University of
Central Lancashire
UCLan Cyprus

ICLAIM
Interdisciplinary Centre for Law,
Alternative and Innovative Methods

Social
Mediators'
Network

Social Mediation Manual on
Culture
in Divided Societies

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Summary

The present Manual – the third publication on Social Mediation by ICLAIM – concerns a topic that has been at the heart of the Social Mediation project since the project's inception in 2018. Identity and culture. The Manual suggests ways in which Social Mediation can be used in Divided Societies as a means to bridge broken social relations and strengthen a divided society's social cohesion and resilience. Following a structure similar to the one employed in the *Handbook on Social Mediation in the Community: A Guide for Practitioners* and the *Manual on Social Mediation for Social Transitions,* this *Social Mediation Manual on Culture in Divided Societies* provides a simple, yet academically-informed definition of how principles of Mediation can be put to use for the benefit of divided societies, through the implementation of Social Mediation interventions with groups or between individuals. The Manual intertwines the notions of culture, identity, and conflict, before suggesting ways on how Social Mediation can be applied in the challenging environment of a divided society.

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Foreword

It is a real pleasure to write the Foreword for the third ICLAIM Manual on Social Mediation, this time focusing on Culture in Divided Societies. ICLAIM is a young non-profit social enterprise whose primary objective is to serve groups & communities in need on the ground. It benefits from the interdisciplinary expertise of a pool of resident experts, researchers and interns in law, conflict resolution, social work and ethics from diverse backgrounds. The organisation envisions a society where citizens are empowered and enjoy access to social justice, through alternative and innovative approaches in the application of the law to societal issues.

Since 2018, ICLAIM has increasingly used Social Mediation as a soft tool which places individuals and communities across the world at the forefront of socio-economic inclusion in turbulent times. It has been aided by the University of Central Lancashire in Cyprus and in the UK in its endeavours over the years. The Social Mediation programme uses concepts around groups and transitions, and has proposed concrete solutions to the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Social Mediation can be used in dealing with complex and sensitive issues of identity, prejudice and exclusion. all exacerbated by the pandemic and migration flows at the global level. It is an adaptive method, applicable in social and professional settings, empowering large, possibly diverse, groups of people to continue interacting regularly through modern technologies despite the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. It offers participants a simple but robust way towards bridging broken or vulnerable social bonds, enhancing cohesion and finding solutions to socio-economic challenges in pandemic and troubled times. During the pandemic, we have facilitated the identification and mitigation of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 by offering to groups/communities across the globe, divided physically/socially/economically by the pandemic, concrete tools to continue dialogue and empower adapted solutions to renew socio-economic inclusion. We hope to continue being able to do so in times of conflicts and transitional justice.

The programme consists of renewable training workshops accessible to all, promoting Social Mediation in different contexts of social tensions, complemented by an international Social Mediators' Network. Social Mediation is applicable in any socio-economic (including professional) context where big groups of people engage with each other on a regular basis, and there is a likelihood for social tension to rise. The project took a new turn with COVID-19, helping participants to address concrete issues in their communities and tackle the urgent needs created by emergency measures, lockdowns, lack of physical mobility, unemployment, social exclusion, or poverty.

The SDGs are also expressly articulated in trainings and deliverables, spreading good and sustainable practices. Workshops use a 'train-the-trainers' approach, with multiplier effects in communities across the globe.Trained members of the Network come from Africa, Asia and Europe. They are educators, national/ international law enforcement & order officers, NGOs, professionals, youths. The 'Social Mediation in Practice' project has received the European Citizen Prize 2020 from the European Parliament for its cross-border promotion of European values .[1] and Social Mediation as a solution from Cyprus is being scaled up at the global level.[2]

The programme strengthens global governance by adapting Social Mediation to pandemic and conflict-impacted societies. It presents a unique & innovative way of applying Mediation beyond traditional conflict resolution internationally, to address needs and socio-economic impacts. The Social Mediation programme initially encouraged the participation of people from all ethnic or other communities of Cyprus, serving as a bridge across the decades-long ethnic division of communities, with varied participation of foreigners, at a truly intercommunal grass-root level. The project then grew to include global issues of social cohesion; its unique diversity being reflected in the membership of the Social Mediators' Network across 3 continents.

The needs on the ground due to the pandemic and migration flows in times of peace and war, transformed the innovative aim of the programme as one of socio-economic cohesion across communities/societies where divides are now more visible than ever due to refugee flows, social distancing and renewed physical barriers.

COVID-19 has impacted all countries around the world with physical/psychological/economic/social outcomes of the pandemic, with even more complex consequences in countries that have protracted disputes or ongoing conflicts. The programme's desired impact is to empower innovative and renewed efforts towards socio-economic cohesion in affected communities and societies at large, through concrete solutions making a difference on the ground.

The programme supports Social Mediators across the world to power solutions within their own communities, building capacity for faster implementation in troubled times.

