Youth, Peace & Security

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Berghof Foundation

The Youth Space of Dialogue and Mediation

An Exploration

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About this publication

This publication synthesises the insights from an exploratory study on the youth space of dialogue and mediation, primarily based on case studies in Myanmar and Ukraine, along with reflections from the Berghof Foundation's work in Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia.

As a follow-up to the UN Security Council Resolution 2250, the study makes a thematic contribution to the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, aiming to stimulate a much-needed discourse on youth contributions to dialogue and mediation. All publications of this study are available online: www.berghof-foundation.org; www.kirkonulkomaanapu.fi/en; www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy.

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She has recently published on this subject with the Paung Sie Facility (formerly Peace Support Fund), and an article is forthcoming in the Journal of International Negotiations.
Originally from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Irena holds a Master's degree in International Relations and Conflict Management from the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University.

“Age considers; youth ventures.”

[RABINDRANATH TAGORE]

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1 Monologue

On age and learning

Growing up and getting older has a downside: we tend to 'unlearn' things.

We do learn, gain experience and get 'wiser'. Then there are things we keep unlearning... unconsciously or consciously.

Perhaps that is how it is supposed to be.

It is amazing, though, what we can 'relearn' (if we are up for it and if we take the time), by spending quality time with folks from different generations younger than us ... all the way up to the new-born. An exploration as such can be full of 'a-ha' moments like 'a-ha... why did I not think of this?' or 'a-ha, I totally forgot one could do that!'

This is a rewarding exploration to 'rejuvenate' ourselves.

On this exploration

This 'exploration', as we call it, of the youth space had to be one that rejuvenates. What we learned (and relearned) from the stories during our exploration, we tried our best to reproduce here in words – often with a struggle to balance poetic exuberance and academic seriousness. We wanted this to be accessible: readable and understandable, above all by those whom this exploration is about and around — young people.

We hope it has indeed become so.

2 Prologue: The why and how of exploring the youth space

We don't talk about what we see; we see only what we can talk about.[1]

2.1 Setting the scene (the background and rationale)

Throughout human history, young people have been pioneering activism and nonviolent movements towards socio-political change. The international peacebuilding and peacemaking field has only recently been emphasising the role of young people as crucial actors for building peace. A (much-needed) United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security was adopted in December 2015, urging greater representation by young men and women in the prevention and resolution of violent conflict.[2]

Young people — individuals, organisations and networks[3] — constructively involve themselves in socio-political development and change, peacebuilding, peacemaking and conflict transformation. These constructive involvements can be seen to be embodied within a youth space: a multi-dimensional space within the socio-political context that young people create, shape and sustain. Is there, within this space, also a space of dialogue and mediation, where young people are transforming conflicts with a dialogic and mediative approach? This question has, by and large, been left unanswered.

In a modest endeavour to explore this 'youth space of dialogue and mediation', conflict contexts in Myanmar and Ukraine were considered.[4] People in their youth phase were conversed with, along with people who have passed beyond this phase of life, allowing them to reflect on their own youth and on their observation of (and interaction with) the work of young people. The learning was further enriched and substantiated by reflections from the Young Facilitators' work in Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia.[5] Additionally, related literature on youth peacebuilding and peacemaking helped construe the youth space in various other parts of the world.

This exploration decidedly disengages from the prevalent discourses on youth, which are already quite well-covered in literature: 'they are both troublemakers and peacemakers' or 'they are a special and potent category of peace agents, and therefore need to be empowered'.

1 KOFMAN (1992).

2 For details of the resolution, see UN-SC (2015).

3 For example, activist groups, volunteer circles, youth NGOs/CBOs, student unions and youth wings of political parties.

4 The primary field research involved semi–structured interviews and focus group discussions in Myanmar by (the young) Irena Grizelj (GRIZELJ 2017A), and in Ukraine by (the not so young, but youth–enthusiast) Mir Mubashir (MIR [UPCOMING])).

5 A project/process supported by the Berghof Foundation; see www.berghof-foundation.org/programmes/caucasus. Mir Mubashir had discussions in person with his Berghof colleagues and Skype and email conversations with young people involved in the work.

Rather, the focus of this exploration is on existing stories of dialogic and mediative efforts in the youth space, in an attempt to bring to light some insights usually left in the dark, and to stimulate a discourse hitherto absent. This is deemed particularly timely, given the inception of a myriad of initiatives since the adoption of Resolution 2250.

In the following, a rough sketch of the youth space of dialogue and mediation is drawn: its characteristics, dimensions, peripheries and dynamics, and the challenges and potential of the space in harbouring youth agency and motivation for transforming conflict. The rest of this Prologue sets the stage for the exploration (the framework); the Travelogue paints the various embodiments of the youth space as discovered during the exploration; and the Epilogue offers some overall reflections on the insights and deliberates on how to further evolve the youth space. The Catalogue acknowledges the referenced source of additional knowledge that has enriched and complemented this exploration.

2.2 Setting the stage (the conceptual framework)

In recent years, the role, efforts and potential of young people in peacebuilding and peacemaking have increasingly been recognised, analysed, celebrated and supported.[6]

There is, however, a dearth of an evidence base or scholarly reflection on young people's contribution to dialogue and mediation processes. This dearth may be attributed to one or more of the following:

- Older people consider young people 'not yet ready for the job'; in general, they perceive young people as immature, inexperienced, not ready, or having too much/too little emotional connection to the conflict. As a result, young people are not given the space to apply their instinct and learning.

- Some young people themselves are unaware of their own contribution to and potential in dialogue and mediation, or they get demotivated by the above. Others remain motivated and navigate/create alternative space to facilitate dialogue and mediation – one which the traditional analytical lens fails to detect.

This gives rise to some considerations about a more adequate and befitting conceptual, analytical, methodological and normative framework for exploring the youth space of dialogue and mediation. The following presents these considerations by unpacking the title of this exploration. As an overall guiding principle, **conflict transformation** was chosen over the terms peacebuilding and peacemaking (see 2.2.2).[7]

6 See, for example, MCGILL AND O'KANE (2015); MCEVOY-LEVY (2001); UN (2016); SFCG (2014); FELICE AND WISLER (2007); KEMPER (2005); DANESH (2008); IANYD (2012); LOPES CARDOZO ET AL. (2015).

7 One route to achieving peace is to *transform conflict* so that it does not become destructive/violent. LEDERACH (2003) offers a poetic rendition of conflict transformation, which is succinct and emphatic:

> Conflict transformation is to *envision and respond*
> to the *ebb and flow* of social conflict
> as *life-giving opportunities*
> for creating *constructive change processes*
> that *reduce violence*,
> *increase justice*
> in *direct interaction* and *social structures*,
> and respond to real-life problems
> in *human relationships*.

Conflict transformation is the pursuit of what Galtung (1964, 1969) conceived as positive peace (the absence of indirect structural and psychological violence), in contrast to negative peace (the absence of direct physical violence, such as war). Positive peace necessitates actions geared towards (re)building of relationships, (re)creating social systems, serving the needs of the whole of society and constructively dealing with conflict.

2.2.1 Youth

2.2.1.1 Stating the obvious [relevance of youth]

In contrast to all the other social and political categories of actors usually referred to in the peacebuilding field — religious, traditional, armed, non-violent, business, state or community actors — youth is the most heterogeneous one since it is not tied to a social or political 'function'. People in all these other categories of actors live through it, irrespective of gender[8], culture or social standing. Every prominent and role-model peacebuilder who is no longer young has lived their youth. It cannot be discounted that a good part of what they do for peace may have been rooted in the life experiences of their youth phase, even if their context exhibited adultism and gerontocracy.[9] After all, living through and experiencing 'youth' is strongly associated with taking further the learning and meaning-making from childhood, and applying the learning and experimenting with it. For many people, youth is the phase when their leadership traits start developing. Peacebuilding processes can therefore benefit from acknowledging the importance of people living their youth and from involving them.

'Youth' is a cross-section of our lifeline, a biographical phase.
Everyone lives through youth.
Children will live it.
Young people are living it.
Older people have lived it.

2.2.1.2 Understanding youth beyond an age-bound category

'Youth' is defined most widely as a category with an age range.[10] It is important to realise, though, that **'youth' is a biological, psychological and sociological construct of identity, which varies across cultures, countries, social groups and organisations, depending on the cultural, social, economic and political contexts**.

8 In the peacebuilding field, 'women' are unfortunately often lumped together with 'youth' as broad categories. This is problematic in many ways, for one, since it reinforces a certain discourse of viewing them as similar categories of marginalised actors, whereas they are vast and unique in their own ways. Also, it has to be taken into account that a good number (about half) of young people in the world are women. The gender dimension in youth is crucial in asking how roles and initiatives of young women and men differ and/or correllate depending on the cultural context.

9 Adultism: Prejudice and accompanying systematic discrimination against young people; behaviours and attitudes based on the assumptions that adults are better than young people www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adultism.
Gerontocracy: A society where leadership is reserved for elders www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerontocracy;
a form of social organisation in which a group of old men or a council of elders dominates or exercises control www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gerontocracy.

10 There is no internationally recognised standard age range for defining youth. Resolution 2250 defines youth as "persons of the age of 18-29 years old, and further noting the variations of definition of the term that may exist on the national and international levels" (UN–SC 2015, 1). The United Nations (UN) and other international and regional organisations have varied age parameters, primarily within the range 15–32. There are cultural variations as well – both formally and informally – ranging from 14–40, e.g. in the African Youth Charter, formally 15–35, and in some Middle Eastern contexts informally up to 40 and formally 18–40 (e.g. in the youth participation criteria of Yemen's National Dialogue Conference). For an overview of these variations, see UNOY (2016, 30) and UNDESA (N.D.). Youth and adulthood as biographical phases are sometimes seen as distinct; however, the UN's classification of young adulthood, i.e. 25–44 as an extended range, is important to consider (the next ranges being middle adulthood 45–64 and older adulthood 65+).

Youth is "a more fluid category than a fixed age-group": it is a **biographical phase of transition** "from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community" (UNESCO, N.D.). A holistic understanding of youth incorporates the "cultural context, [and] political, economic, and social factors" such as "life experiences, [...] education, gender, social group and [...] location", which capture the "dynamics of youth from a context-specific perspective" (UNOY PEACEBUILDERS 2016, 30). These life experiences are affected by "complex social realities as well as young peoples' capacity to engage with them" (UNDP 2014, 47). Phenomena such as globalisation and technological advancement further mould these realities.

Biological	Onset of puberty and reproductive capacity.
Social	Cultural constructs, such as norms and expectations in terms of roles, rituals, relationships.
Psychological	Identy, autonomy, independence, interdependence, responsibility.
Political	Leadership, rights, justice, participation, policies and regulations around education, voting, driving, working.
Economic	Employment, entrepreneurship, taxation.

In peacebuilding 'programming', youth is viewed as simply another stakeholder category. DWYER (2015, 26) argues that this is insufficient and problematic, since 'youth' can be a fuzzy and overlapping category rather than clearly bounded: 'youth' "may take on social meaning as a process, as a site of tension, or as a symbol of broader ideas — modernity, creativity, underdevelopment, danger, freedom, vulnerability potential, threat". DWYER thus suggests that "we must enter into more sustained dialogue" in the "dense nexus where young people's diverse experiences of conflict and their agency in shaping [conflict] landscapes intersect with what is expected, feared and hoped of them". **The sheer diversity in young people's experiences thus argues against seeing youth as a homogeneous group with similar needs. This is the primary rationale for exploring the youth 'space' instead of youth as an age-bound category** (further elaborated in 2.2.2). It is the space of the learning, meaning-making and socialising that characterises the youth phase in the stages of human development, based on the following markers.[11]

Based on these markers, youth is expressed and felt in different ways across the globe. For some, youth is a life stage between being dependent and independent, "starting to enjoy freedom for the first time" (CORRIERO 2004, 4). For others, this dependence and freedom play out differently, for example in a conflict context where a young person's life radically alters when they are forced to take on adult responsibilities at a very young age. It is important to explore the youth space with a nuanced context-specific and person-specific understanding of how some of these markers develop and play out in the given context to construe its youth space. The age parameter is indeed still important to consider, since it is the established framework used in social, political, psychological and economic analyses, policies and youth-focused initiatives.

11 See for example the ERIKSONS' model of psychosocial development constituting the phases of 'adolescence' 13–19 and 'early adulthood' 20–39 (ERIKSON AND ERIKSON 1997). An age parameter for youth needs to consider both phases.
For an interesting exploration of some of these markers of youth/adulthood against the backdrop of emerging trends in the social and behavioural sciences, see SETTERSTEN ET AL. (2015).

Finally, there are some linguistic issues to consider: The term 'youth' is often used to refer to a particular young person or a group of young people, which is linguistically erroneous, since it is really a biographical phase.[12] It can, however, be used as a qualifier: such as youth leadership[13], youth group, youth space and youth approach. In the following, 'young people' and 'young person' are used to refer to anyone in their youth or young adulthood phases. There is, however, no standard word to refer to those who are no longer young people. 'Old people' usually refers to people in their old adulthood and not so much in middle adulthood. With this linguistic difficulty in mind, the pragmatic usage in this exploration is either 'older people' (as a contrast to young people) or 'elder' (as someone with a degree of seniority or authority, which is almost never a young person).

2.2.1.3 Humanising over attributing

In intellectualising, conceptualising and categorising, we sometimes fall into the trap of generalised attribution. For example, in conceptualising 'young mediator', the tendency is to pick certain attributes of youth/young people and of mediators, then establish a caricature, and use this caricature as a lens to decide who a young mediator is or is not. This disregards, first of all, that under the lens there is a person, a human being, who is intimately tied to the given conflict context and the issues around it.

We have been getting better at context-specificity, but there is much work to be done in person-specificity and 'humanisation' of issues. This means to consider that the persons we are talking to and about have their own personal and collective stories, which are intricately connected to the issues. Humanising also means having the openness to understand this complex connection through the language and emotion that go into their narration of and reflection on the issues. This would help us understand their action, inaction and potential in conflict transformation, which is more important than our attribution of them. In an ever-changing world, our attribution, definition and conceptualisation need to be open and dynamic.

This exploration made a conscious effort to embody this humanisation — in understanding from the persons conversed with what they understood by, and how they related to, terms habitually used, such as youth, space, conflict, peace, dialogue, mediation, reconciliation, coexistence.[14] The spectrum of peacebuilding efforts of the whole of society was looked at in the given contexts of this exploration to delve into the youth space of dialogue and mediation. This allowed scope to consider actors who may or may not be aware of their dialogic and mediative capacity (see 2.2.3), which may be instinctual, learned from experience or acquired through structured training. They may or may not be labelled as a mediator or dialogue facilitator (by themselves or by others). What is interesting, however, is to observe if labelling does have a (helpful or unhelpful) effect on the capacity and agency of the actor.

12 Statements such as "the youth's name is …", "most youth think that …" can be seen as linguistically erroneous.

13 It is linguistically correct to say 'youth leader(s)' to mean leader(s) of a youth cohort.

14 Interestingly, in almost all the conversations in Ukraine, the first mention of 'youth' was met with the question "what do you mean by youth?" The question was thrown back at them, to bring aboard their understanding of youth. In contrast, in Myanmar, 'youth' was generally well understood and seen as a specific age-bound phase of life, potentially due to the strong hierarchical culture that pervades in this country.

