Fostering socially just peace

Critical peace pedagogies in an unjust world

Dr. Sara Clarke-Habibi, 14 March 2024
Conference: "Peace Pedagogy in a World of Conflicts"

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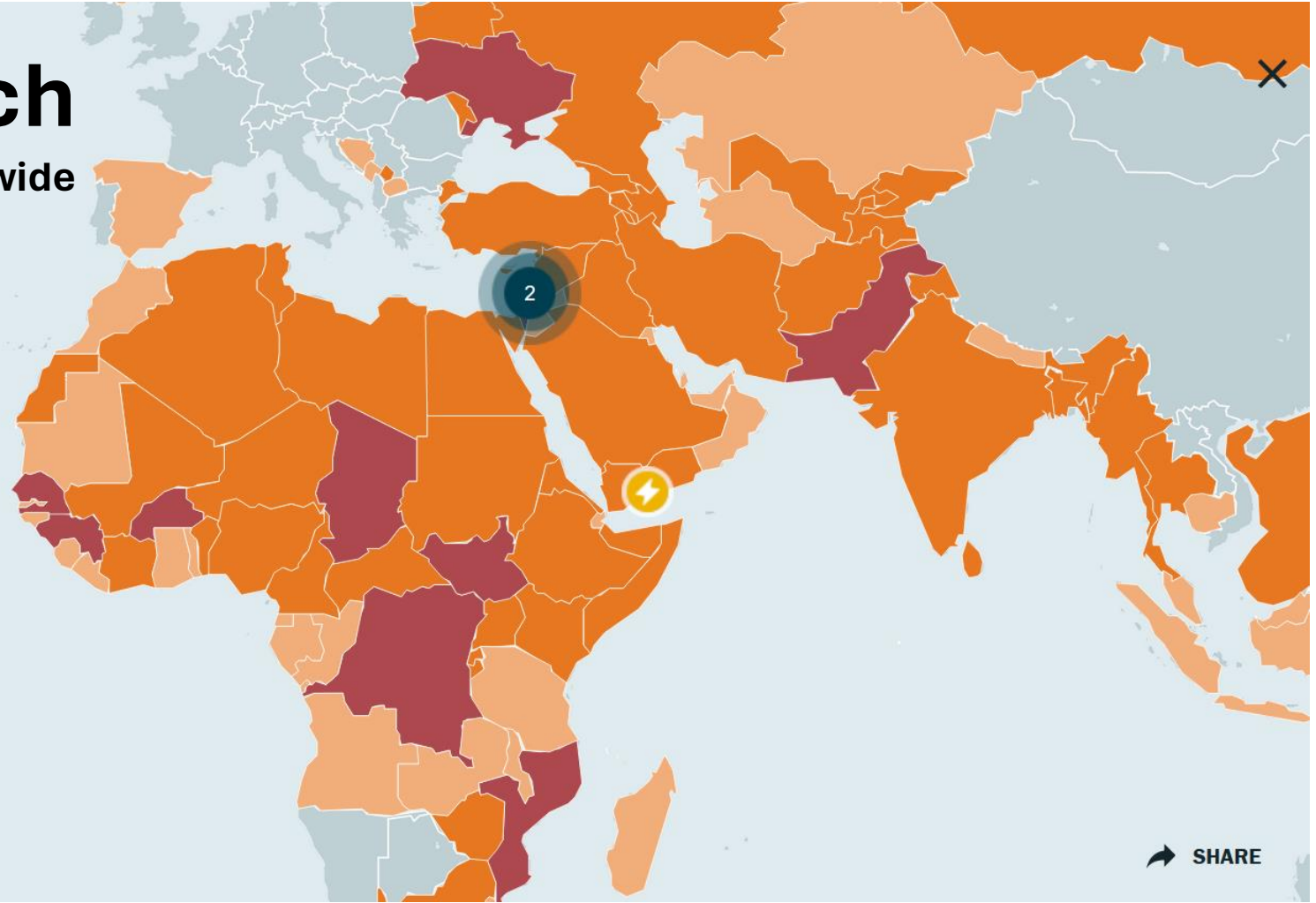
Current global & local challenges

- **Europe & World in conflict** – wars, political & economic insecurity, increased migration, increasing socio-economic gaps, polarized debates, media wars

- **Emotions rising – concern, fear, anger, hopelessness, frustration, desire for action**

- **Perceptions of peace and security – shifting at home and abroad**

- **Perceptions of threat –** leading to cultural and political conservatism, increased xenophobia, racism and intolerance

- **Educators struggling –** to equip generations with needed understanding, values, skills, and courage to navigate these changes and conflicts with confidence and creativity