The Social Mediation programme is delivered by ICLAIM with the support of the University of Central Lancashire in Cyprus (host institution) and in the UK (grants from the University of Central

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[1] For the full press release see:
https://www.uclancyprus.ac.cy/european-citizen-s-prize-2020-amp-2021-award-ceremony/ .
[2] For more information see:
https://www.uclancyprus.ac.cy/iclaim-and-uclan-cyprus-are-joining-the-2022-global-solutions-forum-in-dubai-2/
and https://www.globalsolutionsforum.org/.

Lancashire Institute of Citizenship, Society and Change and the Centre for Sustainable Transitions). The programme has also been supported by grants from the British High Commission in Nicosia, giving rise to concrete outcomes such as the present Manual. International Organisations such as the UN in Cyprus (UNFICYP) act as facilitators. We are happy to present solutions for incremental change at global governance international fora, for exposure to a wide variety of stakeholders to showcase results and advance our cause and to discuss alternative and innovative solutions in an interactive setting. We are also happy to integrate this methodology in other ongoing projects of the School of Law at UCLan Cyprus and at ICLAIM, with a focus on social justice and civil society organisations. *The Social Mediation Manual on Culture in Divided Societies* participates to these efforts and more is to come.

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1. Introduction: The concept of 'Divided Societies'

Around the world, divided societies exist as a result of deeply divisive socio-political events of major historical significance and impact, such as colonialism, internal or international armed conflict, the fall of a military or other authoritarian regime, discriminatory practices, or a combination of any of the above.[3] These are societies where identities have a 'high political salience' sustained over a long period of time,[4] leading to distance, mistrust, and aggression between individuals from opposing groups of people.[5] Whereas, however, all divided societies are characterised by diversity, one needs to be aware that not all multicultural, diverse, non-homogenous societies are necessarily 'divided'.[6] Instead, divided societies can in fact be distinguished from other diverse societies on the basis of four distinct characteristics.[7]

The four characteristics of Divided Societies

A. A hostile and competitive environment, where members of the same group hold the belief that they belong together.

B. The existing divisions frame the majority of political conflicts, even in situations where many norms and values may be shared across groups. As a result, it is not the shared values, but the divisive characteristics and the conflict that drive all sorts of political conflicts.

C. The divisions between groups are perceived as 'intractable', impossible to overcome, among the majority members of the competing groups.

D. The existence of widespread hostility, openly violent or not, leads many members of the public 'to live under conditions of discrimination and insecurity', and therefore, constant fear.

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[3] Erin Daly and Jeremy Sarkin, *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding Common Ground* (University of Pennsylvania Press (2007) 3-4.

[4] Angela Kachuyevski and Ronnie Olesker, 'Divided societies and identity boundaries: a conflict analysis framework' (2014) 25(3) *International Journal of Conflict Management 304, 305*

[5] Daly and Sarkin (n 1) 70.

[6] Patti Tamara Lenard, *Trust, democracy and multicultural challenges* (Penn State University Press 2012) 116.

[7] ibid 116-118.

The above four characteristics refer to ethnocultural groups specifically. However, remaining committed to our earlier work, we hold the view that these four characteristics can be applied by analogy to include various instances of division in society, including racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and gender inequality, among others, even though 'ethnocultural' divisions remain the focus of the present Manual.

The concept of divided societies has been at the heart of the Social Mediation project ever since ICLAIM published the *Handbook on Social Mediation in the Community: A Guide for Practitioners,* in May 2018.[8] The Handbook constituted a first step toward the introduction of Social Mediation as a conflict resolution methodology, and it is addressed to professionals working with diverse group of persons, in the public or the private sector, including public servants, NGO staff and members, community workers, youth workers, teachers, non-formal trainers and educators. Its publication was followed by the Social Mediation in Practice project, which included the conduct of four training sessions on Social Mediation in Cyprus, during the 2019-2020 academic year, and the establishment of the Social Mediators' Network, in September 2020.

This was then followed by the *Social Mediation for Social Transitions,* from January to March 2021, and the corresponding *Manual on Social Mediation for Social Transitions* [9] which was published in spring 2022, and brought adaptive skills into the initial trainings which were based exclusively on the 2018 Handbook. This project was specifically designed to address the challenges caused by social transitions, to support participants in the development of adaptive leadership skills, and facilitate them in addressing individuals' and societies' natural inclination to resist change.

The present Manual is the result of the *Identity, Culture, and Social Mediation for Cyprus* project, which took place during the academic year 2021-2022 at UCLan Cyprus and ICLAIM premises in Pyla, Larnaka, and which served as an initial step towards applying the Social Mediation conflict resolution methodology directly to one of the most challenging aspects of Cypriot history; identity and culture.

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[8] ICLAIM, *Handbook on Social Mediation in the Community: A Guide for Practitioners* (ICLAIM 2018) https://www.iclaimcentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/handbook_final.pdf.

