

Wayfinding Peace: Museums in Conflict Zones

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Wayfinding Peace: Museums in Conflict Zones

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Introduction to the Community Peace Museums Heritage Foundation

The Ph.D. study *Wayfinding Peace: Museums in Conflict Zones* focuses on the Community Peace Museums Heritage Foundation (CPMHF), which is a network of fifteen community-based peace museums across Kenya. The goal of the organization is to strengthen the cultural foundations of ethnic groups to commemorate memories of living in peace even in times of ethnic conflicts. The aim is to utilize cultural heritage knowledge as a resource for the prevention of conflicts and promote sustainable development. The first founding principle is to foster shared traditions of peace heritage through *utu* (human kindness and community well-being (See Battle 2009). Secondly, to encourage peacebuilding, healing, environment care and reconciliation through indigenous peace heritage traditions (Community Peace Museum Development Path, 2001). What makes the CPMHF peace museums unique is that they focus on a grassroots approach to “recall collective memories of reconciliation during contemporary conflicts” (Somjee, 2014, p. 8). Conversely, other peace museums in the world focus on memorialization of a historical event, such as sites of past wars, or they highlight individuals related to social justice issues (Somjee, 2017).

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This study seeks to understand the meaning of peace through an indigenous lens. In what ways does the CPMHF utilize indigenous peace heritage traditions through the arts to as alternative to liberal peace practices? In order to explore this question, four research sites, including the Akamba, Aembu, Pokot, and Maasai community peace museums are being explored. Thus far, the research indicates the CPMHF museums draw upon indigenous peace heritage traditions through indigenous aesthetics, material culture, and the expressive arts as a resource for conflict resolution. Overall, the study identifies key lessons museum and art educators can learn from the CPMHF museums that apply indigenous peacemaking traditions through the arts to resolve contemporary conflict. The research an alternative to Western liberal practices, which international relations scholars claim have been ineffective (Mac Ginty, 2011, 2012; Richmond, 2011). The term ‘liberal peace’ arose as a dominate critical framework applied to post-Cold War policies and practices of post-conflict interventions (Sabaratnam, 2011). The idea was that “democracy, the rule of law and market economies would create sustainable peace in the premise of ‘liberal peace’ post-conflict and transitional states and societies, and in the larger international order that they were part of” (Campbell, Chandeler and Sebaratnam, 2011 p. 1). There is a current trend in international relations to critically re-examine the liberal project of universalizing liberal peace mechanisms in peacemaking. For the purpose of this article, I pose a cross-comparison between A cross-comparison between indigenous scholar’s worldviews of peace and reconciliation traditions through relational aesthetics (Gacheanga, T., 2008, 2017; Hughes, L., 2011; Mutisya, M., 2007, 2018, Somjee, S., 1979, 1994, 1995, 1998, 1999 2000, 2001, 2008, 2014, 2015, 2018) compared with Western relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002) and liberal peace practices.

The article sections include: 1. *Historical Background* of the development CPMHF. 2. *Research Study Design* describes the framework of the study. 3. *Indigenous Relational Aesthetics* accesses anthropology and ethnography insight into peacemaking through traditions cultural artistic practices. 4. *Western Relational Aesthetics* discusses Nicolas Bourriaud’s relational aesthetic theory (1998) in socially engaged contemporary art as a counter narrative. 5. *Indigenous Peace Practices vs. Liberal Peace* provides an overview of the potential of employing indigenous peace heritage traditions as an alternative to address local issues, concerns and perspectives while challenging liberal peace ideals. The exhibitions and projects *The Great Beaded Peace Tree (2008)*, *Journeys of Peace (2013-2014)*, *Youth4Peace (2015)* and *Tubonge: Women’s Peace Material Culture (2018)* illustrate the

employment of indigenous peace heritage traditions. The conclusion addresses key points the study has identified to date and puts forth recommendations.

