

A global conference inviting leaders, scholars, and practitioners, to explore business and civil society roles in conflict-affected contexts



LCC INTERNATIONAL  
UNIVERSITY

# CREATING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

FEB 26 - MAR 1  
2026

ROLES OF BUSINESS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

LCC International University | Klaipėda, Lithuania

A 4-day European peace conference bringing together academics, business and community leaders, practitioners, and students.

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## Conference Organizing Committee

*Naomi Enns*

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*Dr. Andrew Williams*

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*Femi Odebiyi*

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*Ieva Rūkė*

Peace Coordinator, Center for Dialogue and Conflict Transformation, LCC International University

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Director, Kooyrigs, NGO, Armenia

## Creating Resilient Communities for Peace and Justice

In today's interconnected and often conflict-prone world, how do we cultivate communities that endure and flourish? As we celebrate the 5th anniversary of LCC International University's Center for Dialogue and Conflict Transformation, this conference invites you into a vital conversation on creating resilient communities for peace and justice.

We welcome scholars, business and community leaders, practitioners, theologians, church and NGO partners, artists, and students from across the globe to share research, narratives, creative practices, and examples of how resilient communities deepen our sense of connection, belonging and support. How might we build societies where peace is more than the absence of violence? Distinctly, in engaging with possibilities for constructive change, we explore how whole systems can shift when economic life, governance, education, culture, business, and civil society intentionally collaborate for positive transformation, especially where conflict is present. With this topic, the conference aspires to spark dialogue, self-reflection, and mutual discovery—actively engaging business and civil society partners alike.

In what ways do governance, institutions, and accountability open new pathways for justice? How do local faith groups and civil society nurture trust, dialogue, and stability? What is the power of culture, creativity, and collective memory in driving social cohesion? What new approaches are students bringing for peace and sustainability?

Keynotes, panels, creative workshops, storytelling, group dialogues and reflective moments in solidarity with affected communities, will open spaces for curiosity, compassion, and courage. Such practices unlock resilience—integrating body, mind, heart, and spirit as we co-create communities that hold and sustain one another and work together for a better world.

# Schedule

## Pre-Conference Panel - Wednesday, February 25

16:00-17:30 Pre-Conference Panel

"The Case for the Nexus: Economic Prosperity and Peace"

*Panel Lead: Dr. Dorothy Nyambi*

President & CEO, Mennonite Economic Development Agency, MEDA

Dr. Nyambi is a systems change leader in impact investing and agricultural transformation experiences, linking economic growth to social inclusion and peacebuilding globally.

The Pre-Conference Panel featuring MEDA staff and global guests is a vital precursor to the full conference and is open to the public.

Panelists will illuminate the nexus between shared prosperity and stability, spotlighting how inclusive agricultural development stabilizes communities through income, dignity, and shared purpose. Where economic marginalization breeds unrest, MEDA initiatives foster social cohesion, trust, and viable paths to prosperity that weaken conflict incentives. Experts from across the globe will elaborate on key themes and the questions they raise.

- ***The Peace Dividend of Agricultural Prosperity:*** *How does economic opportunity deter conflict?*
- ***Inclusive Value Chains:*** *What models ensure women, youth, and marginalized farmers benefit equally?*
- ***Investment for Stability:*** *How blended finance and impact investing catalyze peacebuilding.*
- ***Policy and Institutional Enablers:*** *What national and global frameworks are needed to sustain the nexus between prosperity and peace?*
- ***Faith, Ethics, and Shared Humanity:*** *How values-based development (as embraced by MEDA) underpins long-term peace.*

This panel engages with the ideas of '**Agriculture as the Foundation for Peacebuilding**', '**Economic Empowerment as Conflict Prevention**', and '**Building Resilient Ecosystems for Long-Term Stability**'. As change makers in conflict-affected places, their stories underscore MEDA and its work across the globe as preventative diplomacy through equitable pathways, cross-border interdependence and cooperative models.

## Day 1 - Thursday, Feb 26

- 12:00-13:00 Registration and coffee
- 13:00-14:30 Welcome and opening session
- Plenary Address  
 “Harvesting Peace: Why Shared Prosperity Begins in the Soil”  
*Dr. Dorothy Nyambi, Canada*
- In a world shaken by conflict, climate shocks, and widening inequality, peace can't be built on treaties alone - it must be rooted in livelihoods. A look at Investment and Stability invites civil society to look at how blended finance and impact investing catalyze peacebuilding.*
- 14:30-16:00 **Towards Transformation - Culture & Memory in Building Resilience and Social Cohesion**
- “Drawing Hope in Conflict-Affected Societies: Young People, Art, and Trans-Local Peacebuilding”  
*Dr. Dong Jin Kim, South Korea*
- “Memory Makers: Youth Driving Inclusive Remembrance and Peacebuilding”  
*Dominyka Svilyte, Lithuania*
- “Collective Memory and Religious Communities: How Churches in Ukraine Shape Narratives of Resilience and Reconciliation During War”  
*Dmytro Fedorchak, Ukraine*
- 16:00-16:30 Coffee Break
- 16:30-18:00 **Workshops 1**
- 18:00-19:30 Dinner
- 19:30-21:00 **Theatre - “Telling Stories”**  
*Raffi Feghali, Netherlands/Lebanon*

## Day 2 - Friday, Feb 27

8:30-9:00	Coffee
9:00-9:30	<p>Plenary Address  “Harvesting Peace: Why Shared Prosperity Begins in the Soil”  <i>Dr. Dorothy Nyambi, Canada</i></p> <p><i>Focusing in on Faith, Ethics, and Shared Humanity - the question of how values-based development (as embraced by MEDA) underpins long-term peace.</i></p>
9:30-11:00	<p><b>Civil Society, Faith, and Dialogue for Local Stability</b></p> <p>“Who Determines What is “Civil”? Thinking Critically About the “Civil” in Civil Society”  <i>Dr. Andrew Suderman, USA</i></p> <p>“Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans Revisited”  <i>Dr. Ina Merdjanova, Ireland/Bulgaria</i></p> <p>“Transforming Associations of the Faithful into Social Entrepreneurship”  <i>Dr. Ivana Bendra &amp; Dr. Igor Jakobfi, Croatia</i></p>
11:00-11:30	Coffee Break
11:30-12:30	<p><b>Empowering Youth: Pedagogy, Service, and Social Entrepreneurship</b></p> <p>“Cultivating Peace Consciousness Through Indigenous Pedagogies”  <i>Tigist Tesfaye, Ethiopia</i></p> <p>“Everyday Initiatives and Building Entrepreneurs”  <i>Kubra Kaya, Lithuania/Turkey</i></p> <p>“Service and the 7 C’s: How Service Learning Can Contribute to Resilience-Building in Youth and Young Adults”  <i>Gretchen Ketner and Ashley Ray, LCC International University, USA</i></p>
12:30-13:00	<p>Student Presentation  “Transformative Pedagogy and Social Emotional Learning (SEL): A Fused Framework for Raising Peace-Oriented Students”  <i>Sofya Detkina, LCC International University, Kazakhstan</i></p>
13:00-14:30	Lunch

## Day 2 - Friday, Feb 27 *continued*

14:30-16:00	<b>Workshops 2</b>
16:00-16:30	Coffee Break
16:30-17:15	Processing Group Dialogue
17:15-18:00	Peace Vigil
18:00-19:30	Dinner
19:30-21:00	Theater <b>"The Showcase"</b> <i>Raffi Feghali, Netherlands/Lebanon &amp; Workshop Participants</i>

## Day 3 - Saturday, Feb 28

8:30-9:00	Coffee
9:00-9:30	<p>Plenary Address          “New Debates, Old Questions: Rethinking the Roles of State, Business, and Civil Society”  <i>Dr. Virginija Poškutė, Lithuania</i></p> <p><i>This keynote examines how expectations toward the state, business, and civil society are shifting - and why these debates are not new. Businesses are increasingly expected to address social and environmental issues once seen as the state’s domain, raising the question: how much engagement is enough? At the same time, as states grow stronger and societies wealthier, the role of civil society appears to be changing rather than disappearing. By revisiting past cycles and comparing them with current trends, this keynote explores how responsibilities are being renegotiated and what this means for future cooperation across sectors.</i></p>
9:30-11:00	<p><b>Critical Governance, Institutions, and Accountability</b></p> <p>“Participation and Stakeholder Engagement in Multilateral Development and Climate Organizations: International and Baltic Perspectives”  <i>Jolanta Blažaitė, Lithuania &amp; Andres Falconer, Brazil</i></p> <p>“Reimagining Higher Education Ecosystems for Sustainability in an AI-driven Era”  <i>Maria Lam, LCC International University, Hong Kong</i></p> <p>“Technocratic Narratives in EU Digital Governance”  <i>Milvydas Knyzelis, LCC International University, Lithuania</i></p>
11:00-12:00	Lunch
12:10-19:00	<p><b>Excursion Options</b></p> <p>“Klaipėda Memories and Civil Society’s Resilience Walk”  <i>Ravyda Vaišvilaitė, Lithuania</i>          (2-hour walking tour meet at DeFehr entrance by 13:00)</p> <p>“Hill of Crosses - A Testament to Society’s Silent Resilience”          (*bus departs 12:10 LCC Neumann Hall Parking Lot)</p>
19:00-20:30	Dinner

