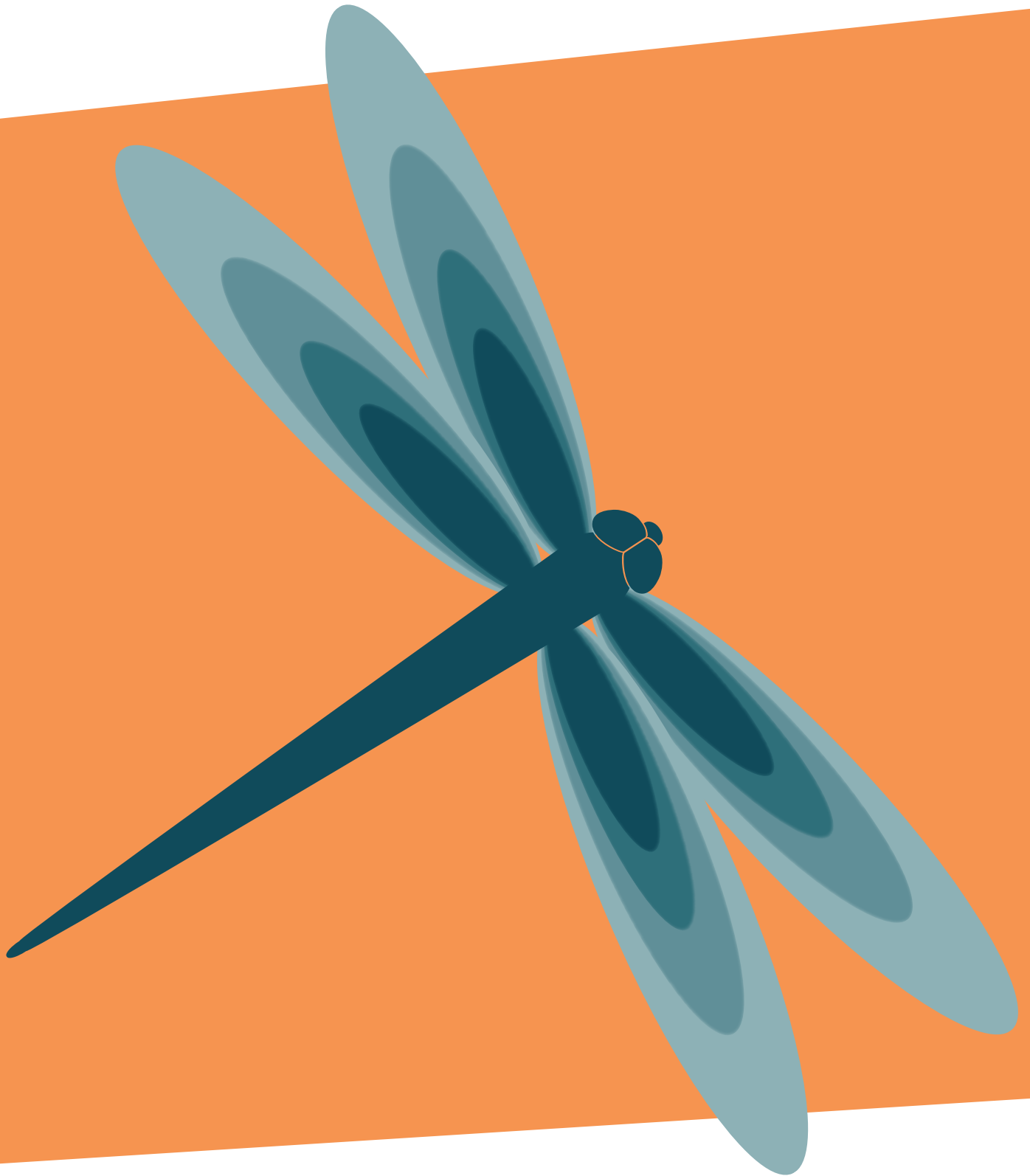


THE DRAGONFLY MODEL

Systems Change to Strengthen Support for
Locally-Led Peacebuilding



INTRODUCTION

How does change happen within the global peacebuilding system that allows it to offer a conducive environment for locally-led peacebuilding? What is a way of understanding systems change that will allow all of us working for change in the global peacebuilding and development system to strategically walk together exploring our alignment, our differences, and how we can best complement one another? What we know is that change is needed. The institutions that are meant to support locally-led peacebuilding, could be doing much better in providing relevant, adequate and timely support. New ways of working and providing the right kind of support could be invented. With a world in flux and sustainable peace being more needed than ever, it is time to fundamentally reconsider our ways of working.

Conductive Space for Peace (CSP) would like to offer the Dragonfly Model as a way of understanding systems change in order to better enable locally-led peacebuilding. The Dragonfly Model presents a way of understanding the peacebuilding systems within which locally-led peacebuilding is embedded. This model emerged as a result of CSP's experience working with locally-led peacebuilding and addressing specific challenges facing it within the current global peacebuilding system. It shows how different systems are interconnected, and how they are moving between the current situation to a reimagined reality, at a time when the global context is in flux and the space for locally-led peacebuilding is changing.

Each wing of the dragonfly illustrates one important dimension of understanding change in strengthening locally-led peacebuilding, and each 'layer' of the wing, nested into the other layers, holds important insights on different approaches to change that can be complementary. The model clearly depicts change as a complex process, and intends to allow all change agents to identify their own role within this broader change process.

While the Dragonfly Model can offer new insights and viewpoints to understand peacebuilding systems through a conceptual lens, we attach critical importance to change agents – human beings with bodies, minds, and souls – to exert creative thinking and action that can make such conceptual models come alive and inspire new ways of thinking and working for change. To effectively pursue systems change for locally-led peacebuilding we on the one hand need concepts, models and visuals to elicit new reflections on change and on the other hand space for creativity and radical imagination of human beings. Drawing on the notions coined by John Paul Lederach on elicitive and prescriptive approaches to peacebuilding (in his book *Preparing for Peace*), we lean heavily towards elicitive approaches that have emerged from the concrete realities, needs and perspectives within particular contexts. It would be in stark contrast to our intention if this model was seen as a way of prescribing

change. It has come about through listening and sensing what change is about, and it is intended to spark further listening, sensing and creative thinking and action.

Section Two begins by outlining the core element of the Dragonfly Model, namely the nested paradigm. Section Three unpacks the implications of applying the nested paradigm to locally-led peacebuilding, reflecting on what it means to hold locally-led peacebuilding at the core of the system. Section Four takes a step back to review the current system, a nested paradigm 'upside down', and the implications of the core dysfunctions of the global peacebuilding system that inhibits support to locally-led peacebuilding. Section Five takes a deeper dive into the different approaches to pursuing systems change for locally-led peacebuilding, following the contours of the wings of the Dragonfly. Section Six takes stock of the diversity of approaches to change and outlines the importance of embracing complexity and seeking complementarity between such approaches. Section Seven pivots away from examining the approaches to change themselves, the *how*, looking instead at the *who*. It elaborates on who carries forward these initiatives, the change agents themselves, the individuals. It explores the need for them to mobilise their listening skills, sensing and creative power, and the key role they play in facilitating change.