2.2.2 Space

2.2.2.1 Thinking spatially

In the peacebuilding field, it is usual to analyse sets and categories of actors (female peacemakers, young peacebuilders, religious mediators, etc.) and their actions, and to then contextualise them. Taking the context as a starting point, however, gives a valuable mode of analysing 'the whole' and its constituent parts. This whole, if construed with a mental model of 'space'[15], includes the context in which the said actors are present along with other actors. This presence is exhibited in the actors' navigation of the space and interaction with other actors navigating the same space. It is therefore a relational space. In exploring young people's contribution to dialogue and mediation, it was valuable to explore the 'youth space' of dialogue and mediation, which, in the larger socio-political space of dialogue and mediation[16], predominantly exhibits youth presence, actions and interactions with other (older) actors.

The youth space is not an isolated or exclusive youth-only space but is embedded in the larger socio-political context. In effect, the youth space is an intergenerational space.

The youth space exhibits dynamics and processes where young people are present and active in various capacities along with older members of society. Older actors — individuals or organisations (local, national, regional and international) — often collaboratively work towards the propagation and amplification of the space. The following figure visualises this embeddedness across various layered spaces in the socio-political context. These spaces are not static but fluid, and have porous boundaries, and the youth space is anywhere that youth presence and (inter)action are exhibited. The youth space can also be thought of as a biographical cross-section of the larger space, cutting through its various layered spaces. Along the same lines, other cross-sections or spaces can be thought of, such as gendered space or thematic/functional spaces of religion, technology, business, the arts and others.

15 Spatial analysis in social sciences and humanities have long been philosophising about the spatial dimension of human activities in social spheres. For an overview, see BAUR ET AL. (2014); BLANK AND ROSEN-ZVI (2010).

16 A concept of 'mediation space' exists, which is the safe and constructive socio-political space between divided groups where their respective (conflictive) discourses can interact non-violently (MASON AND SGUAITAMATTI 2011; FRAZER AND GHETTAS 2013).

Constructive conflict is often essential for stimulating socio-political development and change

SPACE OF **SOCIO-POLITICAL CONFLICT**

Conflict is a socio-political phenomenon.

Dimensions:
Ethnicity, religion, identity,
economy, resources, territory, etc.

Issues:
Structural violence, inequality, marginalisation, discrimination, self-determination, racism, power asymmetry, ideological difference, xenophobia, homophobia, internal displacement, etc.

Response/manifestation:
Constructive (non-violent).
Destructive (violent) in various levels and degrees, e.g. hate speech, hate crime, civil war, armed social violence (e.g. urban violence), communal/sectarian tensions, so-called 'radicalisation' or 'violent extremism'.

Conflict cannot be prevented, but violence (violent/armed conflict) can be prevented.
Conflict may become frozen or protracted.

YOUTH SPACE

Involvement in non-violent social movements, being more willing and able to take risks, e.g. in voicing injustice. On the other hand, in many contexts, they are more susceptible than older actors to be drawn into armed struggle (e.g. child/young soldiers), recruited by armed secessionist groups or so-called 'extremist' groups, or misused by political parties.

SPACE OF **CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION**

Constructive (non-violent) response to conflict, including a multitude of efforts to transform conflict and build positive peace. Engages the resources and capacities of a variety of actors from the grassroots to actors in power politics
in a safe space, e.g. peace education, non-violent resistance, (re)conciliation, trauma healing, diplomacy, dialogue, negotiation, mediation.

YOUTH SPACE

Raising awareness of peace, justice, and rights, weaving social cohesion, or negotiating with armed groups or politicians on behalf of their communities.

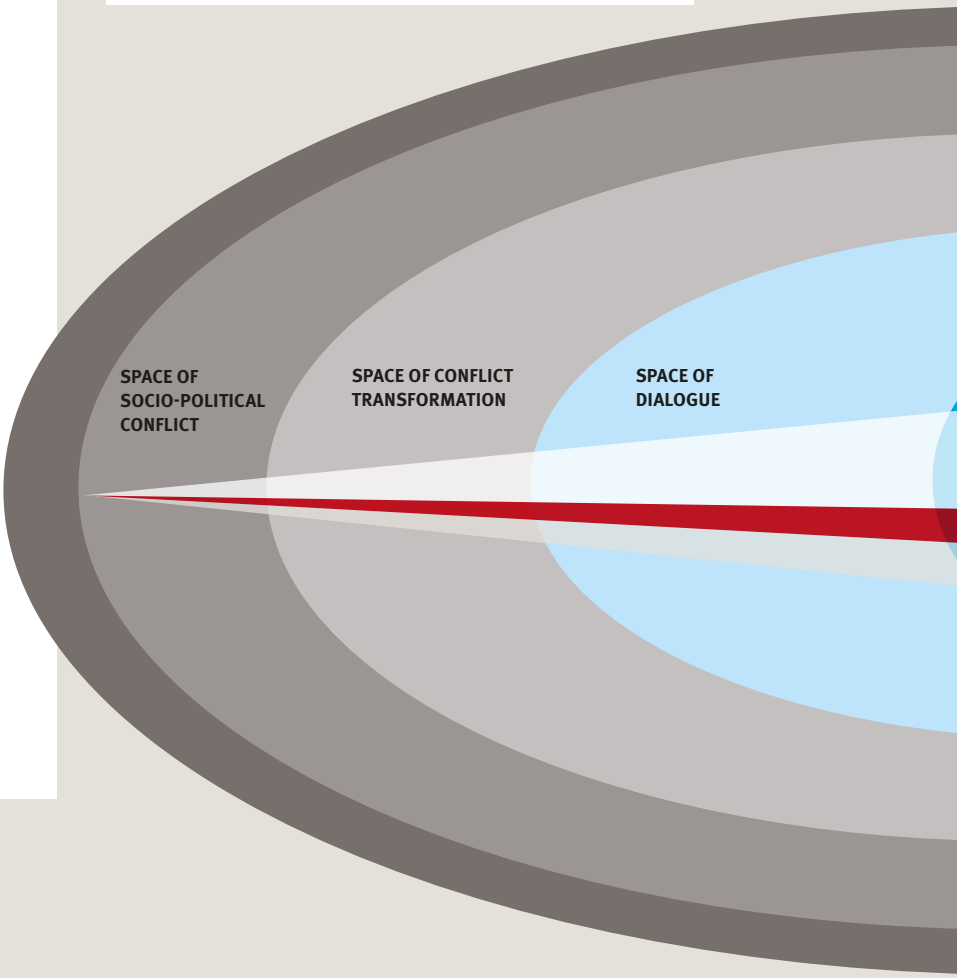


Figure 1. The youth space in the larger socio-political context

SPACE OF **MEDIATION** SPACE OF **DIALOGUE**

Constructive response to conflict, explicitly with a relational approach powered by dialogic and mediative capacity.

Dialogue as a way of communication, a method and a process ideally characterises the space of socio-political development and change and the space of mediation.

YOUTH SPACE

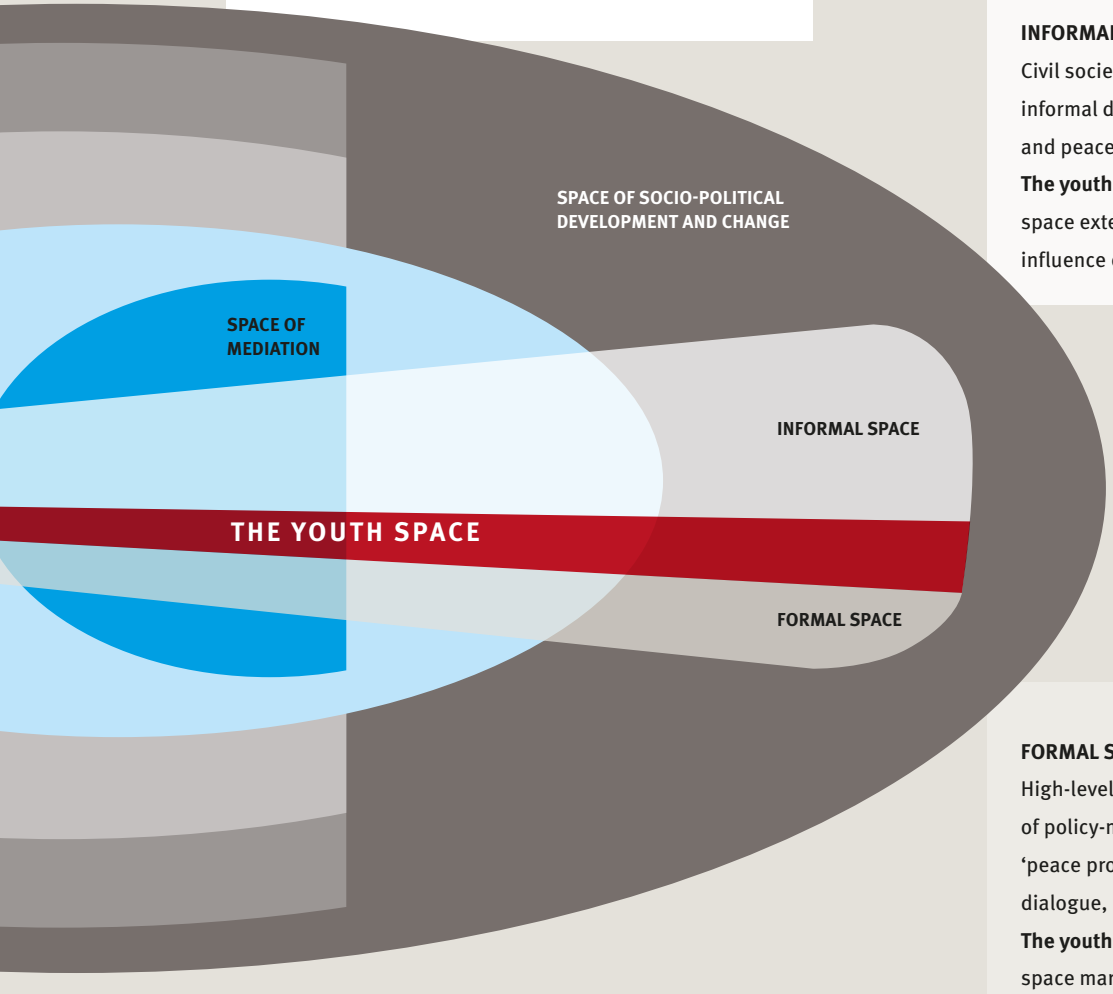
How young people navigate and interact in the space of dialogue and the space of mediation is what the insights from this exploration attempt to reveal.

SPACE OF **SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE**

Improvement of socio-political life, through pursuit of positive peace and positive socio-political change. e.g. social work, scientific innovation, governance, economic development, poverty reduction, pursuit of governmental accountability, and activism.

YOUTH SPACE

Involvement through voluntary or paid work, such as in journalism, cultural associations, activist and lobbyist groups, and youth wings of political parties.



INFORMAL SPACE
Civil society and community space of informal dialogue, everyday diplomacy and peacebuilding.
The youth space traverses the informal space extensively, due to the direct influence of young people on this space.

FORMAL SPACE
High-level, elite-driven, political space of policy-making, decision-making, and 'peace processes' — involving diplomacy, dialogue, negotiation and mediation.
The youth space traverses the formal space marginally, due to the primarily indirect influence of young people on this space.

The evolution of these various spaces, and the dynamics and processes that they exhibit can be understood in light of 'social autopoiesis' or the organic self-(re)production of spaces in society.[17] With regard to conflict, depending on its stage, scope and intensity, the space for accommodating transformation processes emerges in accordance with an innate need in the socio-political context to curb destructive responses to conflict — by seeking an end to violence, maintaining the social fabric, and reconciling human relationships (MIR, MORINA, AND VIMALARAJAH 2016). The space may already exist in some form and would simply need to be recognised and stimulated. Conversely, it may be so enmeshed with violence that it may need to be revitalised and thereafter kept alive.

The space model is particularly relevant in this exploration since, as indicated earlier, **youth is a biographical phase of life and not a social or political function or a gender attribute**, which means it applies to all kinds of actors living that phase. The youth space characterises young people's growing awareness of interdependence as members of a community. MCEVOY-LEVY frames "youth spaces" as

> territories that youth 'can call their own', where young people have placemaking authority; spaces they identify, name, design, makes rules for, arrive at shared meanings about, where they are free to imagine, create and risk mistakes, with porous boundaries (literal and figurative) that enable new experiences and social interactions as well as relationships with adults and with history. (MCEVOY-LEVY 2012, 29)

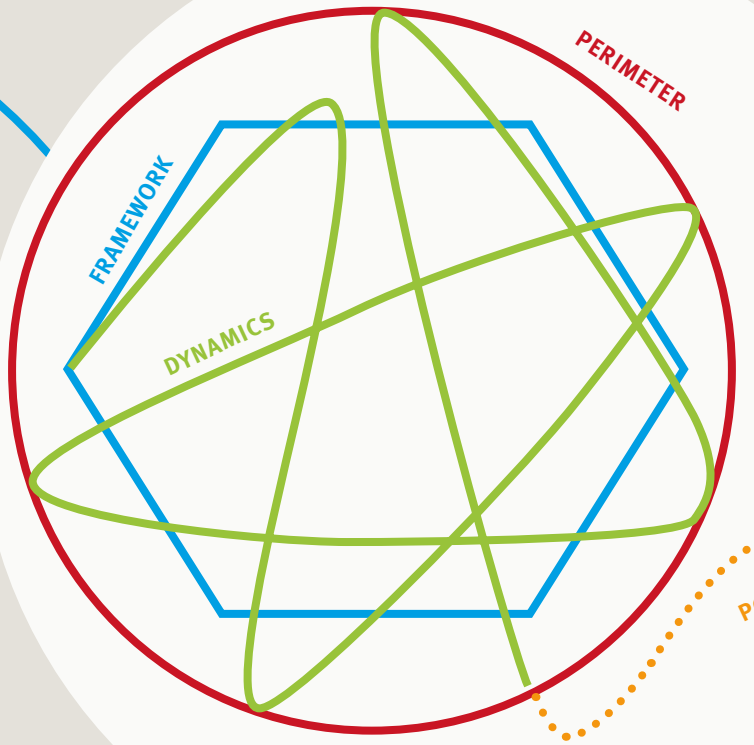
Inspired by this, and based on the insights from this exploration, **the youth space**[18] may be understood in terms of the following dimensions of space (see Figure 2), shaped by the social, political, psychological and economic markers of human development mentioned earlier.

FRAMEWORK

- **Worldview, meaning systems** and **sense of responsibility** that conceive youth action.
- **Agency** behind youth action (what are young people capable of doing (more) when living their youth phase in contrast to when they get older?).
- **Resilience** to withstand and respond to oppression, violence and crises.
- **Traits and patterns** markedly observable (or unique) in people living their youth phase.
- **Literal and figurative place** where young people are most conscious of their identity but not oblivious of their connections to and rootedness in the context.
- **Legitimacy, power and sphere of influence** on actors and structures in the context.