## Day 4 - Sunday, Mar 1

9:30-10:00	Coffee
10:00-10:30	<p>Plenary Address          "From Responsibility Gaps to Shared Solutions: Mapping a New Welfare Mix"  <i>Dr. Virginija Poškutė, Lithuania</i></p> <p><i>Business and civil society are increasingly essential to welfare provision, yet demographic pressure, limited resources, and rising public expectations challenge traditional divisions of responsibility between the state, civil society, and the market. This presentation examines how to rethink collaboration in this changing landscape. It highlights the need for better tools to identify who benefits from business and civil society activities, who is left out, and whether interventions can be scaled or transferred across contexts without reinforcing inequalities. The discussion argues that while business and civil society will continue to play a crucial role, the state remains indispensable for ensuring equitable access, sustainability, and protection against voluntary, market, and government failures. The core task ahead is not reverting to "old" roles but developing adaptive, context-sensitive balances within diverse national welfare traditions.</i></p>
10:30-11:30	<p><b>Redefining Economic Systems for Social Cohesion and Care</b></p> <p>"Peace as the Heart of Economic Life: The Economy of Francesco and the Reimagining of Markets for Fraternity and Care"  <i>Dr. Elena Šiaudvytienė, LCC International University, Lithuania</i></p> <p>"Reaccessing the Price of Abundance: Material Output in the Age of Finance Capitalism"  <i>Lane Miller, USA</i></p> <p>"Peace Marketing: Leveraging Brands for Social Cohesion"  <i>Henrika Rugine, LCC International University, Lithuania; Saidas Rafjevas, LCC International University, Lithuania; Indre Razbadauskaite Venske, LCC International University, Lithuania</i></p>
11:30-12:30	Reflections and Farewell
12:30-14:30	Lunch and Departures

Key  
Guests



*Dr. Dorothy Nyambi*  
Canada

Dr. Dorothy Nyambi is a distinguished leader with over 25 years of experience in the international development, entrepreneurial, and humanitarian sectors. Her career is defined by a strong commitment to ensuring that women and girls are not left behind, particularly through her work in impact investing and blended finance. With lived experience across Africa and the Global South, Dorothy has become a champion of economic transformation, driving initiatives that create job opportunities for women and youth, particularly within agri-food systems.

As CEO of Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA,) Dorothy leads the organization's impactful work across Africa, Latin America and the Caribbeans and Southeast

Asia leveraging partnerships with institutional funders, foundations, and MEDA private supporters to drive economic growth. Prior to joining MEDA, she served as Executive Vice President of the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) and held significant roles at the U.S. Peace Corps, World Health Organization, and USAID. Fluent in both English and French, Dorothy has held senior leadership positions in diverse organizational phases, including start-up, growth, crisis management, and turnaround, across Africa, North America, Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America.

Dorothy is also the Chair of CAMFED Canada, an organization dedicated to empowering girls and young women through education in sub-Saharan Africa.

She serves as Chair of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Board of Governors, is a Board Member of Waterloo EDC in Ontario, and is involved with Board Room Africa, where she mentors young African women aspiring to governance roles.

A passionate advocate for system change, Dorothy believes in the power of entrepreneurship within market systems to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable, inclusive growth. Through her leadership, she continues to drive systemic transformation that expands youth employment by strengthening the agri-food sector. Dorothy is a founding member of Gender Summit Africa and a life member of AWID.



*Dr. Virginija Poškutė*  
ISM University, Lithuania

Professor at the ISM University of Management and Economics in Vilnius, Lithuania. She is an economist and social policy analyst, holds PhD in Economics from Vilnius University (Lithuania), Master's degree from Roskilde University (Denmark) and University of Bath (UK). Virginija was visiting scholar at University of California, Berkeley and Fulbright researcher at Darden Graduate School, University of Virginia (USA). Virginija has extensive international job experience (UNDP/Lithuania; International Master's Programme "European Social Policy Analysis" by CEPS/INSTEAD, Luxembourg and Leuven University, Belgium), has participated in various international consultancy

projects for the World Bank, UN, UNDP, UNICEF, EIGE, European Commission, OECD as well as national projects on economic and social issues for the Lithuanian Government. Virginija is co-editor of the upcoming *Handbook on Social Policy and Civil Society*. Greve, B., Poškutė, V. and Lopes, A. (eds.), (Elgar Handbooks in Social Policy and Welfare series, upcoming in February 2026). Virginija's main research interests are within social policy, welfare economics, and competitiveness.



### Raffi Feghali

Netherlands/Lebanon

Raffi Feghali is a theatre maker, peacebuilder, and trainer who has worked in areas affected by conflict to build social resiliency. He's directed more than 40 theatrical performances since 2009 including *Theatre of the Oppressed*, *Playback Theatre*, and improvisational theatre performances. Most recently, he directed *Home Sweet Home* (2025, Netherlands) and *Tryin'* (2025, L'Olympia – Paris). As a performer he has performed in more than 60 shows worldwide, under many international directors. Raffi is one of the people who brought improv to Lebanon in 2009, and he has recently embarked on a journey taking him back to his storytelling roots. *Halim Al-Hakawati*, the solo improv show directed by Stephen Kearin he is touring with now, resulted from this blend. He launched his first autobiographical monodrama,

*Peer Gynt of Bourj Hammoud*, in 2018. More recently, he has been in *Interview the Dead* directed by Bryan Reynolds. *Anatomy of a Home*, his second autobiographical monodrama, premiered at the Amsterdam Fringe Festival in 2022 and it has been touring since. As a peacebuilder, he specializes in Systems Thinking Conflict Analysis, conflict sensitivity, and bringing the arts, especially theatre and music, to the various dimensions of peacebuilding. His experience has mostly been extensive in the Middle East; Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and Jordan. Raffi also dabbles in audio, sound design for theatre, as well as radio dramas.

# Evening Theatre

**“Telling Stories”**

26 February, 2026

Hosted by our artist in residence, Raffi Feghali, ***The Conference Storytelling Evening*** features participants in the conference telling personal stories that resonate strongly with experiences of creating resilient communities. The evening includes breaks to digest and reflect on the stories informally and while sipping on your favorite beverages. There will also be some opportunities to share your own stories, if you feel inspired to.

**“The Showcase”**

27 February, 2026

An evening of theatre immersion showcasing socio-political realities and interactive theatre as a peacebuilding tool. The audience will be invited into the experience as they witness workshop participants and actor peacebuilder Raffi Feghali highlighting the ways in which socio-political realities come to life and engage with difficult questions. Come to an evening of engaging theatre and witness the public life realities that are often experienced in our common spaces.

# Excursions

On the third day of the conference, participants will be able to join one of the two excursions.

### **I. Klaipėda Memories and Civil Society's Resilience**

A 2 hour walking tour of Klaipėda's memories highlighting the resilience of civil society led by Radvyda Vaišvilatė, a Lithuanian Resident and LCC Instructor.

### **II. Hill of Crosses - A Testament to Society's Silent Resistance**

A bus tour to Hill of Crosses. Participants will visit Lithuania's iconic Hill of Crosses, a profound symbol of resilience amid conflict and oppression. Over time, this sacred site endured Soviet bulldozers and destruction during occupation as crosses reappeared. Today, new crosses continue to appear, joining in solidarity as a sign of unyielding faith, memory, and cultural resistance for those who have experienced conflict-affected societies. Participants will reflect on how this pilgrimage site fosters social cohesion through faith-based dialogue and civil society efforts for local stability. The site's stories stem from historical memories that remain active today and involve memories of harm in villages outside of Klaipėda. Discussions highlight civic empowerment and resilience in ways that prioritize justice, peacebuilding, social cohesion, and community care. Local Lithuanians will share some basic Lithuanian thoughts during the bus ride of 2 hours. This 5-hour excursion includes reflective dialogue and witnessing the inspiring transformative practices for resilient communities.

# Workshop Descriptions

### **Cultivating Inner Capacities for Outer Change**

*Dr. Hannah Reich*

Grounded in experiential learning, this practical workshop explores how embodiment and presencing strengthen peacebuilding, resilience, and social innovation. Participants engage in somatic alignment, mindfulness practices, and reflective inquiry to examine how an awareness of the inner space from which we act shapes outer impact. Through participatory, embodied methods, the session cultivates presence, self-regulation, and authentic relationships. Aligned with the conference's focus on resilient communities, it offers actionable tools to enhance leadership capacity and foster constructive engagement across business and civil society and beyond.

### **Planting the Seeds of Peace: Youth Work as a Pathway to Peaceful Communities**

*Anna Luisa Reinhardt, Germany*

This workshop facilitates a space for practical peer learning around the guiding question: How can youth work nurture a culture of peace? The workshop unfolds in three stages: A case study from youth care practice at the Russian-Lithuanian border offers a practice-informed perspective on everyday peacebuilding. Secondly, A space for exchange invites participants to share personal and professional peace practices, fostering cross-community learning. And third, through group activities, participants explore methods for integrating peace practices into professional youth work and personal interactions. Drawing on participants' experience, the workshop takes a forward-looking approach to co-developing practices that can be carried back into professional and academic contexts.

**Civil Society Advocacy:  
Applying Strategies & Tactics  
from a Historical Example**

*Dr. Andrew Williams*

One powerful way to inspire stronger, more effective advocacy is to learn from past pioneers and visionaries. We'll briefly explore a groundbreaking struggle for freedom and the rights of marginalized people, identifying strategies and tactics that are valuable today. Building on this foundation, we'll devote significant time to imagining and designing approaches to address major contemporary issues of injustice and the denial of human rights.

