Art, Creativity, and Conflict Transformation:
A Practitioner's Field Note

Tatsushi Arai

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Tatsushi Arai is Associate Professor of Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation at the School for International Training (SIT) Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont.

Good evening. A disclaimer I must present upfront is that I am neither a musician nor a theater specialist nor artistically talented. I am a conflict transformation practitioner with a serious interest in artistic expression and a desire to understand more fully how artistic expression can facilitate peacebuilding.

A SNAPSHOT OF PEACEBUILDING ACTIVITIES

Before I share my views on the connection between art, creativity, and conflict transformation, I'll briefly tell you who I am. I am a Japanese citizen. I am a professor and also work in other capacities. But most importantly, I am a practitioner of peacebuilding, and I see this as the deepest core of my identity.

This presentation and discussion will focus primarily on Afghan/Pakistan/U.S. relations as a case study, and the following partial summary of my activities relates in one way or another to this topic. First of all, my institution, the School for International Training (SIT) Graduate Institute, sponsors an annual summer peacebuilding institute that brings together about fifty to sixty peacebuilding practitioners from all over the world for three weeks of participatory, experiential training. This annual program is called CONTACT, or Conflict Transformation Across Cultures. We also have a South Asian regional version of CONTACT, which annually brings together both established and emerging civil society leaders from Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. Occasionally, we have participants from the Maldives, Bhutan, and other countries as well.

Since 2005, when the political tension across the Taiwan Strait was very high, I have been engaged with first annual and later bi-annual dialogues that bring together the next generation of potential leaders from mainland China, Taiwan, and the United States to U.S.-based academic settings for joint conflict analysis and problem solving. This initiative is called Strait Talk. Student organizers at Brown University in Rhode Island started hosting these dialogues for us, and then a group formed at the University of California at Berkeley followed suit. Similar initiatives were later established in Hong Kong

and Taipei, Taiwan. We are exploring the possibility of replicating this model of dialogue in other locations, especially in mainland China proper, in such a way as to be respectful and appropriate in each of the contexts. In East Asia and the Asia Pacific, I have also been engaged in dialogues aimed at shedding fresh light on the territorial dispute in the East China Sea. I work with my Chinese colleagues to bring together Japanese and Chinese people to explore the roots of this conflict and ways in which the tension can be reduced and transformed.

Since 2007, I have been involved in collaborative civil society activities that facilitate practitioner trainings and dialogues in the Middle East. My primary focus has been on Israel/Palestine and Iraq. I have done some research interviews in Oman and the United Arab Emirates and conducted fieldwork in Jordan on the reality of Iraqi refugees. I am committed to deepening my understanding of the ongoing crisis in Syria in the hope of finding a concrete way in which I can contribute to reversing the tides of violence.

I lived in Rwanda in 1997-98, a few years after the genocide. I was a non-governmental organization (NGO) representative, in addition to being a lecturer of international relations at the National University of Rwanda, which at that point was the only standing university. To the best of my knowledge, I was the only person of non-African background with the status of full-time permanent lecturer at the National University of Rwanda after the genocide. Currently, I serve as an advisor to a Rwandan-led initiative aimed at establishing a center for healing and reconciliation at Lake Kivu, located between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. I am determined to build a lifelong friendship with people in the African Great Lakes and firmly believe that those who suffered most have the right to turn their experience of suffering into an unparalleled opportunity for transformation.

As I mentioned earlier, I regularly go to Nepal for a peacebuilding training for South Asian civil society leaders. I combine these visits with field work in order to learn about the effects of Nepal's civil war of 1996-2006 and the prospect of nation-building. My work in Nepal currently focuses on the socio-economic challenges of Dalits, or Untouchables. It is a deep-rooted historical challenge that ultimately must be resolved by the Nepali and South Asian people. Nevertheless, I am convinced that internationals like myself have a role to play in understanding the roots of the challenge and exploring practical ways to transform them in the long run.

As a Fellow of the Center for Peacemaking Practice at George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, I am studying and writing on Buddhist contributions to peacebuilding. My vision is to use this inquiry as a basis for practical peacebuilding activities in conflict-affected, Buddhist-majority countries, such as Burma and Sri Lanka.

Finally, in a very modest way, I have been involved in dialogues and capacity-building activities intended to cope with the effects of global climate change on development and conflict. While I am far from being a competent natural scientist, I believe that conflict resolution practitioners and researchers

like myself have a unique role to play in the prevention and mitigation of conflicts that may be triggered and exacerbated by environmental degradation.

Overall, I have been involved in the Middle East, Central and South Asia, the Asia Pacific, and the African Great Lakes. What connects these regions, and the conceptual foci of my work, is the role that U.S. foreign policy plays in each of these contexts. This is one of the primary reasons why I chose to stay and work in the United States after I finished my graduate education.

KEY CONCEPTS: ART, CREATIVITY, AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

Let us shift our attention to the topic at hand. In the first place, art refers to the kind of skills utilized to create a symbolic representation of human and social experience. The Latin word "art" suggests skill, but our inquiry seeks to go far beyond that basic, literal meaning of art. For the purpose of our conversation, I would like to define art as a human experience of producing such a symbolic representation as well as the experiential process which facilitates the production. Moreover, what interests me even more deeply, from the viewpoint of a peacebuilding practitioner, is the role of art in orchestrating a holistic social experience that creates a deeply humanizing social space in which individuals and communities affected by conflict use their symbolic representations to gradually come to terms with their identities, histories, and future possibilities.

To put it simply, relationship building is an art in and of itself, when we have a watchful eye to see it that way. Unfortunately, I cannot play the trumpet or the piano, but I aspire to be an artist of my own type by way of facilitating relationship building in a constructive, imaginative way.

Now let us think for a moment about conflict transformation. Conflict is a set of differences that touch the sense of who we are and what we care about, in other words, identity and value. Professor Johan Galtung, an academic mentor of mine, argues that conflict is a contradiction between different parties pursuing their own set of goals. If we follow this thinking, we recognize that there is no conflict without contradictions.

Given this conceptual background, what is conflict transformation? I submit that conflict transformation is a sustained dialogical process of looking at the roots and dynamics of a given social conflict from a systematic, multi-angled perspective, and using that understanding as a basis for re-channeling the energy inherent in the conflict into constructive relationship-building. The basic point is first to understand a conflict in a systematic, multi-angled manner, and second, to build on the energy driving the behavioral, perceptual, and relational patterns that sustain the conflict as a social system. Here re-channeling means redirecting the flow of a river, without suppressing or denying its momentum altogether. Aikido, as a form of Japanese martial arts, illustrates this process metaphorically. Sometimes, I actually do a mini demonstration of aikido with conflict parties in dialogues and trainings.

