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International Facilitation across Cultures

A report of the CERI-FACAMP International
Facilitation Techniques Study Group

RESEARCH REPORT

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INTERNATIONAL FACILITATION ACROSS CULTURES
A report of the CERI-FACAMP International Facilitation Techniques Study Group

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FOREWORD



In an increasingly polarized and violent world, there is an urgent need to nurture understanding and connection across cultures. Cheryl and I were delighted to join with this FACAMP initiative to explore how a deeper appreciation of cross-cultural values and practices can enhance international relations and diplomacy.

Drawing upon an evolving synthesis of old and new practices, at the United Peoples Ecosystem, we focus on building a heart-to-heart connection. It is this connection that moves beyond our collective differences, transcends unfamiliarities of the other, and is the foundation of future relationships.

In this programme, we studied cross-cultural elements and provided an opportunity to learn facilitation techniques that embraced our differences for the purpose of building effective and authentic connections with the other, instead of allowing these differences to create fissures.

In building these heart-to-heart connections with the other, our collective work then becomes more meaningful, for we have had the opportunity to fully see the other. Therein, moving past single actionable items relating to a specific cause or issue for the heart has grown, and so broad manners of decision making are changed for a light into the others' heart has been shone and understood.

Within this document are the students' final projects. These are a result of students self-selecting the cultures which they wanted to study, therefore, not all cultures are represented herein. These final projects are rich in materials from which a new form of approaching and managing international relations can be considered.

The United Peoples Ecosystem applies three phases, which you will see referred to. The first phase prepares the participants to come together. The second phase brings the groups together. The third phase allows the people to reflect on their experience and learnings of the other and also of themselves. For this cross-cultural facilitation technique offers ones own personal growth to also be embraced.

We would like to thank FACAMP, in particular Professor Patrícia Nogueira Rinaldi, and the brilliant students who contributed not only with their heads but also with their hearts, where we shared things to unlearn, where we learned, and where we had heart-to-heart connections with one another. The class was a joy, and we hope this joy spreads across generations and geographies to build a better world for one another.

A stylized, abstract signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines.

Dr. Dorothea Christiana
Chair
The United Peoples Ecosystem

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cheryl Durrant" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cheryl Durrant
Learning Officer
The United Peoples Ecosystem

INTRODUCTION

Professor Patrícia Nogueira Rinaldi
Director of CERI-FACAMP



Facilitation is a well-established concept within Alternative Dispute Resolution and a core tool within the United Peoples Ecosystem for supporting cooperative decision-making. It involves the use of a neutral third party to support multi-party groups in reaching informed and inclusive outcomes.

While facilitation is a universal human practice, scholars have noted that facilitation techniques may vary considerably in Western and non-Western practice. In the context of international relations – where actors from diverse cultural backgrounds are required to engage intensively – explore different facilitation techniques and learn how to apply them in an integrated manner become a source of strength.

In this sense, the goal of the CERI-FACAMP Study Group on International Facilitation Techniques, offered in partnership with Dr. Dorothea Christiana and Cheryl Durrant of the United Peoples Ecosystem, was to explore how culturally grounded facilitation techniques can be applied to co-create meaningful cross-cultural connections.

From August to November 2025, the members of the Study Group engaged in the study and research of six types of facilitation techniques – Western legal traditions, Indigenous restorative circles, African Ubuntu consensus-building traditions, Asian harmony-building techniques, Islamic Reconciliation (Sulh) traditions, and Deep Ecology Spirals – and analyzed how they can be applied to international relations.

This report presents the results of this effort and addresses the importance of going beyond procedural dialogue to engage with deeper relationships and values that shape how individuals and communities understand conflict, cooperation, and consensus. By examining facilitation as a relational and culturally embedded practice, the report offers four assessment guides to identify the conditions under which meaningful cultural alignment can be achieved.

Chapters 1 and 2 focus on pre-assessment, comparatively analyzing facilitation traditions to identify their strengths, limitations, and foundational values before dialogue takes place. Chapter 1 examines Asian Harmony-Building Techniques alongside Western Legal Traditions, while Chapter 2 brings together African Ubuntu Consensus-Building, Deep Ecology Spirals, and Islamic Reconciliation (Sulh) traditions.

Chapters 3 and 4 shift to the post-assessment phase, evaluating how selected facilitation approaches perform in practice and the impacts they have on participants and relationships. Chapter 3 analyzes the combined application of Islamic Reconciliation (Sulh), Deep Ecology Spirals, and Western Legal Traditions, while Chapter 4 synthesizes post-assessment insights from Western Legal Traditions, African Ubuntu, and Asian Harmony-Building Techniques.

By combining comparative analysis with facilitation process design and the development of assessment guidelines, the report aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of what is required to build respectful and effective relationships across cultural boundaries. Ultimately, the project is grounded in the premise that when a professional of International Relations cultivates meaningful relationships through culturally attuned facilitation, the conditions for greater international cooperation are significantly strengthened.



CHAPTER 1

ASIAN HARMONY BUILDING TECHNIQUES AND WESTERN LEGAL TRADITIONS

Larissa Paffaro

Rafaela Minucio Pontes

INTRODUCTION

Given that facilitation is a culturally embedded practice, this chapter presents a comparative analysis of Asian Harmony-Building practices, grounded in the Tianxia worldview, and Western Legal facilitation traditions, with the aim of understanding how to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between them. As these two traditions are frequently brought into contact in international and cross-cultural settings, understanding their assumptions is essential for anticipating both points of friction and opportunities for constructive engagement.

Building on this premise, the chapter presents a structured comparison of core attributes, followed by a deeper values-based analysis that explains how and why these traditions diverge in practice. The chapter highlights fundamental tensions between Asian Harmony-Building Techniques and Western Legal Traditions, including collectivism versus individualism, relational ethics versus the rule of law, and restorative versus adjudicative justice. But it also identifies shared aspirations between them, such as the pursuit of order and stability.

With this analytical foundation, the chapter presents an applied facilitation design focused on the pre-assessment stage, comprising three sequential phases: Preparation, Co-presencing, and Going Forth. The chapter concludes by showing that, in practical terms, cross-facilitating Asian Harmony Building and Western Legal traditions requires facilitation practices that deliberately integrate relational depth with procedural clarity. This can be achieved through pre-dialogue trust-building activities, hybrid dialogue formats, and hybrid agreements that combine a relational preamble with legally binding provisions. In sum, the chapter offers a guide to facilitating processes that respect Tianxia's emphasis on harmony and moral order while meeting Western expectations of fairness, transparency, and accountability.

COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF CULTURAL PRACTICES

In order to compare Asian Harmony-Building practices and Western Legal facilitation approaches, it is important to distinguish the cultural, philosophical, and procedural logics that underpin each tradition. In Table 1, we present, side by side, the core attributes of each culture with respect to their goals, views of conflict, facilitation roles, communication styles, and criteria for outcomes. This comparative snapshot enabled us to elaborate Table 2, which presents a comparison of the intensity with which each attribute appears in each culture.

Table 1 – Attributes: Western Legal Traditions vs. Tianxia

Attribute	Asian Harmony (Tianxia)	Western Legal Traditions
Primary Goal	Social Harmony & Collective Stability	Justice & Individual Rights Protection
Conflict View	A disruption to the relational & moral order	A clash of interests/rights to be resolved
Facilitator's Role	Moral guide, mediator, relationship guardian	Neutral arbitrator, procedural expert
Process Focus	Process-oriented, indirect, emergent outcomes	Outcome-oriented, direct, predetermined rules
Communication Style	High-context, implicit, face-saving (mianzi)	Low-context, explicit, and direct
Basis for Outcome	Contextual appropriateness & collective consensus	Codified laws, precedents, and evidence
Outcome Nature	Flexible, aiming to restore harmony	Binding, aiming to declare right/wrong
Key Metaphor	Weaving a torn social fabric back together	Weighing evidence on a scale of justice

Source: Own elaboration based on Avruch, 2003; Zhao, 2009.

Table 2 – Intensity of attributes: Western Legal Traditions vs. Tianxia

Attribute	Asian Harmony (Tianxia)	Western Legal Traditions
Spiritual/Sacred	X	**
Nature/Environment	*	**
Linear Problem-Solving	***	*
Holistic Thinking	X	***
Hierarchical	** (Rule of Law)	*** (Moral & Social Order)
Patient – Long-term Process	*	***

Source: Own elaboration based on Hofstede, 2001; Zhao, 2009.

Legend:
X = not observed
*** to *** = present to strongly present in this culture**

Based on the work of Fukuyama (2011) and Zhao (2009), we can analyze each attribute presented in Table 2 as follows:

Spiritual/Sacred:

- **Western Legal (X):** Modern Western legal systems are largely secular and positivist. Law is derived from human reason, legislation, and precedent, not divine revelation or spiritual principles. The sacred is explicitly separated from the legal realm.
- **Tianxia (**):** The Tianxia concept is imbued with a moral cosmology. Harmony is not just a social goal but a reflection of a cosmic order. The “Mandate of Heaven” (Tianming) historically linked political legitimacy to moral and virtuous conduct, placing the system within a sacred, all-encompassing framework.

Nature/Environment:

- **Western Legal (*):** Nature is often framed legally as property or a resource to be managed. Environmental law exists to regulate human use and mitigate harm, reflecting an instrumental view.
- **Tianxia (**):** Human society is seen as an integral part of a larger natural order. Achieving harmony within society is parallel to achieving harmony with nature (Heaven and Earth). The environment is not a separate legal entity but a key component of the holistic system.

Linear Problem-Solving:

- **Western Legal (***):** The legal process is the epitome of linear problem-solving: complaint → discovery → trial → verdict → appeal. It follows a strict, sequential procedure focused on identifying cause, assigning blame, and applying a remedy.
- **Tianxia (*):** Problem-solving is cyclical and relational. The focus is on understanding the context, mending relationships, and restoring balance through dialogue and mediation, not following a linear path to judgment.

Holistic Thinking:

- **Western Legal (X):** The system is inherently analytical, breaking down disputes into constituent facts and applicable rules. It isolates the legal issue from the broader social and relational context.
- **Tianxia (***):** Holism is fundamental to Tianxia. One cannot understand a part without understanding the whole. A conflict is viewed in the context of the entire web of relationships, history, and social hierarchy, and any solution must address this whole.

Hierarchical:

- **Western Legal (**):** Hierarchy exists within the legal system itself (e.g., court jurisdictions, precedent). However, a core principle is “equality before the law,” which aims to mitigate social hierarchy in legal proceedings.
- **Tianxia (***):** The Tianxia order is explicitly hierarchical, based on moral virtue and social roles. A well-ordered society requires a clear hierarchy in which each part knows its place and duties, contributing to the overall harmony. The facilitator is often a superior figure.

Patient – Long-Term Process:

- **Western Legal (*):** While cases can take time, the system values finality and efficiency (“justice delayed is justice denied”). The goal is to resolve the specific dispute at hand.
- **Tianxia (***):** The process is inherently patient. Building trust (xin), understanding context, and achieving a genuine, lasting consensus that preserves harmony cannot be rushed. The goal is the long-term health of the relationship, not a swift conclusion.

Drawing on the work of Hofstede (2001), LeBaron (2003) and Ting-Toomey (1999), below we show a mapping of core value orientations that come into tension when Asian Harmony-Building Techniques and Western Legal approaches encounter one another. This values-based framing helps explain why misalignment may occur in cross-cultural settings:

Collectivism (All-under-Heaven) ↔ Individualism (Individual Rights)

- **Tianxia:** Strongly collectivist. The unit of analysis is the collective, and its harmony is the ultimate good.
- **Western Legalism:** Strongly individualist. The individual and their inalienable rights are the primary unit.

Relational Ethics (Flexibility) ↔ Rule of Law (Universality)

- **Tianxia:** Ethics are relational and contextual. What is right depends on the specific relationships involved.
- **Western Legalism:** The law must be universal and applied impartially, regardless of the parties' status or relationship.

Implicit & Indirect Communication ↔ Explicit & Direct Communication

- **Tianxia:** Communication is high-context, relying on non-verbal cues and shared understanding to preserve face.
- **Western Legalism:** Communication is low-context, valuing clarity and directness above all to ensure precise terms.

Restorative Justice ↔ Retributive/Adjudicative Justice

- **Tianxia:** Aims for a restorative outcome that mends the social fabric and reintegrates parties.
- **Western Legalism:** Aims for an adjudicative outcome that assigns blame and administers a consequence based on rules.

