

ARTEGENESIS **PHENOMENON**

THE RIPPLE EFFECT MOBILIZED BY EXPRESSIVE
ARTS-BASED CRISIS INTERVENTION COMMUNITY
MURALS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ACTIVE
CONFLICTS IN COLOMBIA, DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF CONGO, & UKRAINE



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OVERVIEW

- Introduction
- Theory
- Methodology
- Case Studies
- Findings
- Cyclical Model
- Implications/ Conclusion
- Call to Action



Note: Dad's Borscht. Olena Yanko, 2025.

All paintings in this presentation are reprinted with permission.



INTRODUCTION

I have consistently witnessed an enormous gap in funding and support for the heroic local artists/ *change agents* who give their blood, sweat, and tears in efforts to empower their communities. The traditional first response frameworks, based on Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs*, urgently needs to be updated to include psychological needs, together with the physiological needs.

*Without meaning,
without purpose,
physical death,
not far behind.*

while working as a *change agent* in crisis environments for over 2 decades and co-facilitating community murals in 47 countries,

Doctoral Research Question:

Can expressive arts (EXA) based Crisis Intervention Community Mural (CRICM) initiatives activate an emergent phenomenon that produces a sustainable aesthetic space for the expansion of **sense of coherence (SoC)**, **narrative reconfiguration**, and identify shifts on both individuals and communities within the **liminal space** of an active conflict zone?



CRICM Initiatives -

Expressive Arts (EXA):

- *change agent, liminal space, ritual, poiesis, decentering, low skill - high sensitivity, art is medicine, The Third, **high skill - high sensitivity**, crystallization*

Salutogenesis:

- *sense of cohesion (SoC) -
 - comprehensibility
 - manageability
 - meaningfulness*

Conflict Transformation:

- *structural transformation*
- *behaviorial transformation*
- *attitudinal transformation*

Emerging Lexicon of Artegenesis:

- *Créateurs & Aesthetic Witnesses*

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Theories
Continents
Conflicts
Methods
Case Studies

Phenomenological cross-cultural case study, ethnographic, & art-based research

- Ethnographic fieldwork
- Semi-structured interviews
- Cross-case analysis
- Risk & wellness assessment
- Bracketing & ethics

