

Imagine IMPACT

An emerging strategy to strengthen the
arts, culture, and conflict transformation ecosystem



IMPACT

IMAGINING TOGETHER

PLATFORM FOR ARTS, CULTURE AND
CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

IMPACT is an initiative of the Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts at Brandeis University, in collaboration with the Baker Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies at Juniata College and Maseno University in Kisumu, Kenya. The planning phase was supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Document developed by Armine Avetisyan, Cynthia Cohen, Emily Forsyth Queen, and Toni Shapiro-Phim in April, 2019.

Photo of reconciliation ritual in Cambodia from [*Notes on Pchum Ben*](#) by Ly Daravuth.

Greetings!

Welcome to the Imagining Together Platform for Arts, Culture and Conflict Transformation (IMPACT), a worldwide, values-driven collaboration to design and activate strategies to strengthen the *arts, culture and conflict transformation ecosystem (acct)*. This *ecosystem* includes individuals and organizations working on the international stage and in local neighborhoods - sometimes at great risk - creating festivals and crafting policies, documenting practices and developing theories, enlivening communities and building bridges across differences. In this *ecosystem*, we imagine and embody a more just, more vibrant, less violent world.

The grand challenges confronting humanity – climate change, growing inequalities, wars and legacies of past wars, displacement, the rise of authoritarian regimes, political and social polarization, and more - call for urgent creative attention beyond the linear, rational approaches that have proved insufficient and often counter-productive. The *acct ecosystem* addresses these challenges in distinct, constructive, transformative ways. With investment and support, this *ecosystem* could be even more effective.

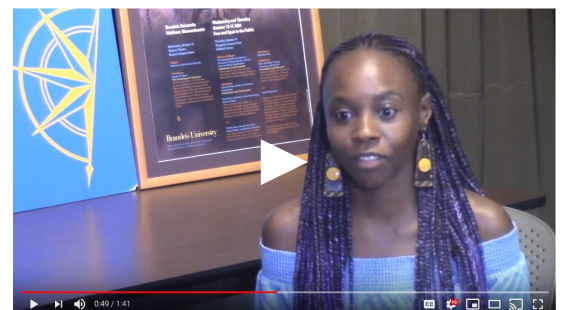
As IMPACT’s writing team, we invite you to explore this report, which is grounded in real world examples and:

- makes the case for the power of arts and culture to transform conflict
- summarizes learning from exchanges - with hundreds of artists, peacebuilders, scholars, funders, policymakers, and others - about the strengths of the *acct ecosystem* and the challenges it faces
- advocates for a platform to support the *acct ecosystem*
- proposes an emerging platform: a web of teams crafting virtual and in person spaces where knowledge can be shared, ethical dilemmas can receive sustained attention, advocacy strategies can be developed and advanced, risks of harm can be minimized, and relationships of reciprocity can be formed

Based on the sense of urgency and commitment of diverse and remarkable leaders directly involved with IMPACT, we are experimenting with a platform designed for distributed leadership and coherence, flexibility and stability, accountability and credibility.

However you are connected to the *ecosystem*, whether as an artist, cultural worker, scholar, conflict transformation practitioner, educator, diplomat, activist, policymaker, funder, or friend, we hope that this report engages your imagination and inspires action. IMPACT is still very much in process, attuned to emerging possibilities. We are eager for your suggestions, participation, and support.

Armine, Cindy, Emily, and Toni
The Imagine IMPACT Writing Team



“How do we think about futures, let alone imagine them?” - Refilwe Nkomo:
<https://youtu.be/mn482AjmvAI>

The power of arts and culture to transform conflict

Imagine humanity embracing the ways arts and culture uniquely transform conflict, mobilizing their full creative power to overcome violence and related challenges of extremism, environmental degradation, injustice, inequality, displacement, and more.

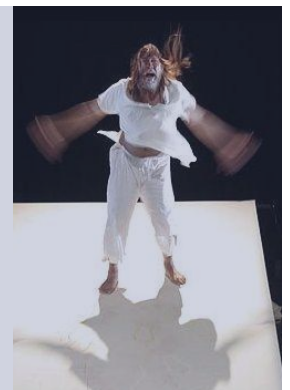
The power of arts and culture comes from the ways they invite imagination of what we have yet to know or create, gathering wisdom from the past with acknowledgement of the present and dreams for the future. Arts and culture are key to transforming conflict because they open new possibilities for listening, seeing, imagining, engaging, and creating together.

Arts and culture go beyond the purely rational, engaging senses, emotion, and thinking all at once. They allow us to experience, reflect deeply on, and experiment with complex realities. They can be crafted to transform conflict by: drawing attention to urgent concerns, bearing witness, memorializing the past, dignifying humanity, resisting oppression, and cultivating empathy and trust among former enemies.

The Afghanistan National Institute of Music supports girls' leadership while preserving cultural heritage and building inter-ethnic trust.
[\[more: p12 in the Full Report\]](#)



The Lamenting Forest performance confronts environmental exploitation and community devastation in Indonesia.
[\[more: p16\]](#)



Tokay Tomah, a Liberian singer and dancer, defies ongoing violence and supports movements for peace.
[\[more: p43\]](#)



In Peru, *Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani* opens doors for witnessing, truth-telling, healing, and enacting transitional justice in the aftermath of violent conflict.
[\[more: p26\]](#)

IMPACT's Path

Voices from over 500 people and groups in 7 regions of the world shared thoughts on the strengths, needs, and challenges of the *acct ecosystem*. **Over 60 thought leaders from 19 countries engaged in 2 creative, collaborative design labs** (one led by youth) to shape ethical strategies to support the *ecosystem*. Here are highlights:

Learnings

- The *acct ecosystem* is uniquely effective, and versatile in complementing other fields
- *Acct* is a vast, diverse, and rich *ecosystem*; strategies to support it need to be multi-faceted and flexible
- *Acct* enjoys many strengths, but is limited by unmet needs and insufficient resources aligned with its potential [see: [“Emerging Story”](#)]
- The impact of the *acct ecosystem* is limited by power divides that erode trust
- *Acct* players in different regions of the world have developed different expertise
- IMPACT has sparked the imaginations and unleashed the energy of experts and influential institutions
- IMPACT can strengthen the influence of *acct* by drawing on complexity and emergence theories and systems thinking

Accomplishments

- Inspired *acct* players to think about one another as part of a dynamic *ecosystem*
- Led powerful [in-person and virtual learning exchanges](#), engaging 300 diverse participants in thinking deeply
- Shared learnings with *acct* through newsletters in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) and the [Arts Education Policy Review](#)
- Created a web of teams focusing on strategy, ethics, advocacy, virtual learning exchanges, regional hubs, and working groups [\[more: p31\]](#)
- Distributed power and strengthened trust by launching a diverse, global Leadership Circle
- Developed partnerships and strengthened collaborations with international, national, regional, and local organizations [\[more: p22\]](#).
- Secured seed funding to ensure near-term continuity of IMPACT's basic functions

Next Steps [\[more: p27\]](#)

- Develop, test, and share tools for embodying [IMPACT values](#)
- Craft advocacy strategies for *acct* by working with funders committed to the *ecosystem*
- Continue convening global [virtual learning exchanges](#) in multiple languages
- Meet regionally to design hubs in Southeast Asia and the Middle East and North Africa in 2019 and follow up on interest from 9 other regions
- Reach out to cultural heritage, [transitional justice](#), and human rights fields through publications, meetings and trainings
- Test and share approaches to evaluation that align with excellent practice in *acct*
- Design an online journal and other virtual spaces for exchange, documentation, and collaboration
- Plan IMPACT global gatherings, including [ICAF 2020](#) in Rotterdam

The need for a platform to support *acct*

Imagine stable, interconnected structures and processes designed to:

- Link *acct* players in active communities of inquiry and support, both in-person and online
- Craft creative ways to address global challenges *as well as* local and regional issues
- Support *acct* players to document efforts, assess results, and share learnings
- Form strategic collaborations to advocate for the *acct ecosystem* and influence related fields
- Embody principles of reciprocity, equity, and distributed leadership
- Acknowledge and work creatively with power differences, cultivating trust across individual, group, and regional inequalities



Through a platform, ready connections could be made between similar initiatives, like the REDress Project - which highlights gendered racial violence against North American Indigenous peoples - and Australian Indigenous rituals addressing ongoing racial and colonial violence [more on both: [p42](#) & [25](#)]



The IMPACT platform plans to advocate for resources to sustain projects like “[Haven’t We Shared Much Salt and Bread?](#)”, which strengthened the role of grassroots women in bridging the persistent divide between Armenia and Turkey. [more: [p17](#)]



We invite you to connect with IMPACT

Whether you are an artist, cultural worker, conflict transformation practitioner, scholar, arts educator, funder, policymaker, diplomat, activist or are doing related work, we invite you to explore how you could benefit from connecting to IMPACT and what you could offer to such a platform.

