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PROGRAMME FOR A PEACEFUL CITY

Listening Talk

**AN EXPERIENCE OF ACADEMIC-PRACTITIONER DIALOGUE IN BRADFORD
DISTRICT: SECOND SYSTEMATISATION OF LEARNING**

(2007-2012)

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with

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ICPS Working Paper 11

University of Bradford

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Introduction

In human societies there will always be differences of views and interests. But the reality today is that we are all interdependent and have to coexist on this small planet. Therefore, the only sensible and intelligent way of resolving differences and clashes of interests, whether between individuals or nations, is through dialogue. The promotion of a culture of dialogue and nonviolence for the future of mankind is thus an important task of the international community.

(His Holiness the Dalai Lama, in a speech to the "Forum 2000" Conference, Prague, Czech Republic, September 4, 1997¹)

The Programme for a Peaceful City (PPC) serves and works with staff across the University of Bradford and in particular in the School of Social and International Studies (SSIS). It is rooted in Peace Studies and based in the International Centre for Participation Studies (ICPS). The PPC is a network of academics and practitioners established in 2001, two months before the Bradford riots. At first we focused on lively public conversations against a complex and fast moving local, national and international backdrop of riots, terrorism and war. From 2007 onwards we challenged ourselves to deepen our knowledge and understanding of conversation processes.

Our search for more fruitful public conversations that could build understanding and connections led us to experiment with different 'talking processes', particularly dialogue. This paper will highlight some of the learning from this experiment. It is important to note that our learning has been rooted in Bradford District. This is a particular place where both shared and diverse values and complex identities intersect within the context of de-industrialised Northern England. Divisions between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' remain marked². Within this context we have looked for ways to facilitate conversations about complex and controversial issues and to work with others trying to do the same.

This paper is a practitioner's reflection. It describes how and why we changed emphasis from the 'what kind of conversations' to the 'how'. We start with a brief description of how it all began and capture some of the 'Talking Tensions' we managed to negotiate. We describe the three key things that led us to change direction (1.3 Changing Talk), before briefly describing our activities in 2007. We also share some of our thinking about dialogue and talking processes (2. Thinking Dialogue). Our work on dialogue has taught us that it is possible to explore deep and complex disagreements but that the outcomes are not predictable. We have learnt that taking time to understand why someone thinks as they do can lead to richer conversations.

¹ http://www.thataway.org/?page_id=550#dialogue

² http://www.bradfordassembly.org.uk/The_State_of_the_District.pdf

We understand that dialogue is seen by some as a threat to certainty, for others it is a pointless distraction from claiming rights, for instance, or practical action. We don't think that dialogue is the only answer to complex social issues and tensions, but we do think it is worth thinking about the purpose and process of conversation. Crucially we have discovered, as many others have in different contexts, that the connections fostered during dialogue can hold strong during difficult times. An example of this will be shared (3.5 Peacebuilding Response to the English Defence League).

The main body of this second systemization offers some key examples of our dialogue practice from 2007 to 2011 (Practicing Dialogue) from a practitioner's viewpoint. Our aim is to capture and disseminate some of our key learning and understanding. We conclude with some reflections on 'where next' from Jenny Pearce, a founder of the PPC and Professor of Latin America politics in Peace Studies at Bradford (the largest academic centre for the study of peace and conflict in the world). Living in a world of increasing diversity, inequality and with the unprecedented challenges of climate change and resource depletion, there is more need than ever to think about what kind of connections we need to face the uncertainty that lies ahead. We paused in 2006/7 to reflect and consider where next. We began this second pause for reflection in 2011, ten years on from the first meeting of the PPC, and have completed it for our eleventh anniversary.

1 THE PPC : STORY OF A 'TALKING SHOP' 2001-2007

The Programme for a Peaceful City was set up two months before the eruption of the 2001 Bradford riots³. For the next five years we hosted conversations that aimed to facilitate safe but challenging spaces for discussing some of the difficult issues identified by a diverse network of academics, practitioners, decision makers and local people. We learnt much from hosting debates and discussions, not least how difficult it is to explore disagreement and encourage people with different viewpoints to listen to each other.

The PPC started out as a network for local people, including some decision makers, who wanted space to talk about some of the key issues impacting on our District. We successfully hosted fortnightly network meetings with practitioner and academic input and some very large and lively public conversations. The PPC carried out its programme of public conversations on a shoestring budget. As much better resourced organisations began working in the District who also wanted to host public conversations we decided to work more in partnership and to develop some serious thinking about the purpose and process of public talk whilst still supporting and hosting some events.

