Global Artivism

Art, Culture, and Collective Action: A Framework for Global Social Change

A White Paper on Artivism, Behavioral Change, and Movement Building

1. Executive Summary

Global Artivism is an international movement that positions art and culture as central instruments of social, political, and environmental transformation. Operating as a joint initiative of the Global Commons Alliance, the Riky Rick Foundation for the Promotion of Artivism, and the Community Arts Network, the movement connects artists, activists, cultural leaders, and funders across continents under the shared belief that creative practice can reshape narratives, build community power, and accelerate collective action.

This white paper examines the global context in which Global Artivism operates, the behavioral and theoretical mechanisms through which art drives social change, and the practical frameworks needed to scale such efforts responsibly. It situates the movement's work within a broader field supported by research from UNESCO, the World Bank, and academic literature on social movements, framing theory, and decolonial practice.

Key findings include:

- Culture and the creative economy represent a measurable share of global economic activity, with UNESCO estimating that cultural and creative industries generate roughly US$2.25 trillion annually and account for close to 30 million jobs worldwide, alongside contributing approximately 3 percent of global GDP and 6.2 percent of employment.
- Research on social movements consistently identifies art as a powerful framing tool, capable of performing diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational functions that translate abstract grievances into shared narratives and mobilize emotions.
- Case studies from South Africa, Kenya, Brazil, and elsewhere demonstrate that locally rooted artistic interventions, from murals to performance to visual storytelling, can shift public discourse, influence policy debates, and strengthen community identity.
- Global Artivism's 2025 Convening in Salvador, Brazil, which brought together approximately 1,000 artists, activists, and cultural leaders ahead of COP30, exemplifies how convening diverse global voices can align cultural strategy with climate and social justice agendas.
- The movement's most significant opportunities lie in strengthening impact measurement, diversifying funding models away from dependency on a small number of philanthropic sources, and embedding Global South leadership more deeply into governance structures.

Recommendations: This paper recommends that Global Artivism and similar movements adopt a structured theory of change linking artistic output to measurable behavioral and systemic outcomes, diversify and decentralize funding, invest in longitudinal impact data, and build digital infrastructure that allows artivists across regions to collaborate without being dependent on a single convening event.

2. Problem Statement

Across the world, communities face a convergence of crises, climate disruption, economic inequality, displacement, and the erosion of cultural identity, which conventional policy and advocacy channels have struggled to address at the pace required. At the same time, public trust in institutions has declined in many regions, and traditional advocacy messaging often fails to resonate emotionally or culturally with the communities it intends to serve.

Several interlocking challenges define why an artivism-led approach is needed:

- Narrative gaps: Marginalized communities, particularly across the Global South, are frequently excluded from the production of dominant cultural narratives, even when they are most affected by the issues those narratives describe.
- Disconnection between activism and lived culture: Advocacy campaigns designed in policy or NGO settings often fail to reflect the cultural idioms, languages, and artistic traditions of the communities they target, limiting their resonance and uptake.
- Underinvestment in the creative sector as a vehicle for change: Despite its scale, with UNESCO data showing the cultural and creative sector represents 3.1 percent of global GDP and 6.2 percent of jobs worldwide, public and philanthropic investment in culture as a tool for social transformation remains limited relative to its demonstrated reach.
- Fragmentation of the global artivist community: Artists and cultural organizers working on parallel issues, climate, gender justice, and racial equity often operate in isolation from one another, without shared platforms for exchanging strategy, resources, or solidarity.
- Vulnerability of the creative sector itself: The same UNESCO research found that the COVID-19 pandemic caused a US$750 billion reduction in the Gross Value Added of the cultural and leisure sectors and the loss of 10 million jobs in 2020, with revenue declines of between 20 and 40 percent in several countries, underscoring how precarious the infrastructure supporting artivists can be.

Global Artivism positions itself as a direct response to these gaps. By building a global network anchored in Global Majority leadership, the movement seeks to connect artists and activists across regions, amplify narratives historically excluded from mainstream discourse, and channel the demonstrated power of culture toward systemic, rather than incremental, change.