**Families as Peacebuilders:  
Dialogue, Trust, and  
Belonging**

*Svitlana Zaluzhna & Iryna Pashkevych*

How can families help rebuild trust in communities torn by war? This workshop explores a family-centered peacebuilding approach that uses intercultural dialogue to foster resilience, belonging, and trust in war-affected contexts. Drawing on successful initiatives in Lithuania, Ukraine, and Norway, the session invites participants to discover how dialogue and storytelling can bridge cultural divides, strengthen community bonds, and inspire collective healing. Grounded in real-world practice, it balances conceptual clarity with practical insights for practitioners and scholars alike.

**The Workplace as a Peace  
Accelerator: Equipping  
Business Leaders as  
Peacebuilders**

*David Heiliger*

Organizations are losing time, talent, and momentum because leaders are forced to navigate cultural tension without the training to do so effectively. Polarization disrupts workflows, damages morale, and escalates minor disagreements into major obstacles. This workshop equips leaders with tools to counter these pressures through the Gracism Framework, a practical approach for turning cultural differences into catalysts for collaboration. Participants will identify their intuitive peacebuilding strengths and learn how to apply them to rebuild trust, stabilize team dynamics, and accelerate organizational effectiveness in the midst of division.

### **Trust Building in Civil Society**

*Ieva Rūķe*

In post-transition and fragile democracies, rebuilding trust between citizens and institutions is central to sustainable peace and social resilience. This workshop explores how civil society, volunteer initiatives, and community engagement can foster democratization by partnering with state and institutional actors. Drawing on Lithuania's experience of post-Soviet transformation, the session examines how civic organizations have helped counter corruption, encourage transparency, and humanize public institutions through dialogue and cooperation. Using a case study from the prison and probation volunteering sector, participants will reflect on how civil society can complement institutional work in restoring public confidence and social cohesion. The workshop offers an interactive space for peacebuilders, practitioners, and business actors to identify parallels in their own contexts and develop starting points for cross-sector collaboration that strengthens accountability, participation, and trust.

### **Dialogue through Interactive Theatre**

*Raffi Feghali*

The most successful businesses are in constant dialogue with their communities. In order for that to happen smoothly, interactive theatre plays the role of the language unifier. In this workshop, we'll explore different formats in which theatre plays a dialogical tool and opens the space for personal and communal stories to be shared, witnessed, and processed. The participants will take part in an evening performance and dialogue session showcasing their learning. This 4-hour training workshop runs Thursday and Friday.

*\*Participation in both parts (A & B) is required for this workshop.*

### **Dialogue on Civil Society: Nurturing Hope, Resilience and Social Cohesion**

*Ina Merdjanova - facilitator*

Participatory Dialogue  
- opening up space for conversation on the themes identified by panel speakers.

### **Dialogue on Business, Social Resilience, Government and Ethical Actions**

*Sose Simavoryan - facilitator*

Participatory Dialogue  
- opening up space for conversation on the themes identified by panel speakers.

# Perspectives

## Perspectives on Transformation - Culture & Memory in Building Resilience and Social Cohesion

### Drawing Hope in Conflict-Affected Societies: Young People, Art, and Trans-Local Peacebuilding

Dr. Dong Jin Kim, Hanshin University, South Korea

This paper explores the agency of young people in disrupting the reproduction of protracted conflict structures and in growing hopeful peace across boundaries. Although more than 600 million young people live in conflict-affected societies, they are too often portrayed as mere victims or potential perpetrators rather than as peacebuilders. Yet, as UN Security Council Resolution 2250 recognizes, youth can play a vital and constructive role in international peace and reconciliation. Building on this recognition, the paper examines how art, particularly when practiced through trans-local collaboration, can serve as a catalyst for youth empowerment and growing hopeful peace.

The study draws on the *Drawing Hope* partnership, a trans-local collaboration among peacebuilding organizations across diverse regions, including Okedongmu Children in Korea (South Korea), Friends of Northeast Asia Children's Art Exhibition (Japan), American Friends Service

Committee, ReconciliAsian (USA), Mennonite Central Committee (Canada), RCity Belfast, Corrymeela (Northern Ireland/Ireland), Cambodia Peace Gallery (Cambodia), EDUPAZ (Colombia), and The Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation (South Africa).

Originating in the 1990s as an exchange of children's self-portraits and peace messages across the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), *Drawing Hope* has since evolved into a global movement linking youth from conflict-affected societies through art exhibitions, storytelling, and shared reflection.

Adopting a qualitative social-constructivist approach, the research analyses artwork and peace messages created by children and youth, alongside semi-structured interviews with project facilitators. The analysis identifies three interlinked dimensions through which art contributes to growing hopeful peace in youth-centered peacebuilding: imagination, communication, and empowerment. Art fosters imagination by allowing young people to envision alternative futures beyond the constraints of inherited conflict narratives,

enables communication by transforming personal expression into collective dialogue across boundaries, and cultivates empowerment by affirming young people's capacity to act as agents of change in their communities.

Findings suggest that art functions not merely as a symbolic expression of hope but as a social practice of peacebuilding that bridges the everyday and the trans-local. *Drawing Hope* demonstrates how sustained partnerships across regions can empower such processes by cultivating and protecting autonomous spaces where young people can use their imagination and communicate their hopes. These spaces must be safeguarded from political co-option and instrumentalization so that imagination can continue to serve as an emancipatory force. By linking young people's artistic agency with trans-local solidarity, *Drawing Hope* exemplifies how collaboration among local peacebuilders from different contexts can nurture intergenerational hope, challenge dehumanization in conflict-affected societies, and contribute to growing hopeful peace grounded in our shared humanity.

**Memory Makers:  
Youth Driving Inclusive  
Remembrance and  
Peacebuilding**

*Dominyka Svilytė, AY Institute, Lithuania*

In an era of rising intolerance, populism, and historical amnesia, *Memory Makers: Youth Driving the Future of Remembrance* demonstrates how youth engagement and innovative pedagogy can directly contribute to peacebuilding and social cohesion. This European initiative mobilizes over 500 young participants to confront the legacies of the Holocaust, war crimes, and other human rights violations, using creative, participatory, and inclusive approaches. By actively involving youth in the collection, interpretation, and dissemination of historical narratives, the project transforms remembrance into a practical tool for fostering empathy, civic responsibility, and sustainable peace. The project's core innovation lies in combining digital storytelling with traditional historical education. Participants document the experiences of lesser-known victim groups—such as Roma, LGBTQ+ individuals, and persons with disabilities—and reinterpret these stories through animation, short-form video, podcasts, and

interactive online content. This approach not only preserves marginalized histories but also engages peers in dynamic, relatable formats that stimulate critical reflection and dialogue. By empowering youth to become active knowledge producers, *Memory Makers* positions them as agents of historical justice and social change, reinforcing the idea that peace begins with understanding and empathy. *Memory Makers* also prioritizes capacity-building for educators and youth leaders, training over 310 professionals to integrate inclusive narratives into formal and informal education. The curriculum links Holocaust education to contemporary societal challenges, such as discrimination, intolerance, and the rise of populism, equipping students with the analytical and moral tools to recognize and resist prejudice. This pedagogical framework ensures that youth engagement translates into measurable societal impact: participants report increased awareness of social inequalities, stronger cross-cultural empathy, and enhanced commitment to civic action. Strategic cross-sector partnerships amplify the project's impact. Collaborations with organizations representing marginalized communities ensure authenticity and

inclusivity in storytelling, while fostering networks for sustained youth activism and peacebuilding. The creation of the *Memory Makers Library of Learning*, a comprehensive multimedia repository, ensures long-term access to educational resources, allowing the initiative to influence future generations beyond the initial cohort. Quantitative and qualitative indicators demonstrate the project's effectiveness: increased youth participation in civic initiatives, production of over 200 digital stories highlighting marginalized narratives, and measurable improvements in empathy and historical understanding among participants. These outcomes illustrate how youth-led education projects can interrupt cycles of intolerance, strengthen social cohesion, and contribute to resilient, inclusive, and peaceful societies. In conclusion, *Memory Makers* exemplifies how youth engagement, innovative pedagogy, and cross-sector collaboration can transform historical remembrance into a practical peacebuilding tool. By empowering young people to explore, reinterpret, and share untold stories, the project cultivates critical thinking, empathy, and civic responsibility, fostering the next generation of socially responsible leaders capable of advancing justice, inclusion, and sustainable peace in Europe and beyond.

### **Collective Memory and Religious Communities: How Churches in Ukraine Shape Narratives of Resilience and Reconciliation During War**

*Dmytro Fedorcha, Dialogue in Action, Ukraine*

This contribution investigates how churches in Ukraine function as key shapers of collective memory during the ongoing war, bridging theological language and civic meaning-making. Through liturgical practices, memorial services, preaching, and public witness, religious communities construct narratives that help individuals and society interpret trauma, loss, and reconciliation. The paper explores how elements of *teologia anamnesis* – the theological understanding of remembering as transformative and identity-forming – are increasingly being translated into a broader civic language accessible to all Ukrainians, regardless of confession or religious participation. The research highlights emerging pastoral and communal practices that orient memory toward reconciliation, dignity, and moral reconstruction rather than revenge or polarization. By engaging

in locally rooted memorial initiatives, supporting families of the fallen, and hosting intercommunal dialogues, churches become active agents of social cohesion. This paper argues that Ukrainian religious communities, as part of civil society, hold a unique capacity to generate reconciliation-oriented memory, enabling society to process grief while imagining just futures. Their evolving memory practices offer insights for public theology, peacebuilding, and the development of inclusive narratives of resilience amid war.

