

IMPACT

IMAGINING TOGETHER

PLATFORM FOR ARTS, CULTURE AND
CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

Imagining Together / Acting Together Virtual Learning Exchange Summary

The Power of the ACCT Ecosystem

Discussion Board | April 22, 2020

Summary and Reflections by Ameer Shaheed

Co-conveners for this exchange



Partners for this exchange:



IMPACT - the [Imagining Together Platform for Arts, Culture and Conflict Transformation](#) - is a worldwide, values-driven collaboration to design and activate strategies to strengthen the *arts, culture and conflict transformation ecosystem (acct)*.

IMPACT Learning Exchanges are virtual conversations designed to offer unique spaces for sharing ideas, professional learning, and reflection on topics important to the growth and sustainability of the Art, Culture and Conflict Transformation (ACCT) ecosystem.

The Imagining Together / Acting Together Learning Exchange explored key concepts in the ecosystem: **resistance, re-humanization, reconciliation** (drawn from resources of the [Acting Together on the World Stage](#) multimedia educational initiative), and **re-enchantment** - alongside current events like **coronavirus** and **the power of the acct ecosystem**. The conversation took place in both Spanish and English, with each language having its own space. Click here to read the Spanish-language summaries.

This document is a summary of the _____ **Discussion Board**. Here are links to summaries of the other discussion boards:

Resistance	Re-humanization	ACCT Connections and Reflections: Coronavirus
Reconciliation	Re-enchantment	
The Power of the ACCT Ecosystem	Creative Spaces	

1. Participants and discussions by the numbers

Number of participants: 31		Number of comments: 196	
Participant Countries		Number and names of the Facilitators: 14	
Australia	Scotland	Christine Vertucci	Bryson Onwalo
Argentina	South Africa	Rajesh Sampath	Madeleine McGirk
Armenia	Spain	Emilie Diouf	Cindy Cohen
France	Switzerland	Marco Galea	Thom Louis
Israel	Syria	Sabine von Merig	Catherine Filloux
Kenya	Uganda	Susan Kilonzo	Stephen Wicken
Malta	U.K	Juliet Oduor	Emily Forsyth Queen
Philippines	U.S.A		
Participant Affiliations (when reported*)			

**participants were asked to write an optional biography; this information is drawn from how participants in this discussion described themselves*

2. Questions that guided the discussion [copy from the discussion board]

The ACCT ecosystem is powerful. We believe it can be even more effective and transformative when we connect with each other, when we cultivate and strengthen our capacities, and when we advocate for the ecosystem as a whole.

“A Powerful Fire, Transformative Potential of Peacebuilding Performance”

- What actions might you and your communities take to strengthen the ACCT ecosystem as a whole?
- What kinds of resources and support would be needed for your practice to fulfil the potential that you imagine, both during the challenges of this moment and in general?
- What is your dream for the future of the arts, culture and conflict transformation ecosystem?

3. Key Emerging Suggestions

This section contains select information from our analysis of the conversation. It is focused on practical suggestions that could inform future work. The key practical recommendations from the conversation were focused on the need for greater collaboration within the ACCT and broader arts and culture ecosystem. Different types of potential collaborations were discussed. The conversation also saw the emergence of a number of insights and values that could be characterized as guiding principles for further collaborations and future work within the ACCT ecosystem.

3.1 Further collaboration

Below are forms of future collaboration suggested by the participants.

- An online platform to help foster enabling environments, broaden and strengthen the ecosystem, and catalyze collaboration. This could include contacts within the ACCT ecosystem, work being conducted locally, lessons learned, support systems, and collaboration frameworks.
- The development of and participation in ACCT classes (virtual, initially). Innovative, creative, and based on important values and principles. Tapping into the IMPACT network as well as other circles of collaboration.
- Local level festivals focusing on ACCT and the broader role of the arts and culture in society. These may be connected to broader, international initiatives.
- Reflection groups (virtual for the time being), allowing for deeper investigation of the

many topics that emerged from the conversation such as:

- o Articulating the role of ACCT and, more broadly art and culture in society through different lenses, including but not limited to:
 - Philosophy and ethics. This could also be put as Ethics, Aesthetics (i.e art), and Truth (philosophy and science), which are the three Transcendental Socratic principles also known as the Good, the True and the Beautiful.
 - Broader macro-level trends and concerns including covid-19, climate change, inequality, vulnerable and minority populations and perspectives,
 - Different ways of communication: virtual vs real-world, during- and after-lockdown. Potentially investigating the use of diaries and keeping records of this crisis.
 - The power of arts for reconciliation, and different themes that could be addressed therein.
 - Contextualizing messages to different cultural contexts, going beyond a one-size-fits-all response.
 - o New models that depart from top-down elitist competitive/judging approaches in artistic forums to broader celebration while maintaining the pursuit of excellence and high standards
 - o Strategies to improve self-sufficiency of members of the ACCT ecosystem
 - o Strategies to help garner more institutional support for the ACCT ecosystem and the broader arts and culture sphere
 - o Strategies to attract and convince those who might be reticent or averse to the expanding scope and use of ACCT in society.
- Publications related to the topics broached by the reflection groups – a critical one being articulating the value of culture and art and ACCT within the broader social and global context
 - Documenting and sharing compelling individual stories across the ecosystem, aiming to inspire other local activities in other contexts.
 - o Emphasizing individual or local transformations while also acknowledging the global dynamics (causes and implications). Could include short video series, radio series, or podcast. Radio could be particularly good for hard-to-access areas.