17 LUHMANN's (1986) constructivist and functionalist concept of social autopoiesis is built on MATURANA AND VARELA's (1980) biological concept of autopoiesis (self-(re)production; from Greek: autos = self, poiein = to produce). FUCHS AND HOFKIRCHNER (2009) refined this concept with critical social systems theory, by emphasising human-centredness, critical thinking and dialectics. SPATSCHECK AND WOLF-OSTERMANN (2009) argued that social spaces are neither absolute entities, nor absolutely relative, but embody the interactive connections between people and their social and ecological environment.

18 The definite article and singular formulation of 'the space' is to be noted, in contrast to 'spaces', to emphasise that the connotation embodies dimensions other than geographical or territorial spaces.



PERIMETER

- **Social, political and legal limits**, as defined by patriarchy, adultism and gerontocracy.
- **Rules** (written or unwritten) limiting youth action.
- **Economic** considerations that may limit youth action.

DYNAMICS

- **Navigation** of the context, as defined by the framework and limited by the perimeter.
- **Interactions and actions** in political participation, diplomacy, nonviolent resistance, activism, dialogue, mediation, etc.
- **Effect** of these interactions and actions.

POTENTIAL

- **Room for manoeuvre** in the context, despite limits, by creating (or regenerating) space for further youth presence and action.
- **Support** from a broader youth collective and from national and international actors.

CONTEXT

- **Social, political and economic context** of conflict with its tangible and intangible elements: the related **actors, relationships, interactions, history, culture, religion, norms.**
- **Structures and processes** formed and set to motion by the interactions or actors, which may (or may not) be conducive to youth presence and interaction: formal and informal institutions, policies, forums, events, physical locations, etc.

Figure 2. The dimensions of the youth space

2.2.2.2 Looking beyond official peace processes of the formal space

The usual connotation of 'peace process' is that of an elite-driven, formal, political space of peacebuilding and peacemaking through diplomacy, dialogue, negotiation and mediation, involving actors in tracks 1 and 1.5. Seldom do they factor in the informal, socio-political space of peacebuilding by civil society actors in tracks 2 and 3. Often, the formalisation of peace processes makes people oblivious to the informal processes that led to it. The informal, however, has crucial implications for the inception, success and sustainability of the formal. For example, the Northern Ireland peace process

> involved efforts to mediate and facilitate not only at the highest political levels but also at lower ones and within civil society. Indeed, especially in the initial stages of the peace process, most activity occurred at the civil society level. [...] 60 percent of that success was due to civil society's capacity to mediate, educate, brainstorm new ideas, and bring members of antagonistic communities together. Peacebuilders worked hard to develop this capacity: civil society leaders "can go where politicians cannot go," and "civil society provided opportunities that were unthreatening to bring political and paramilitary parties together" [...;] "civil society can do a lot of the difficult work that political and military parties cannot do themselves". (RAUSCH AND LUU 2017, 2)

Furthermore, **while formal peace processes are indispensable, due to their nature and scope, they cannot be expected to address the transformation of conflict towards sustainable peace.** It is in the informal space where long-term efforts of conflict transformation — community dialogue and mediation, reconciliation, peace education, trauma healing, etc. — are realised.

Young people are rarely invited to participate in formal peace processes, which are fundamentally adultist and gerontocratic. The call for youth inclusion and participation in peace processes has become a prominent theme only recently.[19] While this is a just call, overly obsessing with inclusion in formal peace processes — and then not getting it — raises frustration that may erode the true youth power in peacebuilding. Having a better understanding of young people's existing efforts in the informal space is therefore central in realising their potential contribution to formal peace processes.

Often, the formalisation of peace processes makes people oblivious to the informal processes that led to it.

It is essential that in the space of conflict transformation, the formal and informal spaces are strategically connected.

Having a better understanding of young people's existing efforts in the informal space is central in realising their (potential) contribution to formal processes.

19 See, for example, POLIS180 (2016); JOHANSON (2017); GRIZELJ (2016; 2017B); OTTO (2014).

2.2.2.3 Recognising socially embedded peace processes of the informal 'everyday' space

Zooming out of peace processes of the formal space reveals the conjoined socially embedded peace processes of the informal space. This space is dynamised by a continuum of efforts to deal with and transform conflict, which have to be strategised and re-strategised on a day to day basis, depending on the fluidity and unpredictability of conflict dynamics. This is pivotal also for understanding the youth space of dialogue and mediation. In peace research and practice, it is duly argued that "the actual experience of peace itself has been given remarkably little attention" (WILLIAMS 2015, 4), and that the discourse emphasises an abstraction of "what peace should look like and who should do it, rather than examining what peace does look like" (IBID., 11).

Peace and peacebuilding are, however, understood in a more nuanced manner through the micro-politics and micro-mechanisms of everyday life, in the most rudimentary of spaces in society and in the 'everyday' experiences of coexistence, tension, tolerance, etc. within those spaces.[20] Although experienced differently by different actors in society, there are patterns that can be observed. The concept of space in this regard is referred to as the "geography of peace", which is concerned with "how peace is socially and spatially (re)produced in and through interconnected sites and scales, including the body, the neighborhood, the city, region and nation" (IBID., 2-3).[21]

A more realistic and holistic understanding is therefore possible, showing how in the complex socio-political space, the constructive space of peacebuilding coexists with the space of destructive (violent) conflict, and how they are in constant interaction and negotiation with each other.

The concept of 'everyday peace' takes into account **human agency** — especially of the marginalised in society — as the capability of engaging with the practices, routines and radical events that shape their everyday resistances and peacebuilding (BERENTS 2015). In this regard, young people are the ones who are "often marginalised or rendered passive in discussions of the violences that affect them" (BERENTS 2015, 1). With agency also "comes questions of **responsibility** and **legitimacy**, so not only why and how certain people chose to act towards peace but also whether their actions are positively recognized, or not, and by whom" (WILLIAMS 2015, 5). Nevertheless, everyday peace actors "actively negotiate and (re)produce peace as policy, narrative, practice and strategy within different [...] spaces and across different scales" (IBID.) and show how these actions are intimately linked to local structures of power and politics (WILLIAMS 2013).

Recently, BERENTS and MCEVOY-LEVY have done crucial work to theorise youth and everyday peace(building) (BERENTS 2015; BERENTS AND MCEVOY-LEVY 2015). They draw attention to how everyday peace is narrated by or through young people: in resisting, rejecting and attempting to

20 The (relatively recent) framings of 'local' and 'embodied everyday' peace(building)/diplomacy help in recalibrating our understanding of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. See, for example, MAC GINTY (2014, 2013); MAC GINTY AND RICHMOND (2013); BERENTS (2015).

21 RING (2006), for example, illustrates 'everyday peace' by examining the social spaces of an ethnically diverse apartment building in Karachi, Pakistan; and WILLIAMS (2015) examines everyday peace between Hindu traders and Muslim weavers in urban north India. In their analysis, peace is never an outcome or end–product, but is always in the process of 'becoming' through constant production and reproduction in space and time. They posit that this becoming does not necessarily involve or nurture the potential for transformation of conflict, and rather that the (re)production of peace may depend on maintaining uneven balances of power characteristic of the status quo. Peace is "not regarded as a trouble free product, but instead an ongoing process that is at once political and infused with power across different sites and scales" (IBID., 5). Nevertheless, 'conflict transformation', understood as a process, is not a pursuit of an elusive peace, but rather an embodiment of transformation of human relations embedded in the everyday.

transform values, policies, and governmental structures that young people have to encounter every day. They also analyse structures between the local and the global to identify what facilitates, restricts and shrouds young people's everyday peace(building) practices.

2.2.2.4 Contextualising the youth space in the whole of society

As mentioned above, the youth space is an intergenerational space and a biographical cross-section of the larger socio-political space. The youth space is (a very important) part of the equation, but it is essential to contextualise it in the whole of society.[22] The space of conflict transformation is enriched by diverse (individual and collective) strengths and resources of actors across various layers and strands of society, both in the state and non-state spaces. These resources can be religious, spiritual, technical, procedural, of leadership abilities, or simply that of being able to earn people's trust. Young people, in addition to the above, usually bring in resources of passion and curiosity to learn about and interact with 'the other'.

The following Figure 3 presents an (ideal) paradigm of how whole of society resources and efforts contribute to conflict transformation. **The youth phase, as mentioned earlier, cuts across most of the actors mentioned.**

Figure 3. An (ideal) paradigm of whole of society resources and efforts for conflict transformation

22 'Whole of society approach' (WoS) has become a relatively new buzzword in the peacebuilding field. It is an outgrowth of the 'whole of government approach' and 'comprehensive approach' advocated by supranational entities (e.g. NATO) for addressing the perennial challenge of coordination and cooperation of political, civilian and military instruments for peace (support) operations and interventions in crisis situations. It has recently been resounding in the Countering/Preventing Violent Extremism field. WoS has been defined as:

> an approach to peacebuilding and conflict prevention, which pays particular attention to the role of a wide variety of societal actors and their inter-relations in the analysis and implementation of conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives. It seeks the representation and participation of the local level in actions to promote peace. It emphasises the importance of inclusivity, comprehensiveness and coherence. It acknowledges the multi-faceted nature of conflict and peacebuilding, and the presence of multiple relationships at policy level and on the ground. It seeks to encompass these complex dynamics and the presence of different interfaces through problematizing not only the multi-actor environment, but also the integration of different policies and peacebuilding actions across a broad spectrum of security needs. (MARTIN ET AL. 2016, 65)

See also BRUNK (2016); SEGERS AND ERONEN (2015).

STATE
Public servants
Politicians
Negotiators
Mediators
Facilitators
Government
Political parties (Opposition)
Armed groups (military, police)
for Peace and Networks of Influence
Institutions (bureaux, ministries, secretariats, commissions and councils) for peace/truth and reconciliation
Parliamentary bodies
National Dialogue/ Conferences
Early warning/action
Reconciliation
Transitional
Justice
Peace education
WHOLE OF SOCIETY CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION
Innate desire and efforts for peace
Traditional, cultural and religious resources
Approaches, processes, methods and tools
Structures and Networks
Entities
Individuals
REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL
Former heads of states
Ambassadors
Diplomats
Mediators
Negotiators
Religious/spiritual leaders
Foreign ministries
Intergovernmental agencies
Bi-/Multilateral entities
Faith-based organisations
Mediation support teams
INGOs
Donors
Advocacy groups
Humanitarian organisations
Regional and international networks for peer exchange and joint learning
Inter-governmental forums
Peace support structures
Outsider engagement
Support: operational, logistical, technical, process, financial, networking
Capacity development (training, mentoring, coaching, shadowing)
Mobilisation of political support
Sounding board
Backstopping
Advising
CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION
CONFLICT

2.2.3 Dialogue and mediation

In the peacebuilding and conflict resolution field, dialogue and mediation are predominantly understood as 'tools', the skills for which can be professionally learned, enabling individuals to become dialogue facilitators and mediators. They are also understood as processes, where these tools are employed with conflict parties: mediation as a negotiation process facilitated by a third party (the mediator and mediation teams), and dialogue as a structured communication process of reaching common understanding, sometimes facilitated by a third party (the dialogue facilitator). Dialogue and mediation processes as we know them, although spanning across different peacebuilding tracks in official peace processes of the formal space, have predominantly a professional emphasis.

Limited consideration of dialogue and mediation contexts

	Local	Intrastate/national	Interstate/international/regional
Dialogue	Non-formal or semi-formal dialogue between societal groups within and across communities, addressing a range of social, political, economic and environmental issues, such as community dialogue, civil society dialogue, interfaith dialogue, intrafaith dialogue.	Formal national/political dialogue addressing issues of national concern, e.g. in contexts of deep political crisis, post-war, far-reaching political transitions.[23]	High-level diplomatic dialogue.
Mediation	Mediation in civil cases as an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism, which is a viable, less costly alternative to court systems to deal with land conflict and family conflict, usually facilitated by local professional mediators.	Mediation in official peace processes by national and/or international or regional mediators in civil war (between state and non-state armed actors), or in violent socio-political conflict.	Mediation by diplomats and international or regional mediators.

However, as argued earlier, looking beyond official peace processes of the formal space, one can recognise socially embedded peace processes of transforming conflict in the informal everyday space, which constitute efforts in the space of dialogue and mediation that are relevant — and often indispensable — to the former.

Some examples from the youth space (cited in the Travelogue that follows) may unnerve the connoisseur of professional and formal mediation or dialogue facilitation. These efforts, including everyday efforts, are usually shrugged off as 'merely peacebuilding'.[24] This disregards some important aspects of and facts about dialogue and mediation, as highlighted in the following.

23 See, for example, BERGHOF FOUNDATION (2017)

24 In fact, eyebrows have been raised during interviews and conferences where the examples have been cited.

A nuanced consideration of the space of dialogue and mediation

- The etymological roots of dialogue and mediation – and how they have been manifested in human history – indicate that they are relational ways of reconciling human relationships.[25]

- Dialogue and mediation processes explicitly labelled as such may not necessarily be dialogic and mediative.[26] A mediation process that has an agreement on paper as the outcome may not have actually transformed the conflict or reconciled relationships.

- Mediation, especially in high-level peace processes, usually considers distinct conflict 'parties' (often identified as party A and party B) whose conflict needs to be mediated. In reality, such a distinction is blurred, since, even if there are two main parties, there are different positions and interests and different perceptions of the conflict within the parties. The spectrum of conflict stakeholders may be much wider than identified conflict parties.

- Peacebuilding and conflict transformation processes constitute efforts by diverse actors from the whole of society who are not necessarily dialogue facilitators or mediators. From within and beyond their diverse social functions, they play everyday roles of enablers, conciliators, interlocutors and bridge-builders.
These relational, dialogic and mediative roles help break deadlocks, catalyse change by moving things forward, and keep dialogue and mediation processes alive. These actors continue their efforts to sustain peace even after formal processes are wrapped up.

- Everyday dialogic and mediative efforts may not be visible in the formal dialogue and mediation 'tables' and processes, but they constitute a broader space of dialogue and mediation, which may have (indirect and implicit) implications for how the formal process comes to being, how it unfolds and how it sustains.

Recognising the subtleties of efforts in being dialogic and mediative and in contributing to dialogue and mediation processes therefore requires a broader and deeper understanding of dialogue and mediation. Building on the above considerations, some propositions are put forward in the following.

25 The etymology of the terms dates back to centuries ago. Dialogue: flow of meaning; from Ancient Greek διά (diá: through) + λόγος (lógos: conversation, discourse). Mediation: to be in the middle, to be or become between; from Medieval Latin medius: middle.

26 For example, dialogue (especially) is often 'overused', which undermines its value. This is the observation in Ukraine, where dialogue "has become a buzzword" referring to just about any "one-time events such as debates, film-discussions", which "aim neither at mutual trust-building, nor at decision making and problem-solving" (KYSELOVA AND VON DOBENECK 2017, 5). Similarly in Myanmar, a plethora of namesake interfaith dialogue initiatives exists (MIR 2016).