Historical background

The CPMHF began in the 1990s when ethnic violence seized the eastern African region from Rwanda to Somalia. At the time, Dr. Sultan Somjee, a Kenyan ethnographer who worked for the Institute of African Studies and the National Museums of Kenya, aimed to identify alternative ways reconciliation and peacemaking could occur to resolve the ongoing ethnic conflicts (Walters, D., Laven, D., and Davis, P., 2017). Somjee began to conduct fieldwork in remote villages in Kenya to understand indigenous cultures values of peace. An important point that emerged from his research was that peace heritage traditions were embedded in their visual, oral, material culture, and expressive arts customs as a resource for conflict resolution. Furthermore, indigenous peacemaking practices were not only utilized before colonialization, during colonialization, and continued in post-independent Kenya. Even though these traditions varied in each ethnic community, he found that they shared many similarities, including peace elder councils, sacred peace trees, animal totems, peace staffs and age set rituals. Somjee consulted closely with elders, who choose young men and women from each ethnic group to be his field assistants. Then he trained them to research peace heritage traditions, collect and conserve material culture. Later, the field assistants built small museums in their homelands and became the curators. These curators' aim is to bring together conflicting ethnic groups "to honour each other's cultural heritage that sustains the notion of *utu* or humanity in its many shades among various ethnic traditions" (Somjee, 2014, p. 72).

In 1994, the museums were formalized under the CPMHF umbrella. The goal was to strengthen the cultural foundations that commemorate memories of living without violence among ethnic communities through cultural heritage. Over the years, the CPMHF has grown to form international partnerships to facilitate community outreach programs, such as *The Great Beaded Peace Tree* (2008), *Journeys of Peace* (2013-2014), *Youth4Peace* (2015) and *Tubonge: women's peace material culture* (2018). These educational programs and exhibits integrated cultural heritage knowledge as a resource for prevention of ethnic conflict, and as a tool to foster reconciliation and healing in post-conflict situations. These projects broaden people's mindsets towards understanding cultural diversity and

developing tolerance. Today, the CPMHF museums continue to be active in Kenyan indigenous cultures through community engagement.

Research study design

Scholars claim the cultural approaches of the CPMHF museums have achieved peaceful outcomes and contributed towards sustainable peace among clashing ethnic groups by employing indigenous peace heritage traditions (Coombes, A., 2003, 2013; Gacheanga, T., 2008, 2017; Hughes, L., 2011; Somjee, S., 1979, 1994, 1995, 1998, 1999 2000, 2001, 2008, 2014). They argue that these ethnic communities have had a higher adherence to sustaining peace rather than template-style international liberal peace interventions, which have been the norm since Kenya's independence in 1963. Their research suggests the CPMHF approach of employing peace heritage traditions through arts community engagement projects may potentially offer an alternative version of peace rather than Western liberal peace strategies.

The research is relevant because the place of indigenous peacemaking narratives has not received sufficient representation in museums of peace internationally. Even though many cultures throughout the world have traditions of peace, “other world peace museums focus on a historical event, such as sites of past wars, or they highlight individuals related to social justice issues, or the “memorialization of violence” (Somjee 2017, p. 74 -75). The research aims to address the following questions:

1. How do community peace museums apply material culture and the expressive arts in exhibits, public and school programs?
2. In what ways can indigenous peace heritage practices be an alternative to liberal peace practices to foster reconciliation between conflicting ethnic groups in conflict zones?
3. What lessons can be learned from peace museums that utilize indigenous aesthetics and peace heritage traditions to resolve contemporary conflicts?

The study is grounded in constructivist theory based on the notion that learning is a process of how people construct meaning through their experiences (Dewey. 1916). An indigenous research paradigm frames the study, and incorporates an indigenous research methodology (IRM) (Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2001; Louis, 2007; Kovach, 2009; Chilisa, 2012). An IRM approach offers an

opportunity to understand the counter story to Western ideas about indigenous cultures' peace heritage traditions. There are two streams of ethics applied firstly, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics for Museums (2012) global standards of museum practices. Secondly, IRM general principles of ethics, including relational accountability, respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation, and rights and regulations were followed (Chilisa, 2012).