3. Literature Review and Global Context

3.1 The Creative Economy as a Global Force

International institutions have increasingly recognized culture as both an economic sector and a development tool. UNESCO's Cultural Times report, produced with the International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers and EY, found that cultural and creative industries generate approximately US$2.25 trillion in revenue annually, equivalent to roughly 3 percent of global GDP, and employ around 29.5 million people, more than the combined automotive industries of Europe, Japan, and the United States.

UNESCO's subsequent Reshaping Policies for Creativity report, the third edition of a series monitoring the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, reaffirmed that 6.2 percent of all workers globally operate within the cultural and creative sectors, while highlighting that creators continue to struggle financially even as audiences consume more cultural content than ever.

3.2 Culture, Crisis, and Resilience

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed both the scale and fragility of the global cultural sector. UNESCO reporting found that the crisis caused a US$750 billion drop in Gross Value Added across cultural and leisure sectors and the loss of 10 million jobs in 2020, with several countries experiencing revenue declines of 20 to 40 percent. At the same time, the same research emphasized the sector's role as an instrument of social cohesion, an educational resource, and a contributor to well-being during periods of crisis, even as its economic contribution weakened.

3.3 Culture and Sustainable Development

Collaborative work between the World Bank and UNESCO, including the Cities, Culture, Creativity report, has examined how cultural and creative industries can be leveraged for inclusive urban growth, citing the sector's 2013 estimated value of US$2.25 trillion, or 3 percent of global GDP, as a foundation for arguing that cultural investment supports broader development goals. While no UN Sustainable Development Goal addresses culture directly, Sustainable Development Goal 8, on inclusive economic growth and decent work, and Goal 12, on sustainable consumption and production, are frequently linked to cultural development through UNESCO's Culture 2030 framework and its associated indicators.

3.4 Decolonization and the Global South in Cultural Discourse

A growing body of academic work argues that genuine cultural transformation requires structural change, not only representation. Scholars writing on the decolonization of the arts argue that dismantling colonial power dynamics requires reallocating resources toward Indigenous- and Black-led organizations and reforming the leadership, curatorial practices, and funding structures that determine whose work is seen and supported. Research from institutions such as the University of Amsterdam's Decolonial Futures research priority area similarly emphasizes that ideas of freedom and liberation are plural and rooted in specific regional histories across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, rather than singular or universally Western in origin.

This literature directly informs Global Artivism's emphasis on Global Majority leadership, a framing that positions communities historically marginalized by colonial and economic systems not as beneficiaries of cultural programming designed elsewhere, but as its architects.

4. Theory of Change Framework

Global Artivism's work can be understood through a five-stage theory of change that links individual creative acts to systemic outcomes. Each stage builds on the one before it, and the framework is iterative rather than strictly linear: systems change, in turn, opens space for new narratives.

1. Art	2. Narrative Change	3. Community Engagement	4. Collective Action	5. Systems Change
Creative works, artistic interventions	Reframed stories, visibility for excluded perspectives	Dialogue, shared identity, local ownership	Organizing, mobilization, advocacy	Policy shifts, institutional reform, cultural norms

Figure 1: Global Artivism Theory of Change — Art → Narrative Change → Community Engagement → Collective Action → Systems Change

At the first stage, artists produce work, murals, performances, films, and music that engage directly with lived experience. Research on visual arts in social movements shows that this stage operates through framing theory: artworks perform diagnostic framing by identifying a problem, prognostic framing by suggesting a direction for change, and motivational framing by generating the emotional energy needed to act.

The second stage, narrative change, occurs when artistic work begins to shift how an issue is publicly understood. The third stage, community engagement, translates that shifted narrative into shared identity and dialogue at the local level, often through participatory or social-practice art forms in which artists collaborate directly with communities rather than producing work about them.

The fourth stage, collective action, is where engaged communities organize, advocate, and mobilize, frequently using the artistic narratives developed in earlier stages as unifying symbols. The fifth stage, systems change, represents the durable outcome: shifts in policy, institutional practice, or deeply held social norms. Crucially, systems change feeds back into the first stage, as transformed conditions open new creative possibilities and new stories to tell.