2.2.3.1 Looking into societal processes of relationship-(re)building

In contrast to international or professional mediation, 'insider mediation' is a **human- and relationship-centric** process. Insiders are physically and emotionally 'intrinsic' to the conflict context: they are part of the social fabric of the conflict, and are tied in complex relationships with each other, which may have been disrupted by the conflict. Their lives are directly affected by the conflict, and they may have a stake in it.[27] In insider mediation processes, dialogue and mediation are not tools employed by insiders, but are ongoing societal processes that are underlined by cumulative efforts to (re)build their relationships with each other and not necessarily to reach an (peace) agreement. In such insider mediation processes, non-formal dialogue is often complementary to its formal counterparts, being able to engage a broader range of stakeholders, including the marginalised or excluded or those who refuse to participate (in formal dialogue).[28] Given the relational aspect of such societal dialogue and mediation processes, they can help sustain the formal process, particularly when the latter is at an impasse or has broken down.

2.2.3.2 Emphasising dialogic and mediative capacity over role

As asserted by LEDERACH (2002, 93), "[m]ediation in its typical application is a socially narrow process of action carried out by a person or small team who facilitates direct dialogue between well-defined actors, particularly at the highest level of political and military leadership". These roles of mediating and facilitating dialogue are defined by a framework and mandate, which are products of the professionalisation of dialogue and mediation. The expectations around the person (or team) and their role may overshadow process orientation and shift the focus to outcome and success. Insider mediation processes, however, have a different emphasis and a broad mandate — that of **reconciling and transforming social relations disrupted by (violent) conflict**.

While insider mediation may involve international, professional or seasoned dialogue facilitators and mediators, it is the actors intrinsic to the conflict context (hereafter simply 'insiders') who own and lead the process. Insiders' efforts are not tied to a specific functional role. While some may indeed be dialogue facilitators or mediators by profession, most of them act from their social functions and position — as elders, community leaders, religious leaders, ex-combatants, students, politicians, businesspersons, and others. They are diverse in gender and age, which means young women and men as well.

Insiders may already be engaged in a variety of interconnected peacebuilding efforts, some of which may exhibit dialogic and mediative characteristics, by virtue of their natural skills, emotional intelligence and learning through doing.[29] These efforts may be underscored by **dialogic and mediative capacity**.

> Mediative capacity, as a lens, requires to think about social spaces for constructive change processes that have intermediary impact rather than about mediation narrowly defined as a role conducted by a person or team at the level of political negotiation. (LEDERACH 2002, 92)

27 See MIR ET AL. (2016, 25–37) for a detailed overview of 'insider mediation'. This concept has been emerging since the late 1990s, recognising insiders' dialogue and mediation efforts as more effective than (or complementary to) outsiders' efforts. Despite being partial to their constituency, through their demonstrated 'fairness', insiders gain legitimacy across constituencies to facilitate dialogue and mediate (WEHR AND LEDERACH 1991; ELGSTRÖM, BERCOVITCH, AND SKAU 2003; HISLAIRE, SMITH, AND WACHIRA 2011; SVENSSON AND LINDGREN 2013; ROEPSTORFF AND BERNHARD 2013; UNDP 2015; ROPERS 2014).

28 See, for example, BROWN (2017).

29 Having said that, gaining professional skills in dialogue and mediation may indeed further enrich insiders' current efforts. On a related note, in the 'global north', young people pursue professional qualifications to become mediators and dialogue facilitators.

Mediative "suggests a quality of relational interaction rather than the specificity of a [mediatory] role", which can be replicated "within specific social spaces" (IBID.).
The same would apply to dialogic capacity. These are the essential ingredients of the space of dialogue and the space of mediation — of the context, actors and interactions — that are conducive to a process of (re)conciliation and transformation of social relations disrupted by violent conflict. For example, in Northern Ireland

> mediative attitudes and behavior were aimed not at introducing a mediator, but rather at finding spaces of natural and necessary cross-community interaction, for example, in public housing or health, that could increase a constructive capacity in interpersonal and social skills. (LEDERACH 2005, 96)

2.2.3.3 Looking not only at tables

Dialogue and mediation processes do often involve sitting around a table, be it in a formal or informal setting, but not essentially, and this therefore cannot be the optical or arrangement criteria. There are cultural variations in how people arrange themselves in these processes, and there are creative formats and concepts different from our traditional notion of arrangement. In its most basic connotation, dialogue as a 'flow of meaning' is not essentially oral but can take other forms of exchange. For example, interactive theatre is a creative process of stimulating community dialogue in analysing and transforming conflict with the language of the body and of emotions (DIAMOND 2007). Some forms of this theatre, such as forum theatre, creates a play that embodies the complexities of a conflict context and engages the audience in dialogic action in experimenting with solutions. Diapraxis (dialogue as action) is another alternative to oral dialogue approaches, whereby a common praxis is endeavoured to understand and transform shared reality (MASON AND SGUAITAMATTI 2011; RASMUSSEN 1988).

Lastly, it is also wise to be wary of namesake: not every process or constituents of a process titled dialogue or mediation is necessarily dialogic or mediative.

It is important, when observing a dialogue or mediation process, to see how it has come about, and who has sustained/will sustain it. Often, young people are the ones to do so, for example in extremely volatile or protracted contexts where (older) people are stuck in their positions or are afraid to lose face.

2.2.3.4 Not underestimating the creation and sustaining of space

No dialogue or mediation process starts from nothingness. Some actors, like insiders, put immense effort in creating the space for these processes to roll out, and subsequently in sustaining the space. This space is larger than the process itself, and it contains vital information and energy to utilise the constructive outcomes of the process after it comes to an end.

The following Figure 4 consolidates the important elements and aspects of the space of dialogue and mediation.[30] They include the norms and values that form the cornerstone of transformative dialogue and mediation processes. Certainly, some of them are 'ideal', and not all aspects and elements may be observed in a given dialogue and mediation process.

30 Built on BOHM (1996); BOHM, FACTOR, AND GARRETT (1991); MOORE (1986; 2003); BURGESS AND BURGESS (1997); BERGHOF FOUNDATION (2012); SAUNDERS (1999); PRUITT AND THOMAS (2007); MIR, MORINA, AND VIMALARAJAH (2016); ROPERS (2017).

FORMATS AND SETTINGS

- Informal meetings and forums
- Cultural/traditional formats
- Non-verbal, body-oriented formats
- Forum theatre
- Diapraxis (dialogue in action)
- Formal roundtable

... and many others

DIALOGUE PROCESS (STAGES AND OBJECTIVES)

Not about agreeing, disagreeing, proving one's own point, proving others wrong, persuading, debating, negotiating, finding solutions or making decisions, but

- immersing in the awareness and consciousness of meaning-making and value systems of self and others
- discovering the richness of diverse perceptions for building a shared set of meanings
- building trust and confidence
- opening up on difficult issues of conflict
- identifying barriers in addressing key issues
- identifying resources and brainstorming on innovative ideas to address the issues
- expressing emotions: feelings, fears and needs
- exchanging views honestly
- identifying common interests
- building a common experience base
- learning and growing collectively
- building mutual understanding and common ground

ACTORS' ROLES

Go-betweens, enablers, facilitators and interlocutors who create and maintain communication channels, break deadlocks and catalyse dialogue and mediation processes.

DIALOGIC AND MEDIATIVE CAPACITY OF ACTORS

Capacity to

- identify the need for dialogue
- initiate a dialogue process
- leverage people's innate need to be part of the dialogue process
- nurture human agency for dialogue
- stimulate hidden/obscure issues to surface (e.g. deep-rooted attitudes)
- uncover the motivation and attitude behind violent behaviour
- *actively* and *empathetically* listen and respond to, learn about and relate to others
- be reflective
- be constructive, non-confrontational and non-judgemental
- be sensitive to others' vulnerability and allow one's own vulnerability to surface
- humanise the interaction
- break down stereotypes
- respect others' views
- trust, and build confidence in, the other
- be willing to open oneself to new ideas
- be open and flexible in changing one's own opinion
- think creatively
- invoke all the above in others in the space of dialogue and mediation

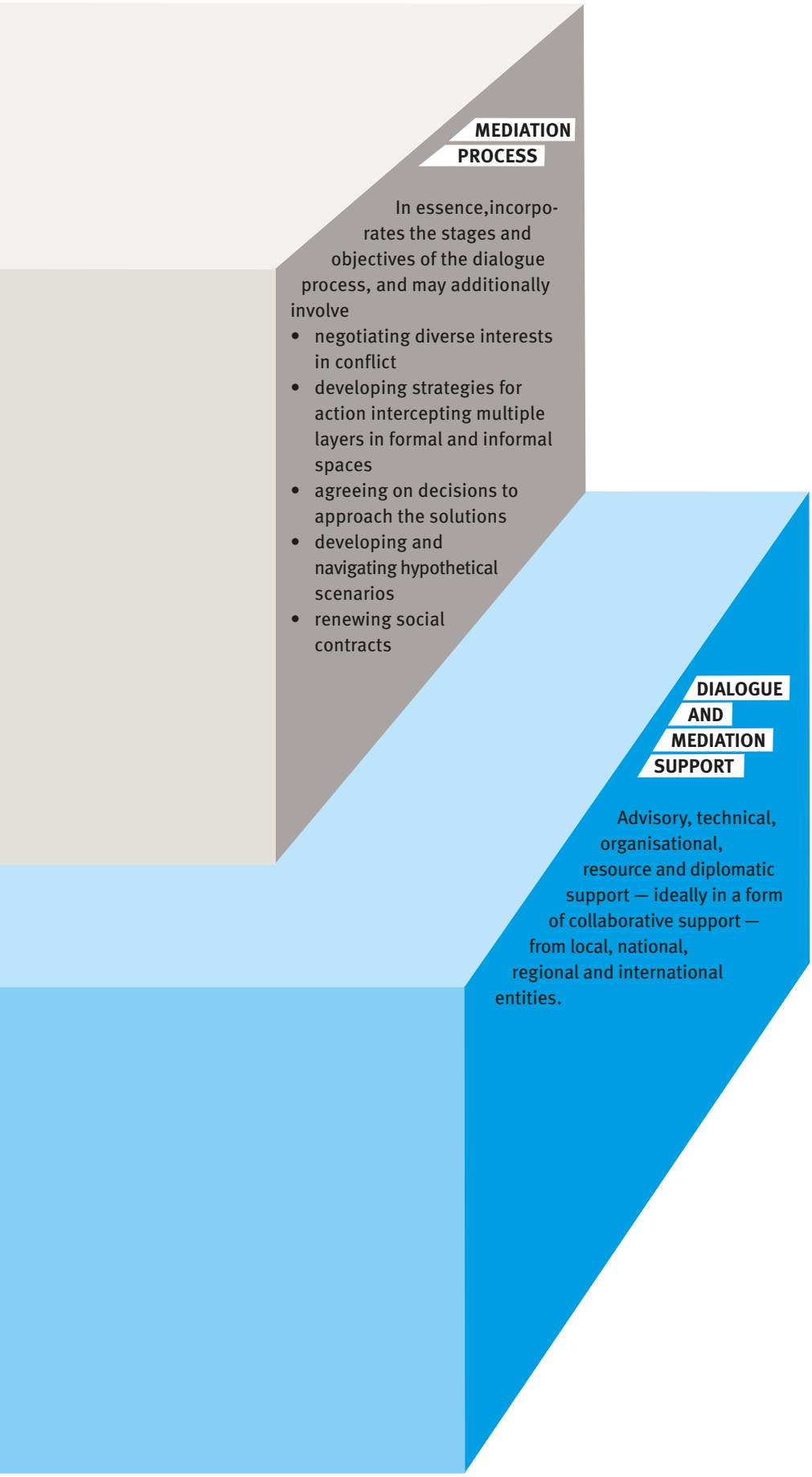


Figure 4. Important elements and aspects of the space of dialogue and mediation

3 Travelogue: Dialogue and mediation in the youth space

BACKDROP ONE

Northern Ghana. 1995. A cycle of intercommunal violence between the Konkombas and Dagombas appears to be on the verge of a full-blown civil war. A small team of African mediators begins the process of creating space for dialogue between the representatives of the two tribes.

Scene

The first face-to-face meeting of the two groups. The Dagomba paramount chief, with a sharp attitude of superiority, addressing himself to the mediators more than the Konkombas, denigrates and verbally attacks the latter:

> *"Look at them. Who are they even that I should be in this room with them? They do not even have a chief. Who am I to talk to? [...] They could have at least brought an old man. But look! They are just boys born yesterday."*

The Konkomba spokesman asked to respond. Fearing the worst, the mediators provided him space to speak. The young man turned and addressed himself to the chief of the enemy tribe:

> *"You are perfectly right, Father, we do not have a chief. We have not had one for years. [...] I am calling you Father because we do not wish to disrespect you. You are a great chief. But what is left to us? Do we have no other means but this violence to receive in return the one thing we seek, to be respected and to establish our own chief who could indeed speak with you, rather than having a young boy do it on our behalf?"*

The young man's attitude, tone of voice, and use of the word Father affects the chief so much that he sits speechless for a moment. Then he speaks, with a changed voice, directly addressing the young man:

> *"I had come to put your people in your place. But now I feel only shame. Though I insulted your people, you still called me Father. It is you who speaks with wisdom, and me who has not seen the truth. What you have said is true. We who are chiefly have always looked down on you because you have no chief, but we have not understood the denigration you suffered. I beg you, my son, to forgive me."*

The young Konkomba man stands, walks to the chief, kneels, and grips his lower leg, as a sign of deep respect. He vocalises a single and audible word of affirmation and acceptance:

> *"Na-a."*

The atmosphere is electrified and elated with emotion.

(LEDERACH 2005, 7–10)

BACKDROP TWO

Kyiv. 2013–14. Maidan protests. Berkut officers have brutally beaten a group of students singing in peaceful protest. The protesters are undeterred. A young student from Lviv, Markiyan Matsekh has an idea. He wants to bring a piano to Maidan and play it, to give people a reason to keep protesting. Markiyan's father says: "Son, it's a nice thought, but these people have been beaten by riot police. How is a piano going to cheer them up?" Markiyan is convincing, though, and they buy a piano and paint it in blue and yellow. Meanwhile, the plan takes on a new dimension: they want to perform for the Berkut as well, to try to get them on their side. Markiyan's father comes up with the idea of putting the piano in front of Berkut troops, to give the world a strong visual image of what is going on.

Scene 1

Bitter cold: -15°C. The piano arrives at Bankova Street and is placed right in front of the Berkut, facing their human barricade. Markiyan takes off his coat and starts playing Chopin's Waltz in C sharp minor. His fingers can barely move… and he has to stop after a minute and a half. Not his best performance, Markiyan reckons, but his purpose has already been served. People gather around the piano in ecstasy and some take turns to play. Soon, chanting starts: "The police are with the people"; they want Berkut officers to know that they could refuse to be violent. While many of them stay stony-faced, some eventually start singing along…

Many more pianos join the Maidan protests in the months to come, also in other cities, organised and played by people of all ages and gender.

…

Antuanetta Mishchenko is another young piano lover… well, she is a music student after all. So far, she has not found a satisfying way to take part in the Maidan protests and/or do something good for the protesters. Then, one day, she finds her place.

Scene 2

On Khreshchatyk Street, a blue and yellow painted piano is being carried by protesters to add to a barricade being formed to protect them from Berkut bullets. Antuanetta has this sudden urge to save the instrument. She runs in, cries out and pleads. Joined by others, she is able to save it. She starts playing… and soon realises that this is her place, this is how she fits into Maidan… she realises that each person should do something no one else can. Antuanetta plays… Mozart, Bach, Chopin, Ukrainian songs… people listen, cheer, sing along. She promises to be there every day and play.

