

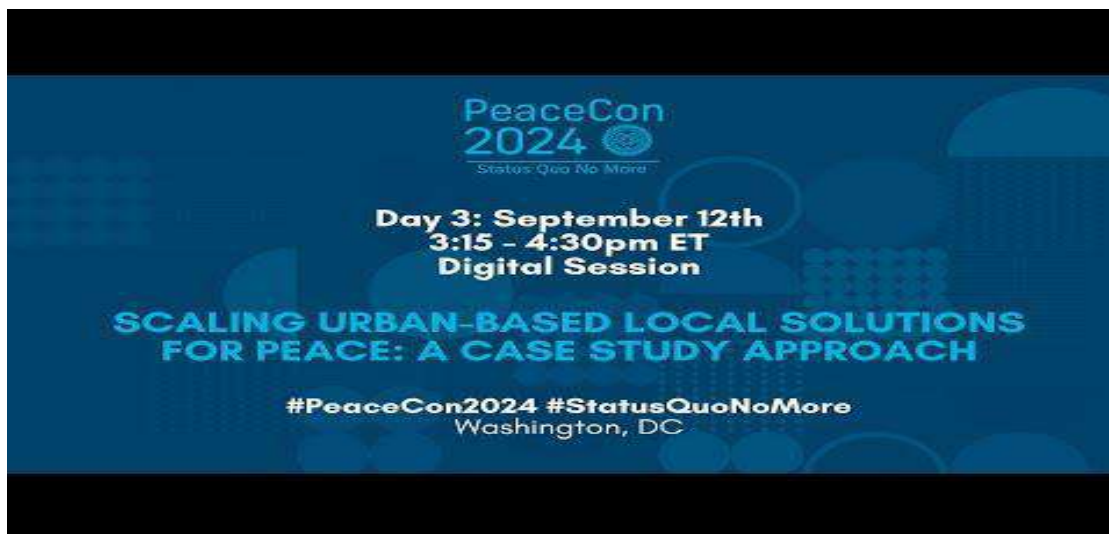
Scaling Urban-Based Local Solutions for Peace: A Case Study Approach

Day 3: September 12, 2024

3:15 PM – 4:30 PM / Concurrent Sessions

Scaling Urban-Based Local Solutions for Peace: A Case Study Approach

For the recording of the session: <https://youtu.be/d37a7zJE5GU?feature=shared>



Beyond established and proven peacebuilding routes like dialogue and diplomacy, many different avenues for building peace and overcoming conflict exist. This workshop will explore scalable, locally-led, evidence-based peacebuilding interventions around arts, nature, and science in a series of case studies from the North-Rhine Westphalia Region of Germany. The presentation will discuss, for example, the use of urban peace gardens that promote intercultural exchange, well-being, and creative and regenerative healing with nature to advance community peace. The session will also explore the use of peace platforms such as the one in Essen, Germany, which empower non-traditional actors to take power in local peacebuilding.

Speakers:

- Aslı Telli, Academics for Peace, Wits University
- Burcu Eke-Schneider, Independent Peace and Conflict Researcher and Peace Worker
- Andreu Ginestet, Independent Artist
- Rochus Ehlen, Independent Life-Trust-Coach®
- Hassan Harati, Peace Activist



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

Dr. Aslı Telli:

Welcome everyone - welcome to the last day and last session of the PeaceCon 2024. We are really glad to have been part of it and hopefully to continue through the discussions, and also the Impressions that we've got all throughout the three days.

We are here with you as a Peace Workers Collaborative. And we have been working together for a few years, some popping in and out and some coming in later but you know, in our own corners of the world, we had been working for a long time for peace and about peace. But we just happen to be now living in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany and this region of Germany is one that is emblematic of what can be done about peace work, because there are a lot of diverse communities living in Germany.

Especially in this region there is a long history about that. This also brings into the perspective different needs of those communities and inspirations for the global issues. We are bringing our intellect and experiences and curiosity together for transformative work into peace, basically into peacebuilding and co-creation of peace. And we are trying to do that at micro-, meso- and macro- levels.

Our micro-level is going to be our example from a local perspective. This would be what we're doing in our own cities, even our neighborhoods localities, with the communities that we're engaged with. And we are also implementing all these activities with the catalyzation of Art, Nature and Science. This is a transdisciplinary scope that we have and we are working on evidence-based solutions. We are looking for solutions together with the communities, solutions that come out of the communities. The meso-level is basically the regional level so we also try to take our solutions to talk at regional levels with different actors.

The macro-level is as you can imagine the trans-local and the international level. We also have different hats in the group with our international experiences and we are also very much open to hearing what is happening in other parts of the world, and how we can somehow get inspiration by those experiences.



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

So once again we are very happy to have you here with us and looking forward to the discussion and sharing of experiences. I am Aslı Telli. I am a peace worker, also a knowledge worker, let's say. I am a researcher of media, communications and social informatics and have been doing community work for a long time, and very happy to be part of this group, for the structural changes that we are aiming for in a common future.