5. A Behavioral Economics Perspective

Beyond social movement theory, behavioral economics offers a complementary lens for understanding why art-led approaches can succeed where conventional messaging fails. Several behavioral mechanisms are particularly relevant to Global Artivism's model.

5.1 Social Norms and Identity

Behavioral research consistently finds that people's actions are shaped less by abstract information than by perceptions of what others like and value. Art that depicts communities acting collectively, caring for the environment, organizing, and celebrating shared heritage can shift perceived social norms by making collective values visible and normalizing participation. When art reflects a viewer's own identity and community back to them, it can strengthen a sense of belonging to a group that is already acting, which behavioral science identifies as one of the strongest predictors of individual participation.

5.2 Narrative Framing and Cognitive Accessibility

Framing theory, as applied to visual arts in social movements, demonstrates that the way an issue is presented strongly influences how audiences interpret it and whether they feel motivated to respond. Research on the emotional dimensions of mobilization identifies an “emotional cocktail” in which moral anger at a concrete, intolerable injustice functions as a primary driver of action, while positive emotions such as humor and surprise increase how memorable and shareable a message becomes. Art's capacity to combine these emotional registers, sometimes within a single work, gives it an advantage over purely factual or statistical communication.

5.3 Trust and Cultural Legitimacy

Trust in messengers is a well-established factor in whether behavioral appeals succeed. Artists who are embedded within the communities they represent, the “artivist” model central to Global Artivism, carry a form of cultural legitimacy that external advocacy organizations often lack. Decolonial scholarship reinforces this point, arguing that who produces and curates cultural narratives is itself a determinant of whether those narratives are trusted and adopted by the communities they describe.

5.4 Belonging and Collective Identity

Finally, large-scale convenings such as Global Artivism's gathering of approximately 1,000 participants in Salvador function, from a behavioral perspective, as identity-reinforcing events. By physically bringing together artivists from many countries, such convenings create a shared sense of belonging to a global movement, which research on collective action suggests can sustain individual motivation well beyond the event itself, provided that follow-up networks and communication channels are maintained.

6. How Art Drives Social and Behavioral Change: The Evidence

A substantial body of academic research supports the claim that art functions not merely as commentary on social issues, but as an active driver of social and behavioral change. This section synthesizes that evidence across several mechanisms.

6.1 Giving Voice to the Unheard

Research on art as a medium for social change describes how activist art amplifies the experiences of communities often excluded from mainstream discourse, shedding light on injustices, inequality, and human rights concerns that might otherwise remain invisible to broader audiences.

6.2 Visual Storytelling and Empathy

Studies of visual storytelling in activism find that conveying narratives and messages through creative means allows artists to evoke empathy, provoke critical thinking, and inspire action across a wide range of social issues, often succeeding where purely informational campaigns do not.

6.3 Public Space as a Forum

Street art and murals, because of their accessibility and visibility in public spaces, function as a public forum for addressing social and political issues. Research on urban murals in Africa documents how artist collectives use large-scale public works to make connections between social and environmental issues visible to entire communities, transforming everyday urban spaces into sites of reflection and dialogue.

6.4 Reshaping Norms Through Participation

Social practice art, in which artists collaborate directly with communities, has been shown to reshape community norms by shifting the focus from artists' individual expertise toward community knowledge itself. This participatory model has been applied to causes ranging from disability inclusion to anti-abuse campaigns and urban planning, embedding social change processes directly within artistic practice rather than treating art as a separate communications layer.

6.5 Historical Evidence of Impact

Historical case studies provide some of the strongest evidence for art's role in systemic change. During the apartheid era in South Africa, artists such as Willie Bester and Sue Williamson created works that documented and denounced the injustices of the regime, contributing to the international pressure that accompanied apartheid's eventual end. More recent movements, including South Africa's Fees Must Fall student protests beginning in 2015, demonstrate how creative and symbolic forms of protest can reshape national debates on inequality and access to education, in that case prompting government action on tuition funding.

7. Stakeholder Analysis

Global Artivism's model depends on coordinated participation from a diverse set of stakeholders, each contributing distinct resources, perspectives, and constraints. The table below summarizes these groups, their roles within the movement, and the primary value they exchange with the network.