[9] Katerina Antoniou, Pinar Zubaroglu-Ioannides, Nadia Kornioti and Zora Kizilyurek, *Manual on Social Mediation for Social Transitions* (ICLAIM 2022). All materials on social mediation published by ICLAIM are available at: www.social-mediation.org/resources/.

The project is compatible with the purposes of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda and the accompanying UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), joining forces with innovators around the world towards the strengthening of peace and freedom around the world. More specifically, the Social Mediation project has been actively promoting Quality Education (Goal 4) and Gender Equality (Goal 5), aims at contributing to the reduction of inequalities (Goal 10) and peace, justice and strong local, regional and international institutions (Goal 16), by actively seeking ways to participate in partnerships for the goals (Goal 17). The SDGs were drawn to stimulate action that will improve the welfare and livelihoods of peoples, and will foster prosperity and peace, through partnerships that will protect our planet from degradation.[10]

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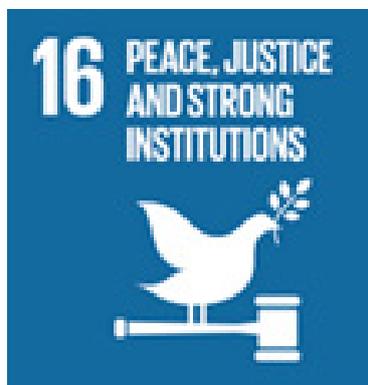
[10] UN, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For more information visit: https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda.

2.The Identity, Culture, and Social Mediation for Cyprus project

As shown above, the Social Mediation project is a continuously-evolving initiative, which has adapted and expanded in different directions, based on social needs and challenges in Cyprus and beyond. One such constant challenge for most of the 20th century in our increasingly globalised world is the competition or outright hostility between individuals or groups of people. This hostility includes cognitive and affective beliefs about the social reality at hand, and leads to assumptions about how a person belonging to a different group may act in a given situation.[11] Inevitably, therefore, divided societies are characterised by mistrust and aggression, as mentioned above.

With conflict triggers such as prejudice, intolerance, and tensions between groups being at the core of the Social Mediation project,[12] this edition of the *Identity, Culture, and Social Mediation for Cyprus* project, sought to invest in Social Mediation's capacity to be utilised as a peacebuilding tool. Thus, the project was an opportunity to take a deeper look into the socio-cultural realities in Cyprus across the continuous division of the island, by addressing questions of identity and culture across all Cypriot communities and religious groups. For the purposes of the project, the workshops were designed to encourage broader participation of locals, particularly youth, and remained open to anyone residing in Cyprus regardless of nationality and status.

The project successfully brought together participants from Cyprus, the Middle East, and Africa, who discussed issues of culture, cultural appropriation, and discrimination. The discussion was triggered by examples from the fashion industry, including the appropriation of cultural symbols and items of indigenous communities, discriminatory western traditions and practices with roots in colonialism, and conflicting views on the origins of traditional dishes and delicacies in South-East Europe and the Middle East. The safe environment of the workshop allowed for extensive and honest discussions among participants, who offered thoughtful commentaries and willingly shared their personal knowledge on specific issues of relevance. Some participants openly shared their concerns on points that were particularly sensitive to their background, adding to the depth of the conversation.

An additional workshop was held in early December 2021 exclusively for new and old members of the Social Mediators' Network. The Network has a horizontal structure, where the members themselves suggest and take the initiative for additional training and capacity building exercises. Thus, on this occasion old members of the Network had prepared an 'Equality-Fairness & Diversity' training, based on their own experience in Law Enforcement. On the same day, other network members shared their own experience with initiatives they had implemented using Social Mediation.

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[11] Marc H Ross, 'Cultural Contestation and the Symbolic Landscape: Politics by other means?' in Marc H Ross (ed)
  Culture and Belonging in Divided Societies: Contestation and Symbolic Landscapes (University of Pennsylvania
  Press   (2009) 4
[12]Social Mediation Handbook (n 6)

The last activity under the project was a public event, held online due to COVID-19-related mobility restrictions, in January 2022, during which we presented the findings under the Identity, Culture, & Social Mediation for Cyprus project and the much-awaited digital platform of the Social Mediators' Network.[13] The platform has the form of a mobile application, and it envisages to assist Network members to facilitate communication in the long-term as well as the exchange of materials and consultation among them, while identifying topics of common interest for future activities.

The project was led by the University of Central Lancashire – Cyprus (UCLan Cyprus) in collaboration with ICLAIM, with financial support from the British High Commission in Nicosia. Its activities ran from November 2021. In the following sections we offer an overview of the theoretical and practical background relevant to Social Mediation in a cultural context.

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[13] Anyone who participates in a training on Social Mediation is eligible to join the Social Mediators' Network, if they are interested to become actively involved in the project in the long run.