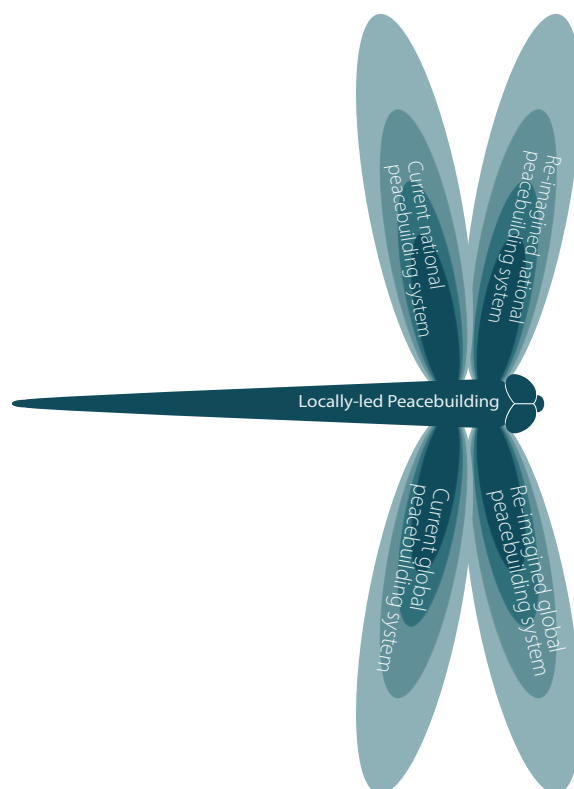


Figure 1:
The Dragonfly for locally-led peacebuilding

The dragonfly lives most of its life as a larval in the form of a water nymph, thus it is long in the making before it becomes a beautiful airborne dragonfly. This model has also been long in the making, brewing in incubation and pondering, gaining strength and experiences to finally unfold into something that is strong enough to see the light of day. While the dragonfly represents a species that has lived on earth for more than 300 million years, it only lives for four weeks in its airborne life cycle. This is an interesting notion to hold in exploring this model, as it indicates that it should not be understood as a constant and will need to be revisited, changed and eventually replaced by other emergent ways of understanding the global peacebuilding system and how strengthening locally-led peacebuilding can be pursued. The dragonfly has four wings and unlike most other insects they are directly connected to flight muscles in its abdomen. The front muscles are for speed, while the back muscles are meant for slower steady flight. Later we will see how this can inspire us to understand something significant concerning the global peacebuilding system and its different dimensions.

The model illustrates overall categories of efforts that are important in strengthening locally-led peacebuilding and the linkages and complementarities between these efforts. While it tries to illustrate the complexity of change in order to expand the scope for change efforts and how they are interrelated, it also zooms in on the composite parts of the locally-led peacebuilding system and the concrete types of change efforts that can be pursued with different entry points.

What is important to note is that each wing is moved by the body; by the needs of local peacebuilders. The real dragonfly moves its wings through muscles in its thorax that directly connect to the base of the wings. Interestingly it is the only species of insects that moves its wings like that. In our understanding of the model, we see it as an aspiration for how the system should work, with local peacebuilders holding the power to move the broader

system to accommodate their needs and work to support them in the best way possible. Thus, the dragonfly carries the inspiration for driving change from the core of what matters: locally-led peacebuilding.

Local peacebuilders are on the frontline of peacebuilding. They hold the knowledge, experiences, ideas, relations, and legitimacy to promote sustainable peacebuilding. This is the case whether a global crisis is limiting the direct involvement of other actors or not, however it has become more apparent for many during the COVID-19 pandemic that spread globally in 2020. The question, as always, is how to best support local peacebuilders and locally-led peacebuilding. In the section below we will discuss the challenges in support to locally-led peacebuilding, and the trends that influence how support to locally-led peacebuilding can be strengthened.

In a dialogue between the CSP team and John Paul Lederach about the Dragonfly Model, we were re-minded of the Japanese Haiku (short poem) from John Paul's book *Moral Imagination*: "Add a pair of wings to a pepper pod, you can make even a dragon fly." When John Paul was reading this aloud, a slight change of tone inspired a new meaning that allowed us to pinpoint perhaps the most important dimension of this model. With a pair of wings, you can make a *dragon* fly. In our understanding, locally-led peacebuilding is the dragon. It is what holds the power and potential for sustainable peace. When the wings of the dragon are driven by the core, when the global and national peacebuilding systems are moved in the service of and steered by local peacebuilders, it will have the power of a dragon to build peace and take us beyond what we currently imagine to be peacebuilding. Envision the dragon carrying Harry Potter and his friends out of the underground chambers of the Gringotts Bank run by the goblins. Think about the power it holds when it is finally able to move its wings. While a dragonfly is a beautiful and highly inspirational creature, a dragon seems to be a better image of the power and potential that locally-led peacebuilding holds. But it needs to break free of the 'chains' that currently hold it back and take full control of its wings. That is the essence.

THE NESTED PARADIGM OF JOHN PAUL LEDERACH

Each of the wings of the dragonfly are inspired by the 'nested paradigm' coined by Máire Dugan and further developed by John Paul Lederach. The original figure (see figure 2) was developed to illustrate the different levels of conflict and of peacebuilding and how they are nested within one another. The concrete issues around which a particular conflict evolves is represented by the inner circle, the relations within which a conflict is embedded represents the next circle, the sub-system which both holds the causes of conflict and the structural ways of addressing them is contained in the third circle, and finally, the broader societal norms and structures that are at the root of a particular conflict system composes the outer circle. This means that any conflict must be understood from the perspectives of each of these circles: What are the issues at stake that must be addressed? What relationships are involved in this conflict, how are they shaped by the conflict, and how can they be engaged in addressing the conflict? What are the systemic dimensions (institutional structures, practices and attitudes) within which the conflict is embedded and which must be involved and changed when dealing with the conflict? What are the dimensions of the broader societal context that must be understood in order to address the conflict?

This paradigm implies that any change effort must, on the one hand, deal with the immediate needs, issues, relations, and conflict dynamics, and on the other hand take a longer-term perspective on change in the struc-

tures, practices, and attitudes within which a conflict is embedded. This perspective holds the implication that no conflict is addressed in sustainable ways if the relationship issues related to the conflict are not transformed, and if the structural causes of conflict are not addressed. A transformative perspective on the conflict will both enhance the possibility of finding better and more sustainable solutions in a particular conflict and will create the space for preventing similar future conflicts.

However, addressing conflict at all these levels may not necessarily be done by the same people. Peace negotiators and community mediators are more likely to be focused on the inner circle, while practitioners that focus on reconciliation and trust-building would often give most attention to the relationship circle, and again other practitioners (and policymakers) who address the broader causes of conflict are more likely to work in the outer circles. The point is that all circles must be addressed; not that they necessarily must be addressed by the same actors and at the same time. The stronger the linkages and complementarities between efforts among different circles, the more sustainable the change efforts are likely to be.

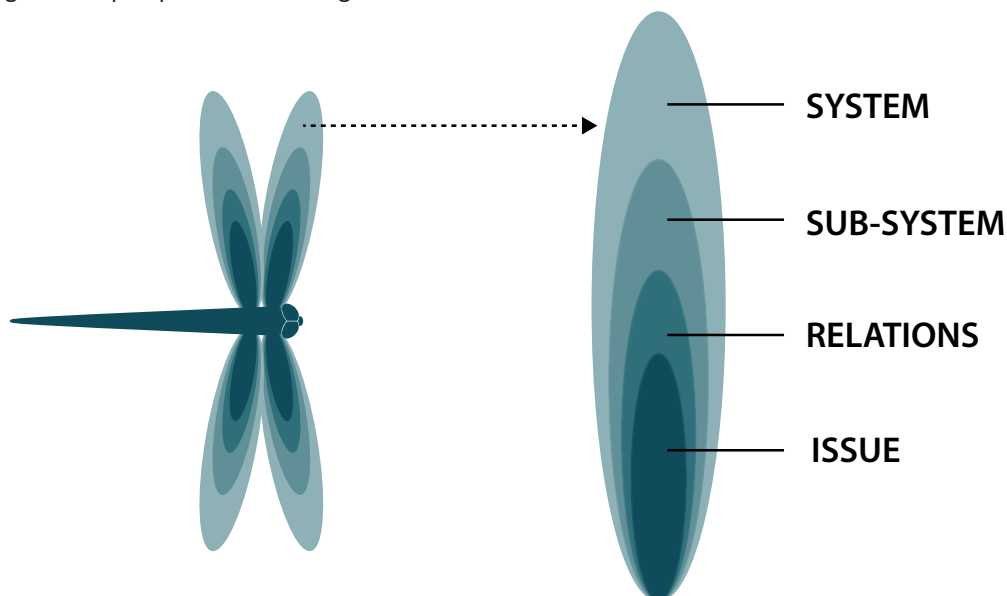


Figure 2:
The Original Nested Paradigm

THE NESTED PARADIGM FOR LOCALLY-LED PEACEBUILDING

In our way of employing the nested paradigm, the inner circle represents locally-led peacebuilding and the needs and potentials of local peacebuilders (see figure 3). Locally-led peacebuilding is embedded in relationships and spaces for collaboration between local peacebuilders and other actors who support and influence locally-led peacebuilding, which again is embedded in the structures, practices and attitudes within the peacebuilding and development system at national and global level, which again is embedded in broader societal structures and norms. With this model we can understand the challenges (see figure 4) and approaches (see figure 5) related to change at each of these levels as they relate to locally-led peacebuilding. All of the levels need to be addressed in order to strengthen the space for locally-led peacebuilding in sustainable ways.

