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- the transdisciplinary nature of solutions to wicked social problems, and
- a shared sense of purpose in human transnational activism for positive change.

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Contributors

HAWAMDA, IZZEDDIN is a Palestinian educator and storyteller from the West Bank. He holds a PhD in Peace and Conflict Studies and works in anti-racist education across diverse educational settings. He is the founder of Sadaa–صدى and the Unbounded Stories series, initiatives that use storytelling to foster dialogue, empathy, and human connection. He teaches at the University of Winnipeg, Canada and Canadian Mennonite University and is a recipient of King Charles III's Coronation Medal.
(email: umhawamd@myumanitoba.ca)

KAFINGA, ALIYU SANI is a Graduate Peace Researcher at the Center for Peace and Security Studies, Modibbo Adama University (MAU), Nigeria. He is the founder of the MPT-SST Spiritual Revolution, the MPT–SST Spiritual-Transformation Initiative, and the Kafinga Metaphysical Center for Peace. His research integrates metaphysics, consciousness, and transformative peace praxis towards holistic human and planetary renewal—a revolutionary voice for the Metaphysical Peace Revolution: One Humanity • One Love • One Cosmos!
(email: kmpt.ssty@gmail.com)

LIN, CHIH-JIUN is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Tourism and Leisure and the Bachelor Programme for Baking and Beverage Modulation at Da-Yeh University in Taiwan. He received his PhD in bio-industry technology from Da-Yeh University and holds a master's degree in restaurant and hotel management from Florida International University, USA. His teaching and research interests include hospitality management, international etiquette, and leisure industry analysis.
(email: n5602@mail.dyu.edu.tw)

LIN, YEN-TING is a master's student in Public Policy at George Mason University, USA and a researcher at the PiVoT Peace Lab (Polarisation and Violence Transformed) at the Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution. His research examines how authoritarian states leverage emerging technologies and information operations to influence public opinion and national security. His analysis and commentary have appeared in *Small Wars Journal*, *American*

Intelligence Journal, *The Defence Horizon Journal*, Ketagalan Media, and the University of Nottingham Taiwan Research Hub.
(email: ylin37@gmu.edu)

MAZUMDER, ABHIJIT, the publisher of the *JTPP*, is a master in business management, who has spent more than 35 years in publishing in both UK and India. Before developing Frontpage, which launches the *JTPP*, Abhijit was the Director, Anthem Press where he had moved from Oxford University Press. Abhijit's interest lies in human rights, forced migration, displacement, media focus on minority representation et al which is translated into his publishing programme under Critical Debates on Frontpage. Abhijit dreams to see underprivileged worldwide achieve their rights and all children are able to smile.
(email: am@jtpp.uk)

MOZZONE, CARLOTTA, MSW, PhD, is a Research Fellow at the Department of Cultures, Politics and Society, University of Turin (Italy), and an Adjunct Professor in Social Work. Her research focuses on the history of social work, social work education, supervision, and the international development of the profession, with a comparative perspective. She has teaching experience in Italy and abroad and has published extensively in peer-reviewed international journals and edited volumes.
(email: carlotta.mozzone@unito.it)

PESSOA, KAMILA BORGES ARAGÃO is a human being who loves, above all, words and people, not necessarily in that order. She is a doctoral candidate at the University of Lisbon, Portugal and works as a teacher in the public school system, mainly with immigrant children. She is a member of DIVCULT at IMISCOE and focuses her studies on the intersection between arts, culture, and migration. She participates in the Politics and Power research group at CAPP, Portugal, and the Center for Environmental Studies Environmentally Displaced Persons (NEPDA).
(email: kbpessoa@gmail.com)

RINKER, JEREMY A, PhD, the Editor-in-Chief of the 'Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis', is Associate Professor & Chair, Department of Peace & Conflict Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA where his research interests revolve around the centrality of justice discourse, trauma awareness, and collective resilience in movements aimed at transforming social conflict, historical injustices, and structural violence. His publications

include 'The Guide to Trauma-Informed and Emotionally Mindful Conflict Practice' (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2024), 'Identity, Rights, and Awareness: Anticaste Activism in India and the Awakening of Justice through Discursive Practices' (Lexington, USA, 2018), 'Realizing Nonviolent Resilience: Neoliberalism, Societal Trauma, and Marginalized Voice' (with Jerry T Lawler, Peter Lang, USA, 2020).
(email: jr@jtpp.uk / JARINKER@uncg.edu)

SCHUTZ, AARON M, PhD, is a Professor of Educational Policy and Community Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee College of Community Engagement & Professions, USA, Schutz is a long-time Department Chair and Programme Director. His research focuses on community organising for social change in urban communities as well as on theories of democracy and democratic education. His community work resulted in increased funding for school nurses in Milwaukee, and he conducted a research project exploring ways to engage students in an inner-city high school in social action projects.
(email: schutz@uwm.edu)

TURUNEN, MADISON is a Peace and Conflict Studies doctoral student at the University of Manitoba, Canada. Madison holds a Master of Arts degree in Peace and Justice from the University of San Diego's Kroc School of Peace Studies, USA. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Pace University, USA and has professional experience as a restorative justice practitioner and human rights advocate.
(email: madisonturunen@gmail.com)

WOEHRLE, LYNNE M, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the School of Nursing at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, USA. Woehrle leads academic programmes on peacebuilding including graduate and undergraduate micro-credentials in conflict transformation, systems-thinking and community change, and an undergraduate certificate in Peace and Conflict Studies. She is a practitioner of community engaged research working with many non-profits to support their programmes around environmental justice, newcomer support and racial equity.
(email: woehrle@uwm.edu)

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Editor-in-Chief's Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the fifteenth (XV) issue of the *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis* (*JTPP*), Volume 8, Number 1. If I had been asked in January 2019, while welcoming readers to the first issue of the *JTPP*, if I thought that I would one day be writing the introduction for the fifteenth edition of this journal, I would have laughed and said, 'not likely'. Now seven years on, here I am writing this fifteenth Welcome and Introduction! This fledgling idea back in 2019 has had a staying power, because, I believe, we, as humans, desperately need to better understand the praxis of peace!

I am glad that you are here, we are interconnected, and your presence as a reader is felt and appreciated. Thank you for those that read our 'critically important' first issue all those years ago. That first issues' pieces are no less critical to peace in the world today, than this current issue's articles. The *JTPP* remains a connective tissue to what Daisy Hildyard calls our 'second body'.[1] As I wrote in the first introduction, transdisciplinarity 'implies an added sense of moving beyond boundaries'. For seven years, the *JTPP* has stayed true to transdisciplinary praxis, publishing boundary-breaking articles about peace history, systems theory, neoliberal economics, religion, and the complex boundary-crossing work of peace. Like Hildyard's desire to 'find some places where real life and this global truth—two bodies—come into one another',[2] the *JTPP* continues to notice, and draw attention to, the boundaries of our understandings of the simple idea of 'peace' and aims to continue to cross borders to try and reveal our radical interconnectedness. I hope you enjoy this latest issue and that it helps you make the important connections that bring us all closer to world peace.

The first two articles in the fifteenth issue take us from Brazil to Palestine to explore the importance of storytelling and memory as acts of resistance. In ' "I'm still here": The Art of Memory from South to North' Kamila Borges Aragão Pessoa seeks to analyse the 'cinematic narrative' (abstract) of the Brazilian film "I'm Still here' in arguing that 'that art is capable of challenging official narratives and putting pressure on authoritarian discourses' (p.13). Engaging in what she calls 'critical peace studies' (p.16) and invoking John Paul Lederach's ideas of the 'moral imagination',[3] Borges Aragão Pessoa resources past issues of the *JTPP* to argue for the urgent need and potential of cinema to resist authoritarianism and dictatorship.

The second article in this issue, by Izzeddin Hawamda and entitled 'Concepts of Home: Land Stewardship through Intergenerational Stories in Palestine', is a heartfelt expression of the pain and displacement felt by the Palestinian diaspora. Following on the theme of decolonisation, this article artfully mediates between the interior experiences of the author and the universal sense of connection to a homeland and place. No summary review can do justice to this piece, this is an article that builds interconnection and solidarity, but one that one must read to fully understand its phenomenological groundings. Both these opening articles subtly point towards systems theory as a more macro frame for human understanding of conflict.

The next two articles follow nicely the first two in this fifteenth issue. The third concise article by Lynne Woehrle and Aaron Schutz, entitled 'The Critical Work of Systems Thinking in Peacebuilding Practice and Theory', presents a sort of toolkit for peacebuilders struggling with grasping the often-imperceptible interconnections between their peace work and activism for change. Presenting a sort of 'practitioners' corner' for us to reflect on peace practice, this short piece foregrounds an epistemological starting point for dealing with complexity and uncertainty in our current context. Exploring two case studies, Woehrle and Schutz articulate how systems thinking can be used by activists in their work for decolonisation, peace and conflict studies pedagogy, and direct intervention in destructive conflict. Even though they do admit 'in moments of critical crisis there may not be time for research and relationship development that is characteristic of a systems-thinking approach' (pp.62-63), they argue that grounding practice in this mindset and making it 'foundational to decision making' (p.63) is critical to effective peacebuilding.