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Emergent
Phenomenon



METHODOLOGY

ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK: COLOMBIA

2016



CASE STUDY 1: COLOMBIA

PROTRACTED INTERNAL ARMED
CONFLICT

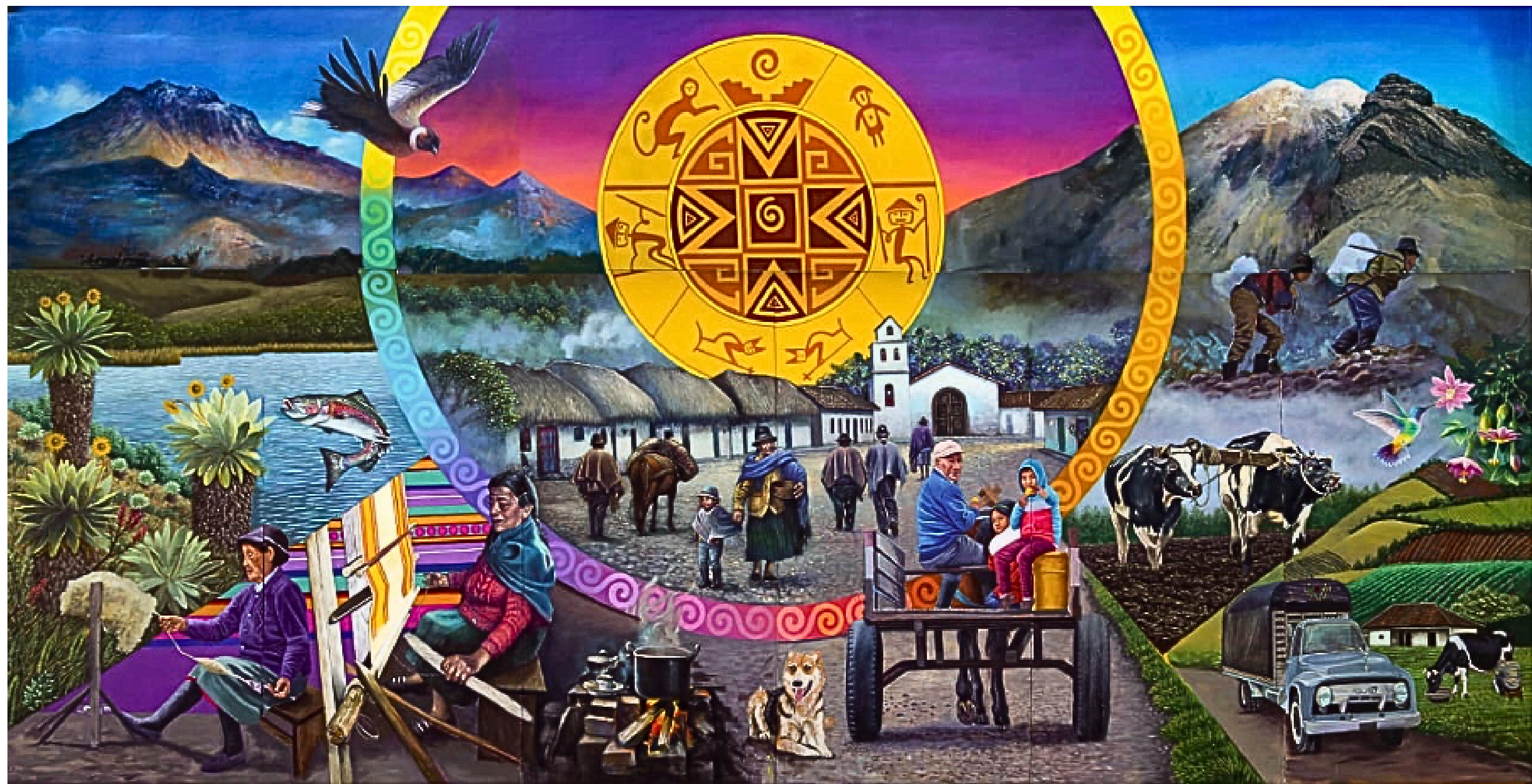


Boris Arteaga

“

It [the CRICM] continues to live in the memory of those who participated, in the care the community gives it, in the conversations it generates, and in the way it inspires children, young people, and adults. Its life doesn't end when the brush is put down, but rather continues as a symbol of identity, resistance, and collective memory. The mural contributed to the empowerment of the community by offering a space to share their cultural identity and reaffirm their sense of belonging

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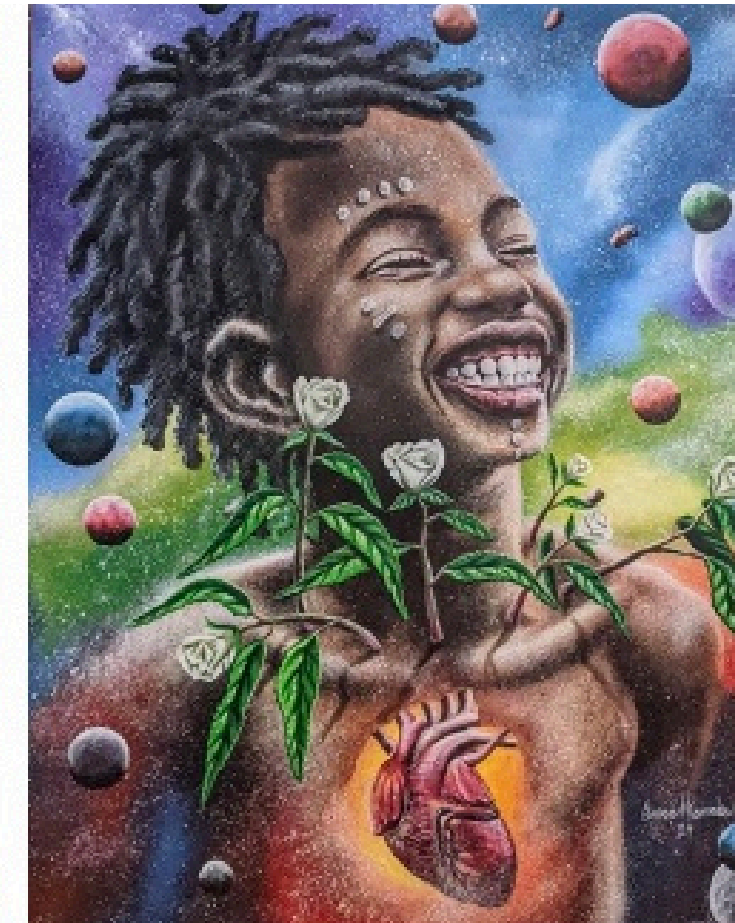