3.2 Guiding insights to integrate in the vision of a greater role for ACCT in society

The following points are guiding principles and insights which emerged from the conversation, and which participants would like to see integrated in future work.

- Critiquing dominant narratives and inequalities
 - o Perpetual growth, construction with destructive costs
 - o Associating the arts to philosophy and ethics
 - o Inequality, oppression, minorities and the vulnerable
- Aspects to integrate in the vision
 - o From the local to the global

- o Reconciliation
- o Contextualizing, rendering appropriate and acceptable
- o An “eco-centric” philosophy
- o Beyond art: employing different kinds of creativity
- o Addressing critics
- o Competition vs celebration
- o Different ways of communicating
 - Virtual vs real world connections
 - Diaries
- o The value of stillness, and being present in the moment

4. Creative resources mentioned [add cells as needed]

Activities cited in the conversation	
<p>(English) On Reconciliation: A reading of letters between Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger</p> <p>An artistic means to voice reconciliatory discussions surrounding World War II atrocities and anti-Semitism in a piece based on letters between writers and philosophers Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger</p>	<p>(English) The Lost Diaries of War</p> <p>Dutch World War II diaries</p>
<p>(English) Personal diaries of life during the pandemic to be kept by the National Archives</p> <p>An initiative taken by the National Archive of Malta to start keeping a diary of life during the Covid-19 crisis.</p>	<p>(English) Art in the Time of Coronavirus: The Future is Unwritten - A UN75 Moderated Dialogue</p> <p>A conversation around art in times of crisis was taking place on the same day, led by the World Health Organization for UN75: "Art in the Time of Coronavirus."</p>
<p>(English) Covid 19 Grants and Funding</p> <p>Support for artists being offered in a few countries</p>	<p>(English) UK artists and puppeteers Chris Pirie and Amy Rose (Bocadalupa) have started creating in their back garden, costumed still-life transformations, and short videos for the community.</p>
<p>(Multilingual) Women Wage Peace</p> <p>Example of an artistic and social activity in Israel that helps build social cohesion: “I was thinking about one activity we have in my country - where women gather...to make pieces for an enormous quilt and they can decorate their pieces with anything. while</p>	

<p>taking part in the activity there are discussions and bonds are built all between people who agree we need to stop the violence and find our way to a fair and just agreement that allows all the people in our region to live with dignity, freedom, and safety.” Sharon Benheim</p>	
<p>Resources</p>	
<p>(English) Idealist Link to a global platform for idealists and sharing activities and work</p>	<p>(English) ITAC Another repository of socially engaged artistic projects</p>

5. Thematic analysis

5.1 Overview

Below is a summary of the key themes that were identified in our analysis of the conversation. This is expanded upon fully in the following section 5.2.

- Dream for ACCT: that the arts and culture sectors play a greater role in society and enjoy further support
- Action: greater collaboration and knowledge-sharing in this ecosystem
 - Reflection groups and courses
- Guiding insights to integrate in the vision of a greater role for ACCT and the arts and culture in society
 - Critiquing dominant narratives and inequalities
 - Perpetual growth, construction with destructive costs
 - Associating the arts to philosophy and ethics
 - Inequality, oppression, minorities and the vulnerable
 - Aspects to integrate in the vision
 - From the local to the global
 - Reconciliation
 - Contextualizing, rendering appropriate and acceptable
 - An “eco-centric” philosophy
 - Beyond art: employing different kinds of creativity
 - Addressing critics
 - Competition vs celebration
 - Different ways of communicating
 - Virtual vs real world connections
 - Diaries
 - The value of stillness, and being present in the moment
- Resources: self-sufficiency to help move forward vs greater support to improve focus and quality. Both may be valid, how to best develop them and work together as an ecosystem?

5.2 Key themes

We have divided this section in a manner that is informed by the guiding questions and the themes emerging from the conversations. This includes elements relating to visions for the future, actions to strengthen the ACCT ecosystem, and key guiding principles to integrate in these visions and actions.

NB: Italicized and indented quotations indicate extracts from the discussion board, along with the name of the author. Minor spelling errors were corrected.

5.2.1 Dream: for ACCT to play a greater role in society and enjoy further support

Responding to the guiding question about visions or dreams, many participants expressed hope for greater recognition, integration and support for ACCT as a field. This feeling also extended to the arts and culture more broadly, which was hoped to have a broader and more widely supported role in society going forward.

“My dream is that as an ecosystem we become recognized as so essential to human and planetary well-being that our societies begin to invest more in creativity than in destruction.”

My dream for the future of the arts, culture and conflict transformation ecosystem is that we deliberately make it popular and user friendly to majority of people and uplift it to the level of scientific ways of providing solutions to problems.

This was the clearest vision that emerged from the conversation. While it is broad, the conversation also elicited a number of insights and values that could be characterized as ‘guiding principles’ to qualify this vision with. As a group of participants from widely different regions and with different specializations, having a broad vision with different principles allows for a diversity of context-specific, local actions which, viewed from above, ultimately feed into an emergent global shift. This importance of contextualizing and localizing action was another key theme in the conversation. The full list of guiding principles and insights can be found below in 5.2.3.

