



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
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Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC
Section Peace, Governance and Equality PGE

Theories of Change

RESILIENCE, SPACES, SHIFTS



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These generic theories of change, which are based on [SDC's Thematic Guidance on Culture and Development](#) and the [Reflection Paper on Culture and Sustaining Peace](#), can serve as building blocks for designing a project in the field of culture and peace.

RESILIENCE

Definition: Communities are better equipped to prepare, adapt and respond to conflict situations and contribute to the (re)building of trust and solidarity.

IF (selected) culture organisations, cultural spaces and art projects are supported with project funding and capacitated, **IF** they have more favorable framework conditions and **IF** artistic creation around topics of relevance for the communities is supported,

THEN, cultural actors can effectively plan and execute cultural initiatives, offer safe spaces and provide the audience with artistic and cultural content and actions around topics of relevance for the communities.

IF (conflict-affected) individuals have access to culture activities as audience and for self-expression and **IF** artists have more opportunities to produce, showcase their work and engage with their audience including vulnerable groups in creative expression even in conflict situations,

THEN, individuals will enhance awareness about topics of relevance for the communities, increase solidarity within their group, they will experience empowerment and a strengthened sense of belonging and develop greater emotional well-being and positive coping mechanisms.

IF communities actively engage in collective cultural activities that foster shared identity, unity, and nonviolent means of resistance,

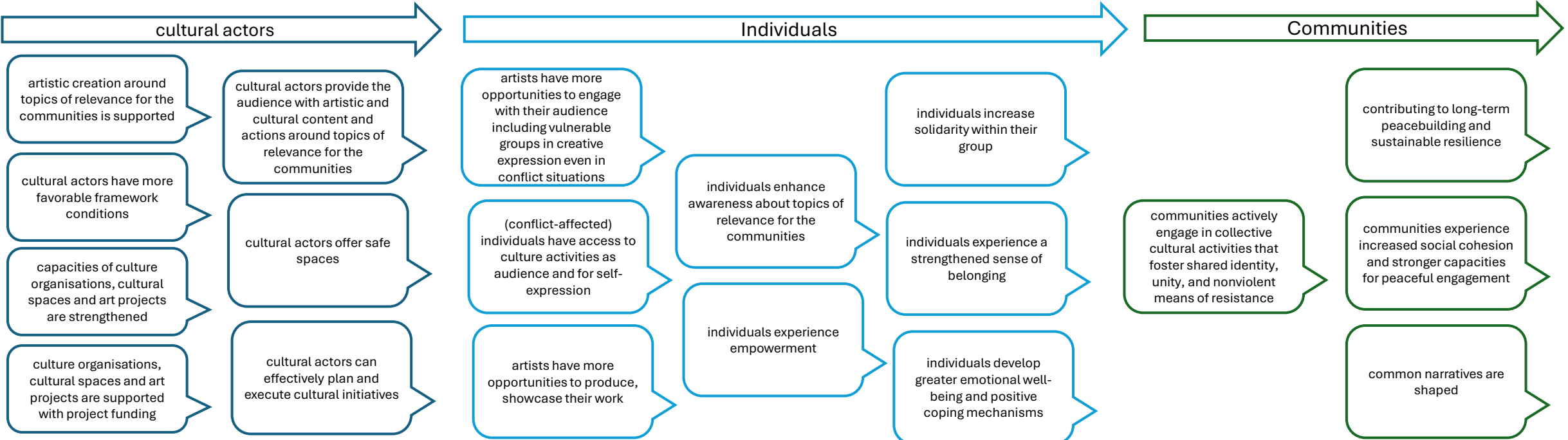
THEN common narratives are shaped, and the communities experience increased social cohesion and stronger capacities for peaceful engagement, collectively contributing to long-term peacebuilding and sustainable resilience.

BECAUSE art and culture provide individuals with the means to express and process difficult emotions and distress in a constructive way, provide a sense of “normality” and joy, foster empathy, and (re)build a sense of belonging, while strengthening collective identity, encouraging peaceful, constructive actions and offering creative ways of making a living also in times of crisis.