There are noted limitations to the study, including being a Western Caucasian women scholar from Canada who is not rooted in the ethnic communities in which the study is based and does not speak the national language of Swahili or the local dialects. Additionally, my cultural ancestry impedes access to conflict areas, and at times, put personal safety at risk when travelling within Kenya. However, with a background as a museum educator, scholar and artist, I understand the importance of culture in the context of museums. In order to lesson these limitations, the CPMHF curators have been my cultural guides, assisting in the navigation of cultural traditions and sacred geography landscapes at each research site. Furthermore, limitations of this study include time restraints that comprises of one month of fieldwork in Kenya on five separate occasions. These restrictions may result in requiring ongoing study. However, this body of work will provide a foundation for future researchers to build upon.

The CPMHF Akamba, Aembu, Pokot, and Maasai community peace museums research sites were chosen in order to cover a diverse range of agriculturalist and pastoralist ethnic groups of Kenya. The participants include curators, elders, artists, women's groups and community members. An influencing factor of the research is the approach of experiencing the research through multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999). Applying a sensory approach to participating in storytelling, ceremonies, art making, expressive arts and walking sacred geography sites allows for a more immersive experience and creates a relational relationship with the research participants.

The general data collection is congruent with indigenous research design, and is employing a conversational method that honors the oral traditions of indigenous cultures. Wilson (2001) suggests the relationship between story and listening establishes a stronger relationship by sharing holistic remembrances, which evoke spiritual, emotional, physical and mental connections to a constructivist tradition. To date there have been, thirty conversational interviews, sixteen talking circles, video recordings and photographs are

compiled. At this stage, the analysis is being conducted using on grounded theory to identify emergent themes that are coded to recognise topics. These codes will be analysed for commonalities and differences across the research sites. In essence, the research goal is to identify the ways the CPMHF curators combine indigenous peace heritage traditions through the arts to contribute towards peace and reconciliation practices in Kenya.

Indigenous relational aesthetics

The disciplines of anthropology and ethnography are well placed to provide insight into a kaleidoscope of cultural lenses to understand ethnic perspectives, intellectual, artistic, and spiritual expressions within complex societies. In the book, *Wayfinders: Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Modern World* (2009), Davis coins the term ‘ethnosphere,’ which he explains as,

The sum total of all thoughts and intuitions, myths and beliefs, ideas and inspirations brought into being by the human imagination since the dawn of consciousness. The ethnosphere is humanity’s greatest legacy. It is a product of our collective dreams, the embodiment of our hopes, the symbol of all that we, as a wildly inquisitive and astonishingly adaptive species, have created.

Wade Davis, 2009, p. 2

Davis’s notion of the ‘ethnosphere’ is a reminder that the social world in which we live does not exist as he says, “in some absolute sense”, but rather is simply one reality among a “myriad of cultures” (Davis, 2011, p. 2). As a museum educator and a P. h. D candidate, ‘culture’ is central to my study. In order for scholars to understand cultural traditions, rituals, and ceremonies, requires, an open mind, heart and spirit is required. In the context of working with cultural communities, Davis’s ‘ethnosphere’ notion offers a uniquely pluralistic perspective. In giving up a limited Western assumption, a potential to learn from countless elders, healers, peacemakers, warriors, artists, mothers, and children. This opens the possibilities for scholars to experience their research through various cultural lenses that deepen understanding of perspectives and ways of being and living in the world. For instance, in the 1992 essay *Beautyway*, anthropologist David Maybury-Lewis discusses the differences between Western and indigenous worldviews of art. To illustrate this, he uses an example of the Wodaabe’s dance festival, where the ethnic group comes together in

celebration during the rainy season to engage in social activities. The festival was considered to be an aesthetic expression by the ancestors.

Tribal art in its passion for spontaneity, is woven into the fabric of society is rooted in something that the modern world has lost, a cosmic confidence in ourselves and in the whole scheme of things. It is this confidence that enables tribal societies to resolve the conflicts and contradictions that are the inevitable part of life itself, to play with oppositions that would otherwise tear their worlds apart. Tribal art thus becomes a means of reconciling what is otherwise irreconcilable, of making the painful crises of life manageable – even of overcoming the ultimate disjunction between life and death.

David Maybury-Lewis 1992, p. 163

Indeed, Maybury-Lewis's passage describes the way art and relational indigenous aesthetics represent a community collective of artistic expression. He points out that while art is created and enjoyed by individuals, they participate in aesthetic expression in the context of their culture (Maybury-Lewis, 1992). The social customs of creating art is steeped in historical knowledge transmitted through artmaking and the creation of material culture. The artwork becomes a significant force to transfer knowledge and skills within the community, which may represent visual symbols, metaphors, stories, proverbs, and spiritual beliefs. Art is utilized in songs and dances, becoming codes saturated with specific meanings and a significant force to consolidate community. The aesthetic experience of creating is also a testimony that celebrates the life of a civilization. At the same time, it promotes the development of culture and exemplifies the highest qualities of a civilization.

Interestingly, while Maybury-Lewis was thinking about indigenous art, Somjee was exploring indigenous aesthetics through material culture among the ethnic tribes of Kenya. His research revealed indigenous art aesthetics was a reflection of their interaction with the environment, an expression of spiritual and cultural social values, and was disseminated in the community through the production of material culture. He found that each of these artistic expressions was a communal activity and were pedagogical because they taught and communicated local ethnic history and cultural values within everyday community life. Another example, within the Maasai's cultural world, is a single material creation, such as bead designs, patterns and shapes, are decided collectively to represent the age sets every 10 to 14 years. Somjee notes, "Amazingly, these designs carry across Maasai land to all of the other villages"

(Somjee, 2018). Indigenous relational aesthetics creates a bond within the cultural community that is connected to stories of origin, belief systems, values, and the environment. In this way, the language of art is based on relational aesthetic codes that are communally decided upon, communally made, and commonly understood within the ethnic group as a collective artistic expression.

Western relational aesthetics

While Davis, Maybury-Lewis and Somjee were exploring culture and indigenous relational aesthetics mechanisms, French curator and critic Nicolas Bourriaud introduced his volume of collected essays *Esthétique relationnelle* (1998; English translation *Relational Aesthetics* followed in 2002), the theory of 'relational aesthetics' as an inter-human encounter of socially engaged contemporary art. He defined relational (art) as,

A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.

Nicolaus Bourriaud, 2002, p. 113

Bourriaud introduced the concept to highlight artistic trends of the 1990s as alternative offerings by contemporary artists. His key idea was that relational art was not focused on the finished product, but instead was an "open-ended, interactive work in progress and spectator intervention in their creation" (*Relational Aesthetics*, 2014, p.1). He considered relational aesthetic theory to consist of judging artworks based on the inter-human relations which they produced and represented or prompted (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 112). The contemporary artistic practice involved generating a form capable of bringing diverse units together in an interactive way to create a relationship to the world. In doing so, he removed aesthetics from the 'act of creation' in the conventional sense and shifted artmaking from execution to that of the audience's experience of a communal event. In this way, the making of the art becomes art itself, therefore, emancipating contemporary art and locating arts capacity for producing positive human relations (Kelly, 2014). Although Bourriaud acknowledged the philosophical traditions that underpin relational aesthetics, such as the materialist tradition, and the 1960s *avande garde* notions of modernism (Kelly, 2014), he failed to consider the larger context of artmaking concerning people's cultural social systems. Art making is not created in isolated contexts or by random materialism. The socio-cultural context influences art

making, which is invariably historical. In essence, humankind is made up of bonds that link individuals to a set of cultural human relations.