In the fourth article by Aliyu Sani Kafinga, he develops a systems-based framework for peace. What the author calls 'The Kafinga Integrated MPT-SST-UPD-CRC Framework' aims to articulate the fact that 'there exists a profound and unmet need for a holistic framework that can integrate the inner dimensions of spirituality with the outer imperatives of structural change' (pp.65-66). Outlining twelve universal principles, the author connects the theoretical literature of peace studies to articulate a framework that can 'encompass and elevate' (p.84) existing models of peace and move them from 'static condition' to 'active process' (p.85). Both these inner articles of this issue articulate a holistic systems-level approach to effectively realising the ideal of peace; a key aspect of transdisciplinary praxis.

The final two articles that round out the current issue develop the spheres of international advocacy and policy as they relate to peace praxis. Madison Turunen's 'Connecting Human Rights and Restorative Justice: Complementary Approaches to International Advocacy' aims to break down the 'silos of peace studies' p.88) by exploring the intersection of human rights and restorative justice. In exploring 40

cases published by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) between 2008 and 2023, Turunen integrates top-down human rights advocacy with bottom-up restorative justice intervention to develop an approach that see human rights and restorative justice 'as complementary in the holistic scope of peacebuilding and change-making' (p.107).

Turunen's broad-based approach foregrounds nicely the last article in this issue, a short thought-piece on digital peacebuilding entitled 'Digital Peacebuilding Against Racial Hate Speech: Theoretical Foundations and Policy Pathways'. Specifically, in examining 'racialized hate speech as a systemic form of digital violence' (p.113), and focusing on how social media platforms 'do not merely host this content; they actively shape its virality' (p.114), the authors, Yen-ting Lin & Chih-Jiun Lin, explore what 'peacebuilding-informed' (p.114) frameworks can provide that reactive social media moderation cannot. In arguing for practical approaches to develop pathways to fix the negative harms of social media on youth, they argue 'if equity, dignity, and accountability are embedded into digital systems now, the next generation will inherit platforms that cultivate empathy rather than division' (p.120). Such a future-looking approach to working in the present to impact the next generation bookends well the resilience and tenacity of this issue's opening article; in screaming 'we are all still here' we remind the neoliberal elite power-structure, that there are better ways to live collectively and we are not giving up on our hopes and dreams for a better, more peaceful, world.

To cap off this issue of the *JTPP* we also present Mozzone Carlotta's review of the book *Social Work in War-Torn Contexts: "From that Moment There Was No Peace"*. This edited volume by Shulamit Ramon and Darja Zaviršek, Carlotta argues contributes to a 'rejection of technocratic or solution-oriented models of helping in contexts where repair, recovery, or restitution may be structurally impossible' (p.123). Such a review offers readers 'both conceptual depth and profound ethical insight' (p.125) that critically engages unspoken paradoxes in what are often called the helping professions. This sentiment that social workers can harm when they think they are helping highlights an important critical stance of social praxis. In these trying times, this book review brings important questions to the forefront of those doing social work to make change in the world.

The issue, as usual, ends with our regular *Kaleidoscope* section, which engages with current events and prospects for peace through increased awareness. Knowing is half the battle, and this section aims to simply keep readers informed of some key happenings in our discipline in our information-saturated world.

As usual, I hope readers will enjoy the approach and pieces in this issue, which connect the important concepts of systems theory with issues of memories of home and narratives of change to argue for what I call an inclusive peacebuilding. As always, thanks to the Peace and Justice Studies Association (PJSA), a bi-national

social justice organisation that supports the work of the *JTPP*. As an affiliated journal of the PJSA, we encourage PJSA membership to reach out and share their work, comments, and ideas. Our always open call for papers can be found at https://jtpp.uk/.

Please continue to support us beyond the reading of this issue by encouraging your friends and colleagues to subscribe to the *JTPP* (https://jtpp.uk/subscription-plan)! Get your university or local library to subscribe with this form (https://jtpp.uk/library-recommendation)! We look forward to hearing from you and continue to stand in solidarity as we work collectively to build a more just and peaceful world!

With much metta (loving kindness),

Dr Jeremy A Rinker
Editor-in-Chief, *JTPP* (https://jtpp.uk/)
Department of Peace and Conflict Studies
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA
E: jarinker@uncg.edu / jr@jtpp.uk

14 February 2026

NOTES

1 Hildyard, Daisy, *The Second Body,* London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2017. She writes: 'You have an individual body in which you exist, eat, sleep, and go about your day-to-day life. You also have a second body which has an impact on foreign countries and on whales' (pp.21-22).

2 Ibid, Hildyard, D, *The Second Body*, p.28

3 Lederach, John Paul, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005

‘I’m still here’
The Art of Memory from South to North

Kamila Borges Aragão Pessoa

ABSTRACT
The film ‘I’m Still Here’ uses melancholy, sobriety and placidity to dissect the wounds of the Brazilian dictatorship, (re)constructing, through the trajectory of the character Eunice Paiva, the various facets of state violence. Anchored in the aesthetic shift in international relations, this study uses Walter Salles’ film as a methodological tool, exploring the dialogue between cultural diplomacy and peace studies. The analysis seeks to understand the potential of local cinematic narratives as a pedagogical tool, a sort of micro-political device of resistance, capable of pluralising stories, denouncing violence and (re)formulating (para) textual counter-narratives. The work is structured around three central questions: i) how can national cinema act as a tool for promoting critical political debate, fostering discussions about justice and memory; ii) how can humanised narratives contribute to the (re)signification of the past and the (re)construction of a collective historical memory; and iii) in what ways can audio-visual media act as a tool for international projection, bringing realities experienced in the South into global debates on historical reconciliation. The study argues that art is capable of challenging official narratives and putting pressure on authoritarian discourses, especially when its magnifying lens shifts to a subjective and aesthetic experience of the audience, making the film a catalyst for political awareness, which brings the local to reflect the global. In a scenario of resurgent far-right movements, which flirt with replicas of authoritarian models and deliberate distortions of ahistorical memory, ‘Ainda Estou Aqui’ reiterates the importance of memory policies and transitional justice mechanisms, such as the ‘Comissão da Verdade’, highlighting the importance of national cinema in the dispute over political constructs that are reverberated and unchallenged by the North.

KEYWORDS
Decolonial Aesthetics, Resistance, Memory, Melancholy, Peace Studies, Transitional Justice, Brazilian Cinema

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

In contemporary Brazil, the dictatorial past (1964-1985) has not simply been forgotten; rather, it has been the target of a deliberate and selective process of silencing. The hundreds of deceased and missing individuals have not secured a definitive place in the nation's collective trauma and reflection. Instead, their memory is shrouded in a fog of selective omission, denial, and revisionism, which are indicative of a society that has yet to process its historical mourning. In the context of an authoritarian resurgence, which can be illustrated by the former president Jair Bolsonaro's public praise for the actions of dictators, the deliberate distortion of memory has emerged as an active political instrument. The present paper contributes to this field by advancing cinema as a transdisciplinary method of peace praxis, arguing that films such as 'I'm Still Here' operate as both a methodological tool and a micro-political practice. In doing so, it highlights memory, affection, and aesthetics as central dimensions of peacebuilding from the Global South.

While narratives that glorify torture and trivialise state violence gain media attention and political power, the reality of the trauma and suffering of families is systematically erased from public debate, making such narratives doubly violent. In a past that still bleeds, conflicts cannot be considered a mere historiographical debate. Challenging narratives is necessary because inaction undermines the possibilities of achieving substantial peace, blocks restorative justice, and prevents critical confrontation. The very existence of a National Truth Commission (2012-2014)—created to investigate the crimes of the dictatorship that occurred between 1964 and 1985—reveals the depth of this fracture. However, the National Truth Commission's pioneering work has never been converted into a state educational project with the capacity to foster robust collective memory. Conversely, it has been subjected to rigorous scrutiny and de-legitimisation

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by conservative sectors. The neoliberal acceleration of life (Harmon et al, 2020), with its cult of the perpetual present and its depletion of the capacity for reflection, deepens this dynamic.

In a society where chronic fatigue is the norm, there is no time, psychic energy, or social space for the patient work of memory. When the slow, complex, and often painful process of historical reflection is not cultivated, the past is appropriated and simplified by those who hold the means of producing a state of forgetting and anaesthesia. In consequence of the aforementioned, a decade has elapsed since the publication of the CNV final report. The report collated data pertaining to 434 deceased and disappeared individuals associated with the regime, along with the 377 agents implicated in systematic state violence. The recommendations put forth for policies concerning memory, truth, and justice persist in encountering challenges in their implementation, as well as in surmounting the 'politics of time'. The 'politics of time' is a phenomenon that endeavours to consign violence to the past, exonerating the present from culpability while severing it from its historical context. The result is a chronic deficit of restorative justice and a structural blockage to the construction of any peace that is more than the mere absence of open confrontation.

This article seeks to contribute to ongoing debates on how peace can be built beyond institutional structures, through work with memory, care, collective healing, micropolitical devices, and aesthetic resistance in contexts of unresolved authoritarian violence. Art brings emotion, along with data, to recall stories, and this is its emancipatory differential. It does so by advancing cinema as a transdisciplinary method of peace praxis.

