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Arts in Peace Mediation

The Story So Far

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter on *The Story So Far* is a distillation of deliberations over six years – from 2015 to 2021 – on how the arts and psychology could enhance peace mediation processes and possibly unblock pathways. The intention is to provide a platform on which this initiative can be taken forwards by the community of practice of mediators, artists, and psychological practitioners, and potentially the international community.

Art and arts practice in peace mediation is about how to make mediation more effective and also to ensure psychological input, awareness and literacy. Conversations have looped around the following questions: Where in a peace process is it best to integrate the arts? What would support a process? What would support a mediator? The underlying vision has been that "artistic practice is accepted by the international community as standard practice in a mediator's toolkit".

Subsequent chapters will develop various aspects further. Chapter 2 tells the story of the Colloquium held in 2015 that started the inquiry on the potential contribution of art to peace mediation processes. Chapter 3 contains an in-depth research report on *Art and Artistic Practices in Peace Mediation.* Chapter 4 offers a perspective from the ground up, with personal reflections by two mediation practitioners. Chapter 5, *Making Links while Building Bridges: Reflections from the SOMIC Project* addresses the psychological dimension. Chapter 6 follows with a *Postscript – Perspectives on Today's Challenges and Opportunities for Peace Mediation.* For further reference, the Annex contains a chronology of encounters and recommendations and lists the people who were involved in the discussions.

The Process[1]

The story of exploring arts practice in peace mediation (AiPM) began in May 2015 when the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations in Geneva[2] (Swiss Permanent Mission) began to consider the role of art as a possible resource for mediation and peace processes. This idea evolved further between 2018 and 2021 in discreet and informal discussions in London

hosted by the Embassy of Switzerland in the United Kingdom to the United Kingdom. Both stages of this initiative were hosted by the same Swiss Ambassador in his respective capacities as Head of the Swiss Permanent Mission in Geneva (2012–2016) and as Swiss Ambassador to the UK (2017–2021), together with his team at the Swiss Embassy in London. A series of conversations took place between cultural and psychological practitioners, mediators and diplomats engaged in mediation processes. These evolved into two thematic streams. One, centred on arts practice and mediation, led in 2019/2020 to a research project that focused on expanding academic research on the role of art in political mediation processes by further liaising with cultural practitioners, mediators, and other partners within relevant academic and professional fields.[3] The second stream concentrated on the psychological dimension in political mediation processes.[4] This became the subject of an ongoing project financed by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), which is led by Birkbeck College as a separate strand on *States of Mind in Conflict* (SOMiC).[5]

A consensus emerged that involving cultural and psychological practitioners will provide valuable perspectives for political mediation processes. Planning began for an international conference at Wilton Park in Spring 2021. Entitled *Rethinking Mediation: Exploring the Potential of Art and Artistic Practices in Peace Processes,* it had to be postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions imposed on travel and in-person meetings, with the latter deemed essential for a successful collaboration between artists and mediators. It is hoped that an international symposium will be held in Switzerland in 2022.[6] The Swiss non-profit foundation *artasfoundation*[7] was appointed in 2021 to lead a series of webinars arranged around themes on arts practice and mediation to ensure follow-up to the wealth of ideas and discussion threads generated over the past three years.[8]

A Steering Committee was formed in March 2020. Its aim was to provide oversight and advice to the AiPM initiative in the run-up to the Wilton Park conference, and on the general direction of this initiative. Six meetings were held between 16 March 2020 and November 2021. Members were chosen based on their involvement in the work and their professional backgrounds,

representing different perspectives from conflict resolution, mediation, art and arts practice, and psychology.

Some Caveats

This is the story so far through the prism of several themes as distilled from conversations over the past six years.[9] It is an effort to summarise and disentangle the main threads and is entirety subjective and by no means exhaustive. To protect the integrity and confidentiality of the conversations, direct quotes are not attributed unless permission has been obtained. Mediation, psychological and arts concepts are referred to as they arose in the exchanges, but there is no further analysis or definition. In addition, the focus of this chapter is primarily on arts in mediation. Given overlaps in the discussions of the two 'strands', one section is dedicated to the *Convergence between Art and Psychology*.

Terminology

Participants consisted of practising artists, poets, novelists, painters, sculptors, performance artists, and musicians, as well as arts producers, including performance and film producers. The generic terms used for the purposes of this text is 'artists' or 'arts practitioners'. Reference to mediation and mediators entails a range of 'mediation practitioners' and 'mediators' who have worked at different levels, Track 1 to 3[10], as well as Swiss and United Nations diplomats. The generic term in this chapter for 'psychological practitioner' encompasses psychologists, academics from psychosocial and medical fields, psychotherapists, and psychiatrists. Reference is made to 'arts practice' or 'the arts', rather than art, as the arts is considered to embody the interdisciplinarity more accurately. The terms 'contributors', 'participants', 'discussants' are used interchangeably referring to all those who participated in these events over the past six years, both in person and online.

THEMES AND THREADS

The process was informal and experimental from the outset. Apart from a shared notion that there could be a mutually beneficial exchange between arts and mediation practitioners, no one knew what to expect and what might evolve.[11] Metaphors flourished throughout the conversations. To continue in this vein of understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another, the most apposite metaphor might be of a loom to weave thread or yarn into cloth, a rug or a tapestry. A number of themes looped through the wide-ranging discussions over six years. They are interlinked, separate and some run in parallel. The guiding questions were: How can artistic endeavour stimulate us to think differently? How can it demonstrate, through its own experience of creativity and challenging people's mindsets, something that can be brought into the world of mediation? As noted by a participant "mediation is all about trying to shift people, who are stuck in the midst of conflict, to rethink the parameters of what is possible and to try and help people to think differently". And another, "art can defy linguistic boundaries and be an ideal resource to understand the perspectives of others. Art can also directly nurture a process by providing a voice to those who are marginalised – and at the same time enhance the relevance and legitimacy of the process itself …".