More than good intentions

- **No society is immune** to these conflicts and challenges

- Education institutions **cannot remain indifferent** to these new realities

- There is a **dire need for peacebuilders** and social justice workers in the world

- **All disciplines & fields** have a role to play

More than good intentions

- **Positive attitudes and values** are a necessary foundation, but are not enough

- **Social tensions** can remain unaddressed, increasing resentments & polarisation

- **Critical peace pedagogies** offer a key for learning how to foster social justice

- Note: this is only **one part of a wider whole** – other kinds of peace pedagogy are needed too

Peace pedagogies in Finland and in the world

Peace pedagogies are needed everywhere that social pedagogues work:

- early childhood education
- schools
- vocational training
- higher education organizations
- liberal arts work
- youth work
- immigrant work
- child protection foster care
- prisons
- nursing homes for the elderly

Peace education vs. Peace pedagogies

"In peace education, *how* we teach is just as important as *what* we teach.

Pedagogy is thus **the lens** through which the peace education approach is regarded.

It is also **the form** that the educational process then takes–that is, the teaching strategies, approaches and methods that are employed."

—Prof. Stephanie Knox, UPeace
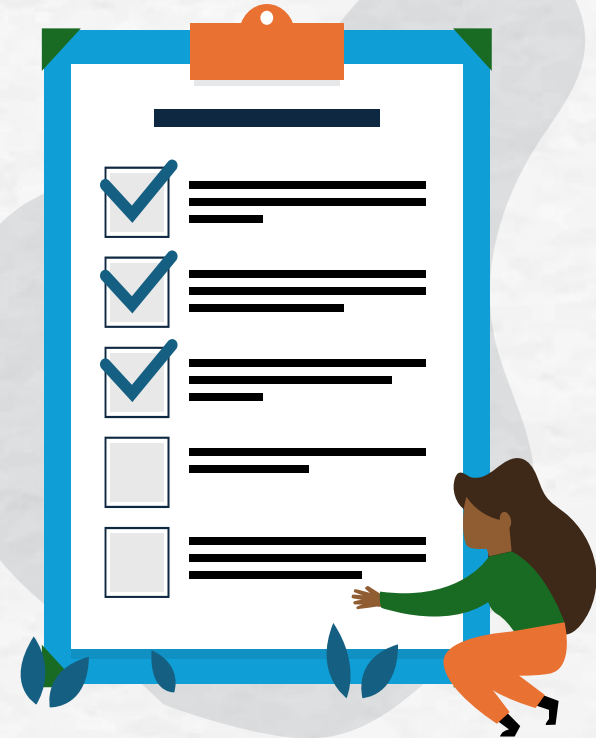
Peace education vs. Peace pedagogies

Calls to "move beyond" Peace Education to Social Justice Education, arguing that traditional peace education, while focussing on values, neglects the issue of power inequalities and the structures and cultures that institutionalize and reproduce them. https://peacemaking.narf.org/2021/04/moving-beyond-peace-education-to-social-justice-education/