The rest of my talk examines the relationship between art and creativity on the one hand, and conflict transformation on the other. My talk has two basic points: first, art can contribute to conflict transformation in a humanizing way when it is introduced mindfully; second, artistic creativity poses its own challenges, such as its inherent limitation in overcoming structural and institutional challenges. Art can be very powerful in influencing what is inside the human mind. However, what is the role of art in transforming structural violence and in addressing the question of governance and decision-making that either includes or excludes certain people? These are both structural questions. Is there any role art can play in these aspects of social reality?

The second part of my talk will focus on the kind of collective social creativity I have been studying as a way of influencing macro-policy options on which artistic creativity usually has limited impact. This second part uses the conflict in Afghanistan and Pakistan and explores the notion of group-based collective creativity in an attempt to tackle structural issues in conflict.

ROLES OF ART IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

A brief slide show titled "Zoom In, Zoom Out," created by Dr. Mohammed Dajani, a Palestinian professor at Al-Quds University in Jerusalem, serves as a useful point of departure for an inquiry into the role of art in conflict transformation. The slide show demonstrates how objects we see in our universe, from galaxies to trees, look different depending on how closely we zoom into the given objects under observation and how far we zoom out to comprehend larger pictures of which the objects are only a small part. There are no right or wrong answers to the question of "What do you see in the slide?" On the contrary, viewers come to the realization that there are numerous ways to look at a situation on different levels, and depending on the perspective we adopt, our observation reveals different issues and different angles.

The experience gained by seeing the slide show is very similar to the process of learning I go through when I listen to people affected by conflicts in such contexts as Pakistan, Rwanda, and China-Japan relations. People suffering from violence express their thoughts and emotions in an authentic manner. If their houses are demolished in war, for example, they say, "Oh, those terrorists or those authorities demolished our houses." I do my best to listen to them because I think their voices are authentic.

The key word here is authenticity, which means being genuine and truthful to one's view and feeling. When Pakistani farmers suffering from insecurity say, "We suffer from terrorism in our region," I am sure they are honest with me in expressing what they see and feel about insecurity. But do their narratives capture the larger picture and less visible layers of the conflict derived from many interrelated causes, such as an international competition for oil and gas pipelines in Central Asia, the India-Pakistan

conflict, mercenaries from neighboring countries entering Pakistan, and the roles of Russia, the United States, China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and other influential stakeholders? Do these farmers know? They may be vaguely aware of some of these factors, but on the whole, they have no way of knowing them.

When viewers say in response to the slides shown, "Oh this is the crest of a hen, this is a rooster, this is a magazine picture . . . ," they are certainly authentic in expressing what their eyes perceive. As they see each object and respond to the question, they give an authentic answer that is true to what they see. That's how a dialogue among conflict parties works, but what the mediator's eyes need to see is different from such a view of the dialogue process. While mediators must pay undivided attention to those authentic voices expressed by conflict parties, they also have to maintain a bird's-eye perspective of the larger picture and less visible aspects of the conflict. This is especially true when working at the grassroots and senior policy levels at the same time, which requires them to manage multiple perspectives simultaneously.

Let's introduce another idea, empirical reality, for lack of a better phrase, and contrast this idea against authenticity. By empirical reality, I mean the kind of knowledge about reality—or a conflict in this case—that is derived from a systematic, accountable mode of inquiry. Empirical reality, in other words, refers to recognition of a social reality established by a good social scientific method.

My basic point is this: conflict parties' authentic descriptions of perceived reality are often different from what social scientists view as empirical reality, yet we as conflict transformation practitioners need both perspectives simultaneously. To listen to and understand authentic voices, we need deep empathy. To listen for what people in conflict do not say or cannot verbalize for one reason or another, we need a social science perspective to shed light on the macro-historical context and less visible causes. Part of the latter is a process of gaining a bird's-eye view of the social reality in which the conflict is embedded.

Incidentally, there is one more important point to make about the usefulness of this artistic slideshow. What if I spoke about the meanings of authenticity and empirical reality using only words without visuals? Would that presentation have been more effective than a slideshow, followed by interactive discussion? It's possible that some of the audience could have started sleeping while I was talking. In other words, weren't the slideshow and interactive exchanges more interesting and engaging than a conventional academic lecture on authenticity?

The key is the interactive quality in an exercise like this. There is a theatrical aspect to the interactive process. The visual images you see activate your senses. It's not only the logical part of your brain that responds. When you see a rooster, it is activating your memory of having seen a rooster at some point in the past. You think you are seeing something new, but you are in fact recalling elements of your past experience. Learning is remembering. I am reminded of this mental process when I see my seven-

year-old son sitting at the center of the children's circle at school for daily reflection time. He is reflecting on his new learning from that day, but at a deeper level, his mind is actually recalling elements of the cumulative experience he has built prior to that day. Artists perform this mode of holistic learning and expression brilliantly. Artists create symbolic representations of what's in their mind, but by so doing, they are actually appealing to the human experiences of the people who interact with the artists' expressions. In other words, people use their own social experience to appreciate somebody else's experience, through art.

I would like to use these reflections on the slide show as a point of departure and discuss various roles and functions that art can serve for conflict transformation. When we say "art" in this context, we are referring to a range of very holistic ways in which we create and communicate symbolic representations of social experience. By art, we mean not only film, music, painting, and other well-recognized genres, but also less formalized means of communicative engagement facilitated by symbolic representation.

Based on this broad understanding of art, I would like to reflect on a question: What are some of the most compelling ways in which art contributes to peace building? In my estimation, there are at least eight different ways in which artistic approaches contribute very powerfully to conflict transformation. In the interest of time, I will highlight only two functions of artistic approaches. (See the handout in the appendix for additional information.)

The first function (point number three on the handout) suggests the role of art in terms of its capacity to provide social space for gathering in the midst of social tension. A short video from the actual scene of perpetrator-victim dialogues in Rwanda can serve to illustrate this point effectively. The footage of this video, shown with the participants' permission, is from my recent visit to Rwanda in 2012. There are twenty survivors in the dialogue room. Some of them had fifty of their family members killed. In this same room, there are also twenty perpetrators/ex-prisoners. Some of the perpetrators attending this dialogue had brutally killed up to fifty of the family members. These perpetrators and victims choose to gather every week to talk in this particular dialogue process. Despite the highly emotional, and often re-traumatizing, effect of these dialogues, the participants often end each session by dancing together.