To uphold the richness of the discussions and to assist in organising the diversity of material, this summation is structured around three main themes or threads and some sub-themes, concluding with a section on proposals made for the way forward to integrate artistic practice and psychological understanding into mediation processes. These themes are (1) Trust, with sections on *Bridges as Metaphor* and *How can the Arts Contribute?* Theme (2) is Language and includes sections on *Listening, Spoken and Written Language, How can the Arts Contribute?* and *Stories and Narratives.* (3) is Convergence between Psychology and Mediation and includes sections on *The Role of the Mediator* and *Reflective Practices.* The final part – Where Do the Qualities of Artists, Psychologists and Mediators Interconnect and How Can They Collaborate? – elicits concrete proposals and suggestions that were made during the discussions to pave the way towards taking this process forward.

Trust

Trust was referred to by many participants as the bedrock of all that goes on within a mediated space. "Trust is paramount", and "the most important thing" is to create circles of trust and safe spaces and to deepen connections. Distinctions were drawn between trusting a process, trusting the person who leads the process, and trusting each other. The different threads and sub-threads encompass: (a) trust between people: opponents, parties and the mediator; within the mediation team; within the respective teams of participants; and with those who stand behind the mediation process, such as government representatives who are sponsoring the process etc.; (b) trust in political mechanisms; (c) trust in the mediation process; and (d) the underlying challenges of how to build trust and how to maintain it. Some questions also arose as to how trust as a concept translates into different languages and what it means in various cultural contexts.[12]

Trust and especially the impact of distrust were also interwoven through many exchanges dedicated to psychology and mediation. The complexity of building and maintaining trust and the basis of the connection were illustrated in a reflective discussion with a senior mediation practitioner:[13]

"Trust is a key element in X's relationship with the Burundian president who feels that his country has been treated badly and strongly distrusts the international community as a whole. One reason why the president seems to trust X is because of things he hasn't done: The fact that X is not criticising the Burundian government publicly has helped build that relationship. It was also noted that the Burundian people who meet with X might feel that he is emotionally connected to them at some level, which nourishes their trust. When asked about his personal motivations for this role, X himself said that he "does not want the system to leave them alone". He also mentioned having formed an attachment to the Burundian people, thus reinforcing the importance of understanding better the people involved in mediation and the nature of their bonds, not just the structures."[14]

Conversely other mediation practitioners challenged the idea that trust is germane to interaction and progress in a mediation space and were critical of the proclivity to "romanticise trust". They maintained that people do not, and simply cannot, trust each other after decades of conflict. Trust does not exist. "The mediation field is hooked onto so many words that do not have any bearing in the real context and reality, such as neutrality or trust ..." The absence of trust, a situation where people have lost

faith in institutions and government, such as in Lebanon, is synonymous with loss of trust. "The real question is, can it be regained? The reality is that we have to acknowledge that the starting point is distrust." Another call for pragmatism was cited with the example of Hanan Ashrawi, a Palestinian negotiator: "I can't trust my enemy. How can I trust my oppressor? I just need to be transactional. So, this is a business, a calculation with a healthy dose of mistrust, but we know we have to work together."[15]

Some suggested that "a different language" is needed, one that allows people in the mediation process dignity and their own personal sovereignty. Dignity provides participants with a sense of agency. All too frequently individual concerns are not being acknowledged and recognised. Shared spaces allow for shared experiences. One participant noted that "… the ability people have, even in the most difficult situations, to … leave the sphere of fear and calculation and invite the other to meet on a different level. It's giving a credit that is not counted as credit, or some kind of 'advance generosity' …" A more apposite concept might be 'benevolence' ('Wohlwollen' in German): "… he is my enemy, but we are in it now together, and I accept that he is well-meaning as well." Or: "… lawyers call it 'good faith'. It means that you would not knowingly do harm to the agreement." A common understanding emerged amongst contributors on the importance of "deep collaboration" and "relationship building".

Trust, acknowledgement and dignity are the cornerstones of a process and need to be established right from the start. However, this is not helped by what some perceived as rivalry and competition between different mediators, and those who 'owned' the processes. "We as a system have to be trustworthy before we can generate trust". Questions arose as to whether "peace mediation is in crisis", and if "we need a new generation of mediators". Conflicts today are increasingly complex and go beyond conventional national and state borders. The nature of the state and engaging with representative state authorities has also shifted as the backdrop of those who support parties in conflict has become infinitely more complex. However, some mediation practitioners felt that mediation as a field and a profession had not yet adapted and was still stuck in a post World War II model – "We need to transform the way we think about the process."

Emphasis was placed on the need for authenticity and vulnerability: "we (as mediation practitioners) have to be vulnerable when we step into any process of mediation – that also applies to painting or music – but in mediation practice we are held back by notions of 'state-building' or even 'neutrality'". Consequently, representation is important. For example, the mediation practitioner in the Burundi case was a white male 'leader' from a 'developed' country who is innately associated with connotations of 'state-building'. Trust may be built more successfully when there is the opportunity for mediators to be in an 'equal' relationship, especially with trusted local individuals. Some arts processes seek points of commonality as a starting point and explore what those who come to the table with great external differences have in common as human beings. A point made in the Burundi example was to look for what the mediator and the president had in common as a route to building a meaningful relationship.

Identifying suitable entry points is critical. Creativity and arts practice can play an important role in illuminating these small openings. Both in music, for example, and in mediation, "the process starts before the process itself". Prior to a musical performance, instruments are tuned, players rehearse together, and there is a soundcheck to ensure the right tone and volume; to adapt to the situation, producers and performers "check out the space" and try to "know the audience". Then there may be improvisation during the performance. Music happens at different levels, not just with sound but with how it makes people feel. In a not dissimilar vein, mediation processes undergo their own 'soundchecks': with planning and structuring of the process, setting the agenda, preparing the space, arranging the seating at the table. These respective pre-processes are essential to create an overall atmosphere of trust.

Bridges as metaphor symbolised in a way a perpendicular thread on the conversation loom. This well-worn metaphor recurred in discussions around trust and also language (see below) in the form of building bridges, meeting on bridges, and potential artistic entry points on bridges. What are the bridges where people recognise commonality? Bridges in the literal and metaphorical sense expedite travel and communication. We place

our trust in foundations but bridges collapse when we don't pay attention – and the trust and relationships that we thought were built proved to be not quite as strong.