Critical Peace Pedagogy responds to this gap by exploring power inequalities and building the foundations of socially just peace.
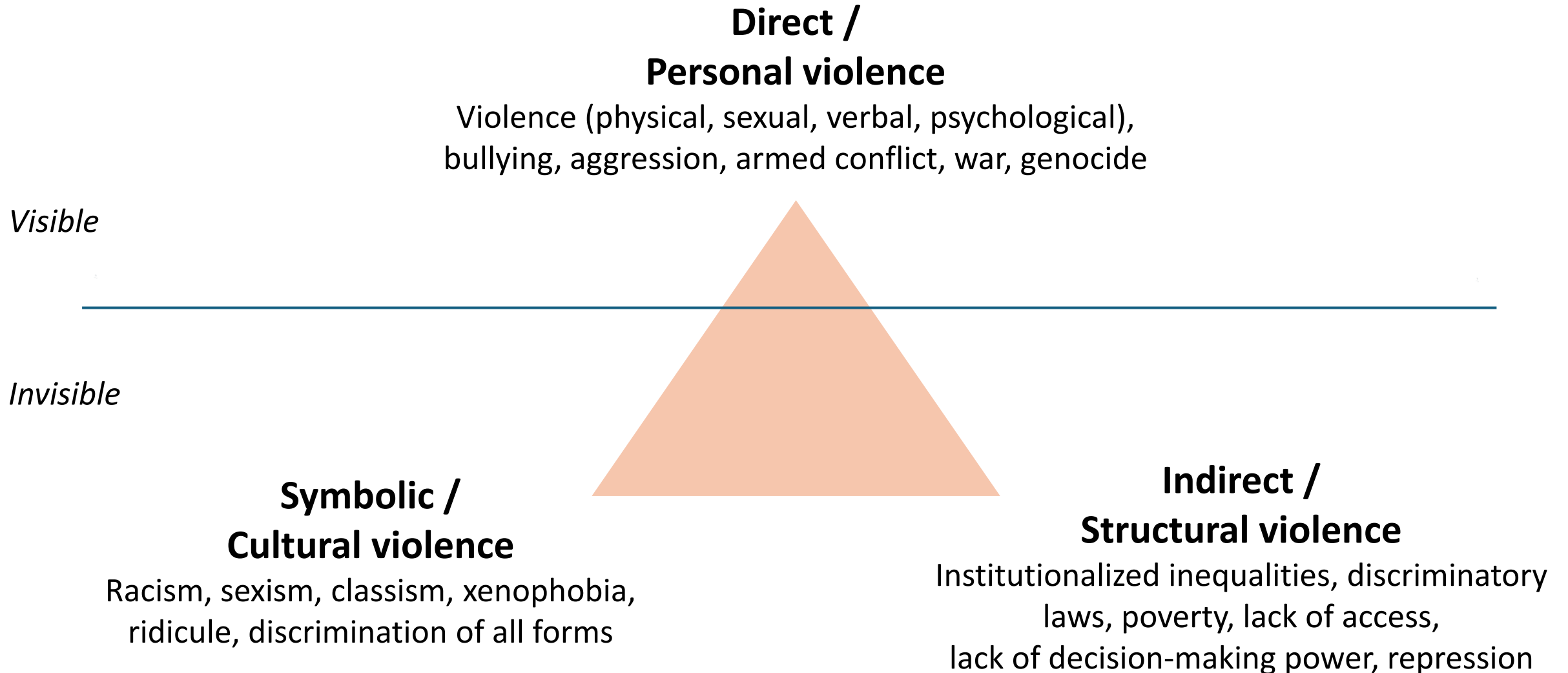
Peace Pedagogies:
a) can be integrated across the curriculum
b) there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach for every classroom;
c) the outcomes of these different pedagogical orientations can also be at odds (thus be aware of when, why & how you use them)
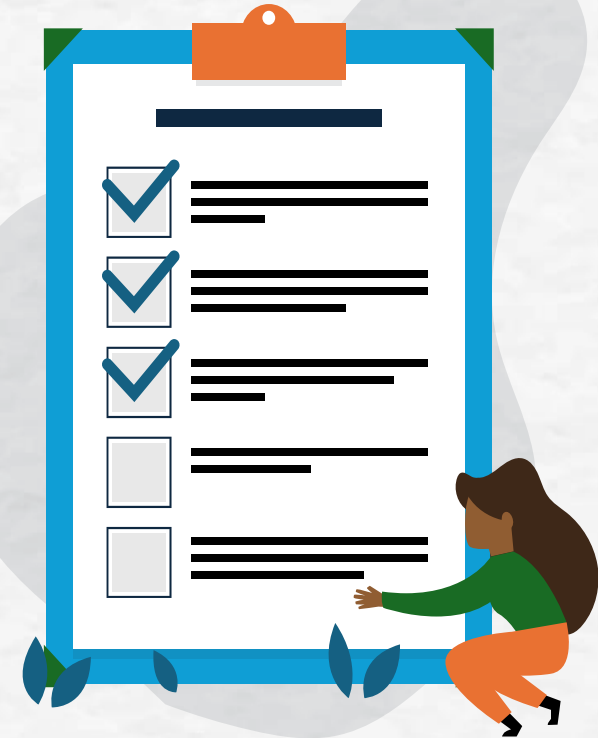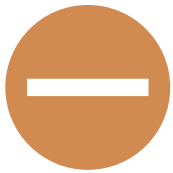
What does 'peace' really mean?

We are a 'peaceful' society,
how is it relevant to us?

Galtung's Violence Triangle

**Direct /
Personal violence**

Violence (physical, sexual, verbal, psychological),
bullying, aggression, armed conflict, war, genocide

Visible

Invisible

**Symbolic /
Cultural violence**

Racism, sexism, classism, xenophobia,
ridicule, discrimination of all forms

**Indirect /
Structural violence**

Institutionalized inequalities, discriminatory
laws, poverty, lack of access,
lack of decision-making power, repression

What is peace?