I have in this group colleagues, doing very valuable and unique work that we will try to present. I will be presenting humbly within the first instances of the dialogue for the transformative dialogue for positive peace.

Burcu Eke-Schneider is also with us with her ecological solutions for peace transformation. Burcu is a longtime peace activist. She also worked in the field of journalism and she is a catalyst also for the different solutions at micro-, meso-, and macro-levels. Her perspective is going to be through the Peace Garden. She has been working for the last few years on an urban Peace Garden in the city of Wuppertal in the North Rhine-Westphalia region and we have been really learning a lot from her experience and trying to combine our own intellect and our own vision into her inspiring work.

Rochus is also with us. Rochus is our life coach. His own expertise and interest is on inner peace and well-being.

We also have dear Hassan who's been doing all the heavy load and preparing all these very nice visuals for you and for the whole group and so he's doing very valuable work together with his colleagues and also inviting us all along in the peace platform that they now call the Peace Hub in Essen. Essen is also a very industrialized city in the North Rhine-Westphalia region, where we are all coming from.

So it's really interesting to see all those different actors, with their own capabilities, skills combining in a Peace Platform in such a city. It also has had a long history of peace and conflict work; Essen has also hosted a lot of migrant workers. In that sense you know these plural perspectives can provide different visions for the whole world.

So our last but also very interesting and versatile speaker is Andreu. He is here with his artistic vision. But he has also been a silent diplomat for a very long time, a solution-oriented silent diplomat and interested in the process because he's an artist. Through his work, he explores preventing conflict by art-based solutions. He's been working with young people within the last few years, and he'll be sharing his experiences in that regard with us. So, this is the different let's say focus of the group and we hope to somehow ignite your interest and discussion all along, while talking about this.



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

We also have many local partners; mostly Burcu has engaged with, so she will explain the alliances to you now.

Burcu Eke-Schneider:

Thank you for the nice introduction. We are in Germany, and it is 9:00 PM here. Our kids are asleep, but we want them to sleep peacefully. We are working hard every day to give them a nice future.

I originally lived in Ankara, and then Istanbul. After active participation in the Gezi Park movement there, I then studied Peace and Conflict Studies with Johan Galtung, Norman Finkelstein, Jorgen Johansen, Gal Harbat, Wolfgang Dietrich, and many other world-famous professors. In 2017, I started to work for Transformation, when I moved to Wuppertal, Germany. Here I implemented the Peace Garden with diverse communities and voices...a real laboratory for transformation. As part of the scientific peace process of raising general awareness about sustainability and just living with a focus on the Wuppertal area, I made contact with various communities...and especially with the Alevi community...in the beginning of 2020. This contact was preceded by a two-year actor-analysis process. I also invited the Wuppertal Institute, which is one of the world's most qualified institutes about energy transformation and the environment, to work for...and to be part of...a constructive change. In February 2020, the Peace Garden was opened. This was an important step in raising awareness regarding innovative methods of transformative peace science.

I also introduced transformative peace science terminology at Humboldt University in 2022. The original idea was to build bridges between the various actors and communities in the city where they were living, under the aspect of just sustainability. The aim was to create a stronger connection to the environment, while at the same time, finding a constructive denominator in between people. Which was, simply, soil. It nicely provided dialogue for creation of a common ground and a common future. Which could then raise awareness of this neglected aspect, and at the same time, contribute to the strengthening of the communities in the cities of all stakeholders.



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

We are a group of peace thinkers. A pioneering group, implementing transformative peacebuilding methods. Transforming Peace Science. Creating a 3rd side. And advancing - micro -meso and -macro structural changes. For a common future.



"Local Partners" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

Utilizing a local-partners' peacebuilding process, we are able to meet the diverse actors in a city, even those who hadn't met before. But after our peacebuilding process, they started to create a connection. Creating Peace Gardens is a metaphorical symbol of such a just transformation, emphasizing the establishment of innovative order and structure...without discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization.

A narrow version of the peacebuilding term has begun to appear within the bodies of the UN, the African Union, the European Union, other regional actors, the international legal system, and the international financial institutions. We believe that peace can be spread all around the world: Through teachers, artists, local thinkers, and anybody else who would like to be involved. We do not need homogenic structures for Peace to grow. We are now transforming peacebuilding with such an approach. Let's create these Peace Gardens together.

Mostly in these local-partner combinations, you do not see peace institutes being part of such a process. And that is because, we just do not have enough peace institutions in the cities or in the universities. So how can we directly activate the communities to become a peace-builder or peace-mediator or peace-worker...acting like social workers or teachers? Actually, this process is already growing by the help of transforming peace science according to humankind's relationship with nature and each other. We are finding nature-based solutions to the drivers of injustice in urban spaces.

And what are the major drivers of injustice in urban spaces? These include:

- Exclusive access to the benefits of urban sustainability;
- Infrastructure racialized or ethnically-exclusionary urbanization;
- Uneven environmental health and pollution patterns;

- No or toxic participation in urban planning;
- Neoliberal growth and austerity urbanism;
- Material and livelihood inequalities;
- Uneven and excluding urban intensification and regeneration;
- Unfit organizational structures;
- Lack of effective brokerage;
- Weakened civil society.