³Cumming, L. 2007. Programme for a Peaceful City, Systematising an Experience 2001-2006. ICPS Working Paper 6. www.bradford.ac.uk/acad/ssis/activities/ppc/programme_final.pdf

Because of this changing landscape we looked critically at our work in 2007, spoke with network members and agreed to spend the next few years deepening our understanding of 'talking processes'. We moved from hosting large public conversations with safe space groundrules⁴, to experiment with a range of different process methods including facilitated dialogue, where the emphasis is placed on exploring meaning, striving for understanding without agreement and challenging assumptions. Over the following five years from 2007 to 2011 we made connections with a range of organisations working in the field of dialogue and conflict transformation in the UK context. We looked to some of the theory and contributed thinking to Carnegie's Commission into Civil Society⁵. Crucially we deepened our own understanding by developing practical facilitation skills in dialogue.

We have shared and utilised this understanding in a variety of ways. For instance, we have facilitated dialogue and other conversation with a broader range of people, giving much more attention to purpose and process. We have developed a knowledge exchange, Thinkspace, for academics and practitioners, including an MA module in Dialogue and Deliberation. We have deepened our connections with a broad range of organisations such as the Schools Linking Network, All Keighley Communities Together, Community Relations Sub-Group of Bradford Council, Manningham United (football project), St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, Concilio (National Consortium sharing thinking and practice about the Far Right) and Bradford Peace Museum. When Bradford faced the threat of an English Defence League (EDL) protest with the possibility of serious violence in the summer of 2010, we found that we were able to utilise our local and national connections to contribute towards one of many locally-rooted peacebuilding interventions. The learning gained by making a practical peacebuilding intervention has in itself been shared with practitioners, activists and students. We believe we have developed an innovative and ethical cycle of 'practice, reflection, practice' that is both long term and responsive to current needs and context.

Our first 'systemisation'⁶ in 2005/6 concluded that we needed to be flexible in responding to new contexts. We set ourselves the following goals for the next five years (2007-11):

1. To deepen our knowledge and understanding of how to talk and dialogue on difficult issues, including especially where there are 'radical disagreements'.
2. To strengthen thinking in Bradford District and in northern England, working in partnership with organisations who have a commitment to open and critical reflection and bridge building between ideas and practice.

⁴ Groundrules included: Speak sincerely & freely, listen to each other & be prepared to change your mind.
http://www.bradford.ac.uk/acad/ssis/activities/ppc/programme_final.pdf

⁵ Kelly, U, Cumming, L. (2009). Civil Society Supporting Dialogue and Deliberation, Carnegie UK Trust, <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/getattachment/7e4dc6ee-d593-454c-9ffb-51a90f2367e1/Civil-Society--Supporting-dialogue-and-deliberatio.aspx>

⁶ Cumming, L. (2006) The Programme for a Peaceful City. Systematising an Experience 2001-2006. ICPS Working Paper
⁶ <http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/icps/>

3. To build strong partnerships in the University with other academics and academic centres who share our goals, building creative interfaces between academics and practitioners.

The term 'radical disagreement' was conceptualised by Professor Oliver Ramsbotham⁷, formerly of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, and used by us to refer to deep value-based disagreement. We felt this had relevance to a context like Bradford where diverse world views often rub against each other and where we experienced serious contention about the causes and symptoms of social problems, not least amongst academics.

In 2007 we also clarified our aim:

"The PPC is a network of academics and practitioners who share thinking, research and ideas about how people participate and interact together in Bradford District and beyond. The PPC aims to work with partner organisations to develop shared discussion spaces and support critical reflection. We aim to develop thinking and practice on how to facilitate honest encounters, challenging ourselves to hear 'the other'".

1.1 Talking Tensions

What needs to be talked about and when? Who decides? Who participates and who doesn't? What is the point of talking? These are some of the questions that the PPC has reflected on. In the first five years there were two key areas of tension that the PPC had to negotiate – the first was the extent to which the PPC was felt to be 'positioned' in the controversial (to some) 'cohesion camp'. The second area of tension was the remit and role of the PPC.

The first issue arose out of our connection to 'Ouseley'. The formation of the PPC was the response of an academic, Jenny Pearce, to having been invited to participate in the 'Race Review' of Bradford headed by Sir Herman Ouseley⁸. When this connection proved controversial to some, she called together interested academics to start exploring some of the issues raised by the Ouseley Commission. The Commission was an investigation into a problem whose understanding was seen as self-evident at the time by many local council officers and councillors - 'Why is community fragmentation along social, cultural, ethnic and religious lines occurring in Bradford District?' (Ouseley, 2001).