It is precisely in this scenario of dualities, mnemonic paralysis, and contested pasts that cinematic art emerges with the plot of the vitality of counter-conduct. This article seeks to contribute to ongoing debates on how peace can be built beyond institutional structures, through work with memory, care, collective healing, micropolitical devices, and aesthetic resistance in contexts of unresolved authoritarian violence. Art brings emotion, along with data, to recall stories, and this is its emancipatory differential. It does so by advancing cinema as a transdisciplinary method of peace praxis.

From an aesthetic and emotional standpoint within international relations, this article proposes the use of Walter Salles' film as both a contextual framework and a methodological tool to address the following interdisciplinary subtopics: i) the potential of national cinema to act as a tool to promote critical political

debate, fostering discussions about justice and memory; ii) the role of humanised narratives in the (re)signification of the past and the (re)construction of a collective historical memory; and iii) the capacity of audio-visual media to act as a tool for international projection, thereby incorporating the realities of the Global South into global discourses on historical reconciliation.

The subsequent analysis will be structured around three subtopics. The first section of the text discusses the theoretical-conceptual framework, which articulates Critical Peace Studies, the aesthetic and affective turn, and the decolonial perspective. The second section provides a contextual analysis of the relationship between Brazilian cinema and the memory of the dictatorship, drawing on a film analysis of 'I'm still here', which explores its melancholic aesthetics and the figure of Eunice Paiva as an agent of memory. The analysis also considers the film's role as a vehicle for international projection. Finally, the last subtopic under discussion is the urgency of this cultural resistance in the current political landscape, based on the understanding that art presents itself as an indispensable micropolitical device for an insurgent peace. In the concluding remarks, a brief reflection is made on the potential of cinema as a catalyst for political consciousness, starting from the local and the sensitive, to challenge past and present authoritarianisms, both nationally and internationally.

TOWARDS AN AESTHETICS AND DECOLONIAL PEACE

This paper is situated within the emerging field of transdisciplinary peace praxis, which is anchored precisely in the effort to decolonise knowledge. In the context of the 'aesthetic turn' debate in International Relations (Bleiker, 2009), positing art as a valid path to political knowledge, and the 'emotional turn' (Clément & Sangar, 2018), considering affects as constitutive political forces, this study analyses the film as both methodology and object simultaneously.

The analysis is enriched by the decolonial perspective, which pays attention to the ways in which the global power hierarchy ends up shaping and framing what can be remembered, felt, and considered valid (Mignolo, 2011; Santos, 2018). The coloniality of knowledge is present, for example, in universalist discourses of peace, justice, and memory that are considered valid. It has been observed that the experiences and epistemologies of the Global South are frequently marginalised and undervalued within these narratives. Collectively, these elements provide the requisite instruments to conceptualise cinematic art not merely as a representational medium, but also as a methodological and micropolitical apparatus for confronting violent legacies. It is at this point that the following proposal is put forward: that the establishment of an insurgent peace, understood as a bottom-up and counter-hegemonic process, may be possible.

Concepts of Home
Land Stewardship through Intergenerational Stories in Palestine

Izzeddin Hawamda

ABSTRACT
Sometimes the natural environment is the reason for conflict in the context of resources and borders. Other times the natural environment is a victim of the conflict, damaged and destroyed. Other times, still, the natural environment may appear to be the aggressor as we battle the effects of climate change. Awareness of the conflict cycle maintained by internalised hierarchies of power and value must also be understood to begin challenging existing perceptions. Given that government policy development, academic research, and education continue to operate under the influence of colonial legacy, lived experiences and stories of the land and environment have been undervalued. Emphasising the inclusion of narrative in research and paying close attention to the details that surround the lived experience of conflict holistically, is integral to developing better understanding with the hope of better solutions.

KEYWORDS
Narrative, Environmental Education, Dialogue, Conflict Transformation, Storytelling, Community-building

INTRODUCTION
I often wonder what it would mean to be Palestinian if traditional wisdom about the land, water, and animals could be put into action. Grandparents and parents often spend time telling stories from their childhood or stories that have been passed down through generations about the way of life before occupation. However, the persistent destruction along with constant fear for safety makes it difficult, if not impossible, for young people in Palestine today to put those lessons into practice. The stories remain for now, but as the conflict causes distance between individuals and their environment—refugees, destruction of the natural environment, appropriation of land—the stories and the lessons they teach are at risk of becoming lost.

As a Palestinian Canadian, I find myself navigating between two worlds grappling

In the face of uncertainty, often what remains are the stories, the tradition of oral narratives, grandmothers, grandfathers, and neighbours sharing wisdom about the preservation of the land through one hardship after another.

with the realities of colonialism and occupation on one hand while also acknowledging my position as a settler on Indigenous peoples' land on the other. I am often left without a clear title, caught between identities. Born and shaped by conflict in Palestine, I wrestle with the complexities of holding a multifaceted identity physically distant from my homeland yet deeply affected by the ongoing occupation that continues to impact my family and community. As a writer and storyteller, I strive to shift the perception of Palestinian people from one of historical victimisation to a narrative of strength, resilience, and hope. The oppression of the occupation and the resulting spirit of strength is evident in the historical narratives passed down through generations, in the cultural celebrations, and even in the humour, all of which are often tied to the land and environment that sustains the people and the culture. While there is a deep desire for the occupation to end, for the killing to stop, for the checkpoints to be removed, and for the land to be returned, there is also a great fear of the unknown.

While there is ongoing hope that these questions will be answered for the next generation, there is also a deep sense of fear about what will come next. Recent events have also highlighted the need to examine this question through the lens of what will be left after the destruction particularly as it relates to the environment that has sustained a population with limited outside resources. In the face of uncertainty, often what remains are the stories, the tradition of oral narratives, grandmothers, grandfathers, and neighbours sharing wisdom about the preservation of the land through one hardship after another. This chapter explores the effects of colonialism, occupation, and displacement on Palestinians, emphasising the power of storytelling in resisting the colonial process by preserving the connection to the land.

GENERATIONAL GIFTS: STORIES FROM THE LAND

When I was growing up in Palestine, my grandfather spent many years teaching me and other children in my community the importance of dialogue. In Arabic my grandfather would often tell us '*Asmeny mleeh ashan nearf nehkey* (listen to me well so we can talk together).' As my grandfather said those words, he would bring all of us to our land and start working on watering the lemon trees, fixing

the fence so the sage plant could grow bigger, creating small canals so water could make it to the far away fig tree. He would do all of this while talking to us about life. He would ask a question and say, 'If you don't know the answer, ask the *rumooan* (the pomegranate).' I learned early on that dialogue takes many shapes and forms as my grandfather would always say, 'Don't worry how different my talk is from yours, if we are talking, it's a start.' After he would say these things, he would lean against an olive tree and make sage tea and call us around to ask us for advice on what to do with the apricot tree in the distance that did not seem to grow quickly enough. From these beginnings, I was equipped with an abundance of curiosity about our land, as well as the love of sharing stories and tea with strangers. I spent a lot of time throughout my childhood knocking on doors in my community in an attempt to build connections and create relationships. Unfortunately, the occupation and the history of conflict has created a palpable fear and distrust that made many people frown upon my endeavour, but my grandfather would always tell me, 'Don't say you have a story, until you've spoken to those who disagree with you, only then you may find your story.' As an optimistic child, I took this to mean that even if people were wary of my presence at first, if I showed up to listen and demonstrated my true intentions, we could one day know and learn from one another.

…that if the goal is for social structures to begin to change, humanisation (to understand and accept that despite differences there is a fundamental value to all human life) and community-building must be integrated into planned approaches. Implementing dialogue increases the likelihood that the parties involved will feel that their position has been heard and that they will develop a sense of hope for the conflict's resolution.

What I would later learn was that my grandfather's wisdom has been echoed in academic research. Over the years, research building on Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory has demonstrated that the initial hypothesis—'positive, face-to-face interactions between members of different groups have the potential to erode all but the most deeply embedded forms of intergroup prejudice' (Dixon, 2024: 172)—continues to apply across time and contexts. However, Dixon (2024) suggests that modern research has moved beyond that hypothesis to examine what happens when the demographics of the groups in contact are changed or when interactions are not shaped to be positive and are instead left to be

The colonial influences often lead us to overlook the significance of environmental education and the stories of the land that are borne out of conflict. Sometimes the natural environment is the reason for the conflict in the context of resources and borders. Other times the natural environment is a victim of the conflict, damaged and destroyed. Other times, still, the natural environment may appear to be the aggressor as we battle the effects of climate change.

authentic, organic, and contentious. While Allport (1954) did postulate that negative interactions could result in negative impacts, whether explicitly linked to Allport's (1954) work or not, it is more modern research that has examined potential outcomes in these contexts and has provided insight into how intergroup contact might be utilised to work towards positive outcomes in the absence of positive interactions. For instance, Kawser Ahmed's (2017) research focused heavily on the potential for transformative dialogue and acknowledged that if the goal is for social structures to begin to change, humanisation (to understand and accept that despite differences there is a fundamental value to all human life) and community-building must be integrated into planned approaches. Implementing dialogue increases the likelihood that the parties involved will feel that their position has been heard and that they will develop a sense of hope for the conflict's resolution (Thiessen & Darweish, 2018: 78-81).