*These data were taken from UrbanA's collective work two years ago, which can be seen at: <https://sustainablejustcities.eu/>.

Many conflicts...like viruses, ecological degradations, economic downfall, racism, and other forms of injustice...are all interconnected. And if they are all interconnected, we can use intersectional methods to build Positive Peace. Which can be defined here as: The attitudes and behavioral changes in the institutions and structures that create Peace and sustain society. In such a local-partners' example, you can see that people start to work for peace together, even though they have lots of limitations or problems between them. But because they believe in peace, it means that we do not always need "experts" intervening in all issues. Communities can directly find peace even when they do not have external interventions. Experts do not always know more than local people or communities. Local people can work for their future if there is room or space for peace and change. Additionally, nature-based solutions can play a huge role in such a process, and heal the heavy burden related to our disconnection from nature and each other. We will continue to explain this new peacebuilding-process initiative later on. There I will explain in greater depth, how we can spread the transformative peacebuilding methods to institutions, education systems and communities...after Asli's presentation.



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

Dr. Ash Telli:

We'll start with my take on the alliances through the language of Peace, then Burcu will present the ecological solutions for peace transformation with her Peace Garden project, then Rochus will take his turn with his inner-peace and well-being perspective as a Life-Trust-Coach®, followed by Hassan with the Peace Hub project and finally, Andreu, our artist and silent diplomat will speak about preventing conflict by art-based solutions.

So it's my turn with the language of peace and how we're building alliances, how we're striving towards new alliances through the language of Peace so I can actually start telling my story through the academics for peace movement because it's been a significant turning point in my life. In Turkey there has been a Kurdish civic front for the last few decades and we, as academics for peace, came to terms with the escalation of the conflict as well as the urgency of a transformative approach in the region. The state and the military intervened and directly imposed violence on the communities that are on the ground and in the grassroots. It was hard to grasp through biased media what was actually happening in the borders of the country but once we visited there as knowledge workers seeking peace, we wanted to be a part of that reality to understand what was going on. Thus, we made a wide call for peace to build alliances on the ground. Through scientific work, but also practice; it's been a great learning experience to create the language of hope during conflict.

I will also continue the story in terms of the very specific projects and life stories that I have also faced afterwards after we signed that petition and got dismissed from our positions back in Turkey starting from 2016. It was interesting to hear about the sidewalk talks project that came before the peace bench project because the sidewalk talks go back to 2014 back in San Francisco when psychologists and social workers and therapists became interested in resolving conflicts out in the streets. Diverse groups when they face certain problems, they think that they are unique in their own problems. Whereas if they can listen to each other's

stories, they would see that they actually go through very similar issues. Thus, they came to these therapists and reached the conclusion that if they went out on the streets and started listening to each other, they would not feel alone anymore. So that's how the sidewalk talks project started.

Before I signed in the peace petition for the liberation of the Kurdish civic front, I had the chance to do a field trip to South Africa to Cape Town and I just saw that the sidewalk talks idea had already traveled to Cape Town within those two years instance; I think South Africa was actually the 23rd country that this idea had traveled to and up until now it adds up to 42 countries. This is also a milestone in the sense that Nelson Mandela was born in the year of 1918 and the centennial anniversary of his birth in 2018 was welcomed with a peace bench that was installed in Oslo in front of the Peace Forum building. The bench in Oslo reads, "The best weapon is to sit down and talk". The Arc design of the peace bench allows it to balance if at least two people sit right in the middle of it at the same time. Sitting at the edges would risk the balance just as in peace negotiations. This for me was an aha moment for the positive peace discourse and designing peace from scratch. It was also interesting to see how this thread started from San Francisco, carrying me towards Cape Town and then traveling back to Turkey to actually focus on co-creating peace on the ground. All these ideas about the sidewalk talks and the peace bench, we have tried in different locations but a specific location in Turkey, Amed (Diyarbakir), a central Kurdish town. We also tried it in Cologne during the prep meeting for World Peace Day, so now as an exile knowledge worker, I'm working with diaspora communities on their non-violent communication skills.



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

This is how I would envision constructing the new language of positive peace: With equitable resources; meeting basic needs without corruption, enabling free flow of information for local well-being and achieving human dignity with social capital towards emancipation. Hence, we should be able to talk about peaceful conditions even when we think we are already at peace.

Besides, this should not be enforced on us by institutions or states, but arise from our own respective conscience as part of our local realities. Such social capital can only exist if we can go beyond disciplinary thinking and learn from our socio-ecological setting. This brings me to the unique idea of the Urban Peace Garden for which I invite my colleague, Burcu to speak about.

Burcu Eke-Schneider:

I do not want to use up all of the time, but do want to share what happened over the last seven years in this transformation process. First, I learned German. Learning a local language is not easy. But it is important that we do this. We need to respect all mother-languages. It does not matter where we come from. We are all equal. More than 120 or 130 cultures are living in the cities. As a result, we can only create dialogue...using the local mother-languages. And only through dialogue, can the trust-process start.