3.Basic Principles of Mediation

Mediation can be seen as a rather elusive term, since its exact meaning may vary depending on the context within which it is used. A dictionary definition of mediation is:

> A means of resolving disputes outside of the judicial system by voluntary participation in negotiations structured by agreement of the parties and usually conducted under the guidance and supervision of a trained intermediary.[14]

The World Bank, on the other hand, offers a more elaborate definition accentuating the characteristics and principles which govern Mediation as a conflict resolution tool, in all its various forms; political, diplomatic, commercial, among others, and of course, Social Mediation, which is the type of mediation the present Manual focuses on:

> Mediation is an informal, confidential conflict resolution process in which an impartial third party helps two or more participants better understand their issues, interests and needs and empower them to bridge their difference through a voluntary agreement.[15]

From this definition derive the main principles of mediation, which are illustrated here:

Informality

Mediation as a conflict resolution process falls under the category of 'Alternative dispute resolution' (ADR) tools, which is a non-judicial form of dispute resolution, unlike 'formal' conflict resolution tools which traditionally are the judicial courts. This allows it to be more **flexible** for participants in terms of setting certain rules and reaching an agreement together instead of having a decision rendered to them and enforced to be effective later.

However, the informality of the mediation process does not mean mediation is free from rules. The mediation process is subject to complete **equality** and **fairness** between both parties. Both parties must have equal opportunities to be involved in the process and share their thoughts and opinions in order to reach the most convenient agreement for both.

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[14] Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mediation> last accessed 16 April 2022
[15] World Bank, Mediation Services <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/unit/mediation-services#1> last accessed 16 April 2022

Confidentiality

Any information (oral information or written documents) which is revealed and became known during the mediation process **cannot be disclosed** by either the parties or the mediator, it remains strictly within the mediation framework and cannot be used for other purposes than that of the mediation.

Confidentiality in the mediation process is **general, absolute, and unlimited in time**. Exception may apply in the legal form of mediation, in cases concerning public order or following the agreement of the parties. This is not the case in Social Mediation.

Mediation is confidential **for the mediator, the participants, and their counsels.** All communications during the mediation process remain confidential **even after reaching an agreement** and the end of the mediation process.[16]

Any confidential information received by the mediator from one of the parties **cannot be disclosed to the other party without the consent of the disclosing party** or unless the law requires it.

Impartiality, independence, and neutrality of the mediator

Article 2.2 of the European Code of Conduct for Mediators states that:

> The mediator shall at all times act, and endeavour to be seen to act, with impartiality towards the parties and be committed to serve all parties equally with respect to the process of mediation.[17]

Impartiality means that the **mediator does not take sides** and that they should **treat both parties equally**. They must not have prejudice regarding the conflict they are mediating or against any of the parties or their backgrounds, otherwise they risk being impartial.

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[16] Article 4 of the European Code of Conduct for Mediators states that: "The mediator must keep confidential all in formation arising out of or in connection with the mediation, including the fact that the mediation is to take place or has taken place, unless compelled by law or grounds of public policy to disclose it. Any information disclosed in confidence to mediators by one of the parties must not be disclosed to the other parties without permission, unless compelled by law."

[17] The full text of the European Code of Conduct for Mediators is accessible at <www.euromed-justice.eu/en/document/eu-european-code-conduct-mediators> last accessed 16 April 2022

The impartiality of the mediator **guarantees a fair and objective procedure.** A mediator does not decide in favour of any party. Their sole and main obligation is to facilitate communication pathways between the participants to help them reach themselves a solution to their conflict.

During the mediation process, the mediator must be entirely independent of the parties, or of third parties, or from any official bodies. They **must not have professional or personal relationships** with parties involved in the mediation process and cannot have a direct or indirect financial or any form of interest in the outcome of mediation (eg a success fee), other than the fee for their services.

The mediator is also neutral in front of the parties. They do not give their opinion on the agreement reached by the parties even if the parties ask the mediator to do so.

Voluntariness

Voluntariness constitutes one of the basic principles of mediation. Mediation is a **consensual process**; it needs the agreement of parties involved as well as well as that of the mediator for it to take place or to end. Unlike in formal court procedures, no party is summoned to take part in a mediation process if they do not accept to do so willingly.

The consensual nature of the mediation makes it **possible for either party to terminate** the process at any stage. In addition, the mediator has the **possibility of refusing** a mediation which could offend their conscience or opinions, they **can also interrupt** a mediation if according to their own judgment, it is running against the spirit and ethics of mediation.

For the parties, the voluntary part of mediation **allows them to assume responsibility** in resolving their conflicts, which helps them resolve disputes in an amicable way and restore social relations. In the mediation process, parties are in charge of the decision-making power to determine the outcome of the mediation.

No decision is rendered against one party over the other, therefore, when parties reach an agreement themselves – the outcome of the mediation – they will be able to fulfil their mediatory engagements set in the agreement easily without coercion from an outside authority.