NEGATIVE PEACE
the absence of direct violence

POSITIVE PEACE
the absence of direct and indirect violence; the presence of social justice, equity and harmonious social relationships

INNER PEACE
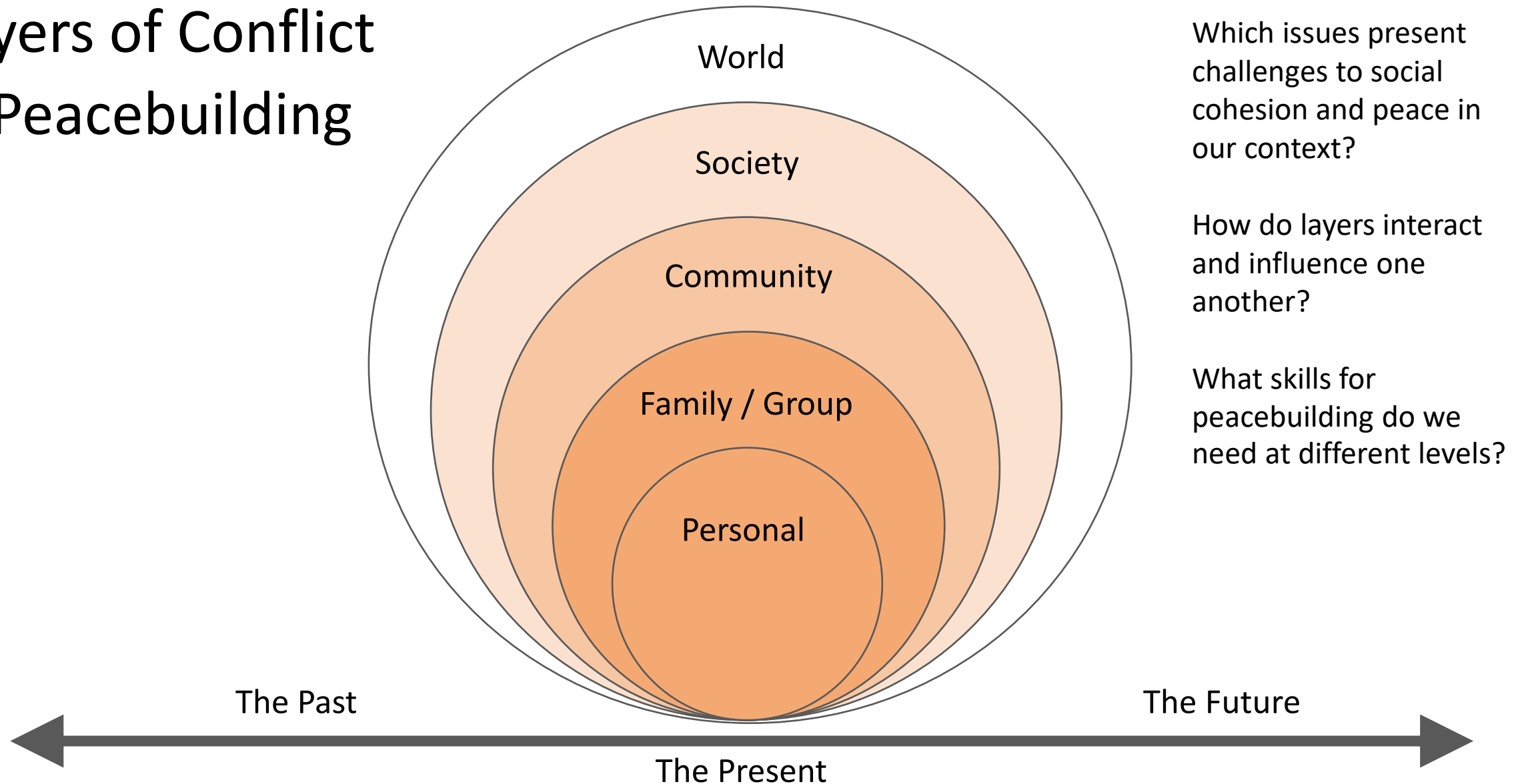a state of psychological and/or spiritual wellbeing, despite the presence of stressors

Martin Luther King Jr (1963),
Johan Galtung (1964/1969)

Sara Clarke-Habibi (2018),
H.B. Danesh (2002)

Layers of Conflict & Peacebuilding

World

Society

Community

Family / Group

Personal

The Past

The Future

The Present

Which issues present challenges to social cohesion and peace in our context?

How do layers interact and influence one another?

What skills for peacebuilding do we need at different levels?