The ‘nested paradigm for locally-led peacebuilding’ explains how we see the link between direct support to locally-led peacebuilding and systems change efforts. It shows how efforts to understand and respond to the concrete needs of local peacebuilders are integrated or nested within broader systems change efforts. This should be understood as a dual directional process where it is equally important to ensure that systems change efforts are

linked to and build on the concrete needs of local peacebuilders. And that direct support to locally-led peacebuilding aspires to change the broader systems that influence and potentially support locally-led peacebuilding.

As with the original ‘nested paradigm’ different actors may take on different roles in the change process, but if the systems change levels are not addressed, the broader system will continue to reproduce less than optimal conditions for locally-led peacebuilding. As we will see below, locally-led peacebuilding is influenced by systemic conditions both at national and global levels, and it is therefore important to understand both sets of conditions and the interplay between them. In the Dragonfly Model, they are represented by two different sets of wings, on either side of the body of the dragonfly. As is clear when we watch the flight of a dragonfly, the wings on either side of the thorax cannot operate independently of the wings on the other side, and while they are to some degree different and may contain different sets of actors, they are intrinsically linked.

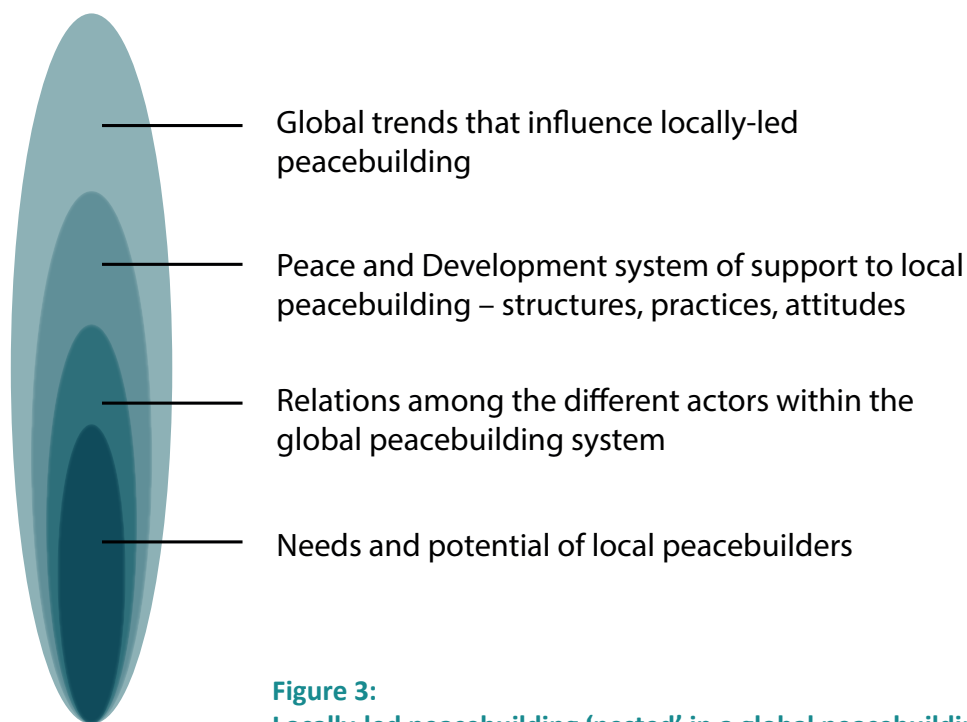


Figure 3:
Locally-led peacebuilding ‘nested’ in a global peacebuilding system

NESTED PARADIGM UPSIDE DOWN – CHALLENGES IN SUPPORT TO LOCALLY-LED PEACEBUILDING

The global peacebuilding system is currently not working as well as it could in supporting the work of local peacebuilders, with an increasing focus on the national interests of donor countries in development assistance including in conflict-affected countries, and upward accountability demands that often override local accountability. The system is becoming less oriented towards meeting the needs of local peacebuilders as New Public Management and geopolitical shifts have, for the past 10 years, prompted a movement away from a system that was more oriented towards meeting the needs of local peacebuilders. In this regard, the peacebuilding system is turned upside down with the system's own needs overriding the needs of those that it is essentially trying to support. Although it is generally recognised that local peacebuilders are at the forefront of peacebuilding and that peacebuilding can only be sustainable if ownership lies with those living in the societies where peace is promoted, the reality is that current ways of working increasingly overrides this ownership. When priorities for peacebuilding is defined in donor countries, when international knowledge is valued higher and overrides local peacebuilding knowledge, when standards of accountability are defined by donors rather than by those who are part of the peacebuilding process, and when funding modalities are inappropriate to the needs of local peacebuilders, then the system is turned upside down.

An effective global peacebuilding system that holds the intention of supporting locally-led peacebuilding must be structured and function in a way where all parts of the system and its integrated ways of working are designed to meet the needs of local peacebuilders. Essentially it must first and foremost ask the questions: **how can the system meet the needs of local peace-**

builders? What type of support would be most conducive for enabling locally-led peacebuilding? What do you need?

As indicated in Figure 4, the challenges of the global peacebuilding system in supporting locally-led peacebuilding play out at all levels of the nested paradigm, with the essential dysfunctionality being the lack of ability to meet the needs of local peacebuilders. When this is the case, it is embedded in inequality and power among the various actors within the global peacebuilding system, including between international, national and local institutions. This may lead to lack of respect, trust and reciprocity in relations, technocratic dysfunctionality that prevents local leadership, as well as broader societal norms and structures that induce inequalities among different parts of the world and different groups in society. It may also allow populism and racism to flourish and prompt a focus on the functioning of systems rather than giving space for human values and potentials.

One global challenge that has become more apparent at this time of global crisis is the New Public Management approach where technocratisation, streamlining, and measuring of change matters more than reliance on complex analysis, human interaction and decision-making. This is the case both in the peacebuilding and development fields, and in the school and health systems of most countries of the world. This way of working reduces our capacity to respond to ever increasing complexities and to build on the strongest capacity of global systems; the human beings that they are made up of and their ability to creatively mobilise their experiences, engage in emergent and adaptive ways, and find solutions to complex challenges.

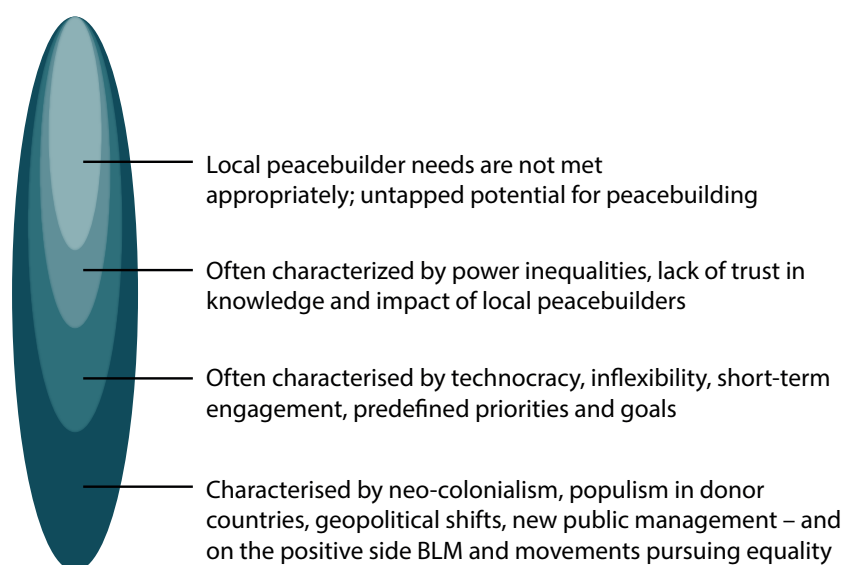


Figure 4:
The challenges of locally-led peacebuilding – the peacebuilding system upside down

APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING LOCALLY-LED PEACEBUILDING

One way of understanding different approaches to supporting locally-led peacebuilding is through the ‘nested paradigm’ which illustrates the linkages and complementarities between different types of support (see figure 5). If we look at the organisations that hold explicit intentions of supporting locally-led peacebuilding, each of them will focus their efforts somewhat differently. Even among those organisations with a particular focus on providing direct support to local peacebuilders – the inner circle - will approach this in very different ways. Similarly, those working to promote broader systems change will take different approaches to that. We will in the following sub-sections provide examples of different types of approaches to change that are undertaken within each of the nested circles. Although we will discuss each type of approach separately it is evident that many actors employ a variety of approaches and that grey areas exist between approaches. This however does not reduce the importance of identifying strengths of each type of approach, and how they can work in complementarity with others.