5.2.2 Action: greater collaboration and knowledge-sharing in the ecosystem

This section addresses two guiding questions. It was cited by a number participants as a vision/dream for the future, and also consists of actions that can strengthen the ACCT ecosystem. This was also one of the major suggestions to come out of Day 1.

Many members of the group expressed a strong desire to see more knowledge-sharing and collaboration going forward, recognizing and appreciating the opportunity created by IMPACT in convening this group. Sharing lessons learned in a global support network would create a moral support network, and also help inform local initiatives all the while building a broader global

vision. It would also help participants in countries where ACCT is less known to create a more enabling environment. Other participants also recommended conducting local-level ACCT festivals and events, as well as others with international collaboration.

“In communities and countries in which ACCT is still a vague term, I think what we need is more knowledge and research on other's experiences in the field. Also, the help of artists and experts to make it context specific so communities will accept it and allow themselves to be part of it.”

“providing an enabling environment is key in empowering communities. And this includes sharing knowledge on best practices.”

“Maybe a group could be formed for mutual encouragement and support.”

“Something will emerge to continue the connections and the formation of new circles of activists that then interconnect with other circles of activists and onward. The energy that is created will have the power to change the world!”

“IMPACT had a design lab IN 2018 where students from across the globe were brought together in a virtual exchange of their engagements. And indeed the feedback I got from my University students who participated in this was euphoric. I suggest we carry forward what we started with IMPACT and expand it to involve many more institutions and communities.”

“As a member of the Kenya Universities Performing Arts and Film Association, the ideas gathered from this virtual exchange will be shared with the general membership and form a central place in our annual regional and national competitions in staged performances, visual arts, music, radio theatre , film and television. We shall reiterate to our target and key audiences on the importance of IMPACT on the artistic endeavours. More important is the adoption of the theatre of the oppressed for participatory engagements with targeted audiences or groups.”

Reflection groups and courses

Ways of collaborating included working on courses and holding smaller reflection groups to further develop some of the important topics raised during the discussion such as the ethical and

philosophical dimensions to art and its role in society.

“So let us gather together and do deep thinking about what we want to be; how to navigate where we are and where we want to go; what we want to create for the betterment of all humans and our planet.”

“Since there is so much richness in the ACCT ecosystem with the arts and culture, maybe we could collaborate in developing a course that taps our respective gifts and talents into something that is attractive, innovative, creative and based on our social justice principles. This thought to collaborate with some of the IMPACT folks did not occur to me until this moment as I answered this question. There is so much knowledge, wisdom, richness, commitment, dedication, and so much among all of us that we can tap forming different circles of collaboration.”

“I think there are many ...within the temporary community created by this learning exchange who would be interested in virtual classes, and who would also be interested in helping put it together.”

5.2.3 Guiding insights to integrate in the vision of a greater role for ACCT and the arts & culture in society

Qualifying the vision of the ACCT ecosystem expanding and the arts and culture having a wider role in society, a number of key insights, questions, and values emerged from the conversation. Put together, these could be seen as guiding principles for both individual and collective future action across the ecosystem.

Major themes included: helping create a counter-narrative in response to the dominant political order and ethos of perpetual growth; viewing society through an inclusive lens; contextualizing and localizing initiatives; valuing the natural environment.

Critiquing dominant narratives and inequalities

Several participants brought up the role of art in critiquing dominant narratives, constructing new ones, and providing a counterweight to the excessively rationalist, relativist, positivist, materialist, greed and power-focused ethos.

“I feel something is in the process of emerging, something is trying to be born. I see this as the positive of COVID-19, all the suffering and glaring inequalities that have been felt so deeply by so many are calling us to carefully and critically reflect and then act.”

“the monotony of industrial capitalism develops an ethos that becomes natural when we think about programming every aspect of life. Art, I think, is the counter thrust to that dynamic, and can relate to issues of ethics and human rights that need to be addressed now more than ever”

“there is not enough radical rethinking about equity and access in social and physical space...what is the platform and how does it relate to radical social transformation beyond 'normal' processes of law, politics, and social policy.”

- Perpetual growth, construction with destructive costs

A few participants questioned the paradigm of perpetual growth for the sake of growth, in a manner that is fixated on profit and human construction and fails to see the associated destruction of nature and ultimate imbalance to the bigger picture / to the whole.

“[in reference to local construction projects that necessitated removing a lot of the surrounding nature and older construction]...they say that 'you can't stop progress'--well, perhaps it is time that someone did--they have gone beyond what is necessary...they are tearing apart what is beautiful about the place”

“it seems important to acknowledge what you refer to as the 'tearing apart of what is beautiful' and to dedicate ourselves as citizens and as cultural workers to resisting and transforming these patterns of greed and consumption and to ignoring the beauty and the indispensability of the natural world.”

- Associating the arts to philosophy and ethics

Associating the arts, ethics, and philosophy to the larger discussion about society and its direction was considered to be an important way of looking at things in a more balanced, holistic manner.

I think there is space for philosophy to play a role in terms of how art opens up space and

changes it too in the way we think, experience, feel, and respond to ongoing dynamics of marginalization, oppression, and exclusion. There are so many examples of how art plays a role in changing society. Without art, we can't feel and if we can't feel, we are no longer human.