Adapted from Dugan (1996), Transforming Historical Harms

Socially just peace

- **Socially just peace** is about establishing conditions that enable positive peace i.e. conditions of inclusion, equity and justice

- Requires us to address both <u>systemic inequalities</u> and the <u>cultural attitudes</u> that sustain them:

  i. Privilege – opportunities / power / voice / representation / legitimacy / self-determination

  ii. Marginalisation and exclusion – that lead to inequities, injustices, restricted development and fulfilment, frustrations

- Requires **systemic engagement** and **personal agency** to transform society
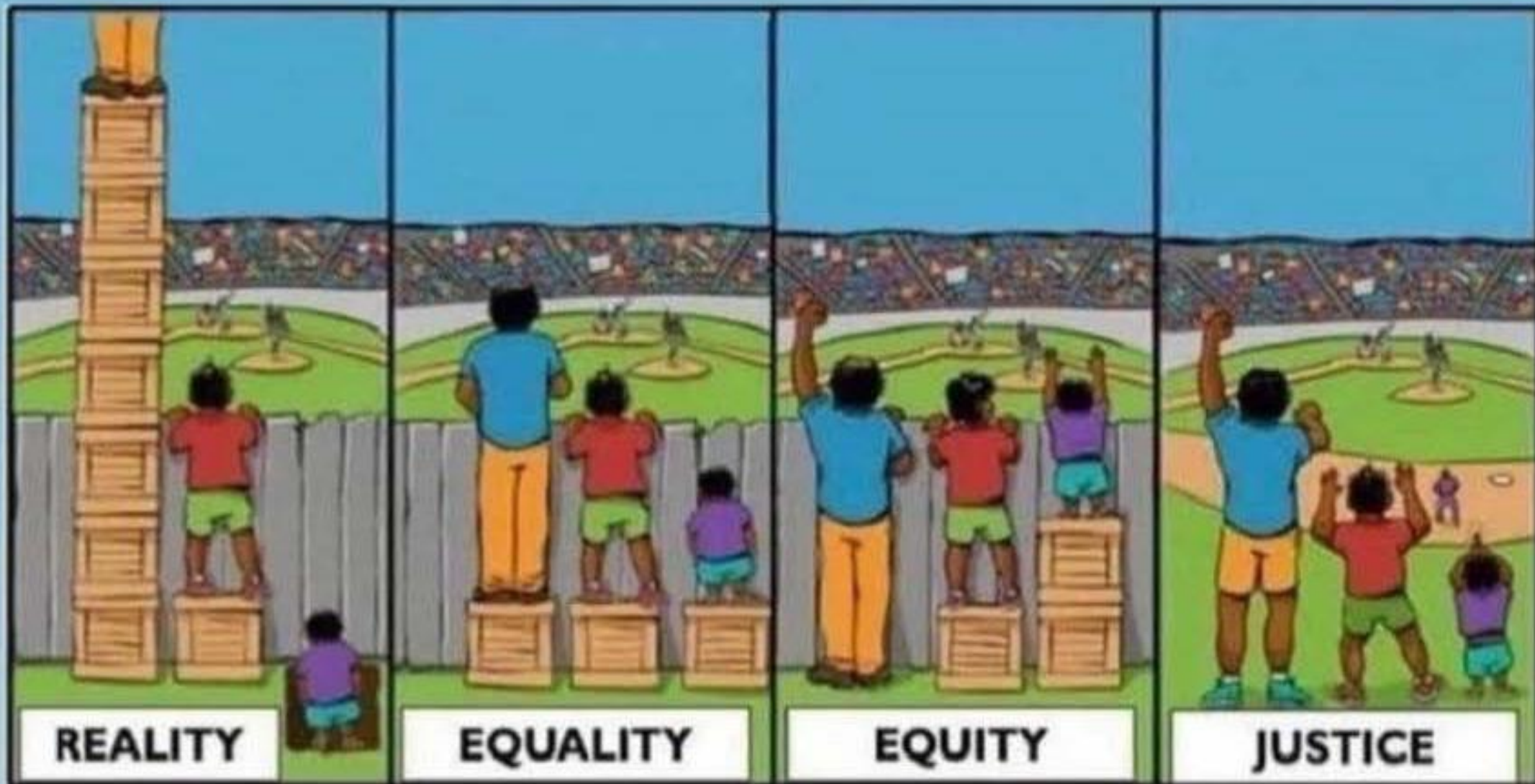
REALITY

One gets more than is needed, while the other gets less than is needed. Thus, a huge disparity is created.