4.Social Mediation in Divided Societies

Divided societies are especially challenging in both theory and practice in terms of conflict prevention, management and resolution 'due to the deep ethnic, religious and cultural cleavages' that result from material factors and subjective experience, as well as emotion and perceptual factors that pose difficulties to any attempts for systematic assessment.[18] These factors are expressed through society's 'symbolic landscape':

> A society's symbolic landscape communicates social and political meanings through specific public images, physical objects, and other expressive representations [through] emotionally important and visible venues.[19]

Mass media, theatre, school textbooks, music, literature and public art, are reflective of how people understand their world, but also others within it, contributing to the shaping of these worlds, while also establishing and legitimating normative standards and power relations.[20]

As indicated above, mediation is in principle a flexible and broad method of alternative dispute resolution outside the formal setting of the courtroom, that can be applied in a variety of contexts. Due to this flexibility, the basic principles of mediation are particularly helpful in addressing the highly emotive context of culturally-induced social conflicts.

Social Mediation is defined as:

> A process for creating and repairing social bonds, leading to peaceful resolutions of conflicts in daily life in which an impartial and independent party seeks, by organizing exchanges between persons and institutions, to help them to improve a relationship or to resolve a conflict opposing them.[21]

Research suggests that cultures and cultural differences do not themselves cause conflict, but rather they serve as 'lenses' through which the causes of a conflict can be refracted.[22] Therefore, among the various types of mediation, Social Mediation is particularly helpful in guiding the parties affected by the conflict in deconstructing the 'cultural lens' and reach the core issues that lead to mistrust and aggression.

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[18] Kachuyevski and Olesker (n 2) 304-305.
[19] Ross (n 10) 6.
[20] ibid.
[21] Heidi Jokinen, 'Social Mediation-Working towards inclusion from amidst exclusion' in Lucian Blaga Proceedings of the 49th *Societas Ethica Annual Conference 2012: Ethics and Migration* (University of Sibiu 2012) 141-142
[22] ibid 5.

Social Mediation can be adjusted on a micro (interpersonal), meso (group and community) and macro (societal) level.[23] Moreover, depending on the specific conflict at hand, Social Mediation can be used in a preventive way, where a sense of tension is growing, as well as a resolution tool where a conflict is apparent, and a rehabilitative tool,[24] once the parties to the conflict have reached a commonly agreed solution. It is therefore up to the exclusive discretion of the parties to implement a Social Mediation approach of their own choice, depending on the context.

In line with the objectives of Social Mediation, the basic general principles of mediation play a determining role in facilitating a positive outcome in the mediative process.

[23] Social Mediation Handbook (n 6) 12.
[24] Ibid 20-24.

Social Mediation Objectives

. Articulate the primary reasons behind the conflict's escalation;

. Discuss underlying reasons, fears and insecurities that may
  exist in all parties and constitute a hotbed for conflict;

. Assist the parties involved to understand their position in the
  creation and escalation of the conflict;

. Consider ways in which such a conflict could have been pre
  vented;

. Consider ways in which such a conflict does not occur again;

. Reach an agreement on how the parties wish to 'close' this
  chapter.

Informality: Apart from equality and fairness, the informal process of Social Mediation is particularly useful in releasing the additional tension the parties to a conflict may feel in a formal, adversarial environment. This has been evident in all Social Mediation training sessions. There participants do not feel any pressure to agree with each other, and at the same time the increasing trust between participants causes a safe environment where they feel comfortable sharing their views.

Confidentiality: In order for the social mediator to gain the trust of the parties, and for the parties to build trust among themselves, confidentiality is the main safeguard. As already mentioned above, the lack of trust is a prime characteristic of divided societies, and therefore, the need to build a relationship of trust and understanding between those involved in the mediative process is imminent.

Impartiality, independence, and neutrality of the mediator: Confidentiality, however, cannot be achieved against the slightest hint of lack of impartiality, independence and neutrality on the side of the mediator. As mentioned, cultural and identity-based social conflicts are particularly emotional for those involved. Therefore, it is important to stress once again that the social mediator, like every other mediator, is ruled by these three principles at all times and that they should pay particular attention not to share with the parties to the conflict their own views and opinions.

The sole responsibility of the mediator is to facilitate the ongoing process between the parties, where the parties are called to reach a commonly agreed upon resolution to the conflict. The same principles rule the work of the mediator in preventive actions, where the social mediator is required to assist the parties to familiarise the latter with the 'preventive tools' available in a given situation, and help them design a preventive strategy.

Voluntariness: The consensual nature of mediation is key, since no party can be coerced to participate in a mediation process. This is important both in terms of further contributing to the enhancement of trust between the parties, but also in terms of them assuming responsibility for the outcome of the process; the agreement. Thus, a social mediator cannot insist on the continuation of a process where either party has withdrawn consent. The mediator may, however, suggest an interruption to the process, if deliberations between the parties constantly reach a dead end.