## Perspectives on Civil Society, Faith, and Dialogue for Local Stability

### Who Determines What is “Civil”? Thinking Critically About the “Civil” in Civil Society

*Dr. Andrew Suderman, Eastern Mennonite University, Secretary, Peace Commission Mennonite World Conference, USA*

Michael Neocosmos, a leading South African sociologist, as he reflects on South Africa’s transition from apartheid to South Africa’s new, democratic political dispensation, notes how a shift occurred in how South Africans understood “politics” and political engagement. They embraced, he argues, a neo-liberal concept of “civil society” which would become the basis for political engagement. However, in adopting this new political dispensation, including the introduction of “civil society” as the basis for political engagement, the country as a whole reverted to an assumption that the government would be the entity responsible for the political as well as the grounds as to who it deemed to be “civil.” This determined, in other words, who could be the legitimate interlocutors with the state. The people, in other words, released their political agency to those now tasked to represent them.

Neocosmos, in his writing on Civil Society, Citizenship and the Politics of the (Im)Possible, I will argue, offers valuable insight and reminder from which others, including peacebuilders and theologians, should pay attention. How often do we usurp the voice and the agency of those on the margins to present their plight “civilly,” and advocate on their behalf, thereby keeping them on the periphery and the margins? What’s more, Neocosmos highlights the danger where the notion of “civil society” itself “ultimately constitutes the limits, structured by the state, of a consensual state domain of politics.” Put even more bluntly, Neocosmos concludes that civil society is the realm of politics through which the state attempts to exercise its hegemony. This paper will end with an attempt to offer a constructive ecclesiology that can demonstrate – witness – the politics of resilient communities who offer a lived expression of a just peace, which is often deemed as impossible by the state and its determined way as to what is possible.

## Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans Revisited

*Dr. Ina Merdjanova, Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland/Bulgaria*

During, and especially since the end of the Yugoslav secessionist wars in the 1990s, interreligious dialogue became a central tool in the continuous efforts to promote peaceful coexistence in the multicultural and multireligious societies in the Balkans. Presenting the major points in a sociological theory of interreligious dialogue for peace building (IRDPB) which I developed together with Patrice Brodeur in "Religion as a Conversation Starter: Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans" (published with Continuum in the UK in 2009 and subsequently translated into Bulgarian in 2010 and into Bosnian in 2014), in this paper I revisit some of the arguments of the book. I argue that IRDPB should address more explicitly political and economic concerns and issues related to poverty and various forms of inequality and exclusion. I also suggest the need for a gender-critical perspective on IRDPB. Highlighting the significant role and contribution to IRDR of laity

in general, and of women in particular, and pointing to the historically and contextually defined unequal positions of the distinct religious groups/communities which participate in it (especially majority-minority relations) will serve to redescribe definitions of IRDP in a more inclusive and participatory way. Emphasizing the interrelatedness rather than polarity of men and women, Christians and Muslims, laity and clergy, will help recalibrate theories and practices of IRDP. Only by unmasking and effectively countering patterns of exclusion and subordination can IRDP foster the transformation of the material and symbolic conditions for intolerance, conflict and violence, and generate positive social change. The paper seeks to address issues related to the "Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Economic Development" theme of the conference.

## Transforming Associations of the Faithful into Social Entrepreneurship

Dr. Ivana Bendra, Croatia

Dr. Igor Jakobfi, Priest, Archdiocese of Đakovo–Osijek, University of Osijek, Croatia

Between 2025 and 2028, a research project entitled *Possibilities and Difficulties of Transforming the Activities of Associations of the Faithful into Social Entrepreneurship* is being conducted within the Đakovo–Osijek Metropolitan Area in Croatia. The project is implemented by an interdisciplinary team composed of members of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts – Institute for Scientific and Artistic Work in Đakovo, the Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences, the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Đakovo, and the Office for the Promotion of the Social Doctrine of the Church and Social Issues of the Archdiocese of Đakovo–Osijek. The research team, led by Professor Vladimir Dugalić, PhD, includes sociologists, psychologists, moral theologians, and social ethicists. The project seeks to highlight the role and significance of transforming the activities of associations of the faithful into forms of social entrepreneurship as a means of strengthening the

stability of local communities, addressing current social challenges, and preventing future social tensions through innovative, economically viable, and socially sustainable approaches. The primary objective is, through the use of a mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative) design, to identify how associations of the faithful, inspired by the principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church, can contribute to alleviating the social problems currently affecting Eastern Croatia—a region that territorially corresponds to the Đakovo–Osijek Metropolitan Area, where the study is being carried out. The conference presentation will focus on the results of the socio-ethical segment of the research and will be divided into two parts. The first part will present the findings of the theoretical assessment of the one-dimensional and unidirectional social and charitable activities of associations of the faithful in light of the Social Doctrine of the Church, particularly with respect to six key social and ethical principles: the universal destination of goods, the common good,

subsidiarity, participation, solidarity, and the preferential option for the poor, as well as in the context of the essential characteristics of social entrepreneurship. The second part will present the methodological framework—developed on the basis of the theoretical assessment—for the empirical study of the social-entrepreneurial orientations of the human capital of associations of the faithful in general. The objective of this part of the research is to gain insight into the current state of human capital in relation to social entrepreneurship and to evaluate it in the light of the Social Doctrine of the Church. The purpose is to formulate practical pastoral guidelines for the successful initiation and implementation of the transformation of the activities of associations of the faithful into social entrepreneurship. This methodological framework is not exclusively designed for local social or ecclesial contexts and, as such, can be applied beyond the borders of Croatia in studies with similar socio-ethical objectives and purposes.

## Perspectives on Empowering Youth: Pedagogy, Service, and Social Entrepreneurship

### Cultivating Peace Consciousness through Indigenous Pedagogies

*Tigist Tesfaye, Meserete Kristos Seminary,  
Evangelical Theological College, Ethiopia*

In the current world's human capital assessment, teenagers and young adults account for about 1.5 billion of the population. According to UNFPA, Youth include the age range of 15 to 24 years. These are globally accepted definitions, although there may be regional and country-specific variations. In most cases, young people refer to adolescents and youth ranging in age from 12 to 24 years. In 2012, 1.6 billion people aged 12-24. As per UNFPA, one third to one half of the population in developing countries is under 20 years old. Increased poverty, social inequalities, low quality education, gender discrimination, widespread unemployment, weakened health systems, and rapid globalization are the realities within which young people grow. In the case of Ethiopia, the reality remains the same. The education system, the integration between the formal and indigenous/ traditional schooling is very weak. However, emerging pedagogical discourse has emphasized the disconnect; the pedagogical discourse also places importance in using the education system

to advocate for greater societal cohesion. It is evident that knowledge, skill and attitude tailored for peaceful resolution of conflict is lacking in many localities. This is manifested through the lack of tailored formal and informal peace education curriculums and platforms engaged in conflict prevention and/or peacebuilding. For instance, at the initial stages of the work of the Ethiopian dialogue commission in February 2022, the chair of commission underlined, "If we look back through history elders were not involved in the political upheavals that our country underwent, and they caused us problems. The youth movement amounted to nothing because it wasn't supported by the experience and wisdom of elders. We should learn from our previous mistakes." The 'wisdom of elders' which alludes to traditional governance and local mechanisms and indigenous knowledge systems, has been ignored in the education system. Many educational systems specially in the global south like Ethiopia prioritize academic achievement and technical knowledge, while neglecting cultural, spiritual, moral, and character formation that partly emerges from the 'wisdom of elders'. This leaves young

people intellectually trained but often lacking clarity of identity, purpose, and ethical grounding that results in being irrelevant in their own community. Ethiopian traditional education systems and indigenous knowledge can inspire a new generation of peace-conscious youth. It argues that peace education in every context should not be imported but rediscovered - rooted in the moral, communal, and spiritual foundations of traditional learning systems such as Ye'abat Timhirt, Edir, Equb, and Shimgilina in the Ethiopian context. It tries to see aligning of the policy and inclusion of the indigenous pedagogical philosophies, that can revive unique educational heritage as a foundation for peace in order to cultivate peace-conscious, creative [entrepreneurial mind-set] and culturally and socially relevant youth. It will apply qualitative approach to explore how the indigenous pedagogies can inform peace education drawing from the Ethiopian experience. It will be developed based on academic literature, policy documents, and historical records of traditional systems such as Ye'abat Timhirt, Edir, Equb, and Shimgilina, it applies thematic analysis to identify core values.

## Everyday Initiatives and Building Entrepreneurs

*Kubra Kaya, Vilnius Tech University, Lithuania/Turkey*

Young people are not only participants in peacebuilding; they are actors, innovators, and policy shapers. This presentation explores how youth engagement, supported by inclusive pedagogy and responsive policy, can drive social cohesion in diverse societies. Drawing on John Paul Lederach's concept of moral imagination, the argument emphasizes that peace requires more than institutional frameworks, it requires creativity, human connection, and meaningful civic participation. Using a cultural initiative in Vilnius, where refugees, migrants, and international students learn and perform Lithuanian songs and poetry, as a case example, the presentation illustrates how experiential learning fosters empathy, mutual respect, and shared identity. Such initiatives demonstrate how youth-led spaces can transform unfamiliarity into belonging and suspicion into dialogue.