- Explore the *Imagine IMPACT | Full Report*: bit.ly/ImagineIMPACTfull and share with your circles
- Join an upcoming [virtual learning exchange](#)
- Find updates and resources in the [Peacebuilding and the Arts Now e-newsletter](#)
- Contribute to and invest in IMPACT’s emerging platform by contacting IMPACT@brandeis.edu

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A distinct transformative power, Supportive voices

From the field

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section 01 introduction

Welcome to IMPACT

Thank You

Core Concepts

From the field

*The Afghanistan National
Institute of Music*

Welcome to IMPACT!

Welcome to the *Imagining Together Platform for Arts, Culture and Conflict Transformation* (IMPACT). Whether you are an artist, cultural worker, conflict transformation scholar or practitioner, policymaker or funder, we offer you this snapshot of a dynamic process as we move from a planning phase to prototyping and implementation. We hope this report speaks to you and welcome your suggestions for IMPACT moving forward.

IMPACT is an emerging platform designed to support the *arts, culture and conflict transformation ecosystem (acct)*, so it can respond more effectively and creatively to complex, pressing contemporary challenges. IMPACT acknowledges that its efforts exist in relationship with the land where we live and work, other players in the *acct ecosystem* who we want to get to know, and with those in other, related fields (e.g., human rights, sustainable development, cultural heritage, indigenous knowledge systems, public policy and education) who work toward the same ends.

IMPACT's process has been guided by core values:

- **Strengthening reciprocity and interdependence** across *acct*
- **Including diverse perspectives**, identities, languages, and professions
- **Honoring many types of knowledge**, including from various indigenous cultures, artistic practices, and disciplines
- **Emphasizing hospitality and care** for people in the communities where we work
- **Recognizing the urgency and fragility** of this moment in time
- **Fostering life-affirming, creative, joyful, and respectful collaboration**

Even during its planning stages, IMPACT has begun to strengthen *acct* by raising awareness of the field, facilitating exchange among its diverse players, and finding leaders to guide IMPACT's next steps.

introduction

Thank you

We acknowledge and appreciate the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for making possible the extraordinary opportunity of IMPACT. We also thank all those who have participated in IMPACT by sharing knowledge, raising questions, and offering inspiration. Everyone who participated and wishes to be named will be listed below. We are just as grateful to others who, for political, cultural or institutional sensitivities, choose to remain anonymous.

For now, we share these photos from the September 2018 Design Lab.



The Foundation endeavors to strengthen, promote, and where necessary defend the contributions of the humanities and the arts to human flourishing and to the well-being of diverse and democratic societies.

Mission Statement, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Core Concepts

Words in the arts, culture, and conflict transformation ecosystem carry many meanings. These definitions indicate the meanings as we use words in this report.

arts and culture

- any type of expressive form of any scale or duration, created by individuals or ensembles with or without specialized training
- collective expressive forms of any ethnic or cultural group, traditional or not

aesthetic engagement

- a way of taking in the world that pleurably links senses and emotions with cognitive and often spiritual dimensions

violence

- actions and regimes of direct and structural violence including: wars,

extremist assaults, gender-based violence, long-standing oppression, assaults on human rights, and attacks on Indigenous knowledge systems

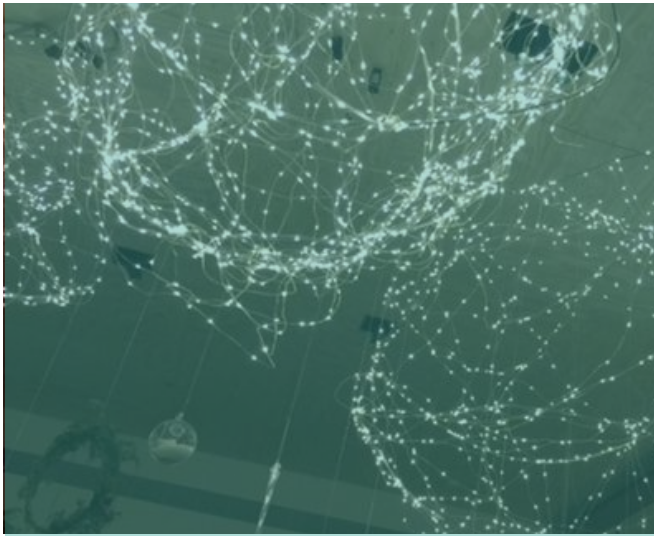
- related patterns of environmental degradation, inequality, authoritarianism, forced migration, marginalization, discrimination, polarization, and more

conflict transformation

Efforts that:

- constructively address the underlying causes and consequences of violence
- build relationships of reciprocity among people and groups based on acknowledging human rights, respecting human dignity, caring, trusting, and being trustworthy
- find creative ways to embrace conflicting ideas, values, needs and interests

More Core Concepts



Roberta Levitow, a founder of Theatre without Borders, offers this picture of her vision of *acct*



"I come from an institution and a system that is pretty structured...[but artists bring] a very strong love of freedom, of not being in a structure and not being controlled and not falling into categories..." - Johanne Bouchard:
<https://youtu.be/3ZXHdFMhzA8>

the arts, culture, and conflict transformation ecosystem (*acct*)

- made up of communities, networks, institutions, and people - including artists, cultural workers, conflict transformation practitioners, scholars, activists, funders, policymakers, arts educators, diplomats, and those in related fields
- similar to ecosystems in the natural world, the ability of each player to thrive depends on all others
- involves work at the nexus of arts, culture and conflict transformation that values both aesthetic and socio-political dimensions

a platform

- a linked set of online and in-person structures and processes designed to facilitate collaboration, exchange, documentation, decision-making, and innovation to address existing and emerging needs

minimizing risk of harm

- recognizing that arts and culture can be destructive as well as beneficial and taking steps to reduce negative effects

These and other concepts are further explored in the [IMPACT glossary](#).

From the field: What does arts, culture, and conflict transformation sound like on the ground?

In a context where extremist ideology and violence are prevalent, *The Afghanistan National Institute of Music* supports girls' leadership while preserving cultural heritage and building inter-ethnic trust

Sounds of Afghan, North Indian, and western classical instruments mix in the air, originating from the collaborative creativity of girls and boys from a range of ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds. This alone is a feat in an environment rife with destruction from decades of war during which cultural heritage was intentionally targeted and music was banned for five years. Recognizing the importance of the country's diverse musical heritage, the Afghanistan National Institute of Music was founded in 2010 by Dr. Ahmad Naser Sarmast with support from the Ministry of Education and Afghanistan's Office of the President.

Hundreds of students were welcomed into the Institute, regardless of their identity, prioritizing support for those with the fewest resources and options for their future. ***The Institute impacts individuals and communities by training future music educators, providing economic opportunities for music professionals, mending continuing divisions in society, reviving and preserving Afghan musical cultures, and affirming people's right to practice those cultures.*** Students model respectful, collaborative interaction between parts of Afghan society that are distrustful and even violent towards one another, thereby building possibilities for broader democratic engagement.