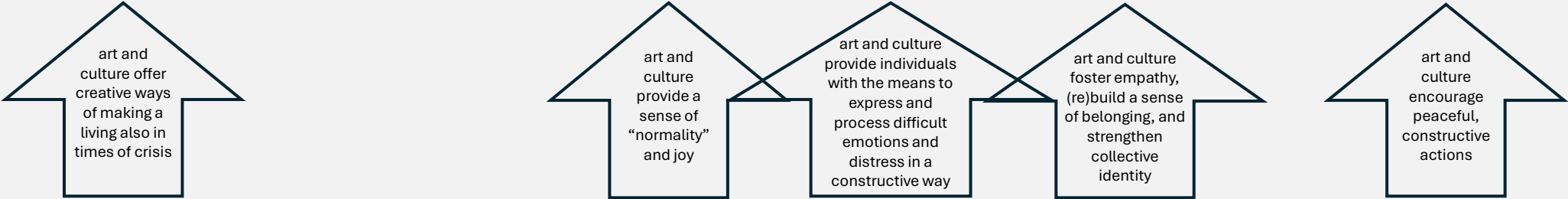
RESILIENCE

Visualisation

Definition: Communities are better equipped to prepare, adapt and respond to conflict situations and contribute to the (re)building of trust and solidarity.



Assumptions:



SPACES

Definition: Physical or digital platforms provided by cultural institutions or artists that foster dialogue, self-expression, and diversity, including marginalized or excluded societal groups. These spaces enable safe environments for creative expression, promoting social cohesion, trust, and understanding while challenging power imbalances and encouraging more inclusive, equitable societal engagement.

IF independent cultural actors have more favorable framework conditions and **IF** they are strengthened and capacitated to create and maintain safe, and inclusive spaces for self-expression, dialogue, and creative engagement,

THEN, individuals including vulnerable groups can participate in creative activities and will experience a stronger sense of self-representation and self-determination,

IF these spaces foster an environment of trust, recognition, and mutual respect, where cultural expressions can challenge power asymmetries, spark reflection, and confronting views and narratives can be safely presented,

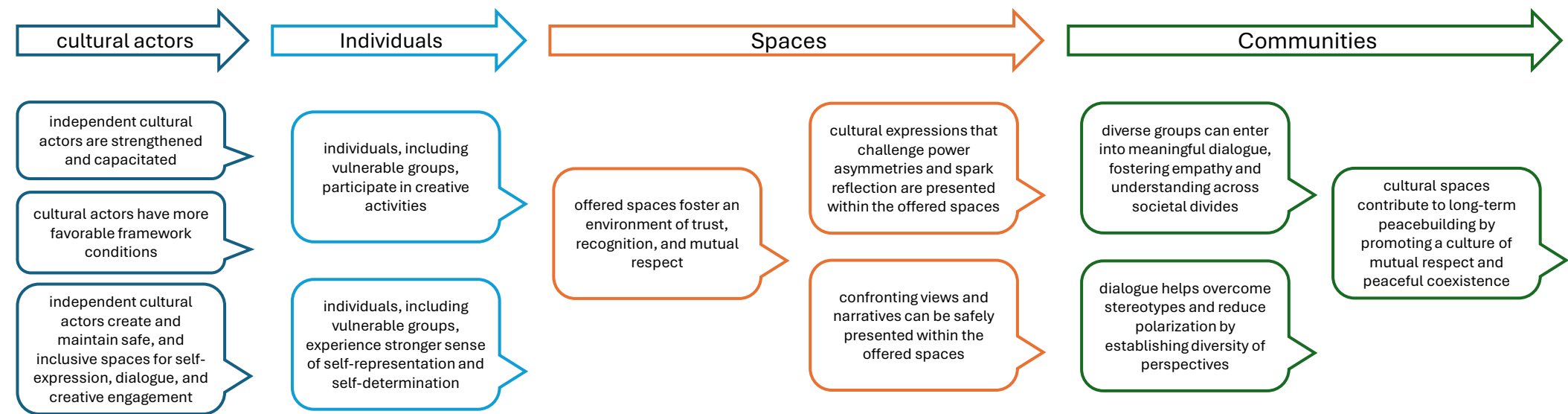
THEN, diverse groups can enter into meaningful dialogue, fostering empathy and understanding across societal divides, overcoming stereotypes, and reducing polarization by establishing diversity of perspectives, and these cultural spaces will contribute to long-term peacebuilding by promoting a culture of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

BECAUSE strengthening cultural actors and providing them with more favorable framework conditions enables them to create inclusive cultural spaces where marginalized voices are heard and where individuals and communities can engage in artistic and cultural expressions that challenge inequalities, foster mutual understanding, and promote pluralistic societies.

SPACES

Visualisation

Definition: Physical or digital platforms provided by cultural institutions or artists that foster dialogue, self-expression, and diversity, including marginalized or excluded societal groups. These spaces enable safe environments for creative expression, promoting social cohesion, trust, and understanding while challenging power imbalances and encouraging more inclusive, equitable societal engagement.