Checklist	**Social Mediators' Toolbox**
i. Identify the problem	i. Community & Group activities
ii. Assess the situation	ii. (Inter)cultural/ Interreligious activities
iii. Try to predict problems which may arise	iii. Awareness raising activities
iv. Make a list of potential actions, using the Social Mediator's 'toolbox'	iv. Training & Empowerment
v.Choose & design the most appropriate action	v. Human Rights Education
vi. Orchestrating the Conflict	vi. Positive Dialogue

5. Identity, Culture, and Conflict

There exist numerous forms of personal and collective identity; social, political, ethnic, cultural, and national. Identity can be to some extent predetermined when associated with inherited or externally determined features, such as geographical location, race, or native language. At the same time, however, identity becomes subject to one's environment and interactions. It can be selected by the individual, or be enforced by political leaders at the community level.[25]
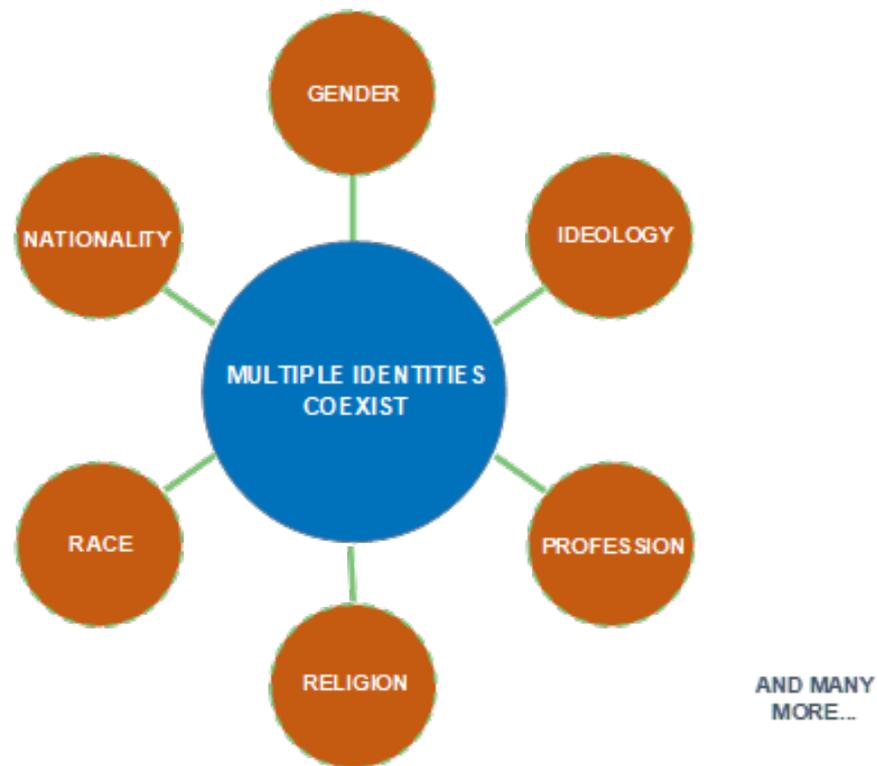
Within societies and collective units, individuals are exposed to the realization of horizontal or collective identity, or the association with their 'alikes' within the unit. Collective identity creates a sense of solidarity amongst the members of a unit, but at the same time promotes hostility against external others, particularly within contexts of societal insecurity such as ethnic conflict.

Marc Howard Ross attempts to put identity into perspective by focusing on culture. In his 2007 account Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict, Ross elaborates on the prominent significance of psychocultural dynamics and psychocultural dramas as portrayed through cultural expression, identity markers, and narratives.[26] Forms of cultural expression include language, public holidays

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[25] Sari Nusseibeh, 'Personal and National Identity: A Tale of Two Wills' in Tomis Kapitan (ed)
Philosophical Perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (Routledge 1997) 205.
[26] Marc H Ross, *Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict* (Cambridge University Press 2007).

and ceremonies, and the symbolic significance of sacred monuments and landscapes, while identity markers are objects and concepts like flags, statues and heroes that represent identity. Similarly, narratives offer a lens through which each group defines both itself and its opponent. According to Ross, the three factors of identity markers, cultural expression, and narratives are central in shaping identity and hence vital for consideration when resolving ethnic conflict.

Examining identity highlights the discrepancy between ethnicity and culture. From an anthropological perspective, Eriksen.[27] defines ethnic identity as shared ancestry and cultural identity as shared norms and practices, arguing that deep ethnic differences can often exist in the absence of substantial cultural differentiation. In a similar vein, Sidanius and Petrocik[28] make the distinction between ethnic and national identity and claim that the multi-ethnic states of the modern era pose a challenge to ethnically defined citizenship. The complexity in defining cultural identity in relation to national and ethnic identity makes it challenging for individuals to define themselves through one single identity, leading to insecurity and a higher likelihood of perceiving that identity to be fragile, or under threat.