Framed through the SDGs (particularly SDG 10, 16, and 17), the talk highlights why supporting youth-led initiatives is not optional; it is foundational to building inclusive, resilient societies. Youth engagement is not the future of peacebuilding; it is the work happening now.

## Service and the 7 C's: How Service Learning Can Contribute to Resilience-Building in Youth and Young Adults

*Gretchen Kettner and Ashley Ray, LCC International University, USA*

Resilience is often described as the ability to “bounce back,” yet research shows it is a more complex, multidimensional capacity. It involves a system's ability to adapt successfully to challenges that threaten its development or functioning (Masten, 2019) and is shaped by both personal qualities and environmental resources, including competence, agency, emotional stability, self-esteem, and access to support (Webb et al., 2016). Various models emphasize an individual's plasticity (Daniels et al., 2015, e.g.); it is possible to grow and develop in resilience. Educators play a key role in fostering the traits that help young people face adversity. Ginsberg's (2011) seven “C's” of resilience—competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping, and control—offer a useful framework for building these traits. Service-learning and volunteer service provide powerful opportunities to develop many of these capacities. Studies show that integrating learning

with service can strengthen students' personal efficacy, identity, moral understanding, and interpersonal skills such as communication and leadership (Kranzler et al., 2011). At LCC International University, a Christian liberal arts institution committed to philanthropy and peacebuilding (About LCC, n.d.), recent initiatives have strengthened community engagement through a student Service Club and the addition of a part-time Service-Learning Coordinator position. This panel presentation will explore the seven C's as a framework for resilience-building and will include testimonials from the coordinator and student participants. Panelists will reflect on questions such as: How have you grown or changed as a person as a result of your involvement in service? In what ways do you approach problems and challenges differently since becoming involved in service? Presenters will also consider how the development of individual resilience can contribute to resilience-building in the community.

## Student Presentation

### Transformative Pedagogy and Social Emotional Learning (SEL): A Fused Framework for Raising Peace-Oriented Students

Sofya Detkina, LCC Senior Student, Kazakhstan

In today's violence-torn world, educational institutions are facing pressure in nurturing and cultivating a generation of not merely passive, but proactive and peace-oriented students. Teachers, instructors, and instructional designers within these institutions must therefore select the most suitable pedagogical framework and didactic tools that would develop empathy, dialogue, and critical reflection. *Transformative Pedagogy* is a framework, grounded in Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, which propels forward action-oriented learning and reflective style in order to yield personal (and community) transformation. In contrast, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a contemporary pedagogical approach, which provides didactic tools for emotional-regulation, interpersonal awareness, and empathy. This focused literature review examines how the two approaches, transformative pedagogy and SEL, have been conceptualized and applied in secondary and higher education,

identifying their strengths, implications, gaps, and contradictions. Accordingly, this review aims to answer the following research question: How can the fusion of *Transformative Pedagogy and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)* inform a coherent framework for cultivating peace-oriented leadership in secondary and higher education students? Aligned with the focused review methodology, a targeted selection of approximately 25 peer-reviewed sources was analyzed using key search terms: "transformative pedagogy", "social emotional learning/SEL", and "peace education", "peacebuilding/peacebuilders", and "[peacebuilding] leadership development". Preliminary focused review suggests that peace education, peace leadership development, and peacebuilders engage soft skills that are at the premise of transformative pedagogy and SEL. In other words, transformative pedagogy and SEL coherently converge with peacebuilding and peace-oriented leaders.

Emerging themes from the focused review of the literature informed the conceptualization of the most coherent framework for raising peace-oriented leaders. Henceforth, emerging themes illuminate that the combination of the two approaches produces a promising framework for raising reflective, proactive, curious, and empathetic students, equipped for peace-building projects in their community. The long-term aim of this research endeavor would be to empirically test and validate the proposed integrated framework in future research, thus examining the applicability of the fused framework in secondary and higher education settings.

# Perspectives on Critical Governance, Institutions, and Accountability

## Participation and Stakeholder Engagement in Multilateral Development and Climate Organizations: International and Baltic Perspectives

Jolanta Blažaitė, Lithuania

Andres Falconer, Brazil/Lithuania

Multilateral development organizations such as the World Bank have, in the past decades, embraced stakeholder engagement through participation, transparency and accountability policies and mechanisms – albeit with mixed results – seeking to be more responsive to the needs of citizens in its projects and programs. International financial institutions created to address the climate crisis have sought to engage with civil society, indigenous peoples, the private sector and other

non-state stakeholders in their governing bodies and in their operations, both as a moral imperative and as a means to enhance their effectiveness. The experience of the World Bank in stakeholder engagement has been adopted or replicated in multiple contexts, including the Baltic States.

This panel presents the experience stakeholder engagement in the operations of the World Bank, and explores and examines this experience from two distinct but related perspectives: 1) *the global efforts of civil society actors to influence the decision-making of World Bank and of multilateral climate funds associated with it, as well as the response of the Bank, establishing frameworks and mechanisms for participation,* and 2) *the application of the World Bank's practical experience to strengthen the engagement of local and regional stakeholders in regional*

*development, with a particular emphasis on enhancing the resilience of border regions in the Baltics.*

Andres Falconer, who has consulted extensively with the World Bank on topics such as citizen and stakeholder engagement, partnerships, participation, transparency and accountability, will discuss findings from evaluations of participation frameworks in World Bank and multilateral climate funds efforts in this field, drawing on firsthand research conducted on the effectiveness of these mechanisms. Jolanta Blažaitė, currently engaged in World Bank initiatives in the Baltics, will present how the experience, tools and approaches developed by the institution for stakeholder engagement have been embraced by the European Commission to accelerate sustainable development and social investment opportunities in catching-up regions in the Baltics and Lithuania.

## **Reimagining Higher Education Ecosystems for Sustainability in an AI-driven Era**

*Maria Lam, LCC International University, Hong Kong*

Higher education has championed sustainability for decades but often struggles to move beyond fragmented approaches. As AI becomes a tool for governance and reporting, its uncritical adoption risks reinforcing systemic injustices. This paper explores what constitutes a responsible ecosystem for multi-stakeholder engagement in advancing sustainability, peace, and resilience in an AI-driven world. Using the ecological university metaphor and multi-stakeholder networks, it proposes a framework for integrating AI responsibly in higher education, particularly in business education.

Grounded in literature and three decades of practice across the U.S., Hong Kong, and Lithuania, the study calls for shifting from neoliberal values toward ecological principles of care, relationality, and justice. Business education must affirm students' personhood, foster ethical self-awareness, and connect business skills to the greater common good. Universities should cultivate trust, critical digital literacy, and ecological leadership. Multi-stakeholders' interests are aligned by science-based goals, shared values, and a responsive feedback mechanism.

## **Technocratic Narratives in EU Digital Governance: A Critical Theory Perspective**

*Milvydas Krnyzelis, LCC International University, Lithuania*

Digital platforms and tech companies have become important actors in shaping contemporary social, political, and economic life. Their influence extends from the micro-level of individual interactions to the macro-level of democratic institutions and global governance. In the context of digital governance, technocratic approaches often are rooted in the worldview that effective governance can be achieved with minimal human intervention, focusing instead on technological solutions. Such narratives often appear in relation with peacebuilding and enhancement of democracy, though they may also reflect underlying technocratic assumptions about how individuals and

digital systems should function. This paper explores how strategic policy discourse constructs and frames the role of the individual within emerging models of digital governance in the European Union. Drawing on insights from Critical Theory, the analysis engages with the ways autonomy, agency, and social order are articulated in EU level strategic policy discourse considering how discursive framings of digital participation may both enable and constrain possibilities for democratic engagement and peace. By critically examining these discourses, the paper seeks to contribute to broader conversations about power, responsibility, and the evolving relationship between digital infrastructures, governance, and society.

## Perspectives on Redefining Economic Systems for Social Cohesion and Care

### Peace as the Heart of Economic Life: The Economy of Francesco and the Reimagining of Markets for Fraternity and Care

*Dr. Elena Šiaudvytienė, LCC International University, Lithuania*

In the Economy of Francesco (EoF), peace is not a peripheral ethic but the foundation for renewed economic imagination. The EoF responds to the invitation letter sent out by Pope Francis in 2019 to young economists, entrepreneurs, and changemakers in order "to give a soul to the economy of tomorrow." It proposes an economy based on fraternity, ecological conversion, and the common good, centered on nonviolence, inclusion, and integral human development. Building on this vision, my paper addresses in which ways the EoF expresses peace as an economic practice: designing markets, finance, and enterprise to serve reconciliation rather than competition, and relationship rather than domination. Within its plural EoF "villages" – such as Work and Care, Finance and Humanity, Agriculture and Justice, and Energy and Poverty – participants nurture new kinds of enterprise inspired by relationality and

gratuity. These, though small-scale, illustrate an emerging paradigm: an economy that can heal social fractures and rebuild the connections between people, creation, and institutions.