It is important to understand the influence that colonial legacies have on the development of perceptions of conflict (Said, 1994). Awareness of the cycle maintained by internalised hierarchies of power and value must also be understood to begin challenging existing perceptions. The colonial influences often lead us to overlook the significance of environmental education and the stories of the land that are borne out of conflict. Sometimes the natural environment is the reason for the conflict in the context of resources and borders. Other times the natural environment is a victim of the conflict, damaged and destroyed. Other times, still, the natural environment may appear to be the aggressor as we battle the

Underpinning colonialism, imperialism, and conflicts around the world are debates over land ownership; resource extraction; and displacement of people, pants, and animals in the name of profit all without regard for the well-being of nature or humans. The goal dialogue-based education is to bring people together to acknowledge the impact of these actions and examine ways forward that foster empathy for all, human and non-human.

The Critical Work of Systems–Thinking in Peacebuilding Practice and Theory

Lynne M Woehrle & Aaron M Schutz

ABSTRACT

Thinking through conflict using a systems view supports the work of peacebuilding and action for change in fractured communities as well as in analytical spaces of looking for peace in persistent conflict cycles. This paper provides an accessible introduction to using systems-thinking to support the processes of peacebuilding and social change. We review key ideas in a systems-thinking approach, highlight a few of the practical tools that can enhance the work of de-escalation, interrupt negative conflict cycles, and support deeper understanding of possibilities for positive peacebuilding in entrenched conflict systems. Basic systems-thinking terminology and theory is introduced. Two case studies are discussed to exemplify how a systems-thinking approach has shifted community change practice and can modify approaches to teaching conflict analysis to students.

KEYWORDS

Systems–Thinking, Peacebuilding, Complexity, Community, Social Change

INTRODUCTION

Systems-thinking is a well-established field of inquiry and practice that depends on the transdisciplinary mind-set. Seemingly intractable problems are approached through ecological models of complexity and the adaptive cycle. Thinking in a systems view supports the work of peacebuilding and action for change in fractured communities as well as in analytical spaces of looking for peace in persistent conflict cycles. This paper provides an accessible introduction to using systems-thinking to support the processes of peacebuilding and social change. This includes using the adaptive cycle and tools for systems transformation (Fath et al, 2015). We cast a critical eye on the theory, in part by drawing in decolonisation theory. Two exemplary case studies round out this article. One considers the work of White activists and professionals to address racism. Applying a systems view brings into clarity how systems thinking supports development of achievable

goals. The second case study considers how systems thinking can support students in their analysis of conflicts past and present.

What Is Systems–Thinking?

Systems-thinking as a term has grown in its familiarity over the last decade and that comes with benefits and challenges. The greatest challenge is that most only see it as a general approach or use it at the '10,000 foot' view, meaning they say, 'oh this is a complex problem'. The popularity of looking at problems holistically or in the lens of complexity has grown, and this is positive, moving us away from focusing on a single issue and from a mechanistic view of the world (Capra & Luisi, 2014; Amissah, 2019) towards seeing a system as dynamic and complex patterns of interactions (Capra, 2024). Using a lens of complexity limits the risk of deciding on a solution based on a single view of a problem (Leroux-Martin & O'Conner, 2017). It is also grounded in a transdisciplinary approach that weaves together perspectives from multiple approaches to theory and analysis (Voulvoulis et al, 2022).

At the heart of systems-thinking is the recognition of the difference between a group of parts and the ways several parts interact to make a whole. Parts become a system when they share a meaningful relationship and have a purpose that connects them through interdependence into a whole (Kaufman & Kaufman, 1980). Take for example, the difference between a bag of general items needed from the grocery store compared to a bag of items needed to cook a specific recipe. The latter example has a level of interdependence since the food items are necessary for the specific recipe. For a system to be functional, all the parts need to be present, and they need to be organised in a way that helps the system be what it is supposed to be. You can't just cut the system in half and hope it will now be two identical things as one may have some parts and the other different pieces, and probably neither of them will function well or achieve their purpose (Kaufman & Kaufman, 1980). Systems-thinking does, however, acknowledge that systems may not work smoothly or achieve their purpose. At times they may need to shift or adapt to improve outcomes. We know it remains a system even with change because additions or subtractions in the process of adaptation require adjustments from all the interrelated parts.

It takes more than big picture thinking to fully leverage a systems lens. There is a 'toolbox' of systems thinking tools. You need to get to know them well enough to select the best set of systems-thinking tools for the job. With the explosive popularity of systems thinking debates have arisen about whether the approach is losing its meaning, used too often in too many ways.

The use of systems-thinking in peacebuilding is significant because at the root of many conflicts is over simplification, or the practice of seeing issues through only one lens.

In this article we return to the core ideas of systems thinking and demonstrate first, how it can be used to understand a process of community change and second, the application of it as a tool to widen and deepen student learning about communal conflict. The use of systems-thinking in peacebuilding is significant because at the root of many conflicts is over simplification, or the practice of seeing issues through only one lens. Sometimes we pick a solution when we don't understand the system, and our solution has a negative effect (Kaufman & Kaufman, 1980).

An important step that peacebuilders can take is to embrace the idea that conflict typically comes out of multi-factor situations of complexity. A negative conflict spiral is often driven by disagreement over what is 'the cause' instead of those in the conflict being willing to notice 'the connection' or 'the interdependence' that drives the conflict forward. Giving attention to the interrelation of factors and how they may drive negative aspects of the conflict is the start to applying a systems-thinking approach to understanding. Take for example the classic conflict model used in teaching where two kids are both trying to claim the same orange for a recipe and the parent steps in and 'solves' the conflict by pointing out that one only needs the peel and the other only needs the juice—so easily 'the cause' has been identified and fixed. However, if you have actually tried to scrape the rind for a recipe and then tried to juice the orange OR ever juiced an orange and then tried to scrap the peel, you probably have discovered that whoever gets to take their part first will have an easier time and a better outcome of the product. Has the parent solved the conflict or delayed it and possibly created larger problems in the future if there is only one orange available. What if the kids are asked to consider how much of the orange each of them needs, what the quality needs to be for the purpose it will serve, and even if there are bigger factors in the situation such as what are the outcomes of them both trying to bake on the same day. Are there more creative solutions? Are they required to make separate items? Could they

An important step that peacebuilders can take is to embrace the idea that conflict typically comes out of multi-factor situations of complexity. A negative conflict spiral is often driven by disagreement over what is 'the cause' instead of those in the conflict being willing to notice 'the connection' or 'the interdependence' that drives the conflict forward.

work together to meet their goals, whatever they are. Could they save time if they cooperated and made one item or would cooperation make the situation worse or less fair. There are so many unknowns in the example that mapping the larger system that surrounds the baking with the orange dispute could have long-term benefits. It may lead to the realisation that they also both plan to use the same supply of flour or the same pans and they can take the time in advance to thoroughly learn project planning skills and practise positive conflict interactions.

A key skill of a systems thinker is intentionally using perspective levels, otherwise known as being able to zoom in and out—or just seeing the big picture.

KEY PRACTICES AND TOOLS FOR SYSTEMS-THINKING

Complexity is a great place to start when applying a systems lens. Systems thinkers move away from linear thinking and instead look at 'clouds' of issues identifying patterns of causal loops instead of seeing change in terms of cause and effect (Leroux-Martin & O'Conner, 2017). Linear or 'clock' thinking is one force having impact, while causal loop thinking allows us to identify how two or more forces interact in a system, possibly changing each other through their interdependent relationships (Leroux-Martin & O'Conner, 2017). This ecosystem lens on how forces function and changes happen is a core idea in systems-thinking. Change is emergent and contextual as well as organic and often unpredictable. Yet, despite that lean towards unpredictability, systems can be studied for patterns, structures and interdependencies (Burton, 2021).

A concept closely related to complexity is the adaptive cycle, which focuses on the recovery characteristics of a system. Through this lens, a system is dynamic and goes through phases of building, growing, breaking, and transforming to build again. The tension or struggle between factors in the system generates change and growth. The context of the system may require adaptation for survival. Watching a system is an opportunity to learn its patterns (Lederach, 2010). Stress and conflict as factors are endemic in systems; how they are managed shapes the success of the system through its adaptations to new conditions.

A key skill of a systems thinker is intentionally using perspective levels, otherwise known as being able to zoom in and out—or just seeing the big picture. This is often referenced as 'going to the balcony', or taking a 'ten-thousand-foot view' (Ury, 2024). You intentionally create distance so you can see the situation in a different way, removing yourself from the overwhelming situation of being in the midst of complexity. Then you can think with perspective and see the factors of complexity from a new angle. At the same time, there is great value in noticing the

The Kafinga Integrated MPT-SST-UPD-CRC Framework

A Metatheory for Universal Peace

Aliyu Sani Kafinga

ABSTRACT

This paper introduces the integrated MPT-SST-UPD-CRC framework, a meta-theoretical paradigm for peacebuilding that addresses the critical gap between inner consciousness and outer structural change. Grounded in Kafinga's (2025) Metaphysical Peace Theory (MPT), which redefines peace as not merely the absence of conflict but the coherence of cosmic order within all existence. The framework is operationalised through two novel components. First, Universal Peace Dynamics (UPD) provides a methodological bridge via twelve 'Transitional Protocols' that translate universal principles into actionable steps across consciousness, worldview, and science. Second, the Consciousness Resonance Cycle (CRC) functions as an autopoietic engine, creating a self-sustaining feedback loop where alignment radiates from the intra-personal to the cosmic and back again. It presents a dual-triad conceptual model, proposes a multimodal validation methodology, and discusses the implications of this consciousness-centered paradigm. It argues that sustainable peace requires engaging with the fundamental principles of coherence, for which this framework provides the necessary architecture, toolkit and process engine.