2020



ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK:
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
OF CONGO

Brice Mumbere Kamabu



CASE STUDY 2: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

COMPLEX INTRASTATE ARMED CONFLICT



“

The painting tells me what to do. The painting speaks to me, and when the painting is finished, it continues to speak to others. Art has a conversation with the viewer.

Public murals and community-based art become long-lasting visual anchors that support mental resilience, social cohesion, and hope. In places like Goma and in other conflict-affected regions around the world such projects are not a luxury. They are a necessity.

”



ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK: UKRAINE



Olena Yanko



CASE STUDY 3: UKRAINE

INTERSTATE WAR



“

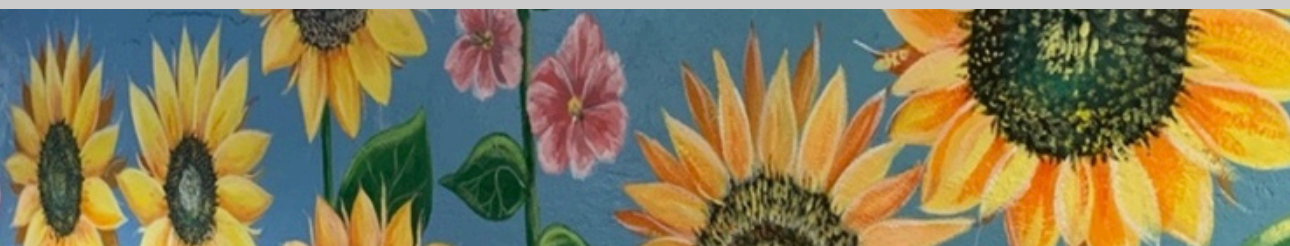
In conflict zones, community art becomes a form of psychological rehabilitation. It creates space for dialogue, connection, and empathy. During the act of collective creation, feelings of isolation, fear, and despair begin to fade. People start to feel part of a community, part of something greater than their own pain. Art transforms trauma into experience, and chaos into an image that can be seen, understood, and accepted. My work in the conflict zone is not only about creating artistic images but also about restoring social connections and building collective experiences of co-creation.

”

DISCUSSION



The **CRICMs** function as the spring water that rehydrates life with **meaning-making, narrative reconfiguration, and health-generating resources**. The collective findings highlight the **interplay between the CRICMs, the community *Créateurs*, and the *Aesthetic Witnesses*** that produce a self-propagating, sustainable ripple effect. This sustainable, emergent phenomenon, is defined by this doctoral research as **ARTEGENESIS**.