Photo provided by The Afghanistan National Institute of Music: www.anim-music.org. Read more: <http://www.zohra-music.org/>.



section 02
arts & culture,
transforming
conflict

A distinct transformative
power
Supportive voices

From the field

The Lamenting Forest,
Sardono on Indonesia

Sharing Salt and Bread
between Armenia & Turkey

arts & culture, transforming conflict

A distinct transformative power

Humanity dignifies, restores and reimagines itself through creating, performing, preserving, and revising its cultural and artistic life.

In the face of violent conflict and related challenges - including environmental degradation, inequality, authoritarianism, forced migration, and marginalization - cultural heritage, cultural practices, and the arts can be crafted to:

- bring attention to urgent concerns and difficult truths
- draw on local sources of strength, meaning, knowledge, and resilience
- address conflicts
- facilitate communication and cultivate empathy, with or without shared language
- reconcile former enemies and work toward trust
- resist oppression and violations of human rights

- memorialize the past and support trauma-healing in ways that revitalize
- imagine and give substance to a more vibrant, less violent, more rights-respecting, and peaceful future

Aesthetic experiences and cultural practices reveal values and ethical commitments, enrich learning by linking thoughts with senses and emotions, and invite new ways to make meaning by reflecting on and experimenting with paradox and complexity.



"...the power of art is not something peripheral..."
 - Raj Sampath: <https://youtu.be/rFpATu7hD9c>

arts & culture, transforming conflict

[T]o create dangerously... is creating as a revolt against silence, creating when both the creation and the reception, the writing and the reading, are dangerous undertakings... Survivors are living in make-shift tent cities and refugee camps somewhere, shielding their heads from the rain, closing their eyes, covering their ears, to shut out the sounds of military 'aid' helicopters. And still, many are reading, and writing, quietly, quietly.

Edwidge Danticat, Haitian-American writer of *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*

[I came to grasp that] change does not have to be done through war, violent protests, direct speeches, or other traditional forms of refusal. The power of collaboration between people, telling stories, creating art- these offer a peaceful, beautiful, and intellectual way of examining change that must occur around us. The acct field is designed to allow people's creative energies to develop while also making direct change.

Margo Sobel '22, Brandeis University student; participant in IMPACT Youth-Focused Design Lab

In my view, all socially-concerned artists want and try to influence [their society]. Trying to change rigid mindsets, minds poisoned by propaganda and indoctrination, is admirable. But of course it should be done through art where you touch the basic goodness among all human beings, approach sensitive matters through song, dance, and humor. Influence to me is to enable people to discover and realize the need for peace and the power of love.

Shahid Nadeem, Director, Ajoka Theater, Pakistan; participant in IMPACT Design Lab and Virtual Learning Exchange

Art restores meaning in bringing us, as responsible human beings, face to face with the undeniable facts and circumstances. Through this encounter with the undeniable, with our collective life as captured in a work of visual or dramatic art, we are perfecting our moral judgment and, above all, feeling the challenge and hearing the call to act, for the sake of our own ethical identities. This may be the key to the transformative power of art over a violent past that seems irredeemable, immutable, but which is always subject to the creative force of our imagination

Salomón Lerner Febres, President, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Peru; Rector Emeritus, Pontificia Catholic University of Peru

"... a society can't be a more just society, a more fair society, without it being a more empathetic society, and the arts help build empathy. And understanding and engagement with the arts builds in us an ability, a capacity, for introspection, for putting ourselves in the shoes of other people, an ability to imagine what it must be like to be different than who we are..."

Darren Walker, President, Ford Foundation



From the field: What does embodying the power of acct look like on the ground?

The Lamenting Forest confronts environmental exploitation and community devastation in Indonesia

Eleven ethnic Dayak performers sit in a circle, singing traditionally-based songs about their experience of a devastating forest fire that scorched their land. Dancers enter with swords and shields and animal masks; all are eventually swallowed by fire in a dance called *Hutan yang Merintih* (The Lamenting Forest), a work by globally renowned Indonesian choreographer Sardono Kusumo in collaboration with members of the Indigenous Dayak community on the Indonesian island of Borneo.

Sardono has been developing deep relationships with the peoples on Borneo since the 1980s, when the Indonesian government and media portrayed the Dayak as responsible for the destruction of the forest ecosystems they relied upon, when millions of acres were actually destroyed by domestic and foreign logging companies. The artistic projects emerging from this collaboration communicate **lived experience of the causes and irreversible impact of indiscriminate logging, the denial and ignoring of climate change, and environmental degradation in Indonesia, especially as it effects Indigenous populations.**

Sardono further amplifies these messages by arranging performances during ecological conferences, raising funds for people whose health and livelihoods suffered following forest fires, teaching at the Jakarta Institute for the Arts, and taking students camping in rainforests - where they can hear stories and learn dances from the Dayak.

Read more in [*"Sardono: Dialogues with Humankind and Nature"*](#) by Murgiyanto. Photo of Sardono by Clendenin/[*Los Angeles Times*](#).



Women “sharing salt and bread” bridge the persistent national divide between Armenia and Turkey

The closed Turkish-Armenian border mirrors distrust between the two nations, but the phrase “sharing salt and bread” references hospitality and friendship in both languages. This connection around traditional food culture sparked a project in 2015 that linked women across this closed border to cook, sing, dance, talk, and eat meals together. Local community members were welcomed to the feasts as well.

Despite a long-standing divide rooted in the 1915 genocide of 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman Empire, which the international community recognizes and the Turkish government denies, women at the center of this initiative listened to and heard one another, many shifting their internal narratives about those from the “other side.” **Most of these women have no connection to civil society organizations and are thus left out of reconciliation efforts. With hearts and minds opened by cooking together, these women have the potential to break down suspicion and resentment among their family members and communities - an important step in nations coming to terms with their pasts and their current disputes.**

Watch more in a clip from “Haven’t We Shared Much Salt and Bread?” directed by Alper Sen, produced by Kars Urban and Culture Research Association: <https://youtu.be/vFEZ7WGenEE>. Photo by Yasin Akkçül.

section 03 IMPACT's path

Timeline

IMPACT's Reach

Sources of Inspiration

Key Learnings

From the field

*Aboriginal Ceremonial Rituals
in Australia*

*Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani
in Peru*

IMPACT's path

IMPACT Timeline

Sept 2017
onward

IMPACT Meetings

Executive Committee and Steering Committee members meet regularly, crafting a **statement of guiding values** and researching organizational structures.

Sept 2017
onward

Conversations with Thought Leaders

IMPACT leadership seeks input from **over 50** thought leaders from various regions of the world, parts of the *acct ecosystem*, and related fields.

Dec 2017 -
Feb 2018

Interviews and Online Research

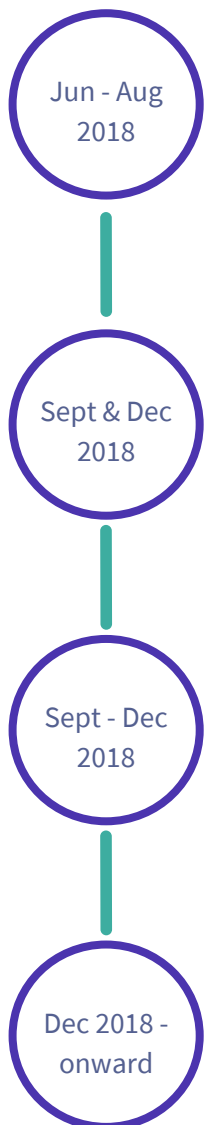
IMPACT's research team connects with **168 entities** (cultural institutions, universities, funding institutions, networks, art collectives, artists, and peacebuilding institutions) from **7 regions** (Australia/Pacific, Asia, South and Central America, North America, Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa) to hear their perspectives on strengths, challenges, and needs of *acct*.

