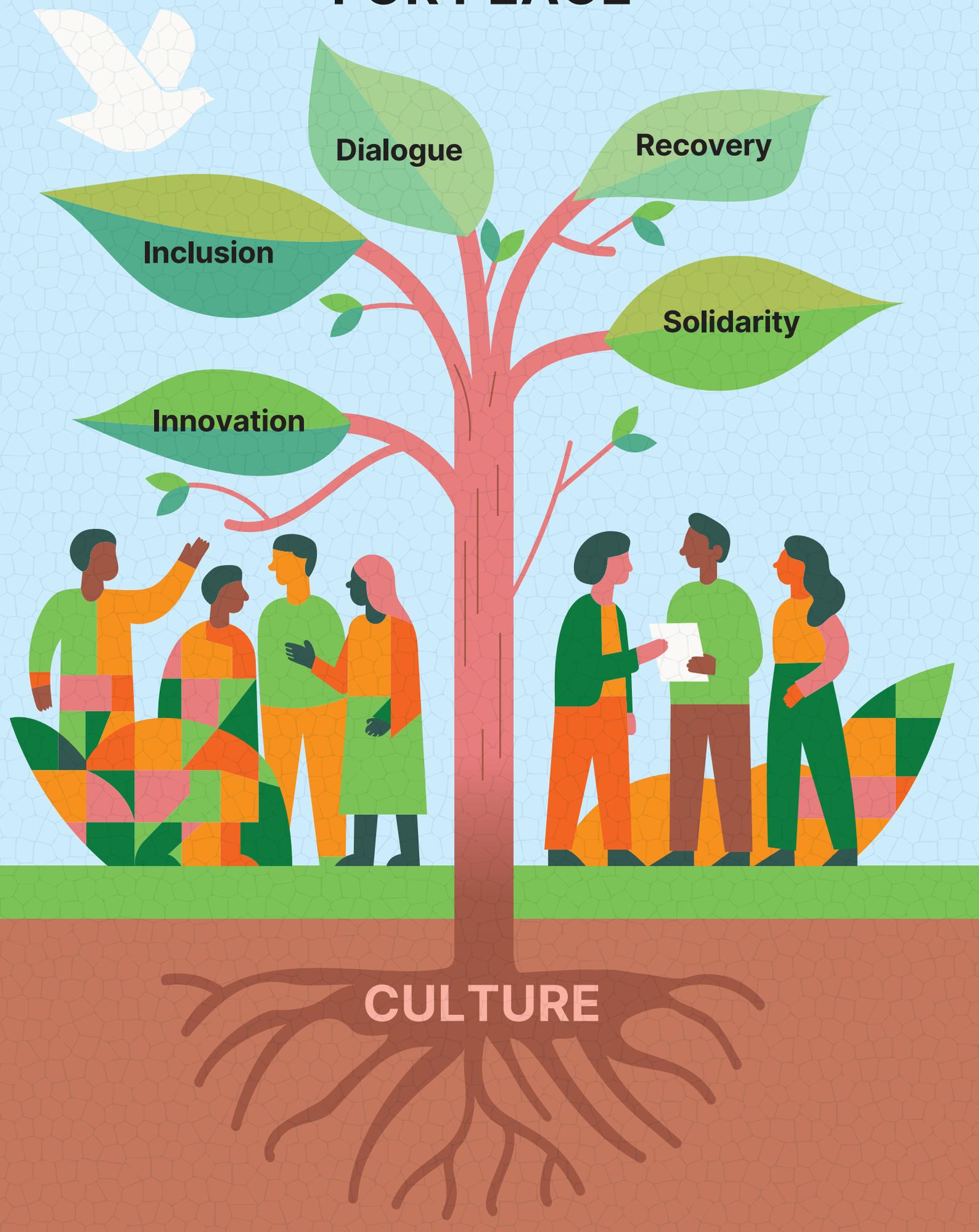
Grounded in a structured and evidence-based approach, and drawing on a robust theoretical background, the C4P Mosaic offers a conceptual and operational lens through which to understand and activate culture for peace. The presentation of reflective vignettes drawn from diverse contexts have illustrated how cultural praxis - from creative expression, to the safeguarding of heritage, digital participation and transnational solidarity - can foster inclusive, dialogic and transformative peace formation.

In identifying a range of opportunities (assumptions) and challenges (risks), the report has highlighted the dual reality that culture can be a powerful enabler of peace yet also remains vulnerable to complex issues that call for sustained commitment and ethical collaboration. Finally, it has provided insights for action, striving to provide innovative ideas and inspiration to all stakeholders on unlocking culture's transformative potential to build more inclusive, sustainable and peaceful societies for all.