KEYWORDS

Peace Theory, Metaphysics, Consciousness, Conflict Transformation, Spirituality, Systems Thinking

INTRODUCTION

The persistent landscape of global conflict, manifested in warfare, social fragmentation and ecological degradation, presents a critical failure of contemporary peacebuilding paradigms. Prevailing models, often rooted in secular-political or siloed religious approaches, have proven insufficient to address the multifaceted nature of these crises, which operate simultaneously across the dimensions of human consciousness, social structure and humanity's relationship with the

natural world. There exists a profound and unmet need for a holistic framework that can integrate the inner dimensions of spirituality with the outer imperatives of structural change.

This paper introduces and elaborates upon the Metaphysical Peace Theory and Spiritual-Structural Transformation (MPT-SST) as a comprehensive, spiritual-transformative paradigm designed to meet this challenge. At its core, MPT-SST posits that sustainable peace is not merely the absence of violence but a positive state of metaphysical coherence an active alignment with universal principles of oneness, justice and harmony. The theory provides a foundational philosophy and a strategic map, identifying four interdependent domains of transformation: the intra-personal (soul), the interpersonal (relationships), the societal (structures) and the cosmic (universal order). However, a theory, no matter how profound, remains an abstraction without the means for its practical application and self-sustaining enactment. To bridge this gap, this work introduces and integrates two pivotal frameworks that complete the MPT-SST system. First, the Universal Peace Dynamics (UPD) framework provides the essential methodological bridge. UPD operationalises the metaphysical principles of MPT into concrete 'Transitional Protocols', offering a structured 'how-to' for engaging the domains of consciousness, faith and science in tangible peacebuilding work.

The CRC is not an external adjunct but the very engine of the system. It provides a dynamic, cyclical feedback loop, a process of continuous energy and information flow from the inner alignment of the individual soul, radiating outward through relationships and societal structures to the cosmic scale and then returning as refined wisdom to inform and elevate the individual anew. This cyclical process transforms the static MPT-SST model into an autonomous, self-sustaining and self-improving meta-framework.

Second, and of critical importance, is the integration of the Consciousness Resonance Cycle (CRC). The CRC is not an external adjunct but the very engine of the system. It provides a dynamic, cyclical feedback loop, a process of continuous energy and information flow from the inner alignment of the individual soul, radiating outward through relationships and societal structures to the cosmic scale and then returning as refined wisdom to inform and elevate the individual anew. This cyclical process transforms the static MPT-SST model into an autonomous, self-sustaining and self-improving meta-framework.

The primary objective of this paper is to present this complete and integrated system, MPT-SST-UPD-CRC, in its entirety. We will demonstrate that this is

not a mere theoretical proposition but a viable, actionable and measurable model for achieving universal peace. The following sections will delineate the theoretical foundations of MPT, synthesise relevant literature, detail the conceptual framework of the UPD and CRC integration, propose a methodology for its validation and discuss its profound implications for the future of peace research and practice. This work aims to provide nothing less than a new operating system for global peacebuilding and a blueprint for civilizational renaissance, one that recognises the revolution is conscious, the process is resonant and the victory is peace.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The architecture of the Metaphysical Peace Theory (MPT) is constructed upon a foundation of perennial wisdom, articulated as a set of axiomatic Universal Principles. These are not proposed as mere philosophical concepts but as fundamental, operative tenets that govern the dynamics of consciousness, energy and reality itself. The integration of Spiritual-Structural Transformation (SST), Universal Peace Dynamics (UPD) and the Consciousness Resonance Cycle (CRC) is not an arbitrary synthesis but a necessary consequence of these foundational principles.

The Twelve Universal Principles: The Cohesive Arc from Source to Manifestation

The twelve universal principles form a seamless, logical arc that describes the process by which unified consciousness manifests as a harmonious physical reality. This sequence is not merely a list but a dynamic narrative that underpins every aspect of the MPT-SST-UPD-CRC system.

THE PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE ONENESS

This primary principle states that all of existence is an interconnected, unified field of consciousness. It negates the illusion of separation and forms the ultimate goal and ethical imperative for the entire framework, establishing that the purpose of UPD protocols and the CRC is to realise and manifest this fundamental unity.

THE PRINCIPLE OF VIBRATION

From this singular source, the first expression is a primordial hum of energy. All that appears as matter is energy at specific frequencies. This provides the fundamental mechanism for change, where UPD protocols function as technologies for shifting the vibrational frequencies of consciousness, relationships and social systems and the CRC is a process of vibrational ascent.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CORRESPONDENCE

'As above, so below; as within, so without.' This vibratory nature establishes a holographic reality where the patterns of the macrocosm are perfectly reflected in the microcosm. This provides the logical basis for the SST domains and the CRC's radiating structure, validating that work on the inner self is the most leverageable point for creating change in the outer world.

THE PRINCIPLE OF ATTRACTION

As these vibrations interact, energies of a similar frequency resonate and coalesce. This principle is the operational driver behind transformation, where UPD protocols aim to help individuals and communities elevate their 'vibrational signature' to naturally attract peace, harmony and synergistic solutions, thereby building the interpersonal and societal stages of the CRC.

THE PRINCIPLE OF INSPIRED ACTION

This is the natural, coherent initiative that arises when an individual or collective is in vibrational alignment with oneness. It is the desired outcome of the system, where the CRC operates at peak efficiency and UPD protocols become an innate mode of operation rather than external tools, marking a state of 'Metaphysical Peace' fully realised.

THE PRINCIPLE OF PERPETUAL TRANSMUTATION

All energy is in a continuous, alchemical process of transformation. This principle of hope and agency states that the dense energy of conflict can be transmuted into the light of reconciliation. UPD protocols are the practical alchemy for this transformation, providing the 'heat' and 'catalyst' (e.g., compassionate communication) to catalyse this change throughout the CRC.

THE PRINCIPLEOF CAUSE AND EFFECT (KARMA)

Every thought, emotion and action sets an immutable force in motion, generating a corresponding, reciprocal force. This institutes cosmic accountability, where ecological crises, climate change, floods, landslides and temperature anomalies, are not purely material accidents but metaphysical manifestations of humanity's collective moral and spiritual dissonance. Ecological disharmony mirrors the degradation of moral consciousness: greed, injustice and exclusiveness reverberate through the natural order as energetic imbalances that destabilise the planetary system. UPD's 'Systemic Karma Mapping' makes these causal chains visible, demonstrating how moral purification is essential for ecological restoration.

Connecting Human Rights and Restorative Justice
Complementary Approaches to International Advocacy

Madison Turunen

ABSTRACT
Scholars of peace studies often examine areas within the field as separate silos. As a result, there can be a disconnect between the academic teaching and research, and in many cases not all silos are engaged in by students. This paper explores how the field can move beyond siloed thinking in theory and practice by examining the potential complementarity of human rights advocacy and restorative justice practices, specifically in the context of international advocacy, through the lens of creating social change.

To begin considering the potential complementarity, this project analyses 40 cases from four annual United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reports released over the past 20 years through a comparative case study analysis. The paper brings together several theories and reflections on the international human rights system and restorative justice practices as means of change-making, alongside social change theory by Ashley Boher on harm reduction and pre-figurative initiatives, and John Paul Lederach's descriptive and prescriptive methods of conflict transformation. The preliminary findings of the case study analysis allude to silos moving beyond the classroom into the field of practice and opens space for discussion on what complementary approaches could look like, specific to the two areas of focus.

KEYWORDS
Human Rights, Restorative Justice, Change-Making, Transformation

INTRODUCTION
As an interdisciplinary field, peace studies bridge a myriad of theories and practices related to social change, innovation, justice, international relations, politics, human connectivity, and various other strategies for peacebuilding. Among these are the conceptualisations of advocacy work within multiple sectors, such as international human rights and restorative justice. Despite the connection of advocacy, the two areas are examined as entirely separate and taught as silos of peace studies. This paradigm is likely because these practices emerge exceptionally differently,

rooted in contexts that are opposite ends of the change-making spectrum. Human rights are associated with international agencies and offices, such as the United Nations, and theorised through professionalised knowledge. Restorative justice originates from Indigenous practices and is often presented as an alternative to national criminal justice systems, theorised through the analyses of grassroots actions. There is no apparent overlap in emergence and application in these framings, and the teachings remain separate. This paper begins to consider how we can shift our understanding of peace studies by examining human rights and restorative justice as complementary.