Apr 2018 -
Mar 2019

Learning Exchanges

IMPACT gathers **300 people** within the *acct ecosystem* from **over 53 countries** on almost every continent for focused facilitated conversations. One in-person exchange addresses monitoring and evaluation in the arts and peacebuilding fields; three virtual exchanges - one in Spanish - engage new voices in conversations on the *acct ecosystem* and their visions for an infrastructure that would strengthen it.

IMPACT's path



Review of Data and Synthesis of Learning

IMPACT's writing team reviews input and synthesizes learnings from interviews, conversations, and exchanges to produce the **"Emerging Story of the Acct Field"**.

Design Labs

In September, IMPACT convenes **26 people** from across the ecosystem coming **from 18 countries** in a multi-faceted, creative design exercise facilitated by EmcArts to imagine how structures and processes can best address complicated and complex issues facing the *acct ecosystem*. In December, IMPACT facilitates a youth-focused design lab involving **35 young artists from 9 countries**.

Creation of Proposed IMPACT Structure

Based on the Design Labs, IMPACT leadership develops and proposes a draft structure to **address strategic priorities in support of the *acct ecosystem***.

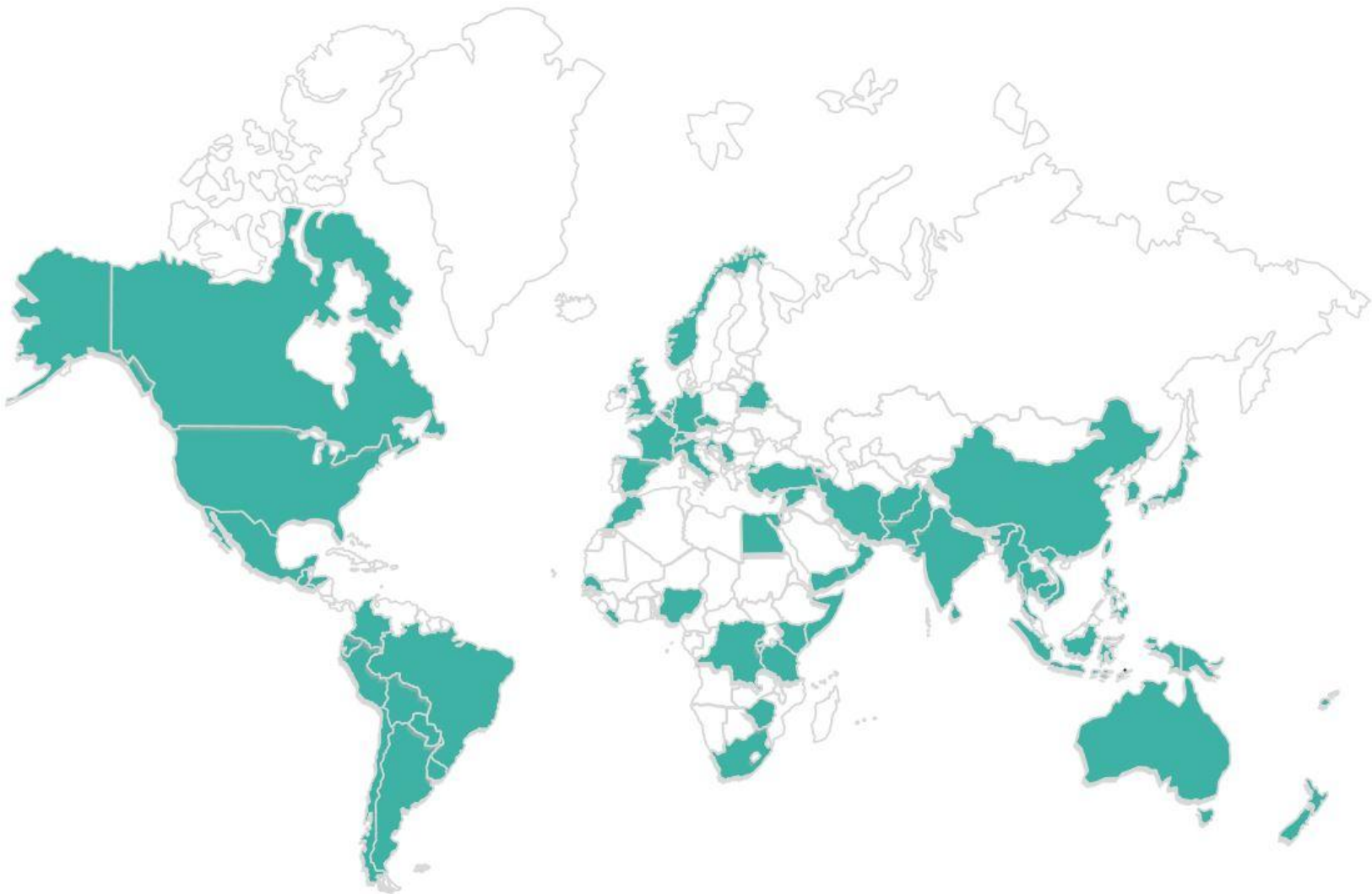
Leadership Circle Meetings

The newly created IMPACT Leadership Circle meets regularly to support IMPACT teams and to **experiment with distributed leadership**.

IMPACT's path

IMPACT's reach

Through interviews, conversations, learning exchanges, design labs, and other events, IMPACT has been exchanging ideas with people all over the world.



IMPACT's path

Sources of inspiration

IMPACT's grasp of *acct* grew through exchanging knowledge, ideas, and energy with people from these groups and others. We are continually inspired by their creativity and courage.