Generally speaking, in Rwanda there is a very limited scope of social mobility, that is, geographic mobility of people moving from village to town, village to village. Consequently, many perpetrators and survivors have lived together in the same villages for two decades following the genocide. During these many years after the genocide, many of them couldn't talk to each other. When they would fetch water at the village well, they could not say hello. If members of one group knew that members of the other group would be at the well at a certain time of the day, they arranged their schedule in order to avoid contact. Many of them endured silence with considerable discomfort.

Ongoing voluntary dialogues like those facilitated by trusted civil society organizations can bring together members of divided communities. But in many cases, those who gather for the first time cannot say much because of deep distrust and trauma. This particular Rwandan dialogue group has met weekly for the past four years, and that's why they have been able to reach this level of interaction. Despite the passage of time and the trust that they have gradually built, in this particular dialogue, there were still some victims who collapsed when speaking and remained speechless for the rest of the dialogue. Still, at the end of the four-hour dialogue, all of them, including the most traumatized survivors, stood up and danced together. What this Rwandan experience suggests is the role that artistic expressions, in this case a traditional community dance, can play in creating social space for gathering and interaction. This social space is a very special one; words cannot adequately capture the essence of the symbolic interaction that non-verbal gestures of artistic expression facilitate.

The second function of art in the transformation of social conflict relates to theater. Take a context as difficult and complex as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and what the United States refers to as the war on terror in these countries. As I indicated earlier, my colleagues and I work with a group of South Asians, including Afghans, Pakistanis, and Indians, who gather in Kathmandu, Nepal, for peacebuilding trainings. After a good deal of team-building among the participants, we introduce a simple technique of experiential learning that uses theatrical performance. We sometimes apply a theatrical approach to our trainings so that our participants can use the approach to demonstrate new perspectives and skills they have learned in the trainings.

In one particular scenario that Afghan and Pakistani participants enacted based on their actual experiences, they demonstrated how their communities suffer from and cope with the cumulative effects of U.S. drone attacks, Pakistani military operations, and violence perpetrated by armed resistance movements. The scenario goes like this: a victim of drone attacks is crying; a Pakistani woman, playing the role of a radicalized mother, is asserting her sense of vengeance and justice; a social worker walks into the scene, offering help. When we have a participant-led theatrical reenactment of a real-life experience, it generates a very unique atmosphere of seriousness and humor. When we actually did this particular skit, Afghans, Pakistanis, Indians, Sri Lankans, and all the rest of the workshop participants were drawn to it. The group discussion that followed was very engaging and authentic.

Incidentally, we can add an interactive component to this theatrical exercise. We can, for example, turn to the audience and ask, "What do you think would be a practical and constructive response to the challenges that the people in this scenario are facing? Is there anybody in the audience who can come forward and actually help create a possible future scenario that builds on the challenges you just saw?" The point of inviting audience participation is not necessarily to generate a right answer, however one might define such an answer. The point is to create an interactive, dialogical space where the

audience becomes active participants and co-creators of the future. In response to this invitation, some people in the audience actually come forward and start speculating, "Maybe we can do something like this and that." In response, the actual performers and those familiar with the real-world scenario may contest their proposal by saying, for example, "No. That's unrealistic because our reality is more difficult and complex." And the dialogue continues.

To conclude the discussion on art in my lecture, I conducted a one-minute version of theatrical enactment that involved everybody in the lecture hall. Audience members divided into mixed gender pairs, faced each other, and followed the example provided by my colleague Professor Polly Walker and me. On the count of three, all male partners sat like women and female partners sat like men while continuing to maintain eye contact with one another. This is a mini version of a role reversal of gender-based identities, and it produced generalized laughter as partners sat like a person of the opposite gender.

When asked what they observed in the behavior of their partners, audience members responded that we all have perceptions of other people already ingrained in our minds, and that men and women behave differently. Polly Walker reported that she posed in a more open stance because she felt like she was allowed to occupy a lot of space and show her strength. In my case, when I acted like a woman in front of Polly, I became a little more Japanese in the use of space. Ever since I was an elementary schoolboy, I have known that boys are supposed to bow one way and girls another. Their differences have to do with how much space each of the two genders can take up when bowing and greeting. Beyond this Japanese example, I suspect that there is something cross-cultural, if not universal, about the possible correlation between gender and social space. Men assimilate the thought that they are expected to take more space than women in many societies. Regardless of whether this speculation is empirically correct, my basic point remains: expectations about social space are socially and subjectively constructed.

My final question to the audience addressed their reaction of laughter when we reversed our gender roles and looked at each other. One member responded that we laughed because it was unexpected, which produced some discomfort and a need to react. It is true that we often laugh when we see something unexpected happening. Laughter occurs when the situation presented to us is disarming and often humanizing. If a guest lecturer delivers a formal speech in a uniform way, using only verbal expressions, to what extent does that speech really engage you? On the other hand, when a guest speaker acts very humorously and invites every one of you to be in the same circle of experiential learning, through a role reversal and other means, what do you get out of the experience? Through this role reversal exercise, I was utterly human and demonstrated that portion of my disarmed self by way of an artistic, theatrical expression. I have done this particular exercise with senior policy and defense officials, who reported that they loved it. So long as artistic, experiential ways of interaction like this are presented respectfully and people do them voluntarily, these disarming, humanizing processes open up a unique

window of opportunity for dialogue. The nature of social interaction that opens up as a result of this is qualitatively different from the atmosphere of formal lectures and scripted diplomatic negotiation. Art plays a unique role in the creation of social space.

Thus far, we have focused mainly on the strengths of art as a contributing factor for peacebuilding. At this point, however, let's talk about its challenges and weaknesses. What are some of the challenges of artistic approaches to conflict transformation, especially in societies affected by deep-rooted conflict? One of the important challenges that the use of art faces in the transformation of conflict is the difficulty in defining its role in tackling collective and structural problems in society. In this context, I am especially interested in the question of structural violence, exemplified by economic exploitation and political repression. Artistic approaches to social change have been used to address structural violence in a range of contexts from Latin America to Northern Ireland. For the purpose of our discussion, I will focus especially on policy-relevant collective creativity that treats structural roots of conflict. To do this, I would like to first recognize the limitations of artistic creativity in the face of structural violence, and use this acceptance as a point of departure to explore a broader definition of creativity, beyond artistic creativity.