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

In the Peace Garden, we exchanged knowledge with a variety of groups. We learned from each other through intercultural and interreligious dialogue. All while growing organic vegetables, fruits, and herbs. And learning about local biodiversity, strengthening women, and changing consumption behaviors which relate to sustainability and just transformation. This was implemented with people from Bosnia, Czech Republic, Syria, other local vulnerable groups, and some local representatives also participated. Like the Police Department, who sent people to us. They were completing their duties as social workers, through work in the Peace Garden.

How can we heal society in the Peace Gardens? All these communities had experienced war, violence or destructive effects of communism, capitalism, neoliberalism. There is no end to all the "-isms". To heal these traumas passed down from generation-to-generation epigenetics, the idea of creating a Peace Garden was born. Every city needs a Peace Garden. Which we will now scale to other cities. For instance, Essen, which also has the need to reduce violence in its urban environment. Nature is our denominator. The Peace Garden uses nature-based

solutions as a dialogue method for a sustainable and just future in an urban context, and ecological guidelines for solving problems *in* nature and *with* nature. We started at the micro level with peacebuilding methods, and created these kinds of Open Spaces ideas according to transformative peace science. This changed the gender-equality decision-making processes within vulnerable groups and a variety of stakeholders. The trust-building process for social justice was also important. It triggered micro-level individual change in neighborhoods. For a transformation example about meso-level peace initiatives in the region, what you hear and see now is this Peace Workers Collaboration. And at the macro-level, Peace Garden works with international institutions and policy makers in a continuing process.

Notably, we published the world's first evidence-based policy brief during Germany's Presidency of the G7 in 2022, showcasing evidence-based literature and its origins. These new approaches do not come out of the blue. We are working for change. A lot of transformation is happening now. Like the evidence-based policy brief, a case study approach idea. Another example: now we start to speak about communities; now we start to speak about localization.



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

How can we change our thinking towards solution-oriented thinking, and how can we work with interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary methods? Solutions are not just coming from out of thin air. There should be a peacebuilding part. And all of them are part of the transformation process. What I can say now, is the key learning from this exercise: The greatest chance for success in any transformation, is through creation of an individual-level force. Such as the desire to have a societal impact, develop solutions, or to do something valuable and meaningful as finding Peace. When people feel valuable, they become part of a change where they live. Even peace workers and peace builders are not living in Peace. Are they always good to their family members? I am skeptical. Are they always good to their neighbors? I am skeptical. This process starts with us, first, at the individual level.

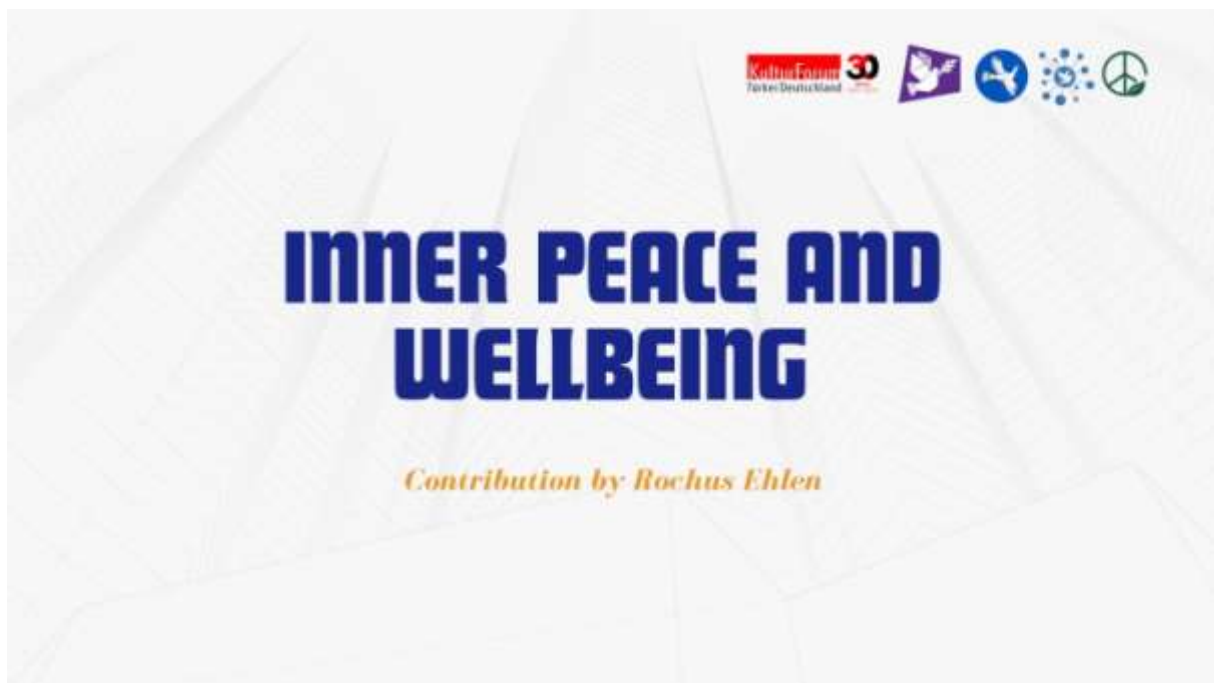
Here is the roadmap for transformative peacebuilding and how we work with the communities *in* nature and work *with* nature. And, what were the results of this transformative peacescience process? We first published an evidence-based policy brief during Germany's G7 presidency. It was called "Sowing Seeds for Peace: Micro-level Peacebuilding Methods Towards a Just and Sustainable Urban Transformation Process". We also started collaborating with diverse disciplines, and initiated meso-level scientific and artistic approaches. Even Germany is not so well-known for peacebuilding. Nevertheless, Germany opened a space for us. Which meant working for peace in our cities' transformation...IS important. This was also a huge transformation step for Germany. We also created our alternative press media. Media is one of the biggest, and most destructive, role-players. Its language escalates everything. We wrote about how wars happen if there is no investment in sustainability and a culture of Peace. We concluded that we must end in peace through alternative media approaches. While we are doing such things, we remain in contact with the communities. We are in the Peace Garden. We are working with people, and publishing our works on social media. I participate in a lot of conferences. The transformation community does not fully understand how peace can grow, how people can work for peace, and I am just sharing this knowledge as a professional peace worker. I explain: There is a group of people that know how to work in the conflict regions, and know how to analyze the situation. The transformation thinkers or groups lost their orientation with the ground, because they were so excited to start a new Renaissance. There is a thought that Europe will be the next step, and it will be the change-maker.



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

Of course, it is not yet a reality. For now, it is time for us to build bridges between transformation, transformative thinking, peacebuilding, and peace science, for a common future. We should come together and work together. There are many examples of how we use Peace with climate-change connections and peace education. We explain how the new peace architecture can grow. But what does it all mean? How can we use both formal and informal education models for communities and institutions? But many things need to change.

We have already started in Germany. Many institutions have started to change, and they have a new identity and name. They have already started to work for new approaches, so it is a kind of process to find solutions for the root cause problems found in the cities. We are building such a community. We need help from multiple scientific disciplines, because natural science has no connection with social science. Natural science worked thousands of years with empirical data, but social science lags behind. Peace scientists do not know nature like the natural scientist, so we are now bringing both sides together and building new bridges. Additionally, these scientific disciplines now also include non-academic actors with a transdisciplinary approach, to frame and address the problems and to find solutions together. It is a Creating Peace Gardens logic, and is already implemented in a city which is working together with its communities. For further Information please see: www.urban-peace.org



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

Rochus Ehlen:

Good evening, good afternoon however.

Well I am here to help us to remember! I would like to share with you some basics in peacebuilding and then I invite you to open your heart.

So let me tell you a story:

I was about 12 years old, standing with my mother in my room in our family's house. And I was telling her, "if there is a God out there who created this Earth, who created this universe, this whole world - once I stay in front of him, I'll asked him: who created you?"

And even though I was raised up and socialized Roman-Catholic, my mother, my parents let me be free in my thoughts.

My parents allowed me to think big, to ask questions others people would maybe not do.

My parents always gave me a safe place!

And so I traveled through the world. I met hundreds of people, listened to hundreds of stories. Exploring Life and knowing whatever happened: I can come home. Because my parents and my family are always there for me – and so I do. And they gave me a safe place at my home !



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

Now I have got four questions for you. Just grab a piece of paper a pen and write down your answers just for yourself.

The first one is: “Did you have a safe place as child at your home?”

Yes or not is good enough for an answer.

The second question is: “Where in your life did you find a safe place outside of your home?”

Write down what comes first.

The third question is: “Are you able to give other people a safe place in your presence?”

And the fourth question is: “Do you know that you can have a safe space always with you?”

It's deep inside of you.

In our approach we offer safe spaces. We invite to feel well, being seen and to be who you are. And while being with us people sometimes feel their first time: being with others and no need of fear.



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

And now that leads us to our next tool: Dream-Points.

In our Dream-Points we invite to dream of a better world. We encourage to dream big, be brave but focus on the good and the positive pictures. Sustainable over generations!

And let me clarify something: don't *think* about a better future. This is scientific. It's only rational, here, in your brain. Dreaming is emotional!

Dreaming, if you can feel deep inside of you what you think - then you are in.

And then not only dream it. Write it down, paint it, visionary it and very, very important: talk to other people about it including your feelings to it, what you feel by this vision of your future.

That is a way these dreams can come to reality. And we take our next step in evolution.

Development of mankind has two roots:

- one we experienced the last 10,000 years and we still do. One was about the limbic system and driven by fear by escape, by "eat and being eaten", harm and whatever.

That leads us to learn how to react on something.

- the other one which becomes more and more visible in these days is a peaceful way of development driven by longing for well-being.

And there is no doubt about it that we are at the edge of a new age. The age of materialistic and greed will find its end. A growing amount of people of the upper third of the green meme is switching into the second tier the yellow meme referring to the Spiral-Dynamics.

So the further development of mankind follows the path of intellectual and consciousness revolution which means a new way of thinking and becoming aware of what life is about.

And it is all about relationship!

So our coaching supports our presented approach of peacebuilding activities in many ways.

And remember one thing: all we do is not only for us - it is for those coming after us!



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

Hassan Harati:

Building a Garden of Peace: A Vision for Collaboration

Good morning, everyone.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the Peace Hub. I'd like to start by sharing a little about myself to provide context for my journey and the work we do. I grew up in Lebanon, a country profoundly affected by the 2006 war. Even as a child, I often wondered why war existed. At the time, I thought it might be due to Lebanon's economic struggles. However, when my family moved to Abu Dhabi, a place of immense wealth, I saw that money alone could not resolve deeper societal issues. Later, I traveled to Germany as an intern and student, believing it to be a place where peace and progress flourished. Yet, as the years passed, I realized that even here, challenges persisted. This journey ultimately led me to dedicate myself to working for peace, and that's how I found my way to the Peace Hub.

The Metaphor of the Peace Garden

At the Peace Hub, we often use metaphors to convey our mission. Imagine two landscapes: one is a dense, wild forest, like the Amazon—thriving but chaotic, where every tree and creature competes for survival. The other is a carefully cultivated garden, where each plant

grows in harmony through deliberate design and care. The forest represents survival of the fittest, while the garden symbolizes synergy and intentional collaboration.

Human interactions, when left to chance, often mirror the untamed forest: disorganized and conflict-prone. But with intention and design, they can resemble the garden—a space where everyone flourishes. In peacebuilding, cultivating this “Garden of Peace” is not just a possibility; it’s a necessity.

The Importance of Collaboration

Collaboration has been foundational to human civilization, from prehistoric tribes hunting together to modern societies addressing global challenges. This peace conference itself is a testament to the power of global collaboration. However, collaboration is not without challenges. Cognitive demands, social dynamics, miscommunication, and differing motivations can lead to misunderstandings, and in worse cases, conflict and violence. Left unchecked, these challenges grow wild, like an unmanaged forest.

Many organizations in the economic sector, from Silicon Valley tech firms to global shipping industries, have recognized the value of collaboration and invested in tools and methodologies to optimize it. At the Peace Hub, we aim to apply these same principles, leveraging tools from entrepreneurship and organizational management to foster grassroots peacebuilding.



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

What We Have Achieved So Far

Earlier this year, we launched two events, bringing together 160 individuals, including peace workers, youth, experts, and community members, to collaborate on pressing social issues. Using a “living labs” model, we focused on observing and enhancing the collaboration

process itself. Structured problem-solving and decision-making frameworks allowed for bottom-up action and commitment from non-traditional actors.

One of our primary objectives was to bridge generational gaps. We used worksheets to facilitate discussions between generations, asking young participants about the skills and resources they needed from older generations, as well as the challenges they faced. Similarly, we asked older participants to provide advice and identify mistakes for the youth to avoid. Despite the diversity of participants, common themes emerged, reinforcing the idea that structured collaboration can bridge generational divides and lead to meaningful action.



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

Results and Programs

From these discussions, we identified key areas for action, such as community engagement events, skill-building workshops, educational programs, mentorship initiatives, and resource-sharing platforms. Out of this work emerged ten projects, six of which are currently active, with four more in development.

Among these initiatives, we are particularly proud of:

1. **Peace in the Neighborhood:** A program focused on grassroots peacebuilding at the community level.
2. **The Peace Center:** Providing youth with spaces to engage and initiate their own activities.
3. **Peace Education:** Opening up valuable knowledge to non-traditional actors.
4. **Social Mentorship Platforms:** Cultivating intergenerational relationships and building future-focused skills.
5. **Seeds of the Future:** Engaging 20 young leaders and equipping them with the tools, skills, and knowledge needed to become effective community leaders. These young people are not just participants; they are catalysts for change.

A Call to Action

Through our work, we envision a future where human collaboration resembles a flourishing garden rather than a chaotic forest. However, like any garden, it requires effort, care, and attention. As gardeners of peace, we must work together to cultivate the roots of collaboration, trust, and understanding.

This is not just about solving today's problems but about creating a sustainable future where peace can thrive. The journey is challenging, but the garden we grow together will be worth every effort. Let us move beyond dialogue to true collaboration and collective action.

Thank you.



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

Andreu Ginestet:

Yes, thank you! well, you know? I'm very happy. I've been three days in happiness, in heaven let's say, because as a [Silent Diplomat](#) you are often in rooms where you face people that you don't really want to talk to, not really, it's like, critical situations ([like nuclear conflict](#)) are very fearful situations; and it's very nice to be in this peace context, and listen to all of you. I have the very - let's say - nice task to end the conference, to say: "thank you" to everybody also and to just put the cherry on the cake.