Drawing on EoF research networks and youth-led projects across Africa, Latin America, and Europe, the paper underlines how these EoF actors have put peace into practice through cooperative finance, circular production, participatory governance, ecological entrepreneurship, etc. These approaches not only resist the technocratic-extractive logic of the current economic order but, at the same time, give rise to what Pope Francis has labelled "the economy of care." Methodologically, the paper is an interpretative case analysis, based on my previous experience in the EoF Academy. Merging official EoF documents, youth-led initiatives, and reflective insights from my engagement within the movement, the study investigates how EoF actors translate peace, care, and fraternity into economic and institutional practices. I argue that EoF is a new generation

of civil and business actors who seek to redefine prosperity as relationship and success as social inclusion. In this perspective, peace becomes the fruit and the precondition of just economic structures: not an after-profit result, but the measure itself of economic health. In dialogue with the Peace Conference's theme, "Creating Resilient Communities for Peace and Justice," this presentation positions the EoF as a living laboratory of resilience, where the logic of care replaces the logic of indifference. It adds to the wider discourse on business and peacebuilding through the detailing of how new forms of entrepreneurship – serving spirituality and youth agency – could transform economic systems into instruments of human fraternity and ecological peace.

## Reaccessing the Price of Abundance: Material Output in the Age of Finance Capitalism

*Lane Miller, Regional Director Europe & Africa Mennonite Mission Network/ Graduate student University of Chicago/ Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, USA*

The notion that business is an essential catalyst to peace in national and international social orders is fundamental to the post-WWII global synthesis. By efficiently directing the latent energy of human labor into production, business increases material consumption per capita and establishes a global trade network of integrated and interdependent supply chains that incentivize the maintenance of a sociopolitical order that sustains human thriving. Within this order, business is understood, at least nominally, as capitalist. That is, whatever the social

functions attributed to business, it also results in capital accumulation to the owners of capital, in the aggregate. The linchpin of the geopolitical stability attributed to business is that the process of capital accumulation necessarily increases output per capita. While capital accumulation necessarily leads to increasing wealth disparity, this is understood as an acceptable consequence given the system's positive effect on aggregate living standards. A rising tide lifting all boats is dynamic, engendering geopolitical and national stability. This essay questions the link between capital accumulation and rising output.

Consequently, it wonders whether business as capital accumulation necessarily contributes to peace or whether its dynamics may also threaten it, under certain circumstances. This essay argues that output is not a defining feature of

business. It is pursued only when it leads to capital accumulation. Consequently, there are various ways in which businesses might pursue capital accumulation by circumscribing output. This is especially the case under finance capitalism, which increasingly dominates developed economies. Capital accumulation caused by increasing scarcity, rather than abundance, is an increasingly common business strategy. These include private equity takeovers, volatility trading strategies, investment vehicles oriented toward hoarding inputs, as well as many internet company strategies that recapitulate pure rentier models based on charging tolls or fees for use. Therefore, the role business plays in social stability and peace is dependent upon how the business pursues capital accumulation. In short, much of the literature about business and peace has been framed within a paradigm of industrial capitalism and production. Its conclusions may be less applicable to finance capitalism, which does not dominate the largest economies.

## Peace Marketing: Leveraging Brands for Social Cohesion

*Henrika Rugine, Saldas Rafijevas, Indrė Razbadauskaitė-Venske, LCC International University, Lithuania*

In an era marked by increasing sociopolitical division, disinformation, and a fragmented public sphere, marketing communication has become a socio-cultural force with the capacity to either intensify or alleviate societal tensions. This environment highlights the importance of initiatives that promote social cohesion and mitigate conflicts arising from multicultural interactions (Baines et al., 2025; Broderick et al., 2011). Beyond its traditional role of stimulating consumption, marketing can foster empathy, intercultural understanding, and social cohesion. Thus, marketing, with its pervasive influence on public discourse and cultural representation, possesses a unique capacity to either exacerbate these divisions or actively contribute to their resolution (Demangeot et al., 2018). Recognizing this potential, the concept of "Peace Marketing" emerges as a framework for intentionally leveraging brand power and

marketing strategies to build bridges between diverse communities, fostering mutual understanding and respect (Demangeot et al., 2018). Peace marketing is an emerging concept within the marketing discipline, focused on cultivating positive peace and societal resilience by addressing conflicts and promoting human interconnectedness (Huda & Kazi, 2020). Additionally, this approach shifts marketing from a purely commercial to a transformative tool (Barrios et al., 2016). It involves a strategic shift from merely tolerating diversity to actively promoting well-being - enhancing multicultural engagement through marketplace interactions (Demangeot et al., 2018). This paper is based on a systematic literature review to synthesize and critically analyze existing articles at the intersection of marketing, peace, and conflict studies. A fundamental reorientation from purely greed-based

marketing to those centered on addressing need-based marketing has become an imperative for contemporary marketing practice (Huda & Kazi, 2020). Thus, this methodological framework enables a comprehensive mapping of how marketing has been theorized and subsequently operationalized as a mechanism for fostering empathy, promoting inclusivity, and enhancing social resilience. Through the integration of insights from peace studies and marketing theory, the paper redefines marketing as a communicative practice situated within broader socio-political systems, rather than solely as a market tool. Ultimately, this paper proposes that peace marketing serves as a framework for analyzing the capacity of corporate communication to foster positive peace and enhance resilience within fractured societies.

# Perspectives on The Case for the Nexus: Economic Prosperity and Peace

## **Agriculture as the Foundation for Peacebuilding**

*Dr. Dorothy Nyambi, President & CEO, MEDA with global guests.*

Agriculture remains the backbone of most developing economies and employs a majority of the population particularly youth and women in regions prone to conflict. Where livelihoods depend on land, water, and markets, economic marginalization can quickly translate into social unrest. Inclusive agricultural development, by contrast, stabilizes communities through income, dignity, and shared purpose. When people see a viable path to prosperity, the incentives for conflict weaken. Agricultural systems that are productive, equitable, and sustainable, nurture social cohesion and trust, key ingredients for peace. By addressing structural inequalities in access to land, finance, and knowledge, Agri-economic development becomes both preventive diplomacy and a peace dividend.

## **Economic Empowerment as Conflict Prevention**

Poverty and exclusion are fertile grounds for conflict. Agricultural growth especially when driven by small farm businesses and rural entrepreneurs' offer equitable pathways to wealth creation. It strengthens local markets, reduces dependency on aid, and creates employment opportunities that deter youth from joining violent groups or illicit economies. Moreover, regional trade in agricultural goods fosters cross-border interdependence, reinforcing peace through mutual benefit. The more communities trade, the less they fight. Therefore, inclusive economic growth in agriculture is not simply a by-product of peace, it is a precondition for it.

## **Building Resilient Ecosystems for Long-Term Stability**

Sustainable Agri-economic systems contribute to climate resilience, food security, and governance. Programs that blend finance, technology, and social capital can transform rural economies from survival mode to thriving enterprises. MEDA's experience demonstrates that impact investing and blended finance in agriculture can drive both economic inclusion and peace dividends by:

Empowering women and youth as agents of transformation.

Reducing economic disparities between rural and urban communities.

Building trust through cooperative models, value-chain transparency, and community ownership.

## **Key Discussion Themes**

***The Peace Dividend of Agricultural Prosperity:*** *How does economic opportunity deter conflict?*

***Inclusive Value Chains:*** *What models ensure women, youth, and marginalized farmers benefit equally?*

***Investment for Stability:*** *How blended finance and impact investing catalyze peacebuilding.*

***Policy and Institutional Enablers:*** *What national and global frameworks are needed to sustain the nexus between prosperity and peace?*

***Faith, Ethics, and Shared Humanity:*** *How values-based development (as embraced by MEDA) underpins long-term peace.*

# Biographies



**Dr. Ivana Bendra** is a sociologist and the Head of the Institute for Social Science Ivo Pilar - Vukovar Regional Center in Croatia. She is an active participant in research, with a particular focus on the methodological and empirical aspects. With a PhD in the interdisciplinary field of science – Croatian Studies from the University of Zagreb, she is a research associate in the fields of sociology and theology. A certified project manager for the development and implementation of EU-Funded Projects, she is a member of the research team for the project Possibilities and Limitations of Religious NGOs Transformation into Social Entrepreneurship and the project Transformation of Local Communities in the Republic of Croatia- Globalization Challenges and Development Potentials. A published author, her most recent article reviews the intergenerational differences in the integration of minorities in the majority society - the case of Croats in Slovenia.



**Jolanta Blažaitė** is an experienced civil society expert and social entrepreneur with a strong academic background. Her work focuses on social innovation, cross-sector cooperation, social inclusion, and community development. She has contributed to the launch of several successful nonprofit organizations in Lithuania, designed and implemented innovative social programs, and collaborated with a wide range of local and international partners across sectors. She is the co-founder and Chair of the Board of Lithuania's food bank, Maisto Bankas. Since 2022, she has worked with the World Bank on a variety of public sector reform and regional development projects in Lithuania and other EU Member States.

**Sofya Detkina** is completing a Bachelor's degree in International Relations and Development at LCC International University in Lithuania. In parallel, she works as an instructional designer at a Kazakhstan-based EdTech startup, supporting high school students through online learning. She designs curricula, assessments, and learning experiences with a strong focus on learner-centred design, practical skills, and the meaningful integration of new technologies. Her bachelor's thesis examines how education policy and history textbooks construct national identity, with the aim of informing more inclusive and critically engaged approaches to education.



**Andres Falconer** is a civil society expert with extensive experience in participation, stakeholder engagement, partnerships, transparency, and social accountability. His background includes co-founding the Center for Third Sector Studies at the University of São Paulo in Brazil, leading a Rockefeller Foundation-established Leadership for Environment and Development program in Brazil, and directing Ashoka, a global nonprofit that supports social entrepreneurs, in the UK.

Since 2012, he has collaborated with the World Bank on initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Social Accountability, and has worked with major multilateral climate funds, including the Climate Investment Funds and the Global Environment Facility.