Stakeholder Group	Primary Role	What They Contribute / Need
Artists / Artivists	Create work that reframes narratives and engages communities directly	Contribute lived experience, creative skill, and cultural legitimacy; need platforms, funding, and protection from political risk
Activists & Grassroots Organizers	Translate cultural narratives into organized collective action	Contribute mobilization capacity and local knowledge; need access to cultural content and shared strategy
Communities	Provide context, participate in social-practice art, and are the ultimate beneficiaries of change	Contribute legitimacy and ownership; need genuine inclusion in decision-making, not just representation
Funders & Philanthropic Partners	Resource the movement's programs, convenings, and infrastructure	Contribute capital; need transparency, impact evidence, and alignment with values-based partnership models
NGOs & Partner Organizations	Provide institutional infrastructure, networks, and thematic expertise (e.g., climate, education)	Contribute organizational capacity and sectoral knowledge; need cultural partners who can extend their reach
Policymakers	Shape the regulatory and funding environment for culture and creative industries	Need evidence of impact and constituency pressure; can provide enabling policy and public investment
Media & Digital Platforms	Amplify artivist work to global audiences	Contribute reach and visibility; need compelling, shareable content and credible sourcing

Table 1: Global Artivism Stakeholder Map

A recurring tension across these groups is the asymmetry between those who hold cultural legitimacy and lived experience (artists and communities) and those who hold financial and

institutional power (funders and policymakers). Global Artivism's emphasis on Global Majority leadership represents an explicit attempt to rebalance this asymmetry by ensuring that decision-making authority sits closer to the communities the movement serves.

8. Global South Leadership and Decolonization

A central pillar of Global Artivism's strategy is its commitment to Global Majority leadership, a term it uses to describe communities historically marginalized by colonial and economic systems. This commitment reflects a broader shift within cultural and academic discourse toward decolonization as a structural, rather than symbolic, process.

Scholars studying decolonization in the arts argue that surface-level efforts, temporary exhibitions of underrepresented artists, diversity hires, or public statements of inclusion, fail to address the underlying structures of leadership, curatorial authority, acquisitions, and funding that determine whose work is seen, valued, and supported. Genuine decolonization, by this account, requires reallocating resources toward Indigenous- and Black-led organizations and reforming the institutions that have historically excluded them.

Research from the University of Amsterdam's Decolonial Futures initiative similarly emphasizes that concepts as fundamental as freedom itself are not universal but plural: ideas of freedom as revolution, independence, liberation, and emancipation emerged from specific historical experiences across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East during the twentieth century, distinct from individualist conceptions often assumed to be the default.

For Global Artivism, this perspective translates into several practical implications:

- Governance structures should ensure that artists and cultural leaders from the Global South hold decision-making authority, not only advisory roles.
- Funding models should prioritize direct resourcing of Global South-led organizations rather than channeling resources through Northern intermediaries.
- Narrative strategy should amplify self-determination and locally generated frameworks for change, rather than importing frameworks developed elsewhere and applying them globally.
- Partnerships, such as Global Artivism's collaboration with the South Africa-based Riky Rick Foundation, should be structured so that regional partners shape agendas for their own contexts rather than implementing externally designed programs.

The location of Global Artivism's two major convenings to date, an inaugural conference in South Africa and the 2025 convening in Salvador, Brazil, reflects this orientation, situating the movement's flagship gatherings within Global South contexts rather than in traditional centers of cultural philanthropy.

9. Case Studies: Art-Led Social Change in Practice

The following case studies illustrate how artistic interventions, across different regions, mediums, and issues, have contributed to measurable shifts in public discourse, policy, or community organization. Each example reflects themes directly relevant to Global Artivism's model: local rootedness, narrative reframing, and connection to broader collective action.

9.1 Faith47 and Urban Murals in South Africa

South African street artist Faith47 has produced large-scale murals addressing inequality, gender-based violence, and human rights across Johannesburg and other cities. Her mural "The Harvest," depicting a woman carrying agricultural produce, has been cited as an example of how urban murals transform cityscapes into platforms for reflection on social injustice, drawing attention to issues that might otherwise remain confined to policy discussions.