Direct support to local peacebuilders

Among those providing direct support to local peacebuilders some will be committed to their local engagement in a way that focuses all attention on one or more concrete partnerships and in those relations try to provide the best possible enabling environment. This approach is often based on long-term experience engaging with partners and an elaborate value-based approach to partnership engagement. This may entail lack of attention to broader systemic conditions that also influence the enabling environment of the local partners in unfolding their potential and getting the support they need. Or it may indeed serve as a stepping stone for attempts to facilitate broader systems change.

A classic example of support to local peacebuilding is funding provided by a bilateral or multilateral donor at country-level to a national (capital-based) NGO or an INGO with a country office, and this ‘intermediary’ (in relation to local peacebuilders) will then engage in partnerships with locally-based organisations. The types of support and partnerships of ‘intermediaries’ (e.g. INGOs or other agencies who receive funding from donors and channel this funding to local organisations) vary from one that can best be characterised as service provision to one that is reciprocal and provides mutual learning.

When support to local peacebuilders takes the form of service provision, the knowledge, insights, and leadership of local peacebuilders rarely take centre stage, and they are often funded only to implement activities that others report on to a donor in-country and/or at head-quarter level. An increasing tendency of donors to solicit funding through open tendering processes, allows con-

sultancies without well proven partnership approaches to take on development and peacebuilding efforts in which local peacebuilders engage as service providers.

When local peacebuilders are supported in an equitable partnership-like manner, the local peacebuilder often sets the terms of the engagement, identifies the vision, the areas of engagement and develops the concrete activities. In best practice cases this entails long-term partnerships with a degree of core funding and support for strategic and organisational development. It should however be noted that the nature of collaboration will still be defined by the funder as the power relations cannot be removed from the equation as illustrated in Figure 4. Challenges related to structural power inequalities are generally best navigated if recognised rather than if they are hidden and ignored.

A model that lends itself well to creating space for equitable partnerships is for a funder to provide core funding to trusted local partners. This entails more flexibility for the local partners in accommodating changing peacebuilding conditions and needs and less time for reporting and adhering to predefined accountability mechanisms. Challenges to this model are that it is human resource demanding and requires that the funder is able to engage staff with strong capacity in not only managing funds but also in providing a supportive environment for partners that work under difficult conditions in conflict-affected contexts. While many funders aspire to this kind of support, they often face obstacles within their own structures to this type of support and support structure. This model of core funding support to local partners is particularly challenging for bilateral or multilateral donors to take on, due in large part to the existing technocratic structures, accountability requirements, and capacity constraints.

Several new and innovative support structures have emerged over the past years including models based on private enterprise or broader public engagement and movements. While these are highly important for the local peacebuilders who engage in them, they are not mainstream across the system, and more than 90 percent of financial support to local peacebuilders originate from bilateral donors. Thus, while important to develop new and innovative modalities of support that better meet the needs of local peacebuilders, it is important to acknowledge that change will entail a focus both on transforming the way these structures currently work and on radically innovating new ways of working to support locally-led peacebuilding.

Approaches to strengthening relations between actors in the national and global peacebuilding system

Relationships that create space for trust-building, learning and adaptation, innovation and complementarities are conducive for peacebuilding not least locally-led peacebuilding. Systems change can happen when groups of change agents evolve into broader movements for change. As the global peacebuilding system currently works, it upholds power inequalities between international, national, and local peacebuilders. Approaches to systems change with a relational focus must therefore focus on addressing these power inequalities and creating a conducive space for collaboration in specific conflict-affected contexts, while also addressing the underlying systemic inequalities embedded in structures, practices, and attitudes.

Without elaborating the multitude of approaches to supporting locally-led national and international networks and platforms aimed at strengthening locally-led peacebuilding, we will give some examples of the types of approaches employed. In South Sudan, a donor-led conflict sensitivity mechanism has been ensuring that peacebuilding efforts are based on local knowledge. In Mali, a bilateral donor has supported a coordination mechanism between international and national actors where the space was co-owned rather than internationally dominated. These approaches strengthen the relation between international and local actors in conflict-affected contexts. Other types of approaches strengthen relations and collaboration among local peacebuilding actors at the national level. In the region of Montes de Maria in Colombia, a regional platform for reconciliation convenes a multitude of peacebuilding and human rights actors with different perspectives on the conflicts, and in South Sudan young peacebuilders are supported through network weaving and accompanying processes facilitated by African colleagues.

In addition, there are ‘trans-local’ networks, both formal and more informal in nature, that promote learning and collaboration between local peacebuilders from different conflict-affected contexts. In the time of COVID-19 such networks and platforms have taken the form of electronic platforms created to provide space for local peacebuilders to learn from and support one another including during the COVID-19 crisis. Other such virtual trans-local spaces are established with the aim of reimagining peacebuilding or providing mentorship across generations. While virtual spaces can enhance access and participation of local peacebuilders who may not under normal circumstances be able to meet peacebuilders from other conflict-affected contexts, they do not, at this time, hold the same potential for learning, creativity, and relationship-building as physical encounters.

Networks of change agents can be both informal and formal and may develop in ways that look structured like a spider-web or unstructured like the universe. Important

though is that they enhance the potential of people in facilitating change, and that they provide space for the human potential of creativity, imagination and strategic thinking among people with diverse perspectives.

Approaches to transforming the global peacebuilding system to provide relevant support for locally-led peacebuilding

Although no single level of the nested paradigm is more important than others in systems change efforts, the third circle that focuses on systems change in the global peacebuilding system, is unavoidable to highlight as it is an essential part of catalysing change. Efforts in other circles of the nested paradigm on locally-led peacebuilding must link their change efforts to the third circle in order to facilitate systems change. If part of the change requires a change in international and national institutions, this cannot be done without working with these institutions and considering their potential for change.

Organisations engaging in direct support to local peacebuilders may have experienced ‘good practices’ of how collaboration can unfold, and they may be able to advocate for or reproduce this when engaging with others. The logic of this type of direct support aspiring to facilitate systems change would thus be through concrete experience that can potentially be reproduced, scaled up and employed as impetus for a broader transformation process. Peacebuilding actors engaged in such approaches since the 1970s, 80s, and 90s based on global solidarity and activism have unfortunately been increasingly undermined by changes elicited by among other things New Public Management.

Other ways of translating concrete partnership experiences to broader systems change, can be through developing documentation of best practices for partnership engagement, or through accompanying local peacebuilders in their engagement with policy makers. It is however uncertain whether policy influencing that draws on stories of local peacebuilders and locally-led peacebuilding can facilitate broader systems change.

The possible limitations of these kinds of systems change efforts seem to be at least two-fold: They generally engage with the international institutions on the terms of these institutions, thus not giving space for locally-led peacebuilding and its experiences to shape the conversation, and they do not engage in long-term accompanying change processes owned by the institutions themselves that navigate within organisational opportunities for change. Although all change efforts must be critically assessed based on the learnings they produce, there is a tendency to accept policy engagement as one of the important change paths without scrutinising the link between policy change and structural change, the link between structural/procedural change and changes in organisational practices, as well as changes in attitudes and norms.