!Kauru Contemporary Art • AccesArte • Aché Tének • Adekunle Ajasin University • AECID (Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation) Network of Cultural Centers • Ajoka Theatre • Alliance for Peacebuilding • Amani Peoples' Theatre • American Academy of Arts and Sciences • American Friends Service Committee • American University of Beirut • Anadolu Kultur • Andrew W. Mellon Foundation • Animating Democracy / Americans for the Arts • Anlong Veng Peace Center • Anna Lindh Foundation • Ariadne Network • Arizona State University / Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts • Art and Abolition • Art Bridge Chiang Rai • ArtAsFoundation for Peace • Arts Council Malta • Ashtar Theatre • Asociacion Libre Expresion • Association for Historical Dialogue and Research • Banco de la República Colombia • Be-production • Belarus Free Theatre • Berghof Foundation • Beyond Skin • BlakDance • Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble • Bond Street Theatre • Bophana Audiovisual Resource Centre • Brandeis University • Build Up • Cambodia Living Arts • CARE Burundi • Cartel Artspace/Gallery • Ceasefire Chicago • Center for Evaluation Innovation • Centre for Social and Creative Media at the University of Goroka • Centro Arte para la Paz • Centro Cultural de la Cooperación • Centros de Creación • Cetsur • Chamwino Arts Centre • Charles University • Chulalongkorn University • CODESRIA (The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa) • COPA • Creative Scotland • Cristosal • CulturAula Comunidades Aprendiendo • Culture et Démocratie • D1 • Dah Teatar • Dancing Earth • Department of Music of the National University of the Arts • Dong Cao Temple • EMCarts • European Cultural Foundation • Fighters for Peace • Filmarte Ecuador • Foro Paz • Fragments Theatre • FriEnt • Fundación Cambio Democrático • Fundación Crear Vale La Pena • Fundación Prolongar • Further Arts • Goethe-Institut Vietnam • Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani • Grupo Sotz'il • Guadalcanal Weaving Festival • Headlight Consulting Services • Helvetas • Hemispheric Institute • Heritage Space • HowlRound Theater Commons • Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute • International Community Arts Festival • IETM International network for contemporary performing arts • Infinite Possibilities: Creative Community Initiatives • InterAction • International Alert • International Network for Museums for Peace • International Storytelling Center • Izindlovu Collective • James Madison University • Juniata College • Kdei Karuna • Kibera Hamlets • Kinetic Collective • Kyoto University of Art and Design • Mujeres en las Artes "Leticia de Oyuela" (MUA) • La Tarumba • Laboratory for Global Performance and Politics, Georgetown University • Laberinto Projects • Lotus Silk • M+ • MA Office of Dispute Resolution & Public Collaboration / University of Massachusetts Boston • Magdalena 2ª Generación • Make a Difference Institute • Manchester University • Many Hands • Manzi Art Space • Maseno University • Mashirika Performing Arts and Media Company • Midlands State University • Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute • MitOst • Mobaderoon • Mouad Lasmak Association • Move This World • Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen • Musicians without Borders • Myanm/Art • Nada crece en la sombra • NARPI (Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute) • National Arts Council of Zimbabwe • National Endowment for the Arts • Nexus Fund / Peace Direct • Nicosia Municipal Arts Center • Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights • Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding • Pannasastra University of Cambodia • Partners Lebanon • Peace and Reconciliation Honiara City • Peace Boat • Peace Direct • Peace Moves • Peaceprints • Philadelphia Folklore Project • Pikadilli Collective • Prince Claus Fund • Queensland University of Technology • RMC Research • Roadside Theater • Rooftop Theatre Group • Rutgers University/Newark • Salzburg Global Institute • Sãn Art • School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University • Seagull Foundation for the Arts • Search for Common Ground • Sleuk Rith Institute • Smithsonian Institution • Sohar University • Somali Youth Development Network • Sonidos de la Tierra • Sophiline Arts Ensemble • Soul Xpressions • Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation • Tahweel Ensemble Theatre • Tel Aviv University • The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture • The People's Music Network • The University of Auckland • The University of Leeds • Theater Arts and Dance Department / University of Minnesota • Theatre of Reconciliation • Transcend Oceania • TransConflict • Trono Theater • United States Agency for International Development • United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor • United States Institute of Peace • Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras / Centro De Arte Y Cultura • Universidad Nacional de las Artes / Argentina • University of British Columbia • University of Kinshasa • University of Liberia / Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation • University of Malta • University of Manitoba • University of Puthisastra • University of Rochester • University of Sydney • University of Tasmania • • Utrecht University Centre for Global Challenges • Victoria University of Wellington • Virginia Commonwealth University • Visual Art Study Program • Voluntary Youth Philanthropists • Zurich University of the Arts

IMPACT's path

Key Learnings

The evolving design of the IMPACT platform and priorities reflect learnings as they emerge. Here's a snapshot of key learnings thus far:

1. **The *acct ecosystem* is vast**, with players and networks in different regions of the world engaging different art forms working in different institutional and community contexts as practitioners, scholars, policymakers, and funders. An infrastructure to support this ecosystem must be multi-faceted and able to accommodate diverse initiatives. Platforms must create opportunities for face-to-face and virtual exchange, exploration of differences, accountability to ethical standards, and collaboration among these many players and networks.
2. **The *acct ecosystem* enjoys many strengths and is gaining credibility.** Its knowledge base, artistic practices, theories, and frameworks come from diverse cultures, scholarly disciplines, and policy fields. Its initiatives are uniquely effective. Although more is needed, important books, articles, films, and curricula have been produced in recent decades. Several institutions and networks cultivate and link *acct* leaders from different parts of the world.
3. **Many important obstacles to the full potential of the *acct ecosystem* remain.** IMPACT's "[Emerging Story](#)" document, prepared for the September 2018 Design Lab, highlighted two obstacles: fissures across power divides that limit trust; and the lack of resources that support sustained initiatives that are most likely to yield meaningful results.

IMPACT's path

More Key Learnings

4. **The effectiveness of the *acct ecosystem* could be enhanced** with more investment in field-building (also noted in the “[Emerging Story](#)”), including:
 - platforms for sustained attention to ethical questions
 - strategic communication and advocacy
 - opportunities for exchange within and across regions that accounts for differences in language, access to technology, ability, etc.
 - recognized, appropriate evaluation approaches
 - affordable professional development
 - rigorous documentation
 - adequate protection from harm and censorship
 - space to develop and build consensus around shared vocabulary
5. **The *acct ecosystem* is emerging with different strengths in different regions of the world.** For instance, in broad terms, South America has a highly developed arts and social transformation network that influences cultural policy at municipal and national levels. Western Europe - more than the Balkans - benefits from cultural policies that acknowledge the pro-social contributions of community arts, and enjoys substantial funding. South, East, and West Africa have developed culturally sensitive creative approaches to reconciliation after mass violence.
6. **IMPACT has sparked the imagination, commitment, and energy of individuals and institutions with relevant expertise and influence in local, national, regional and global spheres.** IMPACT has, for example, secured seed funding from donors, universities, and foundations.
7. **IMPACT can strengthen the influence of *acct* by applying theoretical frameworks related to systems, complexity, field building and emergent influence.** These frameworks are helping IMPACT design structures and processes well matched with the complex, dynamic nature of both the *acct ecosystem* and the challenges we aim to address.



From the field: What can the acct ecosystem learn from traditional forms of cultural expression?

Ceremonial rituals address centuries of violence and intractable racial, ethnic, and colonial divisions in Australia

The annual Myall Creek Massacre memorials are one example of **rituals designed to bring some measure of justice** to violence that occurred on June 10, 1838, when thirty-eight Wirrayaraay people were bound in ropes and forced along a road toward Myall Creek in New South Wales where they were massacred by white stockmen. Every June 10th since 2000, Aboriginal peoples and non-Indigenous Australians, including some of the descendants of both the victims and perpetrators of the massacre, have walked along the route that leads to the massacre site. At the monolithic stone memorial of the massacre the assembled group recounts the history of the massacre, acknowledges the injustices still taking place against Aboriginal people, and commits to collaborative work toward justice and conflict transformation. ***“We will continue our journey, searching our own hearts and reflecting our own attitudes which alienate us from one another.”*** (recitation from Memorial Handbook)

These rituals **acknowledge historical and contemporary conflicts and begin the process of transforming relationships**. Provided with symbolic embodied ways for people to come together across difference, participants in this ritual have the freedom to perform new identities, including in some instances that of kin, rather than “other”. The rituals facilitate solidarity in addressing the many instances of injustice faced by Aboriginal peoples. The numerous memorial ceremonies across Australia in the early 2000s seemed to **contribute to the development of civil society and government interest in holding national ceremonies aimed at transitional justice**. On February 13, 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd offered the government’s first official **“Apology to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples”**, a statement that acknowledges the pain and suffering imposed on Aboriginal families and communities by government policies of child removal.

Read more in **“Creating a New Story: Ritual, Ceremony, and Conflict Transformation between Indigenous and Settler Peoples.”** (2011) by Polly O. Walker. Photo by Polly O. Walker.



Ritual and theatre open paths for mourning losses and acknowledging complicity following violent conflict in Peru

Peru's civil war raged from 1980 to 2000, with horrific abuse mostly by government forces and also by Maoist rebels resulting in more than 69,000 deaths, many of them marginalized Quechua speakers. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) formed in the aftermath of the conflict to help address the legacy of that terrible period, and the factors that contributed to it. Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani, an ethnically diverse theatre company with a decades-long relationship with the Indigenous communities of Peru, **accompanied the TRC to rural villages where they led rituals of mourning, acknowledging 'the disappeared'**, and offered workshops and theatrical works in public spaces, dignifying people's experiences during the war. In these ways they helped survivors testify at the "official table". They also brought the stories of the suffering of the Indigenous people to the elite communities of Lima, to people whose silence had made them complicit. Salomón Lerner Febres, president of Peru's TRC, said that **"Yuyachkani's tools are the symbols through which culture is expressed. It is not a matter so much of reproducing the facts as of producing effects, to reveal and convey the tragedies of Peruvian society."**

Read more: "[Fire in the Memory: Theatre, Truth, and Justice in Argentina and Peru](#)" (2011) by Roberto Gutiérrez Varea. Photo of Ana Correa by Mike Lovett.

section 04
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moving
forward

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From the field

*The REDress Project in
Canada & the United States*

*Turning a Bitter Person Sweet
in Liberia*

IMPACT moving forward

The Case for a Platform

[W]e recognise that now – more urgently than ever – credible and plural sources of knowledge and information are needed. It is critical that the full depth and diversity of the world is easily understood and accessible by curious young people and powerful decision-makers alike. Overcoming hate, bigotry and misogyny requires seeing and knowing each other as fully and as honestly as we possibly can.