I began thinking about this study as I transitioned from my undergraduate to graduate studies within the field of peace and justice. As an undergraduate student, I focused my studies on courses related to human rights and the international system. I also had the privilege of interning and completing a fellowship within the United Nations system. As a graduate student, much of my studies were on trauma-informed peacebuilding and restorative justice. During this time, I also taught a restorative justice re-entry course to incarcerated women. These experiences were significantly different from one another, allowing me to gain a more holistic understanding of peacebuilding, which greatly informs my understanding of theory and approach to practices.

While reflecting on my studies, I see clear overlaps between the two areas I have engaged in, yet none of my classes explored potential intersections or integrations. Although concentrating our focus as peacebuilders has benefits, there is also an immense opportunity to combine different perspectives and understandings to strengthen ourselves and our work.

This study seeks to address the question: Are the silos we theorise and teach in peace studies translating to silos within our practices of peacebuilding? I hypothesise that, yes, in our approach to international advocacy, initiatives are siloed to reflect a specific approach to peacebuilding. Subsequently, we can wonder if the gaps in approaches or the critiques of any particular field result from a singularised approach, and if moving towards a complementary approach could close those gaps. In this conversation, could incorporating restorative justice practices address the gaps within traditional human rights advocacy?

The study below utilises 40 case studies published by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) between 2008 and 2023. These cases represent a mainstreamed approach to human rights within the United Nations system. Each case was analysed to identify its relationship with practices emerging from human rights advocacy and restorative justice practices and its alignment with harm reduction and pre-figurative change-making. The analysis' findings indicate a preliminary pattern within international advocacy, which is expanded in later sections of this paper.

With the current United States administration prioritising policies and actions that oppose initiatives and research on human rights and restorative justice through funding cuts and the shutdown of institutions, it is more important than ever to reconsider how we approach peacebuilding and change-making. Moving beyond silos within the field of peacebuilding will allow academics and practitioners to renew commitments and consider creative solutions to long-withstanding challenges associated with advocacy work. In a time when both human rights and restorative justice are labelled too radical, bridging gaps can be the most substantial way forward.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Working within or alongside international systems is a predominant approach for human rights, both in addressing violations and driving social change. Human rights advocacy campaigns and initiatives within this tradition are described by scholars as being informed by the theories and practices that have emerged from the United Nations, International Courts, and affiliated institutions (Donnelly, 2013; de Zayas, 2023; Ishay, 2004). Thus, advocacy aligns with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the 1966 International Covenants, and subsequent established norms. Over the past 75 years, human rights have evolved in parallel with the international system.

Stephen Hopgood introduced the distinction between Human Rights (intentionally capitalised) as the 'top-down, fixed authority' approach, and human rights, the 'bottom-up, spontaneous' approach (2013: x). This evolution of human rights into Human Rights created a disconnect 'between global humanism with its law, courts, fund-raising, and campaigns on the one hand, and local lived realities on the other' (Hopgood: 14). Within this disconnect, where human rights are a system—or even an industry (see de Zayas, 2023)—many critiques have emerged, creating limitations and challenges in implementing advocacy campaigns as a means of peacebuilding and change-making.

One of the most significant critiques is that the traditional approach to human rights is rooted in historically Westernised foundations. Particularly, the UDHR emerges from the philosophies and scholarship of the Global North's industrial revolution and Enlightenment, where definitions of fraternity, liberty, and morality often reflect European history and religions, and does not directly reflect the teachings and understanding of rights beyond the West (Ishay, 2004: 361-62). Similarly, Alfred de Zayas, a former lawyer within the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), cited his experiences of neo-colonialism[1] within OHCHR and the UN Human Rights Council (2023: 73) aligning with Ishay's implication that Westernised countries with power hold

influence over the workings of the international system. However, Jack Donnelly argues that the UDHR is not solely a reflection of Western ideas and practices but rather rooted in the modern era where colonised countries and people have gained independence (from the American and French Revolutions to India and Ghana in the mid-twentieth century) and politics reflecting the rights of all (2013: 90-91). Nevertheless, the critique of westernisation reflects Hopgood's distinction of Human Rights as a system, where institutions and industries promote particular ways of being and doing that non-Western countries are expected to adhere to.

Another critique of human rights regards their universality. Donnelly asserts, 'The universality of human rights is relative to the contemporary world [whereas] the particularities of implementations are relative to history, politics, culture, and particular decisions. Nonetheless... human rights are universal' (2013: 105). However, global human rights norms do not always align with a country's cultural norms, most often concerning gender. This is referred to as *cultural relativism.* Micheline Ishay explains that lacking cultural relativism leads to a misalignment between states prioritising sovereignty, social norms, and human rights standards (2004). Mark Goodale and Sally Engle Merry present human rights as an empirical and normative framework instead of a force imposed by the international system on others (2007: 20). Further, Costas Douzinas argues that the universality of human rights should not be limited to a singular consistency imposed on others, but rather a moral value system that can be localised, interpreted, and applied (2013). However, despite these differing approaches, the ongoing misalignment between universality and cultural relativism has led to a rejection of the moral authority of institutionalised and systematic human rights, especially amongst religious and conservative countries (Hopgood, 2013: 65). With the above critiques in mind, the traditional approach to human rights is regarded as a top-down perspective of change-making.

Meanwhile, scholars argue that establishing social change, as it relates to traditional human rights approaches, depends on multi-stakeholder systems, where civil society plays an equally important role in driving institutional reform, accountability, and transparent practices (Green, 2016; de Zayas, 2023). This finding is in tension with the existing practices and perceptions of the international system. Therefore, the usage of a traditional human rights approach is limited in its capacity to organise and create social change.

Social movement and peacebuilding scholars have identified various theories shaping the collective understanding of how change emerges. Ashley Boher identifies two paths advocacy campaigns can take: a *harm reduction* approach, which 'striv[es] to reduce present suffering,' or a *prefigurative* approach that 'implement[s] a future just society in the here and now' (2022: 73). Similarly, John Paul Lederach identified transformation as emerging from the dynamic, adapting

Digital Peacebuilding Against Racial Hate Speech
Theoretical Foundations and Policy Pathways

Yen-ting Lin & Chih-Jiun Lin

ABSTRACT
This article examines racialized hate speech as a systemic form of digital violence rooted in platform infrastructures, algorithmic design, and weak public oversight. Rather than treating online hate as isolated or user-driven, it advances a theory-informed diagnosis of how racial harm is engineered, amplified, and monetised across social media ecosystems. Integrating structural violence, scapegoat theory, dehumanisation, and sociotechnical systems analysis, the paper shows how platform incentives normalise racial abuse—especially against Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC). In response, it proposes a five-year framework for digital peacebuilding based on public-private partnerships (PPP) that restructure platform governance, enforce bias-resistant algorithms, and mandate racial accountability through transparency and taxation mechanisms. Beyond structural reform, the paper outlines long-term strategies for building soft power through education, culture, and intergenerational change—embedding peace education, social-emotional learning, and BIPOC-led storytelling into digital civic life. By reframing hate speech as a sociotechnical and political crisis, the article advances a model for sustainable, rights-based, and equity-cantered digital governance.

KEYWORDS
Digital Peacebuilding, Online Extremism, Hate Speech, Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

RACIALIZED HATE SPEECH AS STRUCTURAL DIGITAL VIOLENCE

Racialized hate speech is no longer a marginal phenomenon. It is a structural form of digital violence—engineered, amplified, and monetised by platforms that shape global discourse. What begins as a meme or slur online often metastasises into real-world violence, civic destabilisation, and the erosion of trust in pluralistic democracy.

In recent years, hate crime data and research across digital platforms have

pointed to dramatic surges in racial and ethnic abuse. According to Peace Direct and the Toda Peace Institute (2023), online hate speech has played a catalytic role in real-world ethnic violence and polarisation, particularly when amplified by algorithmic infrastructures. Research compiled by the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH, 2023) reveals that a majority of hate content reported on platforms like X (formerly Twitter) remains unremoved, allowing anti-Black, anti-Semitic, and anti-Asian hate to circulate widely. These acts of racial hatred do not emerge in a vacuum. They often follow digital incitement, coordinated scapegoating, or algorithmic amplification of racist narratives, as highlighted by the United Nations (2022).

These trends underscore that racial hate speech is not merely a reflection of individual bias, but a product of digital infrastructures that facilitate harm at scale.

These trends underscore that racial hate speech is not merely a reflection of individual bias, but a product of digital infrastructures that facilitate harm at scale. Social media platforms—from X (formerly Twitter) to TikTok—do not merely host this content; they actively shape its virality. Algorithmic systems prioritise engagement over equity, propelling divisive content while suppressing marginalised voices (Observer Research Foundation, 2023; Noble, 2018). The design of these platforms, paired with weak enforcement mechanisms, creates a system where racialized disinformation and incitement flourish—especially in polarised political environments where conspiracy theories and ethno-nationalist ideologies thrive.

What results is not just a communication problem, but a form of sociotechnical violence. Structural violence theory reminds us that harm occurs not only through explicit attacks but through institutionalised inequalities and cultural norms that render such attacks acceptable (Galtung, 1969; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2024). Digital racial hate erodes social cohesion, desensitises publics to injustice, and legitimises exclusionary politics. When these dynamics go unchecked, they reinforce broader systems of oppression and normalise digital environments hostile to Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities.