Despite these differences, the values-based framing also reveals points of complementarity that can be leveraged in facilitation design, as shown in Table 3:

Table 3 - Analysis of similar and unique values

Similar Values (Potential for Shared Practice)	Unique Values (Potential for Discomfort)
<p>Both traditions seek to establish a form of "order" and prevent chaos.</p> <p>Both implicitly appeal to a higher principle - for Tianxia, it is cosmic harmony; for the West, it is abstract Justice.</p> <p>Both systems require a third party to oversee the process, granting them a specific authority.</p>	<p>The core tension lies in the Individual vs. Collective focus.</p> <p>The Western assertion of individual rights can be perceived as destructive selfishness from a Tianxia view.</p> <p>Conversely, the Tianxia subordination of the individual to the group can be perceived as oppressive from a Western view.</p> <p>The Tianxia facilitator's role as a moral guide conflicts sharply with the Western ideal of a neutral, value-free arbiter.</p>

Source: Own elaboration based on Fischer; Ury; Patton, 2011; LeBaron, 2003.

CROSS-CULTURAL FACILITATION PROCESS

The analysis below presents the design of a cross-cultural facilitation process grounded in Asian Harmony-Building Techniques as the base culture engaging with Western Legal traditions. Building on the comparative and values-based analyses presented earlier, this section translates theoretical insights into an applied facilitation framework structured across three sequential phases: Phase 1: Preparation; Phase 2: Co-presencing; and Phase 3: Going forth.

Phase 1: Preparing to Enter

What is needed in Phase 1 for the Tianxia-based Community to prepare for Phase 2?

The facilitators must guide the Tianxia-based Community to consciously shift from an internal to an external focus. This involves:

1. Articulating relational objectives: Clearly define what a “harmonious and virtuous partnership” with the Western delegation looks like, moving beyond abstract concepts to tangible indicators of trust and respect. In practical terms, this can be implemented by co-creating a short Relational Indicators List with community representatives prior to the meeting. Examples of indicators include:

- visible openness in discussions (e.g., the Western delegation sharing concerns transparently rather than withholding information);
- gestures of respect during the meeting (e.g., acknowledging cultural norms such as pauses in dialogue before responding);
- continuity of communication after the meeting (e.g., follow-up emails expressing appreciation and summarizing joint commitments);
- commitment to joint decision-making (e.g., allowing time for consensus-building rather than imposing deadlines).

These indicators provide observable behaviors that demonstrate respect and trust, helping the community understand whether harmony is truly developing in the partnership.

2. Strategic communication planning: Pre-identify topics that could cause loss of face (mianzi) and develop indirect, high-context strategies to introduce them, such as using stories or metaphors. Facilitators can do this by mapping sensitive themes prior to engagement. For example, topics such as delays, financial disagreements, or perceived breaches of responsibility can trigger loss of face. In preparation, the facilitators could list sensitive topics and create a “Cultural Introduction Strategy” for each.

- Example: If there is concern about missed deadlines, rather than saying “Your team failed to deliver on time,” the facilitator might use a metaphorical story: “In our village, there is a saying that planting too early or too late risks losing the harvest. Timing must be coordinated so that all farmers can benefit together”.

This metaphor communicates the importance of timing without assigning direct blame, thus preserving dignity.

3. Cognitive reframing of directness: Understand that the Western group’s directness is a cultural tool for efficiency and clarity, not a personal affront or a sign of poor character. To operationalize this, facilitators can use short cultural orientation sessions before the meeting to explain that direct questions, firm negotiation language, or explicit disagreement are not intended to damage relationships.

- In practice, this may include giving examples: “When a Western counterpart says ‘I disagree with this point,’ it usually means they are debating the idea, not the person”.

This reframing prepares the Tianxia-based Community to interpret directness as procedural efficiency within Western legal traditions, reducing emotional tension during dialogue.

What is needed in Phase 1 for the Western Legal Traditions Delegation to prepare for Phase 2?

The facilitators must guide the Western Legal Traditions Delegation to appreciate the foundational role of relationship in the Tianxia framework. This involves:

- **Embracing process over immediate outcome:** Accept that initial meetings will prioritize establishing rapport and mutual understanding (“building the guanxi”) before engaging in substantive contractual negotiations.
- **Operationalizing “Face” (Mianzi):** Learn that preserving the dignity and social standing of all parties is a critical procedural rule. Understand that causing someone to “lose face” can irrevocably damage the partnership.
- **Adopting a holistic mindset:** Prepare to view the project not as a series of discrete problems to be solved linearly, but as the cultivation of a long-term, interdependent ecosystem of connections. To learn about the other in a deep heart-centered way.

What activities could be done together to build understanding, empathy, and trust?

A joint “Worldview Mapping” workshop, conducted virtually or in a neutral preparatory session:

- **Activity:** Using a shared digital whiteboard, both groups collaboratively create a visual map of their core values (e.g., “Collective Harmony,” “Filial Piety” for Tianxia; “Individual Rights,” “Rule of Law,” “Efficiency” for the West).
- **Purpose:** To externalize and make tangible the often-implicit cultural priorities. This allows both sides to “see” the other’s worldview, fostering empathy and providing a reference point for understanding future conflicts not as personal attacks, but as cultural clashes.
- **Outcome:** A shared artifact that visually highlights both points of tension and potential synergy, setting the stage for a more informed Phase 2.

Phase 2: Co-presencing

What sequence of activities will best support coming together to bear witness and listen safely?

1. Entering/Rules:

- **Activity:** A shared tea ceremony, symbolizing peace, respect, and shared humanity. This is followed by the co-creation of a “Relational Charter”.
- **Rules:** The charter includes hybrid rules like: “We will speak directly about issues to ensure clarity, and we will do so with language that preserves the dignity and respect of all individuals.”

2. Welcoming/Introducing:

- **Activity:** Participants introduce themselves by sharing their name, their role, and a personal story or value that connects them to the project’s broader mission (e.g., “I am here because I want to leave a healthy planet for my grandchildren”).
- **Purpose:** This builds connection on a human level, transcending professional roles and aligning both groups around a shared, higher purpose.

3. Listening and bearing witness:

- **Activity:** Structured “Talking Circles.” A symbolic object is passed; only the person holding it may speak, without interruption.
- **Purpose:** This creates intentional pauses between speakers, mitigating the Western cultural tendency toward fast-paced exchange, where immediate rebuttal and debate are often used as mechanisms to test ideas and reach clarity. In Phase 1, this pattern has been explicitly addressed as a common communication norm within Western legal traditions, rather than a universal requirement of Western culture. In real practice, if some Western participants feel that rebuttal and debate are essential to a fair discussion, facilitators can address this need by introducing a two-stage approach within the Talking Circle format:
 - **First Round – Listening stage:** Participants speak without interruption. The goal is to ensure that all perspectives are fully expressed and heard. This stage honors the Tianxia value of deep, relational listening.
 - **Second Round – Clarification and dialogue stage:** A structured invitation is opened for participants to ask clarifying questions or present counterpoints. This stage allows space for the Western preference for analytical debate, but within a framework that preserves dignity and prevents loss of face.

If participants do not perceive rebuttal and debate as essential, the Talking Circle still serves to balance communication dynamics by slowing down interaction and encouraging reflective listening for all cultural backgrounds. Even in cultures that do not explicitly foster full listening, the Circle format equalizes speaking time, reduces dominance by more assertive voices, and creates an environment where participants who are not accustomed to direct debate feel safe to share their views. In this way, the Talking Circle is not a mechanism to suppress debate, but a tool to sequence it -ensuring that listening comes first, and analysis follows. This sequencing protects relational harmony while still allowing Western forms of reasoning to enter the process in a respectful and structured manner.

4. Safety:

- **Activity:** Facilitators act as cultural interpreters and “face-guards.” They actively rephrase blunt statements into interest-based questions (e.g., “What I hear you needing is assurance on X, is that correct?”) and intervene if dialogue becomes personally dismissive.

5. Reflecting/Leaving:

- **Activity:** Concluding round of reflection. Each participant shares one thing they learned or appreciated about the other culture’s perspective and one question they are holding for the future.
- **Purpose:** It ends the session on a note of learning and forward-looking curiosity, reinforcing the collaborative, not adversarial, nature of the process.



Phase 3: Going forth

What is needed in Phase 3 for the Tianxia-based Community (if working separately)?

An internal “Relational Integrity Check” is needed for that. The key discussion questions are: “Has a foundation of sincere trust (xin) been established? Have our Western partners consistently demonstrated virtuous conduct (de) and a genuine commitment to the relationship that justifies a long-term alliance?”

Additionally, the Tianxia-based Community must reflect on its own transformation within the process. Trust is not only an evaluation of the other, but also a recognition of the internal effort to cultivate virtue in the relationship. For this reason, the Relational Integrity Check includes reflective questions such as:

- “In this process, what might I (or we) have done better to honor the relationship?”
- “In which moments did we actively demonstrate respect toward the other, and where did we struggle?”
- “Where did we ‘dig deep’ and create a meaningful connection point with the Western partners?”
- “What concrete steps did we take to ensure a genuine and reciprocal commitment to the relationship?”

These questions reinforce that relational harmony (he) is co-created: it depends not only on evaluating the partner’s conduct, but also on consciously improving one’s own attitude, behavior, and facilitation practice. In Tianxia thinking, the ability to sustain a long-term alliance emerges from this dual reflection – the assessment of the other and the cultivation of oneself.

What is needed in Phase 3 for the Western Legal Traditions Delegation (if working separately)?

An internal “Procedural and Risk Alignment” meeting. The team would analyze all discussions to identify points that require codification, clarify ambiguous terms, and assess potential risks, ensuring the relational understandings from Phase 2 are translated into clear, actionable, and enforceable contract clauses.

What is needed in Phase 3 for the Tianxia-based Community and the Western Legal Traditions Delegation (if working jointly)?

The co-drafting of a “Hybrid Partnership Agreement” is needed. This is a single document with two integrated parts, directly building upon the Relational Charter co-created during Phase 2. In practical terms, the shared values, behavioral commitments, and relationship expectations agreed upon in the Charter become the foundation for the Preamble of the Hybrid Agreement. In this way, the relational work of Phase 2 is not symbolic – it is translated into binding principles that guide the formal partnership.

The “Hybrid Partnership Agreement” would entail:

1. Preamble of shared principles & relational commitments: A Tianxia-inspired section that articulates the shared vision, ethical foundations, and the spirit of the collaboration, serving as the “soul” of the agreement. This preamble includes the key elements from the Relational Charter, such as mutual respect, shared responsibility for harmony, cultural sensitivity regarding face (mianzi), and a commitment to long-term relational health, ensuring that the spirit established in Phase 2 becomes a lasting normative reference.

2. Framework for joint action & governance: A Western-style section that outlines the specific governance structure, decision-making protocols, financial arrangements, and accountability mechanisms, explicitly stating that it is guided by the spirit of the Preamble. This structure allows

the Western delegation to see how relational commitments translate into operational clarity, while ensuring that procedural rules do not disconnect from the relational values collectively defined in the Relational Charter.

By weaving these two parts together, the Hybrid Partnership Agreement becomes a natural continuation of Phase 2: the relational agreements established through listening practices and the Relational Charter are elevated into a formal, operational framework that balances relational harmony with legal clarity.

What values and attributes of our own individual and facilitation team (base) culture do we need to be mindful of, as they may help or be a barrier?

- **As a help:** Our innate understanding of holistic systems, patience for long-term processes, and sensitivity to non-verbal cues and relational undercurrents are immense assets. They allow us to sense discord before it surfaces and to foster a genuinely inclusive atmosphere.
- **As a barrier:** Our cultural predisposition towards avoiding direct confrontation and prioritizing surface harmony is a significant risk. We must be meticulously self-aware to ensure this does not lead us to suppress necessary, difficult conversations. We must consciously and deliberately design moments for explicit feedback and “truth-speaking” to meet the needs of the Western Legal Traditions and ensure that all issues are thoroughly addressed.

PRE-ASSESSMENT GUIDELINE

Until now, we have already designed a cross-cultural facilitation process. Now, we need a tool to measure if that process is likely to work before it even starts. In that case, we have chosen to create a Pre-assessment. This is a diagnostic tool, that is, its purpose is to identify the health of the relationship and potential risks before the main facilitation begins.