In this regard, indigenous relational aesthetics differs from Western relational aesthetics. Bourriaud's relational aesthetics encompassed the participation of individuals creating art with the artist collectively, but was still considered a collective of individual forms of expression, where the act of creation becomes the art itself. Indigenous relational aesthetics involves art that is created through inter-human community relationships, which foster lasting relational encounters. This is a more nuanced aesthetic of relational encounters because they reflect a social system of spiritual and cultural beliefs they construct to mark contemporary historical moments, such as coming of age ceremonies. In summary, 'art' bonds the community through past and present relational experiences while having the ability to bring people and communities together through shared experiences.

Indigenous peace practices vs. liberal peace

Over the past 25 years, the CPMHF museums have built upon pre-existing social bonds through kinship, cultural pluralism and indigenous relational aesthetics, which can take a diversity of forms within culturally specific contexts. The CPMHF is involved in a culture of interactivity that posits indigenous aesthetics in the making of cultural objects, where the expressive arts can be utilized as a set of communication vehicles within and between cultural communities to foster peace and reconciliation. The research has indicated socio-cultural customs of creating art communicate ethnic values and spiritual beliefs, which reinforces historical knowledge, language and artistic skills and expressions to strengthen community relationships both internally and externally.

Even though indigenous cultures offer a vast storehouse of knowledge on peacemaking and peacebuilding interventions, these modes of reconciliation are rarely explored as alternatives to liberal peace practices. The contemporary social positioning of Western peacebuilding policies, practices, interventions, academic scholarships, and publications are "dominated by the global north" (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 4). International relations (IR) scholars' Sabaratnam (2011) and Tadjbakhsh (2011) recount that the universal concept of the international order of liberal peacebuilding policies emerged with the end of the cold war. The aim was to create sustained peace in post-war states founded on consensus

and the democratic rule of law (Paris, 2004). The objective of building liberal peace is based on assumptions around liberal democracy, state building, rule of law and market economies in accordance with human rights. According to Meera Sabaratnam et al (2011), the failure of liberal peace operations in the 1990s, including the former Yugoslavia, Timor-Leste, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Cote d'Ivoire, Kosovo, DR Congo, Burundi, and more recently, Iraq and Afghanistan have prompted both scholars and policymakers to reconsider Western internationally imposed liberal peace interventions that are mostly unsuccessful, expensive and unmanageable. As a consequence, IR scholars have been rethinking liberal peace external models by investigating local alternatives.

Political scientist Roger Mac Ginty (2012), a leading expert in critical peace and conflict studies, explores peace not as a universal concept, but rather from the perspective of local forms of human agency. He suggests mainstream approaches to peace may lead to an 'alienation' of peace from those who live in conflict in their everyday lives (Mac Ginty, 2012, p. 12). He asserts that liberal peace interventions have failed for many reasons including their Western style of implementation and evaluation that is based on state-building norms and policies, rather than focusing on local priorities. Moreover, interventions failed to meet their own standards in the context of 'emancipatory' aims and by "extension of a monopoly of violence as part of the state building project" (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 94). Mac Ginty's research puts forth the concept of a 'hybridization framework' based on international liberal peace ideals and localized forms of human agency. In his book *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace* (2011), Mac Ginty presents case studies as examples of the incorporation of the hybrid model in sixteen countries, which revealed a familiar pattern across the studies, uncovering a resistance to this co-option by local elites and people due to corruption. His analysis questions the co-option model and makes us consider, indigenous peace heritage traditions as an alternative.