- Inequality, oppression, minorities and the vulnerable

Social inequalities and the plight of vulnerable populations featured strongly in the conversation. Participants identified a number of key areas of concern that should be addressed and accounted for in any new narratives being brought forward.

“at what point in this present day, do we use art to actually show the reality that surrounds us? Some people are only surrounded by the most beautiful things--but there is a large majority that must view some things that perhaps we may not wish to remember--but we must--and art should be reflecting that as well”

“The idea of reminding those surrounded by the most beautiful things that there are many surrounded with horrors both takes me to a favorite saying by Finley Peter Dunne: "Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable".

wanting art/good artists to name things in such a way as to uncover truths and then also do it so that it moves people through the work's creative brilliance.

“...the actual answer has a lot to do with the dominant cultures that have grown and persisted over the past centuries - capitalism, colonialism, white supremacy, cisheteropatriarchy, and so on) When will we stop accepting living this way? Is there currently a door into that possibility? Who will and who won't walk through that door and why?”

This included conversations about the historically and presently oppressed, dispossessed, and vulnerable, including Indigenous peoples across the world and minority groups. The term “essential workers” and their treatment by society was examined in this light.

“the idea of what is an essential task, which people are compelled/forced/coerced to take on this work, and who benefits from this work is all completely tied up in the atrocities of genocide of indigenous peoples and enslavement of African peoples that the US was founded on and continues to perpetuate in different forms today. I can envision a really powerful piece that hinges on this idea of the essential worker over the centuries in the US and what is taken from and given to support them. I'd also want to see an exploration of the resilience of our essential workers.”

Aspects to integrate in the vision

From the local to the global

Participants noted the strong emphasis that should be put on the local, and to the community

before the international and the institutional. As noted above, having a broad vision with different principles allows for a diversity of context-specific, local actions which, viewed from above, ultimately feed into an emergent global shift. This is particularly appropriate for the ACCT ecosystem, consisting of participants from widely different regions and with different specializations. This point was also emphasized on Day 1.

“What strategies can we pursue to attract more resources for work? My immediate thought on ...[this]...is that covid-19 may be a good opportunity to rally together to underline the need for a greater prioritization of the cultural sector, noting the value of the arts - even more apparent than usual in times of lockdown - and the damage caused to this very sector during such times (itself made worse by the relatively low support in even normal times).”

I think now is an important time to consider cultural value of all types in a more systematic way to identify that golden thread between the individual, the community and considerations globally. How do we best emphasise the local first in that conversation?

...to identify the threads between the individual, the community and global considerations, and how to best emphasize the local in such conversations....It seems that perhaps we need to identify and share in compelling ways stories of individual and local transformations, that also acknowledge global dynamics (causes and implications) of these personal and local changes. I'm thinking of short videos, or a radio series or podcast. Perhaps radio is one way to reach out beyond those who have strong internet access?? These stories could be shared not so much to suggest that initiatives can be somehow replicated in different contexts, but, to the contrary, that activities in one context can inspire locally-sensitive activities in other contexts. Are there spaces with this kind of intentional, well-crafted sharing is already taking place?

Reconciliation

Reconciliation flows directly from the above points criticizing inequalities and the suffering of vulnerable populations and minorities. The power of art to help reconciliation is a key element of ACCT, and an important topic in and of itself which was the focus of another panel during the “Imagining Together” exercise. It was raised a number of times in the ACCT panel, including mentions of how it was used in a piece tackling anti-Semitism during World War II, and how it needs to be further promoted in Australia to make First Peoples integration a mainstream topic.

Here in Australia, it is necessary for Reconciliation to become a mainstream issue that embraces both Symbolic and Practical Reconciliation strategies and allow for First Peoples to participate and engage in all areas of public life equally and with honour. The colonising story is a similar narrative to the Hitler story in this case. In all its horror, many have looked away. There comes a time, for a people with a history and a story when forgetting is impossible, looking away an injustice and the re-telling essential.

“I was humbled to participate in an event at the Rose Museum on the theme of 'Reconciliation' - a discursive performative reading of letters between the philosophers

Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger (notorious for his Nazi affiliation). Arendt is arguably the first and greatest critic of Antisemitism, Totalitarianism, Fascism in the 20th century and Heidegger the great philosopher of Being and Time. It was a difficult but rewarding experience because in essence I thought reconciliation between someone like Heidegger- a Nazi- and Arendt who shared years of love and devotion was impossible.”

Contextualizing, rendering appropriate and acceptable

Closely related to the above two points on reconciliation and the pre-eminence of locality is how the ACCT field helps make an approach culturally relevant and context-specific. Contextualizing helps raise awareness, create positive behavior change, and deepen mutual understanding. This was particularly discussed in the context of work being conducted by participants in the African context, and included the example of Maasai communities in Kenya.

In the management of the Pandemic, around the globe it appears that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is being employed.

Taking the example of the Maasai Community in Kenya, who have continued to hold on to their cultural practices and resisted attempts to adopt new ones, concepts being introduced during the Pandemic may equally be resisted by them. Creativity is need when developing intervention strategies.

“it is possible to work from within the culture of the community and and appropriate their performance traditions to engender change...working from within may allow them to interrogate their own practices and move forward in very subtle but significant directions”

An “eco-centric” philosophy

The importance of nature was mentioned by several participants, noting: its centrality to our wellbeing; its primacy over the manmade; encouraging a nested philosophy promoting our connection to each other and to all organisms; and its balance being central to our own existence and avoiding issues like the current pandemic.