9.2 Maasai Mbili and Climate Murals in Nairobi

The Nairobi-based artist collective Maasai Mbili has used murals to raise awareness of climate change, deforestation, and pollution and their effects on local ecosystems. Their large-scale public works depict the interconnections between human communities and the natural environment, functioning as accessible entry points into climate conversations for residents who may not engage with formal environmental policy debates.

9.3 Serge Attukwei Clottey's Water Scarcity Installations, Ghana

Ghanaian artist Serge Attukwei Clottey repurposes yellow plastic jerrycans, locally known as "Kufuor gallons," widely used across West Africa for water storage during shortages, into large-scale installations. By transforming an object of daily survival into a recognizable artistic symbol, his work has drawn international attention to water scarcity and environmental pollution while remaining rooted in a material immediately recognizable to local audiences.

9.4 Fees Must Fall, South Africa (2015–2016)

The Fees Must Fall movement, a student-led protest movement that began in South African universities in 2015, combined creative and symbolic forms of protest with organized advocacy to call for the elimination of tuition fee increases. The movement succeeded in halting fee increases in the short term and prompted the national government to increase funding for higher education, while reshaping broader public discourse on inequality and access to education in South Africa.

9.5 The Global Artivism Convening, Salvador, Brazil (2025)

Building on an inaugural conference held in South Africa, the second Global Artivism Convening took place in Salvador, Brazil, from November 3 to 5, 2025, bringing together approximately 1,000 artists, activists, and cultural leaders from around the world. The event was deliberately timed ahead of the COP30 climate summit, positioning cultural strategy as preparation for the high-stakes climate negotiations that followed, and reflecting the movement's broader effort to align global cultural convening with concrete political moments.

Across these cases, a consistent pattern emerges art succeeds as a vehicle for change when it draws on materials, imagery, or symbols already meaningful to a local audience, and when it is

connected, directly or indirectly, to an organized movement capable of converting attention into sustained action.

10. Comparative Analysis with Similar Global Movements

Global Artivism operates within a wider ecosystem of organizations that use art and culture as tools for social impact. Comparing its model with other initiatives highlights both shared strategies and areas of differentiation.

Initiative	Core Approach	Comparison to Global Artivism
Art for Amnesty	Uses artistic expression and high-profile artists to amplify human rights campaigns and raise awareness for Amnesty International's advocacy work	Similar emphasis on amplifying overlooked voices, but operates primarily as a programmatic arm of an existing advocacy organization rather than as an independent movement with its own convening infrastructure
Global Fund for Women's Artist Changemakers Program	A feminist-values program launched in 2021 supporting artists across geographies, from São Paulo to Fiji, working in painting, sculpture, music, and digital installation to drive social justice movements	Shares Global Artivism's global, multi-regional scope and emphasis on artists as movement leaders rather than supporters; both reject the framing of art as a supplementary layer to activism
For Freedoms	A US-based artist-led initiative using public art and civic engagement campaigns to encourage participation in democratic processes	Demonstrates a similar model of artist-led civic engagement, though with a national rather than global frame, and without the explicit Global Majority leadership structure central to Global Artivism
UNESCO Creative Cities Network	A network of over 180 member cities collaborating on culture-led urban development and creative economy growth	Operates at a much larger institutional scale and focuses on economic development policy, whereas Global Artivism centers on grassroots movement-building and narrative change rather than urban policy frameworks

Table 2: Comparative Landscape of Art-Led Social Change Initiatives

This comparison suggests that Global Artivism's distinguishing characteristics are its explicit grounding in Global Majority leadership, its multi-organization partnership structure spanning climate, youth arts education, and community arts sectors, and its use of large-scale, geographically rotating convenings, South Africa followed by Brazil, as a mechanism for building a genuinely global, rather than regionally anchored, network.

10.1 Why is Global Artivism Uniquely Positioned to Lead a Global Artivism Movement?

Taken together, several features distinguish Global Artivism from the comparable initiatives outlined above and position it to scale where others remain narrower in scope. Where many art-for-change programs are run as a single organization's initiative or confined to one country's civic context, Global Artivism is structured from the outset as a partnership spanning three organizations, the Global Commons Alliance, the Riky Rick Foundation for the Promotion of Artivism, and the Community Arts Network, each bringing distinct strengths in climate advocacy, youth arts education, and cross-sector community organizing respectively, giving the movement an institutional base that is inherently multi-regional and multi-sectoral rather than dependent on a single founding organization's reach.