Objective of the pre-assessment

This pre-assessment is a diagnostic tool administered to both the Tianxia-based Community and the Western Legal Traditions Delegation before the facilitation process (Phase 2) begins. Its purpose is to:

- **Identify potential barriers:** Uncover deeply held cultural assumptions that could derail dialogue;
- **Highlight synergies:** Find common ground and shared interests to build upon;
- **Equip the facilitators:** Provide the facilitation team with critical data to tailor the process, anticipate conflicts, and prepare targeted bridging strategies.

Pre-assessment questionnaire

The guideline is presented as a set of questions for participants from both cultures. The questions are designed to probe the core cultural tensions identified in the Comparative Review.

Section A - Foundations & goals: This section measures the alignment on fundamental concepts of success and fairness:

1. What are your top two indicators of a truly successful partnership?
2. In your own words, what does a "fair and respectful" negotiation process look like?

3. When building an agreement, which is more important initially: establishing a trusting relationship or defining clear rules and terms? Please explain briefly.

Section B - Communication & conflict: This section probes directly into the tension between indirect/harmony and direct/debate styles:

1. When you hear an idea you believe is incorrect, what is your most typical response?
 - a) I point out the error directly and explain why.
 - b) I ask questions to guide the other person to see the error themselves.
 - c) I avoid mentioning it immediately to prevent confrontation and wait for a better moment.
 - d) Other.
2. How do you view written contracts: as final, unchangeable documents, or as flexible guidelines that evolve with the relationship?
3. What is the most important role of a facilitator: ensuring a fair procedure, strengthening relationships, or guiding the group toward a wise outcome?

Section C - Cultural preparedness: This section brings unspoken concerns and stereotypes to the surface:

1. What is one strength and one weakness you believe your cultural background brings to this collaboration?
2. What is your biggest concern about working with the other culture's negotiation style?
3. What is one question you have been hesitant to ask about the other group's way of doing things?

How to use the results: a guide for the facilitation team

The answers from this questionnaire are not graded; they are analyzed to customize the facilitation process. Here is how to interpret and use the results:

1. Analyze Section A: If one group's "success" is a solid contract and the other's is a strong relationship, the facilitators know they must explicitly bridge this gap in Phase 2. The "Hybrid Agreement" from Phase 3 becomes the direct solution to this divergence.

2. Analyze Section B: If most respondents from the Western group choose (a) for question 4 and the Tianxia group chooses (b) or (c), the facilitators must proactively implement the "Talking Circles" and "Face-Guarding" rules from Phase 2 to manage this communication clash.

3. Analyze Section C: The concerns and questions raised in this section are a goldmine. The facilitators can address the most common concerns directly at the start of Phase 2 and can design specific activities to answer the questions that have been raised, building immediate trust and empathy.

In essence, this Pre-Assessment is the strategic blueprint that ensures your beautifully designed facilitation process is not applied generically, but is precisely targeted to the specific cultural dynamics at play in your unique scenario.

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CHAPTER 2

AFRICAN UBUNTU CONSENSUS BUILDING, DEEP ECOLOGY SPIRALS AND ISLAMIC RECONCILIATION (SULH) TRADITIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Facilitation techniques are structured methods used by neutral facilitators to support dialogue, cooperation, and shared decision-making within groups. They aim to create safe spaces for communication, encourage equal participation, and guide people toward collaborative solutions, especially in contexts of community development and conflict mediation (Spangler, 2003; Díaz-Puente; Yagüe; Afonso, 2013). Through these practices, communities are able to strengthen relationships, identify common goals, and achieve outcomes based on trust and collective responsibility.

This chapter presents a comparative and practical examination of three traditions of conflict facilitation and resolution: Sulh Islamic Arbitration, Deep Ecology Spiral approaches, and African Ubuntu Consensus Traditions. It functions as a pre-assessment, aiming to identify which elements within an intercultural facilitation and co-design process may support success or, alternatively, create barriers to understanding and collaboration.

Rather than proposing a complete implementation, the work examines conditions that influence interaction between traditions and evaluates how values, communication styles, and expectations shape the quality of dialogue. The structure is organized into three phases: Preparing to Enter, Co-Presencing, and Going Forth, which outline how these traditions may interact, complement each other, and develop more inclusive and effective forms of engagement, examining strengths and weaknesses that help reveal points of convergence or potential obstacles.

Overall, this work seeks to expand the comprehension of intercultural facilitation by highlighting reflective awareness, the balance between emotional and analytical perspectives, and the co-construction of practices with shared meaning.

COMPARATIVE REVIEW

African Ubuntu Consensus Building Traditions: Strengths and weaknesses

Ubuntu is an African ethnical and social philosophy which aims to emphasize that human identity and dignity emerge through the sense of mutual care and shared belonging within

relationships, meaning “a person is a person through other people” or “I am because we are” (Murithi, 2006). Ubuntu targets the community view as the main source of responsibility and moral guidance, rather than seeing individuals as separate and self-contained (Murithi, 2006).

As a facilitation and conflict-resolution practice within African communities, Ubuntu prioritizes restoring relationships by rebuilding trust and social harmony. The goal is not merely to resolve a disagreement or assign blame and punishment, but to repair the fabric of the community itself through guided processes that involve acknowledging harm, expressing remorse, and giving and receiving forgiveness (Murithi, 2006).

The strong aspects of Ubuntu revolve around its relational and holistic approach, encouraging collective responsibility and reconciliation, as well as the emphasis on empathy and human dignity, and, of course, its consensus and inclusion values. Effectively, this means that the Ubuntu traditions focus on making decisions through dialogue and mutual understanding, as well as conflict resolution through the recognition of individual humanity and emotional expression (Murithi, 2006).

However, Ubuntu traditions also present a few drawbacks, especially when used as a cross-cultural facilitation technique. Since the emphasis on collective dialogue and emotional acknowledgment might require long processes, the technique is not always straightforward, and some people claim it is slow and even ineffective. That might entail their resistance to following the stages of the peacemaking process. Another weakness is the community’s reliance on trust, and participants from more individualistic and secular cultures may struggle to internalize the values of trust and mutual well-being, which can lead to the deterioration of the community (Murithi, 2006).

Deep Ecology Spirals: Strengths and weaknesses

Based on the understanding that Gaia, the Earth as a singular, complex, and self-regulating system, must be understood from an ecosophy perspective, the deep ecological spirals call for revisions to our values to heal our perception of separation between humans and nature. Deep ecological spirals also converge with science by promoting a more holistic view of physics, cosmology, psychology, and living systems. For this culture, our own identity must move away from the isolated ego and closer to ecological identities, where spirituality, science, and bodily and felt connection to the world form a sense of self that encompasses the broader community of life, without separating the observer from the observed (Deep Ecology Net, 2022).

A positive aspect of this culture is its collectivism; true listening and connections between living systems are capable of solving problems non-violently and effectively in the long term. Punishment, widely used in Western conflict-resolution systems and processes, does not always consider hearts filled with love, and thus is incapable of healing and restoring peace and peaceful coexistence. As points interpreted as negative, it is difficult to understand the complexities of the principles and values to be followed, making it difficult to find concrete and unambiguous actions that facilitate the resolution of problems and disagreements (Deep Ecology Net, 2022).

Sulh Islamic Arbitration: Strengths and weaknesses

The Sulh culture is based on Islamic and tribal values that shape conflict-resolution methods in Arab societies. This culture operates under the logic of collectivism, prioritizing social harmony and community balance over individualism and legal competition typical of the West. Sulh is the preferred method of dispute resolution, as it seeks to restore relationships and preserve honor and solidarity between the parties. In this view, conflict is considered negative, threatening social order, and must be resolved through dialogue, mediation, and consensus, often conducted by respected figures such as tribal leaders, religious leaders, or elders. Religion, in this context, is not

merely a belief, but a way of life (din), and Sharia guides both moral and legal aspects, imposing the ethical duty to reconcile disagreements (Al-Ramahi, 2008).

Among the strengths of this culture are the valuing of social peace, restorative justice, solidarity, and the moral authority of community leaders, which guarantees legitimacy and social acceptance of decisions. However, its weaknesses lie in the absence of formalization and procedural standardization, as well as in its dependence on personal ties and hierarchies (Al-Ramahi, 2008).

Table 1 – Attributes: Sulh, Deep Ecology Spirals and Ubuntu

Attribute	Sulh	Deep Ecology Spirals	Ubuntu
Spiritual Sacred	***	**	**
Nature/Environment	X	***	X
Linear Problem-Solving	**	X	X
Holistic Thinking	***	***	***
Hierarchical	***	X	X
Patient – Long-Term Process	**	***	***
Individual Rights Protection	***	**	***
Collective Focus	***	***	***
Formal Rules and Procedures	X	*	***
Emphasis on Consensus	**	**	***
Restorative	***	***	***
Adversarial	X	X	X

Source: Own elaboration based on Al-Ramahi, 2008; Deep Ecology Net, 2022; Murithi, 2006.

Legend:
X = not observed
*** to *** = present to strongly present in this culture**

Ubuntu, Deep Ecology and Sulh share a commitment to relational harmony and holistic balance – whether social, ecological, or spiritual. All three reject adversarial justice and promote dialogue, empathy, and restoration. However, they differ in their focus: Ubuntu focuses on community, Deep Ecology on ecosystems, and Sulh on moral and religious duty; and in the structure of the process: Ubuntu and Sulh are based on social rituals and leadership, while Deep Ecology emphasizes internal transformation and awareness.

CROSS-CULTURAL FACILITATION PROCESS

The analysis below presents the design of a cross-cultural facilitation process grounded in Deep Ecology Spirals as the base culture engaging with Sulh and Ubuntu. Building on the comparative and values-based analyses presented earlier, this section translates theoretical insights into an

applied facilitation framework structured across three sequential phases: Phase 1: Preparation; Phase 2: Co-presencing; and Phase 3: Going forth.

Phase 1: Preparing to Enter

What is needed in Phase 1 for Deep Ecology Spirals to prepare for Phase 2?

Participants are encouraged to reflect on how ecological interdependence resonates with the human interdependence of Ubuntu. Preparation involves a ritual of connecting with nature and reflecting on humility before life, for example, with grounding practices such as placing bare feet on grass, breathing in synchrony for a few minutes, and silently acknowledging the environment through touch, stillness, or observation. Calm breathing exercises, slow walking, meditation, or brief focus activities are important steps to prepare ourselves to interact with each other in real presence, without anxiety or uneasiness, to resolve our differences in a state of internal peace.

What activities could be done together to build understanding, empathy and trust?

In an Ubuntu sharing circle, the two groups, through active listening and storytelling, identify common values such as empathy, collective harmony, and forgiveness. The structure of the exercise involves mediation by the facilitator, who grants the right to speak to one participant at a time, enforcing a rule that requires the audience to bear witness without interruption. This structure ensures that every voice is heard and that the dialogue moves towards consensus and mutual understanding, building emotional safety and mutual respect.

To strengthen these relational bridges, a short sequence of practical facilitation techniques may be introduced. For example, before the facilitation begins, participants can exchange objects that symbolize what each person brings to the process, such as a word, gesture, or personal memory that represents kindness with others, patience, or hope. Once the process begins, rules such as listening before speaking, lowering voices, or marking who is speaking could reduce interruptions and anxiety.

A closing activity may include a collective acknowledgement round, where each participant names one thing they learned from another person, creating a sense of shared ownership of the insight. These activities do not replace the structure of Ubuntu dialogue but operationalize it, offering small and concrete methods that build reciprocity and emotional grounding in a shared space.

What is needed in Phase 1 for Sulh Islamic Arbitration to prepare for Phase 2?

Facilitators of the Sulh traditions prepare themselves by reaffirming the intentions of justice (‘adl) and reconciliation (sulh). To coexist with the ecological perspectives of Deep Ecology, they must expand the idea of harm, considering not only social imbalance but also environmental damage as something that deserves repair. This preparation can begin with a brief renewal of intention (niyyah) at the start of meetings, where participants state aloud the commitment to fairness, mutual respect, and responsible use of shared resources.

In practice, Sulh facilitators may review previous community agreements, identify where conflict has harmed land or water, and prepare restorative plans or even propose short reflection moments, inviting participants to observe the land before entering mediation. The preparation may also involve speaking individually with representatives of each family or group before the session, clarifying expectations, assessing emotional readiness, and identifying shared needs. Through this, Sulh enters the encounter grounded in justice and compassion, open to embracing other points as part of peaceful coexistence.