In the next days, Antuanetta is busy building her 'Maidan repertoire' — her audience's favourite songs, tunes and melodies. She buys a songbook and learns new songs. She is there every day, playing, sometimes even in the frosty weather conditions that reach -30°C. Antuanetta shares her emotions:

> *"You know, when I play for them, they behave as if they have known me for a long time. I feel as if they were my family. They approach me, communicate, listen and sing. I feel the unity; I just dissolve in my audience. They have even switched to my tonality! It was strange: not everyone has an ear for music but they immediately adapted to my rhythm and tonality! […] If I am a musician, I should recreate reality, everything that is taking place in our world. […] I want to be a musician not only because I play but because I can communicate with the world with its help, to get the message across."*

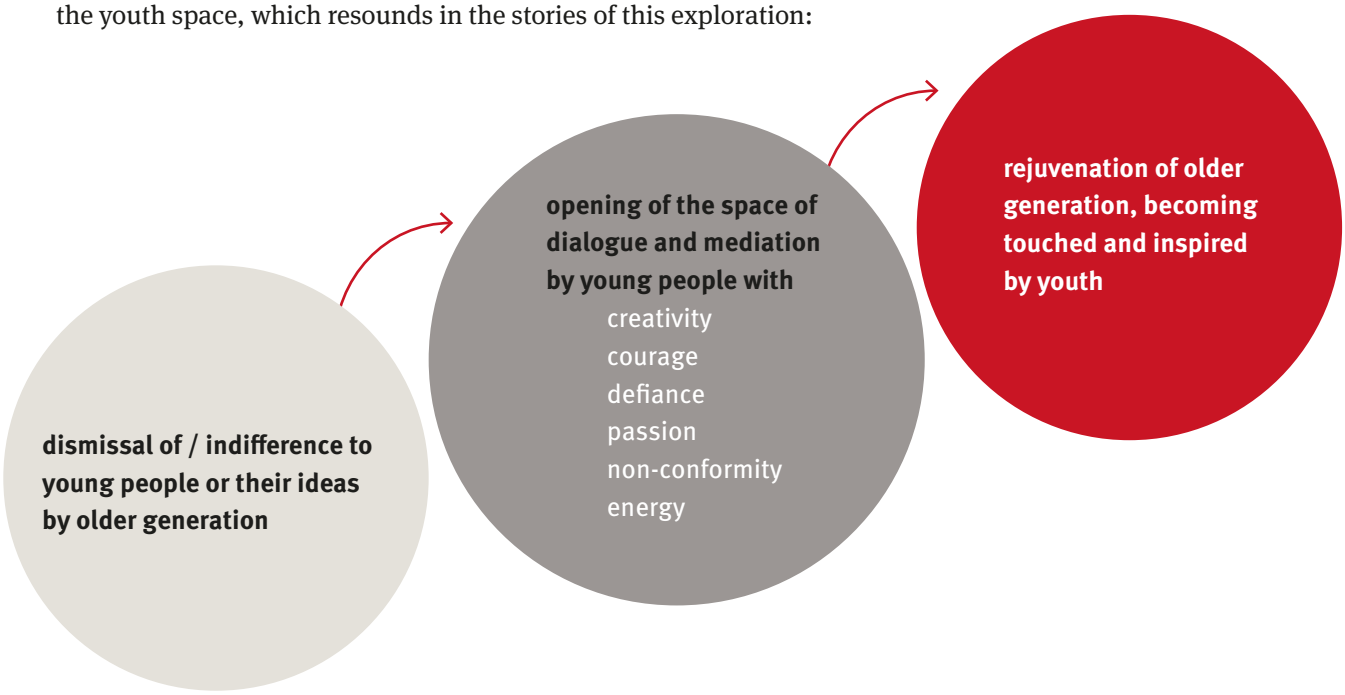
Scene 3

Antuanetta is playing and her audience is singing… a Ukrainian song "Two Little Oaks" … then "She's Enchanted Me" … Confident, loud female voices can be heard. Somewhere along the way, a man with grey hair shouts out:

> *"You organised us in such a great way! Look how many people are here! How great it is!"*

(DRYGAS 2016B, 2016A; SHVADCHAK 2013; BUIST 2014; VOICES OF UKRAINE 2014; WITTMANN 2015)

The above stories precede this exploration. They are presented here, in retrospective, since they are vibrant examples of intergenerational dynamics and dialogic and mediative capacity observable within the youth space, which resounds in the stories of this exploration:



In this travelogue[31], these and other related characteristics of the youth space of dialogue and mediation (for brevity, hereafter simply 'the youth space') are reflected upon, with the considerations put forward so far. Some interesting stories are highlighted in boxes; in cases in which a particular person is cited whose confidentiality must be maintained, their initials have been used.

In the three main conflict contexts discussed, the socio-political conflict contexts where the youth space was observed and explored are as follows.

- **Myanmar:** a post-colonial space of conflict, one with an ethno-political dimension (minority ethnic groups' armed struggle for equality and a representative (federal) political structure against the backdrop of a 60-year civil war); and another with a religious dimension (sectarian conflict between majority Buddhists and minority Muslims) (GRIZELJ 2017A).[32]
- **Ukraine:** a post-Soviet space of conflict, with an ethno-political dimension, where the so-called 'pro-European' and 'pro-Russian' polarisation manifested itself violently in 2014 during the Maidan protests; the subsequent armed conflict between government forces and East Ukrainian separatists; and related issues such as IDPs and the political fault-line (MIR, N.D. [UPCOMING]).
- **Abkhazia - Georgia - South Ossetia:** another post-Soviet space of conflict, with an ethno-political/geo-political dimension, where Georgia was in a (sporadically armed) pervasive structural conflict with its 'Occupied Territories' of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

These patterns may very well be observable in other conflict contexts around the world as well.

31 Travelogue = "A film, book, or illustrated lecture about the places visited by or experiences of a traveller"; Oxford Dictionary www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/travelogue. In this case, it is an account of the insights from this exploration.

32 The conflict context in Myanmar is multidimensional, complex and intertwined. While these two conflict contexts present some of these complexities, other relevant issues, such as the struggle for a democratic political system, abolishing a military regime and the increasingly prominent conflict in Rakhine surrounding the Rohingya, have not been delved into in this exploration.

3.1 Evolution of the youth space

In the above contexts, the following aspects of the evolution of the youth space were observed.

Young people, by themselves, individually or collectively evolve the youth space.
This primarily comes from an innate drive to:

- Find alternative pathways to manifest their dialogic and mediative capacity when disenfranchised by the formal space of peace processes. This is observed in Myanmar, for example, where ethnic minority youth collectives, in an effort to penetrate into the formal space, build or strengthen a dialogic relationship with one another, ethnic armed organisations, state actors and civil society organisations and thus contribute indirectly to the peace process.

- Do something that older people are failing to do, not doing enough, not trying to do, or not knowing how to do. This phenomenon is omnipresent in all three contexts, for example in Ukraine, where young people are the most involved in stimulating community dialogue on the issues of the social divide and IDPs.

Older actors support or stimulate the youth space to evolve.

- Experienced local mediators and dialogue facilitators sometimes offer hands-on dialogue and mediation training and apprenticeship to young leaders.

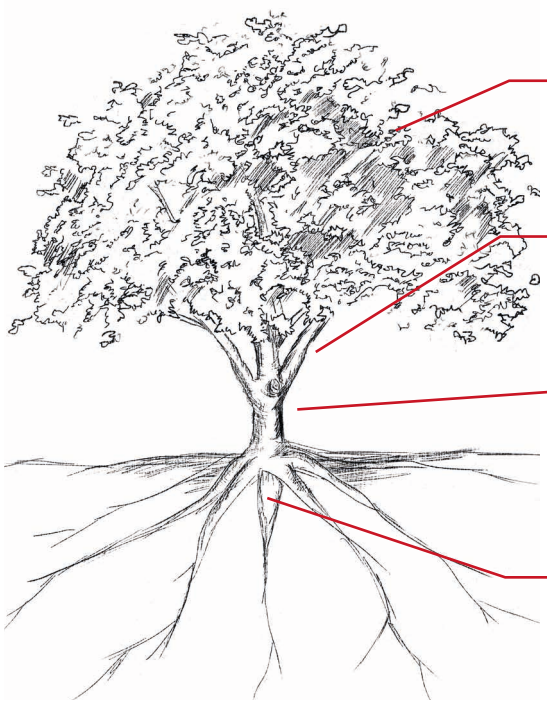
- National NGOs and CSOs have projects and programmes to build young people's capacities to act as 'agents of peace'[33], either by making them part of the organisation (staff) on ongoing initiatives or as part of special youth-focused/ youth-led programmes and projects.

- International and regional organisations offer dialogue, mediation and conflict resolution training and capacity building or 'empowerment' projects (on and with youth).

Youth networks, alliances and forums branch out organically, demonstrating young people's capacity to identify and act upon the need for dialogic and mediative processes in the space of conflict they have to navigate. This branching out is analogous to a tree, as Figure 5 depicts: [34]

33 The 'agents of peace' terminology is uncomfortable to some, raising questions about 'whose peace?' and 'whose agent?' ('agent', although etymologically rooted in 'agency', may have a negative connotation as an instrumentalised actor).

34 Original sketch of tree designed by natanaelginting / Freepik; www.freepik.com/free-photo/tree-sketch-leaves-and-root-on-paper_1162170.htm.



LEAVES/FRUITS/FLOWERS
Intergenerational and intragenerational collaboration and cooperation

BRANCHES
Integration of the whole of society, by inviting and engaging older people in youth efforts

TRUNK
Formation of a cohesive youth collective that realises the value and need of congregating young people with promising dialogic and mediative capacity

ROOTS
Social, political and economic contexts in which the youth space is embedded

Figure 5. Anatomy and evolution of the youth space

While this evolution of the youth space is not an exclusive youth phenomenon, it is indeed particular to, or markedly characteristic of, youth. It happens in iterations as demonstrated in the explored contexts:

Locally

Community-centric initiatives of young individuals and youth groups get connected across neighbouring communities.
In Myanmar, state-based youth organisations, such as the Union of Karenni State Youth, have a strong presence. Youth Facilitators have local groups in all three contexts of Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia.

Nationally

Local initiatives get connected nationwide.
In Myanmar, as a response to envisioning a democratic culture, and the (re)conciliation of inter-ethnic and inter-faith relations, the organisation of visible and labelled youth groups, youth forums, alliances and networks has gained momentum since the political transition began in 2011. In Ukraine, young people are connected through volunteer networks all across Ukraine, responding to the need to (re)build social cohesion in the larger space of socio-political change in the aftermath of the Maidan protests.

In Abkhazia - Georgia - South Ossetia, the Youth Facilitators have over the years formed a discreet and cohesive network of like-minded young people to navigate the transgenerational context of conflict in all three regions.

Regionally and internationally

National initiatives get connected regionally across neighbouring countries with similar conflict contexts and then internationally across regions. Young people in Ukraine are an active part of the Council of Europe's regional dialogues on security and cooperation, but also participate in country-specific discourse.
In Myanmar, young people have become active in South/Southeast Asian forums on regional politics and peacebuilding. Similar networked collectives are present in other locations; examples are the Central Asian Youth Network, Pan African Youth Network on the Culture of Peace, Latin American Youth Network and the European Union Youth Ambassadors. These entities convene young people regionally and internationally for cross-border dialogue and learning. YaLa-Young Leaders have been an energetic force in cultural diplomacy, both online and offline, for the Middle East, working towards regional peace.

3.2 Aspects conducive to dialogic and mediative capacity

The dialogic and mediative capacity in the youth space is developed and fostered by certain qualities that are especially characteristic of the youth phase, along with factors that young people make the best use of. The following aspects have echoed in the stories heard during this exploration. These are obviously not meant to be generalised, given that young people's experiences are very much context-dependent.

Personal stake in conflict	Seeing violent conflict as an impediment to the socio-economic development required for a successful future — making them impatient for peace, striving to make peace their business.
Curiosity, thirst and openness for learning	Being keen on exploring and experimenting with subjects that are new to them, e.g. dialogue and mediation; being open to learn from their own and others' mistakes and to adapt their actions accordingly.
Energy, agility and courage	Being eager and ready to stand up for justice and not being afraid to take risks in voicing their opinions for socio-political change; sometimes this is underlined by an adventure-seeking attitude and romanticism.
Networking capabilities and interconnectedness	Making strenuous efforts to keep relations with other young people and older people alive and dynamic, often travelling distances to meet them.
Globalised connection to the world	Using new (social) media to help in addressing their interest and motivation to know about other cultures, to learn about other conflicts, and to be more sensitive towards diversity.
Volunteerism as a mode of work	Not yet being tied down with earning a living, and thus having the time to do something from an innate need and not in pursuit of career or money (this obviously depends on their age and circumstances).[35]
Alertness and preparedness for early warning and action	Being able to collectively respond to unprecedented crises or violent events quickly and getting help, assuming that they are well-connected.
Pragmatism	Being aware that change happens slowly and on a small scale; as the other side of the coin, however, restlessness and impatience are equally present.
Innovation and creativity	Being creative in designing space for safe encounter and interaction between people with different opinions or extreme views who would normally not talk to one another.

35 The modality of volunteering is culture-dependent. In Ukraine, it has become an institutionalised force for involving young people in doing social good. In Myanmar, it is less institutionalised and not really named as such, although the practice itself is very much present (CUSO INTERNATIONAL, SEARCHERS-MYANMAR, AND UN VOLUNTEERS 2015). It is likely to gain further momentum, given the infiltration of the Western model of volunteerism through development organisations' projects.

The above aspects are in one way or another conducive to young people's dialogic and mediative capacity of bringing people together. Some are due to what was previously discussed as the generational differences of 'othering'. Others are due to the strategic-mindedness of young people in developing a course of action — based on the realisation that they have to think out the box — to bring together a polarised society.

In the youth space cross-section of the space of dialogue and mediation, one can observe how this strategy plays out — in the experimentation with various approaches that they learn, such as non-verbal, bodily dialogue to build trust and empathy on a physical (and emotional) level.

Synching beats

Although quite far from the East Ukrainian conflict regions, Dnipro has a large population of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Although the host communities have generally been empathetic to their situation, it has put a strain on the region's economic and social fabric. Many people are concerned that this is creating a latent conflict that could escalate into violence. How can this be prevented? How can communities in Dnipro become resilient? While many international and local NGOs are trying to create processes of dialogue, they usually fail to attract people. But why?

According to KR, a young artist-activist, people are not 'ready' for conventional sitting-at-a-table kind of dialogue; not yet. What he therefore tries is non-verbal dialogue. He has trained himself in the art of drumming. The ritual of a Drum Circle is a collective drumming endeavour, which is indigenous to many cultures around the world. The reverberations of drumming pass through body and soul and connect people dialogically on a very different level. It is fun, energetic and spiritual. KR invites locals, IDPs and military personnel who would otherwise rarely interact. More often than not, these people, having gone through the process of the Drum Circle, start interacting, eventually engaging in verbal dialogue on community issues.