SOCIAL CREATIVITY FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION: BEYOND ARTISTIC CREATIVITY

As a prelude to policy-oriented collective creativity, I would like to introduce another interactive exercise. The inspiration for this exercise came from Professor Johan Galtung, a Norwegian scholar-practitioner of peacebuilding, whom I mentioned earlier. Imagine you have an orange in front of you. Find one partner in your vicinity. Suppose you have one orange between the two of you. Let's also suppose that both of you want an orange. However, the definition of wanting an orange is a bit unconventional and nuanced in that each of you wants to exercise control over how to maximize the utility of this orange. What concrete ways can you come up with to maximize its utility? Eat the whole thing? Use the peels? However, there are two conditions I need to attach to the exercise. Both parties must negotiate and arrive at a mutually acceptable solution to the dilemma of two people wanting one orange. The second rule is non-violence. You cannot hit the other person and run away.

I once conducted the same exercise with Palestinian teenagers at a refugee settlement in Jordan. I told them before the exercise that if any of the teenagers' pairs could come up with fifteen qualitatively different resolutions, I would consider conferring on them a doctorate in conflict resolution. One of the teens responded, "I heard that Japanese people never lie! That must be true. Will you really give us a doctorate if we come up with fifteen solutions?" And yes, one pair actually came up with over fifteen solutions.

I employ this exercise with Taiwanese and mainland Chinese dialogue participants and ask them, "What is the difference between a two-people-one-orange situation and the conflict over the One China policy?" For Indians and Pakistanis, I ask, "What is the difference between this situation and the conflict over Kashmir?" For Israelis and Palestinians, I ask, "What is the difference between this and the conflict over the status of Jerusalem?" They say, "Orange! Jerusalem! Isn't this comparison absurd? What are you talking about?" Needless to say, this simple scenario of an artificially created conflict over an orange is vastly different from deep-rooted historical conflicts in contexts such as the Taiwan Strait and Israel-Palestine relations. I spend a few minutes inviting the conflict parties to verbalize obvious differences, to reassure them. But I will also ask them a question: "When we were dealing with political conflict, why is it that we tend to assume solutions in simplistic binary terms, illustrated by comments like: 'I take the whole orange and you get nothing'?" That's the most typical solution proposed for political conflicts we face. On the other hand, some solutions will propose a compromise: English Cameroon, French Cameroon, for example. I take the first half, you take the second half. The moment we introduce the concept of juice into the orange conflict, there is a subtle yet important shift, from the concept of a solid object to liquid contained within it. The moment you introduce smell, touch, and appearance, you create another conceptual jump. Indian workshop participants once told me that the orange was beautiful and they agreed to look at the orange together to enjoy its beauty. Rwandan dialogue participants came up with a song about their orange and they actually sang the song in front of others.

My point is that the way we define the problem—in this case a conflict over the orange—shapes the universe in which we stand and think of possible solutions to it. If we recognize the orange as a solid object, we may unknowingly limit perspectives to those that see it in terms of an object to monopolize, divide, and thus fight for. If we see the value of an orange in terms of its fragrance, then we naturally come to see solutions in terms of how to enjoy the fragrance. If we see an orange as a contribution to charity, we can give it to the poor and appreciate the act of giving as a solution to the orange conflict. These various ways of problem identification, tied so closely to problem solving, illustrate key principles of conflict transformation.

Why, then, is it so difficult for us to go beyond the winner-takes-all mentality and introduce these diverse ways of thinking in the transformation of large-scale political conflicts? Why is it that we cannot go beyond the most elementary thinking that suggests cutting the object in half?

The artificially created two-party conflict over an orange is vastly different from the historical conflict over the status of Jerusalem partly because the conflict parties do not sense any weight of history attached to the orange given to them. The genesis of the orange conflict was artificially produced because I created the scenario. If, however, this orange had been grown in an orchard of your ancestors who had been driven out of their land by the army of the other side, then this orange exercise would take on a

dramatically different meaning. In that hypothetical scenario, the orange would not be a simple object; it would represent the conflict parties' history and identity.

While we must duly acknowledge these significant differences between the playful orange exercise and real-world political conflicts, we must also see the value of using evocative symbols in general and experiential exercises in particular to stimulate a mental breakthrough. This brief exercise is meant to demonstrate yet another form of artistic expression that facilitates the opening of different perspectives and to serve as a stepping stone to transition to a broader definition of creativity.

Creativity is a concept that goes beyond artistic imagination. Creativity in conflict transformation is a sustained, group-based process of interactive social learning where the actors involved in the conflict learn to formulate an unconventional response to it, and a growing number of other stakeholders come to perceive it as viable and acceptable. My working definition suggests that creativity for conflict transformation is a collective, subjective process that necessitates social validation of what used to be seen as an unworkable, insignificant insight. These thoughts I have just outlined are more fully developed in my recent book, *Creativity and Conflict Resolution: Alternative Pathways to Peace*. The book examines seventeen case studies of what many people viewed as unthinkable breakthroughs in the resolution of inter-group conflicts. It compares and contrasts these cases and articulates eleven patterns of perceptual, behavioral, and relational shifts that have enabled such breakthroughs.

At the risk of oversimplification, I define creativity as an intersection of unconventionality and viability. Unconventionality is the quality of thinking outside the box, but an attempt to think outside the box, especially in the midst of intractable conflict, may appear utopian and politically irrelevant. Insights generated by unconventional thinking have to be practical and workable as well.

Group-based social creativity for conflict transformation is necessarily an evolutionary and longitudinal process. In other words, creativity of this nature always evolves over time, sometimes over decades and generations. Although we cannot foresee distinct stages of creativity's evolution given its highly nebulous, holistic life cycle, we can at least seek to recognize what may be seen as the origination of social creativity. Origination refers to a critical juncture of a given social process at which a critical mass of innovative thinkers and actors comes to crystalize certain approaches to conflict transformation as potential breakthroughs, at least from their collective, subjective point of view. However, for the origination phase to come to fruition, there must be a social process that precedes it, to incubate constitutive elements of that unconventional proposal. To draw an analogy from physics, Einstein's famous equation, $E=mc^2$, did not come out of the blue. Einstein built on the existing idea that mass and energy are one and the same. That realization of the interconnected nature of mass and energy was achieved by a scientific revolution that preceded Einstein's theory of relativity. This preparatory process that incubates kernel ideas on which the origination phase is then built is called incipience. In addition,

the proposed framework of social creativity suggests that once a given social process passes the incipience stage and reaches the origination phase, it must then undergo a testing process of evolution, in which the proposed solution comes to be accepted or rejected by a growing number of stakeholders that pay attention to it. As part of the evolution process, acceptance is a key sub-component. Another key element within the context of evolution is sustenance, which refers to the capacity of the given social process to gain political currency and attain growing momentum to generate impact for conflict transformation. Incipience, origination, and evolution are three cumulative processes of group-based social creativity essential for conflict transformation.

