Activism, Art-ivism and Digital Media to Reduce Marginalisation:
Sharing Experiences and Lessons from Brazil, Kenya, Syria, and Costa Rica

Isabella Rega and Andrea Medrado (eds.)

CONTENTS

Introduction

This guide is part of the AHRC e-Voices: Redressing Marginality International Network (http://evoices.cemp.ac.uk). The project ran in 2018 and brought together a global network of academics and practitioners to explore the theme of marginalisation and how digital media can be used to support marginalised groups to make their voices heard within and beyond the borders of their communities and promote social inclusion. During 2018 a range of events were held in the UK, Brazil, Kenya, Syria and Costa Rica to explore and share strategies and modalities implemented by activists and development organisations to fight marginalisation.

This guide focuses on four emblematic case studies: (i) media activism in Brazil and how favela residents use digital media to foster community engagement and active citizenship; (ii) art-ivism, the use of art to serve activism causes, and how Kenyan artists use digital tools to promote a dialogue around human rights and power structures; (iii) digital media for social good and how development organisations working with displaced populations in Syria use digital technologies to foster peace and reconciliation in the country; and (iv) digital media for active citizenship and how the state of Costa Rica is working with arts and technologies to promote inclusion and well-being among the youth.

This guide has four chapters, one per country, structured as follows: the context, two emblematic experiences in which media and arts are used to fight social inequalities, and a series of lessons learnt and challenges.

We hope that this guide will inform the activities of similar groups, which, independent of the socio-political and cultural contexts, will be able to learn lessons for how to gain a share of voice and impact policy in order to improve their lives.

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Acknowledgments

Sharing Experiences and Lessons
from Brazil, Kenya, Syria, and Costa Rica

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BRAZIL

1. Context: Brazil, a country of contrasts.

With a population of over 190 million people[1], Brazil is the largest country in Latin America and the fifth largest country in the world. Despite being one of the largest economies in the world, the country still faces a considerable gap between the rich and the poor. According to a report published by Oxfam, in 2017, in Brazil, someone earning the minimum monthly wage would have to work 19 years to make the same money a Brazilian from the richest 0.1% of the population makes in one month. The country's social structure reflects such huge concentration with an apex with very high incomes and the vast majority that earns very little. Indeed, the vast majority of Brazilians' average per capita income is no more than the monthly minimum wage[2].

Although Brazil is an upper middle-income country, in the last years, its economy has experienced a decline: gross domestic product (GDP) average growth between 2011 and 2020 will be less than 1%, leading to a stagnation in per capita income. In 2016, Brazil was dragged into virulent political turmoil. Amidst corruption scandals, President Dilma Rousseff was impeached. Her Vice-President Michel Temer took office and adopted an austerity agenda, imposing a freeze on state spending in health care and education. Many fundamental rights have been under attack, including popular housing programs and indigenous territories demarcation. In April 2018, the arrest of former president Lula da Silva also heightened the political instability. Recently, in October 2018, an ultra-conservative populist, Jair Bolsonaro, was elected, marking a significant rightward shift from the years when the Workers' Party was in power.

In this context of crisis and social inequality, a considerable number of people live in "favelas", the Brazilian Portuguese word for "slums" or "shantytowns". The NGO Catalytic Communities estimates that, in Rio de Janeiro, close to 1.5 million people – around 23-24% of the city's population – live in favelas. The favelas are usually densely populated and located on hilly unstable areas or on the skirts of a city. From a distance, they look like an undistinguishable mass of brick-coloured small boxes, built on top of each other. However, the favelas are far from homogenous: some have emerged over 100 years, others are recent settlements. Additionally, they embody a great internal diversity in terms of the social make-up of their population. Yet, despite such complexity, the media representations of the favelas and their residents have been marked by a recurring sense of binary oppositions.

Either they have been problematised and criminalised, or they have been romanticized and exoticised. In general terms, in situations of crime and violence, favela residents often feel powerless and paralysed. They fear the police and its frequent and often inhumane operations; they fear the drug dealers and their vengeance systems and, at the same time, they feel that they cannot trust the country's justice system.

Image 1: Favela housing construction located right next to an upper-class neighbourhood in Rio de Janeiro. **Photo by** *Andrea Medrado.*

As a consequence, several media activism initiatives have emerged in the country as attempts to provide more nuanced accounts of favela life and to fight oppression and inequality. Although such initiatives can be very diverse in terms of their goals and objectives, they share one key philosophy to which young activists refer to as "us by us" ("nós por nós", in Portuguese). This is a result of young favela residents' feelings of frustration for constantly having their stories told by non-favela residents, people who might not share their cultural references and personal experiences. In this way, they start to use the technologies as tools to reclaim their own stories, placing themselves both as the protagonists and narrato

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[1] According to the 2010 Census carried out by the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics
[2] The report can be downloaded from the link: https://www.oxfam.org.br/sites/default/files/arquivos/relatorio_a_distancia_que_nos_une_en.pdf (access 07 November 2018)
[3] To access more Rio de Janeiro Favela facts: http://catcomm.org/favela-facts/ (accessed 07 November 2018)

2. Case studies

2.1. Maré Vive

Located in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro, Maré was officially recognised as a neighborhood in 1994. However, this favela's formation dates back to the 1940s and 1950s when large industrial projects in Rio de Janeiro made the area attractive for migrants from the rural northeast of Brazil and other southern cities of Rio and São Paulo. As migration intensified, people built stilt houses, known as palafitas, on the water, creating one of Maré's first communities, Baixa do Sapateiro. Today, Complexo da Maré is the largest agglomeration of favelas in Rio de Janeiro, comprising 16 favela communities and housing approximately 130,000 people, according to 2010 census data. As it happens with other Brazilian favelas, segregation and marginalisation, but also everyday creativity and resistance mark Maré's history.

Maré Vive represents one important media activist project in the favela. It was founded in 2014, and it aimed to cover the Military Occupation that took place in April that year in Complexo da Maré. Such government-sponsored interventions intended to make Rio's favela areas safer ahead of the World Cup. The Maré Vive initiative comprised _a Facebook page - https://www.facebook.com/Marevive, an Instagram profile - @mare_vive, and a Twitter account - @Marevive. However, Facebook is by far its most popular platform as the page quickly amassed thousands of followers on the days that followed the occupation. Today, the Facebook page has managed to gather over 137 thousand likes[4] . It is hugely successful amongst residents of Favela da Maré, as well as with residents from other favelas and even non-favela areas of Rio de Janeiro. Facebook is the obvious choice for the main platform as it is widely used in Brazil. Indeed, the country has the fourth largest number of Facebook users in the world[5], but its users are regarded as one of the most active, spending more time navigating social media than any other category of usage[6].

However, this heightened visibility quickly created problems for the activists. In 2015, one year after Maré Vive was founded, the activists were surprised to find out that a fake page with the same name had been created. This fake page then started to publish photos of young men who were allegedly drug dealers, which put the administrators of the real page in danger. They started to receive threats from both members of the military and of the drug gangs. In order to protect themselves, the activists contacted reporters from TV Record, a free-to-air commercial television network. TV Record then ran a story about the fake page on its sensationalist lunch-time programme called Balanço Geral. The reporters helped clarify the confusion, showing that the real page Maré Vive aimed to publish local news from a favela perspective rather than disclosing the identity of criminals.

> Complexo da Maré is the largest agglomeration of favelas in Rio de Janeiro, comprising 16 favela communities and housing
> approximately 130,000 people

After the TV story, the fake page was removed from Facebook. A fake profile also added one of Maré Vive's administrators, sending an apology via an inbox message. Given these tense circumstances, the administrators of Maré Vive have chosen to remain anonymous in all their interactions.

Additionally, Maré Vive describes itself as a "community media channel" produced collaboratively. According to one of the founders, "the channel is made possible by all residents here in Maré who feed us with local information" (Interview, 01/12/2017). On the page's history tab, one can find the following description:

> " The mainstream media often ignore the favelas' perspectives. We are always marginalised and shown in a negative light, but this is different here! We don't have an anti-police or an anti-army stance when we are covering issues. What we have is a pro-favela-resident stance and we are proud to state this very clearly. We are together, Favela!   #marévive
> (Fan Page Facebook Maré Vive/ History) "

[4]As of 07/11/2018. Currently, Maré Vive's Twitter account has 4,642 followers. Its Instagram profile has 9,901 followers but it has not been updated since 13 July 2017.
[5]Behind Indonesia, India and the United States
[6]For more information on Facebook usage around the world: https://www.statista.com/statistics/268136/top-15-countries-based-on-number-of-facebook-users/ (accessed 07 November 2018)

The platforms publish diverse content that includes local events, courses, and jobs opportunities; comments on current affairs from a favela perspective; and posts that aim to appeal to the community's collective memory. Indeed, it uses a photo of one of Favela da Maré's first residents, Dona Orosina, as its profile picture.
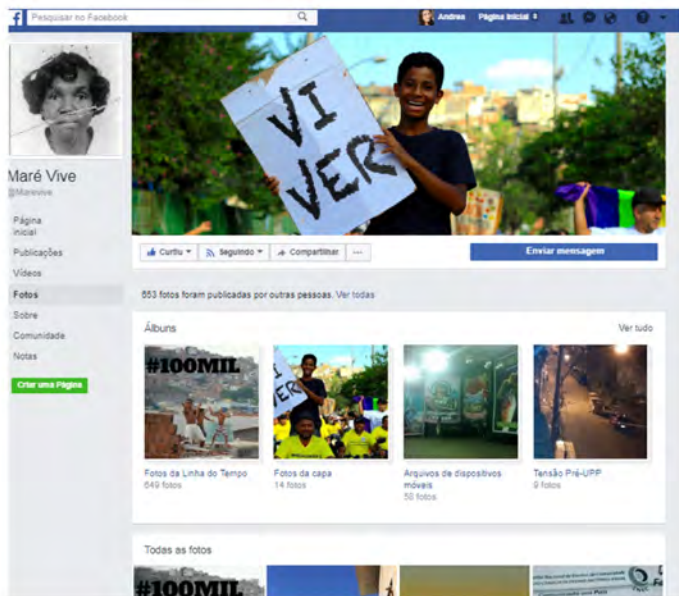

Image 2: Print Screen Maré Vive – The profile picture shows Dona Orosina's face

The Facebook page tends to reach its highest engagement metrics by offering live coverage of police operations, which frequently take place in the favela. When this happens, the page administrators ask for real time updates from different areas of the favela. Users can send messages, photos and videos via inbox messages or via a WhatsApp number. One recent post about a police operation, which was carried out on 06 November 2018 at 11.49 am, exemplifies this. The post generated 1,000 reactions (including "likes", "love it" reactions as well as angry, sad and shocked faces). Usually, the posts about police operations adopt a specific flow: the administrators ask residents to confirm whether there is a police operation taking place; residents start commenting on how the situation is at the exact place where they are located; residents who are either leaving or returning home can then protect themselves based on the information from other residents. People often send in reports of abuses of authority via inbox or WhatsApp messages in order to receive support and guidance on how to proceed in such cases. During these critical days, the page posts infor tion as frequently as once every hour.

To conclude, initiatives of favela media activism, such as Maré Vive, are successful in terms of high engagement and reach. They achieve this by offering help and support for residents when they need to avoid conflict areas where shootings might be taking place. In other words, the social media pages become resources for everyday life survival. This was confirmed in our interviews with residents and users of the page who said that they would never leave or return to their houses without checking the Maré Vive page first.
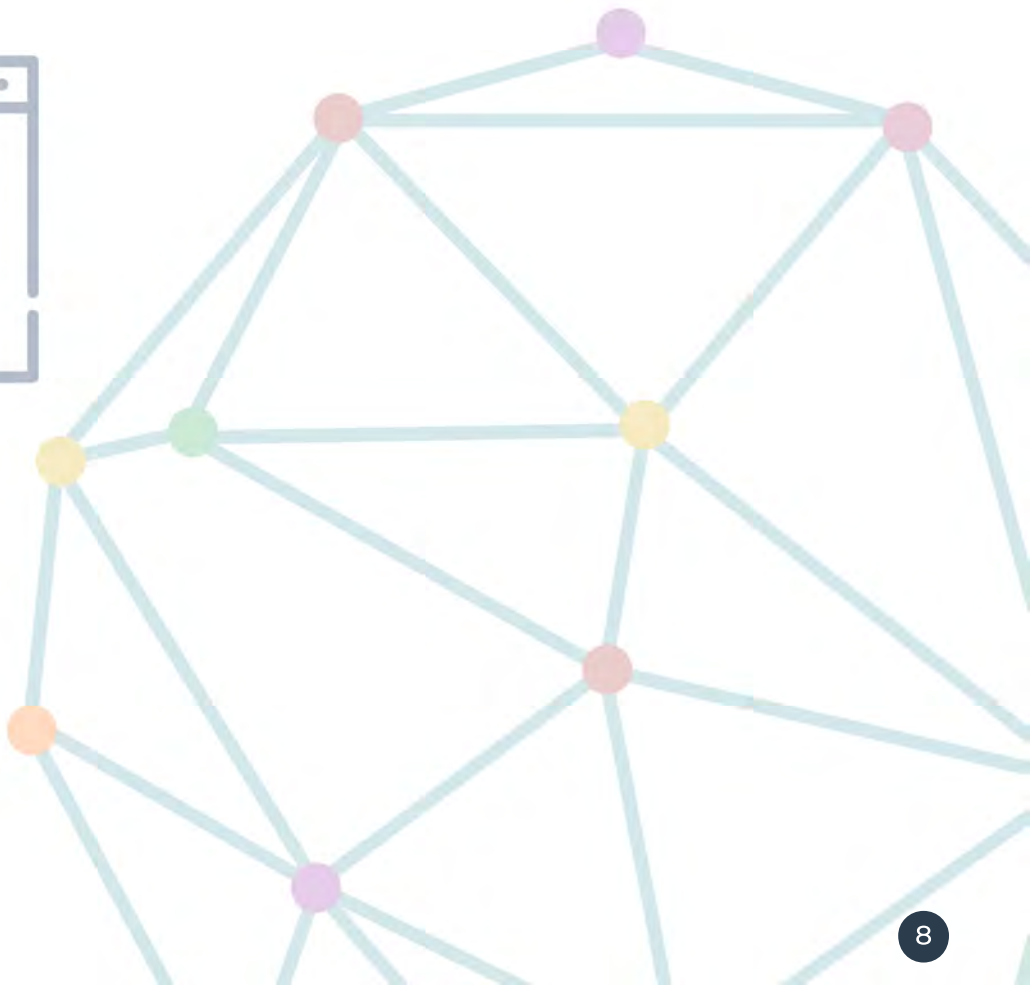
2.2. Coletivo Papo Reto

Coletivo Papo Reto (straight talk, in Portuguese) is a media activism collective from Complexo do Alemão, another large network of favelas, also located in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro. It started in 2013 when heavy floods in Rio de Janeiro left thousands of people homeless in various impoverished areas, such as Acari, Pavuna, Manguinhos, and Alemão. A group of young activists created a WhatsApp chat in which people could send in information about the situation of families that had been affected by the floods in different areas of Alemão. This initiative had very positive outcomes with activists being able to gather food, clothing, and cleaning products, and to use these donations to support the favela residents. Additionally, activists were able to create a network of lawyers, doctors and communication professionals. This made them realise that they had developed a "powerful social technology tool" (interview, 05/09/2018). The chat started being used to gather other types of information, such as accomplishments from favela residents, job opportunities, community events, as well as videos and photos of police raids. Soon, in 2014, the activists decide to create a Facebook page - https://facebook.com/ColetivoPapoReto/, an Instagram profile - @cpapo_reto, and a Twitter account - @C-Papo_Reto. As is the case with Maré Vive, Facebook is its most popular platform with over 50,000 likes[7].