**Dmytro Fedorchak** is a researcher specializing in collective memory, reconciliation processes, and the role of religious communities in contexts of war and social recovery. He holds an MA in nonprofit management from Ukrainian Catholic University, BA Theology from Kyiv Seminary and a Social Work MA from Ternopil National Pedagogical University. He works as a dialogue facilitator and peacebuilding practitioner with Ukrainian civil society, faith-based organizations, and international partners, focusing on trauma-informed approaches, community resilience, and interfaith cooperation. His current work includes analytical projects on memory, veterans' reintegration, and faith-based engagement in humanitarian and peacebuilding initiatives in wartime Ukraine.



**David Heiliger** is a culture conflict specialist, speaker, and strategist equipping leaders to bridge the deepest divides of color, class, and culture. As the Director of Gracism Global and the Pastor of Multicultural Bridge-building at Bridgeway Community Church, he helps leaders and organizations build healthy multicultural communities through actionable frameworks and transformative dialogue. With a master's degree in Conflict Transformation from Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, Dave's work spans faith, business, and civic sectors, impacting communities across the globe.



**Igor Jakobfi, Ph.D.** was born in 1978 in Osijek (Republic of Croatia) and has lived with his wife and two children in Beli Manastir since 2012. He obtained his Master's and Doctoral degrees in the Social Doctrine of the Church at the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Zagreb and completed his postdoctoral studies in the same field at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) in Rome. He is currently employed at the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Đakovo, University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Osijek, where he teaches courses in the Social Doctrine of the Church. Among his other responsibilities, it is worth mentioning that he serves as Secretary of the Office for the Promotion of the Social Doctrine of the Church and Social Issues, a member of the Governing Board of the Center for the Promotion of the Social Doctrine of the Church, and the representative of the Croatian Bishops' Conference in the Commission for Social Affairs of the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union. He is also a member of the Society of Social Ethicists of Central Europe, as well as the founder and president of the humanitarian association Friends of St. Martin. His main research interests focus on the promotion and practical implementation of the Social Doctrine of the Church within associations of the faithful and in the life of parishes.



**Kubra Kaya** is a fourth-year Bioengineering student at Vilnius Tech University. Alongside her scientific work, she is deeply committed to youth leadership, intercultural dialogue, and community-building. She currently serves as the President of ESN Vilnius Tech, where she leads initiatives that help international students build meaningful connections with the Lithuanian community. Together with her team, she has organized language exchanges, cultural workshops, integration evenings, and volunteer programs all designed to strengthen inclusion and foster shared understanding among people from diverse backgrounds. As a Western Union Global Fellow, she designed and implemented a peace-building event that brought together participants from different cultures and religions, aimed to create space for empathy, dialogue, and shared experience. Through her active role with the Balturka Cultural Academy, she has created culturally expressive programs and community events that reached both local residents and displaced communities, including refugees. She also teaches IB Biology at a public school, where she aims not only to support academic success but also to inspire curiosity, confidence, and global awareness in young learners. In 2025, she represented Lithuania as a youth delegate at the SDG conference that happened in the margins of the United Nations 80th General Assembly, where she spoke about the crucial role of youth leadership in building peaceful, resilient, and inclusive societies. Across scientific research, education, and civic engagement, her work is guided by a simple belief: meaningful change happens when we build bridges between disciplines, cultures, and people.



**Gretchen Ketner** earned an M.A. in Teaching English as a Second Language from Pennsylvania State University and recently completed a Graduate Certificate in Education focused on Trauma and Resilience in Educational Environments through Eastern Mennonite University. A member of the English faculty at LCC International University, she also serves as the Student Academic Support Specialist and directs the Summer Language Institute. She has given presentations and led workshops in various countries; most recently these have focused on trauma-informed pedagogy and institutional support for war-affected students.



**Dr. Dong Jin Kim** is Kim Dae Jung Chair Professor of Peace Studies at Hanshin University, South Korea and ISE Adjunct Professor at School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies, Trinity College Dublin. He was ISE Senior Research Fellow in Peace and Reconciliation Studies, IRC and Marie Curie Fellow at Trinity College Dublin, and Lecturer of Peace Studies and International Development at the University of Bradford. His research interests are in the areas of peace processes, peacebuilding, humanitarian, and development cooperation. He conducts engaged research, collaborating with various humanitarian, development, and peace organisations, including Okedongmu Children in Korea, and Corrymeela. He was a Goodwill Ambassador for Peace on the Korean Peninsula at the South Korean Ministry of Unification (2020-22). He is the author of *The Korean Peace Process and Civil Society: Towards Strategic Peacebuilding* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), and co-author of *Peace and Conflict in a Changing World: Key Issues in Peace Studies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024, with David Mitchell and Gillian Wylie). He has published numerous research articles in international journals, including *International Affairs*, *International Peacekeeping*, *Globalizations*, *Peacebuilding*, *Alternatives*, *Asia Europe Journal*, and the *Pacific Review*, as well as several Korean peer-reviewed journals.



**Milvydas Knyzelis** is an Instructor at LCC International University in the Contemporary Communication Department. He holds an MA in Media and Communication Studies from Malmö University and is currently pursuing a PhD at Vilnius Tech University. Milvydas's research explores the relationship between human agency, autonomy, and digital technology, with a particular interest in how interface design, persuasive patterns, and the logics of contemporary technology shape human behavior and public discourse.



**Dr. Maria Lai-ling Lam** is currently the Chair of the International Business Administration Department at LCC International University in Klaipėda, Lithuania. She holds a Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior and Marketing from George Washington University, an M.A. in Religious Studies, and both an M.B.A. and B.B.A. from the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Maria has taught various marketing, organizational behavior, marketing research, and strategy courses to undergraduate and graduate students at four Christian universities in the United States for nineteen years and at several universities in Hong Kong for eight years.

She has conducted numerous seminars and workshops at prominent universities in China and Japan. Maria has published one book and over 100 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. Her intellectual contributions cover areas such as U.S.-China business trust relationships, corporate social responsibility, empathy, human flourishing, management education, cybersecurity, smart cities, artificial intelligence, diversity, equity, and inclusion.



**Ina Merdjanova** is a senior researcher at the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin, and a former visiting professor at the Centre for Trust, Peace, and Social Relation at the University of Coventry (2018-2021). Her research has focused on the intersection of society, religious and cultural pluralism, nationalism, minorities, gender, conflict and peace building, with particular reference to Eastern Europe and Turkey. She has extensive academic experience at various academic and research institutions: Oxford University, New York University, the Center for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at Edinburgh University, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington DC, the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, the Aleksanteri Institute at Helsinki University, and the Freiburg Center for Advanced Studies, among others. Merdjanova is the author of over fifty academic articles and six books. Her book publications in English include *Religion, Nationalism, and Civil Society in Eastern Europe—the Postcommunist Palimpsest* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2002); *Religion as a Conversation Starter: Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans* (with Patrice Brodeur, Continuum, 2009, paperback 2011, subsequently translated and published into Bosnian and Bulgarian); *Rediscovering the Umma: Muslims in the Balkans between Nationalism and Transnationalism* (Oxford University Press, 2013, paperback 2016, translated and published into Bulgarian in 2017); and an edited volume *Women and Religiosity in Orthodox Christianity* (Fordham University Press, 2021).



**Lane Miller** is the Regional Director for Europe & Africa at the Mennonite Mission Network. He holds an MDiv from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and is a current graduate student in religious studies at the University of Chicago. With eight years of experience as a macroeconomic analyst specializing in monetary theory at a U.S. wealth management firm, his current research concentrates on historical and theological intersections between Christianity, monetary theory, and finance capitalism.



**Iryna Pashkevych** is a public dialogue facilitation practitioner trained at the Nansen Peace and Dialogue Centre. Her focus is on dialogue-based approaches for strengthening social cohesion and leading constructive conversations in diverse communities. With more than ten years of experience in educational, cultural, and family-oriented projects, she combines strong operational expertise with a commitment to building trust, resilience, and human connection. Since 2022, Iryna has been part of NGO Open Nations, where she manages programs that bring together people from different backgrounds through shared experiences and public dialogue. She has organized integration camps, cultural programs, international study visits, and rehabilitation camps for families affected by the war in Ukraine. As a facilitator, she designs and leads public dialogues that help communities reflect, understand one another, and transform shared challenges into collective solutions.



**Sidas Rafjevas** is a marketing lecturer, researcher and business consultant, lecturing in LCC International University, Klaipėdos Higher Education Institution, Vilnius University Business School. He is a founder of different events (Lipni Juosta, Plakatonas) for youth who are interested in marketing. His main areas of interest include digital marketing, sustainability, and social business. He holds an MA in Innovation and Business Creation from Jönköping University (Sweden).



**Ashley Ray** serves at LCC International University as the Service-Learning Coordinator. Ashley is passionate about empowering students to see how their unique knowledge and talents can make lasting, meaningful change in their communities through volunteering. With an MA in Cultural Engagement and Leadership from Denver Seminary and significant NGO experience, Ashley brings unique expertise to helping students understand social issues and solutions in a cross-cultural setting.



**Indrė Razbadauskaitė-Venske** co-founded the Lighthouse Neuromarketing Lab and is a lecturer at LCC International University, Klaipėda University and Vilnius University Business School. She is a marketing strategist, mentor, and the Chair of the Lithuanian Marketing Association (LiMA) Klaipėda division. Indre is known for her neuromarketing and strategic marketing expertise, combining research with practical applications.