IR professor Oliver Richmond, in his book chapter *Becoming Liberal, unbecoming liberalism: Liberal-local hybridity via the 'every day' as a response to the paradoxes of liberal peacebuilding* (2011) provides insights as to why liberal peace practices have failed in the interdiscipline of international relations. He draws from post-colonial theory to articulate that international aspirations often create a civil society that does not reflect the local indigenous groups 'every day' life. Richmond (2011) claims, "They (IR scholars) have focused on an artificial notion of civil society which has not connected with or promoted the agency of

the vast bulk of post-conflict populations" (Richmond, 2011, p. 38). He suggests that there is a necessity to be engaged in the 'every day' context, which includes needs, differences, empathies and emancipations from within. However, most of the literature is dominated by Western voices rather than from the perspectives of indigenous peoples living an 'every day' life in conflict and post-conflict spaces. Moreover, liberal peace strategies and their variations as Davis (2018) states, are based on the assumption that indigenous peoples lacked peacemaking mechanisms, processes, and traditions to resolve conflicts. The IR literature for the first twenty years lacked an understanding of local peace heritage traditions, practices, concerning customs and communalism (Richmond, 2011, p. 12).

The CPMHF community outreach exhibits and educational programs *The Great Beaded Peace Tree* (2007) with Samuel Thomas, member of the Lower Cayuga Band of the Iroquois Nation, *Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve, Canada*, *Journeys of Peace* (2013-2014) and *the Youth For Peace* (2014 - 2015) and *Tubonge: women's peace material culture* (2017-2018) offer successful examples of the ways in which they incorporate indigenous peace heritage traditions through relational aesthetics to foster peace and reconciliation practices in the daily lives of people. The curators have integrated cultural knowledge in peace heritage traditions and relational aesthetics in three ways: Firstly, as a resource for prevention of conflict, secondly as a response to ethnic conflict and thirdly as a tool to foster reconciliation and healing in post-conflict situations.

The Great Beaded Peace Tree (2007)

The CPMHF project *The Great Beaded Peace Tree* evolved as a response to the 2007 post-election violence, where the outgoing president Mwai Kibaki was proclaimed the winner on December 27, 2007 (Daily Nation, August 2017). However, challenger Raila Odinga opposed the decision by stating the votes had been rigged. On February 28, 2008, an internationally-brokered power-sharing agreement was signed under which Kibaki kept his job, and Odinga became prime minister. The epicentre of the violence was in the Rift Valley, which pitted members of the Kalenjin and Luo ethnic communities, who were primarily backed by Odinga, against their Kikuyu neighbours, to which Kibaki belonged. Clashes in the following weeks resulted in more than 1,100 people killed, and more than 600,000 were forced to flee from their homes. In the aftermath, the CPMHF, in partnership with Samuel Thomas, member of the

Lower Cayuga Band of the Iroquois Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve, Canada developed *The Great Beaded Peace Tree* exhibition. The project was funded by the Ford Foundation and the Canada Council for the Arts.

The collaborative project involved creating a six-foot tall beaded peace tree with fifty branches to represent the fifty chiefs of the Iroquois confederacy. Each branch held one wampum bead shell and a strawberry fruit. Indigenous aesthetic symbolism was employed to represent the cultures. The Iroquois symbolism of white beads represented peace while the purple beads were a reminder of death and the absence of mindfulness. An African wire technique of winding beads was used to signify the umbilical cord that symbolized *utu* (Mutisya, 2007). Samuel Thomas, the CPMHF curators, elders and artists travelled with the tree from the Akamba Community Peace Museum in Machakos to Loita and then to Nukuru. With each visit to the communities who had experienced the post-election violence they brought together ethnic groups in conflict. Together they placed beads on the tree, participated in talking circles, and in expressive arts peace heritage traditions. Ngugi Njiru, the resident artist of the Aembu Community Peace Museum, recalled his experience in the project, “When one person puts a bead in the palm of their enemy healing occurs” (Njiru, 2018). This illustrates the power of art through *utu*, signifying “peace is what we all desire” (Mutisya, 2007). The bead art on the peace tree became a powerful living symbol in the memories of the communities who participated in the project. Even though some communities refused to participate, many did and reconciliation occurred.