CONFLICT PARADIGMS: A WORKING THEORY OF CREATIVITY

Earlier, I alluded to eleven working theories of creativity for conflict transformation which I have explored. In the interest of time, however, I will highlight only one of them: a theory of conflict paradigms. A conflict paradigm is a systemic entrenchment of perceptual and interactive patterns inherent in social conflict. Consider deep-rooted historical conflicts such as the ones in South Africa, Northern Ireland, Israel-Palestine, and the Taiwan Strait. These conflicts have grown so deeply intractable and entrenched in societies that the conflicts have generated certain behavioral and attitudinal patterns, such as social rituals, that keep historical memory alive and perpetuate well-established economic structures that feed on the continuation of hostilities.

To illustrate this notion of systemic entrenchment, let me draw analogies from my family life. My son bites his nails when he is bored. This is a behavioral pattern he established without his parents knowing it. His habit of biting nails is an entrenched pattern that is hard to change at this point in his life, for it is deeply embedded in his personality. We can think of a well-established and protracted conflict as a social system comprised of parties, their goals, their relationships, and the social context in which they interact. As a social system, a social conflict tends to develop behavioral and attitudinal patterns somewhat similar to biting one's nails.

Let me take another example from daily life. When you walk into a room, you sit on a chair knowing that gravity will work the same way today as yesterday. If gravity started working differently, you could be floating in the air as astronauts do. But today, just as yesterday, you unconsciously trust that gravity will work the same way. In intractable conflict, certain behavioral patterns have been entrenched for decades in society, and many people in conflict-affected societies follow, often unknowingly, those patterns that persist. That's what I mean by a conflict paradigm.

To deepen our discussion on this point, let's return to the orange exercise we examined. Recall that when we defined our conflict over an orange in terms of how to divide a solid object, we thought of cutting it in half or one person taking all of it at the cost of the other person getting nothing. When the

idea of making juice out of the orange was introduced, we realized that we had been confined to a narrow perspective that saw the orange as a solid object, and nothing else. When the realization emerged that the orange contains seeds and we can grow more oranges by planting the seeds together, our horizon of problem identification and problem-solving expanded exponentially. These different categories of thinking and practice illustrate different conflict paradigms.

In the reality of large-scale political conflict, it is very difficult to even begin to contemplate that we as stakeholders in the conflict have been enmeshed in a set of conflict paradigms. What we need in order to realize the very existence of deeply entrenched conflict paradigms is, first and foremost, to expose their presence to human consciousness so that we can talk about our entrenched paradigms. Many American citizens might be surprised to know that the United States has many conflict paradigms in the form of axiomatic commitments—like the war on terror—that few people examine deeply and verbalize clearly.

Perhaps I should introduce another symbolic way of illustrating a conflict paradigm. If I were to switch at this point from English to Japanese, a minority of my audience would be able to understand me. Everyone in this context assumes that I should express myself in English. Nevertheless, I signed no contract that requires me to express myself exclusively in English, but when I break that unspoken shared code of communication between us, you come to realize, "Oh, this guy really is Japanese." *Mais, je commence à parler en français . . .* When I utilize yet another language, you realize that the dynamics of our communication have shifted again. Shifting between English, Japanese, and French, what I wish to illustrate is that only when our unspoken code of communication is broken, and a new grammar is abruptly introduced, do we come to realize that our way of thinking has been deeply embedded in a certain familiar paradigm of practice. This unspoken axiomatic commitment that keeps a system of social conflict intact is what I call a conflict paradigm.

Now that we have defined the concept of a conflict paradigm, we need to ask a question: How do we know there is a conflict paradigm and how do we identify it? The key to answering it is to understand the nature of space, time, and relationship that work together to define the nature of the given conflict. I gained these insights from Einstein. Let me elaborate briefly.

First, to discover and articulate a conflict paradigm in society, it is useful to understand the concept of spatial heuristics and its application. Heuristics in this context simply means a method. By spatial heuristics, I mean a space-oriented method of inquiry aimed at revealing entrenched, less visible aspects of a given social conflict. Let's take as an example the border dispute that Peru and Ecuador have experienced until recently. Peru and Ecuador had fought at least three wars since 1944 along their contested border area. The war they fought in 1995 was especially extensive and tragic. Under international pressure, the two sides signed the Act of Brasilia in 1998 to end their fighting. The

settlement they accepted was arguably one of the most unconventional, creative solutions to contemporary territorial disputes. Essentially they chose to establish a bi-national ecological zone along the disputed border while they also acknowledged a line of demarcation drawn at the midpoint of the bi-national zone's boundaries.

The questions being asked in the Peru-Ecuador conflict were: "Who told you that you have to draw a line? Can you think of a space to share, instead of a line to draw, to solve your territorial dispute?" This is similar to asking: "Who told you that you need to see an orange as a solid object?" To put the Peru-Ecuador situation in a broader historical context, it is important to recall that the birth of modern European states in the seventeenth century presupposed exclusive territorial sovereignty. What this meant was that each piece of land should belong to one state or another, and there should be no gray zone in terms of territorial ownership. Territorial boundaries, established by lines of demarcation, crystalize this spatial arrangement. The idea of a bi-national ecological zone exposed this seemingly unquestionable, axiomatic commitment to exclusive territoriality, which illustrated a conflict paradigm of spatial characteristics. The Act of Brasilia broke that paradigm and through it, revealed that both conflict parties had been entrenched in the spatial paradigm from which they had been unable to escape.

The second method of identifying a conflict paradigm requires examining the notion of time. It appeals to temporal heuristics. Here is an example to illustrate. When we try to end a war, many of us first seek a ceasefire, because in the midst of shooting and bombing, it is very difficult to imagine ending a war. Look, for example, at how United Nations Special Envoy Kofi Annan sought to mediate the conflict in Syria by initially calling for a ceasefire. The underlying assumption is that we first try to stop the parties from shooting so that they can start negotiating. As they negotiate, ideally they will eventually reach an agreement. This notion of a "ceasefire first" approach is arguably typical of Western behaviorist thinking, because it focuses first and foremost on controlling and containing the parties' visible behavior of shooting. The well-established formula is to seek a ceasefire, negotiation, agreement, and its implementation, roughly in this order. But having dialogued with people who belong to armed resistance movements, I am convinced that they will not surrender their guns until their essential needs and aspirations are realized. It is not logical to think that these resistance movements that have taken up arms to achieve their goals, which they believed were not achievable by political means, will suddenly give up their guns under diplomatic pressure and renounce the use of force without having met their political ends. Weapons are merely the means by which they achieve their goals.