Okay! I'll put the cherry on the cake and that's going to be the art! And the art why? Because the art traditionally has been a space for peace! It started in the antique, in Rome, in Greece; it went on for example through the emperor Charlemagne who had for example an [artist as a peace mediator](#), it went on for all the following centuries, also under Philip IV the king of

Spain, for example, during the 1630 Wars, (the Peace of Westphalia was done in Münster, in North Rhine-Westphalia) and that was the time of a painter, whose name was Peter Paul Rubens, and [Peter Paul Rubens also was a diplomat and a peace mediator for 40 years.](#)

My journey started with a [very large sculpture](#) which is titled [Elan](#), and this sculpture is a Monumental sculpture that is closed in. Nobody was allowed to see it, because it's a sculpture that describes the emancipation of humankind from violence! So, the sculpture was closed in by the government, and you can't see it, you can't visit it. And the building was reshaped, because this sculpture led to a spontaneous strike of civil servants. State employees who have no right to strike, made a spontaneous strike to discuss the sculpture, and they [demanded pure emancipation!](#) So, the government got scared about the initiative and they closed down the building!



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

As a consequence I created (the [film](#)) ["Pareto for Peace"](#). "Pareto for Peace" has been published now since April this year (2024). ["Pareto for Peace"](#) is, let's say, the translation of the sculpture Elan (which is closed down) into a film, a video. And this film is quite a long film and lasts 3,5 hours. It shows a utopian thought; it's an example, it's the description of a calendar of seven years of work, for the transformation (emancipation) of the entire planet Earth for all of humankind. [It's a seven-year program with 28 steps of work.](#)

Now, I'm not saying this is feasible, that we must do it, or that we should do it. I'm just proposing a big thought. It's precise, it's descriptive and it allows anybody watching the film to make his own mind and think it through for himself, and say "well this is it! Let's do it!" or even better: "we can do it this way". But the point is that we need a starter.



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

So, on the way from the sculpture Elan, to “Pareto for Peace” this year (2024) we created in [Wuppertal an artist’s initiative](#). It’s a group of artists, at which we also met many of the people who are now in the 2024 PeaceCon group. [We artists](#) created a space for dialogue. We rented a space in the middle of the city (Wuppertal) and we just took some of our artworks into the space, so that we had, let's say, a nice atmosphere. But this room was [just for talking](#) for nothing else. We invited more than [43 personalities](#) within three months, politicians, scientists, therapists, any person that wanted to contribute to peace. Burcu was in there, Rochus was in there. Many people came into the room just to present their own work, in a way the general public could learn about what they do for Peace. This is an artist project! We had children coming in, and we started growing. In the beginning we were seven artists and suddenly we were about 80 artists, all participating and the project went on growing! Whole groups of artists came in and we are still expanding.



1- Promenaden Hauptbahnhof Leipzig – Daniel Reiche

I presently have an [exhibition in the city of Leipzig](#) in the [railway station](#). It's the [largest railway terminus station in Europe](#) and it's the largest exhibition I've ever had. The first picture in our presentation showed the opening of this, uh, exhibition and it's a peace exhibition of two of us, of two of the artists, and again: it's a space for dialogue. As a result I'm very often in Leipzig and we're still expanding. As soon as Leipzig is finished we're going

to the south of Germany and do the same in Freiburg. The notion is spreading like a fever, you know? It's contagious, it's a virus! It's the peace virus.

My life is public. If you want to know anything about the Elan, just go on the internet: you'll find films and documents. Everything is published, but this year is special; it's very special to me. I've done several projects with children for years, for many years. In parallel to the silent diplomacy and the mediation in war cases, you need healthy spaces, as Rochus stated. And working with children is a healthy space: so, you talk to ministers and then you go and talk to children and you're settled. You calm down, it makes it easier to face the ministers the next time.



"Peace Workers Collaborative" slide from PeaceCon 2024 Presentation

I want to talk to you now about a project which I did with children. And here I will go a little bit more into detail. This project happens at a school in Germany, a primary school. And this school had a problem. In a third class they had 99 children from 90 different nations, and they had a problem with identity. They asked an artist in, to work with the teachers and the children, because both groups had problems: the teachers and the children.



2- Artist and children - Courtesy of the artist

The project developed for two years. In the two years we created an art piece, an artwork which is public. It's in the street, made of ceramic tiles which the children made and a huge drawing. The drawing is 30 m long and the drawing and the tiles were manufactured in the school with the children. What was it that we did, to create a common identity? It was a process which I will summarize. There is a longer [document](#) online and Asli has already put the [link in the chat](#), so you can copy, or just open the [document](#).



3 – Children at work - Courtesy of the artist

We had all 99 children bringing into the school stories of their origin countries, fables. In these fables the wisdom of their culture is expressed in short terms. We collected 99 fables, 99 stories and then I sat down, I took them all home, and I analyzed them, and there were common aspects emerging. I had a typical artist intuition. But I had to construct some process for them in a way that it would seem it was themselves that came up with the idea. This implied that out of the 99 examples I had to reduce and prioritize some elements to

help them create a new Fable telling a new story. Inspired by the 99 fables they had discussed, we depicted the new fable in a large picture.