Phase 2: Co-presencing

What sequence of activities will best support coming together to bear witness and listen safely?

1. Entering/Rules:

- **Establish collective intentions and ethical rules:** Ubuntu's communal dialogue defines shared principles; Sulh ensures respectful speech; Deep Ecology offers grounding and Dadirri, as a deep awareness of oneself and others. This will happen through a structure in which the facilitator implements specific cultural tools at distinct moments: At the start, the session opens with an Ubuntu Inkundla circle, where the facilitator organizes the meeting as a "bundle of life," establishing that the conflict belongs to the collective and that every voice must be heard.
- **During the dialogue, particularly when disagreements arise,** the facilitator may use the Sulh principle of makarim al-akhlaq (good character), intervening to remind participants that fairness strengthens relationships while the desire to win an argument undermines them. Finally, when a challenge or emotional impasse arises, the facilitator uses Deep Ecology's Dadirri, pausing the verbal exchange to lead a somatic grounding exercise that shifts focus from the isolated ego to a deep, silent awareness of the broader living world.

2. Welcoming/Introducing:

- **Start with symbolic gestures of unity:** Begin with Ubuntu greetings, and brief silence for ecological connection (Grounding creates presence, and Dadirri (deep listening inspired by Australian Aboriginal peoples but used in contemporary ecological circles) creates an atmosphere of silent attention); a Sulh elder offers a prayer for peace.
- **The Ubuntu greeting** might happen, for example, as standing collectively in a circle (the bundle of life") and repeating the Zulu or Xhosa phrases to establish that the conflict or discussion belongs to the community, not just individuals.
- **The Sulh prayer** usually comes from a recitation of relevant religious texts or traditional invocations suited to the moment, such as the Quran, for example. The elder is invited based on criteria such as their personal qualities, reputation, religious merits, and status as a leader who lives in the community. At this moment, the elder is invited by the facilitator, which cedes the floor entirely to them to maintain the prestige and authority that is essential to the Sulh process.

3. Listening and bearing witness:

- **Exchange of experiences of harmony and conflict:** apply Sulh's ethics of respect and confidentiality, Ubuntu's empathy, and Deep Ecology's heart-to-heart dialogues, by promoting interactions with people that enhance transparent eye-to-eye conversation, for example, some respectful values exchange in groups that would be a safe place to share pieces of wisdom that everyone carries.



- **Then the participants share** experiences, concerns, or stories related to the theme of the facilitation: Ubuntu contributes empathy, emotional recognition, and communal witnessing, Sulh contributes respectful speech ethics and the principle of confidentiality, and Deep Ecology contributes reflective silence, slowing down, and somatic awareness. Example: “As each person speaks, the rest of us practice deep listening – Ubuntu’s empathy, Sulh’s respectful silence, and Deep Ecology’s profound attention”.

4. Safety:

- **Maintain emotional and spiritual safety:** Ubuntu promotes trust; Sulh provides moral boundaries; Deep Ecology offers somatic grounding techniques (breath, observation). That would be related to individual exercises of slowed inhalations and exhalation and thoughtful observation of the environment that the person is in, in favor of being well prepared to solve possible problems and divergences in a calm and effective way. In this case, Ubuntu contributes with: emotional openness and reaffirmation of the sense of belonging to the group; Sulh: protection of honor, respectful boundaries, and procedural clarity; and Deep Ecology: pauses for grounding and breathing practices.
- **Safety interventions may occur:** at the beginning (creating the necessary conditions), in the middle (to address possible increased tension), and at the end (to conclude harmoniously).

5. Anticipated challenges:

- Bringing Ubuntu, Deep Ecology, and Sulh participants into one shared facilitation space will **naturally generate cultural tensions** rooted in differences in rhythm, communication norms, emotional expression, and expectations about authority. Deep Ecology values silence, slowness, and contemplative presence. Ubuntu encourages expressive storytelling and emotional openness. Sulh promotes respectful, moderated speech grounded in dignity (adab) and non-interruption.
- **These contrasts may create misunderstandings** – for example, expressive Ubuntu dialogue may feel overwhelming for Sulh participants, while Deep Ecology silence may be misinterpreted as disengagement. Sulh participants may expect guidance from respected authority figures or elders, while Deep Ecology participants may expect horizontal equality and spontaneity. Ubuntu sits in the middle, privileging community consensus. These differing expectations may produce tension around leadership and decision-making. Ubuntu requires emotional expression; Deep Ecology processes emotions inwardly through presence; Sulh encourages modesty and restraint.
- **Some participants may feel pressured to share** more (or less) than is culturally comfortable. Sulh is grounded in Sharia and religious duty; Deep Ecology in ecological spirituality; Ubuntu in humanistic ethics and relational interdependence. Without guidance, participants might interpret each other’s frameworks through their own cultural lens. Ubuntu’s consensus is slow, Sulh expects efficiency through clear processes, and Deep Ecology prefers nonlinear rhythms. This can lead to frustration or misaligned expectations.

6. How to overcome differences:

- When challenges arise during Phase 2, facilitators will return to the practices prepared and refined in Phase 1, using the strengths of each tradition as tools to overcome cultural differences. Key strategies include:
 - (1) Returning to grounding and Dadirri (Deep Ecology) when pacing issues, emotional tension, or confusion arise. The facilitator team will pause the process for grounding breathing exercises, environmental awareness exercises, or a brief moment of Dadirri (deep listening). This helps regulate emotions, honor the silence for Deep Ecology, and create a neutral reset moment for Sulh and Ubuntu participants;
 - (2) Reaffirming the collective values of Ubuntu, if misunderstandings arise (interruptions, discomfort, emotional imbalance), facilitators will lead the group back to the Ubuntu value agreements co-created at the beginning of the session: “Let’s return to the values we placed at the center: empathy, dignity, care, and shared humanity.” This reminds the group of their collective commitment and equal participation;

- (3) Invoking the ethics of respect (adab) of Sulh. When conflict intensifies, or communication becomes harsh or inconsistent, the facilitator reintroduces the ethical norms of Sulh (respectful tone, non-interruption, preservation of honor, careful consideration of language). This provides structure and security without interrupting the dialogue;
- (4) Rotating leadership structures to honor all traditions and to bridge the gap between hierarchical (Sulh), horizontal (Deep Ecology), and consensus-based (Ubuntu) expectations, facilitators alternate between moments of guided dialogue (honoring Sulh), open circle sharing (Ubuntu), and silent reflection (Deep Ecology). This ensures that all cultural modes of participation are legitimized;
- (5) Using shared themes of harmony and interdependence whenever conceptual divergences arise. The facilitator synthesizes, bringing the group back to the shared principles identified in Phase 1 (harmony, collective well-being, restoration, interdependence (human or ecological)). These shared values serve as bridges between different worldviews;
- (6) Creating cultural safety checkpoints throughout Step 2. At any point of tension, the team can conduct a brief “cultural safety pause,” asking: “Is anyone feeling pressured?”, “Is anyone feeling emotionally overwhelmed?”, “Is there a value from your tradition that should guide us now?”.

Phase 3: Going forth

What is needed in phase 3 for Deep Ecology Spirals (if working separately)?

The Deep Ecology participants focus on maintaining the integration between ecological awareness and human relationships developed during the facilitation. They commit to ongoing ecological dialogues in which empathy and collective reflection are connected to local environmental practices. The group continues this process through the creation of “Earth Listening Circles”, inspired by Ubuntu’s emphasis on collective dialogue and relational interdependence. These circles serve as a space for continued reflection and community action, encouraging participants to translate ecological consciousness into shared responsibility for their surroundings.

Through this integration, Deep Ecology not only absorbs Ubuntu’s relational empathy and Sulh’s restorative principles but translates them into practice. For instance, they could create community listening circles that build emotional connection, coordinating collective restoration activities such as reforestation, waste cleanups, or soil recovery, and developing mediation spaces where shared ecological conflicts, for example, land and water management, can be resolved through dialogue and reconciliation.

What is needed in Phase 3 for Sulh Islamic Arbitration (if working separately)?

Communities within the Sulh tradition continue to hold restorative meetings, led by elders, preserving the collective and hierarchical structure that defines Islamic reconciliation. In practice, this means that disputes are addressed through dialogue, testimony, apology, and negotiated agreement. However, as a result of the intercultural process, these gatherings begin to integrate environmental responsibility and care for creation into their mediation practices, drawing inspiration from Deep Ecology’s vision of planetary ethics. The combination of moral justice (‘adl) and compassion (rah̄ma) remains central but now extends toward environmental and social harmony.

Reconciliation would not end solely with verbal agreements, but also with joint environmental restoration actions, such as replanting/reforestating areas affected by conflict, repairing irrigation canals, or restoring communal pasture zones as a sign of trust. Rather than focusing exclusively

on apology and forgiveness, the settlement becomes embodied through care for the land, transforming the environment itself and becoming part of the peace process. Respected figures within the Islamic community may incorporate ecological responsibility into decision-making, for example, by establishing shared guidelines for waste or plantation management as a condition for maintaining harmony. The emphasis on reconciliation is maintained and expanded by the Deep Ecology vision, while Ubuntu's influence reinforces more inclusive dialogue and empathic communication within traditional settings.

What is needed in Phase 3 for cultures Deep Ecology Spirals and Sulh Islamic Arbitration (if working jointly)?

The two cultures establish a Harmony Protocol that unites Sulh's justice-oriented reconciliation with Deep Ecology's environmental ethics, guided by Ubuntu's commitment to inclusive decision-making and shared consensus. In practice, a Harmony Protocol can be understood as a mutually agreed framework of cooperation designed to prevent conflict, encourage accountability, and maintain balance in ongoing relationships, functioning as a long-term structure that nurtures relationships over time rather than resolving once and abandoning them (Lederach, 1997).

This union phase emphasizes continued cooperation through periodic gatherings facilitated within an Ubuntu approach, ensuring that respect, transparency, and shared voice remain active. Instead of a single resolution event, the protocol sustains collaboration through light agreements, such as periodic check-ins, shared ecological commitments, and community review of decisions, maintaining commitment without requiring deeper intervention every time. By balancing Sulh's relational justice and Deep Ecology's ecological awareness, Ubuntu provides the mechanism that holds them together, allowing dialogue to remain open and stable throughout time.

The Harmony Protocol would promote cooperation based on ethical reciprocity, collective listening, and shared responsibility toward both community and environment. This continuity turns what began as a single facilitation encounter into an intercultural practice that keeps peace alive over decades, bringing together faith, ecological consciousness, and communal care as progress to coexistence.

What values and attributes of our own individual and facilitation team (base) culture do we need to be mindful of, as they may help or be a barrier?

- **Helpful values:** emphasis on relational harmony, decision making through community dialogue and consensus, listening, empathy, and acknowledgment of emotional experiences.
- **Possible barriers:** The collective expression expectation may feel unfamiliar to cultures used to individual reflection (eg: Deep Ecology). To address this possible barrier, the facilitator should also promote shared conversations of what they have learned and understood through the individual exercises of connection, presence, briefing, and observation. By that, people would also have some collective consensus and different understandings about their situation as a group before the next steps; The encouragement of emotional openness may be uncomfortable for participants who value modesty and restraint (eg: Sulh groups).
- **When collective expression is uncomfortable** (eg: Deep Ecology), after individual exercises in silence, presence, or observation, the facilitator can invite the group to share only general learnings or perceptions, not personal emotions. This allows the transition from individual to collective to gradual. This enables the building of collective understanding without pressuring for personal exposure. Example: "After the individual exercise, each person can bring up just one thing they noticed (something about the environment, the group, or the silence. Those who prefer can simply listen)".

- **When emotional openness is uncomfortable** (eg: Sulh groups), it is possible to replace direct emotional questions with more discreet invitations, focused on values, intentions, or needs, while maintaining cultural respect for emotional reserve. In this way, the group contributes without needing to reveal intimate emotions. Example: “Instead of talking about emotions, let’s share an intention for the group or something that each of us considers important to preserve harmony among us”.

PRE-ASSESSMENT GUIDELINE

After presenting the cross-cultural facilitation process, now it is important to present a pre-assessment guideline, which works as a diagnostic tool to identify the worldviews of each culture and potential risks and opportunities before the main facilitation begins.

Understanding of values and worldviews

The first stage involves investigating how participants understand the relationship between the individual and the collective, recognize interdependence, and comfort with spiritual or moral expressions in the context of facilitation.