Yet current responses remain insufficient. Content takedowns and reactive moderation fail to disrupt the underlying architectures that reward hate. To address this crisis at its root, we must re-conceptualise online space as a domain of digital peacebuilding. That means moving beyond harm reduction toward actively constructing environments that foster inclusion, accountability, and intergroup solidarity.

This paper examines how digital infrastructures enable racialized harm, why reactive moderation strategies fall short, and what peacebuilding-informed

These aren't just academic debates; they influence the algorithms, architecture, and power structures of digital spaces.

frameworks can offer instead. What are the systemic mechanisms behind racial hate speech online? Why do existing regulatory and technological tools fail to stop it? And what kind of digital futures can we build—where dignity, not division, becomes the organising logic?

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS: KEY TERMS IN RACIALIZED DIGITAL HARM AND PLATFORM GOVERNANCE

Terms like hate speech, anti-racism, and racialized digital harm are not neutral—they shape how platforms moderate, how governments legislate, and how users engage. Competing definitions reflect competing agendas: regulation vs free speech, equity vs neutrality, and safety vs engagement. These aren't just academic debates; they influence the algorithms, architecture, and power structures of digital spaces.

TABLE 1. Key Concepts in Digital Peacebuilding and Racial Harm

Term	Definition	Source
Hate Speech	Any form of communication that disparages individuals or groups based on attributes such as race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, and which may incite discrimination or violence.	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2019; Waldron, 2012
Online Radicalisation	A process of exposure and ideological transformation in digital environments, whereby individuals adopt extremist beliefs, often facilitated by algorithmic recommendation systems.	Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST), 2022; Neumann, 2013
Anti-Racism	A proactive stance against racism that involves dismantling structural inequalities and promoting equity through policy, education, and institutional reform.	Kendi, 2020; Bonilla-Silva, 2022
Anti-DEI Backlash	Organised resistance to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, framed through discourses of 'reverse discrimination' or 'anti-wokeness' in political and media narratives.	Stanford University Clayman Institute for Gender Research, 2023; Movement Advancement Project (MAP) Research, 2024
Racialized Digital Harm	The reproduction of racial inequality and violence through algorithmic systems, content distribution, and platform design, contributing to both symbolic and physical marginalisation.	Noble, 2018; Benjamin, 2019

These definitions are interlinked. For example, hate speech definitions vary across jurisdictions—Waldron (2012) emphasises dignity and civic harm, while US law protects most speech short of direct incitement. Technology companies adopt ambiguous standards, often prioritising neutrality and engagement over equity and safety. This leads to inconsistent enforcement and a disproportionate impact on marginalised users.

Online radicalization compounds this dynamic. Algorithms sort and escalate content exposure, drawing users into ideologically extreme spaces—not accidentally, but by design (Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats, 2022). Platforms reward provocation, not nuance. Anti–diversity, equity, and inclusion (anti-DEI) backlash thrives in this environment, framing equity efforts as oppression or censorship, reinforcing polarisation through viral content cycles.

The cumulative outcome is racialized digital harm: a feedback loop where racial injustice is embedded in platform design, algorithmic distribution, and moderation neglect. These harms are not anomalies—they are systemic outputs of digital infrastructure.

DIAGNOSING DIGITAL RACIAL HARM: THEORETICAL LENSES ON STRUCTURAL, SOCIAL, AND TECHNOLOGICAL DRIVERS

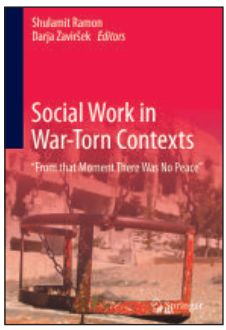
Racialized hate speech in digital spaces is not random—it follows identifiable social, psychological, and technical patterns. Four theoretical frameworks provide distinct but overlapping lenses to explain where this harm originates and how to disrupt it: structural violence, scapegoat theory, dehumanisation theory, and sociotechnical systems theory.

Structural violence theory (Galtung, 1969) highlights how harm is structurally encoded into institutions rather than openly expressed. On social media, this includes algorithmic content bias, racially unequal enforcement of moderation policies, and data infrastructures that amplify dominant group narratives while muting racialized voices. These are not isolated incidents, but patterned outcomes of systemic design (Galtung, 1969; Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, 2025).

Scapegoat theory (Girard, 1986) explains why racialized groups become targets during times of economic, political, or social instability. In digital spaces, algorithms accelerate this dynamic: blame-based narratives—especially those that dehumanise and racialize—tend to perform well in terms of engagement, making them more visible and more viral (Girard, 1986; Acta Gymnica, 2012; Corrydocs, 2025). The scapegoat, once central to ritual expulsion in traditional societies, is now processed through viral outrage and misinformation.

Book Review

Social Work in War-Torn Contexts: "From that Moment There Was No Peace"



By SHULAMIT RAMON & DARJA ZAVIRŠEK (Editors)

pp.275, Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2025, HB
€ 129.99

Reviewed by
CARLOTTA MOZZONE

The book offers a compelling and theoretically ambitious contribution to contemporary debates on war, trauma, and professional responsibility. While firmly grounded in social work scholarship, the volume extends well beyond disciplinary boundaries, engaging questions of direct relevance to theoretical and philosophical psychology, particularly in relation to collective trauma, ethics of care, and the conditions of professional subjectivity under extreme violence.

A central premise of the volume is that war should not be understood as an exceptional or marginal disruption of social life, but rather as a structuring social condition with long-term consequences for institutions, relationships, and individual and collective identities (Ramon & Zaviršek, Introduction; Zaviršek, Chap. 1). From this perspective, war is not only a site of immediate suffering but a force that reshapes moral frameworks, erodes trust, fragments social bonds, and destabilises welfare systems. Social work is, therefore, positioned not as a neutral technical practice, but as an ethical–political project whose foundational commitments—to dignity, justice, and human rights—stand in fundamental tension with the logics of war.

One of the most significant contributions of the volume lies in its rejection of technocratic or solution-oriented models of helping in contexts where repair, recovery, or restitution may be structurally impossible. Across several chapters, the authors emphasise that social workers often act in situations characterised by radical uncertainty, limited resources, and the absence of foreseeable outcomes. Experiences of powerlessness are not treated as professional failure but as an intrinsic feature of practice in war-torn contexts (see Foreword and Introduction). This acknowledgment resonates strongly with phenomenological and moral-psychological approaches that foreground vulnerability, limit situations, and the fragility of human agency.

For psychology, this framing is particularly generative. Rather than grounding support in therapeutic mastery or outcome-based efficacy, the volume advances an ethics of presence, listening, and accompaniment. Help is understood less as a process of fixing and more as a relational stance that remains with suffering without promising resolution. Such an approach challenges dominant therapeutic paradigms and invites reflection on the moral value of action when cure is unattainable.

Empirically, the volume adopts a comparative international perspective, drawing on case studies from Ukraine, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, South Sudan, Syria, Israel/Palestine, Greece, and other contexts. These cases are not presented as isolated examples, but as illustrations of recurring social processes: the collapse of welfare infrastructures, the dispersal of human capital through forced migration, and the reconfiguration of community life under prolonged violence. War emerges as a collective and structural trauma, not reducible to individual psychopathology.

Particular attention is devoted to groups disproportionately affected by armed conflict: children, women and girls, persons with disabilities, and older people. The chapters addressing children affected by war—including unaccompanied minors and child soldiers—highlight a crucial theoretical tension: the instability of the victim–perpetrator distinction. This ambiguity complicates psychological narratives of responsibility and moral repair, calling for interpretive frameworks capable of holding contradiction and moral complexity. Similarly, the focus on disability and ageing reveals how war magnifies pre-existing inequalities, producing layered forms of exclusion and abandonment.

Gender constitutes another key analytical axis. The volume documents the systematic exposure of women and girls to gender-based violence, while simultaneously emphasising women's active roles as caregivers, organisers, and agents of resilience. By refusing both victimisation and idealisation, the book aligns with feminist and critical psychological perspectives that understand subjectivity as situated within intersecting relations of power, trauma, and agency.

One of the most original and theoretically rich sections of the volume concerns social workers themselves as subjects affected by war. In contexts of ongoing conflict, social workers operate within what Orit Nuttman-Shwartz conceptualises as a 'shared traumatic reality' (Chap. 4, pp.79-93), in which professionals and service users are exposed to the same collective threats. This condition destabilises the conventional asymmetry between helper and helped, undermining assumptions of emotional distance and professional neutrality.

The concept of shared traumatic reality is of particular relevance for theoretical psychology. While shared exposure can deepen empathy and mutual understanding, it also carries significant risks: heightened emotional burden, blurred boundaries, burnout, and the narrowing of moral horizons. The volume does not romanticise

these dynamics but critically examines their ambivalence, highlighting the need for reflexivity, supervision, and collective support. In doing so, it contributes to a broader rethinking of professionalism under conditions where personal and professional lives are inextricably entangled.