Music can be a powerful bridge builder in political spaces. For example, chanting, drumming, or singing songs – even national anthems – allow for synchronisation. Although making music can be highly individual, it is predominantly a social activity and triggers social effects and behaviours. It plays a role in bonding and allows people to relate to others. Listening to music in the presence of others can have a stress-reducing effect. Rhythmic entrainment allows people to synchronise their movements with each other and evokes feelings of togetherness. Studies in neuroscience about dance and choreography demonstrate that movement and music increase feelings of cooperation and merging with others. A poignant example was cited from a community-based mediation process in Armenia where during a pause in tense proceedings, one of the participants broke into song. The majority joined and the mood completely shifted. All these elements underscored that trust needs to be built incrementally. Another metaphor used was that of 'yeast', a little of which can have a major ripple effect, fermenting the unseen and unexpected outcomes. Music is a universal language, offering deeper connections. Performers may not speak the same language or dialect but they can play and perform together with ease.

Some called for greater nuance when we try to articulate the requirements of divided communities, ideologies and politics. Bridging a divide between people, communities and places demands planning and forethought and needs to consider issues of consent. Following this perpendicular thread, questions arose such as: Is a bridge necessary? What two entities are we trying to connect? Are they equal in size and power? Is there consent ('planning permission' in a literal sense)? Do we want to build a bridge in order to colonise? Literally and figuratively, are we willing to build bridges from our own land – or is it made of materials that neither side has? Bridges can symbolise the absence and loss of trust. Complex historical examples of actual bridges highlight their symbolic ambiguity, such as the bridge in Sarajevo where both World War I and the 1990s' Bosnian war

started. City planners use roads and bridges to contain and bypass troubled neighbourhoods, such as in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

The bridge metaphor could also be misleading, and underlying issues needed to be addressed, such as the need for justice as a precondition for peace. Communities cannot be reconciled without dealing with justice. "Why are we telling those in pain that their need for justice is subservient to our need for reconciliation?" In other words, both or all sides have to want it and reconciliation requires consent. At the same time, the desire to build bridges and exercising caution when imposing a notion of reconciliation that may not match the needs, histories and sensibilities of both or all parties, could also serve as an entry point for arts practitioners – to explain and tell stories. This frequently brought conversations back to listening, how to listen and the questions to be asked, such as: "What assumptions do we have about 'the other side'? Do we know why they do what they are doing? Do we know how they feel? Do we understand and see things from their perspective?"

In discussions it was reiterated that in communication about peace negotiations and peacebuilding we frequently start with our own message: what do we want to convey about peace? However, participants in a peace process come with their own narrative frames that will imbue our message with their meaning (see below *Stories and Narrative*). Participants may have a vision of a path towards peace that sees a stronger military, for example, or a particular political movement in charge. Therefore, it is a matter of shifting narratives, finding a new language. In an exchange around the 'militarisation' of language,[16] members of the group noted the dehumanising effect of using aggressive, militarised language (such as 'an invasion of refugees', 'a wave of insurgents' etc.), and encouraged a 'feminisation' of language.[17]

How Can the Arts Contribute?

Aesthetic activity engages our cognitive functions but also our senses and emotions and spiritual dimensions, and we as humans find that pleasurable. "When all our faculties are focused on the same thing that can provide a kind of animation in a context

where there has been so much pain and loss. It may allow people the space to imagine something different. It is an epistemological thing. It's about: How are we thinking? Are we thinking in conversations, in words? Or are we thinking in ways that engage more of us?"

Many participants stressed that artists and artistic expression must be detached from political identity. Narratives and theatre help, allowing both sides to identify themselves. There is an authenticity and vulnerability when we step into a mediation process founded in genuine self-expression, whether through words, painting, music or performance.

Some contributors stressed that it is not about trust but about connection. "When you work with indigenous people they say that conflicts are illnesses, so you have to recuperate the flux of energy in the community and the flux of energy between the humans and the planet. It is like music … I believe that is about getting connected, overcoming the 'THEM versus US' and looking together at common goods." "It does not have to be tangible, it needs silence, togetherness, … music, … beauty." Some described it as "this is for me the locus of trust, the locus of benevolence, maybe more than what we normally associate with people. And it is from here that you can begin a process. And this is where art can play an absolutely significative role: to change a bit … to overcome what yesterday was seen as totally impossible."

Overall, trust as a concept was a significant preoccupation throughout the conversations. There seemed consensus that it matters, but no consensus over the degree to which it matters. Trust in its totality seemed too high an expectation, though trust can be created in small parts and incrementally. Corridor conversations, impromptu responses, informal moments, all these move processes forwards. This leads to an awareness of interdependence. Discussions around trust brought to the fore conversations about multiple elements that form the "alchemy" of a process: harmony underpins what we are doing, awareness of interdependence, humility and audacity, courage, generosity and receptivity, benevolence and dissonances coexist. This could be about "the transmutation of matter", "an attempt to convert base metals into gold or a universal elixir, a seemingly

magical process of transformation, creation or combination." It is important not to romanticise trust as the one vital ingredient for a mediation process. Meanwhile, it was also pointed out that arts processes often begin with mistrust, suspicion or some form of apprehension either of the process or the participants (or both). The process of participatory arts is about finding commonality within a group, which then leads them to trust each other. Ultimately it is about human connection.

LANGUAGE

The threads of language, its interpretation, and perception of the meaning of words, all wove themselves through discussions from 2015 onwards in both the arts and psychology conversations, with one entire webinar dedicated to language.[18] Language as communication plays a central role in mediation processes, impacting their integrity and the quality of outcomes. Each stage of mediation demands that all parties and the mediator communicate effectively and understand each other well to ensure the quality of the process.

The language spoken is influential on many levels. It can impact the way we think about time, space and even colours. People who speak different languages focus on different things, depending on words or sentence structures available to them. Language influences our thought processes and feelings. One important aspect in mediation work is the choice and role of the interpreter, in particular their use of dialect and the consequent level of trust (or distrust) placed in them. The complexity and importance of this presence was acknowledged in conversations but not further explored.