To measure individual-collective orientation, specific questions will be used to assess the level of agreement with statements about individual autonomy, common well-being, and shared decision-making. Additionally, an analysis of the frequency of use of terms such as "I" and "we" in proposed narratives will be conducted, as well as the application of small case studies that require participants to decide between approaches centered on the individual or the group.

The recognition of interdependence (social or ecological) will be assessed through items that measure agreement with ideas of interconnectedness and the participants' ability to cite concrete examples that express this notion. An interdependence mapping exercise will allow for measuring the number and quality of connections identified by participants.

Finally, the level of comfort with spiritual, moral, or emotional practices will be measured using self-report scales, direct observation during a brief guided-silence exercise, and questionnaires that investigate willingness to engage in moments of prayer, spiritual metaphors, symbolic rituals, or emotional sharing.

Some important questions are:

1. How do participants understand the relationship between the individual and the collective within their respective cultures?
2. To what extent do they recognize interdependence – whether social (Ubuntu, Sulh) or ecological (Deep Ecology) – as essential to harmony?
3. How comfortable are they with spiritual or moral expressions (e.g., prayer, silence, ritual, emotional sharing) in a facilitation context?

Readiness for dialogue and mutual learning

The second stage seeks to assess openness to dialogue without judgment, expectations regarding structure and leadership, preparedness for emotional vulnerability, and comfort in honestly expressing feelings.

Openness to dialogue will be measured by observing behaviors such as the number of interruptions, the ratio between speaking and listening time, and the ability to reflect on or

paraphrase comments from other participants. A specific active-listening exercise will also be used to directly assess the level of difficulty perceived by the participants.

Expectations regarding time, structure, and leadership will be assessed through directed questions that investigate preferences for rigid agendas, improvisation, hierarchical leadership, or horizontal approaches. Comparative scenarios (structured vs. flexible) will be presented to identify preference trends.

Emotional readiness will be assessed by combining self-assessment (e.g., comfort in expressing regret, gratitude, or vulnerability), observation of facial expressions and body posture during brief activities, and analysis of the frequency with which emotions are mentioned in spontaneous accounts. Comfort in expressing emotions, more generally, will be measured by the clarity with which emotions are named and the willingness to address difficult or uncomfortable topics.

Some important questions are:

1. Are participants open to listening without judgment and engaging in non-linear, reflective dialogue?
2. What expectations do participants have regarding time, structure, and leadership in facilitation (e.g., hierarchical vs. egalitarian approaches)?
3. How prepared are participants to face emotional vulnerability and express remorse, forgiveness, or gratitude in a group setting?
4. Are participants comfortable in speaking openly and honestly about their experiences, feelings, and emotions?

Anticipated cultural tensions or barriers

In the third stage, potential sources of intercultural tension will be identified, such as differences in communication styles, implicit hierarchies, and distinct conceptions of justice.

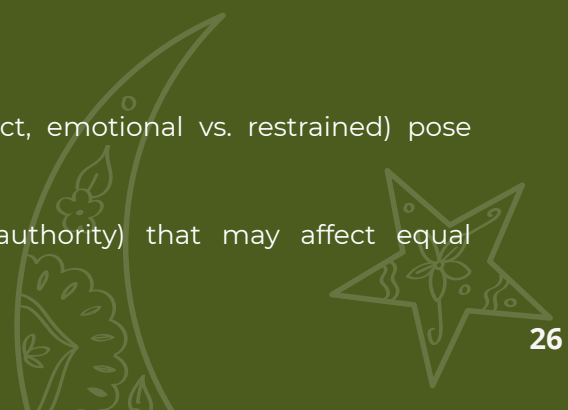
Communication styles will be assessed through questionnaires that investigate preferences for direct or indirect communication, emotional expressiveness, and perceptions of discomfort when interacting with different styles. Misunderstandings during short activities will also be recorded as an indicator.

Implicit hierarchies will be observed through metrics such as who speaks more, who is consulted first, and participants' self-perception of equal voice within the group. The use of specific questions will assess the degree of comfort in disagreeing with people considered authority figures, whether associated with age, gender, or social position.

Conceptions of justice will be measured by participants' responses to hypothetical dilemmas involving spiritual, moral, or ecological issues. Questionnaires will allow the identification of preferences for restorative justice, relational balance, reconciliation, or more retributive approaches.

Some important questions are:

1. Do differences in communication styles (direct vs. indirect, emotional vs. restrained) pose potential challenges?
2. Are there implicit hierarchies (age, gender, religious authority) that may affect equal participation?



3. How might differing interpretations of justice (spiritual, ecological, or moral) influence expectations of outcomes?

Indicators of common ground

The final stage identifies points of convergence among participants, assessing shared values, recognition of common purposes, and the level of facilitators' confidence in the group's readiness.

Common values will be measured by the frequency with which terms such as compassion, harmony, care, and collective well-being appear in participants' responses, as well as scale items that assess the degree of importance attributed to these values. The identification of common purposes is recorded both through questionnaires and through qualitative analysis of spontaneous statements mentioning restoration, empathy, or balance.

Some important questions are:

1. What shared values – such as compassion, stewardship, harmony, or collective well-being – can serve as points of convergence?
2. Do participants recognize common purposes across the three traditions (restoration, empathy, balance)?
3. How confident do facilitators feel that participants are ready to co-create a process rooted in mutual care and accountability?

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CHAPTER 3

ISLAMIC RECONCILIATION (SULH), DEEP ECOLOGY SPIRALS AND WESTERN LEGAL TRADITIONS

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to analyze, in both a comparative and applied manner, three traditions of conflict resolution and facilitation: Sulh Islamic Arbitration, the Deep Ecology Spiral and Western Legal Traditions. Each tradition embodies distinct values, practices, and worldviews regarding interpersonal relations, community dynamics, and the broader environment.

Building on these conceptual foundations, the work develops an intercultural facilitation process structured into three phases, Preparing to Enter, Co-Presencing, and Going Forth, highlighting how these traditions can interact, complement one another, and generate more inclusive, sensitive and effective facilitation practices.

Additionally, a set of post-assessment guidelines is presented to evaluate not only practical outcomes but also ethical, relational, and ecological transformations that emerge from cross-cultural engagement. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to a broader and more critical understanding of facilitation, emphasizing intercultural awareness, the integration of emotion and reasoning, and the co-creation of meaningful processes.

COMPARATIVE VIEW

Sulh Islamic Arbitration

The Sulh is a traditional Arab and Islamic practice of peaceful dispute resolution that originated in pre-Islamic Arabia, when tribal leaders and respected elders acted as mediators to restore harmony within and between tribes. With the rise of Islam in the 7th century, this custom was integrated into Islamic law (Sharia) and elevated to a moral and religious duty. The Prophet Muhammad himself encouraged reconciliation and considered Sulh (meaning “peace” or “reconciliation”) a virtuous act more rewarding than prayer or fasting (Al-Ramahi, 2008). Deeply rooted in the communal and spiritual fabric of Islamic societies, Sulh is built on the idea that justice is not only about determining who is right, but about restoring social balance and preserving relationships. It reflects the belief that conflict is a natural part of human interaction,

but that its resolution should lead to harmony, forgiveness, and the strengthening of community bonds.

The strength of Sulh lies in its collective and relational nature. It emphasizes solidarity, empathy, and moral responsibility, seeing reconciliation as an obligation shared by all members of society (Al-Ramahi, 2008). The process promotes dialogue and cooperation over confrontation, making it a restorative rather than adversarial approach to conflict. It is highly adaptable, functioning both informally within communities and formally within Islamic courts, and it prioritizes the *maslaha* (public good) over individual gain. Due to it being spiritual sacred, it can be linked to another culture studied: Deep Ecology Spirals; as well as the fact that both share a restorative and reflective process (Brown; Macy, 1998; Naess, 1989). The other culture studied is Western Legal Traditions, which we believe to have in common the hierarchy.

However, Sulh also faces a few limitations. Because it depends on communal authority and religious legitimacy, it can be difficult to apply in secular or multicultural settings. It's not that formal, which can be a problem. Furthermore, its emphasis on harmony may unintentionally silence marginalized voices or discourage open confrontation of injustice (Al-Ramahi, 2008).

Deep Ecology Spirals

The Deep Ecology Spiral, also known as the Work That Reconnects Spiral, is a framework developed by Joanna Macy within the field of Deep Ecology, designed to help people reconnect with themselves, with others, and with the living Earth (Brown; Macy, 1998). Representing a cyclical and evolving movement of awareness, the spiral guides participants through four main stages that mirror both emotional and ecological transformation. It begins with Coming from Gratitude, cultivating appreciation for life and creating an open, grounded atmosphere. It then moves into Honoring Our Pain for the World, where participants are invited to express grief, fear, or anger about the state of the planet, recognizing these emotions as signs of care and interconnection rather than weakness (Naess, 1989). The third stage, Seeing with New Eyes, expands perception through ecological understanding and systems thinking, allowing individuals to experience themselves as integral parts of the web of life. Finally, Going Forth transforms these insights into concrete intentions and actions for personal and collective change.

As a facilitation technique, the Deep Ecology Spiral offers a structured yet flexible process for workshops, group dialogue, and community development (Brown; Macy, 1998). Facilitators use it to create safe spaces for emotional expression, foster connection through experiential and reflective exercises, and support participants in transforming awareness into meaningful, sustainable action. Ultimately, the Deep Ecology Spiral serves as both a philosophical and practical approach to awakening ecological consciousness, empowering people to respond to the challenges of our time with courage, compassion, and a renewed sense of belonging to the Earth.

Western Legal Traditions

Western models of conflict resolution are systems of negotiation and mediation developed primarily within liberal Western societies, grounded in rational choice, individual autonomy, and structured dialogue. They emphasize analysis, cost-benefit calculation, compromise, and future-oriented problem solving (Adler; Aycan, 2018). These models often assume that conflicts can be resolved through logical reasoning, clear communication, and mutual interests, reflecting the cultural values of Enlightenment rationality and procedural justice that characterize Western institutions.

Their strengths lie in their capacity to provide organized frameworks for negotiation, promoting efficiency, transparency, and the pursuit of mutually beneficial solutions. They have proven effective in contexts where participants share similar assumptions about time, risk, and rational

behavior, such as in business, diplomacy, or formal political negotiations. The emphasis on structure and predictability often facilitates agreements in complex or multi-party disputes.

However, these same characteristics can become limitations when Western models are applied to non-Western contexts. They tend to privilege abstract reasoning over relational and emotional dimensions of conflict, and they may ignore local cultural norms regarding honor, hierarchy, or spirituality. When imposed uncritically, they risk reproducing forms of cultural colonization, assuming universality where only partial experience exists. The scholar John Paul Lederach argues that Western practitioners must not enter a conflict assuming they possess “the model”, and instead should recognize and engage with local ethnotheories, the culturally specific understandings of conflict, and ethnopraxies, traditional ways of resolving it (Lederach, 1995).

The most effective approach, therefore, arises from a process of cross-fertilization: the encounter between Western methodologies and indigenous practices. Rather than rejecting external knowledge or idealizing local traditions, this synthesis creates solutions suited to the specific cultural context. While Western models contribute analytical and procedural rigor, local systems often provide deeper sensitivity to collective emotion, social harmony, and moral legitimacy.

Finally, the reflection extends to the concept of culture itself, which goes beyond nationality or ethnicity. Culture also operates within institutions and professions, military, academic, legal, or humanitarian, each forming its own worldview (Adler; Aycan, 2018). Thus, conflict resolution is always a multi-cultural process, where participants bring multiple cultural and professional identities. Since individuals simultaneously inhabit many cultural spheres, there can be no single, universal technique of peacebuilding. The most authentic resolution emerges where external and indigenous perspectives meet, not in dominance but in mutual transformation.

CROSS-CULTURAL FACILITATION PROCESS

The analysis below presents the design of a cross-cultural facilitation process grounded in Deep Ecology Spirals as the base culture engaging with Sulh and Western Legal Traditions. Building on the comparative and values-based analyses presented earlier, this section translates theoretical insights into an applied facilitation framework structured across three sequential phases: Phase 1: Preparation; Phase 2: Co-presencing; and Phase 3: Going forth.

Phase 1: Preparing to enter

What is needed in Phase 1 for Deep Ecology Spiral to prepare for Phase 2?