Anasuya Sengupta
and Siko Bouterse,
coordinators of
Whose Knowledge?

Global challenges call for urgent creative attention beyond the linear, rational thinking that has proved insufficient and often counter-productive. The *acct ecosystem* has distinct, transformative contributions to offer. IMPACT calls for a platform to strengthen *acct* and maximize its effectiveness.

A platform of stable, interconnected structures can lay groundwork for a global civil society committed to values that sustain life and to holding those with political, economic, and cultural power accountable to those values.

A platform of diverse players across *acct* can foster experimentation and creative problem-solving based on collaboration across disciplines, cultures, regions, worldviews, and modes of communication.

A values-driven platform can acknowledge divisions that have limited *acct* in the past and build the relationships of trust and trustworthiness that are needed for *acct* to fulfill its potential.

IMPACT seeks partnerships with people, institutions, and networks that share our values; our concerns for our communities, planet, and future; and our commitment to creativity.

IMPACT moving forward

IMPACT's Emerging Platform



Understanding the complex challenges of the current moment, and believing that the *acct ecosystem* is well-suited to make significant, distinct contributions to addressing them, IMPACT has designed and begun activating a platform for strengthening *acct*.

This multifaceted platform includes aspects of our initial vision, augmented by our learning from the activities and conversations from IMPACT's first eighteen months. While the full shape the platform will take is still emerging, elements are already activated, drawing on the sense of urgency and the commitment of the creative and motivated people who contributed to its design. Other elements are in planning stages or are part of the aspirational, long-term vision of IMPACT.



"...look at the role of research across the field and eliminate some of those silos..."

- Germaine Ingram
<https://youtu.be/v7Klrjqw9TE>

IMPACT moving forward

Theory of Change and Strategic Priorities

As a learning community, IMPACT is engaged in ongoing research about the needs and strengths of *acct*, initiatives that can strengthen the ecosystem, and how to coordinate such initiatives. IMPACT is exploring an emergent, flexible theory of change:

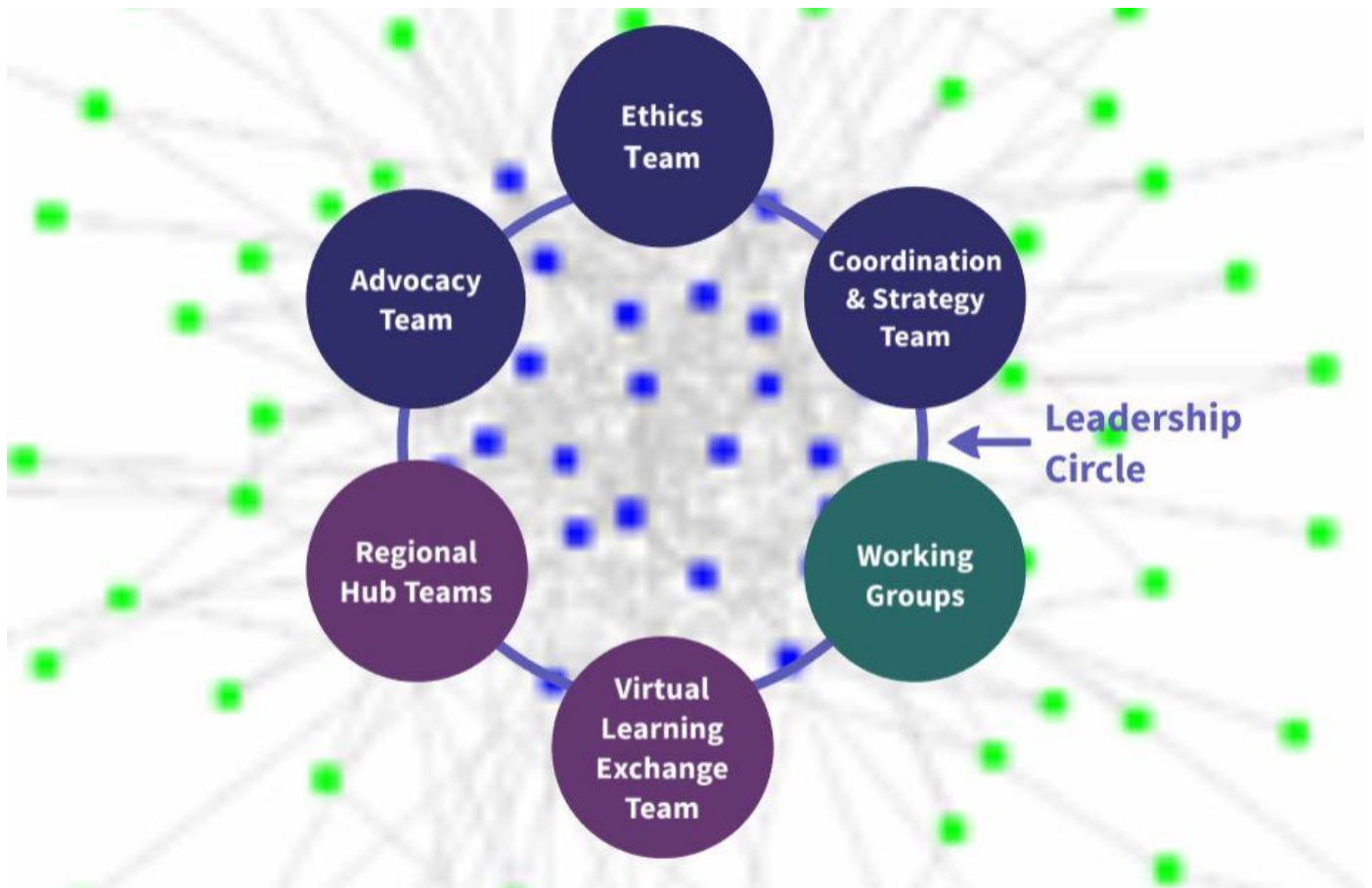
We envision IMPACT providing opportunities for sustained, ethical attention to the emerging needs and strengths of the *acct ecosystem* as a whole. We think this will position *acct* to better advocate for creative approaches to transforming violent conflict and related challenges. This will strengthen the ecosystem because the efforts of a diverse range of players will reinforce each other in strategic ways.

IMPACT is enacting this theory of change through **strategic priorities** based on *acct's* specific needs and strengths:

- grounding IMPACT in **principles and values** of reciprocity and decolonization and supporting *acct* players to do the same
- fostering **connectivity and inclusion** regionally and globally through in-person and virtual exchanges
- **advocating with donors and related fields** for resources for *acct* that are strongly aligned with the needs of the *ecosystem*
- supporting the formation of working groups to address *acct's* priority needs like **knowledge generation and sharing** and **evaluation**
- developing approaches to **coordination and strategy** that distribute leadership while still ensuring stability and coherence

IMPACT moving forward

Active Experiments: Web of Teams



IMPACT moving forward

Active Experiments: Leadership Circle

IMPACT's most ambitious experiment so far involves a web of teams linked by and accountable to a Leadership Circle. The circle distributes leadership, reflecting our commitment to decolonizing approaches to governance. The circle consists of 2 - 4 members from each of the six IMPACT teams. The Leadership Circle serves as a platform for information sharing, discussion, accountability, and input into key decisions.