On May 2007, *The Great Beaded Peace Tree* was unveiled at the United Nations in New York and received international attention as the first collaborative heritage project of indigenous people’s belief in *utu*. The four-year project brought together the Iroquois peoples of North America and indigenous groups of Kenya, threading beads together for a peaceful future.

The Journeys of Peace

In 2014, the CPMHF, in partnership with the Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB) created a common vision of utilizing cultural heritage as a resource and indispensable element for the promotion of human rights and resulted in the development of democracy the *Journeys of Peace* project. The aim of the project was to revitalize indigenous peace culture in Kenya by using both tangible and intangible cultural heritage to empower and transform communities in conflict

(Perrin, D. & Walters, D., 2017) in order to encourage the respect of human rights and the realization of peaceful coexistence between conflicting ethnic groups. The goal was to strive towards sustainable peace and human development.

The traveling exhibition provided a safe forum to discuss conflict and peace building. Over 4,000 people visited the exhibition at eight locations. As part of the exhibition project three workshops were conducted, two in Nairobi and one in Nyer. The exhibitions and associated dialogue sessions were community-focused, and the participants included elders, men, women, youth and children. Peace material culture and the expressive arts were utilized to prompt collective memories of peace heritage traditions to stimulate understanding, appreciation and the practice of peace making. The sessions were an opportunity for community building. Additionally, the relationships between the CPMHF curators were strengthened through discussions and shared experiences. For many of the curators, this was the first time they had met their colleagues from other community peace museums. This meeting of minds, hearts and spirits resulted in the curators collaborating to take the exhibition to more remote communities in conflict zones. Furthermore, the project offered them training in internet technology and social media to support communication within the network of museums.

Nonetheless, this assertion led to many challenges, including the transportation of the exhibition across unmaintained dirt roads to reach rural villages. Once the team arrived, they tried to create an environment for safe dialogue between conflicting communities, sometimes thwarted by feelings of suspicion and distrust between ethnic groups. For example, the Pokot and Samburu are neighbouring pastoral communities that have shared values and traditions. Due to frequent droughts and lack of natural resources, such as water and grazing lands for livestock, four decades of conflict has occurred. Between 2004 and 2011, violence increased due to an influx of guns, resulting in 380 deaths and thousands of people being displaced. Consequently, reprisals between the two communities were commonplace.

The primary aim of bringing the exhibition to this area was to facilitate a peace and reconciliation dialogue between the two communities through the identification of traditional practices and recognition of common values. Despite the challenges at the beginning, community building between the Pokot and Samburu increased during the workshops as they began to actively engage

in traditional peace and reconciliation practices to resolve their conflicts. Munuve Mutisya, Curator of the Akamba Peace Museum recounts,

The results are staggering – perhaps the most symbolic being that each community arrived at the venue carrying (peace) sticks instead of guns. Agreement was reached to continue the dialogue, women were given a voice, and the communities asked how the outcome of the exhibition could be sustained. Following on from the exhibition the two communities have started to trade livestock at market, conflict has ceased, and there are two examples of stolen livestock being returned to their rightful owners.

Munuve Mutisya, 2014, p. 2

The *Journeys of Peace* project resulted in empowering people, calming violence between conflicting ethnic groups, actively encouraging women to participate in dialogue with men, as well as bridging gender gaps between elders and youth. Additionally, schools and colleges participated and, as a result Peace Clubs in schools, were revitalized to empower youth to be active in building a safer future. In doing so, the stories of peace values were related, practiced and sustained.