In Phase 1, the Deep Ecology Spiral focuses on creating the internal and external conditions that allow for genuine connection, presence, and safety in the following phase, Co-Presencing (Brown; Macy, 1998). This preparatory stage is essential because it establishes the emotional, psychological, and relational foundation that will enable participants to engage deeply with themselves, one another, and the more-than-human world (Naess, 1989).

The process begins by clarifying the collective intention and purpose of coming together: to reconnect with life, to listen deeply, and to bear witness to the reality of our interconnected existence. Such clarity helps participants arrive with openness and curiosity, setting aside personal agendas or expectations.

Alongside this, facilitators must create a strong container of safety by establishing shared agreements, such as confidentiality, respect, attentive listening, and speaking from personal experience, that define how the group will interact (Brown; Macy, 1998). These agreements act as guiding principles that protect the integrity of the space and ensure emotional security. Welcoming and introductory rituals also play a crucial role in this phase, allowing participants to enter the process as whole persons rather than as abstract representatives of ideas or roles (Naess, 1989). Through inclusive introductions and gentle grounding practices like breathing exercises, silence, or expressions of gratitude, the group begins to build trust and coherence.

Cultural and ecological sensitivity are essential components of the preparation phase within the Deep Ecology tradition. Facilitators must acknowledge and honor the diverse ways in which people relate to nature, express emotion, and understand interconnectedness. As Naess (1989) argues, such awareness prevents the process from reproducing cultural hierarchies and instead invites mutual respect and reciprocal learning.

At this stage, it is crucial to introduce the principles of deep listening and bearing witness as core practices of co-presencing. According to Brown and Macy (1998), to bear witness means to be fully present to both the pain and the beauty of the world without judgment or the impulse to fix; it is an act of compassion that expands awareness and fosters collective healing. However, as highlighted by the instructors, dialogue consists not only of listening but also of speaking. Participants must be supported in opening themselves, voicing what arises within them, and embracing the vulnerability of sharing their inner experiences. Seed (1988) emphasizes that such courageous expression strengthens relational bonds and enables the group to become a container for authenticity and transformation.

By the end of Phase 1, the group should feel grounded, safe, and aligned in purpose, not only ready to listen deeply, but also prepared to speak truthfully from the heart. In this way, Preparing to Enter functions not merely as an introductory step but as the creation of a living container within which the transformative work of the Deep Ecology Spiral can genuinely unfold (Brown; Macy, 1998).

What is needed in Phase 1 for Western Legal Traditions to prepare for Phase 2?

In the preparatory stage, Culture B operates from a worldview that prioritizes order, rational planning, and procedural clarity (Adler; Aycan, 2018). Before entering dialogue or joint engagement, Western-oriented participants generally seek to define objectives, roles, expectations, and desired outcomes with precision. This need for structure reflects deeper cultural values rooted in Enlightenment rationalism and liberal individualism (Lederach, 1995), where predictability and personal responsibility are considered prerequisites for cooperation. Preparing for Phase 2, therefore, involves creating an environment that feels organized, logical, and safe for analytical exchange.

However, facilitators must recognize that this emphasis on structure can unintentionally suppress emotional awareness and relational preparation, two elements essential to genuine co-presence (Adler; Aycan, 2018). Because Western culture often separates reason from emotion, participants may feel uncomfortable engaging in reflective or affective exercises prior to formal discussion. Thus, facilitators working within Culture B should intentionally introduce practices that bridge the cognitive and the emotional, for example, opening conversations about personal motivations, values, or experiences related to the issue at hand (Lederach, 1995). Encouraging moments of vulnerability or narrative sharing helps balance efficiency with empathy.

To prepare effectively for Phase 2, the facilitator must help participants understand that successful dialogue requires not only logical readiness but also relational presence and openness to uncertainty. This means maintaining the cultural comfort of planning while gradually expanding the space for affective connection and reflexivity. Such preparation ensures that the analytical strengths of Culture B become an asset rather than a barrier once interaction begins (Adler; Aycan, 2018).

Phase 2: Co-presencing

What is needed in Phase 2 for Deep Ecology Spiral, Sulh and Western Legal Traditions as they come together?

1. Entering/Rules:

- Set shared intentions and ethical agreements (confidentiality, respect, attentive listening);
- **From Western models:** structure and clarity;
- **From Deep Ecology Spiral:** mindful entry and presence;
- **From Sulh:** moral grounding and communal responsibility.

2. Welcoming/Introducing:

- The opening of the process should begin with **gratitude or a symbolic ritual** that marks the transition into shared space. This can take many forms depending on cultural context, for example, a simple collective breath, the offering of water or a small natural object to the center of the circle, or a brief moment of silence honoring all beings (Brown; Macy, 1998). Such rituals ground the group, evoke interconnectedness, and establish a tone of reverence consistent with Deep Ecology's emphasis on widening the self beyond the ego (Naess, 1989).
- Introductions should invite participants to **honor both identity and purpose**. For example, each person might be invited to say their name, the place or community that shaped them, and one intention they bring into the space.
- Another possibility is to ask participants to share "one relationship with the natural world that has influenced who you are today." These forms of introduction align with Sulh's tradition of relational hospitality, in which people become known to one another through connections rather than roles alone (Al-Ramahi, 2008), while also reflecting the transparency valued in Western facilitation models.
- When the comment asks "**How would this be done?**", the answer lies in combining these traditions: the facilitator explicitly names the purpose of the introduction round, invites sincerity rather than performance, and models it by sharing first – briefly, authentically, and vulnerably. This blend of structured invitation (Western clarity), relational warmth (Sulh), and ecological awareness (Deep Ecology) creates an inclusive and meaningful opening.

3. Listening and bearing witness:

- **Create** storytelling or dialogue circles;
- **Listen** without interruption or judgment;
- **Combine** Deep Ecology's witnessing, Sulh's reconciliation ethos, and Western active listening.

4. Safety:

- Maintaining emotional and cultural safety relies on the **facilitator's presence, clarity, and attunement**. This includes setting explicit agreements, such as confidentiality, respectful listening, permission to pause, and non-judgmental speech – elements consistent with Western practices of structured group process (Gelfand et al., 2011). At the same time, safety is also cultivated through communal empathy, a principle central to Sulh, where the restoration of harmony depends on collective responsibility and mutual care (Al-Ramahi, 2008).

- **For example**, the facilitator might begin the session by saying: “If at any moment you feel emotionally overwhelmed, you may step back, breathe, or request a pause. This space belongs to all of us, and care for one another is part of our shared commitment”. The facilitator can also model slow pacing, soft tone, and grounded body language – behaviors that communicate steadiness and non-reactivity (Brown; Macy, 1998).
- **Deep Ecology** contributes to the understanding that trust grows when participants feel held by the group and by the more-than-human world. Activities such as brief grounding exercises, nature-based metaphors, or acknowledging the presence of ancestral or ecological lineages help create a sense of shared space greater than any individual (Naess, 1989). Through this integration – Western structure, Sulh’s communal compassion, and Deep Ecology’s relational trust – the group environment becomes a psychologically and culturally safe container for transformative work.

5. Reflecting/Leaving:

- **Invite** shared reflection, gratitude, and closure rituals;
- **Integrate** insights into future actions or commitments;
- **Unite** Deep Ecology’s transformation, Sulh’s harmony, and Western follow-up practice.

Phase 3: Going forth

What is needed in Phase 3 for Deep Ecology Spiral (if working separately)?

In Phase 3, Deep Ecology Spiral focuses on transforming the insights, emotions, and awareness cultivated in the previous phases into concrete forms of engagement and action (Brown; Macy, 1998). This phase represents the moment when participants integrate their experiences of gratitude, presence, and interconnectedness into their everyday lives, carrying forward the sense of purpose and belonging that has emerged through the process.

What is needed at this stage is a conscious effort to translate inner transformation into outer expression, bridging the reflective and experiential dimensions of the spiral with tangible practices that contribute to ecological and social well-being (Naess, 1989).

Facilitators play a key role in supporting this transition by guiding reflection on what participants feel called to create, embody, or change in their own contexts. Through dialogue and reflection, individuals can identify commitments and actions that align with the principles of deep ecology, recognizing themselves as active participants in the ongoing work of regeneration and care for life (Brown; Macy, 1998).

When working separately, Deep Ecology Spiral needs to establish structures that sustain the energy and clarity gained during the previous phases. This can involve creating personal or collective intentions, setting realistic goals for action, or forming support networks that maintain motivation and accountability (Naess, 1989).

Rituals of closure and gratitude can help mark the passage from inner experience to outward engagement, reinforcing the sense that each participant carries something valuable into the wider world (Brown; Macy, 1998). It is also essential to cultivate resilience and self-reflection so that the work continues to evolve rather than ending with the formal process.

Ultimately, Going Forth is not only about doing but about being different. It invites participants to embody a deeper awareness of interconnection, to act from compassion, and to sustain the practice of ecological consciousness in daily life (Naess, 1989). By grounding transformation in action, Deep Ecology Spiral ensures that the learning and reconnection experienced in the earlier phases become living expressions of care, responsibility, and renewal (Brown; Macy, 1998).

What is needed in Phase 3 for Western Legal Traditions (if working separately)?

When Western Legal Traditions moves toward conclusion or implementation, the dominant orientation is toward action, measurable outcomes, and institutional accountability (Adler; Aycan, 2018). Western participants often interpret “moving forward” as transforming discussion into concrete steps – formal agreements, written documentation, or performance indicators. This pragmatic approach reflects the Western belief in progress through rational control and the fulfillment of objectives (Lederach, 1995). It sustains motivation and a sense of accomplishment, which are vital for long-term commitment.

Yet, if the process ends only at this operational level, important symbolic and relational dimensions risk being left unattended. Closure within Western frameworks tends to be procedural, marking the end through signatures or reports, rather than experiential, where participants emotionally integrate the process and its meaning (Adler; Aycan, 2018). Therefore, in Phase 3, facilitators must go beyond logistics to include spaces for reflection, gratitude, and emotional processing. This might involve acknowledging collective learning, expressing appreciation for contributions, or revisiting the shared purpose behind the dialogue (Lederach, 1995).

Another challenge is the Western tendency toward individual accountability, which can overshadow collective responsibility and relational continuity. Facilitators should thus encourage participants to view success not merely as personal achievement but as a sustained commitment to the community or partnership that emerged. Integrating relational closure with analytical follow-through transforms the Western outcome-driven logic into a holistic completion process, aligning technical efficiency with cultural humility and emotional intelligence (Adler; Aycan, 2018).

What is needed in Phase 3 for Deep Ecology Spirals and Western Legal Traditions (if working jointly)?

- Integrate inner transformation (Deep Ecology Spirals) with structured action planning (Western Legal Traditions);
- Balance emotional and relational awareness with analytical and procedural clarity;
- Co-create commitments that honor both ecological interconnection and practical implementation;
- Establish support systems that sustain long-term collaboration and accountability;
- Use reflection and evaluation to adapt actions to cultural and contextual realities;
- Celebrate closure through gratitude and shared purpose, reinforcing mutual learning;
- Carry forward both the spirit of connection (Deep Ecology Spirals) and the discipline of structured problem-solving (Western Legal Traditions).