Mediators have to be circumspect in the language they use and adopt language strategies to facilitate the process and the conversations – as do psychologists. "Some mediators are artful" in how they adapt to the dynamics and shifts in a mediation process by modifying their use of words, phrases and tone. Mediation practitioners use specific categories of question for specific goals and purposes. Some linguistic features can underline the inclusiveness of mediation – the power dynamics between the parties – and highlight equality or inequality. For example,

in some cases "mediation becomes more of a conversation", losing its formality. Mediation training often does not provide descriptions of the kinds of language changes mediators can adopt to facilitate a process. The training is focused on techniques such as reframing, reshaping, emphasising neutrality, and rewording the statements of the different parties.

The parties' reactions demand continuous adaptation and awareness of underlying feelings. In individual conversations some mediators emphasised the need to be clear to the participants who they are, where they are from, and explain their belief system as an important general starting point that also influences or possibly "liberates" the use of language in the process. In essence this clarifies the mediators' motivation and is an important principle, which can lead to reciprocity between mediator and participants and is also part of building trust.

Mediation practitioners can be faced with challenging situations where parties express anger, aggression, frustrations, accusations and high emotions. One side may be more dominant than the other, thus shifting the dynamics so the 'other' side may be more reluctant to speak. Observing, and listening to reactions, tone and utterances of the parties means that mediation practitioners need to make stylistic choices based on these reactions. In addition, they may discover previously hidden points of conflict and underlying information during the process. The mediator needs to allow opportunities for all sides to express concerns, for example by calling for private meetings with one of the parties. Other tools are available, such as open-ended questions and "trying to get parties to focus on current rather than past issues".

Listening

The skilled use of language comes with the need for effective listening, another recurring thread in both the psychology and arts exchanges. It was suggested that mediation practitioners need to become "super-listeners" in some instances. Mediation practitioners refine this fundamental skill throughout their careers, with many sub-threads: of listening effectively to understand the different interests and needs of the parties before

facilitating a process. Mediators are called upon to assist in clarifying issues and allow those who have less "definitional power" to describe the problem. The key is to listen to both the factual and emotional content. Reframing of a conflict can be the key to how it might be resolved. Definitional reframing is a central focus of the mediator's role in facilitating the negotiations.

Hurdles and 'impasses' can be both spoken and unspoken. To listen well, mediators must attend to spoken words and "to the silence between words" and understand the "types of silence". Silence could be regarded as a "semi-neutral place". This resonated closely with both psychology and arts practitioners. Artists expressed the view that they could play a role both in the definitional stage as well as in capturing and possibly intercepting silences. Musicians in particular underlined the need for active listening skills and parallels that could be drawn between music and mediated processes: what instruments or voices can one hear? What key is the song or the discourse in? How does the music, the discourse or the tone shift and why? What is the structure of the song or the music? Does it follow a common structure?

Spoken and Written Language

Another dimension that surfaced was the difference between spoken and written language – the negotiated language of agreements which converts and translates emotions expressed into aspirational language. This also highlighted the contrast between the potentially ambiguous use of words in art and the very targeted use of wording in peace agreements. A mediation practitioner who is engaged in negotiating an agreement over time approaches language in a very different vein.

The choice of language – at times painstakingly negotiated – is best illustrated by the role of ambiguity deployed in peace agreements. For example, if parties have strong and contradictory interests and neither side seems prepared to concede their demands, or if negotiations are running out of time and parties are unable to discuss concessions in detail. Conflicting interests are resolved almost by "simulating" a compromise. The mediation team may devise a formula, which is open to at least two interpretations and carries at least two meanings.[19] Mediators

want to maintain the integrity and comprehensiveness of the draft. At the same time, they take a small step toward elaborating a compromise between the maximum demands of the conflicting parties who now become negotiating parties. In short, ambiguities make sure that on the one hand parties retain their individual perceptions on how things should proceed, and on the other a common language is adopted that can later be used.

Several examples were mentioned, such as the negotiations for the *Global Compact on Safe and Orderly Migration*.[20] Reference was made to agreements where language and ambiguity went hand in hand, such as the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords[21] where Madeleine Albright was quoted as saying "instead of glue it's been sandpaper", a deliberately ambiguous framework for a partnership between Israelis and Palestinians.

The "Good Friday" Agreement[22] set an institutional framework for the resolution of the political conflict in Northern Ireland. Negotiators achieved a relative compromise that brought partial satisfaction to the political ambitions of both sides, Unionists and Irish Nationalists.[23] The compromise rested on three key institutions, but the Agreement left certain relations vague. This allowed the parties to put incompatible constructions into the formulation of the deal. The critical issue was that at the time the original ambiguities in the Good Friday framework made it easier for both parties to embrace the deal, launch the peace process and, as articulated by some, "take the gun out of Irish politics".

Another device is the use of "open-ended sentences", which can be found in negotiated legal texts. A chapter in a peace treaty may begin with a precise enumeration of the powers that one entity, e.g. a central federal authority, may exercise. But at the end of the chapter an open-ended provision is inserted, which may, for instance, state that "the central federal authority may exercise some other duties as well", such as in the case of Kosovo. This clearly introduces an ambiguity and raises several questions – for example: if basic powers are clearly spelled out, then why would one need an additional open-ended clause to leave room for the expansion of the powers?

How Can the Arts Contribute?

Arts practice could illuminate the cracks in the linguistic conventions and words described above and "allow the light to shine in". Artists can contribute by surfacing feelings, explaining history or historical narratives; their contribution can add precision and nuance, and create empathy. In some conversations, the spotlight fell on how poetry and music could help with the unspoken or the unspeakable and help to explain "the meaning that is lost in trauma".[24] The uses and misuses of language were dissected in a webinar arranged around these questions: What carries us closer to the promise of our words? How do turning points that make a difference happen? How does constructive change happen? How can we be more strategic in the pursuit of this change?