Creating pathways for encounter and exchange

This is how the Union of Karenni State Youth (UKSY), a network of Karenni (Kayah) youth organisations in Myanmar, rationalised their initiatives of making encounters possible between elder leaders of ethnic armed groups and political parties who rarely met and spoke together. By first assembling and building trust between different youth organisations, including youth wings of armed organisations and political parties, UKSY created a strong and interconnected youth network. They then worked to bring together the older generation of leaders. They did so informally at first, for example by inviting ethnic leaders and political parties to attend cultural dinners and to act as panellist speakers at thematic workshops. The latter simultaneously obliged the conflict parties to face one another and listen to each other's perspectives; it also enabled the community to express their views and ask questions directly to the leaders. The impact of their initiative is evident in the fact that their state has had significantly reduced violent armed conflict since 2012. "Now, they rarely fight, because we brought them together," explains UKSY.

Of stories and the language of the body

The Theatre for Dialogue initiative by a group of young enthusiasts was founded as a movement of solidarity with the 2014 Maidan protests in Ukraine. They wanted to have dialogue through the creative means of interactive theatre as an alternative to violence. They wanted to humanise humanity by endeavouring to create a culture of dialogue to balance the culture of monologue. The young activists engage in dialogue with communities to analyse their issues using the interactive theatre methodology. An artistic process captures the issues in plays, which form the background to interactive public performances where the actors and spectators are stimulated to engage dialogically and find solutions to their common challenges. The spectator becomes the 'spect-actor'. Different forms of dialogic space are created with Forum Theatre, Playback Theatre and Documentary Theatre. Real issues faced by real people are enacted, empathised with and talked about.

3.3 Space for exercising dialogic and mediative capacity

How do young people navigate the space of conflict, especially in adultist and gerontocratic contexts, to exercise their dialogic and mediative capacity? Young people, it seems, have certain advantages compared to their older counterparts, enabling them to reach out to certain conflict actors and constructively influence them. The space for action and the modes of navigation are illustrated in the following.

3.3.1 Sphere of influence, legitimacy and power

Although the lack of access to formal space of dialogue and mediation is a common youth grudge, in certain contexts, the informal relations they have with older actors and their modality of navigating hierarchy, power relations and authority structures actually prove to be advantageous. They give young women and men a different kind of access to and influence on the whole of society — their communities, elders and state institutions and structures. In less democratic societies, societal elites tend to perceive youth as a threat to their status quo. Even in these cases, however, persistent initiatives of constructive engagement and dialogue often prove to be useful.

For example, in a civil war context – as in Myanmar – the (formal) asymmetric relationship among non-state armed groups, state actors and traditional political and societal elites is usually a tense one, where maintaining status and trust is a constant challenge. Young people, in contrast, due to their undefined and informal relationship to all these actors, can allow constructive engagement and dialogue on issues of conflict, even in hierarchical systems. Often, young people are the more plausible actors to bring the normality of dialogue to their communities and they know that they are the only ones who can achieve this without been judged or appearing threatening.

In Myanmar, Syria and Yemen, as another example, young people play a role in negotiating with armed groups on their communities' human rights situation, including the release of civilians recruited from their communities, and exchange of detained and abducted persons. Some ethnic youth groups in Myanmar play a crucial role in synthesising their community voice and endeavouring to include local concerns in the formal peace process through advocacy with armed group leaders, political parties and government authorities. To that end, they have been the key connectors of grassroots peacebuilding to the national-level peace process and decision-making. Young people have convened the community voice to feed into state-level processes, and have also provided technical and facilitative support for formal peace structures (encompassing government, political parties, the military and ethnic armed organisations) — a fact that is grossly understated. Some young people have also actively negotiated with international corporations in cases when the latter's activities or policies have adversely affected the communities.

In Yemen, young people have formed the Tribal Peace Ambassadors, who share outcomes of facilitated discussions in their communities with neighbouring districts and then with government leaders as a link between communities and policy-makers. In Ukraine, youth NGOs have built monitoring mechanisms for governance accountability to keep corruption in check. On the other hand, another youth organisation in Kyiv sees the advantage of strategic relationship with state actors: it has built a rapport with the state and established office premises in a ministerial building — to remain transparent and to keep the door to dialogue open.

Finally, an important gender aspect characterises the sphere of influence in the youth space. Depending on the culture, young women may have better or worse access and influence than young men (if not the same). Interestingly, although all three contexts explored are patriarchal societies, Myanmar's young women expressed their dissatisfaction regarding what they are allowed to do, while in the other two contexts young women, despite the general gender disparity, often had better access to conflict stakeholders.

Influencing local governance

In Tunisia, local youth councils enjoy the trust of local authorities and politicians, who consult the council on matters relating to local budgets, where the young members are able to negotiate community interests. A national youth council is currently being established as a step towards institutionalising the youth space of dialogue.

Commitment means credibility

Deeply concerned about the ongoing conflict, a young mediator, SO, from Myanmar's Northern Shan State often travels to communities displaced by the armed conflict to engage in dialogue with them and assess the kind of support they need. Over time, this level of personal commitment builds trust and credibility at the community level. Being active in the community gets him the attention of elders, who then respond to his wish to speak to them about community issues. It also ensures that he is well-prepared for negotiating the community's concerns with state and non-state armed groups. One of the co-founders and initiators of the Ethnic Youth Conference and a key leader and contact among young people, SO is often called upon to mediate community-level disputes.

With natural qualities for mediation and having built credibility with the community and community leaders over several years, SO is able to facilitate 'underground' negotiations within and between the community, armed groups and government leaders. In this regard, SO has a skill in identifying the key actors who can effect change, building trust and persuading them to initiate a negotiation process. One key approach that sustains SO's credibility is remaining open and transparent with the community and everyone he deals with during negotiations. To that end, he additionally utilises social media and news outlets. His pictures from Facebook are used by media outlets and his factual statements, based on observations, are also quoted by the press.

In dialogue with politics[36]

During the run-up to the first direct election of mayors in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2004, a youth group from the Young People Build the Future initiative run by Ipak (a German-Bosnian organisation) decided to invite the political candidates to a dialogue series on socio-political change. This kind of public dialogue between young people and actors in the formal political space was a novelty in the region, and it was actually the youth group that conceptualised and planned the dialogue.

3.3.2 The intergenerational space

The past — especially a violent and traumatic past — intensely shapes the dynamics in the intergenerational space, in dealing with the past and the present and imagining the future.[37] The space may be shaped in diverse contours: transgenerational transmission of trauma, grief, intolerance and patterns of repetition from the past; tense intergenerational relations due to difference in perceptions and reality; and apathy.[38]

> We continue to "remember" the past and "reinvent" it depending on the ever-shifting context. This is even more so for those who did not experience it directly, such as young people, who feel its after-shocks and walk in its shadow. (HAMBER 2015, 62)

Fortunately, "[t]he memories and associated traumas of the past are not carbon-copied from one generation to the next, but rather take on a life of their own, manifesting in a myriad of ways" (IBID.). Tense intergenerational relations may be underscored by the young people's desire to break out of the generational pattern of perceptions about the issues of conflict in their societies.

SIMIĆ (2015, 25) observes that young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina "do not want to dwell on the violent past and its memories for one simple reason: they have had enough of the narratives of violence that happened between 1992 and 1995, and also of the conflict ongoing since 1995, fought not with guns but with hearts and minds". This generational shift may partly be attributed to the globalisation that young people live in today. The younger generation has, understandably, a different reality, lived experience, stake in the conflict, expectations and visions than their forebears.[39]

What young people often strive to do is disassociate from their forebears' tendency of 'othering' based on their perception of 'the other' as 'the enemy', their experience of trauma and guilt, and their take on issues such as religion, sexuality, gender roles, governance, corruption, economy, foreign policy, coexistence, militarism and geopolitics.

Young people also tend to be generally more sensitive and reactive to injustice and oppression, and open to (and make more effort towards) intercultural understanding, questioning stereotypes and promoting empathy.[40]

36 From FISCHER (2006, 247).

37 An interesting commonality of the space of conflict in the three contexts is how they are all societies with difficult pasts (post–colonial or post–Soviet). Unfortunately, there are all too many similar contexts out there. On a positive note, the insights from these contexts may be useful in understanding other contexts.

38 See for example GOBODO-MADIKIZELA (2016); AUSTIN AND FISCHER (2016).

39 Obviously, this is also context–specific. In a conflict context like present–day Yemen or Syria, where everyone's life is on the line, the intergenerational divide becomes blurred or is not of primary importance.

40 This cannot, however, be generalised, given the different social backgrounds of young people within a given context. Many young people would indeed walk in their forebears' footsteps. In Ukraine, for example, many young people who were passionately involved in the Maidan protests later voluntarily joined the army, driven by the desire to defeat 'the enemy' in East Ukraine.

These are advantageous to a constructive approach. Indeed, as FISCHER (2006, 234) observes in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, "[y]ounger age groups (especially those who were born after the war) are generally more open to dialogue and cooperation, compared with the generations that have been directly affected by war and atrocities". In fact, it is usually young people who take the initiative to engage in dialogic encounter with the older generation as a way of mediating the generational divide — something which might be part of what HAMBER (2015, 62) hints at as "a transparent, public process of discussing the past".

Transforming through memorialising[41]

The relationships between Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia have been difficult for a long time. In an effort to transform the very strong apathetic or bitter sentiments that most of the older generation nurture, the Young Facilitators have taken the initiative to foster dialogue and empathy. They are part of an energetic group of people from all three regions who realise that all the negativity, however 'justified' it may be, is not constructive for anyone.

Their 'biographical salon' is a dialogic and mediative space where life stories and war memories are shared in intergenerational groups. Older and younger people interact: young people interview old people; both listen together to other interviews; everyone listens to stories from the other regions; older participants add their experiences, while younger participants (respectfully) challenge dominant narratives and share their views.[42] They engage the whole of society – IDPs, students, ex-combatants, journalist, politicians and lawyers – in these dialogue activities, helping their own society to understand the other society, normalise relationships and stimulate forgiveness, by improving communication and building confidence and trust.

Evolving such a space takes time, patience and resilience from young people. The Young Facilitators had to struggle long and hard to tackle the elders' resistance to this generational shift of thinking. Through persistent but respectful challenging of age-old stereotypes, they have been successful in slowly breaking down walls. The Young Facilitators are poised on the reality that no dramatic societal change will happen overnight; the smallest change of perception that happens in the room is a crucial step towards systemic transformation. This is evident, for example, in Abkhazia — a more conservative and closed society than Georgia — where the biographical salon initiative is slowly gaining traction.

41 Based on the authors' conversation with a Young Facilitator from Georgia.

42 In a related setting, ZEMSKOV-ZÜGE (2015, 54) narrates an incident during a workshop in Georgia with young people, war witnesses and veterans, where the role of Neformaly (Georgian non-state conflict actors) was being memorialised. When one war veteran claimed that Neformaly should not be seen as violators, but as dissidents who freed Georgia from Soviet rule, the young participants initiated an intense and fruitful dialogue on the Georgian nationalist movement.

3.3.3 The space of community cohesion

The youth space is most visible at the community level, where young people are often the ones to foster a cohesive community despite conflict — reconciling relations by creating space for dialogue. In Myanmar, since religiously targeted violence erupted in 2012, young people based in Mandalay and Yangon have become active in facilitating dialogue in their communities to bridge divides across religious lines — often forming trusted networks among youth from different religious groups. In some cases, where it is difficult to penetrate 'the other' community, young people have performed low-key liaising between religious leaders and influential persons. As young people are seen as less threatening than the older generation, young people are able to utilise their 'youth phase' to gain access and stimulate dialogue where others might not be able to.

In Ukraine, some young people take up dialogue through practice (diapraxis) by creating community projects to engage locals and IDPs in common community development activities. In Myanmar, youth groups are engaged in similar diapraxis with people from diverse religious backgrounds, doing community development projects together. In Abkhazia - Georgia - South Ossetia, the Young Facilitators attempt to engage whole of society – IDPs, students, ex-combatants, journalist, politicians and lawyers – in their dialogue activities. Dialogue through sports is also a common youth endeavour.

A flicker in the darkness

The violent armed conflict between the Ukrainian military and so-called 'pro-Russian separatists' in East Ukraine continues to cost lives and displace many thousands. In a city close to the contact line, people suffer from the pain and trauma of war and of losing their home and loved ones. They see their life as dark and hopeless. AM, a young woman, has seen her childhood home destroyed, her parents living in misery. From a very deep personal connection to the conflict, she has taken up the challenge of bringing back the light of hope to her home town. She knows it is a daunting task, and it will take time.

AM invites her community to informal community gatherings where she tries, to the best of her ability, to offer a warm and cosy atmosphere with some sweets and coffee (which, in these times of war and agony, is literally and figuratively luxurious and comforting). She invites peacebuilders from around the globe, either physically or via skype — who have the experience of a traumatic past (and present) — to share their story of struggling for peace and reclaiming hope in their communities. This sharing becomes a process of transforming pain and stimulating empathy.

It was not an easy process to begin with. With strong emotions, agony and anger, members of the community had initially struggled to listen to each other, and often could not help blaming or responding with denial and defensiveness. This, however, was something authentic, which they needed to go through, and was essential to figure out their personal and collective issues, limits and capacities for empathy. In the safe space created by AM, they could that. The dialogue that followed was thus also authentic: a collective process of dealing with the past and imagining a new future. A low-key, informal dialogue process, AM's initiative stands out among the plethora of dialogue initiatives in Ukraine as a deeply inspirational one, due to its organic evolution and its deep, transformative nature.

Dialogue 'in action'

In Myanmar's hotbed of communal conflict, young volunteers in Mandalay take up dialogue in action (diapraxis) by creating community projects to engage community members from different faiths in solving issues of common concern, e.g. environment protection (MIR 2016). Similarly, in Ukraine, young volunteers engage local people and IDPs in community development activities. This, despite not being verbally dialogic, addresses latent conflict between the groups and fosters an unspoken social contract of solidarity with 'the other'.

With a religious hat and secular hands

In contrast to his (elder) Church peers, EMK, a young pastor, has been pragmatic, innovative and profound in promoting religious tolerance and political awareness in suburban Nairobi. He has been sensitising and empowering at-risk young people from different ethnic backgrounds during his weekly 'coffee club' gatherings. Here, they can enjoy a cup of coffee while being encouraged to discuss politics, conflict and religious dimensions in their communities and to brainstorm on workable solutions. Beyond youth, he has been engaging, since the events of 2008, with the larger community where people from different clans and religions live — facilitating a process where they can 'make their own peace'. Rather than being based on a specific religious doctrine, this is a process that develops or rekindles, from the inside, the community's innate need to coexist in peace and harmony, by acknowledging that prejudice and hatred lead to violence, which does not make anybody happy. The work is difficult, but his persistence is gradually earning him the respect of the community.

Interweaving faith-threads

Dialogue on and between different faiths is a passion of M, a young activist in Myanmar, who is Catholic but looks Muslim/Hindu due to his descent. In 2012, when violent conflict erupted between Muslim and Buddhist communities, he became scared for his and his family's life. He realised that it was crucial to address the fear and hatred that were spreading between people from different faiths. For that, M knew he had to reach out to the elders and religious leaders, which proved more difficult than he had imagined. He works closely with his friends in youth religious networks, and uses the connection to request meetings with elders of different faiths. They do not always want to meet, and it takes several attempts before a positive response comes. In these meetings, M tries to get to know them, and asks simple questions about their religion. Then they become curious about his religion, giving him the chance to bring the facets of different religions onto the table. This has proved to be a roundabout but fruitful way for many elders to learn about other religions, since they do not normally take the initiative to meet the others.

4 Epilogue: Thoughts on further evolving the youth space

Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind; [...] it is a matter of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions [...] Youth means a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity of the appetite, for adventure over the love of ease. [...] Whether sixty or sixteen, there is in every human being's heart the lure of wonder, the unfailing child-like appetite of what's next, and the joy of the game of living.

[Excerpts from 'Youth' by Samuel Ullman][43]

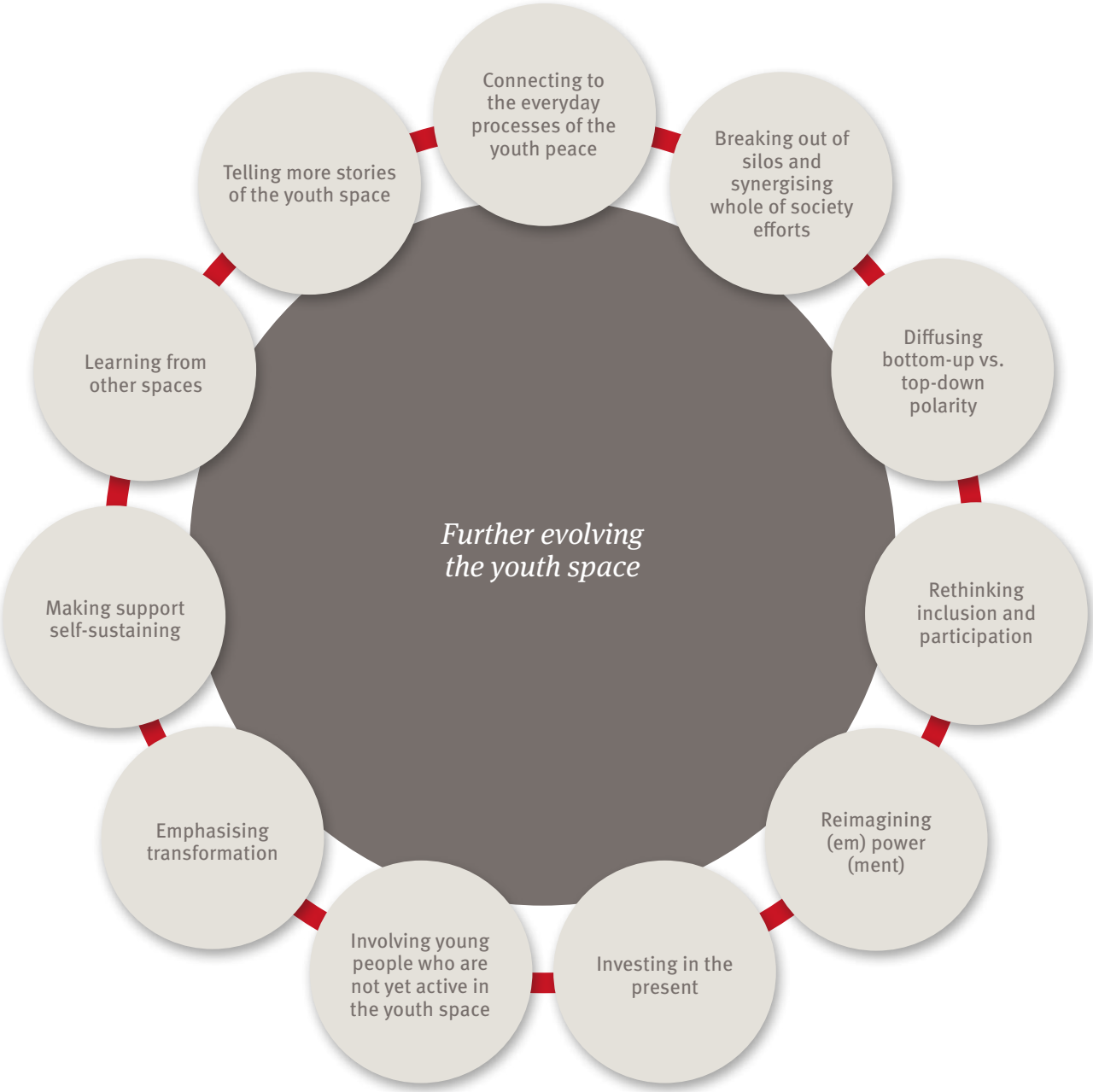
The peacebuilding field has come a long way. Remarkable achievements have been made over the past decades. There is, however, a cyclical pattern in the assumptions, terminologies, conceptualising and theorising that define our work: in inventing buzzwords and following trends that eventually slip into oblivion. To transform this pattern, it is necessary to continually transform peacebuilding norms and to be more nuanced in the engagement with the peacebuilding resources of the whole of society in its everyday efforts to transform conflict.

There is great value in (i) recognising, (ii) understanding and (iii) acknowledging what various peacebuilding actors in a context are already doing anyway in their own capacities, and then in (iv) supporting, (v) reinforcing and (vi) sustaining these efforts.

This exploration has attempted to make a case for taking a more nuanced look at the youth space while considering dialogue and mediation. The stories in the Travelogue offer inspiration to that end. It has contextualised young people's everyday dialogic and mediative capacity and efforts, which are usually not understood as such and often dismissed as 'merely peacebuilding'. It has underscored approaches to and methods for dialogue and mediation that are distinctive to the youth phase of life. Finally, it has accentuated young people's extended 'sphere of influence' on and access to conflict stakeholders, which are different from those of traditional political and societal elites or other (older) peacebuilders.

The following are some reflections and open questions as discussion starters (and not as the usual practice of giving recommendations) for us in the peacebuilding field who are excited about United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 and want to engage with youth. They allude to one or more of the five key pillars of UNSCR 2250: participation, protection, prevention, partnership and disengagement/reintegration, and may prove to be useful for policy-making.

43 www.uab.edu/ullmanmuseum.



4.1 Connecting to the everyday processes of the youth space

How does one connect to and practically engage with the youth space of the everyday to be able to further evolve it? The space may seem unstructured and complex. It may seem overwhelming, given the wide range of actors, making it difficult to determine who to engage with. There is however, always 'a process', however chaotic it might seem, and this process has its own internal logic, structures, actors, patterns and interactions.

The youth space of dialogue and mediation is situated in the socially embedded peace processes of the informal space of everyday. Recognising this is key to engaging with it.

The first challenge, especially for outsiders, is to identify and understand this process and space. Those who are present in the context for a long time, in contrast to those who are visiting or flying in for a project mandate, are in a better position to do so. Some insider actors may also not recognise this process and space as such or may disregard it. The second challenge is determining the modality of connecting to this process and space, and addressing the needs, especially since some of the efforts may not be well coordinated and may be happening in isolation with regard to other efforts. The space may thus benefit from a coordination mechanism, with emphasis on insider-outsider cooperation. While outsiders are often in a better position to act as a mirror for insiders to reflect on and recognise the need for coordination, it is essential for the mechanism to be locally owned.

A gradual evolution of the everyday youth space[44]

The Young People Build the Future initiative in Bosnia and Herzegovina identified and connected "the existing, yet somewhat isolated and uncoordinated, youth initiatives in rural areas and small towns of Eastern Bosnia". The initial need that emerged was for "a place where they could meet to organise activities and talk about their experiences". This was followed by a regional conference, which "provided further insight into the needs of the young people [and] initiated an information exchange that resulted in the active coordination of some youth initiatives".

Subsequently, needs were expressed for international exchange and inter-cultural learning, coupled with sustained dialogue with actors from the whole of society, including international actors. Specific projects continued to develop, targeting society's needs.

4.2 Breaking out of silos and synergising whole of society efforts

Romanticising and empowering one set of actors that are currently trending in international discourse or practice disregards how they relate to other actors, and fails to maximise the value of the combined effect of resources and efforts from actors in the whole of society. Youth being a biographical phase that every human being lives through, it is useful to nurture and sustain the youth 'space', not as a special, isolated bubble, but in the context of the whole of society.

The categorical approach of training, empowering and building capacities of people in silos (e.g. women, religious leaders, business people, rebels, government and, most recently, youth) essentially ends up dealing with 'parts' and losing sight of the complex 'whole'.

The very essence of youth is lost if the starting point of youth engagement is considering youth as just another category.

44 From FISCHER (2006, 247).

Supporting and reinforcing this youth space does not mean addressing only the needs of young people; it also means addressing the needs of those older (insider and outsider) actors who are aware of and involved in the youth space and those who are not. These latter actors would therefore need to be sensitised about the youth space for them to interact with it.

It takes two to tango… but many to *dabke*.[45] Similar to the group effort in the Arabic folk dance dabke, which is said to have originated from a form of collaborative problem-solving, **peacebuilding and conflict transformation require synergism[46] from the interaction of whole of society resources and efforts.** Synergy would also require some sort of framework for strategic communication, partnership, collaboration, coordination, networking and policy-making. How such a framework is designed and realised is heavily dependent on the context, and there is no one-size-fits-all framework. Some useful impetuses for such a framework are offered in the social and political sciences, e.g. Networks of Effective Action[47] and Collaborative Support Framework[48], and in the health sciences, e.g. Partnership Synergy[49]. Stories of such partnerships have recently emerged, e.g. between young people and religious leaders in building peace.[50] Multi-Track Diplomacy[51] is yet another approach: it emphasises the systemic interconnection among various actors and their resources. For the youth space to contribute to this synergy with a whole of society approach, actions need to be embedded in support of UNSCR 2250 as much as possible.

Thematic areas of work in conflict contexts (e.g. economic development, humanitarian assistance, good governance, security, DDR/SSR) also often reveal the tendency for silo thinking and disconnected efforts. The frameworks mentioned above may be utilised to create platforms and networks for cross-thematic exchange and joint efforts. Existing frameworks around the Sustainable Development Goals and the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action[52] are interesting examples in this regard.

45 Dabke/Dabka/Debka: derived from the Arabic word دبكة meaning 'stamping of the feet'. According to tradition, the dance originated from the collaborative effort of compacting a house roof that is lined with tree branches and topped with mud. This would happen first with a newly built roof and then, once in a while, when changes in the weather caused the mud to crack. The owner of the house would call to the neighbours for help. The neighbours and the family would climb onto the roof, form a line, hold hands and start stamping their feet while walking on the roof to to push the mud around and fill the cracks. Sources: www.griotsrepublic.com/dabke-dance-a-symbol-of-love-life-and-struggle and www.dancehistorydevelopment.wordpress.com/2013/05/09/the-dabke-an-arabic-folk-dance.
It is interesting to note the parallel to violent conflict (the recurring cracks) and collaborative conflict transformation efforts (the holding of hands and stamping together).

46 Synergism = "interaction of discrete agents […] such that the total effect is greater than the sum of the individual effects"; Merriam-Webster Dictionary www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/synergism. Synergy is "the power to combine the perspectives, resources, and skills of a group of people and organizations" (LASKER, WEISS, AND MILLER 2001, 183). 'Synergy' stems from the Attic Greek words συνεργία synergia and συνεργός synergos, meaning 'working together'.

47 Networks of effective action are a set of practices for collaboration and communication that facilitate integrated approaches to peacebuilding by bringing together international and local actors within a conflict context and finding creative ways to develop a 'common theory of action' (RICIGLIANO 2003). The key here is to have a 'chaordic' arrangement: neither random nor centrally coordinated, and not a formalised network with an explicit division of responsibilities, but a self-organising and flexible form of collaboration, which is as inclusive as possible and provides spaces for 'joint learning'.

48 See MIR AND VIMALARAJAH (2016).

49 Partnership Synergy is a practical framework for addressing critical policy, evaluation and management issues related to collaboration (LASKER, WEISS, AND MILLER 2001; WEHR AND LEDERACH 1991).

50 See COX, NOZELL, AND BUBA (2017).

51 DUDOUET AND DRESSLER (2016) stress the need to shift away from power mediation to sustained dialogue in multi-track engagement by mediation/dialogue support teams, involving multiple stakeholders and diversified methods of 'soft power' diplomacy.

52 See www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3829.

4.3 Diffusing bottom-up vs. top-down polarity

The starting point for the prevalent 'whole of society approach' (WoS) is how governments (and military) can work with and include civil society in the former's pursuit of peace. This can be regarded as a top-down approach.[53]

> [S]pace must be left for communities and civil society actors to develop initiatives of their own and to determine if, and when, state involvement is appropriate, and to what extent. This is particularly important in the case of initiatives aiming to mobilize actors outside of the mainstream. (FRAZER AND NÜNLIST 2015, 3).

WoS would benefit from a flat hierarchy of actors, where no one is considered to be on the top, bottom or at the centre of anything. To this end, WoS could embrace a 'middle-out approach'[54] that diffuses the bottom-up vs. top-down polarity with a synergistic model. Certain actors, especially 'middle range leaders' or 'insider (partial) mediators', have the acumen, dynamism, leadership skills and influence to connect top and bottom levels, while also cutting horizontally across the opposing sides of conflict (LEDERACH 1997; WEHR AND LEDERACH 1991). They might also be the ones to stimulate and facilitate synergistic interaction within and across societal layers. In the business field, a similar concept of boundary-spanning leaders exists. These are people who are keen on partnership building, understand and appreciate partners' different perspectives, bridge their diverse cultures, and are comfortable sharing ideas, resources and power (LASKER, WEISS, AND MILLER 2001; ERNST AND CHROBOT-MASON 2011; YIP, ERNST, AND CAMPBELL 2016).

They are

> intermediaries that span different layers in society, such as civil society organisations capable of both 'listening down' and 'speaking up'; distinct social constituencies who cut across diverse levels, like women, youths or victims; or even the potential of social and state institutions as platforms for building reconciliation, which similarly straddle and operate across levels. (CR 2016, 5)

In stimulating synergy, however, "top-down, bottom-up and middle-out approaches should not be viewed as mutually exclusive" (IBID.).

Young people are usually only considered in bottom-up approaches. Some of the stories in this exploration, however, reveal a middle-out approach, e.g. in that collective youth leadership may in some contexts be the only creative force to break the ice during stalemates and bring conflict stakeholders together. This unique leadership capacity and efforts can be a model for others to learn from.

A 'middle-out approach' is often useful for diffusing bottom-up vs. top-down polarity and fostering synergy. The youth space offers inspiring examples in this regard.

53 SCHIRCH duly notes:

> While some governments are eager to link with nongovernmental groups in a "whole of society" or "comprehensive approach," many civil society organizations around the world challenge this approach, calling for more separation between government and civil society. They fear that short-term military and political imperatives and corporate interests are hijacking funds needed for a long-term approach to sustainable peace and development. (SCHIRCH 2011, 1)

54 The 'middle-out' approach is often applied in the software engineering field, and has been adopted in the business and management world to create new leadership patterns.