In today's interconnected yet fractured world, harnessing culture for peace is paramount. We must reimagine peace through culture, not only as the absence of violence but as the presence of justice, dignity and harmony. We have aimed to do this through our work as an Independent Expert Group, and it is our hope that the C4P Mosaic can serve as a transformative tool in working towards **unlocking culture's full potential - as a method, process and long-term commitment for building just peace.**



CULTIVATING CULTURE FOR PEACE



Dialogue

Recovery

Inclusion

Solidarity

Innovation

CULTURE

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BIOS OF EXPERT GROUP MEMBERS

ALEJANDRO CASTILLEJO-CUÉLLAR

ALEJANDRO CASTILLEJO-CUÉLLAR is former Commissioner of Colombia's Truth Commission (2020/22) and Associate Professor at the Universidad de Los Andes, Colombia. He is anthropologist and Sound artist and has significant ethnographic experience in the fields of violence, culture, arts and subjectivity, political transitions, sound and memory studies. His writing has dealt, over the last 25 years, with the impact that different forms of violence have had on the existential landscape of human and non-human experience. In this context, he has conducted collaborative fieldwork in Colombia, and South Africa with survivors of torture and displacement, and with former guerrilla combatants. Professor Castillejo-Cuéllar was also international observer to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Perú. In 2014 he was Chief-Rapporteur of Colombia's forcefully disappeared victims' organizations preparatory meetings to the Habana Peace Process. That year the Gerald Ford School of Public Policy (University of Michigan) invited him to deliver the Joshua Rosenthal Memorial Fund Lecture. Since 2011, leads the Critical Studies Program on Political Transitions (PECT), an interdisciplinary academic initiative and network of researchers from Africa and Latin America interested in the study of the social worlds that emerge during the aftermath of violence. He is currently finishing his book *Looking after the traces of the body: Ethnographic Essays on the Disappeared and Politics of the (in)audible in Colombia's Transitions*.

ILWAD ELMAN

ILWAD ELMAN is a peace activist, social entrepreneur, and Chief Operating Officer of the Elman Peace Centre in Somalia. With a lifelong commitment to peacebuilding, social justice, and human rights, her work focuses on inclusive peace processes, gender equity, and youth leadership in conflict resolution. She has played a pivotal role in creating spaces for women, youth, and marginalized communities to engage in peace and security efforts. Beyond her work at Elman Peace, Ilwad holds a commissioner role on the Global Commission on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking and is a founding member of multiple global networks and coalitions, including the Every Woman Treaty to end violence against women and the Peace by Africa Network, which connects grassroots peacebuilders across nine African countries. Her contributions to peace and human rights have been recognized with numerous awards, including the Gleitsman International Activist Award from Harvard University, the Hessian Peace Prize, The Right Livelihood award, multiple Nobel Peace Prize nominations and an Honorary Doctorate of Law from SOAS University among other prestigious distinctions.

MOHSEN GHARSALLAH

Dr. MOHSEN GHARSALLAH is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Tunisian Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies (TIPCS), a think-do tank dedicated to advancing sustainable peace through integrated and local solutions. With over 15 years of professional experience in governance and international development, he has gained valuable knowledge and experience in peace studies and cultural dialogue in the MENA region. His academic foundation in Public Law is complemented by a PhD in Economics, specializing in transactional dynamics in economic development, along with multiple master's degrees in public law, terrorism and counterterrorism, and governance. This interdisciplinary background enriches his perspective on peacebuilding, integrating cultural and economic dimensions. Dr. GHARSALLAH has held senior positions

with major international organizations. His work has consistently focused on bridging cultural understanding and promoting peace through institutional development and policy reform. At TIPCS, he leads initiatives that combine research, capacity-building, and practical intervention in areas of conflict transformation, cultural dialogue, and sustainable peace. His expertise spans governance, cultural policy, peacebuilding, and international development, with a particular focus on the Mediterranean region. Dr. Gharsallah is a frequent speaker at international conferences and has published extensively on topics related to peace studies, cultural dialogue, and governance. He is fluent in Arabic, English, and French, facilitating his work in cross-cultural contexts and international forums.

AMRA HADŽIMUHAMEDOVIC

AMRA HADŽIMUHAMEDOVIC (Director of the Centre for Cultural Heritage, International Forum Bosnia), has been the leading heritage expert in the process of implementation of Annex 8 of the Dayton Peace Accord for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and managing diverse projects of integrating cultural heritage into post-war recovery in Bosnia, Kosovo, Palestine, and Iraq. She has worked as a consultant for UNESCO, ICCROM; World Bank, ICOMOS International, OSCE, Europa Nostra, ARC- WH, Welfare, etc. She taught History of Architecture and Architectural Conservation at the International University of Sarajevo (2010-2019), guest-lectured at the universities in USA, Europe, Arab Region, and published widely, including the books: Heritage Reconstruction and People. Integrated recovery after trauma (ed.); Heritage, War and Peace; Human Rights and Destruction of Cultural Memory (ed.); Bosnia: Destruction of Cultural Heritage (co-author). She is a founder of HIDR (House of International Dialogue and Research) which includes ISSYH, a school for sustainable, inclusive, resilient and holistic recovery of heritage.