We argue for a comprehensive approach to change that does not limit itself to policy engagement in relation to the global peacebuilding system. Approaches to systems change that addresses structures, practices, norms, and attitudes are long-term, strategic and entail both efforts to disrupt the institutions and existing ways or working from the outside and efforts to accompany institutions in their change process from and with the inside. Although change in the global peacebuilding system is likely to be facilitated by peacebuilders who see the need for change, there are elements of the change process that require in-sights into technocratic conditions for institutional procedures. Such institutional procedures and practices relevant to change may be new accountability mechanisms and funding modalities, while other dimensions of change entail a broader attitudinal change process that must be able to address issues of power and dignity. Again, we argue for viewing systems change through a lens that grasps its complexity, and instead of calling one approach out as better than another, creates space for complementarity and learning among various change approaches.

Approaches to addressing global inequality, racism and dysfunctional structures for global collaboration

The outer circle of the nested paradigm encompasses the broader system that surrounds the global peacebuilding system. This is composed of the societal structures and norms that create the foundation and conditions within which the global peacebuilding system is functioning, through structures that either enable or create barriers for locally-led peacebuilding. This also sets the broader conditions for sustainable transformative change.

There are several key trends that are currently engaging with and impacting the structures and norms within which the global peace and development system operates. Some

of the most recent and prominent include global discussions on racism and decolonisation that have called out and explicitly recognised the underlying power dynamics inherent in the current global ‘order’ and ways of working. Over the past decade the marked rise in populism, particularly in donor countries as well as globally, has dramatically shifted the political landscape promulgating an often nativist vision of the world locked in conflict with outsiders and establishment elites. Such tendencies impact the global development and peacebuilding system as the culture, anti-establishment and socio-economic forms of populism arising within the public constituencies of key donor countries place significant pressure on government institutions to direct their work towards often more explicitly nationalist aims. When looking beyond domestic political cultures in donor countries, it is evident that current geopolitical shifts place the rules-based and multilateral approaches long associated with and underpinning development and peacebuilding norms in peril. In addition, digitalisation of communications and information communication technology continues to have profound effects across society, economies, conflict systems and on the global development system in wide ranging and profound ways.

Approaches to addressing these global challenges can for instance be seen through the rise of movements such as Black Lives Matter or Decolonise Aid. Although these trends are critical in shaping how the global peacebuilding system functions and is able to provide an enabling space for locally-led peacebuilding, it is beyond the scope of this publication to point to relevant approaches to facilitate transformation at this level.

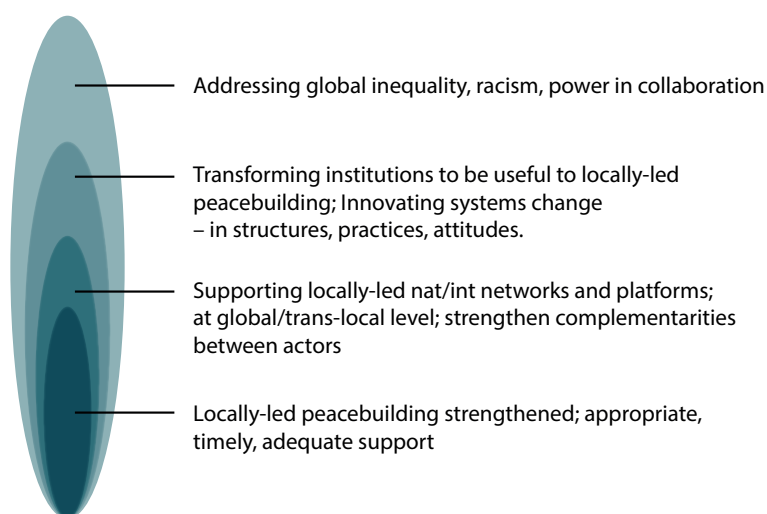


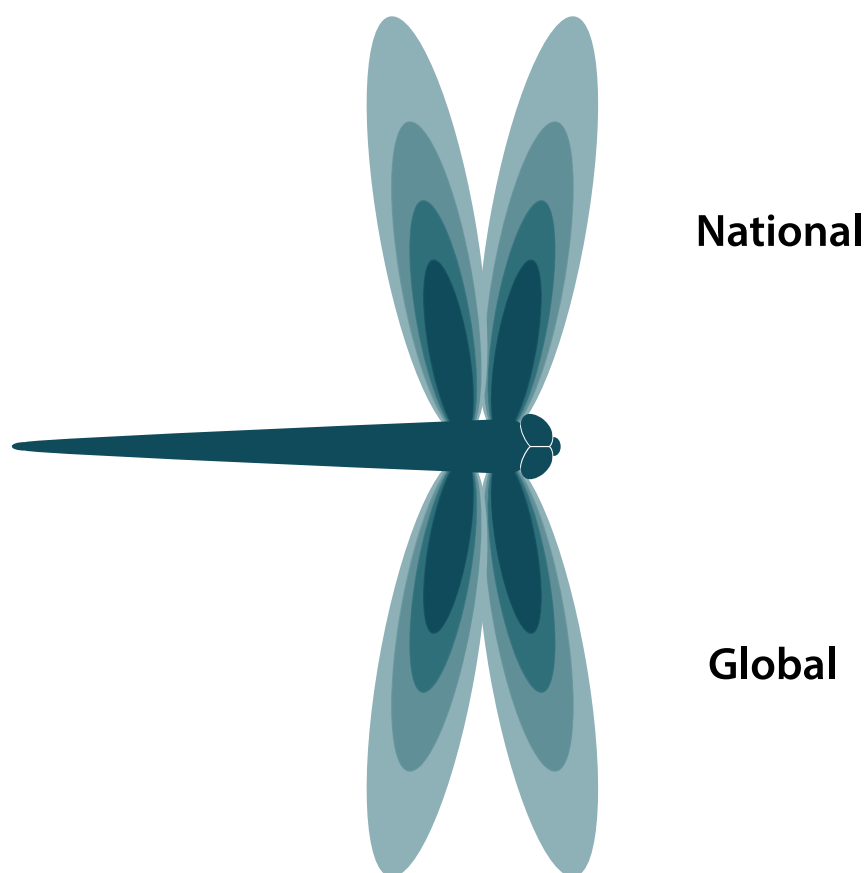
Figure 5:
Approaches to supporting locally-led peacebuilding



COMPLEXITY AND COMPLEMENTARITY OF ENGAGEMENT FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

The Dragonfly Model illustrates how national and international systems of support to locally-led peacebuilding should be driven by the needs of local peacebuilders, how they intersect with one another, and under positive conditions may play a complementary role (see figure 6). Each wing of the dragonfly illustrates one important dimension of the global peacebuilding system, and each 'layer' of the wing, nested into the other layers, hold important insights about different approaches to change that can be complementary. While the national peacebuilding system is embedded within the global peacebuilding system, they are depicted as separate but interrelated systems in the Dragonfly Model. This is done as it has proven useful to recognise that different roles and dynamics are in place among actors within each of these systems.

While each set of wings of the dragonfly will always move in unity, each wing in our model (or each of the national and global systems) will ideally be moved through the same forces setting them in motion, but with different means and conditions for providing an enabling environment for locally-led peacebuilding. It is these differences that provide the foundation for complementary engagement.



While some actors focus on changing the nationally-based conditions, others focus on the global level. Each must recognise their intersection and potential complementarities. Initiatives undertaken to strengthen national civic space and address potential government resistance to dealing with causes of conflict such as inequality, discrimination and accountability for past human rights violations are examples of national systemic engagement in support of local peacebuilders. Another is setting up joint peacebuilding mechanisms for collaboration among government institutions and civil society as has been done in multiple conflict-affected contexts like Nepal and Colombia.

Although multiple systems innovation initiatives exist within the global peacebuilding system, initiatives focusing on systems transformation are not as frequently identified. Examples of INGOs currently working for systems transformation are Peace Direct, Life and Peace Institute, Quaker United Nations Office, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, and Conducive Space for Peace. Examples among funders are Humanity United, Robert Bosch Stiftung GmbH, and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Constellations of these

actors have come together in initiatives such as Shift Power for Peace (SP4P) with Conducive Space for Peace, Humanity United and Peace Direct or the Inclusive Peace in Practice Initiative of the Life and Peace Institute. Beyond the peacebuilding field, movements of change agents such as #ShiftThePower are promoting transformative change in the broader development field and advocating for shifting power to local actors.

Systems change efforts vary in their orientation towards changing the current global peacebuilding system in a way that shifts power to local peacebuilders versus reimagining a completely different peacebuilding system that holds local actors at the centre. The reimagining approach holds a degree of preparedness to discard the existing ways of working including the mainstream institutional ways of providing support to local peacebuilders through bilateral funders, to intermediary INGOs and on to national and/or local peacebuilding actors. As previously stated, currently approximately 90 percent of funding for locally-led peacebuilding comes from bilateral donors. While this is likely to change significantly in the coming years, there are few alternative sources of support ready to replace it, and changes are not

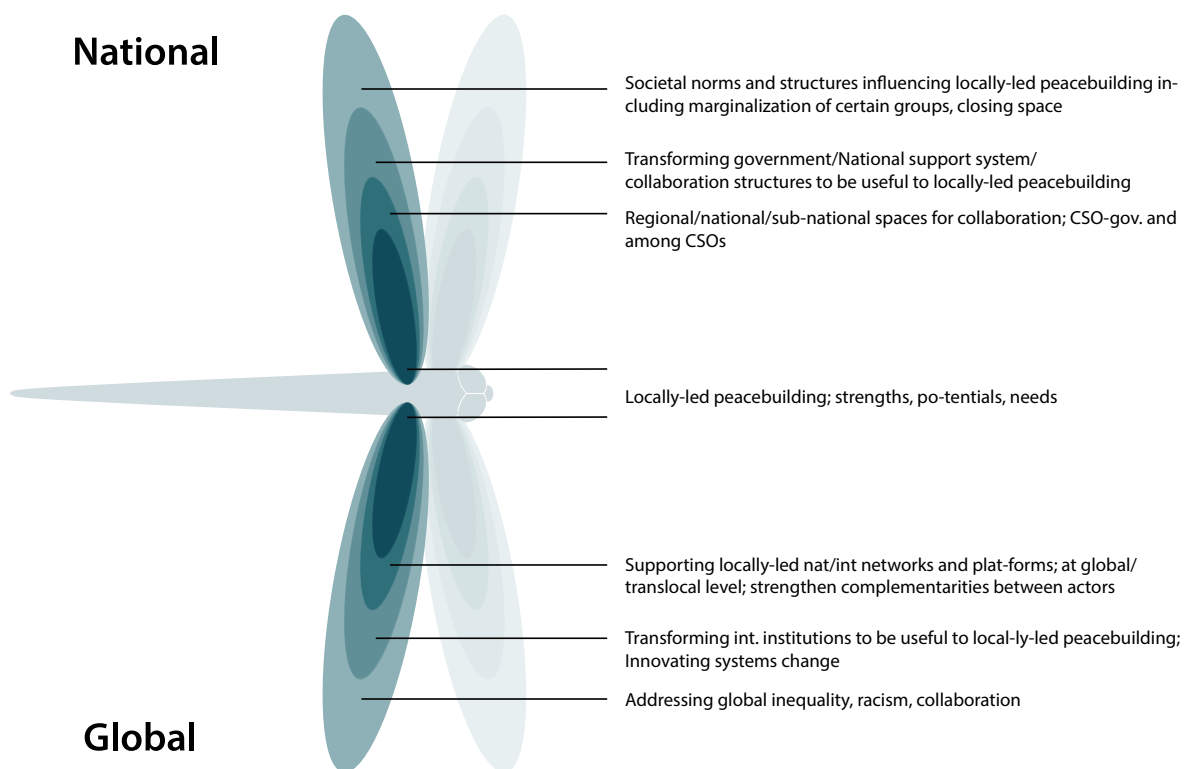


Figure 6:
Changing the current global system of support to locally-led peacebuilding

likely to happen quickly. Therefore, change must be sought both through changing the current global peacebuilding system and its way of supporting locally-led peacebuilding as well as through processes of reimagining the creation of something new. Most efforts to change the current system and ways of working take place from within the international institutions that recognise a need to change. These change efforts hold an overall understanding that things can be done better in supporting local actors in their development and peacebuilding efforts, that institutional change must be incremental, and that the overall logic of multilateralism and organisational incentives, decision-making, and other structural dimensions cannot be radically changed.

An evolving movement of change agents outside of the bilateral and multilateral international institutions is however gaining momentum for more transformational change that also addresses the power inequalities embedded in structures and procedures aimed at supporting local actors (see figure 7). These change efforts are intended at transforming structures, practices, and norms, and in doing so employ diverse systems change approach-

es ranging from disruptive advocacy efforts that portray the dysfunctionalities of the system to accompaniment of systems innovation to gradually address the systems dysfunctionalities, and strengthen the relevance and timeliness of current international support to local peacebuilding .

"People in the broader system have not lost hope that systemic change is possible. But how will change happen? The pressure has to come from multiple level and levers - from the mavericks within the system, from funders who can demonstrate what alternative funding mechanisms looks like, from international NGOs who can model what devolution of power and meaningful partnership look like, and from a vocal demand by partners in the Global South that they will no longer accept anything less than having an agency and power over decisions that affect their communities, societies and their reputation".

Peacebuilder at global convening on locally-led peacebuilding in 2019

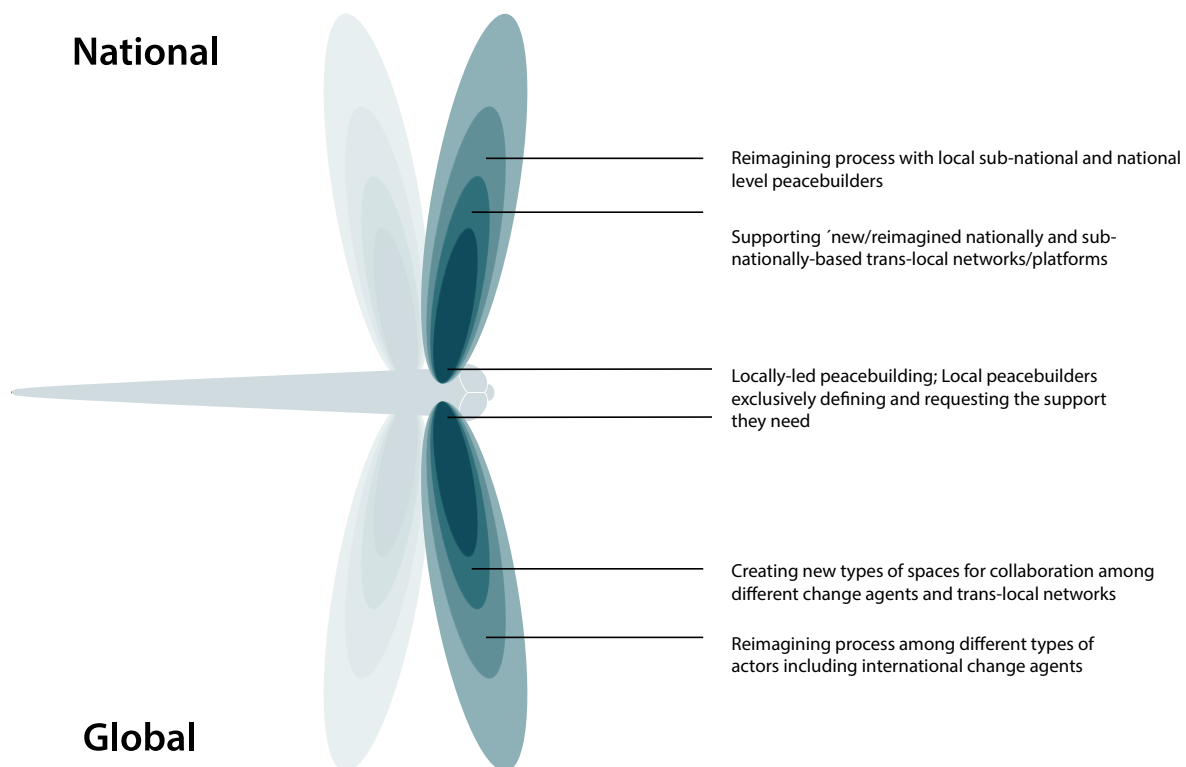


Figure 7:
Reimagining a future global system of support to locally-led peacebuilding

THE ROLE OF CHANGE AGENTS WITHIN SYSTEMS CHANGE APPROACHES

Having unpacked the core components of the Dragonfly Model that outline a series of approaches for how pursuit of change in the global peacebuilding system can take place, we now pivot to a discussion on who are the change agents that carry forward these change efforts. It is important to emphasise the importance of change agents in facilitating systems transformation, recognising the distinction between entities and the individuals that comprise them and the key role that such individuals hold in the application of creative thinking to change efforts. As we develop our thinking on this, a series of key questions arise: Who are the change agents that can transform the global peacebuilding system to enable locally-led peacebuilding? Who have been the change agents in previous change processes such as social movements that have struggled to facilitate large-scale structural change and address power inequalities, and what can we learn from them? Which types of change agents have potential, capacity and drive to transform the global peacebuilding system? The point is not to identify who is better, or better placed, to facilitate change, but rather how different types of change agents can complement one another in achieving broader systems change.