I propose an explicit ecosophy for ACCT ecosystem as we seek to transform societies in form of ecocentric approaches to problem solution. We need to restore inter-human, inter-organisms and inter-nature symmetrical relationship. These networks and exchanges with the ACCT ecosystem have to be sustained.

I think we [at IMPACT] ...must agree that ACCT must take an ecological approach, and find ways of enacting principles of reciprocity, not only with other humans but with the planet as well.

“This all ties in to our responses to the pandemic and to make recurrence less likely. It seems like as we increase the human population, and the destruction of animal habitat

has resulted in more human/animal contact and the spread of viruses that animals live with easily but can destroy humans.”

Beyond art: employing different kinds of creativity

ACCT may help underline the value of creativity beyond art, i.e thinking creatively for better problem solving, as clearly highlighted in times of crisis

“the creative work was inside, within and through our families in small and daily acts of survival. ...much of the conversation was taken up with tips from others on how to access welfare, provide essential support to remote, regional and rural communities and indeed how to stay strong, sane and connected.”

“the meaning of being creative changes according to the situation someone is living in. For me the first thing that would come to mind is creating art, but you showed me that people also need to be creative to survive!”

[Highlighting the switching of roles during the crisis:] “on Broadway in New York the applause every night is now for the healthcare workers instead of the artists. ...The healthcare workers perform the same acts every day, the audience applauds them. And the artists are forced to be creative trying to save our souls in unusual ways and with innovative means. The artists become the healers, and the healers take center stage.”

Addressing critics

The ecosystem must also bear in mind people who might be less inclined towards ACCT, or the arts and culture in a broader context. It is incumbent on people wanting to gain further support to address such points of view as well.

I'm curious, as we come towards the end of the exchange and think about the broader ecosystem: how do we expand and draw people in, especially those who don't see arts and culture as 'serious'? What kinds of methods might we use to transmit that fundamental feeling of the deep importance of creating and playing together as a form of conflict transformation?

Perhaps one simple route could be asking those we want to convince about what artistic/creative experiences and expressions they picked up to help them process and survive/thrive through the pandemic. Anyone else have additional ideas for how to convince 'detractors' of the positive power of arts and culture to transform conflict?

Competition vs celebration

Another point of discussion related to the role of competition in arts, culture and ACCT-related forums, festivals, and events. The judging and competitive framework was seen by some to be top-down elitism. Many participants agreed that the focus at festivals should be the celebratory

spirit, recognizing art in its multitudinous forms. At the same time, it was recognized that standards help any art form and its artists in the pursuit of excellence.

“How can we revert to the festival approach and just make it a celebration? It is in this festival- celebration matrix that we can again enhance the social engagement of our arts”

“ [it is important to] reconcile the need for competition to motivate, and the categorization that creates a dichotomy of winners/losers that in the final analysis... Can/ should cultural performance traditions be subjected to a universalized/ homogeneous assessment criteria when these traditions are as heterogeneous as they come?”

“I suppose the "winners" of cultural engagement should be those involved , and top-down value judgment can confuse that. What are some other ways of encouraging competition without labeling one type of expression "winning" over another?”

“I agree that there is something about competition that can undermine the spirit of creativity and reciprocity that animates the acct ecosystem. At the same time, we should not let go of concerns about excellence.”

Different ways of communicating

-Virtual vs real world connections

The importance for ACCT ecosystem members to have good access and presence online was acknowledged, alongside the value of virtual exchanges. At the same time, there was also support for exploring ways to maintain community bonds and connections without information technology, particularly in times of lockdown.

“been reflecting on using platforms such as zoom as artistic stages for solo renditions of creative pieces that address peace concerns. The zoom as stage and auditorium where we appreciate artistic productions is a viable option in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. It would offer opportunities for small group reflections on the actual artistic productions.”

“I am wondering about ways in which ACCT can support and document intra-communal forms of social distancing that do not necessarily involve the use of technology? In other words, how do we document various ways of being together in confinement?”

-Diaries

The question about non-technological ways of communicating led to a discussion about diaries. It started with mention of a proposal made by the National Archive in Malta during the pandemic for people to keep diaries. This led to a discussion around diaries kept during World War II, and the value in keeping personal records of this kind during key historical moments like the one currently

being faced. A few ideas were floated regarding how to best keep journals of the pandemic today, including the pros and cons of telephones and online platforms like twitter.

“The Dutch National Archive is publishing diaries that were kept during WWII. The prime minister, from London, asked the Dutch people to keep diaries of the war, of what they saw, heard and were thinking. The diaries are beautiful and tragic, mundane and riveting.”

“I...wonder about how tough it is to record and share voice memo diaries using cell phones (including the non-smart phones used in many rural areas of the world). I'm thinking of those who struggle with literacy - I wouldn't want their experiences to not be documented (and tend to try to avoid the trap of worshipping the written word Also, in such a digital age with so much surveillance, I'm curious what risks may come with digitally-stored diaries”

“perhaps the curation power and digestible nature of newer platforms could ultimately help us just as easily pull out brilliance and creativity.”