The Turkish Kurdish poet, Bejan Matur,[25] described artists as "being like shamans": a person who is regarded as having access and influence in the spirit world, with good and evil spirits. Typically, shamans enter this other world in a trance state during a ritual and practise divination and healing. This is similar to mystical or religious experts who, in some societies, function as healers and custodians of cultural tradition, such as for example in Aboriginal culture. Language can both open and close doors and its skilled or "artful" use can be considered as a bridge. Language is also representative of identity and shifting identities. The key is to go beneath the "veil of language", and behind the "'truth' by politicians". Language can also become "a uniform – we use it to de-individualise". But "poetry and music can open the space". Language of poetry also opens the door to listening in different ways, to hear the human story, to go deep and find the human reality, like being "an archaeologist of the soul".

Bir ağıtsa bu

Olmayan bir *ülkeden* söz ediyorlar Olmayan dilden, kardeşlikten. Konuşma yok
Yok kelimeler.
Anlaşılmak içinse yeryüzü Kim *ölümü* anlatacak Dağların aldığı nefesi *Çöken* karanlığı
Kim anlatacak,
Bir *çocuğun* rüyasında büyüyenleri Kim?
Kuşların kanatları
Eski bir masaldan bana doğru *çırpınıyor* Eski kadınların anlattığı
Tenin taşa yakınlığı.
Belli ki bir ağıtçıyım ben, Karanlık *çöktüğünde*
Dağların *ötesinde*
Kimi ansam bakıyor bana acıyla.
Bu bir ağıtsa
Ağlamak henüz başlamadı.

If This Is a Lament

They speak of a land that never was, a non-existent tongue.
There is no utterance,
No words.
If we're put on earth
To understand each other – Who can make sense of death?
Explain how mountains stole breath, Or translate the darkness
That has fallen?
Who can say what burgeons in a child's dream?
Flapping out of an ancient tale, Birds' wings bear down
On me – and skin
Akin to stone
As the old women used to say. When darkness falls
Beyond the mountains,
The people I remember look to me in pain. My words are elegy.
If this is a lament, we haven't even
Begun to cry.

Poem by Bejan Matur

The potential contributions of poetry and music were cited frequently in the various exchanges as these arts shared an affinity, both being arts of sound and using rhythm as a principle of order in sound. Poetry was offered as concrete intuitions on life and histories "the rehearsal of emotions attached to real things". Speech and language are communication, an utterance from a speaker to a hearer. In the case of speech deployed by mediators, or in ordinary speech, the aim is to effect some change of mind that will lead to an action beneficial to participants in a mediation process. In a sense the peace practitioner's speech is concrete, with the aim to influence and conduct. Poetry can be the

"spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings", with the purpose of expressing life for the sake of values. Even when ostensibly directed to a particular person, "a poem has an audience that is really universal". No matter how intimate and spontaneous, no poem can escape being social.

In summary, language was considered as both an enabler and a disabler. Both artists and mediation practitioners agreed on the necessity of ambiguity in the use and interpretation of language, the creative ambiguity where "the aesthetic is happening inside a problem." "What happens? It is about the other, otherness, there is always the other side, always. The thing about literature, the literature brings us to a common centre, no matter where we were born. It is about reimagining a world that people are moved by – what we don't know we can imagine. The power of the story is what I believe in, the transformative power."

Stories and Narratives

'Storytelling' in various mediums was repeatedly suggested as an entry point for artists. The terms 'narrative' and 'story' were used interchangeably. Some nuances teased out of the discussions elicit important distinctions between those terms. Storytelling in various forms is recognised as an important skill and tool to effect change, raise awareness, and is used even in some forms of strategic communication, for example for fundraising purposes or to advocate for social or political issues. The various means of storytelling proposed involved poetry, music, dance and theatre, and mirrored events of the past to explain history or histories. Oral storytelling is also common in many cultural traditions and a shared entry point for engagement. Storytelling is not just about sharing vignettes and conveying messages. Stories have characters, with a beginning, middle and an end, with a plot, conflict and resolution.

Narratives, however, denote a system of stories, that fit together (more or less) and aim to provide a coherent view of the world based on lived experience, culture and education. "Narratives contain patterns that fit the data of everyday life, explaining how events unfold over time and how one thing causes another."

Stories were likened to "trees that grow from the soil". Many different stories can grow from a shared narrative frame. Within this narrative soil, human interactions are thought of as battles or competitions where individuals or groups pursue divergent interests. Stories that spring from the soil can include, for example, "winners and losers", using the language of war or sport analogies.

A number of contributors called for "a change in narrative" at different levels of the mediation process. Dominant or 'meta' narratives are fundamental to societal underlying attitudes, actions and belief system. Much literature exists on how peacebuilders engage with narratives in different forms. The peacebuilding and conflict resolution field has used academic studies on narrative to foster dialogue and reconciliation initiatives. It has been the subject of interdisciplinary research in anthropology, psychology, sociology and political science. The aim of arts practice is not about combatting toxic narratives but how to assist mediation teams and parties to understand and incorporate different worldviews to create a platform for a jointly constructed and complex dominant narrative towards peaceful coexistence.

The dominant or meta narrative was referred to as the foundation for identity. These narratives affect our beliefs about how we belong to a group or a community and consider others as outsiders. "Many conflicts are based on identity makers of ethnicity". These can be narratives that are repeated over and over again and provide a foundation for an understanding of shared history and events. History is littered with examples of invoking nationalist narratives with devastating consequences. Amongst examples cited was the dominant narrative by Serbia's most ardent nationalists invoking the rebirth of the medieval Serbian kingdom lost to Ottoman Turks at the battle of Kosovo in 1389. This was infamously used by Milosevic in 1989, marking the 600th anniversary of the battle of Kosovo amidst already rising ethnic tensions, whipping up divisions and polarising nationalist sentiments.[26] More recently, the narrative of the 'Proud Boys' in the US came to international attention following the storming of the Capitol on 6 January 2021, driven in part by their belief that white men and Western culture are under siege. Often it is

the narrative frame rather than reality that affects behaviour. Hard data, 'facts' and studies may not be the most effective tool to counter this. The way something is framed and the language used affect attitudes with profound and deep-seated consequences (as in the examples cited above).