Table 3 – Cross-cultural facilitation process between Deep Ecology Spirals and Western Legal Traditions

Phase 1: Preparing to Enter	Phase 2: Co-Presencing	Phase 3: Going Forth
<p>What is needed in Phase 1 for Deep Ecology Spirals to prepare for Phase 2?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create conditions for safety, openness, and presence. • Clarify shared purpose and intentions. • Establish group agreements and respectful listening rules. • Use welcoming rituals and grounding practices. • Foster cultural awareness and readiness to bear witness. 	<p>What sequence of activities will best support coming together to bear witness and listen safely?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Entering / Rules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set shared intentions and ethical agreements (confidentiality, respect, attentive listening). • From Western models: structure and clarity. • From Deep Ecology Spiral: mindful entry and presence. • From Sulh: moral grounding and communal responsibility. 2. Welcoming/Introducing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open with a short moment of gratitude or reflection, inspired by Deep Ecology, to ground the group. • Encourage introductions that highlight relational identities rather than titles or roles, establishing equality between participants. 3. Listening and Bearing Witness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create storytelling or dialogue circles. • Listen without interruption or judgment. • Combine Deep Ecology’s witnessing, Sulh’s reconciliation ethos, and Western active listening. 4. Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain emotional and cultural safety through facilitator presence. • Draw on Western structure, Sulh’s communal empathy, and Deep Ecology’s trust in shared space. 5. Reflecting / Leaving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite shared reflection, gratitude, and closure rituals. • Integrate insights into future actions or commitments. Use Deep Ecology’s transformation, Sulh’s harmony, and Western follow-up practices. 	<p>What is needed in Phase 3 for Deep Ecology Spirals (if working separately)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate insights into concrete actions. • Define personal and collective commitments. • Create support structures for continued engagement. • Mark closure with gratitude and intention. • Carry the spirit of deep ecology into everyday life.
<p>What activities could be done together to build understanding, empathy, and trust?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided gratitude or reflection rituals. • Joint dialogue on values, justice, and harmony. • Nature-based activities fostering connection and presence. • Cultural exchange sessions to share traditions and practices. • Community meals or hospitality rituals symbolizing reconciliation. 		<p>What is needed in Phase 3 for Cultures A and B (if working jointly)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate inner transformation (Culture A) with structured action planning (Culture B). • Balance emotional and relational awareness with analytical and procedural clarity. • Co-create commitments that honor both ecological interconnectedness and practical implementation. • Establish support systems that sustain long-term collaboration and accountability. • Use reflection and evaluation to adapt actions to cultural and contextual realities. • Celebrate closure through gratitude and shared purpose. • Reinforce mutual learning.
<p>What is needed in Phase 1 for Western Legal Traditions to prepare for Phase 2?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation: Values structure, planning, and clarity; seeks defined goals and predictable processes. • Strengths: Brings organization, rational preparation, and clear expectations. • Challenges: May neglect emotional and relational readiness; tends to separate reason from feeling. • Facilitator focus: Balance structure with empathy; include reflective or storytelling moments to foster connection. • Goal: Prepare participants both logically and emotionally for genuine co-presence. 		<p>What is needed in Phase 3 for Culture B (if working separately)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation: Prioritizes tangible results, accountability, and efficient implementation. • Strengths: Ensures clear outcomes, documentation, and follow-through. • Challenges: Can reduce closure to procedure, overlooking emotional or symbolic meaning. • Facilitator focus: Integrate reflection, gratitude, and shared responsibility alongside practical actions. • Goal: Achieve holistic closure—combining efficiency with emotional awareness and relational harmony.

Source: Own elaboration based on Avruch, 2003; Global Water Partnership, 2025; Indigenous Peacemaking Initiative, 2025; Murithi, 2006.

POST-ASSESSMENT GUIDELINE

This post-assessment session is designed to consolidate learning from the cross-cultural facilitation process between Sulh, Western legal approaches and Deep Ecology Spirals. The post-assessment guideline is divided into eight evaluation questions with a guideline on how to answer and measure each one. The focus is to offer simple and practical questions for evaluating the successes and difficulties of cross-cultural facilitation between these three cultures:

1. Did the participants integrate the collective ethics of Sulh, the procedural rigor of Western legal traditions, and the ecocentric awareness of Deep Ecology Spirals into their facilitation practice?

How: By evaluating their facilitation plans, recorded sessions, and behaviors during practice simulations. Observers check if the facilitator uses:

- Sulh elements (hospitality, communal empathy, conflict softening) (Al-Ramahi, 2008);
- Western structure (clear steps, agreements, transparency);
- Deep Ecology elements (rituals, ecological metaphors, non-linear spirals) (Brown; Macy, 1998).

Example: A facilitator begins with a grounding ritual (Deep Ecology), outlines clear procedural steps for discussion (Western), and manages disagreements through a relational circle instead of debate (Sulh).

Measurement:

- Observation checklist + rubric score (1–5);
- Evidence in facilitation artifacts (agenda, ritual description, conflict-handling).

2. To what extent did participants demonstrate the ability to unlearn linear, goal-oriented, and individualistic models of reasoning, replacing them with more holistic, community-centered perspectives?

How: By analyzing whether participants replaced linear agendas with circular/spiral methods and whether decision-making involved group reflection instead of individual assertions.

Example: Instead of A → B → C, the facilitator uses a spiral flow: grounding → pair reflection → collective meaning-making → silence → closing.

Measurement:

- Rubric dimension (“holistic design”);
- Artifacts (session diagram);
- Participant reflection journals noting shift in thinking.

3. How effectively did participants balance structure and sensitivity, combining Western methods, with the relational and reflective found in Sulh and Deep Ecology?

How: By checking whether facilitators alternate between procedural clarity and emotional/relational attunement.

Example: The facilitator sets clear time boundaries (Western), opens space for emotional processing when tension arises (Sulh), and integrates silence or nature-based anchoring (Deep Ecology).

Measurement:

- Behavioral observation:
 - Number of times facilitator paused for emotional space;
 - Clarity of instructions;
 - Appropriate use of silence.
- Rubric dimension “structure–sensitivity balance”.



4. In what ways did participants show respect for local culture, avoiding both the imposition of external Western models and the romanticization of traditional practices, and instead fostering genuine cross-fertilization between approaches?

How: By evaluating whether facilitators co-designed rituals or procedural adaptations with local participants, instead of bringing pre-packaged formulas.

Example: Before using a local symbolic object or greeting, the facilitator asks: "Is this appropriate? Would you like to adapt it?"

Measurement:

- Documentation of consent/co-creation;
- Rubric dimension "cultural respect";
- Short interviews with local participants.

5. Did engagement with the three traditions cultivate empathy, humility, and a deeper sense of interconnectedness – both among participants and with the broader social and ecological systems they inhabit?

How: Through reflective writing, focus groups, and observation of group dynamics.

Example: Participants reference collective identity ("we") instead of individual ("I"), or express humility when correcting themselves.

Measurement:

- Content analysis of journals.
- Observer notes on empathetic responses.
- Likert items (e.g., "I felt connected to the group").

6. How did the facilitation process address cultural and methodological tensions, for instance between Western proceduralism, Islamic collectivism, and ecological spirituality, and what strategies were developed to navigate them constructively?

How: By identifying how facilitators detected tensions and what actions they took (pausing, naming the tension, hybridizing methods).

Example: When some participants push for a formal vote (Western), but others request relational discussion (Sulh), the facilitator proposes:

- quick anonymous preferences (Western), followed by
- a relational circle for understanding impact (Sulh),
- ending with a moment of silence (Deep Ecology).

Measurement:

- Observer evidence of tension management;
- Rubric dimension "tension navigation".

7. To what extent did participants recognize that culture operates beyond national or religious boundaries, influencing institutions, professions, and worldviews – and how did this awareness shape their approach to facilitation?

How: By examining whether facilitators identify multiple cultural layers (professional, organizational, generational) as sources of difference (Adler; Aycan, 2018).

Example: A facilitator notices that engineers prefer structure, while activists prefer expressive dialogue, and adjusts by using structured rounds mixed with open reflection.

Measurement:

- Reflection journals mentioning layered culture;
- Facilitation design adjustments based on institutional culture;
- Rubric scoring.

8. What enduring lessons emerged from this cross-cultural encounter that can inform future facilitation practices, making them more inclusive, sustainable, and context-sensitive?

How: Through final reflection circles, written synthesis, and facilitator presentations of “three lessons to carry forward.”

Example: A participant concludes: “Hospitality practices from Sulh + ecological grounding reduced tension better than formal mediation alone.”

Measurement:

- Collection of written lessons and coding for themes;
- Facilitator final assignment (“practice recommendations”);
- Follow-up check 30-90 days later to verify continued application.

The joint analysis of Sulh, the Deep Ecology Spiral, and Western Legal Traditions demonstrates that no single model is sufficient for addressing the complexity of contemporary conflicts. While Sulh foregrounds relational restoration and collective responsibility, the Deep Ecology Spiral brings an ecocentric and transformative dimension, and Western methods offer procedural clarity, structure, and strategic planning.

By articulating these perspectives, the work shows that intercultural facilitation requires both sensitivity and rigor; emotional presence as well as logical organization; deep listening alongside authentic expression. The integrated three-phase process reveals that the complementarity among traditions not only enriches facilitation practices but also strengthens their ethical, relational, and ecological impact.

Finally, the post-assessment guidelines reinforce that facilitation is not merely a technical exercise, but an ongoing practice of learning, cultural humility, and long-term transformative commitment.

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CHAPTER 4

WESTERN LEGAL TRADITIONS, AFRICAN UBUNTU CONSENSUS BUILDING, AND ASIAN HARMONY BUILDING TECHNIQUES

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a comparative analytical framework and an applied facilitation design to examine how the strengths and limitations of Western Legal Traditions, Asian Harmony Building Techniques and African Ubuntu can be integrated into a cross-cultural facilitation process. It begins with a comparative review of the three traditions, drawing on established scholarship to map their values, assumptions and procedural logics.

Building on this analytical foundation, the chapter then advances a cross-cultural facilitation process that integrates these traditions into a coherent, practice-oriented model. By positioning Western Legal Traditions as a procedural base while incorporating Ubuntu's restorative ethos and Asian Harmony's relational sensitivity, the facilitation analysis is structured around three interconnected phases – Preparing to enter, Co-presencing, and Going forth – the design offers concrete facilitation strategies, with examples of practices and activities that can be conducted to bridge these cultures.

The final section offers a post-assessment framework, demonstrating how cognitive, relational and practical dimensions of learning can be evaluated in a responsive way to the three cultures. With this post-assessment guideline, the chapter aims to show how facilitation practices can be empathetic and restorative across diverse social and institutional contexts.

COMPARATIVE REVIEW

In order to identify points of convergence and tension among Western Legal Traditions, Asian Harmony Building Techniques and African Ubuntu, this section presents a comparison among them in Table 1. Besides, Table 2 highlights how Western legalism prioritizes rule-based fairness and individual rights, whereas Table 3 shows how Asian Harmony Building Techniques emphasize social balance and indirect communication. Table 4 displays how Ubuntu foregrounds relational repair and communal belonging. This comparative analysis provides the conceptual grounding for understanding why no single tradition, on its own, is sufficient to address culturally diverse conflict settings.

Table 1 – Attributes: Western Legal Traditions, Asian Harmony Building Techniques and Ubuntu

Attribute	Western Legal Traditions	Asian Harmony Building Techniques	Ubuntu
Focus on the unity of humanity	X	*	**
Scope of responsibility	X	**	***
Economic vision	*	*	***
Precedent vs. Reconciliation	***	*	X
Source of authority	**	***	X
Final goal	*	***	***

Source: Own elaboration based on Avruch, 2003; Murithi, 2006; and Thomas, 2018.

Legend:
X = not observed
*** to *** = present to strongly present in this culture**

Table 2 – Justification of the Western Legal Tradition attributes

Attribute	Western Legal Traditions
Focus on the unity of humanity	Systems tend to focus on individual rights and separateness, with the legal system often operating outside the spiritual and ecological sphere.
Scope of responsibility	The focus is on the individual wrongdoer, seeking individual culpability and punishment.
Economic vision	The culture is often associated with a “cultural logic that emphasizes self-interest, private accumulation, and the competitive drive for power and resources” (Avruch, 2003).
Precedent vs. Reconciliation	The priority is to establish legal clarity and precedent, seeking a fast, linear resolution to the problem.
Source of authority	The ultimate authority is derived from the Law (Constitution, Statutes) and the formal structure of the court.
Final goal	The process aims for a legal “victory” (guilty or not guilty), with little emphasis on social healing or the ongoing relationship between the parties.

Source: Own elaboration based on Avruch, 2003.

Table 3 – Justification of the Asian Harmony-Building Techniques attributes

Attribute	Asian Harmony-Building Techniques
Focus on the unity of humanity	While not the legal system's central focus, this approach acknowledges the presence of spiritual and sacred elements and seeks balance within an ordered cosmos.
Scope of responsibility	Conflict is primarily seen as a threat to long-term relationships and group peace, and responsibility extends to families and interpersonal connections.
Economic vision	Implies a subtle sharing necessary to maintain social peace, though the primary focus remains stability and hierarchy, not necessarily equitable distribution.
Precedent vs. Reconciliation	The process is patient and long-term, aimed at preventing conflict recurrence by prioritizing social cohesion over strict legal precedent.
Source of authority	Authority is strongly derived from respect for position, seniority, and the hierarchical social structure.
Final goal	The goal is social cohesion (or harmony), achieved through a deliberate, long-term process designed to save face and maintain relationships.

Source: Own elaboration based on Anggita; Hatori, 2020; Thomas, 2018.