The value of stillness, and being present in the moment

A number of participants touched upon the value of stillness, of being present to what is, as well as the value of simplicity and sufficiency over perpetual growth and complexity. Stillness also has an important function in connecting to reality, to seeing things as they are. This is an important, though often painful, process, as it requires acceptance. Being more still and present may also paradoxically help envision a clearer picture of the future.

“Yes, I think the art of stillness is very poorly practiced in our modern day. Which is a shame because a seemingly unproductive action can lead to flow states, the very height of productivity”

“I would go even further...why not stillness for stillness sake? does it need to lead to productivity? why not just a peaceful nature?”

“I think sometimes it's hard to slow down, to be present deeply to what is, because it would mean feeling so much grief, and possibly despair. Allowing space for these feelings -- which I personally find very challenging -- might help us to figure out what are and are not useful expenditures of resources.”

“This is an interesting paradox perhaps: how to live in the moment, be present to what is, and... live with focus and calmness; and to be living in this present in ways that generate possibilities for things to be better in the future. I think this is the essence of Lederach's concept of the moral imagination. Not so much worrying, not so much needing everything planned out, but holding a vision for the future and being alert to openings and possibilities now”.

5.2.4 Resources: self-sufficiency to help move forward vs greater support to improve focus and quality

A substantive discussion also ensued regarding the guiding question on what resources were needed to support participants' practices. The discussion focused on two key aspects: on the one hand, the importance of self-sufficiency and seeking the help one needs to ensure that progress continues; on the other hand, an enabling environment with sufficient support for the arts and culture reduces the amount of time spent concerned over funding, allowing artists to be more present in the moment and to their craft, thus helping them do their best work.

On the need to be self-sufficient, there were differing opinions about the extent to which it should be the focus.

"May be within our communities of practice, in these difficult economic times, we could start thinking of how we can support our own initiatives. This is likely to take care of the financial resources needed. Further, relying on volunteers from the part of the world I come from, Kenya, is common. In hard times we can volunteers in ACCT engagements and encourage others to do so. With time, the dream of growth and transformation of our communities into peaceful families can be realised."

"This is a conversation I have had with NGO workers here in Davao about how do we avoid becoming dependent on outside funding and then feel that we cannot do anything. How do we help each other move away from this kind of dependence and believe that we have the power/capability to find other ways to support our efforts for social transformation."

"[There is a need for the amount of] funding that it wasn't a constant stress wondering how to fund this work... funding [which] made it easy to have the space to connect with other practitioners more often, rather than being busy wasting time looking for cash to do the next project... More being in the moment."

Others found both to be valid, leaving some open questions about how to maximize on the two strategies and best strike a balance.

"Perhaps both impulses are valid. What can we do, as an ecosystem, drawing on the strengths of resources within our midst? And, at the same time, what can we do, what strategies can we pursue, to attract more resources for work that meets the ethical and (perhaps differing) aesthetic standards we value?"

"I wonder if those here consider those two strategies to be mutually exclusive? How should decisions be made around the "more resources" raised and what challenges and opportunities do they bring? Are there any experiences of models that work particularly well? What existing resources are we forgetting?"

Appendix 1: Summarized Discussion Thread

This is a summary of the key points in the discussion, in their original chronological order.

[Here each person would add a 2-3 page brief with bullet points for each discussion point, chronologically. When a conversation takes place with a few points of view, we can summarize them all in one bullet point. Not included are: 1) non-substantial comments (greetings, what the weather is like, etc.) 2) repetitions of previously mentioned points, unless they add something.

- The dream is for ACCT to grow globally, to be further accepted and invested in.
- Three key aspects to my dream is 1) for better connection between different actors in the global ACCT space, 2) collaboration within the ACCT space for an online course on arts culture and peace-building, and 3) organization of smaller reflection groups to work towards re-imagining a better future
- Art can also play an important role as a counter thrust to the monotony of industrial capitalism, broadening the framework to include ethics and better address human rights.
 - An example was provided of an artistic means to voice reconciliatory discussions surrounding world war II atrocities in a piece based on letters between Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger.
- Reflection groups are a good idea. Discussions about a wider role for arts, including the link to ethics and human rights could also take place therein.
- We are at a time of re-imagining the world and how we operate in it, issues made starker and highlighted by the pandemic.
- Can we document ways of being together in ways that do not necessarily use technology
- Art is a receptacle for suffering, including types of suffering not necessarily acknowledged or seen clearly. It can also help radical rethinking about equity and access.
- ACCT is important for equity, giving voice to the vulnerable and disenfranchised – itself made worse in times of confinement and distancing
- National archive of Malta made a call for people to keep diaries during the crisis. The value and interest of diaries was discussed.
- There is an interesting interface between philosophy and art, and examining the many ways in which art changes society.
- We should also mention amateur and community art, which has received even less support from state and non-state agencies than the professional world. But it is nonetheless important, including for community wellbeing.
- We need to find ways to help artists move increasingly to the virtual sphere
- It is an important time to look at what it is to be human. In some places, we are seeing less practice of key values such as empathy and solidarity. On the other hand, some artists are being vocal against this retraction of values, as seen with some cartoonists and writers for example.
- Greater importance needs to be given to reconciliation in Australia, to make reconciliation with First Peoples a greater priority.
- Construction projects and activities like hunting are continuing despite lockdown in Malta.