The mediation process was equated with a form of narrative engagement as "an act of making meaning together". This is best done through dialogue with intended audiences. Therefore, partnerships with professional storytellers and other creative approaches could be key. Participatory arts practices are distinct from other arts practices and there is an important difference with professional storytellers who are not participatory artists. Participatory storytelling is premised on the belief that everyone has a story to tell.[27] "What is also necessary is to create a platform to maintain ongoing collaborations to reproduce and disseminate narratives towards peace... "Artists can tell stories, but this needs to be a reciprocal process and it is important HOW we listen to stories. The outdated model of communication that there is a sender, a message and a receiver is no longer appropriate. Research has shown that the making of meaning happens not in the message or story itself but 'in the mind of the receiver'.

CONVERGENCE BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGY AND MEDIATION

Many threads overlapped in both the arts and psychology conversations – a number of which have already been alluded to above. In part this was because participants included a mix of practitioners from the fields of psychology and psychotherapy, the arts and mediation; in part it was also due to the nature of the conversations which considered "the space between", the unexplored capacity, the leeway available for mediators and artists alike, "the scope for play and the intervals, possible lacuna, and omissions". "Participants made the bridge to previous discussions on the role of art in peace mediation processes and the necessity to make the two streams converge".[28]

During the four informal discussions on psychology and mediation, several reflections crisscrossed on the possible contributions of art and psychology to peace mediation, both jointly

and separately. They underline a conjunction of how arts and psychological practice and expertise can be mutually supportive and assist peace mediation processes – in preparation, during the process and in monitoring the implementation of an agreement.

Both streams of conversation emphasised the importance of the need to know about the negotiating party's background and the system that made leaders emerge. We need to ask, "what is driving them?" (as we do about mediators). A conflict analysis should therefore not only be based on the politico-geographic power play at stake, but needs to include questions of identity of the negotiating parties and the psychological terrain of a conflict. At present, there is no adequate psychological analysis of the motivations of parties. Both artists and psychologists expressed a desire to assist in addressing this gap. A tool to help establish this connection is 'strategic empathy', the ability of the mediator to connect with the parties and for the parties to connect with each other.

Other than analysing the psychological state of the adversaries, there is also a need to facilitate the mediator's self-awareness and to be aware of his/her background and mental health. What are the elements which the mediator is picking up emotionally and not just rationally? What is the mediator's 'Achilles' heel'? This is an intersection where participatory arts processes coincide with psychologists. Participatory arts processes have self-reflection implicit within the processes of arts making. Therefore, if mediators are involved alongside those with whom they are mediating, facilitated by skilled artists, there is much to learn through shared reflection.

Other connections that were highlighted included the use of space and in particular "the table" where and how participants are seated – literally and metaphorically,[29] the choreography of space and accompanying notions and dynamics of power, especially regarding the role of the mediator. The notion of space, the complexity of the process and the need to "read the room" require both instinct and expertise on the part of the mediator. Consequently, is the mediator a form of producer? What facilitates communication, how people are seated, the light, the shape

of the table – all this has a psychological and artistic dimension. "Both art and psychology create spaces; artists, mediators and therapists are always 'on the edge' and can reflect things differently. In this sense, both art and psychology create the conditions for working in liminal spaces. Engaging with local artists might help to sense the pulse of citizens in the country and help to begin asking questions we couldn't ask otherwise". At the same time, there is a need to create willingness for participants to be in the space together. Distinctions were drawn between the formal and the informal space – where can artists and mediators meet?

In addition, artistic processes could offer a methodology to assist mediators and contribute to their psychological 'toolkit'. While preparing to engage in complex negotiations, participants underlined that "art has the power to put people in a place of common humanity…". The arts are not there to be 'used' for messaging (instrumentalising), but to help us understand our differences by participating in meaningful exploration of what is important to each of us. To illustrate, in an exchange over the psychological support required in engaging with the (then) Burundian government, the question was posed how "… arts methodology might help to engage Burundian society in a conversation" and finding allies for the mediation practitioner through art: "The question was therefore raised where and who might be allies … (in Burundian society)".[30]

The role of the mediator represented a perpendicular thread in the conversation loom: the power exercised by one person, albeit supported by a mediation team, and being taken seriously by all parties. Psychologically oriented participants emphasised the notion of "the moral third" and the creation of a triangular space. But there are different types of mediators. "There is not one charismatic mediator – that era is over". Mediation models are based on views that human beings are rational beings, but "most mediators use psychology and intuition". Artists interjected with comparisons of the mediator as a "sponge" and whether peacemakers can be likened to the fulcrum or pivot point of a seesaw or to a conductor of an orchestra? The fulcrum or pivot point is the part of the lever that does not move, it is in the middle. The work or force applied to the lever is the person

sitting on the other end of the seesaw. The force that is applied by pushing down or pushing up on one end of the seesaw can substitute for the mass on the other end.

But how neutral or impartial are mediators? The notion of neutrality was repeatedly dismissed by most participants as a myth and "a complete delusion". Many felt that there is a need to unravel and expand conversations around empathy, impartiality, and neutrality. For example, some participants pointed out that it is impossible to be neutral in the face of brutality and that being neutral would mean to stop caring. On the other hand, remaining impartial means to not take sides, to advocate for an outcome and to be empathetic of the aspirations of all parties. Impartiality also implies the ability to remain objective, to be able to distance oneself and to act as an honest broker, focusing on outcomes. Some mediators distinguished the roles of artists and mediation practitioners as "some artists may have a personal stake", such as poets from one or other group. Mediation practitioners are supposed to "come to this in a more impersonal, impartial manner, as trained professionals". The same professionalism will apply to a participatory artist. Not all artists will be able or wish to engage in this work. Artists may be impartial but not impersonal, as artists they have to engage at a personal level.

Reflective Practices

A critical aspect that emerged was the need for reflective practice to enable mediation practitioners to learn from what happened to develop and improve their future practice. The aim is to enable mediation practitioners to achieve better awareness of themselves, their knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies and their tools.[31] Reflective practice is an established and valued tool among psychiatrists, psychotherapists and general practitioners, and can have a particular value in bringing into focus positions or assumptions that might be operating unconsciously, as well as introducing alternative perspectives when a clinician or mediator feels stuck.