Changing a system in a way that transforms the structures, practices, norms and attitudes takes time, systems understanding, imagination, strategic pondering, and not least a movement of people who share a vision for change. We can talk about such movement as a 'spiderweb' or network of change agents with the potential to facilitate transformative change

Addressing power inequalities in knowledge

Both local and international peacebuilders are part of the global peacebuilding system, but they hold different knowledge about the system. Local peacebuilders know what it takes to promote peacebuilding in their context, what is at stake, what conflict dynamics are at play, and what societal and human strengths need to be mobilised to build peace. Knowing what it takes to build peace is of course the essential element of any peacebuilding effort. National and regional actors know the broader conflict-affected context and often have a good understanding of the multiple actors that hold the potential for supporting peacebuilding within a given context.

As international actors may influence both the conflict dynamics at play and the peacebuilding context, understanding the global peacebuilding system also entails knowing how the international institutions work and

where the entry points for change in their way of working lie. International peacebuilders know the international institutions from the inside, their decision-making hierarchies, incentive structures, human resource management modalities, programming procedures, and so on. Thus, they also hold insights about how the international institutions can change. On the other hand, they are likely not to hold a deeper understanding of what it takes to build sustainable peace in a given conflict-affected context relative to their local peacebuilder peers. However, if they are able to listen carefully, respect what they hear, and take steps to accommodate what is needed, they may be able to make themselves useful and provide critical support.

The knowledge of both local and international peacebuilders is essential in working towards systems change, whether the aim is to change the current global peacebuilding system or reinvent something new. None of them separately hold the full insight into a comprehensive change process. In a similar vein, any change process, whether aiming at changing the current way of working or inventing something new, needs creativity and imagination as critical components.

What is required is not learning a new skill of creative peacebuilding or employing a model that tells us what to do, rather it is bringing to the surface the humanity of our engagement for peace.

Bringing creative thinking into peacebuilding

Imagination is embedded in the very core of our humanity. It essentially challenges the notion of knowledge as something technical, external, and professional. John Paul Lederach has coined the term 'moral imagination' to describe the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist. Already in 2005, Lederach saw a shift in the profession of peacebuilders becoming more technicians than artists: *"By virtue of this shift of perception, our approaches have become too cookie-cutter-like, too reliant on what proper technique suggests as a frame of reference, and, as a result, our processes are too rigid and fragile"* (John Paul Lederach, 2005, *The Moral Imagination*).

Peacebuilding as a profession has increasingly underestimated and in some instances forgotten the art of the creative process. This has severe implications for the

potential of peacebuilding globally and for the concrete possibilities of local peacebuilders to unfold their potential in peacebuilding. As most financial support to locally-led peacebuilding comes from bilateral donor agencies with funding modalities often shaped by predefined notions of peacebuilding that can be easily grasped, conceptualised and measured, it can be difficult for local peacebuilders to get financial support when engaging in more creative and unpredictable processes of peacebuilding. It often requires particular capacities from the international donor representative to see the importance of 'creative peacebuilding' and find ways to circumvent rigid procedures that do not accommodate such engagement.

Drawing on Lederach's notion of Moral Imagination, we can explore how the art of the creative process is an important aspect of systems change. John Paul Lederach argues that "*finding the art of the matter...*" is not just "*a minor corrective to an otherwise healthy system*".

What is required is not learning a new skill of creative peacebuilding or employing a model that tells us what to do, rather it is bringing to the surface the humanity of our engagement for peace. That which is already there. When we bring the core of our humanity, of who we are and what we bring to the world, to the forefront of our engagement with others and embark with an open mind in a creative process, we may be able to create real change. This essentially means that current notions of capacity building and empowerment are irrelevant as the essential capacity to build peace exists already within and among people engaging in peacebuilding, through the life experiences they carry. This does not imply that peacebuilding is less of a 'professional field' than other such fields. It

implies a world view that human beings inherently possess potentials that are further developed through the knowledge and experience they gain, and this can be further strengthened by the encounters and conditions they face. The art and soul of peacebuilding can be nurtured through conscious action to create conducive spaces for peace - but cannot be created as a technical expertise or endeavour. A global peacebuilding system must aspire to hold this essential understanding at its core. A model such as the Dragonfly Model which we are sharing here can only hope to be used in a way that elicit further human creativity in facilitating systems change, and for this creativity to spark new networks, collaborations, and change efforts that strategically address the complex systems challenges and help us imagine something new.

"It requires a worldview shift. I will propose that, as conflict professionals, we must go well beyond a sideshow, well beyond lip service to attain the art and soul of constructive change. We must envision our work as a creative act, more akin to the artistic endeavor than the technical process. This never negates skill and technique. But it does suggest that the wellspring, the source that gives life, is not found in the supporting scaffolding, the detailed knowledge of substance and process, nor the paraphernalia that accompanies any professional endeavor, be it artistic, political, economic, or social. The wellspring lies in our moral imagination".

John Paul Lederach (Moral Imagination, 2005)

CONCLUSION

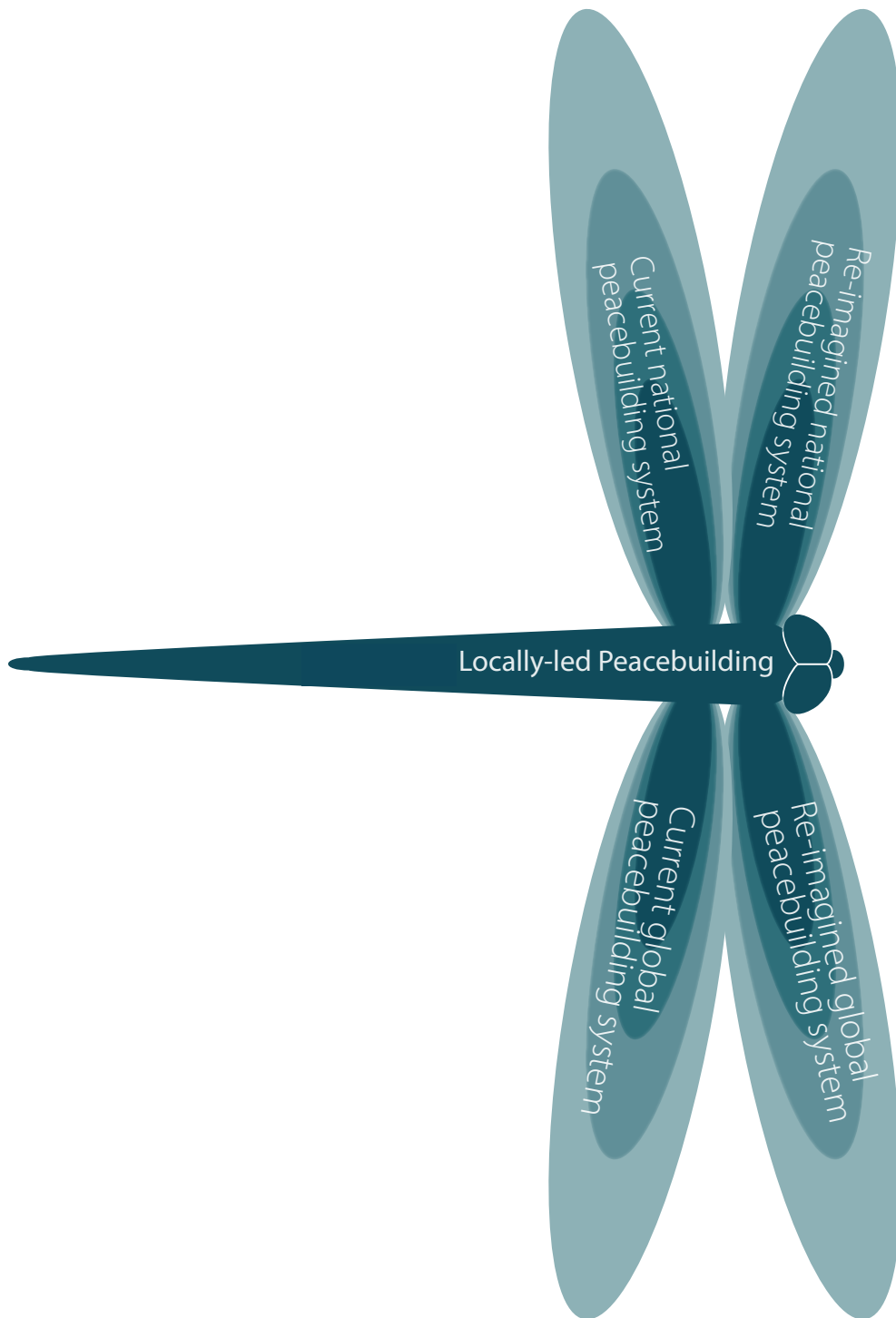
Our collective experiences in Conducive Space for Peace have led us to believe that it is through different entry points to change and creating complementarity between these various entry points that we will be most successful in pursuing change that shifts power to local peacebuilders. When different types of change agents work towards the same overall goals - sometimes together, sometimes in parallel - holding their different perspectives, knowledge, ideas, relations, and approaches, it is evident that this will amount to a stronger change process. This may play out as separate tracks in a multi-prong change process or social movement, or it may be a collaborative endeavour with joint strategising for change. The challenge is that different perspectives sometimes may feel irreconcilable. Thus, the task is to create spaces for convening around a joint vision and to catalyse spaces for creating linkages and complementarities between different types of change agents with different perspectives and potentials for facilitating change. In doing so it is of critical importance to be attentive to process and how collaboration is facilitated in a space with inherent power imbalances and at the same time pay attention to the immense creative potential brought by diverse change agents.