This can make one less hopeful about the balance of values in a post-pandemic world, despite hoping it would put more emphasis on creativity rather than destruction of nature.

- How is creativity playing out for First Nations people in light of covid-19? Does access to technology affect this?
- We held a Zoom version of an Indigenous roundtable. The need for creative work was mostly in terms of addressing practical concerns being faced by many, including: caregiving for family members; finding work or sources of financial support and grants, how to deal with low bandwidth and communications technologies; mental health and wellbeing concerns and solutions...
- Meaning of being creative depends on context. The example from the Indigenous roundtable shows the importance of being creative to find solutions in hard time – creativity for survival.
- On different perspectives and shifting definitions: essential health workers are now being applauded on Broadway streets, while artists are at home trying to come up with ways to help heal people from the inside
- In terms of fundraising and support needed in these times, a discussion ensued about the relative roles of making do without external funding (including raising money, working with volunteers etc), allowing one to move to address key ACCT issues at hand – vs how to look for support. Examples were provided of work in Kenya with student movements raising money, working with volunteers to keep community theater activities going. This is particularly important in contexts with a poor enabling environment, and where the continuity of the work is important to achieve ones goals (as in the case of community theater for peace-building).
- A one-size-fits-all approach is being used in certain approaches to the pandemic, without always taking local realities and differences into consideration. ACCT can help translate and make messages more accessible and acceptable.
- Zoom was successfully used in examples of ACCT activities for peace building in Kenya – solo renditions of peace building pieces using zoom as both stage and auditorium. It is viable for covid-19 related work going forward.
- The Maasai community is a good example of one which has been resistant to external influence. Interventions seeking to help them need culturally sensitive strategies to combat this reticence. Art can help in this matter.
- One should set up arts and peace festivals at local / national level where art emerges as a key element to peace building. We hope to develop this line in Kenya.
- It should be possible to work effectively with the Maasai [and by extension, other groups who are resistant to foreign cultures] if you work from within the community.
- In countries where ACCT is less known, sharing experiences from other countries is important, best practices would help along with other steps to create an enabling environment for such [discussion between participants from Syria and Kenya]
- Would anyone working on the ground like to keep in touch for mutual encouragement and support? We are facing difficulties locally for funding and support.
- Diary example is very interesting way of keeping an account of any changes taking place in this time for posterity's sake.
- Concrete examples were provided of work taking place in Uganda (ARLPI) in terms of strengthening ACCT ecosystems: 1) working with primary school peace clubs across different media and activities, 2) extending out to community engagement using various forms, and 3) documenting this and trying to popularize its use in a wider context.
- Resources and support would help reduce time spent searching for it and give more for

the work at hand and being in the moment [particularly important for the creative process]. Also enables a wider reach and engagement across multiple channels and platforms.

- Reiteration of the two approaches, self reliance and greater support. How can we do this as an ecosystem? What strategies can pursue to get more support, while also bearing in the mind the aesthetic and ethical standards we may have?
- Importance of being in the moment, in the present. How to live in the present in a way that hold a vision for a better future while being alert to the possibilities in the now.
- Appreciate the term ACCT *ecosystem*. Propose an explicit “ecosophy”, one that understands the correlation and interconnected webs of relationships between people, other living organisms, and broader nature.
- Following from the above, there is also much to learn from indigenous knowledge systems.
- Similar conversation to the IMPACT one currently taking place with the WHO In case it may be of interest. "Art in the Time of Coronavirus. [see section 3.2 Links]
- Discussion surrounding the role of competitive frameworks, having “winners” at arts festivals and gatherings. On the one hand, it can impose a rigid hierarchy on the quality of work, supporting the elitist ethos of the judges, as opposed to celebrating diversity and promoting grassroots activities. Preference for festivals remaining focused on the celebration of art rather than competition. On the other hand, competition can help promote the pursuit of excellence.
- We wish to carry on the kind of work conducted at the IMPACT design lab in 2018, including more partners and communities.
- We are conducting in the Serengeti ecosystem in Kenya, with several important ecological considerations including wildlife, human encroachment, pollution, water levels, loss of indigenous knowledge... Artists need to espouse and adopt “eco-centric” viewpoints going forward.
- A mental shift from “competition” to “festival” would be welcome.
- Coming back to the resources question. Covid-19 has highlighted the important role and need for art, as well as the heavy price being paid by artists during lockdown. It is a good time for the sector to rally together, clearly articulate its multifaceted value, and lobby for greater support.
- Commemorating Earth Day 2020 [the day of the conversation], what can we each do to make a better world? Why can we not seek peace for ourselves, in our own homes, why are we so frustrated by the call to stay at home?
- Art of stillness can be very illuminating, and even yield to greater insight and productivity, while being an important end in and of itself. No need to always innovate, produce, grow. Such goals are questionable. There is value in simplicity.
- Deciding on winners at an arts and peace festival somewhat marred the spirit of the festival. How to rank and categorize something as heterogeneous as art? An important part of this may be based on who is actually judging. What are other ways of encouraging competition without judging?
- There is an interesting example in Israel where women work together on a quilt, all the while engaging in rich discussions that are amenable to conflict resolution and social cohesion. Sharing of a page to bring together different “idealist” ideas and activities across the world [see section 3.2].
- We request a forum to stay connected and share the different activities being done by members of this discussion. In response, a link to ITAC [see section 3.2].