Memory and testimony constitute another important thematic strand. Several chapters emphasise the ethical and political necessity of preserving the memory of war crimes and amplifying the voices of survivors, including those who remain silent. Memory is framed not only as a matter of historical record but as a form of collective care and intergenerational responsibility. This perspective resonates strongly with psychological and philosophical work on collective memory, recognition, and the transmission of trauma.

In its later sections, the volume expands its scope to include countries formally at peace but deeply implicated in war through forced migration. Social workers in receiving countries confront new forms of suffering—trauma, disorientation, and cultural rupture—often under conditions of political hostility and institutional strain. The book thus advances a conception of responsibility that exceeds national boundaries, emphasising the importance of transnational professional networks and global solidarity.

While the volume's contributions are substantial, some limitations merit consideration. First, despite its rich empirical material, the book does not always engage in sustained dialogue with psychological theories of collective trauma, affect, and subject formation. Second, the theoretical depth varies across chapters, with some empirically powerful contributions remaining more descriptive than analytically integrated. Finally, the strong ethical and normative positioning of the volume occasionally comes at the expense of explicit conceptual debate with alternative frameworks.

Nevertheless, these limitations do not detract from the book's overall significance. Rather, they point to its openness and generative potential. *Social Work in War-Torn Contexts* will be of clear interest not only to scholars but also to practitioners, educators, and advanced students across social work, psychology, trauma studies, and peace studies. The volume is particularly well suited for graduate-level teaching, offering rich material for courses on collective trauma, ethics of care, professional identity, and war-related social intervention.

Overall, Ramon and Zaviršek have edited a volume that makes a powerful contribution to understanding what it means to care, to act, and to remain ethically accountable in contexts where violence seeks to dissolve social bonds. For readers concerned with the psychological, moral, and political dimensions of helping under extreme conditions, this book offers both conceptual depth and profound ethical insight.

Kaleidoscope

COP16 Deal a 'Step Forward' For Nature Protection

Despite the tumultuous geopolitical landscape, nations agreed in March to mobilise at least $200bn (£155bn) per year by 2030 to help developing countries conserve biodiversity.

Read more at:
https://healthpolicy-watch.news/cop16-deal-commits-nations-to-raise-200-billion-annually-for-biodiversity-but-implementation-pushed-off/

Three Outstanding Human Rights Defenders Recognised with the 2025 Martin Ennals Award

The 2025 Martin Ennals Award recognises three outstanding human rights defenders who have spearheaded justice initiatives in Brazil, Uganda and Tunisia against racism and corruption in public institutions. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights awarded the selected laureate during the ceremony that took place on 26 November 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Read more at:
https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/three-outstanding-human-rights-defenders-recognised-with-the-2025-martin-ennals-award/

Australia Bans Social Media for Kids Under 16

Under-16s in Australia have been banned from using major social media services including Tiktok, X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat and Threads.

They cannot set up new accounts and their existing profiles were deactivated. The ban is the first of its kind and has been watched closely by other countries. Australia's government said the ban would reduce the negative impact of social media's 'design features that encourage [young people] to spend more time on screens, while also serving up content that can harm their health and wellbeing'.

A study it commissioned in 2025 found that 96% of children aged 10-15 used social media, and that seven out of 10 of them had been exposed to harmful content. This included misogynistic and violent material as well as content promoting eating disorders and suicide.

One in seven also reported experiencing grooming-type behaviour from adults or older children, and more than half said they had been the victim of cyberbullying.

Read more at:
https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cwyp9d3ddqyo

Kilmar Armando Ábrego García's Wrongful Deportation Case Became a Symbol of the Second Trump Administration's Immigration Policies

Kilmar Armando Ábrego García's story involves the US government's extraordinary pursuit of a rather ordinary man—a Salvadoran immigrant who had lived quietly in Maryland, working and raising his family far from the politics that would later engulf him. His wrongful deportation from the United States in 2025 drew international attention to US immigration enforcement and human rights. Ábrego García had entered the United States without authorisation about 2011 but, because of the danger he faced in his home country of El Salvador, received protection under US federal law that prevented his removal.

At the time of his 2025 detention, he was living in Maryland with his wife, their five-year-old child, and two children from a previous relationship. According to court documents, immigration agents stopped Ábrego García on 12 March 2025, and incorrectly informed him that his legal status had changed. Three days later, despite the standing order protecting him from removal, Ábrego García was deported to El Salvador and confined in the country's maximum-security Terrorism Confinement Center (CECOT), a facility widely criticised for its harsh conditions. From there, he was ultimately returned to the United States—despite government claims that such a return was impossible—and awaiting his trial, however, not in custody.

Read more at:
https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kilmar-Armando-Abrego-Garcia
https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/abrego-garcia-can-remain-free-while-judge-considers-arguments-for-returning-him-to-immigration-custody

Countries in Latin America and Beyond Adjust to US Mass Deportations Campaign

The fallout from the rapid-fire immigration policy changes in the United States was global and often unpredictable. Cooperation on deportation became a precondition for diplomatic engagement with Washington, and multiple countries were left reeling with the consequences of deportations and a stiffer US border.

Patterns of movement through the Americas were particularly shaken up. Crossings of the treacherous Darien Gap between Colombia and Panama plummeted precipitously, down from more than 520,000 in 2023 to fewer than 3,000 in the first nine months of 2025.

Read more at:
https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/top-10-migration-issues-2025

Global Use of Capital Punishment Increased Dramatically in 2025

Despite a global trend towards the abolition of the death penalty, there are a number of countries that continue to increase their use of capital punishment as a deterrent to crime. In 2025, these alarming surges have been clearly linked to drug-related crimes, bringing condemnation from the United Nations (UN), who have stated that these particular crimes do not meet the threshold of 'most serious crimes'.

It is believed that 1,500 people were executed in Iran in 2025, 47% of whom were punished for drug-related offences. The rise in drug-related executions has risen dramatically in the country, from 2020 when it was around 20 to 2024 when the number stood at over 700. Human rights organisations in Iran believe that the government is unlawfully targeting immigrants and ethnic minorities from the poorest areas, who upon arrest are being executed secretly and without a fair trial.

Read more at:
https://www.humanrightsresearch.org/post/global-use-of-capital-punishment-increased-dramatically-in-2025

ICC Charges Rodrigo Duterte with Crimes Against Humanity

Former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte has been charged with crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The 80-year-old is accused of being criminally responsible for dozens of murders that allegedly took place as part of his so-called war on drugs, during which thousands of small-time drug dealers, users and others were killed without trial. The ICC's charge sheet, which includes several redactions, dates from July but was only made public on Monday (22 September 2025).

Read more at:
https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cg5e1v85lrdo

South Korea: Census to Count Same-Sex Couples

In October 2025, South Korea's Ministry of Data and Statistics updated the 2025 Population and Housing Census to allow same-sex couples to be counted. The decision marked an important step for the rights of LGBT people in South Korea.

Read more at:
https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/10/29/south-korea-census-to-count-same-sex-couples

US and EU Lift Sanctions on Syria

The fall of Syria's long-time dictator Bashar al-Assad in a lightning rebel offensive in December 2024 effectively signalled the end of more than 13 years of brutal civil war, which left more than 580,000 people dead and 13 million Syrians forcibly displaced.

The man who headed that rebel offensive was Ahmed al-Sharaa, a former Islamist militant with links to Al Qaeda.

Al-Sharaa, who has shed his nom de guerre, Abu Mohammed al-Julani, is now on a mission to present himself as a capable statesman capable of rebuilding his country by forging alliances with new international partners, EU and US included.

He became the first Syrian leader in 60 years to address the United Nations General Assembly and was received by Trump at the White House.

Read more at:
https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2026/01/02/year-in-review-our-pick-of-the-major-global-news-events-that-shaped-a-turbulent-2025

Trump Suspends US Support for 66 International Organisations

The Trump administration will withdraw from dozens of international organisations, including the UN's population agency and the UN treaty that establishes international climate negotiations, as the US further retreats from global cooperation.

US President Donald Trump signed an executive order suspending support for 66 organisations, agencies and commissions following his instructions for his administration to review participation in and funding for all international organisations, including those affiliated with the United Nations, according to a White House statement on social media.

Most of the targets are UN-related agencies, commissions and advisory panels that focus on climate, labour and other issues that the Trump administration has categorised as catering to diversity and 'woke' initiatives.

Read more at:
https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/trump-suspends-us-support-for-international-organizations-9.7037333

Sudan's Gruelling Civil War Continues

'Hell on Earth' may be the best description of Sudan's nearly three-year long civil war. The fighting pits the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, against the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Mohamed Hamdan 'Hemedti' Dagalo. The two men seized power in a coup in October 2021 but eventually had a falling out. Neither side has won a decisive breakthrough, and fighting continues across multiple fronts. The SAF governs from Port Sudan on the Red Sea, controls the major cities in the east and north, and is recognised as Sudan's legitimate government. Meanwhile, the RSF controls most of Darfur and other areas in central and western Sudan. Each side has foreign backers, with Egypt, Russia, and Turkey among the countries supporting the SAF and Chad, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates among those supporting the RSF. The war's human cost has been staggering.

Read more at:
https://www.cfr.org/articles/ten-most-significant-world-events-2025

Curated by Abhijit Mazumder

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