Some scenes, figures or elements were made out of clay, because of what Burcu said: when you touch earth and you touch clay, it makes you happy, it produces oxytocin. It's the hormones that flow. Touching the earth is positive. And I worked with the children for a year producing these tiles.

What happened in parallel was that every child had some problems, and there was an artist that worked long hours in the school. The children could come to the artist and talk and release themselves into freedom. This process happened while we were doing the artwork.

I will tell you three main moments of the fable and then finish. This fable is a short story. It's two pages long, and you can read it. It's translated into English (p.15 in the [Canisius School Project description](#)).



4 – Fish meets genie - Courtesy of the artist

It tells the story of a fish. The fish is the metaphorical equivalent of a child. It's living below sea level. So the horizon is at the sea surface. The fish swims close to the surface, and then he sees other animals, and he thinks it's a "strange world" out there. That's the child's perspective across the sea surface onto the adult world, the world above sea level. The fish finds in the sea a bottle with a genie and he frees the genie. The genie

allows the fish three wishes.



5 - Fish with a giraffe neck - Courtesy of the artist

First wish: The fish swims, looks out and he sees a giraffe with a long neck, very long neck and he states: "well if I have a long neck I can look out, you know, I can cross the water surface, and I can see the world outside, so genie, give me a long neck, give me a giraffe neck" And this is how we come to a fish with a giraffe neck, yeah! That's the first stage!



6 – Flying fish - Courtesy of the artist

Second wish: As soon as he pulls his neck out of the water, he feels it's hard to swim, okay! It's hard to swim: a small fish with a long giraffe neck. So he needs some other tools, because he wants to see (learn) more without getting tired. He looks out and he sees the birds in the sky and he says: "Oh they fly! They can see even further!" And he goes back to the genie and says: "Genie, I have a second wish: give me some wings! I

want to fly!" And this is, if you want, a metaphor for the children learning to fly with the knowledge that we provide them. Children possess the curiosity to cross the boundaries of their own world and to immerse themselves into the next world, and then we give them the wings to fly (we teach them to produce new knowledge) so that they start understanding the world and life (adaptation). But that is not enough.



7 – Lion's head - Courtesy of the artist

Third wish: While the fish is flying he sees what happens on Earth and he sees a group of lions, and he sees that the lions are roaring, loudly. So he says: "Wow, that's an impressively strong voice! I want that!" So he goes back a third time to the genie and he asks for the head of a lion. This is the moment when the children, let's say, become adults and they need the strength of a lion and the strong voice of a lion, to make themselves

heard.

Finally you have a fish with a long giraffe neck, and then he gets the wings. It's a flying fish with a long neck and at the end of the story it has a lion's head. This is the main line of argument we agreed between the teachers and the children to create this artwork, and the process. It tells the journey of a fish (child) from beginning (birth) to end (adulthood).

This is a project which I enjoyed most. The children enjoyed it most, and the neighborhood enjoyed it most, because it was something that was talked about in the entire city and it prevails. It has no tagging on it. People like it. That's it! Okay! That's all from my side! Thank you.

Dr. Ash Telli:

We can actually celebrate this since it is the end of the panel and the very end of the whole big conference as well because we were the last presenters in the last session. We hope it's been helpful for all the participants here and it's nice that we have a recording of the session right now. We can actually also distribute it to our own networks and to those interested but any last-minute thoughts from the audience or impressions comments?

Burcu Eke-Schneider:

Maybe I can say the last words, as this is our first PeaceCon Peacebuilding Alliance. We came together two years ago, and we started to understand and build trust with each other. As peace thinkers, we think that for peace workers or peace builders or some other kind of peace community they also need such a kind of collaboration between them. Oslo or Switzerland or Washington should not be just the neutral zones for building peace in the world. It is not enough. It does not work anymore. It just does not work. I am sorry, but transformation that starts with this kind of mindset, is not enough. I do not want to say negative things. But it is enough. It is in our hands, and we will spread Peace...everywhere. This peace-knowledge should not be confined to our universities, where people die to reach such a kind of knowledge. I'm happy that peace professors came to Istanbul. They educated ten students, all from conflict zones around the world. We lost this year, as you probably know, Prof. Johan Galtung. He is the founder of Peace and Conflict Studies. And so, I think that our most knowledgeable people should now move from their comfort zone, reaching out to other interested people, and spreading their knowledge without any expectations. It is time for this.

So, thanks for being with us...and thanks for recognizing that transformation IS possible. You can call it "change", or even "revolution". What we call it, doesn't matter. But we DO have to change. We MUST change. And the peacebuilding community needs to open up a space for us. A space where we can share our thoughts. We are critical thinkers, and we know that without critical thinking, nothing will change in today's world. And so, I hope that we will soon find thousands of solutions together, and implement them as soon as possible. And I also hope that we will all continue to be part of constructive change, and evolve together. Thank you very much for giving us this opportunity to be here today, and to share our knowledge and perspective.