4.4 Rethinking inclusion and participation

Youth *inclusion* and *participation* are buzzwords in the top-down peacebuilding architecture and logic that tend to dominate and define formal peace processes, mediation processes and peacebuilding 'projects' — often driven by state actors or international actors in conflict contexts. However, they frequently end up being merely symbolic terms that are dealt with as agenda points to be checked off the list, measured in percentages and usually applied only to certain parts of a process and not the whole. Seldom are the terms rooted in an informed consideration of what young people in the given context perceive themselves as able to offer. For example, although the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference of 2014 "went to great lengths to be as inclusive as possible, notably by including small parties and important social groups — including women and youth — the decision-making process was criticised by many as elite-driven and exclusive" (PLANTA, PRINZ, AND VIMALARAJAH 2015, 10).

Often merely ornamental, the inclusion paradigm is misleading and frustrating, and results in a loss of opportunity to benefit from youth resources. The other critical issue is that even those who do end up participating in formal processes may "not necessarily [be] representative of the group they have been selected for, as broad social categories like women or youth veil the vast differences within such groups.

The dominant paradigm of youth inclusion and participation, often merely ornamental, is misleading and frustrating, and results in a loss of opportunity to benefit from youth resources.

This in turn can result in the exclusion of marginalised members of [these] social groups" (IBID., 9).

If these challenges can be adequately dealt with, young people's ownership of and participation in mediation and peace processes could certainly be ensured by including them

- in designing the processes
- in mediation teams at the mediation/ negotiation table
- as informants, experts and advisors to mediation teams
- as observers
- as witnesses and signatories to peace agreements
- in implementation and monitoring of post-agreement mechanisms
- as members of formal and informal consultative forums.[55]

This applies not just to the youth space, but also to other spaces and actors considered through a whole of society approach.

Including youth through consultative forums[56]

To understand the issues behind public positions in the conflict context, mediators sometimes reach out to various forms of consultative forums involving civil society actors. In the 2005 Sudan peace process, the lead mediator organised consultative forums with youth. The framework of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region provided for representation of the Regional Youth Forum in the formal space through an institutional mechanism that ensured young people's participation in efforts to promote peace, stability and development in the region. Through this process, young people were able to select their representatives to the regional summits or peace talks on the conflicts in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

55 Partly adapted from LIMO (2017).
56 LIMO (2017).

However, a more sustainable modality of inclusion is bi-directional: formal processes need to interact with young people's existing informal, everyday dialogic and mediative efforts in the youth space, both locally and nationally. This may require some sort of (reformed) institutional mechanism and culture that are sustained beyond clearly defined and time-limited mediation and peace processes. To this end, one conceptual and practical means is evolving — the so-called Infrastructures for Peace (i4p)[57] – from existing or new institutions, which may offer broader scope and modalities for inclusion of young people. Such a modality may be one that DWER (2015, 18) suggests could "make transformative, rather than merely additive, contributions to [...] peacebuilding".

A sustainable modality of inclusion is bi-directional: formal processes need to interact with young people's existing informal, everyday dialogic and mediative efforts in the youth space, both locally and nationally.

4.5 Reimagining (em)power(ment)

Initiatives by international organisations in particular tend to jump into bolstering youth agency and participation by "empowering" them, often in a prescribed manner. Additionally, for so-called 'troublemaking' and 'at-risk' young people, these empowerment projects and programmes are framed with 'preventive' and 'corrective' measures. No matter how sincere and well-intentioned such initiatives might be, they often fail to recognise the inherent power of youth. Some of the stories in this exploration have exemplified this power, showing how young people themselves have subtly led processes of bringing conflict stakeholders together by exercising their dialogic and mediative capacity.

Action on UNSCR 2250 needs to consider and further strengthen these important aspects of youth power, capacity and sphere of influence. Having said that, in many contexts there is often the issue of the 'shrinking space of civil society', which increases marginalisation, especially of young people, and particularly where governments are, or tend to become, authoritarian. In such cases, the whole of society, in cooperation with outsider actors, would need to constructively engage with governments to ensure a safe and conducive environment for young people to be active in political processes.

Young people already have power, capacity and a sphere of influence, and need not be given to them.

Often-formulated slogans for youth-targeted initiatives are 'give voice to the voiceless' or 'let the youth voice be heard'. These can be problematic, since they express a certain demand (or even a plea) and expectation, which disregard the very youth agency that already exists. Provocatively speaking, **'make your voice heard, be loud and clear'** — addressing young people instead, to mean exercise your agency — may be a more constructive slogan.

57 Infrastructures for Peace (i4p) or Peace Infrastructures can be thought of as dynamic networks of interdependent structures, institutions and entities that can interact to make societies resilient to conflict and to create and sustain capacity for peace. See, for example, VAN TONGEREN (2013); UNGER ET AL. (2013); RYAN (2012).

Instead of pursuing a narrow empowerment agenda, youth(-targeted) programmes could be more valuable if they nurtured the youth space by facilitating a process where young people can discover their place within this space. Young people can explore for themselves what their agency and capacity are, how they can contribute, and what further support they might need. While there may indeed be a few examples that reflect this thought, much work still needs to be done to make this the framework for youth programming.

Another interesting aspect of power is that in the young-old relationship, power dynamics are often contentious: elders do not want to 'give or lose power' to younger people, and young people strive to 'get hold of the same power' as older people. The latter, if it does not happen, may prove to be self-disempowering and shroud the true potential of youth. Achieving power, however, does not have to mean power over someone or something. A downside of programmes that "seek to empower [young people] in the wake of conflict [is that they] may exacerbate or create generational tensions" and "tense power dynamics", by offering them "unprecedented authority in their communities" or positioning them as "conceptual gatekeepers whose fluency in globalising languages of justice or conflict resolution provides them with a privileged relationship to outside interveners or their elders" (DWYER 2015, 26). Adopting Conflict Sensitivity and Do No Harm approaches is necessary when addressing and transforming such power relations. To this end, nurturing and developing dialogic and mediative capacity in the youth space would also need to stimulate and strengthen collaborative intergenerational partnership. Neither the older nor the younger generation has to lead or follow at the expense of the other.

4.6 Investing in the present

"Young people are not only the future, they are the **present**".[58] By using a future-only framing for young people, we fail to recognise their agency of today and how they can and do contribute right now. This exploration has uncovered stories of what young people are already doing in relation to dialogue and mediation.

They are in a continuous process of learning and exploring, and what they learn and explore today will influence how they will contribute to the world of tomorrow. They are indeed very eager to learn the techniques, tools and formats of dialogue and mediation, to learn from the experience of the older generation, and also to learn by doing.

The (older) dialogue and mediation experts of today have the responsibility to create the space for young people to learn and to practise and experiment with what they learn. This has not been much heard of during this exploration.

Experienced dialogue and mediation experts can build the next generation of experts, offering hands-on training, coaching, shadowing, mentoring, and most importantly apprenticeship to young leaders.

One elderly mediator in Ukraine acknowledged that this is an area that they have not put thought into, mainly because they were themselves bogged down with dealing with the current conflict. Another mediator in Ukraine generalised and dismissed young people's capacity: "they do not understand the concept of dialogue… to them, dialogue is 'listen to me, because I'm right, and you are wrong'… they do not want to listen to what the other has to say". This is indeed often

58 This increasingly popular quote is hard to source; see, for example, its usage in DAWSON (2015); RAPPORT (2014).

the case, but happens regardless of age or place and therefore cannot be generalised.[59] It is not uncommon for participants in the inception stage of dialogue and mediation processes to spell out or imply their belief that if only the others would change what they are thinking and doing, then the problem would be solved.[60]

An experienced dialogue facilitator, however, finds a way to have participants reflect on how they might need to change what they themselves are thinking and doing. To build a future generation of experienced dialogue facilitators and mediators, the experts of today have the responsibility to make space available for young leaders to recognise and (further) develop their dialogic and mediative capacity.[61]

4.7 Involving young people who are not yet active in the youth space

In addition to further developing the dialogic and mediative capacity of young people who are already active in the youth space, there is a need to reach out to young people who are missing in action.

The diverse array of young people in fragile environments need to be engaged in the youth space and made aware of their positive agency for transforming conflict.

Given the diversity of young people in the fragile environments that characterise conflict contexts, these may be so-called 'at risk', 'on the move', 'troublemaking' and 'disadvantaged' young people, such as IDPs, refugees, returnees and child/young armed actors. They may also be young people who tend to become part of youth movements but whose approach is not necessarily dialogic and mediative.

All these young people may become resourceful actors in the youth space, if their sense and situation can be transformed through a safe space and through the opportunity for them to become aware of their own resources and positive agency. This would require broader context-specific processes and strategies for determining which approach to use in order to engage these different young actors within the youth space. Existing frameworks and approaches that are made use of within the UNSCR 2250 pillars of disengagement/reintegration and participation would prove to be helpful in this regard, additionally incorporating the objective of developing dialogic and mediative capacity.

4.8 Emphasising transformation

Dialogue and mediation processes are ideally long-term, human-centred and relational, and ideally orientated towards reconciling and transforming social relations disrupted by (violent) conflict. The proponents of 'transformative dialogue' and 'transformative mediation' have pointed out how the professional dialogue and mediation field could do better on the transformative aspect (BUSH AND FOLGER 2005; FOLGER AND BUSH 1996, 2014; GERGEN, MCNAMEE, AND BARRETT 2001).[62]

59 In fact, the dialogic and mediative capacity of the young people conversed with during this exploration was vividly apparent both from the tone of their conversation and from the stories of dialogic and mediative encounter that they narrated (or other older actors narrated for them).

60 See KAHANE (2010, 59) for a similar experience in India.

61 See for example SFCG (2017) for an inspiring story of how two elderly Malagasy mediators have been training young mediators. See also GASSER ET AL. (2015) for an inspirational collection of letters addressed to the 'young mediator' from some of the great mediators of the present time.

62 See www.transformativemediation.org for further resources.

A dialogue or mediation process is not an end in itself. What is crucial is to observe what happens in the aftermath of a wrapped-up process: what has transformed and what has not, what is new, and where there is opportunity to do more work.

Rendering dialogue and mediation processes 'transformative' may require innovations — experimenting with unconventional formats, such as those that are art- or mass media-based — which in many contexts characterises the youth space.

Often, innovations are required; this may mean experimenting with unconventional formats, such as those that are art- or mass media-based. Finally, both dialogue and mediation processes could benefit from a broad-based, open-ended form of 'sustained dialogue'. It is an ongoing and socially embedded process that brings together participants from different groups and "builds upon the transformative qualities of dialogue [...] in a repeated effort towards transforming conflicted relationships so that conflicts are constructively resolved" (SUSTAINED DIALOGUE INSTITUTE 2016).[63]

4.9 Making support self-sustaining

The INGO/donor system of projectisation continues to be problematic, given the lack of investment of time and resources in stimulating self-sustaining processes and structures. The need for material resources is self-evident: in the youth space explored within this study, the actors expressed difficulty in getting funding for projects conceived by young people. Students have expressed their dilemma of balancing passion-driven volunteerism, working to provide for family or to sustain themselves, and completing their studies.

In Ukraine, for example, many young people who were intensely engaged in sustaining the space of dialogue during the Maidan protests and its aftermath were physically and emotionally stressed, often ending up with burnout. Some of them decided to go back to their 'normal life' of earning a living or going to study/live abroad. Similar expressions were heard in Myanmar, where the youth space has been left underfunded and unrecognised, driving young people to work in other sectors in order to provide for their family. This negatively affects the youth space and therefore requires support that goes beyond material resources.

To sustainably support the youth space, one needs to invest time, patience and commitment, being aware of the fluidity of actors within the space. It also requires an approach that does not create vicious cycles of dependence but facilitates resource mobilisation within the context, such as through 'infrastructures for peace'.

63 See also SAUNDERS (1999; 2003); SAUNDERS ET AL. (2011). (SAUNDERS 1999; SAUNDERS ET AL. 2011; SAUNDERS 2003).

International donors' support logic and funding instruments has yet to catch up with the 'youth trend'. They will be (and are already in some cases) confronted with certain challenges and dilemmas experienced with previous, and ongoing, trends on women and religious actors, such as the question of representation.[64] They must also deal with the fluidity of actors[65] within this space.

From the lessons learned from such processes, one consideration is to reframe the support logic more holistically: to support not only specific actor categories but also to **support the creation and transformation of policies, institutions, networks and processes so that they can construe self-sustaining infrastructures for peace** that are locally, nationally and internationally interconnected.

Sustaining the youth space in the Caucasus

The Berghof Foundation's process involving Young Facilitators in the Abkhazia - Georgia - South Ossetia triad is an inspiring example of how to evolve and sustain the youth space. A previous Berghof process in the region had revealed young people's conviction, commitment and capacity to break out of the transgenerational patterns that keep the conflict in the triad protracted.[66] The process started as a capacity development initiative involving a core group of young people as dialogue facilitators, mediators and multipliers in their respective communities. In due course, they became very active in training their peers and engaging in constructive intra- and intergenerational dialogue and confidence-building measures between and within communities.

The *Young Facilitators* Group has since taken the form of a semi-formalised network, where the young people, in bilateral or trilateral teams, have been founding NGOs and engaging in their own projects that cut across conflict lines, with little to no foreign, third-party involvement. The support from Berghof has gradually transformed into mentoring and coaching of processes that the Young Facilitators themselves conceptualise and lead.

Eight years down the line since it started in 2010, the results of this long process are visible on a larger societal canvas: shifted perspectives, willingness to have an honest dialogue with 'the other' and greater level of empathy across the three regions. State actors, who have time and again been engaged with, acknowledge the efforts of the process and are willing to engage in its further development.

63 See also SAUNDERS (1999; 2003); SAUNDERS ET AL. (2011). (SAUNDERS 1999; SAUNDERS ET AL. 2011; SAUNDERS 2003).

64 Given that young people are increasingly becoming global citizens, and in their contexts are interconnected with a diverse set of actors, it would be difficult for donors to assess who they represent and whose interest they may be serving.

65 The fluidity of actors is a result of lack of investment/funding/resources, so actors come in and out; for example, they need to work elsewhere to support self/family.

66 See www.berghof-foundation.org/programmes/caucasus for an account of how the work in the Caucusus has developed over the years.

4.10 Learning from other spaces

Experiences, insights and lessons learned from other spaces, such as the gendered space or spaces of religion, technology and business, may offer useful impetus on how to further evolve the youth space. The gendered space of women, for example, has been well recognised and engaged with, especially following UNSCR 1325 on women, peace, and security. Lessons can be learned from the experiences of National Action Plans, Regional Action Plans[67] and National Focal Point Network[68] that have been developed in this space to open up opportunities for women's inclusion and participation in peace and security. In the thematic space of religion, the evolution of the Network for religious and traditional peacemakers[69] can also offer useful insights.

Evolving the youth space can make use of lessons learned from the evolution of other spaces, such as the space of women (UNSCR 1325) and the space of religious actors.

4.11 Telling more stories of the youth space

Last but not least: **stories are powerful**. They humanise the issues in the socio-political space and enable us to relate to them better — either as resonating or as inspiring. This exploration has been able to do only so much to narrate the stories of the youth space of dialogue and mediation.

The more stories we can tell of young people's dialogic and mediative efforts, the more we can all learn and relearn, enabling us to play a meaningful role in further evolving the youth space.

67 See www.peacewomen.org/member-states.
68 See www.peacewomen.org/node/97093.
69 See www.peacemakersnetwork.org.

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