DANIELA HERNÁNDEZ SILVA

DANIELA HERNÁNDEZ SILVA is a Colombian anthropologist. She is PhD candidate in Regional Development at FLACSO (Latin American School of Social Sciences)-Ecuador, co-host of the Aula Divergente Podcast (part of the FreshEd Podcast), and Adjunct Professor of Community Development at Palm Beach Atlantic University in Florida, USA. She is an Erasmus Mundus Master in Education Policies for Global Development (GLOBED) and holds a specialization degree in Sustainability and Innovation from Harvard University. Her research interests include development, rural education, and sustainability.

RACHEL KERR

RACHEL KERR is Professor of War and Society in the Department of War Studies at King's College London. Rachel is a contemporary historian whose research focuses broadly on how states, societies and individuals contend with legacies of war and atrocity. Rachel's current research is focused on the role of art and culture in peace and reconciliation and using visual and embodied methodologies to address intersectional gendered violence.

LINA LAZAAR

LINA LAZAAR is a London based, Tunisian-Swiss contemporary art specialist and curator, and serves as the Vice President of the Kamel Lazaar Foundation. Lina made her curatorial debut at the Tate Modern in 2010, following which she curated 'The Future of a Promise', the first Pan-Arab Pavilion at the 2011 Venice Biennale. Lina was also founder of Jeddah Art Week (JAW) in 2012, through which she brought large-scale city-wide interventions and exhibitions to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. JAW evolved into the JAOU biennial, a platform for diverse international curators

to deliver city wide interventions, activations, symposiums, concerts, and large-scale exhibitions across the MENA region. Lina returned to Venice Biennale in 2017 as curator of the Absence of Paths, Tunisia's first national pavilion for over 50 years, which attracted over 100,000 visitors and was voted among the top ten pavilions at the 2017 Venice Biennale. Previously, she worked as a Contemporary Art specialist at Sotheby's, London. Throughout her decade long career, she spearheaded the development of the contemporary Arab art market in the international auction market, including the launch of Sotheby's auctions in the Middle East. Lina is an advisory board member of the Renaissance Society, Kunsthalle at the University of Chicago, the ICA at the University of Pennsylvania, the co-founder of Ibraaz, a prominent online academic platform on visual arts from the MENA region, and the instigator of B7L9, the first independent, experimental and entirely community managed art-space in Tunis. Lina serves as the Vice President of the KLF, a position she has held since 2016. The KLF is dedicated to promoting Arts and Culture from the MENA region. Lina is a graduate from HEC Lausanne and holds graduate degrees from the London School of Economics and Sotheby's institute.

SARRA MESSAOUDI

SARRA MESSAOUDI is a peacebuilding and organizational development practitioner. Her work is essentially related to the fields of peacebuilding and leading collaborative networks. Driven by her mission to achieve sustainable peace, Sarra led, managed, and coordinated different global, regional, and local networked structures that actively work to advocate for local peacebuilders leadership and participation in decision-making. She has also served as a youth advisory council member at the United States Institute of Peace where she worked on advancing, maturing, and professionalizing the Youth, Peace, and Security space. In 2022, Sarra was elected as the MENA representative ISG at the United Network of Young Peacebuilders. Currently, Sarra is the regional lead at the MENA Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security and the network coordinator at the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, the world's largest network of local peacebuilders. In both roles, Sarra is working on weaving, convening, and catalysing diverse members and external policy actors to foster collaboration, create opportunities and exchange, and ensure that local voices are integral in shaping policies.

PHLOEUN PRIM

PHLOEUN PRIM is a visionary cultural entrepreneur and the Executive Director of Living Arts International (LAI). Phloeun co-founded the social enterprise Artisans d'Angkor in 1998, and in 2009 became Director of Cambodian Living Arts, an arts and culture NGO that became the seed for LAI. LAI is a grassroots, post-conflict NGO which includes CLA working locally, Mekong Cultural Hub working regionally, and Connecting South more broadly. Now, through LAI, he aims to centre the Global South in the global discourse of access, ethics, and cultural expression in generative AI systems.

OLIVER RICHMOND

OLIVER RICHMOND is Professor in IR and Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manchester, UK. He is also International Professor at Dublin City University, Distinguished Visiting Professor at Ewha University, Seoul, Korea, and Honorary Professor in the School of International Relations, University of St Andrews, Scotland. He is also Visiting Professor at Near Eastern University, Lefkoshia, Cyprus. He received a Distinguished Scholar award from the ISA Peace Studies Section in 2019. His publications include *The Grand Design: The Evolution of the International Peace Architecture* (Oxford University Press, 2022), *Peace Formation and Political Order in Conflict Affected Societies* (Oxford University Press, 2016), and *Failed Statebuilding* (Yale University Press, 2014). He is co-editor of the Palgrave book series, *Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies*, and co-editor of the Journal, *Peacebuilding*.

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