Assumptions:



SHIFTS

Definition: Transformative changes in attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors, that drive societal change, which is a precondition for peacebuilding and social cohesion. These shifts ideally foster trust-building, empathy, and healing at both individual and collective levels, helping communities collaborate and work toward shared solutions.

IF diverse and inclusive cultural sectors and their actors have more favorable framework conditions and **IF** they are strengthened through capacity building, resources, and safe spaces for creative expression, which stimulate critical reflection on societal topics,

Then, cultural activities will promote shifts in perceptions and narratives that can influence attitudes and behavior at both individual and collective levels fostering empathy, openness and social cohesion.

IF culture initiatives provide communities, especially marginalized and conflict-affected groups, with ways to cope with trauma and explore personal and collective memory and truth from different perspectives,

THEN, these initiatives will support healing and reconciliation, enhancing mutual empathy, understanding and trust among individuals and groups, leading to deeper connections and greater acceptance of “the other”, and strengthening the capacity to collaborate on joint solutions that promote peaceful coexistence.

IF cultural expression is integrated into advocacy and awareness campaigns focused on social justice, human rights, and peacebuilding,

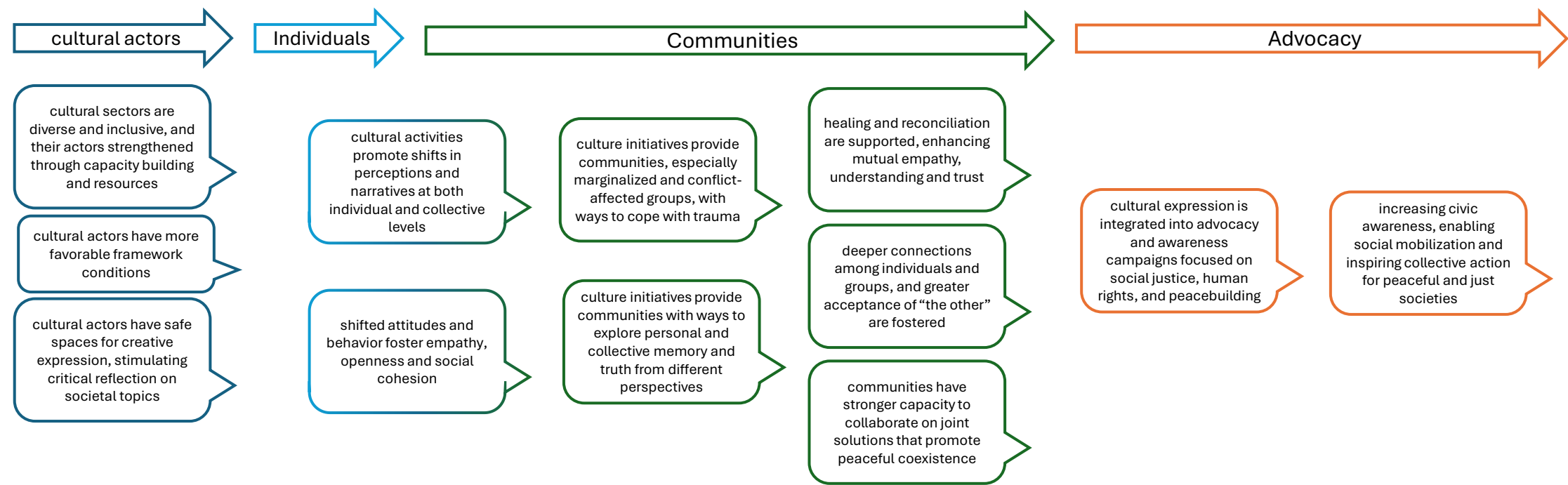
THEN, they will drive long-term transformative change by increasing civic awareness, enabling social mobilization, and inspiring collective action for peaceful and just societies.

BECAUSE art and culture have a unique power to emotionally engage individuals, challenge entrenched narratives, and build shared understanding and the collective consciousness around topics of societal concern, thereby shifting perceptions, attitudes and behaviors. By providing spaces for expression, reflection, and advocacy, culture helps to dismantle barriers, encourage trust, and empower people to engage in truth-seeking, laying the foundation for peaceful coexistence and transformative social change.

SHIFTS / Societal change

Definition: Transformative changes in attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors, that drive societal change, which is a precondition for peacebuilding, and social cohesion. These shifts ideally foster trust-building, empathy, and healing at both individual and collective levels, helping communities collaborate and work toward shared solutions.

Visualisation



Assumptions:

