Exploring Innovative Technology for Peacebuilding

Bill Warters, Ph.D.
Former Academic Director, Master of Arts in Dispute Resolution
Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan

Portfolio at campus-adr.net

My Journey with This

* Made a great career out of mediation and conflict resolution. Looked for "affordances" for peacework in job or placements I had.

* Trained community mediator, developed mediation services on college campuses, wrote book on it

* Got into technology early on in my career, hosted Conflict Resolution Tech Blog for years

* developed several grant-funded online clearinghouses exploring conflict resolution topics - see **creducation.net/**

* helped host annual online "Cyberweek" events starting back in the early 2000's that explored technology and conflict resolution issues

* attended international Online Dispute Resolution Forum conferences as the field expanded

* Taught an online course on Communication Technology and Conflict multiple times

Bill with his first smartphone

Tech to the Rescue?

We've often hoped for a brighter future thanks to technology

"Techno-optimism" is not new.

Early Examples of "Peace Tech"

- **Use of Telegraph** in Crisis Diplomacy (19th Century) - Lincoln used during Civil War to prevent escalation and manage rumors - Trent Affair of 1861 - diplomatic dispute with Britain

- **Hot Air Balloons** for Reconnaissance (19th Century) - monitor borders, give early warning

- **Early Radar** development (1930s-1940s) - provide early warning, time for de-escalation

- The **Nuclear Hotline** (Moscow-Washington Hotline, 1963) - developed after the Cuban Missile Crisis
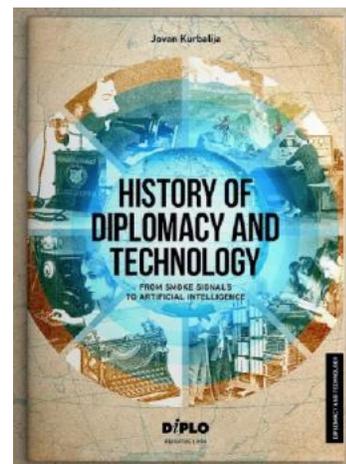
History of Diplomacy and Technology book

Tech's Many Functions

- **Agitate**
- **Mobilize**
- **Inform and Educate**
- **Build Community**
- **Share Perspectives**
- **Assist Decision-Making**
- **Build Consensus**
- **Construct Agreements**
- **Create Fear & Doubt**
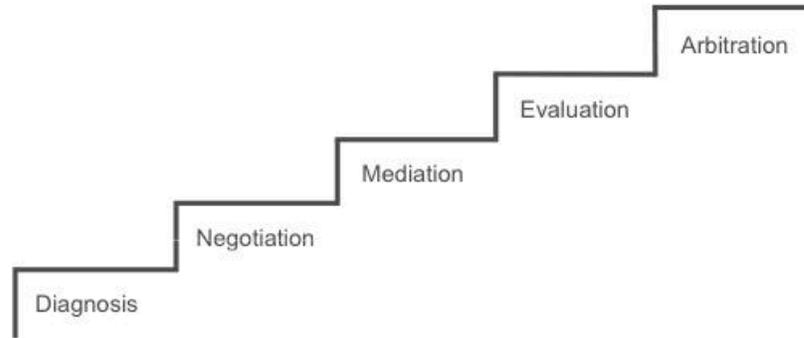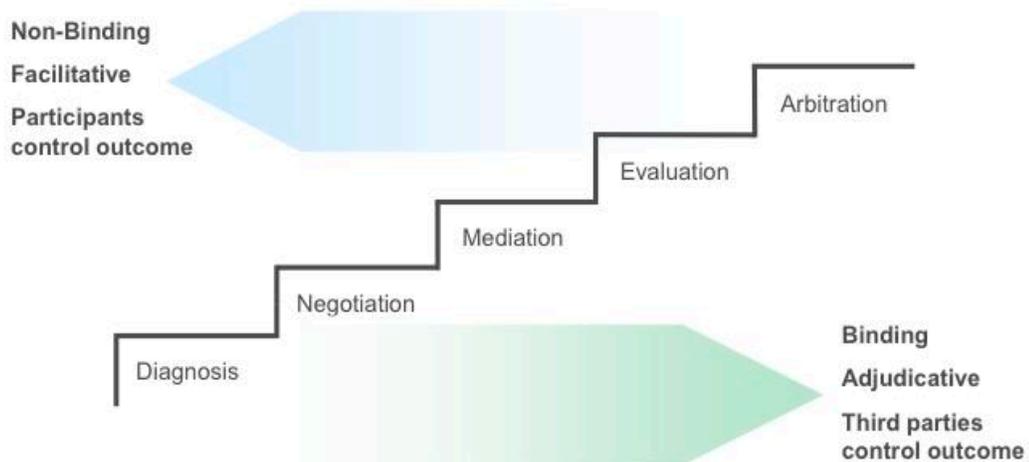- **Challenge Corruption**
- **Surveil & Document**
- **and MORE**

ODR

The Rise of **Online Dispute Resolution** began with the e-commerce boom of the late 1990s

What is **ODR**?

- **Online Dispute resolution processes**:
  - facilitative processes such as **conciliation**, **mediation**, and **facilitated negotiation**
    - advisory processes such as **case appraisal**, **mock trial**, and **neutral evaluation**
      - determinative process such as **arbitration** and **adjudication**
- Assisted by technology, especially the internet
- Can be used for online or offline Disputes
- Online disputes often occur **across legal jurisdictions**, making local courts less effective

Tech as the "Fourth Party" in a Dispute

Online Dispute Resolution scholarship starting using the concept of the **"fourth party"** to refer to technology's role in the dispute resolution process.

- emphasizes the collaboration between human neutrals and technology;
- some tasks a third party performs best and some tasks the fourth party (tech) performs best;
- Goal: optimize the partnership to achieve our shared objective of fairly resolving the dispute at hand

ODR Systems Assume Dispute Escalation Steps

- **Disputes usually escalate up through the different resolution types**

Arbitration

Evaluation

Mediation

Negotiation

Diagnosis

Characteristics of process

Non-Binding

Facilitative

Participants control outcome

Arbitration

Evaluation

Mediation

Negotiation

Diagnosis

Binding

Adjudicative

Third parties control outcome

Process Filtering

- Each process acts like a filter, resolving a certain percentage of disputes

Arbitration

Evaluation

Mediation

Negotiation

Diagnosis

# of disputes

Key ODR Resources

NCTDR
The National Center for
Technology & Dispute Resolution
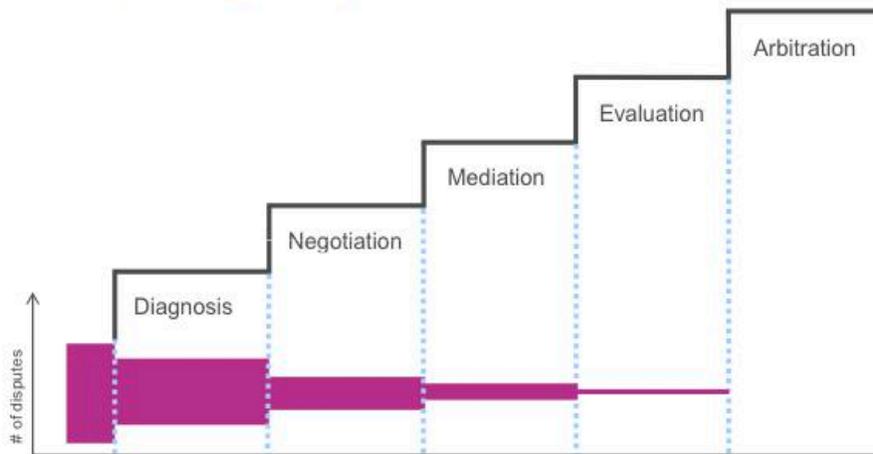
- Collection of ODR Standards, Principles and Guidelines https://odr.info/standards/

- Guidelines on ODR Training, Video Mediation, Video Arbitration

National Center for Technology and Dispute Resolution (odr.info)
- Annual ODR Forum (London April 29-30, 2025)
- Annual ODR Cyberweek (every Nov or Dec)
- Conferences & webinars archive
- ODR Bibliography (76 pages!)
- ODR Framework publication
- List of ODR academic programs, courses, trainings
- ODR Ethics, Principles, Standards archive
- ODR Self-certification & ODR Endorsement info
- ODR Provider list

See odr.info website!

International Council for Online Dispute Resolution (icodr.org)
- ODR membership & standards setting organization
- Members access to *International Journal for Online Dispute Resolution*
- Monthly meetings with innovators, practitioners, academics
- Podcast (free to public)
- ODR Ethical Standards in 10 languages
- 1 pagers: recommendations for video conferencing & ODR training

icodr.org

Appropriate flows can be built for any kind of dispute

MODRIA

Modular Online Dispute Resolution Implementation Assistant


ODR.com

New 2025 Textbook on Using Technology in Preventing and Resolving Conflicts

Law Schools and Conflict Studies programs are now include teaching about Dispute Systems Design involving Tech

New Book on Digital Dispute Systems Design
https://aspenpublishing.com/products/schmitz-digitaldisputesystemdesign

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2022 Book

- After the COVID shutdowns, lots of face-to-face mediators moved to online tools like Zoom

- This book by Dan Rainey sought to help them get more comfortable with the virtual environment with advice such as:

- 1) Become familiar with the technology yourself before using it with clients,

- 2) Help clients feel comfortable with the technology, and

- 3) Regularly check in with clients to address any concerns or issues.
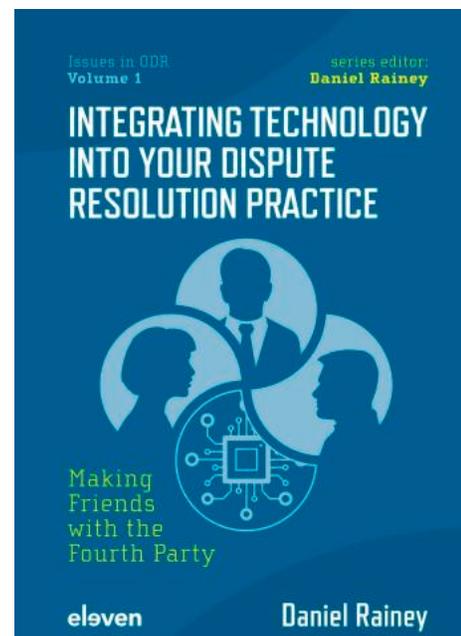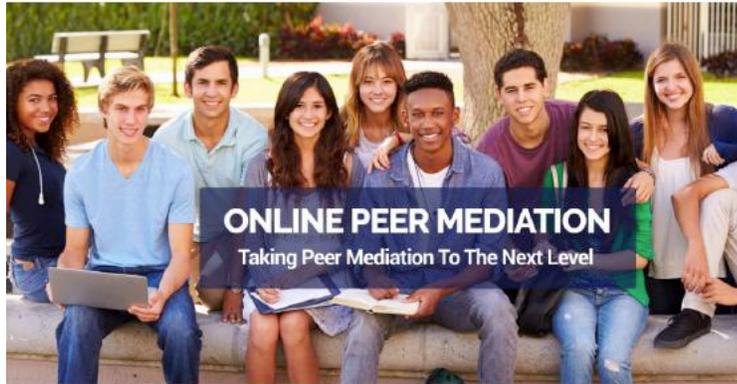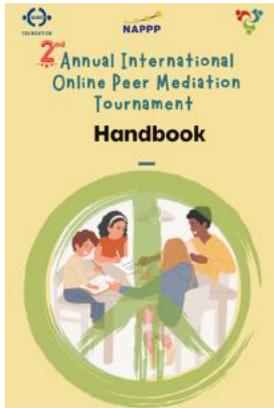
Zoom and COVID led to lots more people mediating online

Video Mediation with Youth

Online Peer Mediation Platform and **Tournament**

http://peermediationonline.org/

SmartSettle

Building on the early idea of "Blind Bidding," SmartSettle manages complex negotiations while keeping each party's information private. Rewards collaboration.
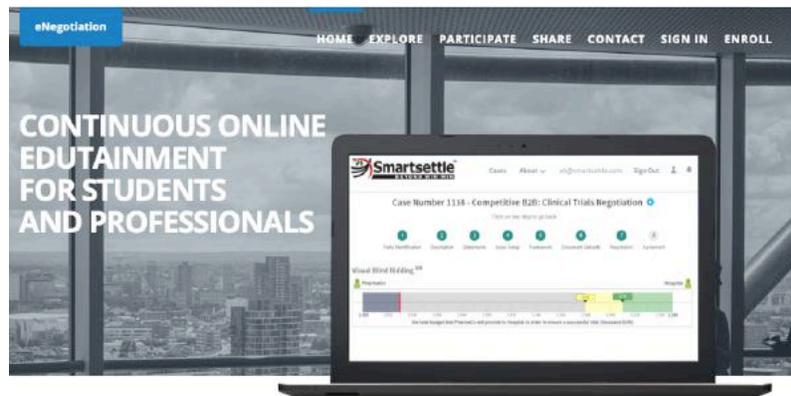
Try out SmartSettle platform here: https://enegotiation.org

Overview of the
eNegotiation Exhibition

Follow these steps to proceed quickly through the eNegotiation Exhibition process.

Step 1: Enroll   Step 2: Follow the Steps

Conflict Coaching Tools

Applies concepts from principled negotiation practice to your personal situations, offering advice on next steps.

Making Conflict Work
Harnessing the Power of Disagreement

On The Book   Meet the Authors   Media ⌄   Resources ⌄   Services   Contact   Buy the Book

What are your tendencies when dealing with conflict, and what are some different strategies that might be more effective?

How can you make conflicts work for you, not against you?

The free Making Conflict Work app—available on both iPhone and Google Android—provides an interactive tool to help you adaptively and constructively respond to conflict. Please click the links above or the icons below to view and download the app.

Get it on iTunes

GET IT ON Google play

ChatGPT Powered Coach for Mediators

- Built on top of ChatGPT, this system draws on a body of knowledge regarding best practices for mediators.

- Better than just ChatGPT on it's own

- Useful for instructors and people engaged in negotiation

- Developed by John Lande

RPS Negotiation and Mediation Coach 5.2 ⌄   Log in   Sign up for free

RPS Negotiation and Mediation Coach
By John Lande

This helps people prepare for and participate in negotiation or mediation using Real Practice Systems Checklists. It may make mistakes. Users should review the output, assess its usefulness, ask follow-up questions, and decide what to use. It does not provide legal advice or act as a mediator.

I'm an attorney or mediator.   I'm an instructor, trainer, student, or trainee.   I'm an ADR program administrator.   I'm having a problem with a dispute or deal.

Ask anything

Attach   Create image   Voice

By messaging ChatGPT, an AI chatbot, you agree to our Terms and have read our Privacy Policy.

https://chatgpt.com/g/g-67bdbff0204c81919bae3f14ac7810dc-rps-negotiation-and-mediation-coach