Ho-Won Jeong suggests that a central feature of identity is its role in determining and maintaining boundaries to distinguish between a homogeneous in-group and alienated out-groups.[29] This feature is particularly evident in cases of ethnic conflict, as threats to identity further solidify the boundaries that differentiate the disputing groups from one another. Daniel Rothbart and Korina Korostelina identify three factors that increase identity salience, including the existence of a collective group that relates to a particular identity, the association of personal goals and activities to that identity, and the incidence of negative approaches from out-groups.[30]

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[27] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, 'Ethnic identity, national identity, and intergroup conflict: The significance of personal experiences' in R D Ashmore L Jussim and D. Wilder (eds) *Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction* (Oxford University Press 2001) 42.
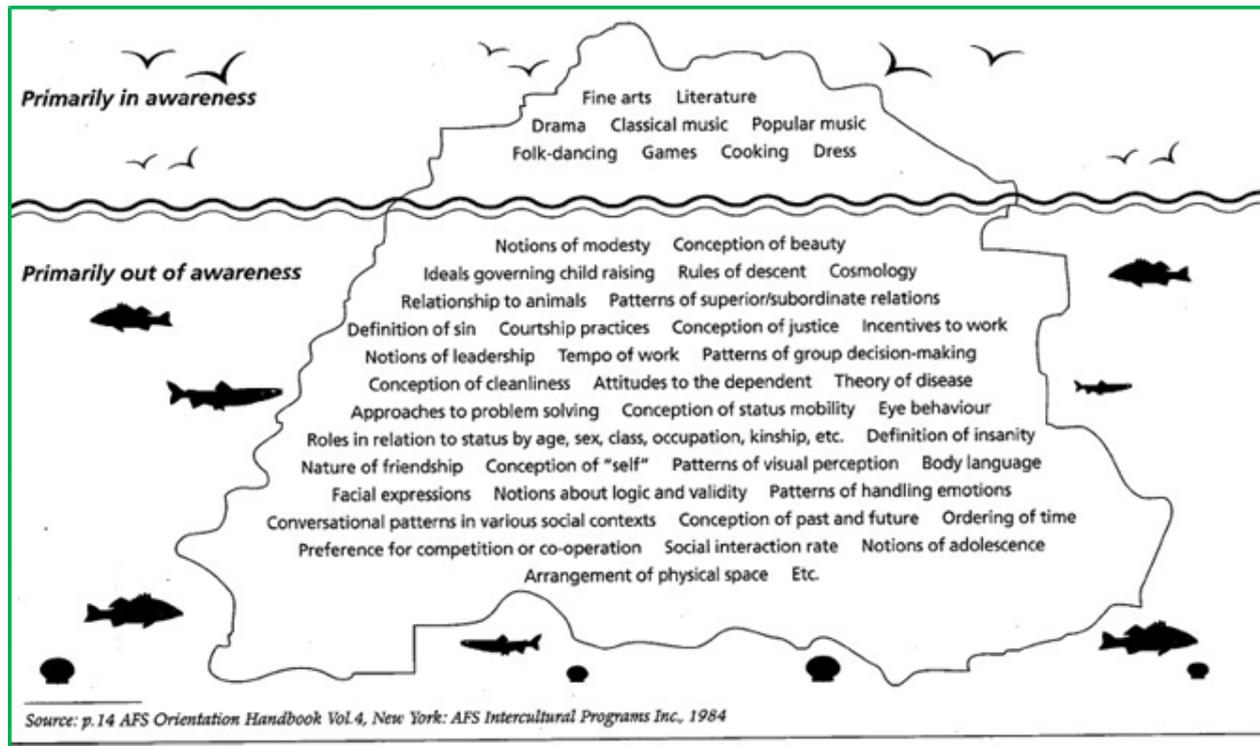[28] Jim Sidanius and John R. Petrocik. 'Ethnicity and national identity: A comparison of three perspectives' Paper presented at Conference *Re-Thinking Democracy in the New Millennium*. Houston, Texas (2000).
[29] Ho-Won Jeong, *Understanding Conflict and Conflict Analysis* (Sage 2008).
[30] Daniel Rothbart and Karina V. Korostelina, *Identity, Morality and Threat: Studies in Violent Conflict* (Lexington Books (2006)

THE CULTURAL ICEBERG

The 'Cultural Iceberg' helps us illustrate how there are elements of culture that are evident, and others that lie under the surface:

Primarily in awareness

Fine arts   Literature
Drama   Classical music   Popular music
Folk-dancing   Games   Cooking   Dress

Primarily out of awareness

Notions of modesty   Conception of beauty
Ideals governing child raising   Rules of descent   Cosmology
Relationship to animals   Patterns of superior/subordinate relations
Definition of sin   Courtship practices   Conception of justice   Incentives to work
Notions of leadership   Tempo of work   Patterns of group decision-making
Conception of cleanliness   Attitudes to the dependent   Theory of disease
Approaches to problem solving   Conception of status mobility   Eye behaviour
Roles in relation to status by age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, etc.   Definition of insanity
Nature of friendship   Conception of "self"   Patterns of visual perception   Body language
Facial expressions   Notions about logic and validity   Patterns of handling emotions
Conversational patterns in various social contexts   Conception of past and future   Ordering of time
Preference for competition or co-operation   Social interaction rate   Notions of adolescence
Arrangement of physical space   Etc.

Source: p.14 AFS Orientation Handbook Vol.4, New York: AFS Intercultural Programs Inc., 1984

When we define culture as a multi-layered concept that lies both above and below the surface, the elements affecting our expressed behaviour become clearer. There is a direct connection between culture and other forms of identity, values, and experience that inform our attitudes and perceptions. To this end, culture – in all its layers – and identity – the multiple identities that coexist for every individual – become key reference points for understanding perceived threats and antagonism in cases of conflict.

The Cultural Iceberg was employed in the Social Mediation workshops to illustrate how some aspects of culture and identity that inform our assumptions and behaviour are not evident, as they lie under the surface. It is therefore the responsibility of the Social Mediator to assist the parties in conflict to identify a value, practice, or identity that is not openly expressed, yet feels threatened.

6. Applying Social Mediation

Members of the Social Mediators' Network had the opportunity to reflect on the use of Social Mediation and its effectiveness in resolving or de-escalating conflict. The Network's Social Mediators shared testimonials on the application of Social Mediation and the scenarios we face on a daily basis that could benefit from the use of Social Mediation as a form of non-formal facilitated dialogue. Many praised the ability of Social Mediation to address tension before it turns into a full-scale dispute, while a second popular opinion was its effectiveness in restoring communication and providing safe channels for discussion and reconciliation.

The quotes below are the direct input of Social Mediators that have put Social Mediation to practice, and have considered its applicability in various scenarios:

"Social mediation can provide a safe environment both to those whose identity is being threatened and to those who find it difficult to accept others. This is done through a structured dialogue for both sides and helping the 'aggressors' understand their behaviour by helping them self-reflect and build empathy with the identity of others".

"[Social Mediation can address conflict] by pinpointing the roots causes of potential problems before they could rise, in settings where there are conflicting sides present with cultural and other identity differences. [Social Mediation can] address the situation by setting the tone of the interaction, point out the differences and what may they cause if pushed to extreme, and how it may be beneficial to achieve a common goal".

"[Social Mediation can address conflict] by educating people and have early interventions to defuse/resolve issues, before becoming too complex or difficult to deal with".

Applying Social Mediation was not an easy task for the Social Mediators, as it is not always easy to distance ourselves from conflicts and tensions within our immediate environment.

Looking at the Social Mediator testimonials, an overwhelming majority of Social Mediators that shared their input on the application of Social Mediation confessed that they – or someone they know personally – affiliate with an identity that they find difficult to express openly. The identities most difficult to express were religion and gender identity. Additionally, approximately half admitted having experienced a perceived identity threat against themselves or someone they know personally.

Frequently, tensions and perceived identity and cultural threats involve the Social Mediator directly, making Social Mediation a tool that is used reflectively to achieve reconciliation on a personal level.

7. Moving forward

Literature on divided societies contains a plethora of examples from around the globe. Going eastwards from the Pacific Islands, to the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, the Balkans, and Latin America, each case of a divided society has its own unique characteristics and context. It is also true, however, that people living in divided societies more often than not are overcome by feelings of insecurity and fear, due to mistrust and aggression; either as individuals, or as members of a group.

Divided societies are complex, unstable, and prone to rapid changes in short periods of time. Thus, the topic the present Manual engages with requires further elaboration and more in-depth analysis. Hence, the present Manual and the project from which it derived, constitute a first step in bridging Social Mediation as a conflict-resolution tool with issues directly relevant to the weak social bonds observed in divided societies. The workshop and the testimonies have confirmed our initial hypothesis, that 'culture' – broadly conceived – lies at the core of the tensions that arise.

As indicated above, such insecurity can derive due to differences in religion, a traditional expression of culture, but also through issues that only recently have received increased attention in many societies, such as gender. The surfacing of currently deeply supressed identities, that are likely to rise in the public domain and enter our daily vocabulary in the future, is almost a given, the more individuals are empowered to share awareness of deeply suppressed aspects of their identity.

In the 20th century, divided societies have often been the result of armed violence and conflict. In an unprecedently globalised world, however, division can take many forms, both within and beyond national boundaries. Thus, the need for a flexible tool that has a capacity to promote understanding through the establishment of a safe space that encourages dialogue is imminent. Social Mediation, if applied with the appropriate safeguards, has the capacity to be such a tool, at all levels of society.

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