If compared to Maré Vive, Coletivo Papo Reto adopts similar strategies in terms of content production. The social media posts tend to focus on news from a favela perspective, in contrast to mainstream commercial media news. The pages also alerts residents about police operations, local events, workshops and posts content related to community communication initiatives and Human Rights. There is, however, one fundamental difference in relation to Maré Vive: the activists who run the pages are not anonymous. Currently, a total of 8 activists (4 women and 4 men) help manage and run the platforms and some of them have become well-known citizen journalists and Human Rights advocates in Brazil, such as Raull Santiago, Thainã Medeiros, and Renata Trajano. They adopted a strategy of visibility, rather than anonymity, through a partnership with Witness, an international nonprofit organisation that trains and supports people using video in their fight for human rights. Members of the NGO were willing to find Brazilian partners who worked with video making as a way to gather proof of human rights violations and contacted activists from Coletivo Papo Reto. The aim was not just to draw attention to acts of violence but also to hold the responsible parties accountable. The organisation perceived Brazil as an ideal test case. The country has a history of a troubled relationship between police forces and Favela residents, training on how to assure that video can be used as legal evidence, as well as training on data security awareness.

Coletivo Papo Reto has also managed to achieve a reasonable degree of visibility in Brazil and abroad. On 18 February 2015, for instance, the New York Times published an in-depth investigative story about the collective spanning 4 pages of a Sunday edition[8]. According to interviews with activists, this was crucial in helping them obtain more funding, support and resources. However, such visibility also caused critical moments for the activists. The leading person behind Papo Reto, Raull Santiago had to deal with several fake profiles who used his name, his image, and published photos of alleged members of drug gangs in Alemão. He was severely threatened as a result. The solution was then to obtain from Facebook a blue badge for both Raull himself as well as the Coletivo Papo Reto page. The badge confirmed that this was their authentic page or profile, and helped them shut down the fake ones.

Image 3: Print screen Facebook page Coletivo Papo Reto

3. Lessons learnt

3.1. What works?

Being genuinely grassroots:
The most successful initiatives that use technologies to fight marginalisation tend to have a bottom-up nature. The media activism collectives are mostly comprised of favela residents themselves within the philosophy of "us by us" (favela residents are the ones to tell their own stories);

Local knowledge and relevance:
Because the activists tend to be from the favelas they can fully understand the issues that affect favela residents from an insider perspective and are, therefore, well equipped to cater for people's needs and demands;

Community media expertise:
Prior to their current projects, most of the media activists have a history of being involved in community work, often in community media and citizen journalism. Maré Vive activists, for instance, had vast experience as community photographers;

Favela networks:
They often meet with other activists and establish solid networks across favelas through community communication initiatives and collectives;

International networks:
Establishing partnerships with international organisations, as it was the case with Coletivo Papo Reto and Witness, can be very effective for exchanging training resources and skills, particularly in terms of data security expertise;

Data security
Learning to store data safely is key. By working with Witness, Coletivo Papo Reto has started to encrypt and archive the material collected. If the material is only posted on Facebook or WhatsApp, it can be easily deleted or lost.

Everyday online protection:
Everyday data safety procedures are equally important. Activists have started adopting very simple habits, such as deleting messages from favela residents after receiving them, and instructing the residents to do the same. Mobile phones must also have difficult unlock codes. This can protect activists if their phones are confiscated, preventing easy access to their social media and messaging apps.

Favela pride:
In Brazil unlike in other countries, our research revealed that residents displayed a genuine sense of pride of being born and raised in a favela. Residents achieved this through collective initiatives that aimed to foster their memory and history. In Rio, for instance, they established a network of museums based in favelas. Additionally, the word "favela", which was previously deemed as pejorative has had its meaning turned around into something positive. Residents of Rio de Janeiro favelas have created an expression that translates this sense of favela pride: they call themselves "crias de favela" (which can be loosely translated as favela offsprings)

Getting into institutionalised politics:
Favela residents' neighbourhood associations have had a long tradition of establishing linkages with mainstream politicians. It is common, for instance, for each association to have a connection with a particular political party or local councilor. Often, this results in entering clientelistic deals with politicians in which goods and services are exchanged for political support. However, in the last decades, there has been a shift in terms of actual favela-born community leaders or activists running for office and being elected. City Councilwoman Marielle Franco, murdered in March 2018, exemplifies this. Recently, her former chief of staff, Renata Souza, born and raised in Favela da Maré, has also been elected as a State Councilor.
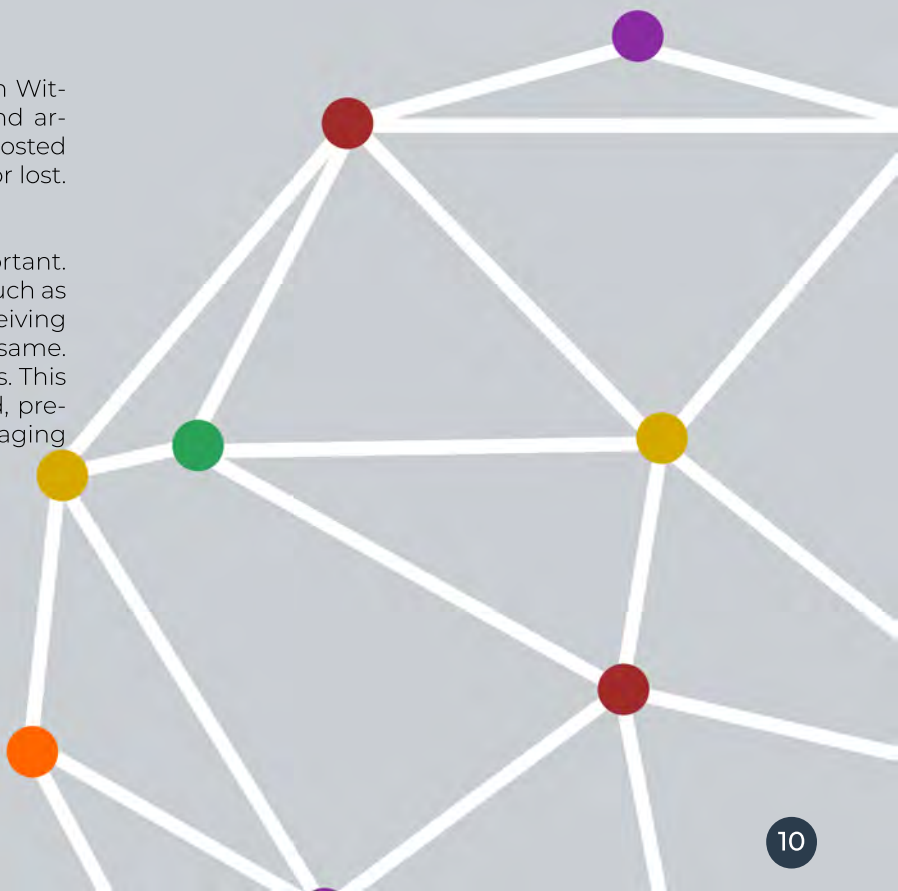
3.2. Challenges and critical issues

Obtaining **financial sustainability** is often a critical issue for most initiatives using technology to combat marginalisation. Often, they manage to obtain grants or funding from NGOs or the Government. However, because resources are scarce and activists are precarious workers from low-income backgrounds, they seldom manage to have a long-term strategy for financial stability.

In the Brazilian context, there is a **general mistrust of NGOs.** Favela activists and residents perceive members of NGOs as opportunists who might take the credit for grassroots projects, coming in and dashing out without giving anything back to the communities. This has been worsened by various corruption scandals involving NGOs.

General mistrust of mainstream commercial media. Activists frequently describe negative experiences with mainstream media journalists who adopt unethical practices such as: a) using the local media initiatives for information but being careless about the protection of sources, b) representing the favelas in a simplistic and often negative light, c) distorting stories as a way to fit the general agenda of portraying the favelas as crime epicentres.

Professionalism versus authenticity. Media activism initiatives might be pushed to become more professional and adopt more structured work practices. However, this might also come at the expense of the spontaneity and passion that drive activist work. Our research indicates that activists were often unsure about how much growth they could handle without losing their authenticity.

More connection between initiatives is needed. Even though our research revealed a strong network of favela media initiatives, many activists were also unaware of projects in other favelas or even within the same favela. Based on this insight, we produced a story map with media activism initiatives in Brazil, using a book published by Núcleo Piratininga de Comunicação as a starting point. The idea is that activists will then be able to feed into this map, providing information on other initiatives they are aware of.

Media regulation and competition. Unlike other Latin American countries, Brazil has not made significant progress in terms of media policies. The media landscape is marked by a huge degree of concentration. A small number of large conglomerates own a large number of media outlets. Political oligarchies also own a large number of media outlets in many regions of the country. To make matters worse, the Neo-Pentecostal Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) has become a major media player. TV Record, the network that they own, has become the second largest in the country, losing out only to the Globo Corporation. The country has little tradition of public service broadcasting and there are virtually no public subsidies for community media initiatives.

Mistrust of the Justice System. The Brazilian Judicial System is perceived as slow, inefficient and biased towards those with political and economic power. Marielle Franco's murder has been an emblematic case. Although this has been a targeted political assassination, which created a public outcry with large protests on the streets, the crime remains unsolved.

Surveillance. Our research reveals that many activists have had their digital footprints used against them with the frequent creation of fake pages, profiles, or the spreading of fake news to damage their reputation and place them and their families at risk.
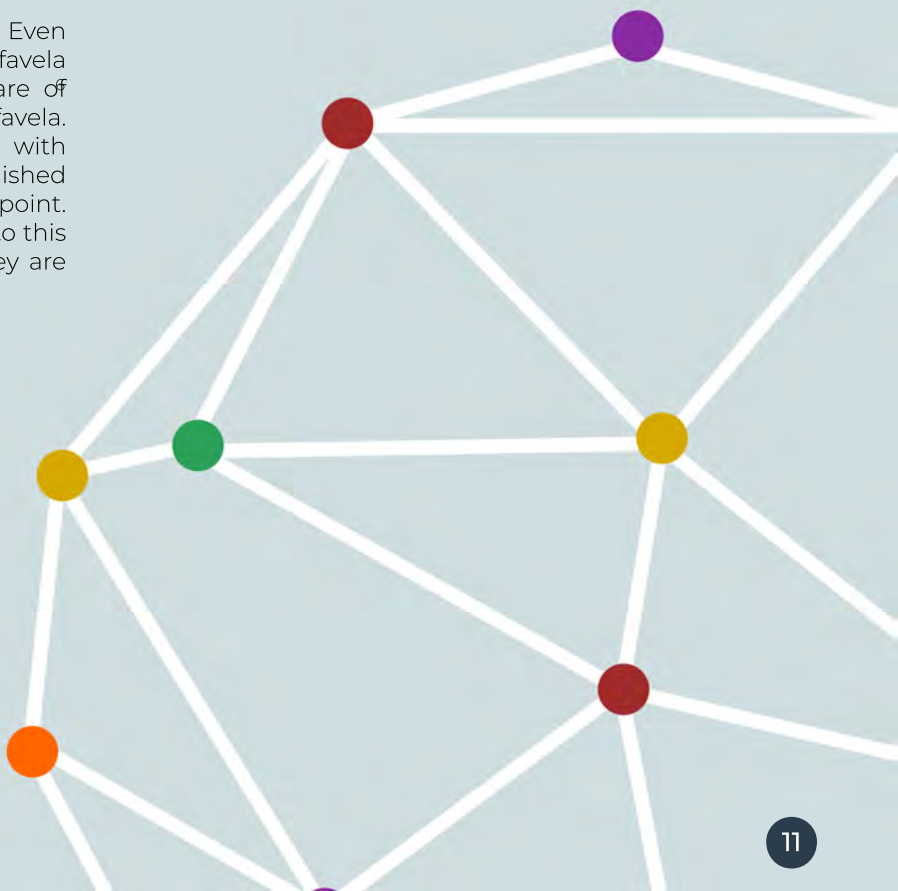
4. Other projects in Rio de Janeiro:

Museu da Maré, Complexo da Maré, Rio de Janeiro
https://www.facebook.com/museudamare/
www.museudamare.org.br

Favela Cineclube, Favela da Providência, Rio de Janeiro
https://www.facebook.com/favelacineclube/

Impacto das Cores, Favela da Providência, Rio de Janeiro
https://www.facebook.com/impactodascores

Defezap, Complexo do Alemão, Rio de Janeiro.
https://www.facebook.com/defezap/

Rede de Museologia Social, Rio de Janeiro.
http://rededemuseologiasocialdorj.blogspot.com/

To access our **Story Map** of media
activism initiatives
https://goo.gl/CF4FdJ
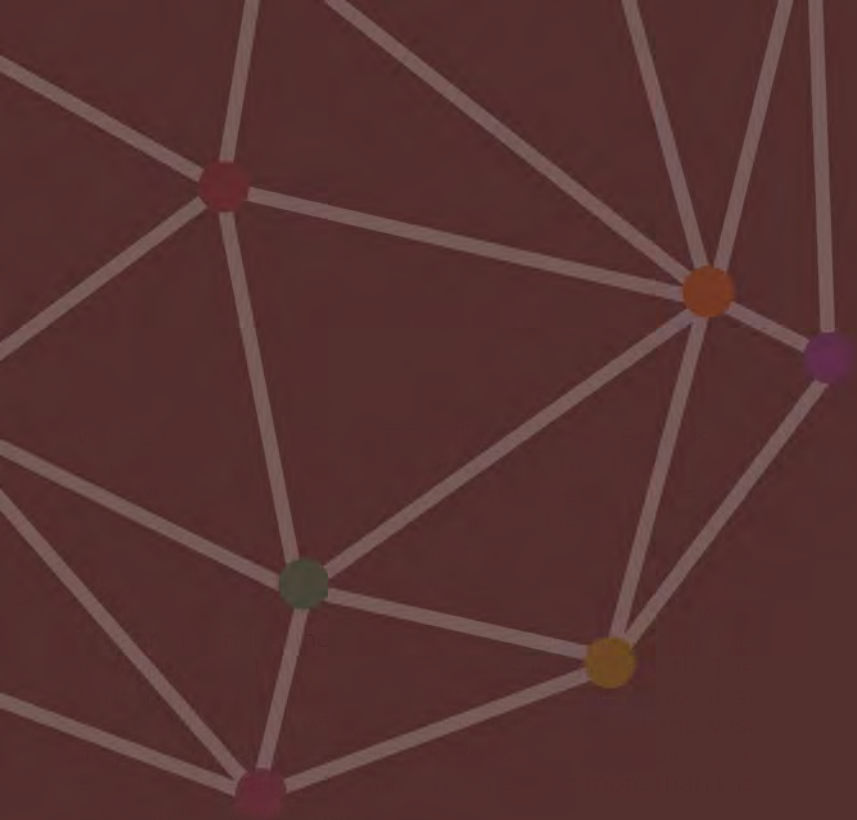
Sharing Experiences and Lessons
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1. Context: Kenya in the aftermath of 2007 general elections

Kenya is an East African nation, whose population, according to World Bank 2017 estimates, was just over 49 million, occupying more than 582,000 sq. km and a GDP of USD 74.9 billion (Kes 7.68trillion). It continuously finds itself receiving both praise and criticism in equal portion. These contradictions have created a political environment that leads to economic and social isolation through poor citizen engagement, little to no public participation and increasing institutionalised abuse of human rights.

In September 2014, Kenya acquired a low middle-income country status. It is considered the strongest country economically, politically and socially in the Eastern African region and made it to the UN's top four list of countries in Africa to invest in. However, in the same breath it was recently ranked 8th globally and 6th in Africa among countries with large percentages of their populations living on less than USD 591 monthly (Kes 5,910) by the World Poverty Clock report. This accounts for 14.7 million people, 29% of its population. Moreover, Kenya's corruption levels have seen it ranked 143 out of 180 countries on Transparency International's 2017 corruption index. An overview of the corruption scandals of the last decade reveals more than USD 17.25billion (Kes 1.77trillion) lost or unaccounted for[1]. The cost of this corruption is the irredeemable long-term opportunity costs in form of investment in the productive capacity of the economy across all sectors. In 2016, the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission estimated that Kenya loses approximately USD 6billion (Kes. 607billion) annually, which accounts for nearly a third of its national budget.

At the end of 2007, Kenya held its general elections with race to the top between incumbent Mwai Kibaki and leader of the Orange Party, Raila Odinga. Claims that the vote was rigged stoked partisan tensions leading to violence erupting across Kenya with more than 1,100 people killed and over 500,000 people forced to flee their own homes. The violence pitted ethnic groups aligned with Kibaki and Odinga against eachother, the Kikuyu and Kalenjin and Luo. During this time, the media played a significant part in fuelling these ethnic divisions through the construction and dissemination of narratives that set about inter-ethnic hostility[2].
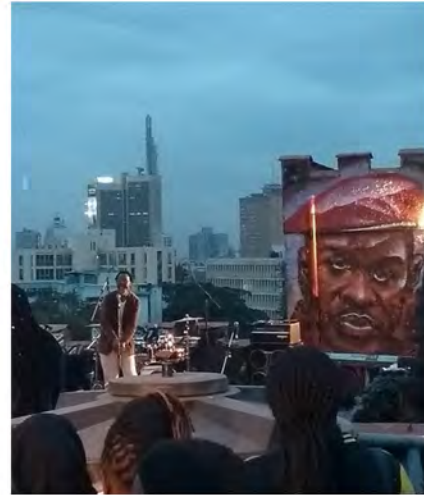

Image 1: Concert at PAWA254, August 2018

The aftermath of this experience left a lasting impression on Kenyan society. Artists, in particular, responded through a combination of creative uses of technologies and aesthetic tactics visible in their art. The changes in the technological landscape also meant that promoting and sharing views was facilitated through virtual (in addition to physical) spaces. Between 2007 and 2012, when the next set of elections were due, it became apparent that artists were developing tactics to present politically subversive messages, whilst understanding the reliance they had on the institutions they set out to critique[3]. Cartoonists, animators, musicians and multi-media artists created a breadth of content that was distributed online and that differentiated from traditional media. As Benkler[4] states, unlike the unidirectional "hub-and-spoke" architecture, digital technologies offer a distributed architecture with multidirectional connections among all nodes, in the case of Kenya giving rise to unofficial networks and vernacular creativity.

[1] https://africaopendata.org/dataset/kenya-government-corruption-scandal-media-report-sheet-2008-2018/resource/956acac6-d0cb-4d1d-9c18-616a4bbe843e
[2] See Wachanga, D.N. (2011) Kenya's indigenous radio stations and their use of metaphors in the 2007 election violence. Journal of African Media Studies
[3] See Callus, P., 2018. The rise of Kenyan political animation: tactics of subversion. In: Tejumola, O. and Limb, P., eds. Taking African Cartoons Seriously: Politics, Satire, and Culture. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.
[4]Ibid.

2. Case studies

2.1. PAWA 254

This case study evaluates the ways in which PAWA254 has used arti-vism, to contribute to a better Kenya through increased citizen engagement and social accountability. Boniface Mwangi is an award-winning photojournalist who had documented the events of the election violence as they unfolded in 2007. Following the violence, Mwangi gave up his work as a journalist and turned his attention to setting up an organization intended to be politically active: PAWA254, an organization that was led by a belief in the arts and the potential to use art politically and for social change. PAWA was set up as a youth-led, non-profit entity in 2009, and it is now Kenya's unique art and cultural collaborative hub that houses, fosters and catalyses creative and community-driven projects for social change; its name combines the acronym "PAWA" is Swahili slang for "power," and the number "254", the Kenya's international telephone code.

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> *"For change to happen, people need a sense of possibility to fuel their motivation. Art provides us a vision of what could be, as well as a critical reflection upon the world we must act within right now. Art also helps us feel and experience both pain and possibility, rather than simply know and understand it."[5]*
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PAWA's campaigns and projects make an intensive use of digital technologies, that in Kenya have emerged as a multi-faceted, accessible and alternative platform for data collection, communication/dissemination of information in real time in the face of an increasingly unreliable and costly mainstream media platforms. In this guide, we present two initiatives run by PAWA that exemplify how arts, digital media and activism are powerful tools to promote active citizenship and fight against corruption and inequalities.

The first campaign is called **Mavulture (September 2012 – March 2013)**; the term 'Mavulture' is slang for vultures who are identified as elected leaders in different positions who prey on their electorate once elected. The overall objective of this project was to train and equip an emerging generation of professional and citizen journalists, in preparation of the upcoming general elections that were held in March 2013. Throughout the Mavulture project, three workshops on Citizen Journalism, Photography and

Poetry were conducted by Kenyan veteran professionals who have used these skills to creatively create awareness and inform Kenyans on social injustice. Furthermore, the campaign used multimedia and multipronged approaches to creating awareness prior to the general elections: it combined information, non-violent protest methodologies, a combination of performing and visual art, highly symbolic art that incorporated shock-factors to rouse passive citizen engagement, non-mainstream journalism and the use of digital technology for dissemination and community mobilization at the grassroots. The campaign had a website www.mavulture.com featuring cases of political corruption and sharing creative online videos—user-generated, high quality videos that address topical issues in an interesting and engaging manner. One example is the Voters vs Vultures song collaboratively written and produced by PAWA's community of musicians that became an immediate hit.[6] As of May 15, 2013, the site had registered 211,000+ views, with most of the traffic (about 20 percent) referenced from social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter. This initiative coupled also activist action happening in the streets of Nairobi, as the political demonstration dubbed, to call out the growing off levels impunity that Members of Parliament and other leaders had cost Kenyans.

Image 2: Graffiti in the Capital's central business district, part of the Mavulture campaign

The Mavulture concept also inspired the theme of the development of a new Kenyan game titled 'Election Thief' by an upcoming crop of young Kenyan gamers. The game, featured briefly on Google Play after its successful launch at the PAWA254 Hub on 2nd March 2013, is based on a character 'Omu', who chases down the 'vulture' who has stolen ballot papers in an ongoing election.

The second initiative, **Changamka Na Sanaa**, took place in 2017. In this case PAWA254 took a slightly different approach to civic engagement by focusing on four counties (Kisumu, Nakuru, Nairobi and Mombasa) for engagement and dissemination, using local community organisations and community mobilisers from the target locations and co-creation between local creatives and PAWA's community of established artists who each focused on their area of specialisation in dance, spoken word, graffiti and music. It also leveraged a key partnership with the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) that is the constitutionally mandated body to conduct or supervise referenda and elections to any elective body or office established by the Constitution, and any other elections as prescribed by an Act of Parliament. This integrated communications and community-based approach to voter education was implemented through a high impact, youth targeted campaign aimed at inspiring and provoking citizens to use their voting power to foster change in their social, political,

and economic environments.. *#ChangamkaNaSanaa* is Kiswahili and it means to 'be activated through art'. The campaign contributed to increasing the meaningful, active and non-violent participation of youth and women in the 2017 General Elections. Through local community groups, PAWA254 engaged community mobilisers throughout the four counties to use M-Collect, an innovative mobile application that was developed by PAWA254 and deployed to support data collection while at the same time send short interactive messages (SMS) bearing civic education.

Following post-project conversations with the mobilizers, artists and partners, the consensus was that voter education did empower voters not only to understand the voting process but to appreciate the meaning of elections in a democracy. The ripple effect was the continued conversations after the project activities wound up. The use of graffiti to communicate the message and other performances like poetry, dance and songs provided entertainment while driving the message home. Deployment of PAWA Artists as mentors who led the co-creation exercise worked well to improve talent and skill among the local artists.

2.2. The photographer Msingi Sasis and Nairobi Noir

Msingi Sasis is a Kenyan photographer, who created a cultural enterprise and production firm, called Nairobi Noir, which feature a range of forms of expression, from written arts (poems and short stories), to visual art (videos and photographs), to sound art (music and field recording of Nairobi streets at night). Msingi Sasis's Noir perspective specialised in black and white pictures of Nairobi at night, this allows him to capture and document social issues in the Kenyan capital, such as corruption, prostitution, social anxiety, homelessness, poverty.

> "Noir originated as a part of social criticism in a very disguised manner, addressing issues which have been driven sometimes underground [...] when you look at the dark side of a city, you are able to address a lot of social problems, in a way that people do not find offending, or overbearing, or very obvious. It does not come out of as the traditional type of protest. [...] you are able to address all these issues in an indirect way"
> (interview with Msingi Sasis, 26/08/2018)

Msingi's story shows the power of social media and the internet in protecting and supporting art-ivists and their cause, but it also highlights the other side of the coin, the risks connected to visibility and the importance to one's online reputation. Msingi's passion for Nairobi at night started when he was in high school (1999-2000), but it is only after attending a film school and going back to Nairobi in 2012 that he started photographing, for his own pleasure, the streets of Nairobi after sunset. One day in 2014, he edited one of these pictures and posted it on facebook, and people liked it and shared it. Msingi started editing and posting a picture everyday, choosing within the hundreds of pictures he had taken, almost unconsciously, for two years; those pictures resonated with the people and his popularity started to grow. After a month of posting, he got a facebook message from PAWA inviting him to present his work at an exhibition held in the framework of the international event "African metropolis". For the occasion Msingi created his website and the brand Nairobi Noir. His pictures and his website became very popular, and four months later he was interviewed by an international broadcaster, BBC world service[7].

