IPTG
The Interdisciplinary
PeaceTech Group

PeaceTech in Action workshops, June 2022
Notetakers' summary of participant reflections

Overall, the PeaceTech in Action event was summarized as interesting and informative, with a wide range of observations about this new and emerging field. PeaceTech was regarded one route towards peace that can – if properly used – disrupt the spread of fake news, augment one-sided or outdated analysis, and enable proactive solutions and responses before negative events have occurred. It was viewed as the '*smart way of resolving conflicts across the world due to simultaneously reaching all conflicting parties*'.

Discussions covered how Peace and Tech areas of research and practice can jointly:
- create solutions for today's world challenges.
- enable the collection of less traditional types of data, and how those can express new indicators and methods for data collection and peacebuilding.
- create an awareness of the potential of finding new ways to understand, analyze and resolve conflicts by use of technological tools in a peacebuilding context
- convey the reality of peace and conflict work and interventions
- extract and interpret information with authenticity and accuracy
- reach a greater audience, so spreading information in a simplified manner to the public and policy makers
- develop current trends in the measurement of peaceful change in conflicts
- generate a wider understanding of peace indicators and data needed to work towards positive peace.

The use of data in PeaceTech
In all workshops, discussions reflected on the strengths and dangers of working with data.

STRENGTHS
- Useful for positive research and peacebuilding work - the potential to provide alternate (more nuanced?) interpretations of conflict situations to those more commonly found in big media journalism and political views /orientations, so enabling new / creative / unorthodox perceptions of conflicts
- As yet, not taken advantage of by politicians, big institutions, extremists, hackers
- Can enable a clearer understanding of the needs of various parties, leading to "understanding beyond opposition"
- Potential to tap into elements of culture and regional/national politics to see subtle variations in perception of conflicts and responses of people, politicians and institutions in conflict zones - as well as in intervening countries
- Potential in increasing research into the validation of collected PeaceTech data
- Can enable linkage to / re-use of earlier collected data – eg of financial mobility and financial services - to shape pathways towards peace

DANGERS
Despite a mainly positive attitude, panelists and participants repeatedly highlighted the dangers inherent in the use / misuse of data in Peacetech, including:

- a limited understanding of the wider contexts that the data was collected within

- oversimplification of diverse data findings which could lead to peacetech being regarded as a worthless information tool by critics and supporters of traditional peace and conflict practices
- the manipulation of data for misinformation if data used for quantitative research alone. A full-picture analysis of conflict and peacebuilding projects requires qualitative / mixed method approaches in additional to quantitative analysis
- the importance of recognising and working with feelings / lived experience as a significant component of peacebuilding and therefore of PeaceTech
- The definition and quantification of violence and how this is mirrored in collected data sets
- Discrepancies in the understanding of, and different purposes for, data collection between different institutions
- Data cleaning concerns: what data is reliable enough to be re-used for PeaceTech aims? eg only 40% of indicators of data collection can usually be linked to specific aims and appear consistent.
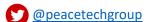
Challenges for this emerging field
- PeaceTech is not thoroughly 'good' but can potentially be easily misused - incomplete data sets or improper data collection could lead to inaccurate results / interventions.
- Current inability to expand PeaceTech initiatives due to not having sufficient knowledge and technical know-how about such ways of data collection
- The need to work together with Tech companies to develop accessible research processes / tools using appropriate algorithms for efficient AI
- Making research outputs / visualisations attractive and easily understandable for everyone.
- Not everyone has access to virtual data, especially not where people live without internet and capable internet devices or where regimes can influence people's access to the internet.
- What would the impact be on the use of PeaceTech initiatives in countries which block the use/publication of political, cultural, social data and / or promote false information?

Areas of potential for applied PeaceTech tools (future trends and directions)?
- Its communicative abilities to reach wide-spread audience - current technological abilities allow access to worldwide publics
- PeaceTech tools can act as a platform to make the world aware of ethical problems and to mediate conflicts without physically meeting.
- What are the boundaries of PeaceTech? Who does PeaceTech actually reach?

Areas of potential for future peacetech research
- Feelings and emotions should be separated from facts and reality and that must be made visible in the data of conflict analysis;
- To mitigate the challenge of inaccuracy and misinterpretation, context must be provided and both quantitative and qualitative methods should be used.
- Research / tool building processes should be context-informed, multilayered and rooted in historical / geopolitical and other data.
- What methods of data visualization is best to be used for attracting people and to make it easy to understand?

How do we demonstrate outcomes from the use of PeaceTech?

- Dynamic data visualizations as seen in past electoral mappings, eg to generate visualisations of gun-related deaths in a country or show worldwide gender imbalances.
- The anticipation of problems can help reduce the negative outcomes of upcoming incidents if PeaceTech is used proactively in both theory and practice
- Both academics and practitioners can research and use AI to automate tasks and create smarter patterns that then can be used more effectively as human knowledge increases while technology grows.
- PeaceTech work may enable academics and practitioners to stay up to date with resources and information that in the end can help to make better decisions and reach the end of conflict faster.

Is PeaceTech a necessity for the future in conflict and data analysis?

- While participants and panelists were careful to define the potential dangers of PeaceTech, they nonetheless considered it an '*absolute necessity for the future in conflict and data analysis*' which '*should be explored as much as possible*'.
- Some regarded PeaceTech as a way of responding to root causes and the history of a conflict - different within every specific conflict setting.
- Given that technology influences the way humans view life, it could maybe have a part to play in determining and even influencing the information/ data passed around. NB While this could possibly help in peacebuilding, it may also aggravate it if not used properly or in destabilized environments.
- Accessible PeaceTech can prepare and equip people and complete regions with methods to avoid conflict and possibly cause a change in standardized variables or measuring peace. Data can help lessen the gap between developed and developing countries by the provided insights, keeping people informed of world / regional / local developments.