Reflective practice also plays a critical role in arts approaches, especially participatory art. The participatory artist is motivated

by the relational process of working with others – through whichever medium. They choose to be 'listening artists', working with people and their experiences directly. They tend to have carefully examined their motivation and the ethics of reciprocity and reflective practice is core to their work.

One mediation practitioner underlined how he had benefitted from the "outside perspective" of psychologists on his experience and found participants' inputs both revealing and educational. He supported the idea of a "reflective practice" – the offer of informal meetings between mediators and psychologists, giving the former an opportunity to reflect on different stages and challenges of a mediation process in which they are involved. He also suggested that such "sounding boards" can indeed "have a training effect" for the mediator but should be kept informal, and a high level of trust between those involved is essential.

In preparation for exploring the psychological dimensions of mediation with prominent mediation practitioners, questions were developed to provide a framework for conversations.[32] The objective was to define and investigate important, and at times very personal, issues raised by the mediators, such as the "loneliness of the mediator". The enquiry also focused on the potential of art and psychology in a number of aspects: to help out in critical phases; the potential of art and psychology to set up a "common safe space" for mediators and parties; and the way art and psychology might help the mediator to set up, frame and lead the mediation process.

In summary, there was unanimity that a vital contribution could be made to mediation efforts by linking different disciplines – a vertical thread woven through both streams of art and psychology. Talking across disciplines can lead to a translation of concepts and allows "us to understand 'the other'". Without this, "thoughts become rigidified and a person's position hardens, which makes it difficult to move into a more fluid space where compromise is possible". The key challenge here is "to humanise", to get beyond people's facade. Participants felt that art could liberate, and that psychologists lead to better understanding, hence both were part of a circle. "Psychologists and artists can assist by getting people 'unstuck'."

In any form of conflict people become entrenched in repetition, which needs to be "disrupted".

At the same time unorthodox opportunities should be encouraged. Sport was mentioned in several conversations, including those with individual mediators. The (Burundi) case study highlighted a shared interest in football between the Chair of the PBC Burundi Configuration and the Burundian President. Looking for what the mediator and the president had in common as a route to building a meaningful relationship can divert tension and allow for a more human discussion "before returning to 'tricky' issues." Often an arts process and conversations about sport start with exploring what we have in common as human beings who come to the table with significant external differences.

WHERE DO THE QUALITIES OF ARTISTS, PSYCHOLOGISTS AND MEDIATORS INTERCONNECT AND HOW CAN THEY COLLABORATE?

To conclude with the metaphor of a weaving loom: While the threads of conversations may not at this stage amount to a tapestry, they began to weave a cloth, with a number of loose threads and space to weave more. The discussions were open-ended. This section extracts suggestions and concrete recommendations on how a mediation process can be understood and be made more effective through the arts. The collection of meetings did not develop a formula of how arts and mediation practitioners could collaborate. Many arts practitioners commented that "creativity is not a transferable skill". They expressed concern over being "instrumentalised". "Instrumentalisation happens when an artist is involved in a predefined result." The broad consensus emerged that "one size does not fit all":

"All art is political. The question is to what extent and how do we harness that. It is not possible to come up with … a document that fits all, it has to be bespoke and new. And in some ways, it is allowing for the unknown, the nuances of the unknown, the unlikely friendships that can be forged, as artists, to what extent can we harness that, promote those relationships as well."

A sense emerged that artistic support and interventions could assist the mediator in 'reframing'. Artists "bear witness" and assist in creating "narrative complexity". Engagement with peace narratives cannot be simplistic, where one view is always right, with simple cause and effect and a stable, static context. Artists can pierce through an overreliance on policy arguments and static political discourse. A critical underexplored aspect is a conversation about and with appropriate participants focused on the "creative energy of young people, as this new generation intuitively operates in the milieu of storytelling and content creation".

Some concrete entry points emerged from the conversations (see also *Annex*) and included both immediate and medium-term proposals.

- Initiating a pilot project of an 'artist in residence' in a Track 1 or 1.5 mediation, where the artist could simply follow the discussions without any specific goal. The sole purpose would be that she/he would absorb and feel the atmosphere, report on her/his experience and make suggestions. By providing observations, thoughts and discreet input, a different dynamic will be added, simply by being present and providing commentary in different forms afterwards. To implement this proposal, discussions would need to be held with Track 1 mediators in Geneva – or where appropriate.
- A second, possibly sequential option could be to explore the possibility of artists meeting artists 'from the other sides' as part of the mediation process. This could create a different form of dynamic and interaction.
- It is crucial to find the right artists to work with and the right mediators to work with the artists. A group of carefully chosen artists and mediators should be sought with whom close and long-term relationships can be established.
- To develop an academic network and collaboration with universities who have departments or institutes engaged in conflict resolution, peace mediation etc. Examples suggested were: the London School of Economics (LSE) and the University of Warwick in the UK, or in Zurich in Switzerland – and also to ensure the inclusion of non-Western institutions, such as universities in Somaliland, Ethiopia or Bangladesh, and others to

be determined. During the initial stage, mediators and artists should be given the chance to ask each other questions, untangle their disciplines to find commonalities and differences. Doing so might help both artists and mediators discover new factors to consider and implement in their respective practices. A workshop between artists and mediators could start with an artwork and mediators could be introduced to the creative process behind it.

- If there is an international symposium to take this further, practical workshops should play a prominent part to cover not only the cognitive dimensions of a collaboration between artists and mediators but also to give participants a chance to experience and apply new methods.
- In terms of the areas of convergence between the arts and psychological practice, a space for self-reflection might be provided for mediators and those providing mediation support as "reflective practice". Participants in the exchanges shared several names of mediators to whom a reflective practice session in a safe space could be offered.[33]
- The Embassy of Switzerland in the UK had agreed with the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs that this reflective practice would be made available for Human Security Advisers who are implementing the department's peace promotion programmes in the field and who experience difficult situations. Feedback from this experience could be useful.
- To follow up on the recommendations of SOMIC to conduct a pilot study, which will primarily focus on identifying, mapping and conceptualising the psychological components of turning points, blockages and breakthroughs in mediation. The long-term aim would be to identify key psychological concepts, strategies and techniques. One objective would be to develop a psychological 'toolkit' and provide recommendations and training to better equip mediation practitioners.
- Some outstanding questions and issues that should be addressed going forward are:
    - Have we exhausted existing tools and means for peacebuilding?
    - Can arts practitioners assist with the issue of translation and interpretation – and if so, how?
    - Do we need a new generation of mediators with different ways of working?