This sequential thinking, which indicates the occurrence of A, B, C, D in a linear fashion, is simply unrealistic. Why, then, did this way of thinking become so axiomatic as to be unquestionable in many contexts of diplomatic negotiation over conflict? A short answer is: because of the deep structure and culture of state hierarchy and elite-led diplomacy. Their thinking is different than the thinking at the

grassroots level. Talk to Syrian people in the midst of the conflict. They would never drop their guns because of the unfulfilled human needs that they view as non-negotiable.

To transcend this fixed notion of sequential thinking, can we imagine a context in which it makes sense to work toward a ceasefire, political negotiation, formulation of solutions, and implementation, all at the same time, or to work on some of these tasks simultaneously? Can we, for example, formulate and disseminate working solutions among conflict parties based on one-on-one dialogues with them, and continuously improve the solutions while simultaneously preparing better social conditions that justify a ceasefire? Such an approach may or may not be workable, depending on the nature of the conflict, but my basic point remains. We need to make explicit a time-oriented paradigm that binds us in conflict and find a way to transcend it if doing so contributes to transforming the conflict.

Finally, I would like to talk about relational heuristics, or a method of thinking that enables us to identify less visible patterns of relationships underlying conflict paradigms. Relational heuristics is arguably more complicated than spatial and temporal heuristics. Relational heuristics guides our thinking to recognize center-periphery, dominant-marginal, vertical-horizontal, and other forms of relationship-oriented social structures. In the Swiss federation, Bern is the seat of the federal parliament but Bern is not a designated capital, unlike Washington for the United States and Tokyo for Japan. The ambiguity of the political center, at least in an officially designated sense, is arguably a reflection of the centuries of power sharing in Swiss history in which constituent political units have carefully prevented one another from becoming a hegemon. Another noteworthy example of center-periphery relations is Turkey. Historically, Istanbul has been, and continues to be, the economic hub of the country. However, in the process of contemporary state-making, Turkey chose to shift its capital to Ankara to mark a fresh start as a republic and to free itself from the old habits created by the Istanbul-based regime of the defeated Ottoman Empire. This Turkish example demonstrates that separation of a political center and an economic center is possible. It represents a departure from the conventional model of a single capital city, like Tokyo, that is dominant in both economics and politics. The examples of Switzerland and Turkey illustrate that nations can reimagine ways in which center-periphery relations are organized. If we know these and other historical examples of relational structures, we can use that knowledge and historical consciousness to organize public discussion about how to improve existing relational structures. Relational heuristics is a concept that facilitates that inquiry and dialogue.

A CASE STUDY: AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN-UNITED STATES RELATIONS

I would now like to shift our attention to the practical application of the theory of group-based collective creativity I have just outlined. The following brief case study will focus on the Afghanistan-

Pakistan-U.S. relations, based on the dialogues, trainings, and research interviews I have conducted since 2010.

At the heart of the system of social conflicts defining Afghanistan-Pakistan-U.S. relations, there are several interconnected challenges of social tension and contradictions that need to be resolved. One is the conflict within Afghanistan that involves diverse ethno-linguistic communities and regions, all desperately in need of reconciliation to overcome the legacy of the prolonged civil war. The second challenge is the conflict within Pakistan, especially the long-standing tension between the overriding power of the military and a weak civil society that has been unable to exercise effective civilian control over the military-led foreign and domestic policy. The third challenge is the conflict between India and Pakistan that affects these countries' power struggle inside Afghanistan. The most visible aspect of this struggle is the Pakistani military and its intelligence agency working together with the Afghan Taliban to counter what Pakistan sees as Indian hands deep inside the economic and cultural infrastructure of post-war Afghanistan. The fourth challenge is the conflict between the United States and Pakistan, at least in terms of inter-state relations. The two sides present themselves as allies in their common cause to pursue the U.S.-led war on terror, but they are indisputably clashing and view each other with deep mutual distrust. The fifth challenge is the conflict between the United States and Afghanistan, which is palpable in the way Presidents Hamid Karzai and Barack Obama strongly disagree and often confront one another about Afghan sovereignty and the scheduled U.S. troop withdrawal in 2014.

Consequently, Afghanistan-Pakistan-U.S. relations represent a set of interrelated conflicts. Now, let's ask: What is the conflict paradigm underlying these relationships? If we take a U.S.-centered worldview, one of the most conspicuous discourses that has come to be deeply entrenched since the September 11th attacks is the "war on terror." But let's pause for a moment and reflect on what the war on terror really means.

The war on terror presumes that there are evil terrorists. President George W. Bush's statement in the aftermath of September 11th declared his administration's recognition of an "axis of evil" comprised of North Korea, Iran, and Iraq. The discourse of the axis of evil necessarily objectifies the evil other. In this discourse, we are good, they are bad. We have some sins, but the magnitude of our incorrect behavior pales in the face of their exponentially greater evil behavior. They, on the evil side, are evil by nature. When we designate them as evil, we don't have to bother asking about why they became evil. The evil side, once designated by us as such, is not entitled to have a history of human grievances that drove them to take up arms. Remember how Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Slobodan Milosevic in the Balkans came to be designated as evil leaders in the discourse of American foreign policy. Once we designate them as evil, we feel justified in using force and eliminating them because they are less than human in our eyes. The problem is that in this social process, it becomes increasingly difficult to be introspective and examine

whether we, as a contributor to the making of their evil history, have done anything wrong to push them into a corner and force them to behave the way they do.

With regard to the question of conflict paradigms, the war on terror as a discourse and a social structure has the capacity to force people's attention to focus sharply on the emerging crisis. In terms of its temporal orientation, it is short-term immediate. Such a crisis-driven mode of collective thinking and action draws attention to a narrowly defined geographic context, typically the immediate geographic location in which effects of terrorizing violence are expereinced. In both time and space, the war on terror highlights immediacy.

How do we counter the push for immediacy and short-sightedness driven by the war on terror and the conflict paradigm that sustains it? I suggest that we reverse the way of thinking that drives the war on terror. What I advocate is a more holistic, self-reflective, and dialogical process of exploring the origins of the perceived terror and the historical conflict with emphasis on what gave rise to the challenge that our side and their side share. To do this, we need to expand the notion of time, going back in history and projecting an image of alternative scenarios onto the future. We must also expand the notion of space. By space, I mean a social space in which relationships are formed. As stated earlier, the war on terror sees the theater of terrorizing violence as its main focus of attention. Many Americans, for example, call the war in Afghanistan an Afghan war, and the nuclear crisis in North Korea a North Korean problem. I understand the public sentiment that justifies these designations of the problems, but ultimately, there is no such thing as an Afghan conflict; it is an Afghan conflict in relation to Pakistan, the United States and other nations. Likewise, regarding North Korea, what we are actually witnessing is a conflict between North Korea and the United States, among other countries deeply concerned with the crisis. Let's make the U.S. role visible in the circles of relationships and expand the notion of social space beyond the narrowly defined locality of the crisis that concerns the immediate U.S. interest.