DoNotPay chatbot

A **chatbot-driven** legal assistance tool that helps individuals contest parking tickets, cancel subscriptions, and resolve consumer complaints.
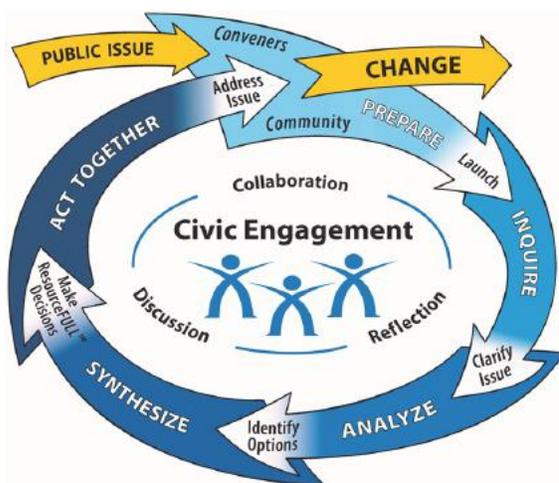

https://donotpay.com/
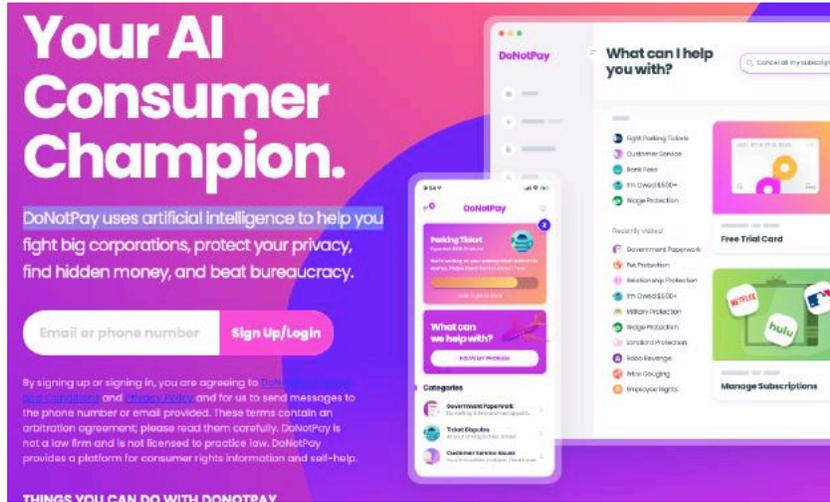
Image from UMN Extension service

Civic Engagement

Another Area of Tech Tool Development

Public/Citizen Engagement Enhanced Using Technology

https://www.iap2.org/

Spectrum from IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation)

http://nyc.smartparticipation.com/

https://www.mindmixer.com/

Public Participation Platforms

Polis

Input Crowd, Output Meaning

Polis is a real-time system for gathering, analyzing and understanding what large groups of people think in their own words, enabled by advanced statistics and machine learning.

Polis has been used all over the world by governments, academics, independent media and citizens, and is completely open source.

Get Started

https://pol.is/home2

Your Priorities (top-rated tool)

Your Priorities

Your Priorities is an open-source, highly accessible platform with a strong global reputation. It is the most highly rated platform on this list and has been innovating in the digital participation platform space since 2008. ...

97

https://citizens.is/getting-started/

Public Participation Platforms
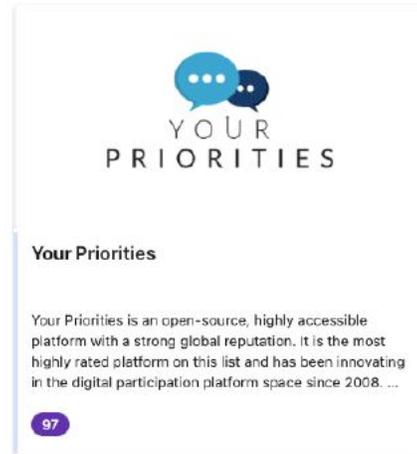
WE ARE PEOPLE POWERED

People Powered Global Hub
https://www.peoplepowered.org/

The UNDP and People Powered Provides a Guide

Get it here

People Powered Provides Ratings and an online Course

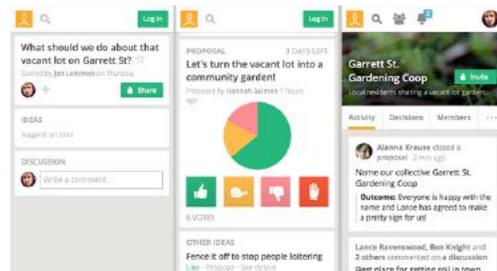https://www.peoplepowered.org/platform-ratings

Groupwork Platforms

loomio.com

Loomio

Collaborative Discussion and
Decision-making Tool Inspired
by the Occupy Movement

See video: Loomio in 2 minutes
https://youtu.be/K8ZRNtlRvAI?si=VqzeILhe_MoOzLJk

Another Groupwork Example
Facilitate Pro

- Capture Ideas with Brainstorm
- Build on Ideas with Comments
- Organize Ideas with Categorize
- Prioritize Ideas with Thumbs Up
- Evaluate and Select Ideas with Vote
- Decide with Results
- Document with Reports

https://www.facilitate.com
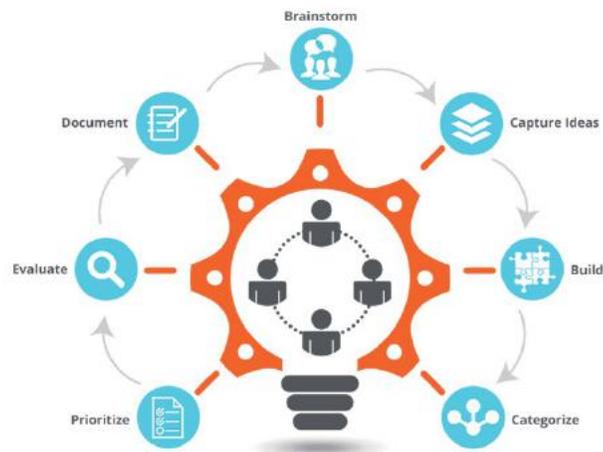
Remesh: AI-Powered Dialogue with up
1,000 people at once

https://www.remesh.ai/resources/the-future-of-policy-making-ais-role-in-politics

Soliya Project

Promoting Cross-cultural understanding via specialized video chat platform

Volunteers and staff are trained to be Virtual Exchange Facilitators

An online cross-cultural education program integrated into existing post-secondary curricula in more than 200 universities across 35 nations, providing a deeper understanding of the perspectives of others on important socio-political issues and crucial 21st Century skills, including critical thinking, communication, and digital media literacy.

https://soliya.net/

Peacebuilding and Tech

Areas of Digital Peacebuilding Work

25 Spheres of Digital Peacebuilding	
1. Digital Citizen Journalism and Cyber Witnessing	13. Modeling Digital Communication Skills
2. Digital Conflict Analysis and Ceasefire Monitoring	14. Facilitating Intergroup Digital Dialogue
3. Digital Election Monitoring	15. Digital Peace Education through Gaming
4. Digital Early Warning of Violence and Dangerous Speech	16. Digital Violence Prevention
5. Digital Civilian Protection	17. Digital Diplomacy, Negotiation and Mediation
6. Digital Public Opinion Polling	18. Digital Inclusion in Peace Processes
7. Digital Coordinating and Managing Crisis Information	19. Digital Upstanding
8. Digital Governance	20. Digital Social Movements
9. Digital Monitoring and Evaluation	21. Digital Hackathons and PeaceTech Startups
10. Digital Responses to Violent Extremism and Terror	22. Peace Engineering
11. Digital Fact-Checking to Stop Rumours	23. The Hague Peace Data Standard
12. Digital Social Marketing of Peace Narratives	24. Digital Media Literacy
	25. Digital Public Safety

https://toda.org/policy-briefs-and-resources/policy-briefs/25-spheres-of-digital-peacebuilding-and-peacetech.html

as per Lisa Schirch in *25 Spheres of Digital Peacebuilding and PeaceTech (2020)*

Early Example of Crowdsourcing & Crisis Response with Technology
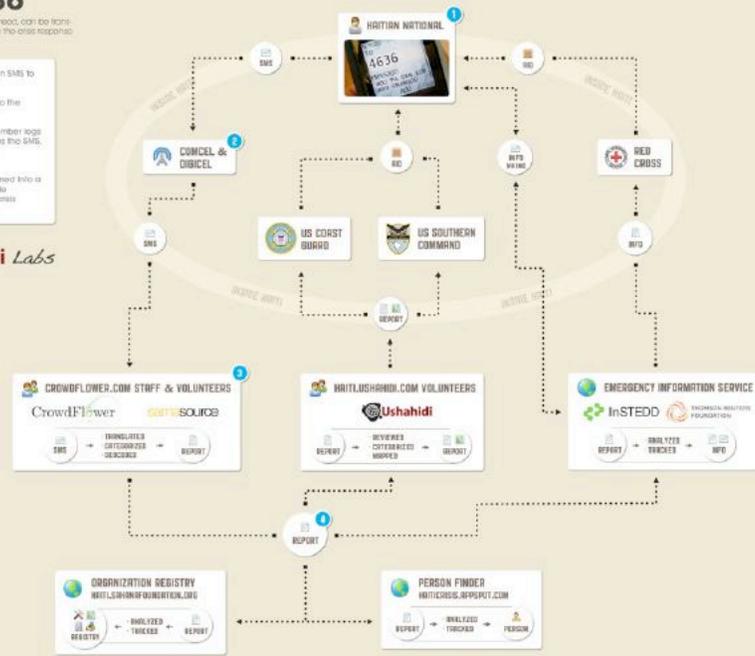

2010 Haiti Crisis Mapping Project

Key example of using Ushahidi software & volunteers and the Rise of "**Digital Humaitarians**"

Pulling it all together with Ushahidi

▸ Crowd-sourced Data was used to build a Crisis Map with Ushahidi

▸ http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/2012/07/02/crisis-mapping-haiti/
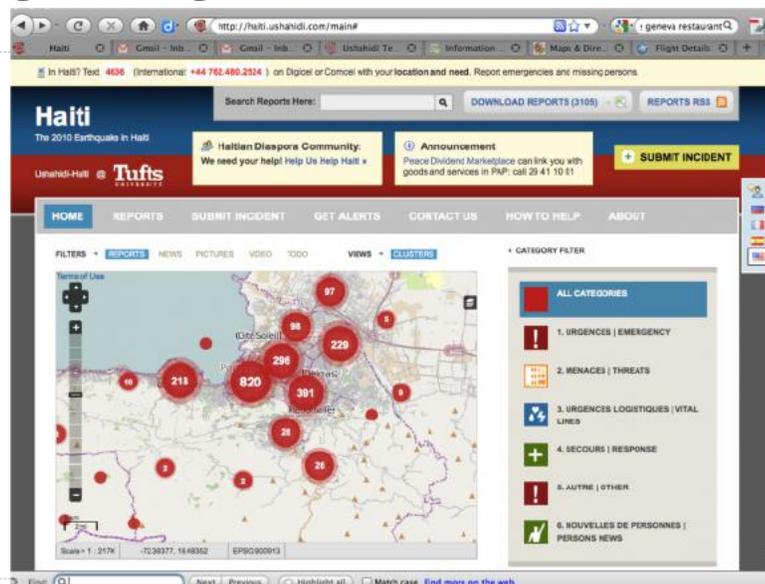
Ushahidi Project

Developed in Africa around mapping crisis situations and election violence, spread worldwide

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Phoenix Open Source Social Media Listening Platform

Empowering Peacebuilding through Social Media Analysis

https://howtobuildup.org/phoenix/

Much of the work that **Crisis Mappers** did manually back in Haiti can be automated now

Peacemakers Demonstrate Great Creativity designing
Apps for Peace and Justice

SwissPeace Digital Peacebuilding Toolkit

https://www.swisspeace.ch/articles/digital-peacebuilding-toolkit

Interactive Resource Developed using Miro
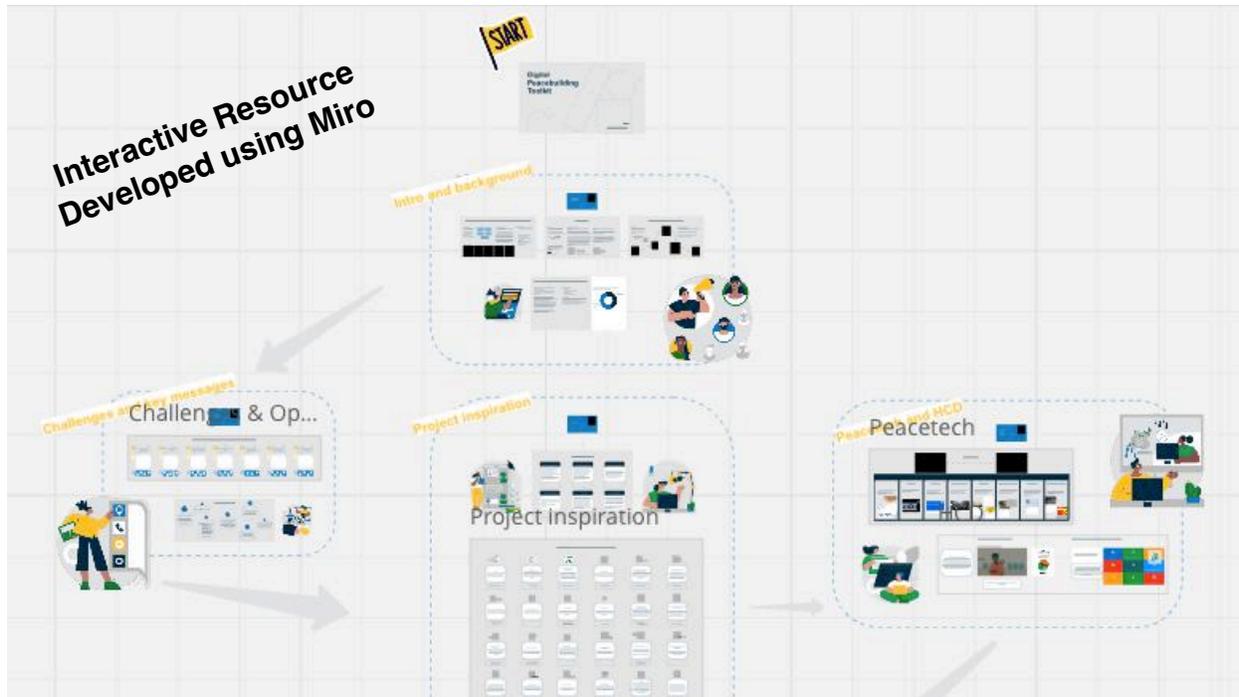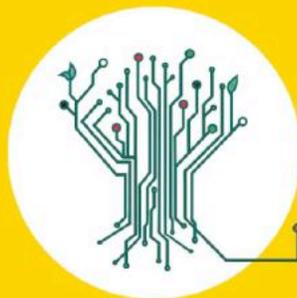
Peace Tech Incubators

BuildUp's Annual Conference on Peace Tech

https://howtobuildpeace.org/

Build Peace 2025 was held on November 21-23 in Barcelona, Spain

"Build Peace 2025 –
Towards a Pluriverse of Peace"

Three subthemes:
Between Polarization and Deliberation
Between Deterrence and Nonviolence
Between Erasure and Memory

**Build Peace 2026 will
take place in
Waterloo, Canada**

https://www.youtube.com/@HowToBuildUp/videos

Global PeaceTech Projects Map

https://www.globalpeacetech.org/gptmap/

Games for Peace Collections

EducationInspiring PeaceLab

https://eiplab.eu/peace-games-online-catalogue

Welcome to the online library of the 55 Peace Games included in the catalogue!

Tactical Tech - Pushing Back Using Info-Activism

AI & US

Now more than ever, we need to be ready to understand and navigate the impacts of generative technologies. Through immersive activations, toolkits, guides, and training programs, we empower individuals, communities, and organizations to understand and respond to the landscape of challenges and opportunities created by AI and AI-powered tools

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES & CLIMATE

Digital technologies impact the environment, but also shape the way society understands and responds to the climate crisis. Increasingly, actors work with data-driven technologies to set narratives that sometimes spread confusion. We advance knowledge and build the capacity of professionals and

YOUTH & TECH

We want to empower young people to shape the digital world they want to live in. To do so, we design creative, playful, youth-focused initiatives, captivating educational interventions, resources, toolkits, and workshop curricula co-created with youth and educators, with which we foster spaces for conversations about how technology impacts our lives—from the individual to the societal and

TECH, MEDIA & DIGITAL INVESTIGATIONS

Fostering a trustworthy, evidence-based information ecosystem is key. Through co-developed resources, digital residencies, and training programs on investigative methods, we build the capacity of journalists, media actors, citizen investigators, and content creators to uncover hidden

https://tacticaltech.org/

Tactical Tech Group's Latest -
Everywhere, All the Time:
a playful exhibition for Teens about AI

Developed by Tactical Tech's youth initiative What the Future Wants, co-developed with 300 young people and 100 educators, this learning experience equips educators, librarians and anyone working with youth aged 13-19 with a set of engaging and innovative digital literacy resources and methods that can be used in both formal and informal learning environments.

https://www.theglassroom.org/youth/everywhere-all-the-time/

What About Impacts of **Artificial Intelligence** and Large Language Models?

- Multiple languages are needed for true cross-cultural dispute resolution

- Groups are developing useful hate-speech lexicons for different regions, for use with social media research

- AI has been largely trained on English language content so far, but that is changing

- Bias is built into systems of data collection due to historical practices

- What role and mechanisms is there for human oversight of underlying algorithms?
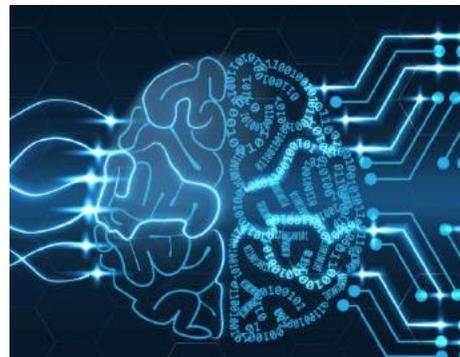
Training AI to Handle Conflict
Takes Culturally Relevant Data

- As more disputes are handled using online platforms, more data is available about possible solutions and patterns of settlement

- Because of **privacy concerns**, training of AI models for certain dispute types will probably lag behind

- Current AI language models can **summarize positions, predict outcomes at trial or arbitration, and propose bargaining ranges**, but they still lack the nuanced empathy and cultural awareness that can defuse emotional standoffs and manage multiple stakeholders.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION DATA

PeaceRep
Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform

AI is Coming for the Mediator's Job

Dyspute.ai

Meet Adri, Our AI Mediator.
Purpose-built for intelligent, affordable, 24/7 resolution.

GET STARTED

The AI Mediator That Never Sleeps.

emo

How AI Mediation Works

Complete intake chat with Adri, our AI mediator → Edit & exchange AI-generated case summaries → Vote on & make proposals in virtual mediation room

Edit and sign settlement agreement → Return to dashboard

Parties can also process settlement payment in-platform

Mediators had LOTS of Questions

Robert Bergman 1:27 PM
How many parties are supported? Can each party have multiple participants?

John Lande 1:28 PM
What conflicts would this be appropriate for? What would it be inappropriate for?

Sateesh Nori 1:28 PM
Are the proposals generated from prior caselaw? Does ADRI evaluate the evidence?

Doug Witten 1:29 PM
Is Adri trained to make proposals the parties are most likely to accept, or what Adri "thinks" is "correct" or "just" (or based on submitted comments, documents, or something else)?

shbla 1:31 PM
Can a party be directed to legal advice within this technology?

Robert Bergman 1:31 PM
What foundation models are being used, what agreements are in place for protecting information (e.g. DPA agreements), encryption, etc)

- Last week I attended a demonstration of dyspute.ai designed to mediate cases using an AI mediator

Applications of AI to Conflict Mediation

- Helena Puig from BuildUp recently summarized her view of the state of play in 2025.

- "Applications of artificial intelligence to mediation are all in one way or another focused on **sensemaking** of the opinions or positions of conflict parties, key stakeholders or the general public on matters related to a peace process. This includes making it easier to **interpret information coming from consultative processes**, **understanding the positions of parties from previous statements**, **interacting with a digital twin to play a conflict forward**, or finding **bridge-building positions**."

- Recent work is also focused on using **AI Agents** to model interaction with parties in a conflict situation. For example **"Ask Abdalla"** was an experiment of modeling an interview with a combatant in eastern Sudan, with **"Ask Amina"** representing a woman living in a refugee camp.