Youth 4 Peace (2014 - 2015)

The *Youth4Peace* (2014 - 2015) project aimed to support young people in Kenya to become active advocates of building peace. Through a network of peace museums and school peace clubs, this project utilized African cultural traditions of peaceful coexistence, and diversity. This project was in collaboration between the CPMHF and the Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB). The Creative Force Programme: Swedish Institute provided funding for this joint enterprise in efforts to promote human rights, transparency and democracy with the aid of initiatives that use culture and media as a method for achieving change. The arts were central in the youth learning and practicing peace heritage traditions, songs, dances, stories, theatre, and art making. Learning was disseminated by using cell phones to share their experiences with other youth across the country. In August 2015, the first *Youth4Peace* conference was held in Nairobi, bringing together youths for across the country to learn leadership skills to become peace ambassadors in their home communities. Many of the youth peace ambassadors continued to build their knowledge and skills as advocates for peace by

becoming interns at their local peace museums and working with peace clubs at local schools.

Tubonge: Women's Peace Material Culture (2017-2018)

The *Tubonge: women's peace material culture* art exhibition was inspired by Sheng, an urban slang word that asks people to come together and dialogue (Mutisya 2018). The project was a partnership between CPMHF and Fredens Hus in Uppsala and the community and funded by the Swedish Institute. The exhibition honored African women as peacemakers, negotiators and decision makers. The exhibition unearthed women's peace material culture customs within the indigenous world, and objects displayed were selected from various ethnic groups across Kenya. One example was the Maasai *Olkila*, a women's leather apron stitched with beads that represent peace. Traditionally, women would place their apron in between men during heated arguments or fighting as a call for the return to calmness. Belongings, like the *Olkila*, make a powerful connection to ancestral peace heritage traditions. The exhibition travelled to sixteen ethnic communities, it sparked memories of the traditions of women's roles as peace leaders during conflicts as well as generated dialogue in talking circles, art making and engagement in the expressive arts. The exhibition also connected urban youth to learn about how the female ancestors created artistic expressions, such as material culture, songs, dances, and stories to generate *utu*, creating community well-being for gender and social equality.

In August 2018, the exhibition concluded with a conference held at the National Nairobi Museum, which brought together women's ethnic groups, youth, post-secondary students and community members in dialogue and celebration of peace heritage traditions. Therefore, the exhibition and programs became opportunities to inspire people to revitalize the themes of peacemaking and reconciliation through indigenous relational aesthetics. In this way, the CPMHF works towards contemporary peace activism to prevent stereotypes and promotes gender equality to reconcile community conflict.

Conclusion

In Kenya, as a result of corrupt political leadership, geopolitics, climate change, hunger for resources and aggravated by a flood of weapons, understanding

'peacemaking' is complex. Interventions by organizations and humanitarian aid, as well as the notion of liberal peace, makes this study profoundly complicated.

Thus far, *Wayfinding Peace: Museums in Conflict Zones* explorations of indigenous peace heritage traditions through art activities and the discourses around them examined historical and contemporary developments in Kenya. The Akamba, Aembu, Pokot, and Maasai community peace museums were the selected research sites, which provided case studies to compare the effectiveness of these assertions. The findings indicate that the CPMHF has formed partnerships with international organizations to promote and strengthen the cultural foundations that commemorate memories of living without violence among youth, women's groups, elders, artists, and various rural communities through cultural heritage and indigenous relational aesthetics. Remembering traditions and practicing them provides an alternative to liberal peace strategies in contemporary society. This approach is a reminder that actions employed by local people need not conform to conventions of acceptable and unacceptable political behavior as proposed by others from outside the community. The CPMHF museums are concrete community-rooted examples for museum and art educators and scholars to draw from when undertaking peace education through indigenous relational aesthetics.

One way this study is useful is to encourage them to pay attention to indigenous peace heritage traditions that offer a different alternative perspective of what it means to live in peace and conflict in the everyday lives of community members. Additionally, they need to be mindful to decolonize the Western academy by employing indigenous research methodology as a way to consider indigenous people's perspectives, concerns, and experiences as expressed through cultural traditions. Ultimately, the research study has shown that in order to create a more peaceful world, solutions need to be lasting, between human beings. Building upon pre-existing peace heritage traditions, which have a set of artistic elements interwoven through the fabric of society, have a more significant potential to build relationships and sustain peace.

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