In this context of spatial expansion, let me add another dimension to advance our thinking further. The key to the spatial expansion is to be conscious of self and other, and the relationship between them. If we choose to see social conflict this way, we will realize that the conflict in Afghanistan and Pakistan in fact involves at least seventeen countries and seven international organizations. For China, for example, one of the key concerns and goals at stake in Afghanistan is the energy supply from Central Asia. Another important concern has to do with the removal of the East Turkmenistan Islamist Movement in Xinjiang, now active in Afghanistan as well as in Central Asia. For India, the key is to cope with and contain Pakistan's strategic interference in Afghanistan, which Islamabad seeks to extend through its own agents and its historical allies in Afghanistan. In other words, all these actors, their needs, and relationships are interconnected, never isolated. You may wonder how many of the senior policy officials in Washington see the vast network of conflicts inside and outside of Afghanistan this way, transcending the narrowly

defined war on terror. In other words, how many of them would even see the "Afghan problem" in terms of conflict analysis, not just crisis management? How many of them see this challenge in terms of juice and seeds, not just an orange as a solid object? Having conducted many workshops in Washington and elsewhere for policy-oriented professionals, I must regrettably say very few.

To reiterate my basic point succinctly, an applied practice of group-based social creativity has to do with thinking expansively about the temporal and spatial frameworks of analysis, transcending the crisis-driven mode to open up a systematic, multi-angled conflict analysis and to explore ways in which practical steps for transformation and reconciliation can begin to take place. This is exactly what we need to do inside Afghanistan and Pakistan, between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and in the larger international context.

In the interest of time, let me focus primarily on the international level of social change that is critically needed for conflict transformation in Afghanistan-Pakistan-U.S. relations. Our focus on the international context, I believe, will also help us clarify what we as international partners can do to support what is essentially an Afghan and Pakistani-led process to build peace in their own countries. In broad outline, what I have been working on together with diverse regional and international colleagues is to explore the possibility of launching a Central and South Asian Conference for Peace and Security. Let me explain what I mean by this.

As stated earlier, the conflicts in the region are intermeshed. The proposed conference, as a multi-year consultation process, seeks to bring together Afghanistan and Pakistan as key parties, in addition to Iran, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. This regional process should be open to other regional stakeholders that may express interest.

These and other regional stakeholders have at least two things in common. First, take any pair of neighboring countries in the region, and you realize that there is deep-rooted mistrust between them, either because of their competition for energy resources, identity-based conflicts, or other reasons. The relationship between Pakistan and India is a well-established case in point. Paradoxically, these sets of distrustful bilateral relationships are all interdependent. By interdependence, I mean relationships in which one's survival and prosperity depends on the action of one's distrusted neighbor. For example, the tension between Pakistan and Iran goes back in history to their interference in Afghanistan, but these two countries depend on each other in terms of selling and buying Iranian natural gas that Pakistan desperately needs. The second commonality among these regional stakeholders is that they all wish to avoid Western interventions, whose disastrous consequences they are seeing in Afghanistan. While these regional stakeholders don't trust each other, they are united in their cause to avert Western interventions. Motivated in part by this common cause, the Central Asian countries, together with China and Russia, formed the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

If we take these dynamics of mutual distrust and interdependence seriously, what kind of long-term processes of constructive change come to mind? A series of dialogues I had with individuals and groups from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere appear to converge on the need to orchestrate a holistic regional process that takes the practical challenges on the ground seriously. One way of crystalizing a possible image of such a regional process is to draw insights from the historical precedent of the Helsinki Process of 1972 to 1975 in European and Trans-Atlantic relations during the Cold War. Under the leadership of President Urho Kekkonen, Finland managed to bring together thirty-five countries deeply polarized between the Soviet and U.S. camps. It is critically important that this Finnish-led initiative took place against all odds, against the backdrop of the hot proxy wars taking place in Vietnam and acrimonious Arab-Israeli relations. There was no certainty that the process would work, but history has proven that it did.

The Helsinki Process introduced three baskets of simultaneous multilateral negotiation: a security basket, an economic basket, and a human rights basket. Applied to Afghan-Pakistani relations, this third basket, I believe, will need to be configured as a culture/religion basket. The multi-pronged negotiation adopted rotating chairpersonship among the participating nations and decision-making by consensus, leaving no room for privileged superpowers to exercise veto. In the Afghan-Pakistani context, Turkey is uniquely qualified to be a convener, at least in the initial stage, for it has already brought Afghan and Pakistani leaders together multiple times for confidence-building. In fact, Turkey did convene a similar multinational initiative in November 2011 as a co-convener, together with Afghanistan, to facilitate a comprehensive international process for confidence-building to resolve the conflict in Afghanistan.

In this particular regional process I have in mind, which can build on existing regional mechanisms such as this Turkish-led process, I envision that the security basket of issues will need to address the possibility of regional policing and peacekeeper training and well-incentivized practical mechanisms of arms control, among other issues. The economic basket will need to discuss an equitable and sustainable regional mechanism for harnessing and sharing gas and oil, and ways in which best practices of development, such as agricultural cooperatives, can be shared widely across the region to gradually transform the exploitive economy that feeds on opium, arms, and mercenaries. The culture-religion basket must explore how to support mainstream religious readers and their discourses and school curricula that actively promote interfaith and inter-communal coexistence.

In relation to this last point, I met with a number of Islamic leaders who regularly appear on the radio and preach non-violence. Some of them receive death threats from people who fiercely oppose these leaders' interpretations of Islam. Currently these leaders tend to be sidelined and isolated both in their religious circles and in civil society at large. In my estimation, it is necessary to devise ways for both the government and civil society to see the benefit of working together to move these courageous Islamic

leaders of conscience toward the mainstream and take steps to support and protect them from death threats. I am aware that such a change necessitates a paradigm shift, but that's exactly what we need for peace.