**Dr. Hannah Reich** holds a professorship on artistic and movement-oriented methods in social work in the Faculty of Applied Social Science at the Technical University of Applied Science Würzburg (THWS), Würzburg, Germany based on her expertise in interactive participatory theatre. Her proficiency lies in participatory, experienced based methods for conscientization and relationship building, focussing on conflict transformation, peacebuilding, and community building for sustainable futures and is compassionate to integrate mindfulness techniques, embodiment and somatic alignment within the curricula of Higher Education. She is the director of the project: “International Social Work in Crisis: Thinking from the Future, Recognizing and Interrelating with the Past and Embodiment in the Present (ThRivE)”, which is implemented together with a Jordanian and a Lebanese university focussing on strengthening the resilience of activists in crisis situations.

In her PhD thesis she explored forum theatre methodology as a way to generate knowledge about how to transform sectarian conflicts with a case study in post-war Lebanon. She is trained by David Diamond and August Boal, holds an MA in Islamic Societies and Cultures from the SOAS, UK, and a graduate diploma in Cultural Geography from the University of Bonn, Germany as well as a mindfulness trainer in MBSR.



**Anna Luisa Reinhardt** is a youth worker with the Lithuanian Diaconical Services. She holds a BSc(Hons) degree in Politics, Psychology, Law, and Economics at the University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands). Luisa has further studied Latin American Studies in Buenos Aires (Argentina), Theology in Münster (Germany), and Ethical Philosophy in Oxford (UK). Luisa employs interdisciplinary methods to research child protection in conflict, informed by a feminist-constructivist ontology and legal-political security studies. Luisa has further followed training in contemporary dance as well as ensemble and new music at the Conservatory of Lübeck (Germany). She introduces arts and dance into childcare work, currently in a Lithuanian childcare institution. This engagement fuses practical and academic viewpoints, thereby facilitating a policy-oriented perspective on child protection in conflict. Luisa currently explores the potential of artistic resilience-building to empower children in and shield them from the adverse effects of conflict.



**Henrika Ruginė** is an economist, business practitioner and at the same time lecturer in the Business Administration department at LCC International University. She holds an MA in Marketing Management from Klaipėda University. Henrika is currently studying economics towards a PhD and is a researcher working on Circular economy implication and effects in various business and governmental organizations.



**Ieva Rūkė** worked as a Program Coordinator at the Center for Dialogue and Conflict Transformation at LCC International University, Lithuania, where she assisted in design and implementation of dialogue-driven initiatives focused on conflict transformation, restorative practices, and civic engagement. With a background in political science and more than seven years of professional experience in the business sector — spanning sales, leadership, and hospitality — she brings a strong understanding of organizational systems and human relations into peacebuilding work. Ieva led a prison volunteering program that connected over twenty university students with correctional institutions, fostering trust and personal growth through dialogue-based learning. Alongside her engagement in refugee and community empowerment projects, her work centers on strengthening civil society through practical collaboration between institutions, volunteers, and communities — guided by values of empathy, inclusion, and social responsibility.



**Dr. Elena Šiaudvytienė** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of International Relations and Development and the director of the Center for Research on Faith and Human Flourishing at LCC International University and a postdoctoral researcher at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas – Angelicum in Rome, Italy, within the CREATE (Catholic Social Teaching Rome Exchange: Advanced Training Experience) program. She earned her Bachelor's and Licentiate in Social Sciences from the Angelicum, where her Licentiate thesis focused on The Role of the Third Sector in Creating New Jobs in Europe. She completed an M.A. in European Studies at Vilnius University, with a thesis comparing The Concepts of Subsidiarity in Catholic Social Teaching and EU Law. In June 2024, she defended her Ph.D. dissertation, *Just Transition in Lithuania: A Blue Marble Evaluation of the Policy Framework in the Light of Integral Ecology*. Dr. Šiaudvytienė has served as a Research Fellow at the Economy of Francesco Academy (2023–2024) and is a JTPeers Expert for Lithuania under the European Commission's Just Transition Platform. She is currently continuing her Catholic Theology studies at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania.



**Sose Simavoryan** is an LCC International University 2025 alumna from with a dynamic portfolio that bridges the non-profit and corporate sectors. She holds a BA in International Relations and Development from LCC International University (2025) and is the Director of the Kooryigs NGO in Yerevan, Armenia.



**Dr. Andrew Suderman** serves as the Secretary of Mennonite World Conference's Peace Commission as well as an Associate Professor in Theology, Peace, and Mission at Eastern Mennonite University. Although born in Canada, Andrew has spent many years living outside of Canada – a combined total of ten years in Latin America, seven years in South Africa, and 8 years and counting in the United States. Through all of his different roles, Andrew seeks to explore how we embody our theological convictions and how our lived experience and journey affect the way in which we understand God's work and mission in the world. Throughout his life, Andrew has sought ways to balance the academy and classroom on the one hand, while also finding ways of participating in different struggles and lived ministerial and practical experiences on the other. He has worked with offenders and ex-offenders in both Provincial and Federal penitentiaries in Canada, supervised a 54-bed homeless shelter, and walked with and learned from South Africans as they continue to wrestle with their painful history of apartheid and how they are working towards a new, reconciled reality based on a foundation of justice and peace. Dr. Suderman's PhD dissertation explored South African political theology, focusing on South Africa's Kairos Document, and how it intersects with Anabaptism. Andrew and his wife, Karen, have three wonderful, beautiful, and energetic children, and live on a little farmette and homestead called Little North Acres just outside of Harrisonburg, VA.



**Dominyka Svilytė** is a youth activist and social justice advocate dedicated to strengthening inclusive communities through remembrance, education, and civic engagement. As a project manager and project developer at AY Institute, one of Lithuania's leading youth NGOs, she works on national and international initiatives that empower young people, promote critical thinking, and address the impacts of discrimination, conflict, and historical trauma.

Dominyka's work centers on youth-driven memory making and innovative approaches to remembrance, using storytelling, creative methods, and community dialogue to build bridges between generations and foster resilience. She is committed to shaping environments where young people feel equipped and inspired to contribute to a more just and peaceful society.



**Tigist Tesfaye** is the founding director of Spark Valley, a local NGO established in 2021 that advances adolescent development through programs focused on cognitive growth, character formation, and practical skill enhancement. She brings over 15 years of professional experience in the development sector across international and local organizations, complemented by more than two decades of dedicated work with teenagers and young adults. Her multidisciplinary academic grounding spans human and economic development, systematic theology, and educational leadership. Tigist also serves as a faculty member at Meserete Kristos Seminary and the Evangelical Theological College in Ethiopia.



**Radvyda Vaišvilaitė** is a department chair of Lithuanian Studies and assistant professor at LCC International University. She studied at Vilnius University and has taught Lithuanian language to foreigners with a specific interest in finding methods of language learning that could help students with a variety of backgrounds for 20 years. Radvyda considers language learning as an educational experience that opens the culture of the people of the language which we are learning. She is also interested in Contemporary Lithuanian literature with a focus on Christian images in contemporary texts. Radvyda likes to tell stories, read, dance and educate people about the past and present of her LIETUVA.



**Dr. Andrew Williams** is the Director of the MA in International Institution and NGO Leadership, Director for the Institute for Philanthropy, and an Assistant Professor in Development and Civil Society at LCC International University, Lithuania. Andy has worked in the non-governmental sector for more than 25 years, including with micro-economic development programs in both Rwanda (3 years) and the Dominican Republic (4 years). His research interests include human rights, the role of civil society, and religion. He holds a doctoral degree in non-profit and global studies as well as master's degrees from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Harvard Divinity School. For fun, the Williams family (he is married with three children) enjoys a good board game, a long bike ride, a classic book, or a cup of ice cream!



**Svitlana Zaluzhna** is a Ukrainian social activist, visionary founder of the NGO Open Nations, and a dedicated professional committed to community development and fostering positive social change. With a background in business, education, and the humanities, Svitlana's work focuses on healing war trauma, promoting post-traumatic growth, encouraging mutual integration and social cohesion, and building inclusive, resilient communities.

Before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, she was a social entrepreneur. For many years, she was a principal of a private school, experimenting with the best world-renowned educational approaches and innovative practices. In 2020, she fully shifted into the field of family development with the mission to preserve and reinforce Ukrainian families by organizing family camps, educational events, festivals, and to create a movement aimed to foster conscious, humane parenting.

Since March 2022, Svitlana has been residing in Lithuania, where she has continued her active engagement in social work. She founded the NGO Open Nations, an organization dedicated to implementing social projects and initiatives that uphold principles of humanity and multicultural tolerance, especially during military conflicts, global migration, and ongoing crises.

Svitlana's areas of professional competence are diverse and reflect her multifaceted skill set: project management, resilient community building, cultural integration, facilitation and coaching, and human-centered design. Moreover, she strongly advocates for feminine leadership, recognizing women's vital role in shaping societies and driving positive change.

# Notes

## Notes



# LCC Campus

- 1 Defehr Centre
- 2 Michealsen Centre
- 3 Neumann Hall



## Thank You

Thank you for participating in this conference. We hope this was an enriching experience for you. Building resilient communities undenaibly requires both business and civil society collaborating together. We hope this conference left you with important questions to ask and skills to use that foster communities for peace and justice.

Thank you to our donors who made this transformative conference possible for all of us.



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**Creating Resilient Communities  
for Peace and Justice**  
Klaipėda 2026