- Perhaps more interesting is the idea that interacting with AI agents might support — through **narrative integration**, **belief updating** and **information therapy** — one of the core goals of mediation: to achieve the shift from positions to interests and needs that paves the way for constructive negotiations

See https://howtobuildup.medium.com/ai-intimacy-mediation-a55cd822c380

# The UN is **Very Engaged** with AI

Examples from Recent UN 2.0 Data & Digital Community AI Expo

- UNICEF – Guidance on AI and Children
- UN-Habitat – BEAM AI (Building & Establishment Automated Mapper)
- UNFPA – AI Platform for Adolescents and Youth
- IOM – Donor Intelligence platform for local actors
- UNDP – AI Sprint - integrating new tools in a large org
- OHCHR – Human Rights Data Exchange (HRDx)
- UN Global Pulse – DISHA: Data Insights for Social & Humanitarian Action
- WIPO – Breaking Language Barriers with AI transcription and translation

https://dig.watch/updates/ai-in-practice-across-the-un-system-un-2-0-ai-expo

UN AI Resource Hub
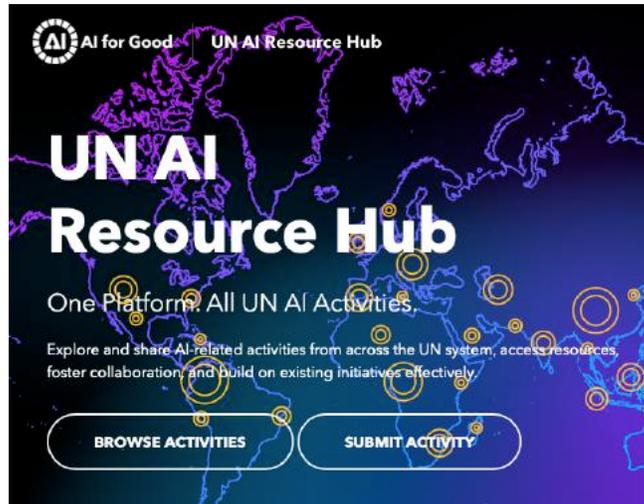
Diplomats are Finding Value in AI Tools

- Diplomatic agendas now include negotiations on AI-related agreements and treaties. AI also serves as a practical tool in diplomacy, aiding decision-making, drafting, translation, negotiation, and trend analysis.

- DiPlo, a training platform for diplomats and governments, has taken up the task of building tools specifically for statecraft and negotiation

- AI tools can "level the playing field" for smaller delegations
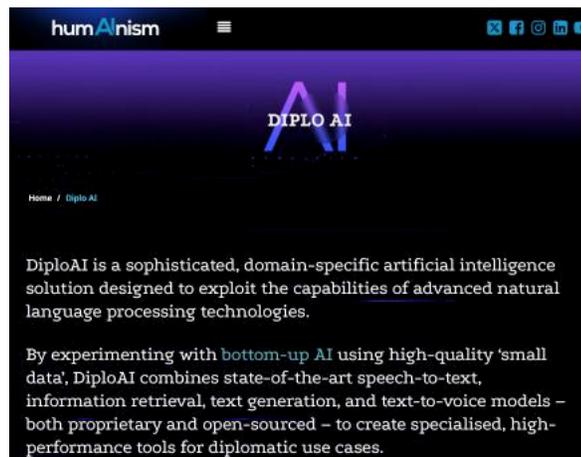
Diplomats are Finding Value in AI Tools

- AI tools can "level the playing field" for smaller delegations

- This Speech Generator helps parties get a big picture view of the positions of other groups, and then craft a statement that covers their core concerns

- Training public servants in AI is a growing focus with lots of good resources out there. See for instance, the AI for Good Skills Coalition: https://aiforgood.itu.int/ai-skills-coalition/

https://www.diplomacy.edu/the-diplo-ai-ecosystem/
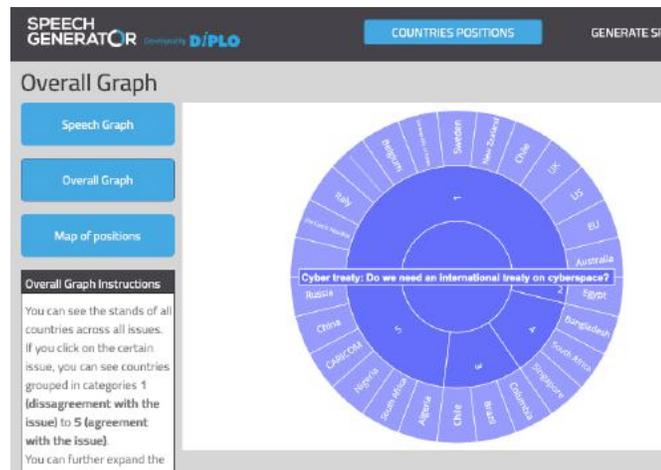
If Time permits
6:30 mins

Diplo 2025 End of Year Summary about AI Trends

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJ234sb0OEQ

Wrapping Up

- **Peace Tech** has **evolved greatly over time**.

- There are dual roles for technology both serving as a **neutral platform** and as a **tool for advocates engaged in struggle**

- The **market for Peace Tech is less lucrative** than for conventional weapons and adversarial approaches, so Peace Tech will need champions and return on investment arguments to continue to grow

- Note: **Clauses relating to the use of digital technologies** are now being added to peace agreements

- The emerging powers of large language models (**AI**) is certain to provide **new tools for peacemakers**, but we will need to **balance risk vs reward**

- **Building and Maintaining TRUST is a key challenge**