Having outlined a regional process of confidence-building, what should be the appropriate role of the United States, the European Union, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Japan, and other stakeholders outside the region? History has cogently demonstrated that their military interventions are always counterproductive and leave disastrous consequences not only for the countries in the region but also for their own self-interests. The most effective role they can play, I believe, is to work together to pool their resources and channel them through a politically impartial mechanism coordinated by the United Nations. The resources can be used to support the regionally-led autonomous process comprised of the three baskets of issues to negotiate. The international stakeholders, within the United Nations framework, can demand transparency in the use of the funds and tolerate no corruption. Within this U.N.-led process, the United States can even host some of the conferences, perhaps after some regional trust-building is accomplished, with Washington's explicit commitment not to attach any strings to the process. If the United States wishes to prevent future September 11th attacks from happening, Washington must think differently. By intensifying drone attacks, night raids, and other overt and covert tactics of its military campaign, the United States is currently leading the way to engender the next generation of firmly committed attackers looking for vengeance. We must change the current course of action immediately and decisively.

I started my presentation with discussion of the role of art in peacebuilding and built an argument to explore group-based collective creativity that seeks to address structural roots of violent conflict. Does this last part, including the case study of Afghanistan and Pakistan, sound like an application of artistic creativity? Perhaps not. My point in the latter half of the presentation is that to engage policymakers practically and initiate structural change, we need to expand the notion of creativity and align it to the need for structural transformation. Artists may or may not be trained or experienced to think this way. This is where we need more research and applied practice in our attempt to link creativity to peacebuilding.

To conclude, I would like to summarize my presentation in three parts. First, artistic creativity, when applied skillfully and intentionally, serves as a powerful way of humanizing interaction. Second, artistic creativity faces serious challenges in its attempt to tackle structural roots of conflict and social inequity. It is in this context that a broader sense of social creativity as I have outlined here is crucially important. Third and finally, however, even in the context of policy-oriented discussion on the need of structural transformation, people involved in policymaking are, after all, human beings. As human beings, they embrace their collective identities, historical experiences, and worldviews. The experiential exercises

incorporated in this presentation such as zoom in, zoom out, the orange dialogue, and gender role reversal, sought to show concrete ways in which policymakers and civil society leaders alike can learn together about how to analyze and transform social conflict. These exercises demonstrate that diverse applications of artistic creativity and experiential learning can help create a unique synergy of macro policy-making and authentic human interactions.

Appendix:
Art and Conflict Transformation: A Practitioner's Field Note
(A Handout Distributed for the Presentation)

These notes summarize my personal reflections on the link between art and conflict transformation from the viewpoint of a practitioner of the latter deeply interested in the former. These reflections are intended to facilitate constructive dialogue on the topic.

What is conflict transformation?
A sustained dialogical process of exploring the sources and contexts of a given social conflict systematically and developing relevant means by which to redirect its momentum into constructive relationship building and social change.

What is art?
Skill in producing a symbolic representation of human experience. By extension, it is a process of production, a product itself, and an experience in interacting with the representation. Forms of artistic expression include, but are not limited to, visual arts, music, dance, theater, film, poetry, and novels. This inquiry seeks to explore a much broader scope of symbolic representations that activate different senses and orchestrate holistic experiential learning.

Functions of art in conflict transformation, with significant overlap
1. *Method of expression, primarily unilateral* – "Do you remember Sarajevo?" (2002 documentary); artistic expressions of this category may be used for social protest.
2. *Method of reciprocal, conciliatory communication* – Theatrical, dramaturgical re-enactment of past events for healing, mutual acknowledgement, and reconciliation; peace ceremonies and rituals such as Polynesian *ho'oponopono* (setting to right).
3. *Provision of social space for gathering* (or for "mediative capacity-building," John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*) – a Japanese violinist organizing a concert for Israelis and Palestinians; Rwandan cow dance symbolizing peace in community gatherings; Nepali photo exhibits on the civil war that bring together different sides of the conflict.
4. *Pedagogic tool of peace education* – Collaborative artwork that brings divided children together; rap music used by American youth to express themselves for self-actualization and nonviolence; theatrical enactment of integrative visions, as a conclusion of training.
5. *Invitation and inspiration for dialogue, to describe the indescribable* – Forum theater (Augusto Boal, inspired by Paulo Freire) to stimulate solution-oriented thinking and discussion.
6. *Metaphor, as an artistic expression, intentionally used to discover and describe the meaning of something important in conflict* – Use of metaphors (e.g., Chinese family) to describe constructive images of the Taiwan Strait in 2020.
7. *Storage of collective memory of historical experience, as a basis for activating its peace potential* – Liturgy for prayers; Afghan poetry used in dialogue recalling ancestors.
8. *Method of income generation and fundraising* – Rwandan handcrafts for sale.

Strengths of artistic approaches to conflict transformation
- Artistic approaches enable artists to employ multiple senses (different skills, capacities, intelligences) to express their feelings and thoughts through audiovisual, kinetic, and other means of symbolic representation and holistic interaction.
- From the viewpoint of its "audience," artistic experience activates both cognitive and emotive capacities and appeals to the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious.
- Based on the combined effect of these effects, artistic approaches have the capacity to restore a sense of common humanity overshadowed by political, economic, and other differences.
- Artistic expression can create a vicarious experience of being in touch with a given social reality (for example, war) that people may or may not have experienced firsthand. Such artistic expression can be both close enough to the reality it represents and distant enough from the reality to contain the risk of emotional triggers. This balance (esthetic distance) between experiential proximity and emotional distance, if achieved, would provide a potentially useful basis for deep self-reflection and creative reengagement in the reality of social conflict that needs transformation.

Difficulties inherent in artistic approaches to conflict transformation
- Uncertainty and arbitrariness of interpretation – Art as a form of communication involves an act of interpretation. Artists and their "audience" may or may not come to share the same message for peace through a given artistic experience. Recipients of the message may interpret the artists' intention negatively, depending on the interpretive lenses they wear and the social contexts in which they produce the interpretation.
- Difficulty in evaluation – Appreciation of artistic experience is necessarily intuitive and subjective. It is therefore hard to assess the effects of artistic experience on conflict transformation by appeal to a systematic, accountable method of inquiry. This difficulty, in turn, makes it hard for artistic approaches to build academic credibility, policy relevance, and financial support. Methodological innovation is essential.

Questions for further inquiry
1. According to Paul D'Andrea, a playwright and an expert on Shakespeare, a good artistic expression is one that is shaped convincingly. If so, what qualities of communication give a compelling shape to a story, a visual image, a kinesthetic movement, a piece of music, and other modes of artistic expression? Can we build a general theory of compelling artistic expression and make it learnable and teachable for peace?
2. How does the macro social context of artistic communication—historical, structural, and cultural—shape and reshape a given form of artistic expression, especially when society is undergoing protracted conflict?
3. How does artistic expression, in turn, contribute to shaping and reshaping the macro historical, structural, and cultural context of conflict in order to facilitate conflict transformation?