[7]https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p026v6dz

Image 3: nairobinoir.com homepage, screenshot

One night, in April 2015, he went out, as usual, at sunset, to start portraying the city and taking pictures of the Galleria Mall, but some people noticing what he was doing and still shaken by the tragic terrorist attack at the Westgate shopping mall in 2013, started to get suspicious and decided that he was attempting to plan some acts of terrorism. The situation got serious and the crowd became violent; but luckily, someone called the police, which arrested him, but at the same time rescued him from being lynched by the mob. The police had the right to hold any terror suspect for 365 days without disclosing it to the public, thanks to the anti-terrorism bill passed after the Westgate massacre. So, when Boniface Mwangi, the founder of PAWA254, went to look for him the police didn't confirm his arrest. Boniface and PAWA started an online campaign on social media to denounce Msingi's arrest and in less than 24h he was released.

> *"After I was arrested, the support and encour-agement I had was also very overwhelming, and I felt like, I cannot just stop because of a single arrest, because all these people, this work was resonating with a lot of people, and there were people telling me how this work had opened their eyes [...]."*
>
> **(interview with Msingi Sasis, 26/08/2018)**

After his arrest he went back to photograph both for Nairobi Noir and in his portrait studio, but he clients in his studio started to turn him down, as the news of him being arrested as a terror suspect spread online and on social media; he did not get as much business as he used to have and he got into debts. He could not pay his rent and was kicked out of his flat, becoming homeless and jobless. This was a very dark moment in Msingi's life. A few weeks later, still on the streets, he met someone he knew and he learnt that people were looking for him online and on social media. He posted a request for help, asking his audi-ence to buy his prints to help him get back on his feet, and people, once again, supported him, and he could go back on track and set up a new photographic studio

Untitled 92. ©Msingi Sasis. (Nº.160)

Untitled 89. ©Msingi Sasis. (Nº.157)

Untitled 98. ©Msingi Sasis. (Nº.166)

3. Lessons learnt

3.1. What works?

The importance of an umbrella organisation to protect and support artivists:
For artists developing creative work on social issues, it is key to belong to a network of artists under an umbrella organisation, such as PAWA 254. In this way, they can be protected and supported if they suffer any kind of persecution from the authorities. When Msingi Sasis was arrested, the support that he obtained from PAWA 254 and its founder Boniface Mwangi was essential for not only getting him released but also helping re-build his network of clients, getting back on his feet financially and psychologically.

Social media as a tool to mobilise help:
Msingi Sasis' story summarises the ways in which social media can be used as a tool for solidarity. When he became homeless due to having been deemed a terror suspect, he also realised that he could use his connections with a community of fans who appreciated his photographic work to ask for help in rebuilding his life. Through engaging with posts on Sasis' social media, users started to buy his work and offered him assistance in a situation in which he was vulnerable. However, on the other hand, social media is often also a tool that can be used for destroying reputations, as we will discuss in the next section of this report.

Timing is everything:
The release of PAWA 254's Mavulture campaign planned to coincide with the elections in 2013. The content thus rode the mood of the season and audiences did not struggle to connect with the messaging.

Multi-sensory content:
The main form of media used by the Mavulture campaign was visual. This was already a great advantage as people tend to remember and therefore be further influenced by content that is optical and also combines a full sensory appeal. This is the same strategy used by Nairobi Noir.

Relevance and Effectiveness:
Applying art in civic education has proved to be very effective when communicating with the youth in its ability to fully engage and to use language that they identify with. Graffiti and the pledge wall allowed a high level of community engagement and the conversations to continue long after the project.

Facilitation:
PAWA 254's work relied on partners who worked and supported mobilisers through a strong team effort and supervision. This ensured that the information given to the public was uniform and consistent. In the initial stages, communication was a challenge but was ironed out with time. Choosing mobilisers from the same locality also reduced the levels of suspicions and allowed for successful exercise.

Training:
The training session helped mobilisers to understand more about #ChangamkaNaSanaa and what it stands for. Mobilisers felt that they were more informed on the process and the way election is being conducted. Through the training on the election, mobilisers understood the role and responsibility of youth and women in the electoral process and to promote peaceful co-existence

Co-creation:
The facilitators were knowledgeable and worked well with the local artists granting their local counterparts opportunities to create and develop their unique contents in dance, spoken word, skits and graffiti. Graffiti installations attracted more audiences while the performances generated discussions and compelling young and old alike to reflect on the importance of peace during and after the General Elections and subsequently make a peace pledge. Some local artists were very impressed by the partnership that improved their ability to communicate through art. They also commended the impact it had on their understanding of citizens' role in the election process.

Mentorship through PAWA artists:
Interactions proved very inspiring for the local artists. The friendships and teamwork broke boundaries of tribe and brought out unity and patriotism. In addition, it provided an opportunity for the capital city-based artists to see new opportunities in the other cities while the local artists sampled the experience of the more established artists. It also developed confidence among the local artists who sometimes suffer from too much familiarity with their audiences.

Mobile network connection:
In some geographical areas it was impossible to communicate due to poor telephone network. This made it difficult to contact members of the team and also save the data collected during the interviews. In such instances, the mobilisers manually took the details and later uploaded what they collected once they arrived in areas with stronger network signals.

Connections with the mainstream media:
The mainstream media coverage of activist initiatives can be problematic and simplistic. However, when artivists become skilled at telling their stories in mainstream media outlets, this can bring them many advantages. After being arrested and, later released, Msingi Sasis managed to tell his story to many national and international media outlets, such as BBC World Service. This allowed him to reframe it, in his own terms, highlighting the harassment and poor conditions that artists often need to face.

3.2. Challenges and critical issues

Tribalism:
Some local residences refused to disclose some of the information citing privacy. Locals were not aware of the initiative hence were reluctant to yield information. Mobilisers spent time to explain the purpose of the project and the need for the desired information, which was primarily for sharing information regarding elections.

Preparation Time:
Developing artistic content takes time and creativity, and that the artists agreed that training tool much of the time leaving them only the option of running through their presentations. While the audiences were impressed with the performances, the artists believed the performances and therefore the educational aspect would have been much better with more training and practice.

Time constrains and political polarisation:
This posed a challenge for implementing partners. People's time and especially the youth, was taken up by political party campaigns leaving them very little time to listen to truthful civic education messages. This also affected the identification of project sites for the graffiti where in some instances wall owners changed their minds at the last minute causing the partners to seek alternatives which were not in the initial plan.

Time-period of implementation:
Civic engagement should be a continuous process; it is not a touch and go kind of approach. As the general elections were less than two months away, the IEBC could not dedicate adequate time to fully participate in the project. PAWA254 has since been working on developing partnerships that will enhance civic engagement throughout the five-year election cycle.

Sustainability:
Art is a way of life and it can be safely asserted that the partners will continue with the activities in the organizations. Young artists that were trained continue to partner with PAWA254 and are always called upon to be part of other activities. In addition, they still perform as a way of life and for income in their individual capacities. We believe that in their performances, part of their messages involves civic education and reflections.

**The use of social media and websites as channels for dissemination of information:**
On the one hand, when used correctly, trending on social media can lead to mainstream media picking up the stories and running them on mainstream news. In Kenya, it is typical to include a budget for paying for coverage for events or publication of stories on mainstream media. On the other hand, when mainstream media pick up trending content from social media, this cost is immediately re moved. However, in such situations organisations have no control on the segments the content is published on, how the story/event/project is covered. This in turn could affect how citizens and partners engage with content, and potentially even affect the organisation's brand/PR.

The limitations of social media:
Where increased citizen engagement leading to better governance and reduced political marginalisation is the objective the use of social media and other digital channels of communication do not have a deep reach (cutting across language, ethnicity, rural or otherwise demarcated communities/populations); they may exacerbate the marginalisation faced by communities living in rural and peri-urban areas.

Social media and online reputation:
Artivists often have to face the spread of lies and fake news that damage their reputation. This was evident in Msingi Sasi's case. He was falsely branded as a terror suspect for taking photos of Nairobi at night. The story quickly spread online, causing him professional and personal damage. In an interview to members of the eVoices team (on 26 August 2018), Boniface Mwangi also discussed many examples in which people spread negative rumours and fake edited with photoshoped images to harm his reputation.
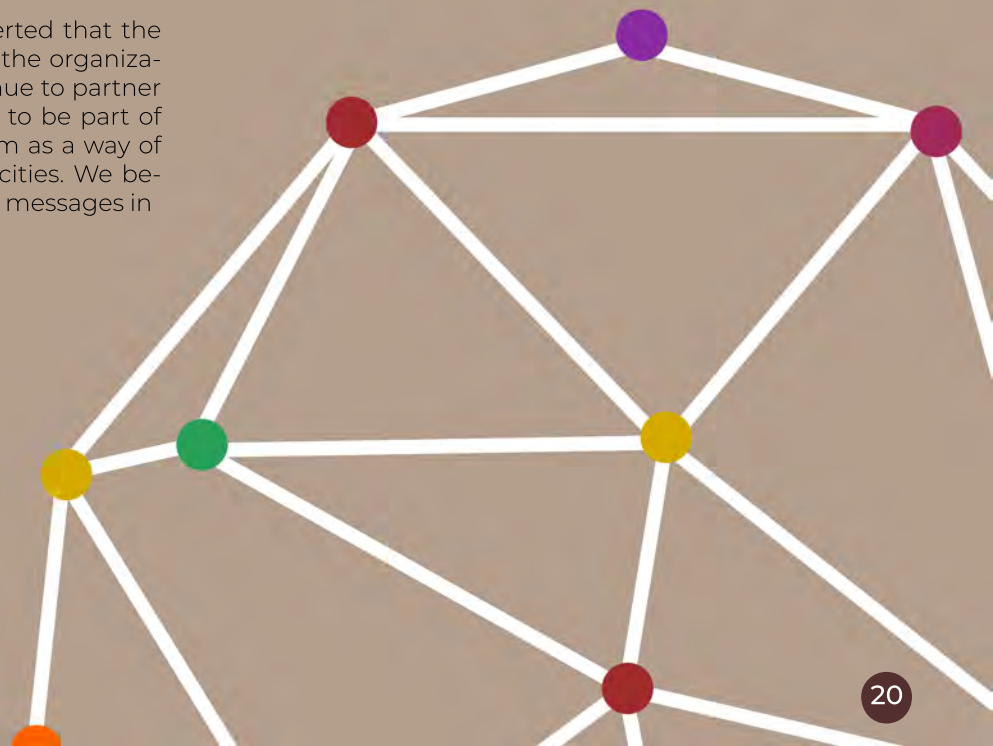
A poor reading culture:
Social media is also affected by the poor reading culture that typifies Kenyans. The result is that audiences make assumptions or do not read at all; rather, they rely on hearsay or on a general response about articles. To address this, there were concerted efforts to find different ways of communicating. There was the use of pictures, shorter stories and billboards in addition to having interactive sessions on Facebook and Twitter, which allowed for back-and-forth interactive conversations that provided clarification. Some content such as animation and info graphics created for civic engagement as a pilot were not able to realise their full potential. Similarly, for the SMS system, it has been used for feedback and sending bulk messages.

Long-term activist support:
The trainings were very popular, but PAWA initially lacked the capacity to continuously support activists thereafter. It is only between 2017 and 2018 that PAWA has been implementing an activist support and development project dubbed Emerging Voices. This shared a similar overarching theme with the Mavulture project but factored in a mentorship aspect. This allowed new generations of activists to be mentored by older Kenyan activists. It also built bridges between activist movements in low income areas with those based or founded within higher income areas such as the Kilimani Foundation to for reflection sessions on best practices.

Budget constraints, mainstream media blackouts and plagiarism:
Implementation of projects faced three main challenges. The first was limited resources to see through some of the ideas. For instance, pitching billboards is expensive; this limited the time and location of display and, consequently, lowered impact. Furthermore, there was a blackout by the mainstream media against majority of the project activities due to their controversial nature. Examples are peaceful demonstrations, website profiles, and short films. This is also somewhat due to the fact that media houses in Kenya are either increasingly directly or indirectly controlled by politicians through ownership or association and power play.[8] This too affected the reach and impact but, in turn, added to the urgency for more coverage through the internet. This, partly, was the reason th online campaigns were a huge success. Lastly, the Mavulture site was plagiarised by a section of bloggers and gossip news sites thus denying its rightful share of readers.
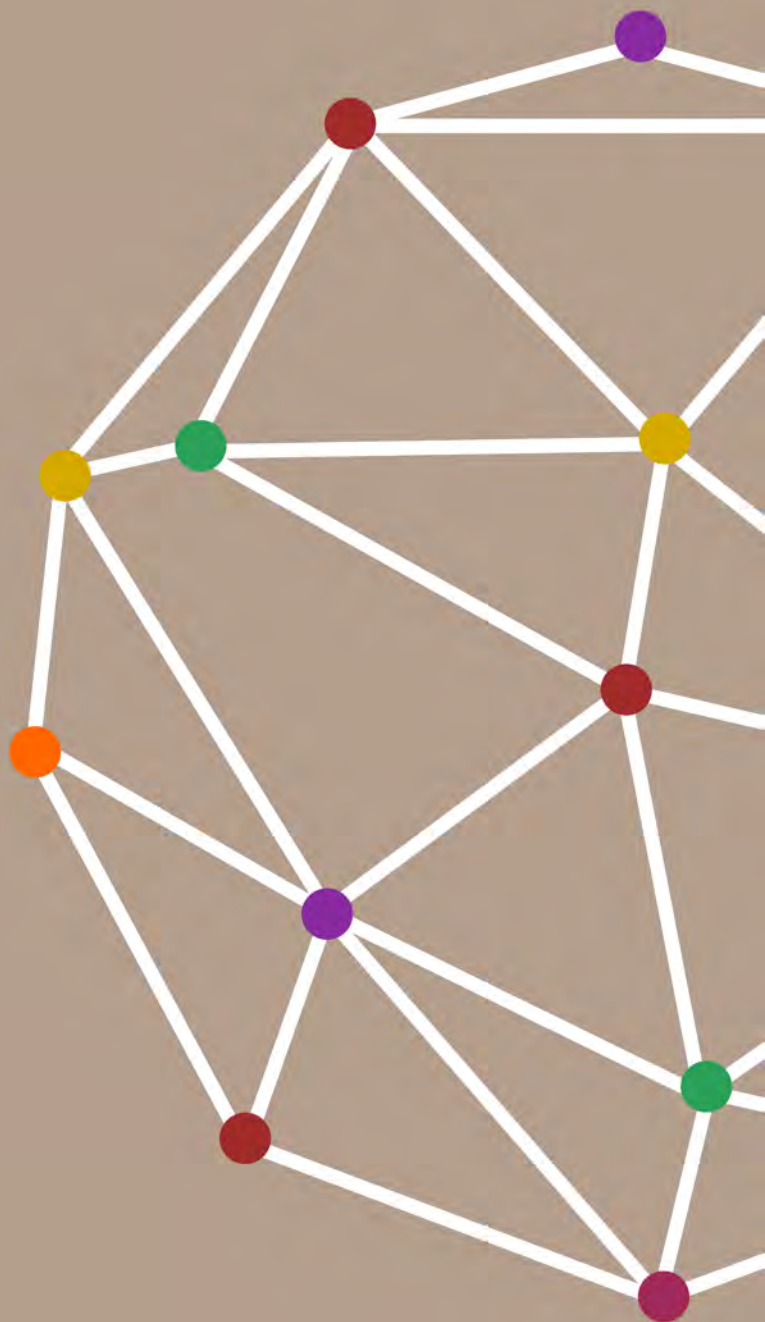
[8] https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africatoday.57.3.77?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