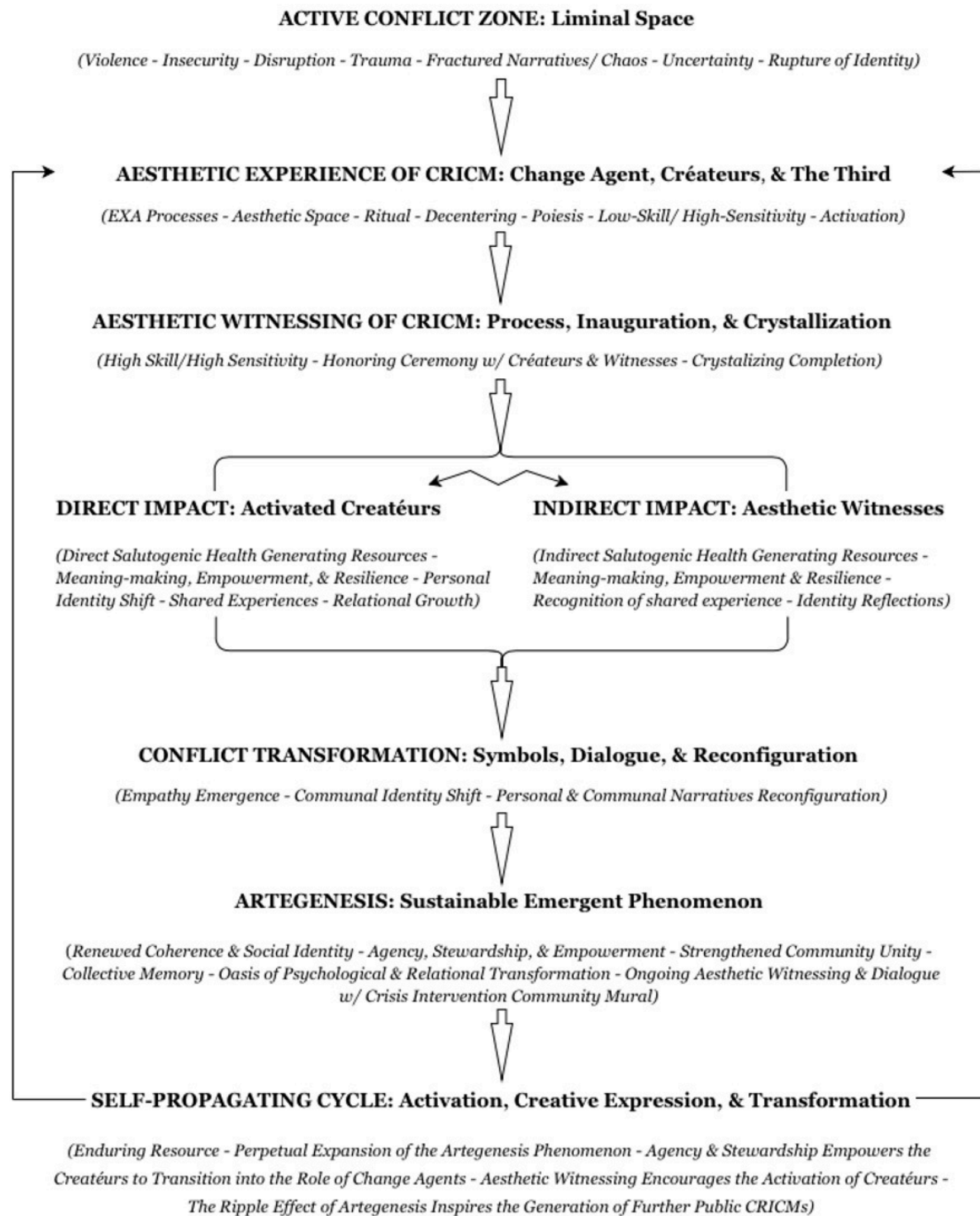


Within the diverse contexts of active conflicts, Colombia, DRC, and Ukraine, the collective findings of all cases and ethnographic fieldwork suggest that the EXA-based CRICM initiatives mobilize salutogenic and conflict transformation processes on both individual and communal dimensions.

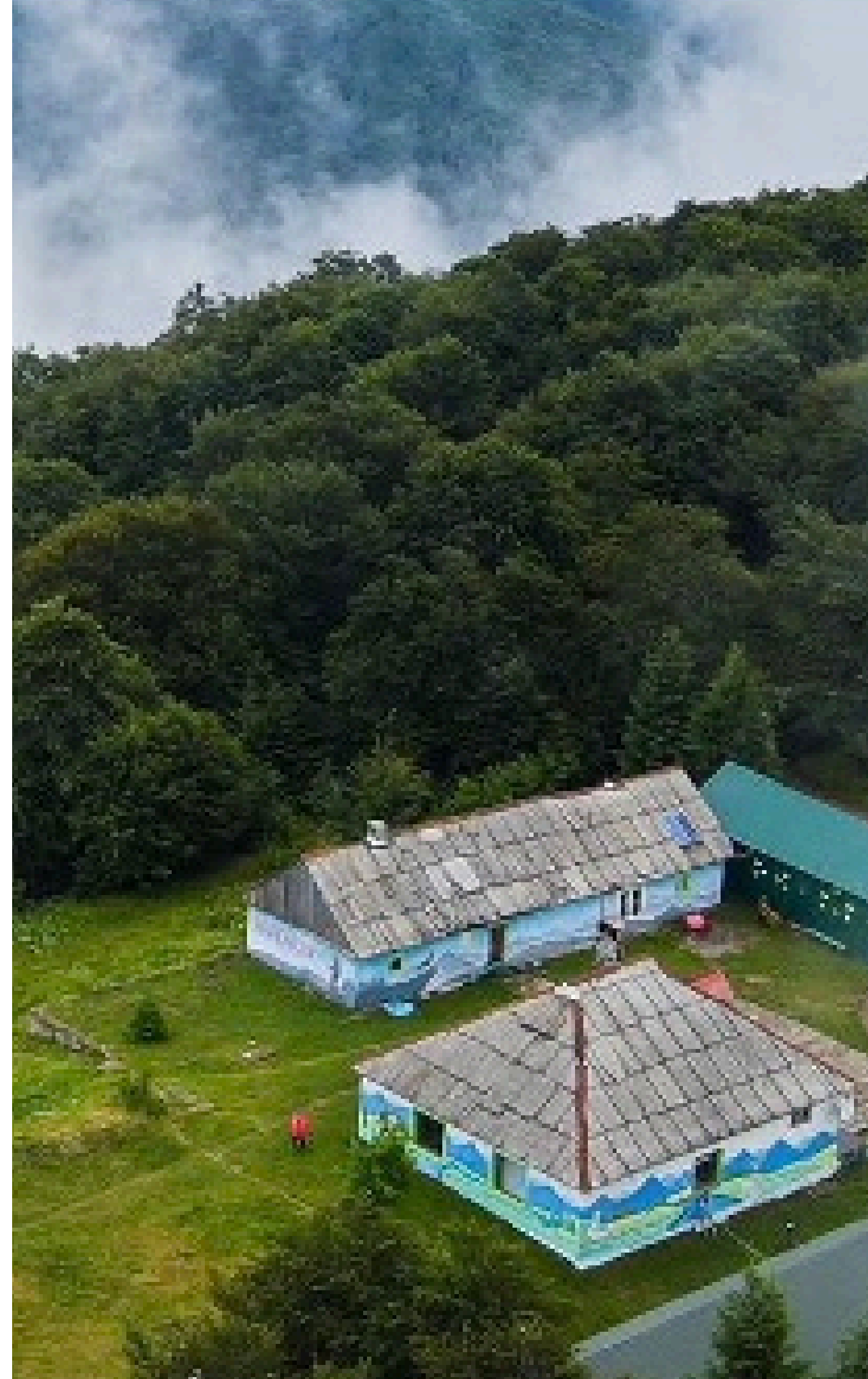
ETHNOGENESIS



CYCLICAL MODEL OF ARTEGENESIS PHENOMENON



Note: Diagram created by author B. Swatez, 2026



The *Artegenesis* phenomenon emerges upon the threshold of three theories: EXA, salutogenesis, and conflict transformation. While EXA principles and practice run through the veins of **CRICM** initiatives within active conflict zones, serving as the physical **mechanism** that creates the *aesthetic space* for **salutogenesis and conflict transformation to emerge**, the *Artegenesis* phenomenon cannot adequately be explained by any singular existing theory.

“CHOP YOUR OWN WOOD AND
IT WILL WARM YOU TWICE.”



While **post-intervention resilience frameworks** focus on **community recovery** after disruption (Suresh et al., 2024) and **therapeutic landscapes research** examines how **places foster healing and wellbeing** (Gesler, 1993), *Artegenesis* describes a distinct phenomenon. It conceptualizes the **CRICM** as an evolving social catalyst that continues to **generate new relationships, meanings, and creative initiatives after its completion**. Rather than emphasizing recovery or healing environments, *Artegenesis* highlights a self-propagating process through which **CRICM** transforms both *Créateurs* and *Aesthetic Witnesses*, extending salutogenic, peacebuilding, and conflict transformation effects beyond the original site and into wider communities.

CONTRIBUTION TO THEORIES

This doctoral study contributes to the psychological field by formally naming the emergent Artegenesis phenomenon, developing new lexicon with the introduction of Créateurs and Aesthetic Witnesses, and the implications of the data strongly suggest the need to redefine traditional First Responder protocols to include psychosocial/ EXA professionals.

EXA Theory

- The *Artegenesis* phenomenon demonstrates that relational *aesthetic witnessing*, *aesthetic experience*, and the CRICM are dynamic processes that can self-propagate across conflict contexts. This extends EXA theory by showing how creative processes initiated in one setting can generate ongoing *aesthetic witnessing* and meaning-making in new contexts, creating a systemic ripple effect.



Salutogenesis Theory

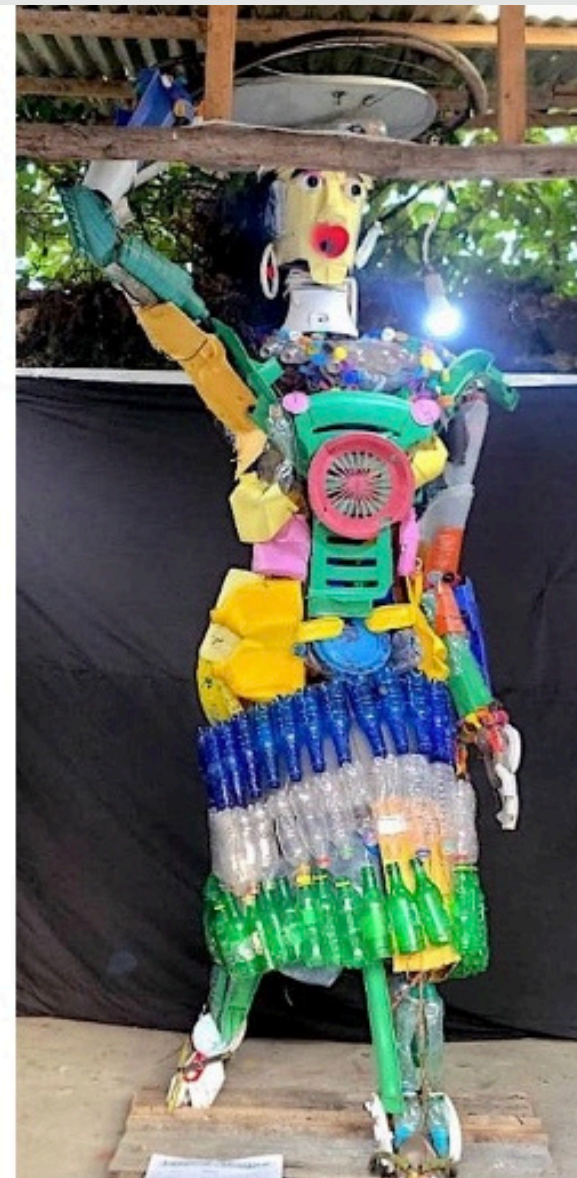
- *Artegenesis* expands salutogenesis beyond the individual level by illustrating how Sense of Coherence (SoC) can be strengthened collectively through both direct participation (*Créateurs*) and indirect engagement (*Aesthetic Witnesses*). The findings highlight the dynamic and relational nature of collective psychosocial wellbeing.

Conflict Transformation Theory

- The findings show that the transformative effects of co-creation and *aesthetic witnessing* can extend beyond the original community involved in the CRICM. This suggests that participatory and aesthetic practices can generate trans-local ripple effects, amplifying conflict transformation and social change across diverse contexts.



- *Enveloping the Spatial Field*
- *Multiple Modal Harvest*



- *Context of Crisis*
- *Artegenesis*
- *Peace Building*



CALL TO ACTION

This doctoral research calls for greater institution recognition for arts-based community initiatives that are vital components of crisis intervention and peacebuilding practices. There is an urgent, ongoing need for transformative, community-led approaches within crisis environments.

It is time to adapt first response protocols to include crisis intervention community arts initiatives on the front lines to empower the communities and transform conflict from the bottom up. This research calls for the redefining of the role of first responder. **It is time to stop viewing the arts as secondary to survival, but essential to emotional regulation, relational resilience, and human recovery within the context of crisis.**



Policymakers, NGOs, future researchers, and change agents are strongly encouraged to further integrate EXA-based, psychosocial methodologies within first response frameworks. Together we can emerge from the liminal space of extreme adversity by stewarding a narrative of empowerment, unity, and peace. The time is now!

Thank You