Table 4 – Justification of the Ubuntu attributes

Attribute	Ubuntu
Focus on the unity of humanity	Ubuntu highlights the “essential unity of humanity” and the notion that “my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs” (Murithi, 2006).
Scope of responsibility	Ubuntu mechanisms perceive a dispute as belonging “to the whole community,” transforming a law-breaking individual into a “law-breaking group” (Murithi, 2006).
Economic vision	The approach advocates for “Ubuntu economies” that emphasize fair resource distribution and thus the discharging of the Earth’s resources for the benefit of all, contrasting with systems that promote private accumulation.
Precedent vs. Reconciliation	Conflict resolution processes are structured with the guiding principle that parties need to be reconciled in order to re-build and maintain social trust and social cohesion. The process involves acknowledgment of guilt, remorse, forgiveness, and commitment.
Source of authority	Ubuntu societies developed mechanisms where consensus-building was embraced as a cultural pillar, and the entire society was involved, making the community the ultimate source of resolution.
Final goal	The final goal is the restoration of broken relationships and a commitment to co-existence, emphasizing reinclusion. In difficult cases, the death penalty is avoided because it “would only serve to cause injury to the society as a whole” (Murithi, 2006).

Source: Own elaboration based on Murithi, 2006.

CROSS-CULTURAL FACILITATION PROCESS

Integrating Western Legal Traditions, Ubuntu Consensus, and Asian Harmony-Building Techniques

This facilitation design combines three cultural paradigms of conflict resolution to create a process rooted in justice, empathy, and collective balance.

The Western Legal Tradition serves as the base culture, providing procedural structure, fairness, and logical reasoning.

The African Ubuntu consensus-building tradition offers a restorative and community-centered approach focused on reconciliation and belonging (“I am because we are”).

The Asian Harmony Building framework contributes patience, indirect communication, and respect for hierarchy to preserve social balance and honor.

By integrating these three dimensions within the United Peoples Ecosystem, this facilitation process aims to move beyond purely adversarial or legalistic logic, cultivating a dialogical space where participants can co-create meaning, mutual trust, and shared accountability.

The design follows three interconnected phases – Preparing to Enter, Co-presencing, and Going forth – using relational empathy, safe dialogue, and reflective practice to transform both individuals and relationships. The analysis from a variety of sources, including Avruch (2003), Murithi (2006), Indigenous Peacemaking Initiative (2025), Thomas (2018), and Anggita; Hatori (2020).

Phase 1: Preparing to Enter

What is needed in Phase 1 for Western Legal Traditions to prepare for Phase 2?

- **Develop relational sensitivity and reduce adversarial logic.** Example: Facilitators from Western cultures begin meetings with a short “check-in round” in which each person shares one feeling. This softens the overly logical/legal tone and signals a relational environment.
- **Train facilitators in active listening, emotional intelligence, and cultural humility.** Example: Before Phase 2, Western facilitators complete a 20-minute exercise: listening to a story without interrupting, then reflecting feelings instead of summarizing facts.
- **Adjust formal structures to allow flexibility and restorative dialogue.** Example: The Western facilitator introduces an agenda but explicitly says: “This is a flexible guide; emotional or cultural needs may lead us to adapt the order.”
- **Recognize that justice includes healing, not only rule enforcement.** Example: Facilitators intentionally ask: “Is there anything that still hurts and needs to be acknowledged before we move on?”, shifting from procedural justice to relational healing.

What is needed in Phase 1 for Ubuntu and Asian Harmony-Building Techniques to prepare for Phase 2?

- **Ubuntu:** Select respected community representatives and identify symbolic gestures of reconciliation. Example: Before Phase 2, the Ubuntu representative prepares a phrase or gesture, such as placing a bowl of water in the center, symbolizing cleansing and beginning anew.

- **Asian Harmony-Building Techniques:** Hold private preliminary meetings to clarify hierarchy and ensure that participants feel safe expressing concerns indirectly. Example: The Asian representative checks beforehand if any participant prefers indirect communication or private feedback rather than public confrontation.
- **Both cultures:** Translate relational and honor-based values into language understandable for Western facilitators. Example: Ubuntu explains that forgiveness may require storytelling; Asian Harmony-Building Techniques explain that silence does not equal disagreement.

What activities could be done together to build understanding, empathy, and trust?

- **Ubuntu Talking Circle:** Each participant shares a personal story of reconciliation or a moment when they learned something from another culture.
- **Harmony Reflection:** 1-2 minutes of silent breathing led by the Asian representative, grounding the group before speaking.
- **Collective Value Mapping:** Small groups identify key shared values (e.g., fairness, harmony, care).
- **Co-creation of a “Cultural Charter”:** Participants create 4-6 shared principles (e.g., “We listen fully,” “We speak with kindness,” “We honor silence,” etc.).

What values and attributes of our own (base) culture do we need to be mindful of, as they may help or be a barrier?

- **Objectivity, structure, and analytical reasoning** help with clarity but may hinder emotional depth.
- **The Western tendency toward linear logic and control** should be balanced with patience, empathy, and relational awareness.

Phase 2: Co-presencing

1. Entering/Rules:

- Open the session with a **collective ritual** (candle, silence, or shared breath);
- **Establish ground rules:** confidentiality, equal speaking time, no interruptions, respect for cultural differences;
- **Example of implementation:** The Asian facilitator rings a soft bell to begin; silence marks the shift into dialogue.

2. Welcoming/Introducing:

- **Ubuntu** representative opens with a communal greeting (“I am because we are”).
- **Western** facilitator states objectives clearly and simply.
- **Asian participant** shares a short reflection on humility and collective balance.
- **Example:** Each participant receives a small stone and places it in the center to symbolize contribution.

3. Listening and bearing witness:

- **Story-sharing round** where each participant narrates a meaningful conflict or reconciliation moment;
- **Others listen** silently and without judgment;
- **Western facilitator summarizes emotional insights** using reflective phrases (“I hear sadness and courage in what you shared”);
- **Example:** Ubuntu representative may ask: “What does your heart need to move forward?”.

4. Safety

- **Facilitators monitor** body language, tone changes, or silence that signals discomfort;
- **If tension rises**, pause for a grounding practice (breathing, silence);
- **Assign co-facilitators** from each culture to check in privately if someone feels unsafe;
- **Example:** If an Asian participant avoids eye contact, the co-facilitator privately asks if harmony feels broken and what is needed to restore it.

5. Reflecting/Leaving

- **Close with a gratitude ritual** (Ubuntu handshake, Asian bow, Western verbal acknowledgment);
- **Summarize** commitments and **plan** follow-up;
- **Example:** Participants write one word describing what they are taking from the session and place it in the center.

Phase 3: Going forth

What is needed in Phase 3 for Western Legal Traditions, if working separately?

- **Analytical debrief:** evaluate how relational approaches improved legitimacy and fairness. Example: Western facilitators create a short report comparing “planned structure” vs. “actual flow” and reflect on deviations caused by emotional needs;
- **Documentation and recommendations:** Example: Write guidelines: “Allow 10 minutes extra for storytelling in Ubuntu-influenced groups”.

What is needed in Phase 3 for Ubuntu, if working separately?

- **Community reintegration** ritual and continued dialogue;
- **Sharing personal testimonies** of forgiveness and transformation. Example: Ubuntu community gathers for a restorative meal or storytelling circle.

What is needed in Phase 3 for Western Legal Traditions and Ubuntu, if working jointly?

- **Joint reflection session** considering time, hierarchy, emotional expression, and lessons learned;
- **Creation of a Cross-Cultural Best Practices Guide** with principles from the three traditions;
- **Define sustainability indicators:** trust, cooperation, continuity of shared learning;
- **Identify concrete next steps** integrating the three previous points;
- **Example:** Plan a quarterly intercultural circle alternating facilitation between Western, Ubuntu, and Asian styles.

What is needed in Phase 3 for Asian Harmony Building Techniques, if working separately?

- **Confidential follow-ups** to maintain harmony and “save face”;
- **Exchange letters** or tokens of appreciation;
- **Example:** Participants send handwritten notes thanking each other for contributions.

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POST-ASSESSMENT GUIDELINE

This post-assessment guideline aims to measure the impact of the facilitation techniques on participants, identifying lessons learned and ways to strengthen future dialogue and impact. The post-assessment is based on a critical distinction between the rule-focused Western Legal Traditions (WLT) and the relationship-focused paradigms of African Ubuntu and Asian Harmony Building Techniques:

- **WLT Focus:** Emphasizes individualism and private interest. The process is linear and aims for a legal Precedent or Victory, with authority rooted in the Law.
- **Ubuntu Focus:** Emphasizes communalism (“I am because we are”). Conflict is communal, and the process is non-linear and holistic, aiming for Reconciliation and Healing.
- **Asian Harmony Building Techniques Focus:** Emphasizes group cohesion and hierarchy. The process is patient and focused on achieving Stability and preserving respect (face).

In order to integrate these facilitation traditions in a post-assessment guideline, it is important to balance relational, communal and legal-institutional needs. While it aligns with the deep relational values of Ubuntu and Asian Harmony Building Techniques – such as dialogue, mutual recognition, reconciliation, and social harmony – it also incorporates the core needs of the Western Legal Tradition by ensuring clear procedures, individual rights, accountability and legally grounded agreements.

The following post-assessment guideline is divided into parts: purpose and dimensions; core criteria and methods; sample culturally specific evaluation questions; and use of Results.

Purpose and dimensions

The assessment aims to measure cultural empathy, mutual understanding, and sustainable collaboration. Analysis covers three dimensions:

- **Cognitive:** Changes in participants’ understanding of justice (integrating forgiveness, healing, and social balance).
- **Relational:** Strengthening of trust, respect, active listening, and meaningful sharing, ensuring that participants are both heard and empowered to express their perspectives across cultures.
- **Practical:** Application of learned values in new facilitation contexts.

Core criteria and methods

Evaluation is guided by five axes: 1) expanded cognitive understanding; 2) listening and speaking balance; 3) transfer and application; 4) emotional safety and belonging; and 5) structural and legal clarity. Key methods include:

- **Reflective interviews:** Conducted with representatives from all three traditions (WLT, Ubuntu, and Asian Harmony Building Techniques) to analyze the balance between legal-structural clarity and cultural sensitivity, as well as participants’ capacity to actively listen and openly share their perspectives. For example, participants are asked to describe moments when they felt both heard and able to express their views, and how legal structure either supported or limited this process.
- **Narrative follow-up circle:** A return session where participants share how they applied values such as reconciliation, patience, and dialogue in their daily lives, measuring sustainability over

- time. For instance, participants may report how they used dialogue techniques in community, academic, or professional conflicts after the session.
- **Post-session questionnaire:** Measures immediate perceptions of trust, fairness, emotional safety, voice, and learning through short-scale and open-ended questions. Example indicators include: “I felt safe to express my perspective”, “The process was fair”, and “I learned tools I can apply in real situations”. An open-ended question asks participants to identify one concrete action they intend to apply after the session, measuring practical transfer.

Sample culturally specific evaluation questions

To ensure cultural balance and depth in the evaluation process, sample questions are adapted to each conflict paradigm:

1. Western Legal Tradition

- Did you feel that the rules and procedures of the process were clear and fairly applied?
- Do you believe your individual rights and interests were respected during the dialogue?
- Did the process lead to a fair and accountable outcome for those involved?

2. Ubuntu

- Did this process help restore relationships within the community?
- Do you feel that mutual care, respect, and collective responsibility were strengthened?
- Did you leave the dialogue feeling more connected to others?

3. Asian Harmony-Building Techniques Perspective

- Did the process help preserve social harmony and mutual respect?
- Were disagreements managed in a way that protected dignity and “face”?
- Did the dialogue promote patience, balance, and group cohesion?

Use of results

Since this post-assessment guideline combines quantitative and qualitative data, its findings can be used to:

- **Enhance facilitation models** by combining structural clarity (WLT) with reconciliation (Ubuntu) and relational balance (Asian Harmony Building Techniques), based on measured outcomes and participant feedback.
- **Train new facilitators** based on identified intercultural challenges and successful practices, and real participant testimonials to illustrate personal transformation, intercultural learning, and sustained relational impact.
- **Cultivate a stronger sense of global belonging**, empathy, and solidarity by using selected participant testimonials to illustrate personal transformation, intercultural learning, and sustained relational impact.
- **Strengthen future program design** through testimonial collection, gathering short written or recorded reflections from participants to capture lived experiences, perceived impact, and practical dimensions of the process.

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