4. Other projects in Kenya:

Salim Busuru
https://twitter.com/sbusuru
https://www.instagram.com/salimbusuru/

The NEST
http://thenestcollective.co.uk/

Jim Chuchu
http://www.jimchuchu.com/

Ng'endo Mukii
https://www.ngendo.com/

Slum Film Festival
http://www.slumfilmfestival.net/

Jepchumba
http://www.jepchumba.com/

To access our story map of art-ivism in Kenya:
https://goo.gl/sGsvjG
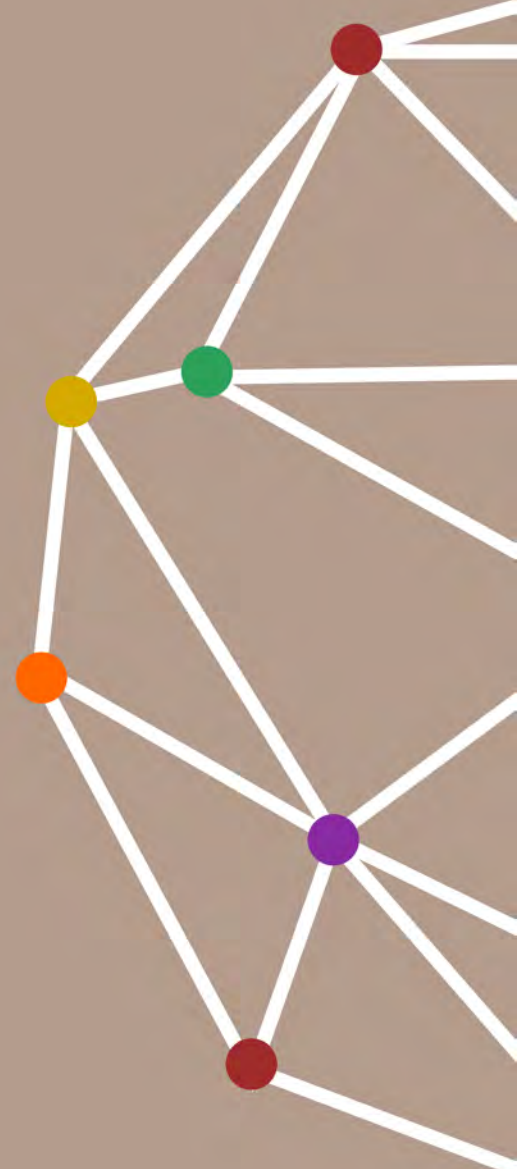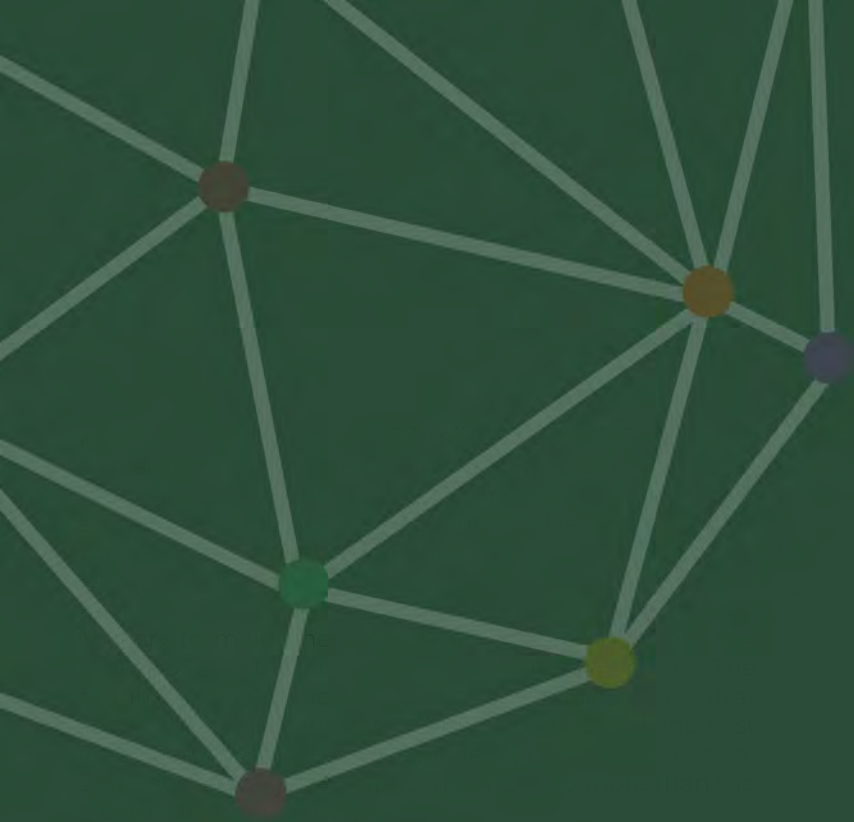

STORY MAP OF ART-IVISM
in Kenya

SYRIA

Sharing Experiences and Lessons
from Brazil, Kenya, Syria, and Costa Rica

Nabil Eid

1. Context: Syria is the most violent country in the world

Syria is located in Western Asia, in the Middle East, bordering Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and Jordan. In 2010, before the crisis, the Syrian population was estimated at roughly 23 million permanent inhabitants. Since March 2011, Syria has been embroiled in an armed conflict, which has created the worst humanitarian crisis of our time since World War II. More than 12 million people have been forced to flee their homes. The Syria crisis is now entering its eighth year, with the country being ranked last on the Global Peace Index, making it the most violent country in the world. The war caused 470,000 deaths (February 2016 SCPR estimate), and the internal displacement of 7.6 million people (July 2015 UNHCR estimate). Additionally, over 5 million people have become refugees (July 2017 registered by UNHCR), making population assessment difficult. However, despite these turbulent circumstances, as of December 2017, life continues normally for most of its citizens in areas least affected by the civil war.

According to a UNICEF report, in 2018, more than 13.1 million people, including 5.3 million children, needed urgent life-saving humanitarian assistance An estimated 5.6 million people are in acute need due to vulnerabilities resulting from displacement, exposure to hostilities, and limited access to basic goods and services. 2.7 million children have been living as registered refugees in Turkey, Lenon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Over 90% of these refugees are living in host communities and facing challenging conditions, including high poverty rates, high costs of living, limited livelihood opportunities and the exhaustion of savings. Women and girls are at higher risk of gender-based violence, including sexual violence and exploitation, child marriage and human trafficking. Millions of children have never known peace, and suffer from psychosocial distress as a result of experiencing the horrors of war. The proportion of people living in extreme poverty (less than US $ 1.90 per day) doubled from 34% pre-crisis to nearly 70% today. Within this context, Syrian communities are striving to survive and are demonstrating heroic resilience in the face of violence. While external observers are busy mapping the demarcation lines separating belligerents, ordinary Syrians are putting their lives on the line to negotiate access to necessities, attempting to maintain social cohesion and advancing creative initiatives to reduce violence.

Image 1: The war in Syria. Credit: AFP , GETTY Images, YASIN AKGUL.

The United Nations, international NGOs and Syrian local organizations working inside Syria, cross-border, and within neighboring countries have used the digital media services to exercise freedom of speech and as a space for civic engagement. This has also enabled them to focus on their fight against marginalisation through social media tools to overcome difficulties, inequalities, and to start processes of cultural transformation to maintain social cohesion and promote creative initiatives to reduce violence and foster peacebuilding dynamics in the Syrian context

2. Case studies

2.1. The Syrian Refugee Art Initiative

As the Syrian War rages on, desperate civilians continue to pour across the borders into neighboring countries. While they have escaped the death and destruction of war, many refugees now find themselves in desolate refugee camps across the region. Other refugees pack into towns and cities, straining services and resources, leading to tensions with local populations. Lives are on hold and official work is prohibited. While international humanitarian organisations scramble to provide food, shelter and medical care to refugees, other critical needs often fall through the cracks, such as educational and creative activities for youth to focus on, trauma relief and mentorship programs. Artistic and cultural activities that enrich the human experience are scarce and refugees have no platform for their voices to reach out to the world and tell their own stories.

To address these issues, Joel Bergner, co-founder of the Artolution organisation, has been travelling to Jordan since 2013 to facilitate mural arts projects with Syrian youths and their families. The team worked with Syrian artists and educators in the Azraq and Za'atari refugee camps. The aim has been to reduce tensions and to promote social cohesion amongst these two populations. Hundreds of children have had the opportunity to participate and add their own creativity to murals throughout the refugee camps and host communities, bringing color and life to a desolate environment and spreading messages of hope to local residents. As Lauren Parater, Innovation Community and Content Manager at UNHCR, argues *"Through using digital media for social change, this Initiative shows how art and cultural activities have contributed to create dialogue whether it's through painting or one of the many other media to express one's creativity; art provides a platform to raise awareness and encourages refugees to realize their own potential"*. (Lauren Parater)

The project has helped give voice to refugee children, as Joel Bergner explains:

> *They engaged kids like the so-called 'wheelbarrow boys', who use their wheelbarrows to smuggle goods into the camp, where they are sold on the black market. These kids are not in school and the work is dangerous. To get them involved in positive and educational activities, the project facilitators conducted wheelbarrow-painting workshops, which the boys loved! The painting was combined with a variety of other educational activities and mural-making. Soon, Za'atari was full of boys running around with colorful wheelbarrows! The project gave voice to refugee children who are often forgotten in the horrific news of the Syrian war. These children must therefore be connected to positive adult role models adults and involve them in educational and creative activities, which played a role in the rebuilding their communities. For many, this is the only organized eductional program they're involved in.*
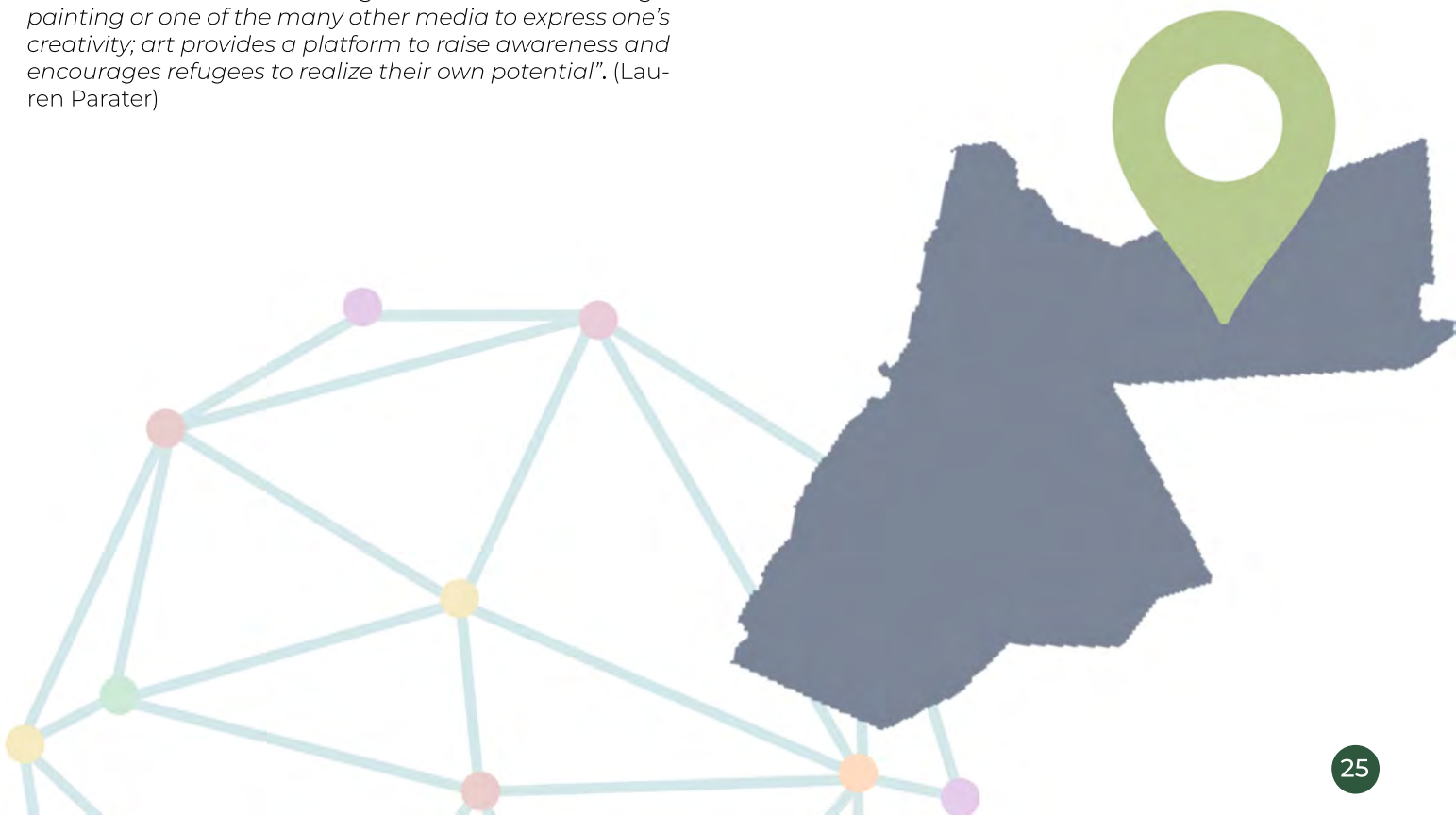
Image 2: A girl participating in an Artolution mural project in Azraq Syrian Refugee Camp. Credit: AFP, GETTY Images, YASIN AKGUL

Artolution has published peace messages through digital media such as videos (see, for instance, CNN's feature on Joel's and his organisation Artolution's work with Syrian refugees[1]). They have also worked with storytelling as "PhotoBlog" to create art in a public space and uplift the community, in addition to translating the dreams of Syrian refugees to having a peaceful Syria, returning to their homes and raising families. The Artolution organization and Joel Bergner used digital media tools strategically to disseminate Syrian Refugee Art Initiative, and thus consider online presence critical to peacebuilding aims.

To achieve this, they have used various digital and social media tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, videos, storytelling, digital public art, films. This has provided refugees with an opportunity to transfer their hopes and dreams into colourful paintings on the walls of buildings and tents of the camp.

[1] A link to watch the video on Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/CNNconnect/videos/10155109631146562/

Other resources:
https://joelartista.com/in-the-media/
https://joelartista.com/paintings/
https://joelartista.com/video-press/
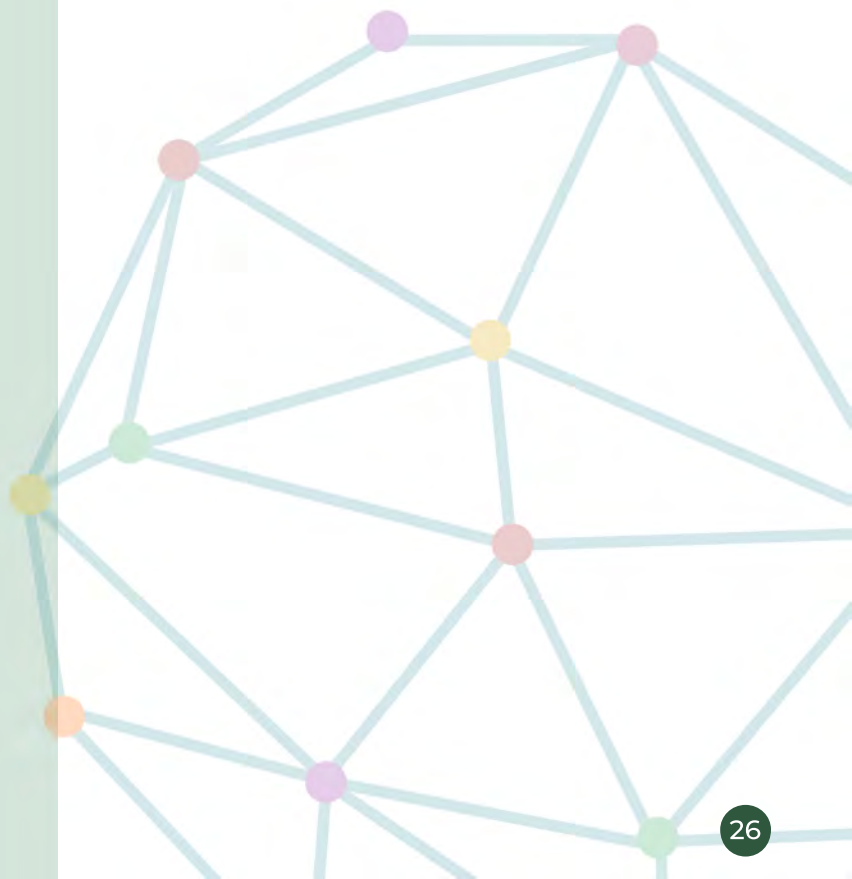*https://www.artolution.org/syrian-refugee-art*

Stories from the field:

- Children grabbed different objects and figured out different ways of painting them, attaching them and creating a sculpture from nothing. The frenetic energy of these children is emphatic. They scream and jump, laugh and exert more emotion at every second. This memory is something that is out of the ordinary for them, but also is a signal that there may be another life up ahead.

- A 6-year old girl wanted to help but had a baby in a carriage. So she chose to grab some of the painted objects in one hand that she had proudly painted, and wheel the baby over the rocky ground with the other hand. When she reached the area that had the sewage, she put down the painted objects. She picked up the baby carriage, put it over the estuary of green muck, and then went back to pick up the objects she painted to bring them across a second time. The kinds of lives that these children have to live on an everyday basis are extraordinarily self-reliant.

2.2. Syrian Eyes

The Syrian Eyes is a volunteer non-profit organisation based in Lebanon built on the principle of promoting volunteer work in wider society. All of the staff are volunteers, comprised of motivated Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian youth (students, archaeologists, teachers, social workers, photographers, doctors, administration experts and more) who believe in equal human rights for all, and adopt a rights-based approach to assisting those in need.

Syrian Eyes team aims to provide relief and development assistance to displaced Syrian refugees in the informal tented settlements in Lebanon as well as those in need of support within the host communities. Since October 2013, Syrian Eyes has been working in informal tented settlements and residential areas in Lebanon's Beqaa Valley through a range of relief, WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene), rehabilitation, medical support, informal education, art, culture, and peacebuilding services and activities. They also work with livelihood projects, and the Syrian Eye team have built up intimate knowledge of the marginalised communities and refugee camps with which they work.

Having a set of goals and vision, which derive from being on the ground, the Syrian Eyes team believes in the importance of working in the development sector. They also engage with the main stakeholders to implement sustainable projects based on their needs in order to improve communities' living conditions.

In addition to covering the refugee initiative through the Facebook page, Syrian Eyes has also published many videos on their YouTube Channel - *https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfMhG_xKdD9TBpc-NY0uL6A*, as well as documented activities through their official website – *www.syrianeyes.org* - and Twitter account @SyrianEyesteam

Image 3: Peace building through heritage. Credit: Syrian Eyes

Other resources:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iw9HLSo34tk
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMIV37KKay0
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8tkry0C3x4
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7sSBCgzTxz4

3. Lessons learnt

3.1. What works?

Promoting integration:
Peacebuilding should be inclusive within refugee camps and host communities to overcome difficulties, inequalities and marginalisation. They should initiate cultural transformation processes. Syrian Eyes used social media as a resource to promote integration and support refugees in Lebanon as well as to attract the attention of supporters about crisis issues in hard areas.

Promoting social cohesion:
The role of digital media is very important in maintaining social cohesion and promoting creative initiatives to support psychological and social well-being, education, culture and peacebuilding, empowering Internally Displaced People and Refugees. The Artolution Organisation initiative used digital media for social cohesion and showed how art and cultural activities have contributed in creating dialogue, whether this happens through painting or one of the many other media to express creativity.

Digital media face-to-face contact:
Analysis is needed to strengthen awareness among humanitarian workers responding to the Syrian crisis, providing regular briefings that focus on prioritising needs, lessons learnt and assessment and information gap analysis. All this helps to deliver health promotion messages, learning opportunities and social cohesion.

Understanding the complexity of refugee camps:
Using digital media to provide services and ease tensions; partnering with local organisations; providing shelter and infrastructure; understanding the varying impacts of refugees on different host communities; and using targeted development assistance.

Digital media as a tool for cooperation:
Cooperation between international organisations and civil society organisations is an absolute necessity for successful peacebuilding interventions within refugee camps and host communities. Each partner brings the strengths of its mandates, capabilities and approach to promote the reconciliation and increasing culture of peace.

Sustained partnership:
Development is crucial to peacebuilding by supporting local, regional and international partners for initiatives focused on creating social, institutional and economic catalysts for peacebuilding on the ground

Digital media to make effective positive change:
Digital media is a useful tool for promoting peacetech initiative by responding to the Syrian crisis by considering options for future work. Technology is used for peacebuilding and development and for presenting an opportunity to reach people as a tool for raising refugee's voices.

Community participation:
In refugees' camps is an essential building block when digital media is used in critical ways to promote engagement with initiatives that monitor refugees' issues. Such interventions succeed when initiatives are driven by people specialising in digital media.

Empowering the marginalised:
Storytelling has contributed to the creative empowerment of marginalised people in refugee camps and host communities. Digital media have provided new and supportive tools and practices in embracing digital stories programs for young people in difficult life circumstances.

Learning from digital media about conflict and crisis:
Digital videos focus on the individual narratives of refugees to serve as starting points for critical conversations about refugee persons and refugee life. This is important to enable greater understanding and perception of the image of who is a refugee, what a refugee looks like, and how a refugee contributes to host communities. Through each narrative, we can build on the information presented.
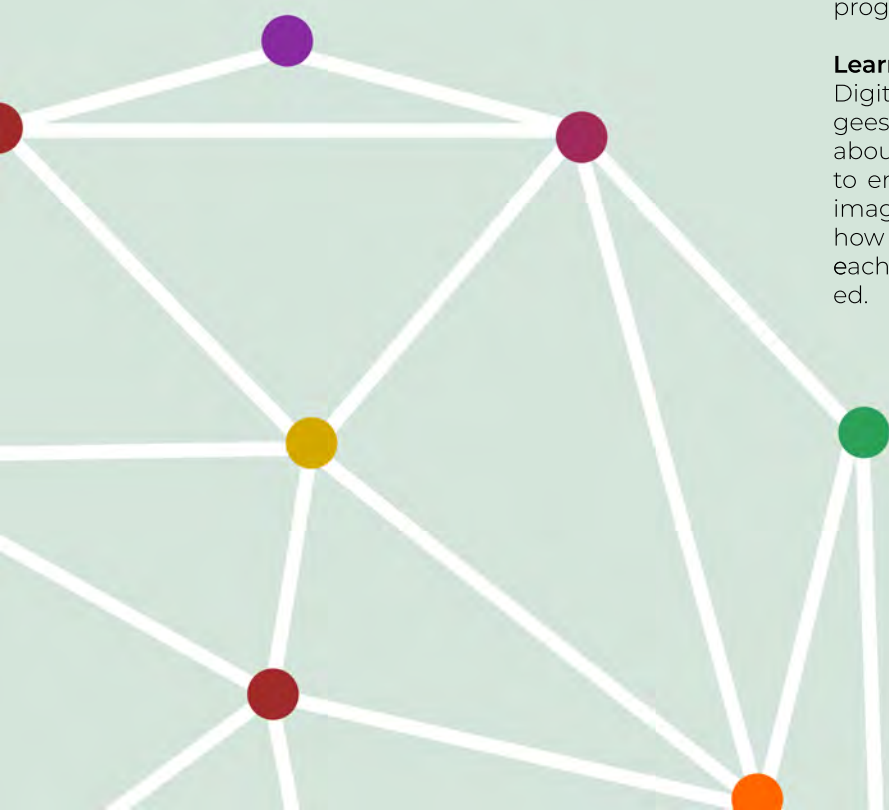
3.2. Challenges and critical issues

Providing support for digital media initiatives within the camps is far from ideal and presents different challenges. These challenges are unlikely to be overcome in the near future. The reasons vary from organisational culture to shortsightedness by various stakeholders and governments that focus too much on their own interests. Lebanon is one of those countries where formal refugee camps have never been setup.
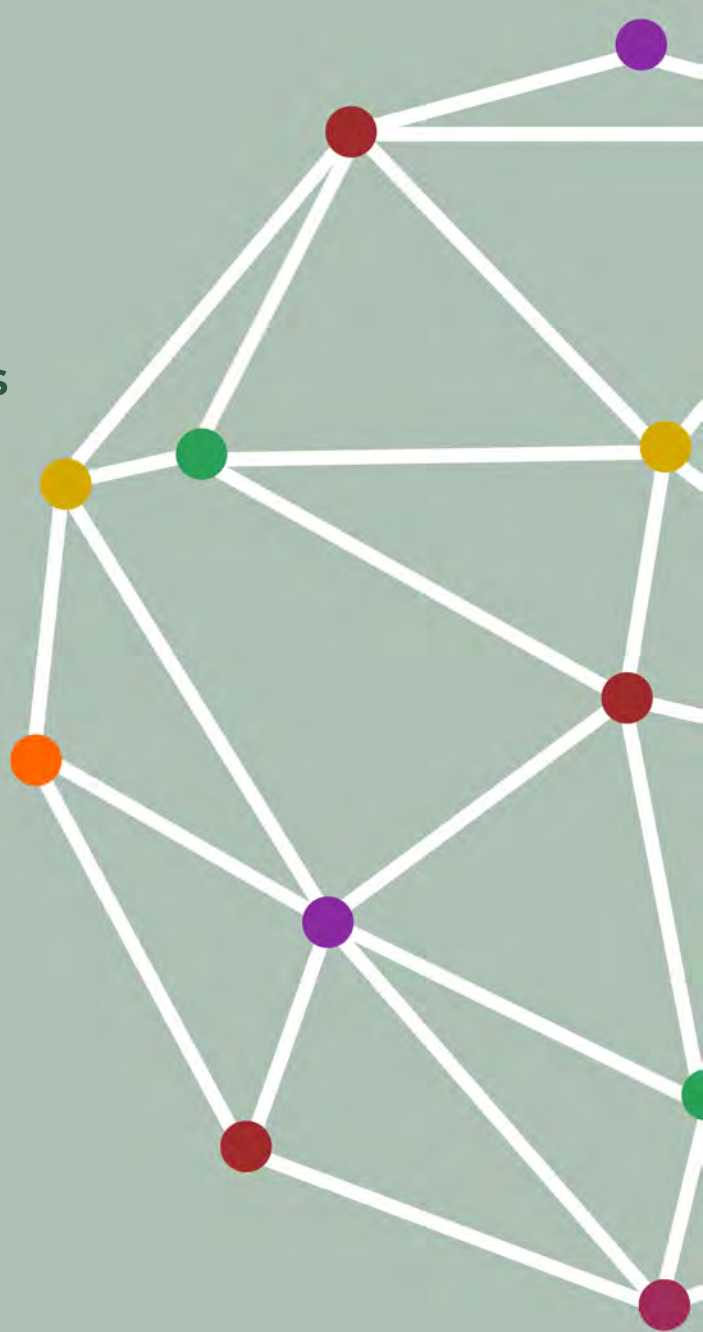
Given the **limited resources** available, some international organisations operating within or outside Syria have put in place a restrictive system in the adoption of digital media initiatives, and this can be a challenge.

Limited access to the Internet and the restrictive **system of control** imposed by host Governments in neighboring countries, Jordan and Lebanon particularly, have a significant impact on the optimal use of digital media within refugee camps.

There are **logistical difficulties** facing local organisations, both within and outside Syria, working in the conflict areas in terms of securing funding to support digital media initiatives in combating marginalisation.

Despite the proliferation of **alternative / new media**, there are questions about its **impact on peace-building** actors in Syria as most Syrian refugees struggle to rebuild their lives from the ruins of overwhelming crisis. Treating these refugees primarily as potential security threats, through destabilisation of host countries, does a profound injustice to their real problems. Peacemakers must find ways to take seriously the challenges posed by large refugee and displaced communities without giving in to the unwarranted securitisation of these populations.

Need to develop a comprehensive policy. It is important for governments in host countries to engage local stakeholders in policy formulation and to initiate an effort to mobilise and support the marginalised communities. It is important to recognise and accept that the actors will provide assistance by enabling a larger number of refugees to share their stories for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding and truly seek transparency for peacebuilding objectives.

4. Other projects in Syria

Salamieh Friends Association
https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sa-
lamieh-Friends-Association

Jusoor
https://jusoorsyria.com/

Najda-Now
http://www.najda-now.net/

Malaak
https://malaak.org/

Basmeth & Zeitooneh
http://www.basmeh-zeitooneh.org/

To access our story map of development or-
ganisations working with digital media in the
Syrian crisis to promote peace and reconcilia-
tion:[4]
https://goo.gl/jksYtP

STORYMAPPING
PEACEBUILDING AND
RECONCILIATION EFFORTS
in the Syrian Crisis

Sharing Experiences and Lessons
from Brazil, Kenya, Syria, and Costa Rica

Diego Zúñiga Céspedes, Luis Alejandro Acuña Fallas, Maritza Ortiz Cortés, Pamela Vargas, and Vivian Pastor Murillo.

1. Context: Costa Rica

Costa Rica is a Central American country with a population of around 5 million people in a territory of 51100 km2. It is located in a strategic area that connects the north with the south of the American continent. As indicated in the National Development and Public Investment Plan, between 2012 and 2017, the population of Costa Rica has increased by more than a quarter of a million people, from 4.65 to 4.94 million. However, this increase has been at an increasingly slow pace, showing downward trends in both the fertility rate and the gross birth rate. According to the State of the Nation (2018), the fertility rate for 2017 (1.67 children per woman) is well below the replacement level (2.1) (PNDIP, 2019).

In economic matters, the country is mainly driven by the tertiary sector. Despite presenting growth in the economy and the decrease in the percentage of households living in poverty at the national level, situations of inequality persist in specific territories linked to the distribution of income, employment opportunities, among others, mainly in coastal areas, cross-border areas.

In education, Costa Rica reports practically 100% attendance at primary education, however, despite different efforts to promote permanence in studies, situations of school exclusion occur for secondary education, reducing attendance by an approximate 88% for 2018.

Although Costa Rica has a rate of intentional homicides and crimes relatively low in relation to the Central American region, this rate has tended to rise in recent years and the main victims are young people between 15 and 29 years of age, marking a trend towards juvenile homicide. The second and third National Youth Survey indicate that more than 40% of the people who inhabit the country are young people (from 12 to 35 years old), which indicates the importance of working and prioritizing this population.

In addition to direct violence, there are also persisting indicators of structural violence related to the economic and social inequality that affects young people and especially young adolescents in access to opportunities, school exclusion, poverty, reproduction of traditional gender roles, reproduction of poverty, unwanted pregnancies in adolescence, unemployment, poverty, among others.

Consequently and in response to this dynamic, the creation of different programmes and prioritized initiatives has been given priority in areas with risky characteristics and geographical, demographic, socioeconomic conditions and critical vulnerabilities and directed with special attention to young people where they can be protagonists of transformations to improve the conditions of their lives and their communities. This document presents two initiatives oriented in this regard.
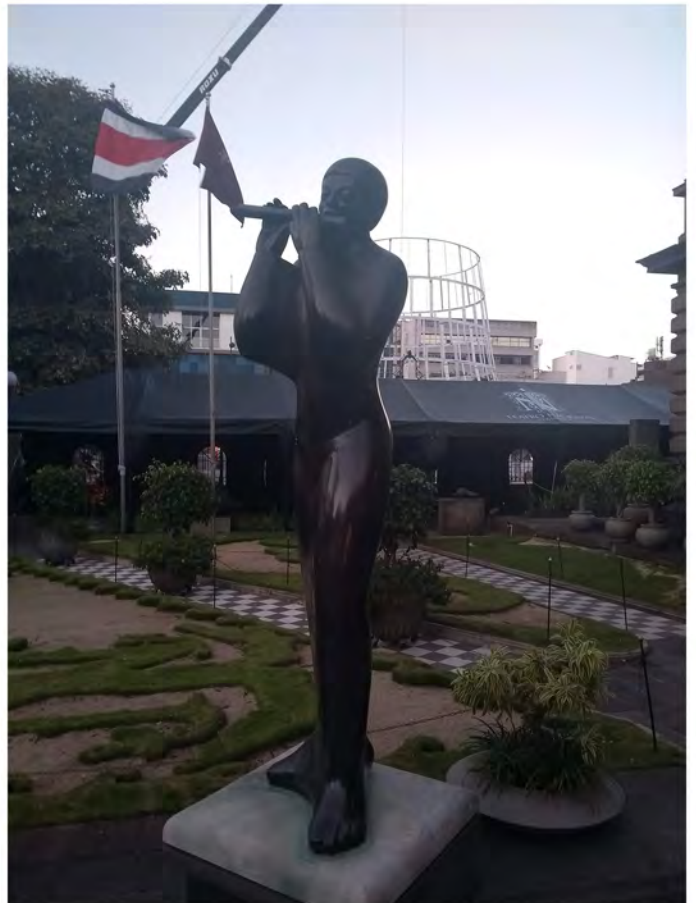

Image 1: Teatro Nacional, San José, Costa Rica. **Photo by** *Andrea Medrado.*

2. Case studies

2.1. Centros Cívicos por la Paz (CCP): An innovation and social inclusion practice for violence prevention in Costa Rica.

The Centros Cívicos por la Paz Programme constitutes a proposal for inter-institutional and intersectoral work that, from the local area and in coordination with the Municipal Sector, institutions, companies and community organizations, manages the execution of the policies of the Costa Rican State for the prevention of violence and the promotion of social inclusion.

Based on the framework of Law 9025 (Gazette No 64, Scope 39, dated 29-03-2012), which approves the Loan Contract No 2526/OC- CR between the BID and the government of Costa Rica.

The civic centres arise from the need for greater investment in programmes and infrastructure, articulation in prevention policies and territorial focus in critical areas and in young and at-risk populations. They work with a preventive model that integrates art, recreation, sports, technologies, resources of democratic culture and innovative training proposals to generate opportunities for education, socialisation, citizen participation and non-violent resolution of conflicts, cooperation, tolerance and developing. They act as agents of change to the population of their areas of influence, with priority in adolescents and young people at risk and conditions of social vulnerability. In response to that, there is recent construction in each of the 7 provinces of the country, in prioritized cantons: Santa Cruz, San Carlos, Garabito, Cartago, Heredia, Desamparados and Pococí. The PCC invite all the communities in the area of influence to participate and be part of the proposals for transformation, focusing and prioritising the offer in young people from 13 to 17 years old.

The Ministry of Justice and Peace, in accordance with its Organic Law No. 6739, and in accordance with Law 9025 and its directives for violence prevention, is responsible for facilitating and coordinating the Peace Community Centres, in order to match and articulate the services provided by public entities, as well as the coordination of plans and programmes aimed at their development and operation. This has Executive Decree N°40876-JP-MCJ as regulatory framework, regulations governing the Organisation and Functioning of Peace Community Centres (Gazette, Scope No 37 dated 02-20-2018) and Executive Decree No 41187-MP-MIDEPLAN Organic Regulations of the Executive Power.

Image 2: Computer lab, Centro Cívico por la Paz, San José, Costa Rica. **Photo by** Andrea Medrado

Image 3: Centro Cívico por la Paz, San José, Costa Rica. **Photo by** Andrea Medrado
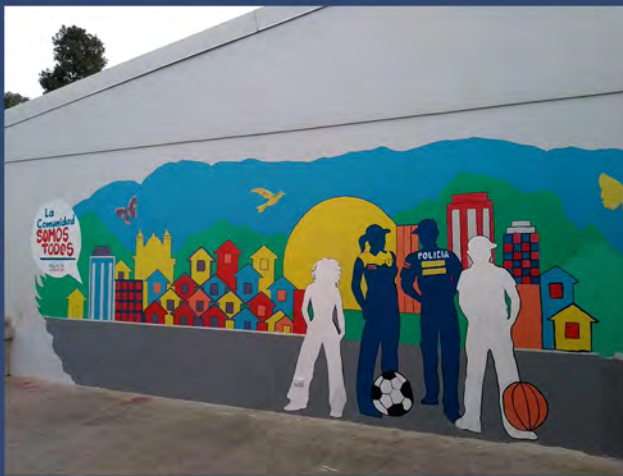

Image 4: Mural, Centro Cívico por la Paz, San José, Costa Rica. **Photo by** Andrea Medrado

In the CCP Programme, technical and multidisciplinary personnel of the Ministry of Justice and Peace (General Office for the Promotion of Peace and Citizen Coexistence, National Office of Alternative Resolution of Conflicts), Ministry of Culture and Youth (National Office of Culture, Youth Council, National Dance Workshop, National Theatre Workshop, National System of Music Education, School House of the Artist, National System of Libraries), the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Costa Rican Institute of Sports and Recreation, the Children National Board and other institutions depending on the context, such as: the Joint Institute of Social Assistance, the Institute of Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, the National Institute of Learning, the National Institute of Women, public universities (UCR, UNA, TEC , UNED).

The CCP represent a physical and symbolic space of preventive state and community presence.   Its preventive model provides the conceptual, ethical and methodological basis and a national-level organisational structure (National Council, National Technical Committee, Technical Secretariat) and at the local level (Administrative Committee, Inter-institutional Coordination Committee, Youth Forum, Specific Community Committees). Within its implementation mechanisms are: training processes (linked to thematic axes of self-care and care, social inclusion, co-existence and culture of peace), a system of registration, monitoring and evaluation, as well as reference and counter-referral.

During the short time of operation of the Programme, more than 40,000 people have used its facilities, either through enrolment in training processes (courses, workshops, etc.), participation in community activities (promotion, strengthening), use of recreational and sports spaces and loan of facilities to institutions and organisations that take advantage of the space because it is facilitated for the development of their own preventive programmes and thus contributing to the general strengthening of counterparts in it. Multiple cases of success and human development of young people and families that have transformed their life histories are reported, as well as the strengthening of organizations and networks that find positive and congruent resonance in the existence of the CCP in their territory.
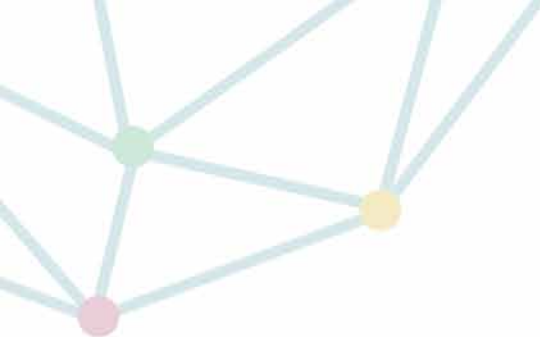
2.2. Parque La Libertad: Where creativity has no limits

The Parque Metropolitano La Libertad (Parque La Libertad o PLL) was founded in 2008 as a space for the interaction of artistic, environmental and urban projects, with a focus aimed primarily at young people.

The Park is the meeting point for the communities of three neighbouring cantons (Desamparados, Curridabat and La Unión) of the province of San José, who find in this space access to cultural, recreational activities, healthy lifestyles, technology, environment, opportunities for technical training and enjoyment in general.

Framed within the concept of human security of the United Nations, the Park opens up a range of options designed to promote social, economic and environmental change in order to improve the quality of life of people living in its area of influence, this is achieved thanks to the existing link with the communities, local governments and public and/or private institutions.

The Fundación Parque Metropolitano La Libertad manages the project through a Cooperation Agreement with the Ministry of Culture and Youth. Its purpose is the administration of the 32 hectares; promoting the collection of funds to finance the construction, operation and maintenance of its facilities; establishing community relations with neighbouring populations, local governments, and promoting the joint development of programmes with the public and private, national and foreign sectors, as long as they are related to their objectives.

The Park obtains its financing through the national budget granted to the Ministry of Culture and Youth, as well as with the sale of services, fundraising and donations, whether they are economic or in-kind contributions.

The Youth Management Foundation, promotes the development of young people between 12 and 35 years of age, who live in communities of immediate influence, categorized as areas at risk and of priority attention. Through the Youth Approach, duly oriented to the population, various models of attention have been implemented to address the needs and interests of young people, through which life skills and competencies are generated for the search and labour permanence.

A comprehensive vision focused on personal development is promoted, using the arts, technology and sports as main tools (healthy lifestyles and recreation).

In order for this to be successful, knowledge about the adolescent and young population is essential, as well as the generation of safe spaces, of trust, free expression and the generation of proposals and projects of interest to them. Among the main programmatic proposals of this management we can find: courses focused on the development of skills and abilities for employability such as screen printing, photography, drawing, office automation. A sports programme is also developed with 7 different disciplines, spaces for the promotion of culture and citizen participation; the validation of artistic and cultural youth expressions, as well as the generation of roadmaps for the personal development of the participants.

Each of these training spaces has followed the objectives set at the institutional level from the beginning, constantly adapting to the interests of the participating population, as well as market demands and changes generated at the social level.

Image 2: The Parque Metropolitano La Libertad, San José, Costa Rica. **Photo by** Andrea Medrado

3. Lessons learnt

3.1. What works?

Social innovation:
Both initiatives imply opportunities for social innovation and important social innovation in territories of high vulnerability and a challenge for traditional institutional cultures.

Interinstitutional articulation:
The Centros Cívicos por la Paz Programme and the Parque La Libertad develop their actions mainly thanks to the interinstitutional articulation. The intersectorial and interinstitutional aspects are integrated into national and local structures, proposing the formation of work teams of diverse origin, beyond the amount or presence of different institutions in the same articulation space. This calls for the co-management and co-production of prevention, sharing knowledge, the integration of knowledge, interests, resources and mainstreaming of approaches, as criteria of success and good governance to enable sustainability. The main positive implications based on the articulation of multiple sectors and actors, begin with the contribution of the different institutions, disciplines, met ologies and work areas for the realization of joint processes, designed more integrally for the adolescent and young population. In addition, the synergy between actors allows to maximize the impact of these and generate financial, administrative and technical sustainability, in order to better meet their goals and objectives. A significant number of the developed actions are carried out in close coordination with the local or national institutions, which supports the actions and guarantees the sustainability of processes.

Work approaches:
Both cases have delimited frames of work approach focused on people, such as approach of rights, human development, youth, among others, which allows to prioritise actions to reduce gaps and inequalities.

Offer based on population's needs:
The programmatic development of the offer of both cases responds to the needs of the participating population. Additionally, offers are intended to respond to the current situation of the labour market through market studies.

Comprehensive and diverse offer:
The developed processes have an integral approach, which promotes the development of positive conducts according to each of the populations served. In addition to the permanent offers, offers are managed according to the contexts and resources of the territory in different areas. The programmatic offer is quite robust, the participants can find in a single training space different complementary courses.

Creation of relationships and company:
In both initiatives, mechanisms are developed to create relationships with young people and individualised company and prioritised by different professionals.

Qualified personnel:
Both initiatives have qualified personnel, people in charge of management, promotion and facilitation of activities and workshops have enough field experience in the area they teach, guaranteeing quality training and competitive standards.

Infrastructure:
Both the Centros Cívicos por la Paz and the Parque La Libertad have investment in high quality infrastructure, which allows the development of appropriate and attractive socio-educational processes.

Attraction of people:
When presenting alternative and diverse offers in both cases, the number of participants of the different processes has been increased.
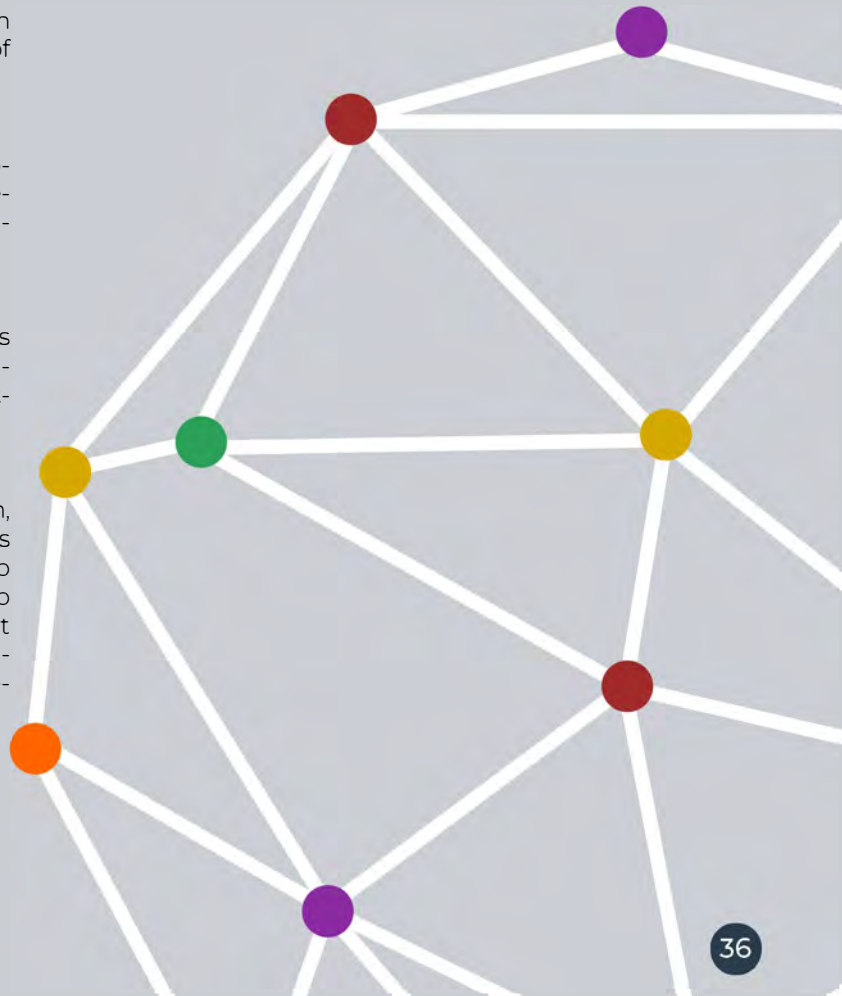
3.2. Challenges and critical issues

Rupture with traditional approaches in public institutions: the articulated work model implies a rupture of the traditional, atomised, working and accountability manner of institutions, changing vertical or pyramidal forms of organization, towards the empowerment of diverse democratic leaderships and a different look to the exercise of our powers. The management model and governance in the CCP can be complex, as it is a matrix organization; that is to say, various institutions with different rules, internal regulations and forms of organisation, are integrated into a program that in turn has a coordination in each centre and there are other structures of local and national character that are linked in the coordination. This implies carrying out processes of transformation and continuous improvement of services and programmatic offer.

Work teams: that the management groups become a work team, where they can build technical tools to encourage integration, dialogue, listening, self-evaluation, in an affective group climate, which contains the challenges and failures and celebrate the achievements. The teams must walk towards the construction of a safe space where all the people feel that they count, not only for what they do, but also for what they feel and are as a person, and knowing that everyone is highly relevant to the task, thus promoting group resilience. A strong group lives and resists the pain, confronts, proposes, argues and enjoys the work … This must be seen with a strategic sense, since team building is a cost-effective investment" (Ortiz, 2017)

Commitment to preventive approach: These types of programmes require a strategic commitment to a prevention as a State policy, a unified work commitment is required under the same preventive model, which implies opening for training and the incorporation of the approaches and principles in it; which goes through a necessary awareness to achieve a coherent implementation. This is not easy when integrating personnel from multiple scientific, artistic and technical disciplines, with diversity of interests, educational levels and different knowledge. It is necessary to encourage those involved in the management of the Programme, an open attitude to continuous learning, updating, democratization of the processes for decision making, timely and relevant actions, flexibility, being able to read the contexts, anticipate and prevent. A strong training strategy is required to address the comprehensive prevention of violence and decode the adult centrism, authoritarianism, sexism and multiple forms of discrimination that are immersed in our culture.

Commitment and political/technical will: for the sustainability of both cases, with knowledge and conviction of being a relevant strategy for the prevention of violence for youth, reinforced within the framework of public policies of the State, with mandatory compliance for the institutions involved for the development of more joint projects.

Strengthening the relationship and sense of belonging between Parque La Libertad, the Centros Cívicos por la Paz and the users and communities, which at the same time allows the expansion of users and protagonists of projects.
Increase in the population benefiting from services with new populations and, at the same time, the ability to care for people with trained personnel who are committed to working approaches.

Financial sustainability through the diversification of donors in order to maintain a striking offer suited to the needs of the population and for the ongoing maintenance of the existing infrastructure and construction of future stages in both cases.

Network vision: Maintaining a constant flow of communication and information between the different national, regional and local structures, so that they function as a networked system, with threads that connect and through which continuous information flows. This implies promoting the linking of new and diverse public and private institutions to contribute to the development of the communities and at the national and international level for the exchange of experiences and work approaches.

Real application of focuses: The approaches of human rights, gender, youth, innovation, social inclusion, respect for diversity, community participation, among others, applied in the operation (methodologies, practices, projects, learning proposals) of the programmes, must start from the premise that their priority reason is the target population of adolescents and young people. Strengthening the incorporation of this population as co-manager of the Programme is a challenge.

System of Registration, Monitoring and Evaluation: construction of a system that allows to record the results, products and impact that the programmes have on the youths and in relation to the innovative work proposal of the institutionality.

4. Other projects in Costa Rica:

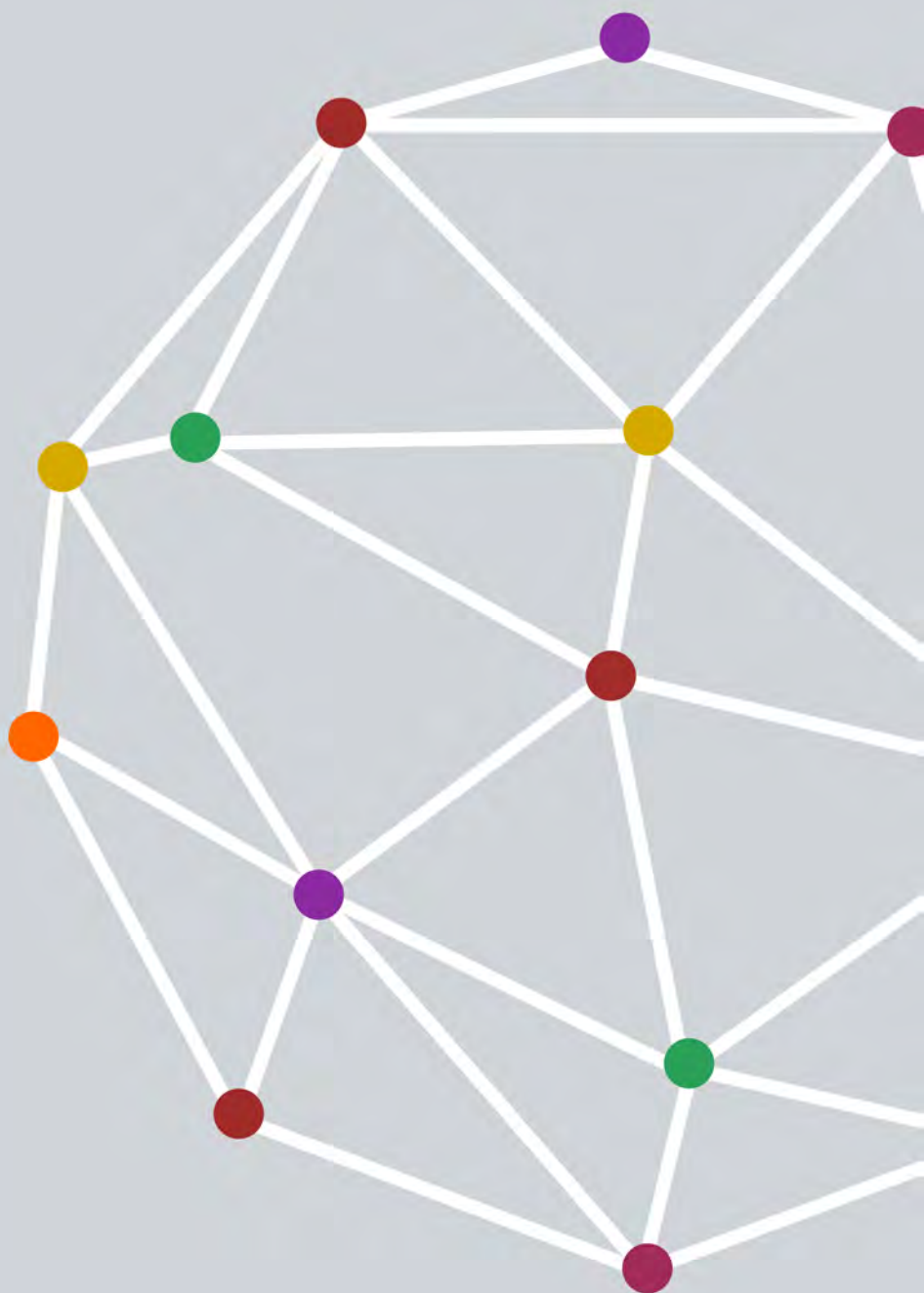**Human Development Centre of the Municipality of Curridabat "La Cometa"**
http://www.curridabat.go.cr/la-cometa-3/

Fundación Fundamentes
http://fundamentes.or.cs/es

Fundación Paniamor
http://www.paniamor.org