EQUALITY

The assumption is that everyone benefits from the same supports. This is considered to be equal treatment.
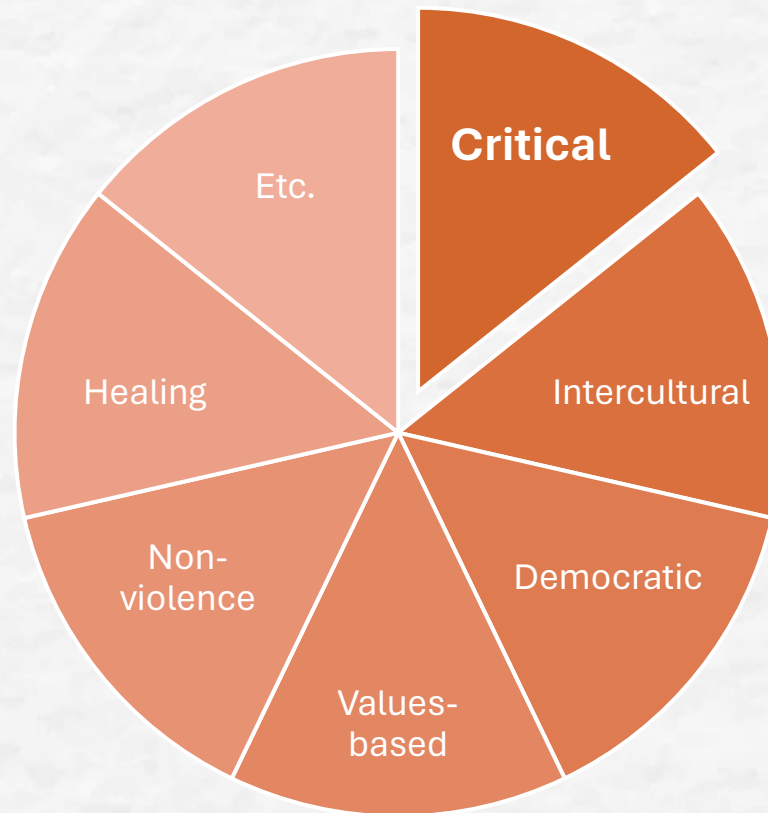
EQUITY

Everyone gets the support they need, which produces equity.

JUSTICE

All 3 can see the game without supports or accommodations because the cause(s) of the inequity was addressed.

Peace pedagogies for diverse outcomes

A broad range of peace pedagogies exists, each for different outcomes:

Use & combine in ways that are:

➤ Developmentally adapted

➤ Contextually relevant

➤ Culturally-sensitive

➤ Trauma-sensitive

➤ Multiperspectival

➤ Self-reflexive

➤ Action-oriented

Critical peace pedagogy

A broad term that can include:

- Anti-racist pedagogy

- Human rights pedagogy

- Democratic pedagogy

- Feminist pedagogy

- Decolonial pedagogy

- 'Pedagogies of discomfort'

Each peace pedagogy has its own:

Educational aims

To be liberated from oppression, to dismantle cultural & structural violence, to make the world socially just

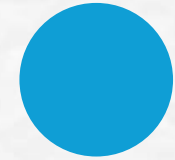**e.g. Freire's critical pedagogy**

Theory of change

Conscientization of inequalities of power and the sources of social injustice, plus reflective action (praxis), fosters social change

Instructional methods

Critical reflection and action to transform the status quo

Desired learning outcomes

Critical consciousness and political agency (empowerment)

[Peacebuilding competences]

Critical peace pedagogy

"Critical peace pedagogy establishes education for social consciousness, self-realization, and collective nonviolent action...
By integrating peace pedagogy with critical pedagogy, both pedagogical frameworks are deepened to better address the most pressing issues of our contemporary world."

(Schmidt, 2022)

https://www.peacejusticestudies.org/chronicle/a-conceptual-framework-for-critical-peace-pedagogy/

Critical peace pedagogy

"Critical approaches offer peace educators the conceptual resources for **understanding structural impediments** to advancing the possibility and promise of peace education in diverse localities across the globe. Rather than **reproducing the status quo**, critical approaches in peace education aim to empower learners as **transformative change agents** who critically analyze power dynamics and intersectionalities among race, class, gender, dis/ability, sexual orientation, language, religion, geography, and other forms of social stratification. Critical peace education considers the potential for educational spaces—formal and informal—to become sites of **individual and collective transformation**." (Bajaj, 2019)

https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10081588/1/Bajaj_Article_11_Bajaj.pdf

Critical peace pedagogy

Critical peace pedagogy is about having the courage to face **difficult conversations** about controversial issues with the intention of building **better relationships** and a **better society** for all.

Working effectively with critical peace pedagogies requires **holding space for emotions...**

Critical awareness and the call for change can feel threatening...

...to our identities, traditions, values, imagined futures, sense of security....

Increased awareness of social injustices can provoke **defensiveness** in some and **frustration** in others

Immature awareness can increase intergroup **polarisation** and lead to either **disaffection & apathy** or **radicalisation**

Risks

Prevention & support

- To prevent polarisation, awareness of challenges in society needs to be framed within a **peace worldview** to foster **mature understanding** and sense of **shared responsibility**

- Learning should prioritize **connection, collaboration** and **constructive social action**

- **Combining** different peace pedagogies is beneficial for this purpose

Factors to consider in the learning space

- We are humans, not robots
- What has meaning for one person may not have the same meaning for another.
- There are no easy solutions or 'silver bullets'

We have:

- Distinct individual & collective identities
- Different life experiences
- Past and present trauma
- Degrees of developmental maturity
- These shape our subjectivities

Different contexts (place, time, relations) shape our:

- Positionalities
- Intersectionalities
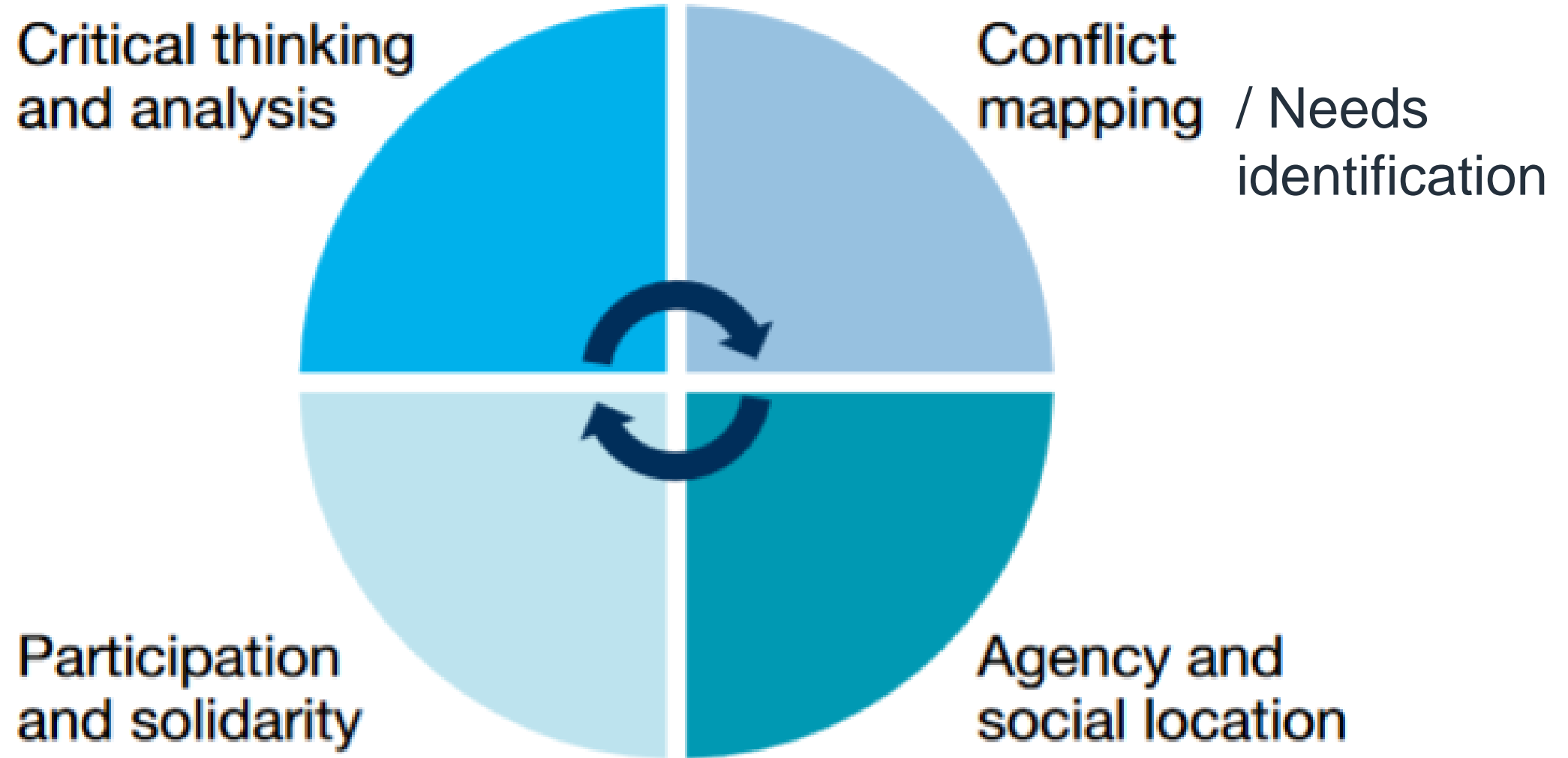
So how to 'do' critical peace pedagogy?

Start by exploring and mapping together:

What are the peacebuilding challenges and needs in this context, with this group, in this society, at this time?

Foster inclusive & multiperspectival:

Critical thinking and analysis

Conflict mapping / Needs identification

Participation and solidarity

Agency and social location

[1] https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10081588/1/Bajaj_Article_11_Bajaj.pdf

Pose critical questions:

- *Who is not represented in this discussion?*
- *Whose voices are heard and not heard?*
- *What biases may I / we have in this situation?*
- *How would it look / feel from the other's perspective?*
- *How might inequalities be operating in this scenario?*
- *Whose interests are being served / not served?*
- *What are the fears / needs behind the resistance?*
- *How could this be addressed in a more inclusive, equal and constructive way?*

The Ultimate Cheatsheet for Critical Thinking

global digital citizen foundation

Want to exercise critical thinking skills? Ask these questions whenever you discover or discuss new information. These are broad and versatile questions that have limitless applications!

Who
- ... benefits from this?
- ... is this harmful to?
- ... makes decisions about this?
- ... is most directly affected?
- ... have you also heard discuss this?
- ... would be the best person to consult?
- ... will be the key people in this?
- ... deserves recognition for this?

What
- ... are the strengths/weaknesses?
- ... is another perspective?
- ... is another alternative?
- ... would be a counter-argument?
- ... is the best/worst case scenario?
- ... is most/least important?
- ... can we do to make a positive change?
- ... is getting in the way of our action?

Where
- ... would we see this in the real world?
- ... are there similar concepts/situations?
- ... is there the most need for this?
- ... in the world would this be a problem?
- ... can we get more information?
- ... do we go for help with this?
- ... will this idea take us?
- ... are the areas for improvement?

When
- ... is this acceptable/unacceptable?
- ... would this benefit our society?
- ... would this cause a problem?
- ... is the best time to take action?
- ... will we know we've succeeded?
- ... has this played a part in our history?
- ... can we expect this to change?
- ... should we ask for help with this?

Why
- ... is this a problem/challenge?
- ... is it relevant to me/others?
- ... is this the best/worst scenario?
- ... are people influenced by this?
- ... should people know about this?
- ... has it been this way for so long?
- ... have we allowed this to happen?
- ... is there a need for this today?

How
- ... is this similar to _____?
- ... does this disrupt things?
- ... do we know the truth about this?
- ... will we approach this safely?
- ... does this benefit us/others?
- ... does this harm us/others?
- ... do we see this in the future?
- ... can we change this for our good?

globaldigitalcitizen.org

Identify:
What kind of peacebuilding is need in this situation?

- **Be sensitive to context and timeliness**

- **Different approaches will be needed for:**
  - Different professional and community contexts
  - Different age groups & maturity levels
  - People in distress
  - Stable, but unjust, societies
  - Conflict-affected societies (with historical and ongoing grievances)

Some tested good practices:

1. **Connect:** Establish inclusive, safe and brave spaces for approaching sensitive and controversial issues

2. **Frame:** Provide a frame for why it is important to look at the issue and a roadmap of how it will be done

3. **Engage:** Use interactive and collaborative methods to make learning engaging and to connect to personal experience

Some tested good practices:

4. **Debrief:** Debrief the activity thoroughly and acknowledge the legitimacy of different experiences and emotions

5. **Discuss / Reflect:** How the learning can apply to other aspects of one's life and society

6. **Foster Agency:** Channel awareness and frustration into constructive action

7. **Affirm:** Celebrate action and growth

More entry points

- Cultivate Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments

- Integrate Social Justice Themes into the Learning Programme

- Cultivate Critical Thinking, including Media Literacy

- Nurture Empathy and Intercultural Competence

- Develop Social Skills and Conflict Resolution Skills

- Facilitate Open Dialogues and Learn to Sit with and Learn from Discomfort

- Adopt Trauma-Informed Practices

- Foster Advocacy and Activism

- Build Community Engagement and Partnerships

Some useful methods

Listening & Reflection

- Active listening
- Story circles
- Restorative circles
- Living libraries

Dialogue

- Open dialogue
- Intergroup dialogues
- Intergenerational encounters
- Pair-sharing

Perspective-Taking

- Debate
- Retelling stories from an alternative perspective
- Structured controversies

Conflict Analysis

- Conflict Tree
- Critical reflection
- Collaborative projects

Arts

- Role play
- Theatre of the Oppressed
- Dance, music, visual methods, film, video
- Creative writing, journalling

Advocacy

- Policy analysis & design
- Awareness campaigns

Thank you!