- I am concerned over local development in my community, love of construction and money and growth affecting what was seen as a better, simpler community set up. Concern that this type of progress is destructive.
- Coming back to the question about resources, what strategies work well?
- It is important to better articulating the value of ACCT and art and culture more broadly, in a systematic way. Emphasizing the different levels, individual, communal, global. How to emphasize the local first?
- There are fair concerns over competition, but pursuit of excellence is also important. Link to Acting Together discussion on how artists define excellence in their different fields. How do we think about excellence in ACCT? how to create opportunities for reflecting on this further?
- So much progress can be destructive. Food for thought on Earth Day. Important to acknowledge this destructive tendency, tearing apart what is beautiful. We must help bring back the importance of what is beautiful. Also of the connection between these issues – growth, population, destruction of nature, encroachment on natural spaces – and the pandemic. How can such an awareness inform our artistic practices?
- On silence, it can be difficult to be still and to listen deeply because of how much pain may be present – but allowing space for such experiences is very important.
- Regarding how to put the emphasis on the individual in terms of the broader changes we are discussing, could be interesting to document and share compelling individual stories. A short video series, radio series, or podcast could be interesting in that regard. About individual or local transformations that also acknowledge the global dynamics (causes and implications). Radio particularly good for hard to access areas. Hopefully such individual stories could inspire other local activities in other contexts.
- In terms of discussion groups, it ^would be nice to have small zoom groups in which such discussions could continue.
- Further details on Dutch government having shared diaries from WWII.
- Some interesting examples of artists working around lockdown include a puppeteer couple working out of their garden in the UK and calls for window performances in France [see 3.2]
- Musing about a shift of values and subject in art in the modern era. As nature degrades we do not capture that degradation, but rather focus on material things.
- Presenting some links to the Dutch diaries and the artists doing things from home [see 3.2]
- How to expand the ACCT ecosystem, and how to reach out about its value to those who are less inclined towards it?
 - Listening, dialogue, engaging
 - How can the arts help build bridges, including to those who are less inclined towards it as something with broader social use.
- At the same time, the pandemic has brought us back in touch with families or other co-inhabitants, and helped us reconnect in more creative ways across social distance with others. Reconnecting with nature, simple pleasures, and slowing down.
- How can we help improve access to these kind of discussions and ACCT to those without the means?
- On how to contact those who are less inclined towards seeing the use of arts, might be good to find out about the art that they currently have in their lives, especially during the pandemic, which may have increased the appreciation of certain art forms
- Some discussion around the term “essential worker”, how it creates a divide, can be linked to inequality and even subjugation, with reference to the First Nations genocide and

slavery.

- How to have more focus on what is beautiful and in the image of nature? When will we stop living in this way (the destructive manner being criticized earlier)?
- Essential workers are linked to these broader systems of oppression. Would be nice to see artwork on the history of essential workers in the US, what they've given vs what they've gotten, and to also see something surrounding their resilience. They are also very maltreated in some respects. Hope arts can shed more light on that and tearing apart the term.
- Diaries make one think about how good it can be to preserve records of creative expressions used to get through hard times like these. What obstacles get in the way of thinking about such feelings and experiences? Such as perfectionism and elitism of artsy culture.
- Need to take time to reflect to do something like those diaries. Does our society have that time or are we too used to jotting down things in a rush, tic-toc style. Or perhaps this might help make them more pithy and poignant?
- How to document these experiences for the non literate? Or those without technology?
- Art needs to show the reality surrounding us fully, including those we do not wish to face.
- Artists to help uncover truths, and do so in a manner that is compelling and touching. Also very powerful when done publicly
- How can we work as a community / ecosystem? To help the individuals and the collective
- Reiteration of art as truth, and of the need to live simply, recycle, etc.
- Support for virtual ACCT classes, both to join in and put together

Appendix 2: Select quotes from participants detailing current work

Strengthening the ecosystem

“At ARLPI we are strengthening ACCT ecosystem through three means that are intertwined, one is establishing and working with primary level school peace clubs who engage in debate, music dance and football competition all based on peace themes with the focus of instilling in the young ones the culture of peace and none violence. Then, being creative in using local drama to conduct community sensitizations on land conflicts, gender based violence and general nonviolent means of conflict resolutions. The dramas are acted by volunteer peace committees established and trained by ARLPI. Finally, documenting and popularizing the use of the traditional conflict transformation processes like “mato oput” and others to be employed by the young generations in resolving conflicts.” Francis Lokwiya

Working within an ecological framework

“I currently work within the Mau-Mara- Serengeti ecosystem associated with the greatest wildebeest migration in the Maasai Mara Game Reserve. We also have the greatest water tower, May Forest, with over 400,000 hectares from where the Mara River which all the carnivores and herbivores rely on. Over the years this ecosystem has been threatened by human encroachment, political interference biodiversity loss, human-wildlife conflict, pollution and climate change. These ecosystem is also inhabited by the Maasai Community who through their pastoral way of life have managed to conserve their community. The Ogiek community have also lived in the Mau Forest protecting the ecosystem. With modernization, there is loss of indigenous knowledge in terms of the fauna and flora cleared for construction of buildings. This forms the basis of ecocentric approaches that I insist that any artist should adopt. We need to strike a balance so that we don't destroy all our ecosystems.” Bonface Isalambo