Accomplishments

- Imagined and created IMPACT Leadership Circle, consisting of 16 artists, cultural workers, scholar-practitioners, and NGO leaders from regions around the world

- Designed virtual meetings with facilitation styles that balance efficiency and connection; information sharing and decision-making; spiritual grounding and strategic thinking
- Convened Leadership Circle three times between December, 2018 & March, 2019
- Used online "breakout rooms" to facilitate rich discussion in small groups

Plans

- Hold regular Leadership Circle meetings
- Develop a system for rotating in new members
- Refine and articulate decision-making responsibilities of Leadership Circle

IMPACT moving forward

Active Experiments: Ethics Team

Since IMPACT's inception, its leadership has recognized the importance of shared ethical principles and values. Ethical questions are on the minds of people throughout *acct*, as revealed through our multi-regional research. We recognize that they require constant attention, including within our own interactions and practices.

Accomplishments

- Reflected on real-life challenges of consistently enacting IMPACT's values
- Surveyed ethical principles of related organizations and initiatives
- Secured initial funding to support work of the Ethics Team

Plans

- Develop IMPACT discourse principles that, for example:
 - Capture and embrace the positive energy in conflict
 - Offer opportunities for participants to express the full range of their identities
 - Honor different cultural conceptions of time
 - Support participants to develop ethical world-viewing skills
- Produce practical tools based on discourse principles and test them within IMPACT
- Refine discourse principles as resources for the *acct ecosystem*
- Develop, test, and share ethical principles related to governance and fundraising

IMPACT moving forward

Active Experiments: Advocacy Team

Recognizing that not enough resources enable sustained presence of *acct* initiatives in communities, IMPACT has prioritized creating an advocacy team.

Accomplishments

- Cultivated partnerships to advocate effectively for *acct* with current and potential funders
- Developed a plan for strategizing with supportive donors and philanthropic professionals
- Secured funding from individual donors and small foundations for a kick-off strategy session by spring 2020

Plans

- Cultivate additional partners and implement strategies to generate more resources that are aligned with the needs of *acct*

One of the most important levels for bringing about [systemic] change is field building -- coordinating the efforts of multiple organizations and individuals around a common goal and creating the conditions necessary for them to succeed.... The rising tide -- in the form of support for weaker organizations, filled gaps in service, enhanced understandings of peers working towards the same and similar goals, and improved communication and coordination throughout -- lifts all boats.

“Strong Field Framework” by The James Irvine Foundation and The Bridgespan Group

IMPACT moving forward

Active Experiments: Learning Exchange Team

Recognizing that many players in *acct* work in isolation and seek opportunities for connection and exchange, and building on the success of three online exchanges that IMPACT hosted with partners in 2018 and 2019 (one in Spanish), we have established the virtual learning exchanges team to envision and coordinate these global, focused online conversations.

Accomplishments

- Secured funding for six days of learning exchanges in 2019
- Hosted a virtual learning exchange in Spanish in March, 2019, attracting 130 *acct* players from across Latin America

Plans

- Translate summary of March 2019 learning exchange into English
- Host virtual exchange exploring the role of higher education in IMPACT in April, 2019
- Share summaries of learning exchanges with IMPACT players and *acct*
- Convene four additional days of virtual learning exchanges in 2019
- Continue to partner with Peace Direct to conduct future learning exchanges

IMPACT moving forward

Active Experiments: Regional Hubs Team



IMPACT moving forward

Active Experiments: Regional Hubs Team

Participants in IMPACT Design Labs and Virtual Learning Exchanges have expressed strong interest in coordinating face-to-face meetings in their regions to generate ideas for regional hubs. These hubs would all participate in documenting practice and facilitating exchange within regions; they would also address region-specific possibilities, interests and needs.

As a first step, IMPACT established a Regional Hubs Team to support people and institutions to articulate their visions. The team is also exploring possibilities for a fellowship program that would launch multiple regional hubs linking artists, scholars, NGO leaders, funders and policymakers within and across regions, expanding over time.

Accomplishments

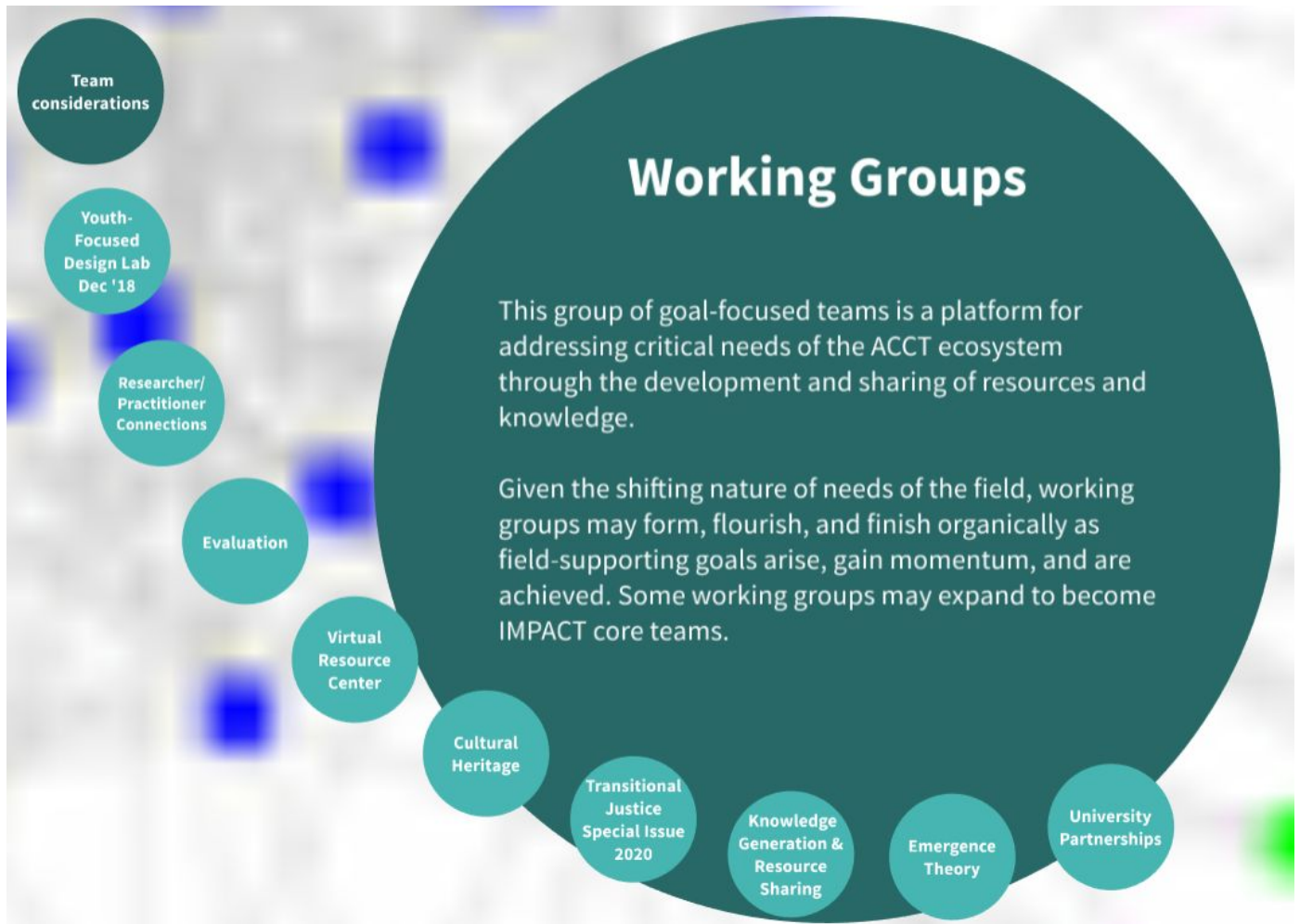
- Identified leaders for initial convenings in eleven regions
- Scheduled one-day meeting in **Southeast Asia** in May 2019, hosted by the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute

Plans

- **Middle East and North Africa:** Gather scholars and practitioners in Cyprus in summer or fall of 2019
- **Balkans:** Convene artists, cultural workers, scholars and activists from eleven countries in 2020
- **Southern Africa:** Research, develop and fundraise for a center for art and politics to open in 2020 in Johannesburg. The center would attract an expansive network of partners from academic, public, and civil society sectors, as well as artists and cultural workers to think globally and act locally.
- **South Asia:** Connect two activist/arts/research organizations with a university in Lahore, Pakistan (all deeply engaged in *acct*), jump-starting dialogue about regional outreach
- **Caucasus:** Launch mapping exercise to identify regional *acct* players
- **East Africa, East Asia, North America, South America:** Discuss gatherings and fellowship models

IMPACT moving forward

Active Experiments: Working Groups Team



IMPACT moving forward

Active Experiments: Working Groups Team

IMPACT recognizes that *acct* players seek opportunities to connect with partners to advance work on a particular issue or topic.

Working groups enjoy the benefits of being part of a larger platform: opportunities to recruit participants, receive feedback on emerging plans and documents, and share results throughout the *acct ecosystem*. These are envisioned as time- and topic-bound groups. In some cases, with infusion of funds, some might develop into new ongoing teams.

Accomplishments

- Completed a [design lab on Youth Participation in IMPACT](#) with recommendations shared with Leadership Circle
- Explored ideal evaluation approaches for the *acct ecosystem* to use

- Submitted funding proposal for collaboration with ICCROM to develop case studies based on trainings of cultural heritage professionals in Syria and Iraq
- Partnered with International Journal of Transitional Justice on [special issue about arts and culture](#) (publication in spring 2020)

Plans

- Resource Sharing Group: curate and disseminate an annotated list of core *acct* books, articles, websites, conference reports and films
- Further develop plans within groups including: Emergence Theory; Strengthening Researcher/Practitioner Connections; Virtual Resource Center Development; and University Partnerships

IMPACT moving forward

Active Experiments: Coordination & Strategy Team

As IMPACT transitions from a phase of planning to prototyping and innovation, its emerging web of teams requires coordination. The Coordination and Strategy Team is responsible for managing the Leadership Circle, strategic planning, resource development, and creating portals and processes through which others can become involved.

Accomplishments

- Proposed and refined web of teams linked by Leadership Circle, aimed at distributing leadership while maintaining coherence and momentum
- Coordinated and documented three Leadership Circle meetings, facilitating communication among teams
- Updated *acct ecosystem* about Design Labs, learning exchanges, and IMPACT developments thru 3 issues of [Peacebuilding and the Arts e-newsletter](#)
- Raised seed funding to sustain IMPACT at a basic level through June 2020
- Created 6 concept notes about specific aspects of IMPACT; researched potential donors

Plans

- Design organizational structures that are accountable to our values as well as to funding and institutional partners
- Convene Leadership Circle and IMPACT team coordinators in person at the [March 2020 International Community Arts Festival in Rotterdam](#)
- Invest in organizational development by strengthening IMPACT's adaptive leadership skills and evaluating IMPACT
- Bring new leaders into IMPACT's web of teams and working groups
- Develop communication strategies to reach the *acct ecosystem* and beyond

I believe flexibility, adaptability, connectivity, accessibility and concrete practical relevance for actors operating directly in the field would be key for such a new global structure... [N]etworks that have the ability to "morph" into whatever is tactically/strategically, politically or financially needed and possible have the best chances to become sustainable and remain relevant for a longer period of time.

Philipp Dietachmair, European Cultural Foundation, in IMPACT Learning Exchange

IMPACT moving forward

Invitations

We invite you to consider your relationship to the acct ecosystem, how you could benefit from connecting to IMPACT, and what you could offer to strengthen the platform envisioned here.

Stay up to date about the emergence of IMPACT and opportunities to get involved. Subscribe to the [“Peacebuilding and the Arts NOW” e-newsletter](#).

Help spread the word about IMPACT. Share this document with people in your networks connected to or interested in arts, culture, and conflict transformation.

Learn more about IMPACT at bit.ly/IMPACTinfo.

Explore how you can invest in IMPACT moving forward. Email IMPACT@brandeis.edu to request concept papers for part or all of IMPACT’s vision.



“I’ve seen a lot of progress in this field...I think it’s a very fertile space for taking this forward in ways that are going to make a real difference in the lives of people around the world...”

- Polly Walker:
<https://youtu.be/GPoA5sjPQ7g>



From the field: How does art bear witness to violence and mobilize people to take action to end it?

The REDress Project addresses inequality and gendered racial violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada and the United States

The REDress Project, an art installation first created by Métis artist Jaime Black of Canada in 2011, calls attention to the scourge of missing and murdered Indigenous women in her country. Empty red dresses of various sizes are the focus. With bodies absent, the multiple **dresses evoke the presence of Indigenous women who have been violated**. In both Canada and the United States, Indigenous women have gone missing or been murdered with little reaction or action from the public or the government. A [2018 report by the United States Commission on Civil Rights](#) states that, compared to the national average, Native American women are 10 times more likely to be murdered and 4 times more likely to experience sexual assault.

When these dresses are hung in various configurations at galleries, museums and universities throughout North America, visitors are invited to ponder the lives impacted by such loss, and the societies that tolerate this violence. Also, through forums on ending this epidemic of abuse, they are **offered information and tools to take action against such violence**. Red is a “calling back of the spirits of these women,” Jaime Black explains, because red is the only color those spirits can see.

Read more in [“REDress exhibit highlights epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women.”](#) (2019) by Lauren Gambino. Photo of REDress Project Kamloops from [REDress Facebook page](#).



“Turning a Bitter Person Sweet” in Liberia to defy ongoing ethnic violence and support movements for peace during Liberia’s civil war

During dire civil conflict, Tokay Tomah, a traditional dancer and singer with the Liberian National Cultural troupe, shifted her artistic focus, composing *“We Want Peace, No More War”*. **Her song became an anthem of the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement, a multi-ethnic, inter-religious group that demanded an end to the 14-year civil war and played a key role in forcing negotiations that led to the signing of a peace agreement.** Leymah Gbowee, the movement’s leader, went on to win a Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts.

Tokay Tomah didn’t just write, perform, and record songs that became part of the fabric of her country’s peace process. Working with the United Nations and non-governmental agencies, she performed as part of anti-war, reconciliation, and anti-sexual violence campaigns. Of ethnic Gio heritage, she’d sing and dance on stage with an ethnic Kranh artist to model how members of these two ethnic communities – pitted against each other at the time – could create beauty and dignity together.

She also **used her fame to encourage child soldiers to lay down their weapons and begin reconciliation and rehabilitation.** Traditional chiefs from each of Liberia’s 16 counties honored her for her peace work in a national ceremony in 2013. In the movie *Because of the War* Tokay shares that, as a singer, she took on a new charge: **“I’m going to pass messages over to people who are very bitter. What can I do to make them to turn sweet?”**

Watch more in *“Because of the War”* (2018), directed by Toni Shapiro-Phim: www.becauseofthewar.org. Photo of Tokay Tomah by JJ Tiziou.

thank you

Thank you for engaging with this material. It reflects helpful comments from readers of earlier drafts. We look forward to seeing these ideas evolve further.

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April 2019



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IMPACT

IMAGINING TOGETHER

PLATFORM FOR ARTS, CULTURE AND
CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

THE
ANDREW W.
MELLON
FOUNDATION



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