The Dragonfly Model offers a way of understanding systems change which holds the aim of shifting power to local peacebuilders and pursuing sustainable paths to peacebuilding. It shows how different systems and approaches to change are interconnected and must be pursued in complementarity. We stand at a time when the global context is in flux and the space for locally-led peacebuilding is changing. It has never been as important as it is now to enable locally-led peacebuilding to unfold its potential, both with the purpose of promoting sustainable peace at local and national level and with the purpose of informing the broader global peacebuilding agenda at a critical time.

Systems transformation is needed, but it is critical to remember that systems are developed by people, and must be changed by people, and that any process of transformation holds an inherently human essence. Only with the creative power of human beings, and with the diverse perspectives and possible complementarities of thought and action can we catalyse the change we aspire to. The question therefore becomes how we can create conducive spaces for people to come together to think creatively, connect with the essence of what peace-

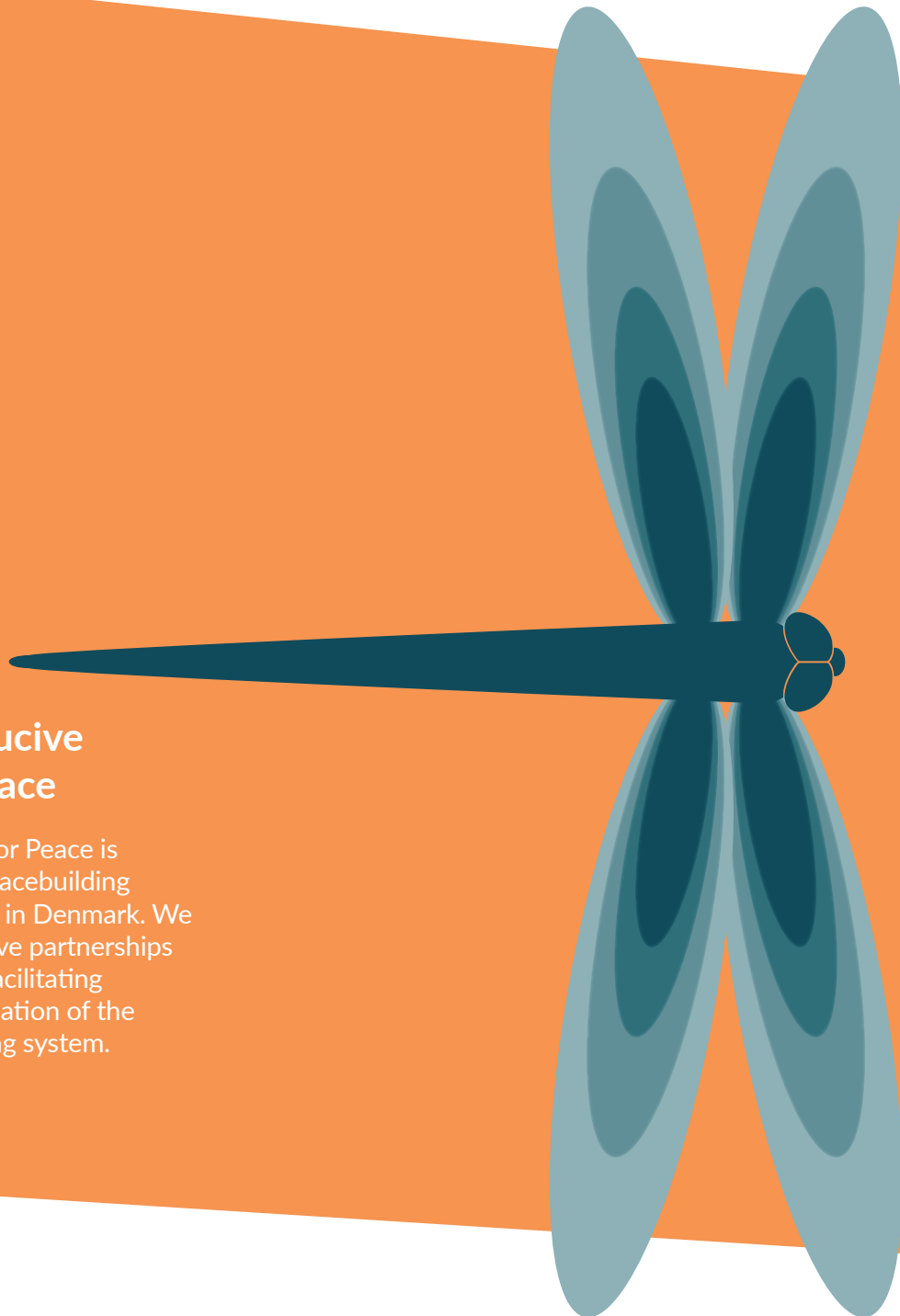
building implies, grasp the complexity of change without being discouraged by the magnitude of the task, and strategise for joint action. Not least, we must come together and learn what it takes to create a movement of change agents collectively working towards shifting power to local peacebuilders. A conducive space for change must recognise and navigate the power inequalities that it is trying to address, and it must hold values of respect, reciprocity, and dignity at the core. This is the greatest aspiration of **Conducive Space for Peace**.

A model such as the Dragonfly Model which we are sharing here can only hope to be used in a way that elicit further human creativity in facilitating systems change, and for this creativity to spark new networks, collaborations, and change efforts that strategically address the complex systems challenges and help us imagine something new.



The thinking behind the Dragonfly model has evolved over the years from Conducive Space for Peace's experience in facilitating systems change to shift power to local peacebuilders, and was released in March 2021.

Conducive Space for Peace is supported by Humanity United and other private foundations in its work to facilitate systems transformation that creates an enabling environment for locally-led peacebuilding.



About Conducive Space for Peace

Conducive Space for Peace is an International Peacebuilding organisation based in Denmark. We work in collaborative partnerships as a connector in facilitating systemic transformation of the global peacebuilding system.

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