This is reinforced by a governance philosophy built around Global Majority leadership, which, unlike initiatives that primarily showcase artists from underrepresented regions within programs designed elsewhere, places decision-making authority with the communities most affected by the issues being addressed, a structural commitment that the decolonial literature reviewed in Section 8 identifies as the difference between genuine transformation and symbolic representation.

Global Artivism's strategic framing also allows it to sit at the intersection of climate justice, cultural expression, and social movement organizing in a way that single-issue initiatives cannot: by treating culture as the connective tissue between these domains, the movement can mobilize artivists around climate action, narrative justice, and community organizing as a unified agenda rather than as separate programs competing for attention. Its convening model further sets it apart, moving its flagship gathering from an inaugural conference in South Africa to the 2025 convening in Salvador, Brazil, ahead of COP30, and signaling a deliberate strategy of rotating through Global South regions to build a worldwide network anchored in different cultural contexts rather than returning repeatedly to the same geography.

Finally, because its theory of change deliberately links narrative change, community engagement, and systems change into a single continuous pathway, as set out in Section 4, Global Artivism is positioned not merely to produce or showcase art, but to convert cultural momentum into organized movements and, ultimately, into durable policy and institutional outcomes, a combination of narrative, community-building, and systemic ambition that few comparable initiatives attempt to hold together at a global scale.

11. Challenges and Risks

While the evidence supporting art-led social change is substantial, the literature also identifies significant risks and structural challenges that movements like Global Artivism must navigate.

11.1 Funding Sustainability

UNESCO's pandemic-era findings, a US$750 billion drop in cultural sector Gross Value Added and 10 million jobs lost in 2020, illustrate how exposed the creative sector is to external shocks. Public spending on creative industries was already declining before the pandemic, meaning that movements dependent on cultural infrastructure inherit this underlying fragility. Reliance on a small number of philanthropic partners or convening sponsors creates risk if those funding relationships shift.

11.2 Scalability Without Dilution

Social-practice and participatory art forms derive much of their power from deep, slow relationships with specific communities. As movements scale globally, there is a risk that this depth is replaced by broader but shallower engagement, what critics elsewhere describe as the commodification of activist art, in which messages are diluted or co-opted as they reach wider audiences.

11.3 Representation and Power Imbalances

Even within movements explicitly committed to Global Majority leadership, research on decolonizing the arts cautions that representation alone, including artists from underrepresented regions, does not guarantee structural change unless it is accompanied by shifts in who controls funding decisions, curatorial authority, and strategic direction.

11.4 Political Resistance and Artist Safety

Art that challenges dominant narratives or power structures has historically faced censorship, legal repercussions, and political resistance. Research on street art in Africa documents how the often-subversive nature of public art has led to conflicts with authorities over property rights, vandalism, and censorship, limiting both the reach of individual works and the safety of the artists who create them.

11.5 Burnout and Sustainability of Individual Artivists

Because artivism positions individual artists as both creative producers and community organizers, often without the institutional support available to full-time advocates, there is a recognized risk of burnout. Sustaining a global network depends not only on funding programs and convenings, but on infrastructure, training, mental health support, and ongoing resourcing, that supports individual artivists between major events.

12. Impact Measurement Framework and Key Performance Indicators

One of the most consistent challenges identified in the literature on art-led social change is the difficulty of measuring impact in ways that capture both the cultural and the systemic dimensions of the work. The framework below proposes indicators aligned with each stage of the theory of change introduced in Section 4.

Theory of Change Stage	Illustrative KPIs	Data Sources
Art (Output)	Number of artworks, performances, or installations produced; number of participating artivists by region and discipline	Program records, grantee reporting
Narrative Change	Media coverage and sentiment analysis; reach and engagement of artistic content across platforms; shifts in framing of target issues in public discourse	Media monitoring, social listening tools
Community Engagement	Number of community participants in social-practice projects; depth of engagement (repeat participation, co-creation roles); community-reported sense of ownership	Surveys, participatory evaluation
Collective Action	Number of organizing activities linked to artivist-led campaigns; growth in local advocacy networks; participation in convenings and follow-on initiatives	Partner organization reporting, convening attendance data
Systems Change	Documented policy changes referencing campaign narratives; institutional adoption of practices developed through the movement; longitudinal shifts in relevant social norm surveys	Policy tracking, independent evaluation, longitudinal surveys

Table 3: Proposed Impact Measurement Framework Aligned to the Theory of Change

A critical methodological recommendation is that systems-change indicators require longitudinal tracking, often over several years, since policy and norm shifts rarely follow immediately from cultural interventions. Movements should therefore distinguish between short-term output metrics, which can be reported annually, and long-term outcome metrics, which require sustained investment in evaluation infrastructure.

13. Communications and Narrative Strategy Framework

Framing theory identifies three core tasks that effective social movement communication must perform: diagnostic framing, which identifies and names a problem; prognostic framing, which proposes a solution or direction; and motivational framing, which generates the emotional energy needed to act. Research on climate communication has found that messages combining all three frames in a single coherent narrative are more likely to be perceived as credible and complete than messages that separate these elements across different channels, which rely on audiences to integrate them independently.

Applied to Global Artivism, this suggests a narrative strategy built around three principles:

- Locally rooted diagnosis: Narratives should be developed in collaboration with the communities most affected by an issue, ensuring that the "problem" as depicted in artistic work reflects lived experience rather than externally defined priorities.
- Visible alternatives: Following the prognostic framing function, artistic work should, where possible, depict not only injustice but also alternative futures, communities organizing, ecosystems restored, institutions reformed, giving audiences a sense of direction rather than only grievance.
- Emotional range: Drawing on research identifying an "emotional cocktail" of moral anger, humor, and surprise as drivers of attention and memorability, communications strategy should avoid relying solely on one emotional register, balancing urgency with moments of joy, humor, or celebration that research suggests increase shareability and reduce audience fatigue.

On distribution, research on visual activism notes that social media has become a central amplifier for art-based campaigns, transforming platforms into spaces where artivism can reach global audiences instantly and where movements can organize around shared visual symbols and hashtags. For Global Artivism, this implies a digital strategy that treats convenings such as the Salvador gathering not as standalone events, but as content-generation moments that feed sustained digital narratives between in-person gatherings.

14. Community Building and Movement Growth Model

Global Artivism's structure, a partnership of the Global Commons Alliance, the Riky Rick Foundation for the Promotion of Artivism, and the Community Arts Network, combined with open participation channels such as its Stakeholder Forum, suggests a growth model built around three interconnected layers.

Layer	Function	Growth Mechanism
Core Partnership	Provides institutional backbone, strategic direction, and shared identity across the Global Commons Alliance, Riky Rick Foundation, and Community Arts Network	Formal partnership agreements; shared branding and mission documents
Regional Hubs	Anchor the movement within specific geographic and cultural contexts, exemplified by the South Africa and Brazil convening locations	Rotating convenings; regional partner organizations leading local programming
Individual Artivists and Stakeholder Forum	Provide the grassroots base of artists, activists, and community members participating in programs and campaigns	Open enrollment via Stakeholder Forum; social media channels (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn); newsletter

Table 4: Three-Layer Community Growth Model

The model's strength lies in its combination of a stable institutional core with flexible, regionally led expansion. Each new convening location, moving from an inaugural conference in South Africa to the 2025 gathering in Salvador, Brazil, both anchors the movement in a new regional context and expands the network of artivists who can subsequently engage through digital channels. The primary growth risk is over-reliance on convenings as the main connective tissue; sustained growth depends on the Stakeholder Forum and digital channels remaining active and valuable between in-person events.

15. Future Outlook

15.1 Digital Culture and Online Mobilization

Research on visual activism highlights how social media has transformed art-based activism, turning platforms into spaces where movements such as those organized around hashtags can reach global audiences instantly and where artists and activists collaborate across borders. For Global Artivism, this trend suggests growing opportunity to extend the reach of convenings like the Salvador gathering well beyond the roughly 1,000 in-person participants, through digital documentation, online forums, and cross-border digital collaborations between artivists who may never meet in person.

15.2 Artificial Intelligence and Creative Practice

The growing use of generative and analytical AI tools across creative sectors presents both opportunities and risks for artivist movements. On one hand, such tools can lower barriers to producing and translating culturally specific content for global audiences, and can assist with tasks such as sentiment analysis for narrative-change tracking, as outlined in Section 12. On the other hand, decolonial scholarship's concerns about whose knowledge systems are encoded into dominant technologies apply directly to AI, raising questions about whether AI tools developed primarily in the Global North adequately represent the artistic traditions and languages of Global Majority communities. Movements like Global Artivism will likely need to engage critically with these tools rather than adopting them uncritically.

15.3 Climate Movements as a Convening Force

The decision to hold the 2025 Global Artivism Convening in Salvador, Brazil, ahead of the COP30 climate summit reflects a broader trend of cultural movements aligning their convening calendars with major political moments. Given that climate justice is identified as a core strategic concern for the movement, future convenings are likely to continue this pattern, using major international policy moments, climate summits, human rights conferences, and global development forums, as anchors for cultural mobilization.

15.4 Youth Engagement

The partnership with the Riky Rick Foundation for the Promotion of Artivism, which honors the legacy of a South African musician through expanding youth access to arts and education, signals an explicit focus on youth as both participants and future leaders of the movement. Given that young people are disproportionately affected by issues such as climate change and economic precarity, and are often early adopters of the digital platforms central to the movement's communications strategy, sustained youth engagement is likely to be a defining factor in the movement's long-term trajectory.

16. Strategic Recommendations

16.1 For Global Artivism and Similar Organizations

- Formalize the theory of change presented in Section 4 into program design, ensuring that every funded activity is mapped to a specific stage (art, narrative change, community engagement, collective action, or systems change) with corresponding indicators from the framework in Section 12.
- Diversify funding sources beyond core philanthropic partners by developing values-based partnerships across sectors, as referenced in the movement's published strategy, to reduce dependence on any single funding relationship given the demonstrated fragility of cultural-sector financing.
- Invest in digital infrastructure that sustains engagement between convenings, ensuring that the network built through events such as the Salvador convening continues to function as an active community via the Stakeholder Forum and associated channels.
- Strengthen longitudinal evaluation capacity, particularly for systems-change indicators, recognizing that policy and norm shifts typically emerge years after the cultural interventions that contribute to them.

16.2 For Funders

- Recognize the creative and cultural sector's documented scale, an estimated US$2.25 trillion in annual revenue and close to 30 million jobs globally, as justification for treating cultural investment as core development funding rather than a peripheral or optional category.
- Provide multi-year, flexible funding that accounts for the long timelines required for narrative and systems change, rather than funding structured around single events or annual cycles.
- Direct resources toward Global South-led organizations directly, consistent with decolonial funding practices that prioritize reallocating resources to historically excluded communities rather than channeling support through Northern intermediaries.

16.3 For Artists and Artivists

- Anchor creative work in locally meaningful symbols and materials, following the pattern demonstrated by case studies such as Serge Attukwei Clottey's use of water containers, which connect global issues to immediately recognizable local realities.
- Build connections to organized advocacy and community networks, since research consistently finds that art's impact on collective action is strongest when linked to organized movements capable of converting attention into sustained activity.
- Engage with peer networks and convenings to access shared resources, reduce isolation, and mitigate the risk of burnout associated with combining creative and organizing roles.

16.4 For Community Leaders and Policymakers

- Engage with artivist-led narrative work as a credible input into policy debates, particularly on issues such as climate justice, gender equity, and education access, where case studies demonstrate measurable links between cultural campaigns and policy shifts.
- Support enabling policy environments for the cultural sector, addressing the decline in public spending on creative industries identified by UNESCO even prior to the pandemic, given the sector's demonstrated role in social cohesion and well-being during crises.
- Involve community members as co-designers, not only subjects, of cultural programming, in line with research showing that social-practice art succeeds when it shifts authority toward community knowledge.

17. References

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