- How can mediation processes better harness the creative energy and understanding of younger people? How can arts practitioners help?
- What does it feel like to be mediated on? How can artists assist in exploring this underexplored aspect?

As a final remark, it would be pre-emptive to draw conclusions based on the exchanges over the past six years conducted in various forums and through diverse mediums. Many seeds have been sown and the shoots are yet to emerge. This chapter is a perspective on a complex and at times patchy process. Many more loose threads could be added (depending on the weaver), such as probing the importance of empathy or identity, or the understanding of time and the time frame of the mediation process and of artistic design. The aim of this chapter is to provide a platform and a setting, from which conversations and interactions can continue to move forward.

NOTES

1 Chronology of meetings: The confidential dinner discussions pursuing *Arts in Peace Mediation* (AiPM) involved the Colloquium in 2015 in Geneva (see Chapter 2: *Art in Mediation – Recollections and Reflections from a Colloquium,* author: Dagmar Reichert, Director of *artasfoundation*) and two dedicated dinner discussions in London. In preparation and to inform the research report (see Chapter 4: *Art and Artistic Practices in Peace Mediation,* author: Isabel Käser, academic consultant to the Embassy of Switzerland in the UK, 2020), three Zoom workshops in 2019 focused on AiPM, co-hosted by the lead researcher and the director of *artasfoundation.* The *artasfoundation* organised seven webinars online between March and November 2021. To explore the potential role psychologists could play in supporting mediation processes, four dedicated dinner discussions were hosted at the Embassy of Switzerland in London. The Birkbeck College *States of Mind in Conflict* (SOMIC) followed its own methodology, including interviews with mediators and focus groups. (See Chapter 5: *Making Links while Building Bridges: Reflections from the SOMIC Project,* author: Irene Bruna Seu).
2 The Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and to the other international organisations in Geneva
3 See Chapter 3
4 From 13 November 2018.
5 The *States of Mind in Conflict* (SOMIC) project was launched in August 2020 and is based in the Centre for Researching & Embedding Human Rights at Birkbeck, University of London. SOMIC is a pilot study seeking to identify where a psychological perspective can help to enhance the insight and efficacy of conflict mediators.
See Chapter 5 for some of the findings.
6 Still to be confirmed
7 *artasfoundation* explores whether artistic ways of relating to the world – through art or artists – can contribute to peacebuilding. It initiates and implements art projects in conflict-affected regions, investigates whether art can support the work of peace-mediators, and conducts research on art in peace-building (www.artasfoundation.ch).
8 Between April – November 2021.
9 The author was both an observer and an active participant since 2018.
10 Outline of definitions: Track one: An instrument of foreign policy for the establishment and development of contacts between the governments of different states through the use of intermediaries mutually recognized by the respective parties.
Track 2: Unofficial, informal interaction between members of adversary groups or nations that aim to develop strategies, to influence public opinion, organize human and material resources in ways that might help resolve their conflicts.
Track 1.5: Diplomatic initiatives that are facilitated by unofficial bodies, but directly involve officials from the conflict in question.
Track 3: Mostly informal interactions involving local leaders, e.g. community developers, grassroots NGOs, local peace committees, community mediation programmes, insider-mediators.
11 See Annex: *Chronology of Gatherings and Recommendations*.
12 Webinar conversation 12 May 2021 devoted to the theme of trust – reflecting many aspects of the confidential discussions at the embassy of Switzerland and the 2015 Colloquium.
13 Embassy of Switzerland London, 3 April 2019.
14 From Summary Report of Meeting, 3 April 2019.
15 Webinar, 12 May 2021.
16 Webinar, 24 March 2021.
17 For a more detailed examination on feminisation, see Chapter 4: *Art and Artistic Practices in Peace Mediation,* Isabel Käser.
18 Webinar, 24 March 2021.
19 One to gratify the interests of party A and the other to gratify the interests of party B.
20 The *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* is an intergovernmental agreement, prepared under the umbrella of the United Nations, led by the Swiss Government, signed on 19 December 2018, drafted 13 July 2018. Described as covering "all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner".
21 In September 1993, Israel and the PLO signed the Declaration of Principles of Palestinian Self-Rule, the first agreement between the two sides and the initial document in what became generally known as the Oslo Accords. They comprised a series of agreements and the second, the Cairo Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho, was signed in May 1994.

22 Adopted on 10 April 1998.
23 Unionists favoured maintenance of links between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom whereas the Irish nationalists favoured integration of Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland.
24 Reference was made on several occasion to Dan Bar-On's book on exploring trauma *The Indescribable and the Undiscussable, Reconstructing Human Discourse After Trauma,* published 1999, Central European University Press.
25 Bejan Matur is a Kurdish poet, writer and journalist. She has won several literary prizes and has written extensively on Armenian issues, minority problems and women's issues.
26 The Gazimestan speech was given on 28 June 1989 by Slobodan Milošević, then president of Serbia, at the Gazimestan monument on the Kosovo field. It was the centrepiece of a day-long event to mark the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, which was fought at the site in 1389.
27 See François Matarasso, *A Restless Art – How participation won and why it matters,* published by Central Books, 19 January 2019.
28 Minutes of Discussion at Embassy of Switzerland in London, 19 April 2019.
29 Colloquium, May 2015 – see Chapter 3.
30 Minutes of 2 April 2019 meeting, Embassy of Switzerland in London.
31 Embassy of Switzerland Meeting, 13 November 2019, Psychology in Mediation.
32 Conversations with a senior mediation practitioner and a UN Diplomat – *Minutes of Steering Committee Meetings.*
33 Note: Invitations had been extended to other mediation practitioners, but these plans were curtailed because of Covid-19 restrictions.