The final report, *Pride Not Prejudice*, was overtaken by the Bradford riots in July 2001, appearing four days later. The report highlighted many issues relevant to riot, including discrimination, lack of participation, lack of civic pride and controversially for some, some people claimed to be living in fear of each other. Following riots and disturbances in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley, two more reports further highlighted

⁷ Ramsbotham, O. (2010). *Transforming Violent Conflict. Radical Disagreement, Dialogue and Survival*. Routledge.

⁸ Ouseley, H. (2001) *Community Pride not Prejudice: Making Diversity Work in Bradford [The Ouseley Report]*. Bradford: Bradford Vision.

segregation between communities and Ted Cante coined the phrase 'parallel lives'⁹. This gave rise to a new Government policy agenda ('Community Cohesion'), which shaped the national and local landscape for several years. This was an agenda that would divide opinion. For some, 'Community Cohesion' was a much needed solution to community division. For others, it was a policy that ignored structural inequalities and drivers of social division, such as poverty and racism. Some even considered cohesion to be a State-led agenda to promote the 'assimilation' of minority ethnic groups into a dominant 'British' culture.

In this heated local climate it was the very small PPC network which collectively drew up early Programme principles including a strategic vision to facilitate safe spaces. The vision was aimed at:

- Influencing University policy on its response to the Ouseley Report.
- Specifically, encouraging it to build a national reputation around its practical and intellectual agenda for addressing issues of diversity, equality and cohesion based on experience within Bradford District.
- Impacting on local and national policy agendas through research findings and action/training methodologies.

The PPC was an attempt to ensure that the Ouseley Report did not sit on a shelf. In conversations with academics over the years it is clear that this motivation was subject to interpretation. For some it meant creating discussion spaces and for others it meant lobbying for change. Additionally, as stated in our first systemisation, the PPC underestimated opposition to Ouseley, particularly amongst academics. Whereas some academics opted into the space, others felt uncomfortable participating, taking Ouseley to endorse contentious views of segregation as deeply problematic. It was clear that some academics were quick to position each other and were not used to exploring their own values and beliefs. It became common to hear academics talk of each other as 'only interested in gender' or 'race' or 'class'. We were attempting to explore disagreement in a University context where communication often takes the form of arguments to be won or lost.

The PPC negotiated this key tension by ensuring a diversity of subjects were discussed such as national cohesion policy, diversity (or lack of) within schools, class division, regeneration on estates, local democracy and more. Topics were generated by PPC members and in many of the larger public discussions, disagreement was made explicit by inviting speakers with a range of perspectives to share their views. This was welcomed by many of the practitioners. As one

⁹ Cante, T. (2001)'Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team', Home Office. Building cohesive communities. Report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion - The Denham Report. (2001). Home Office. Both available at: <http://www.cohesioninstitute.org.uk>



practitioner reflected on an evaluation form, “the PPC encourages and facilitates debate in a safe but open environment. Most of all it challenges people to drop preconceived ideas”. For academics, used to adversarial debate, often in written form, involvement proved more of a challenge and it became obvious that participation in face to face spaces to explore disagreement presented a counter cultural challenge to norms of academic engagement.

Some of this was exposed when we hosted a discussion on multiculturalism (PPC Annual Meeting 2006). The speakers were Dr Ludi Simpson, known for contesting the very notion of segregation and Professor Ted Cattle, famous for the ‘parallel lives’ concept and subsequent influence on the ‘cohesion’ agenda. During the discussion, one academic angrily questioned how we could have invited Dr Simpson, on the grounds that his argument was “just wrong” and another said he had “brought things to throw at Ted”. Many practitioners on the other hand, along with some academics, embraced the opportunity to explore different perspectives and contradictions.

The second related tension was the remit and role of the PPC. Some academics wanted the PPC to be a space to explore the complexities of key current debates. Other members wanted the PPC to take a position on key issues, such as community polarisation in Bradford, and to lobby for change. We had a clear choice. We could opt to stay as a network and attempt to contain disagreement and diversity, in which case there would be no consensus to lobby on. Alternatively we could choose to become less diverse and take positions on key issues such as segregation, and lobby for policy and practice change.

Given there was already diversity and lack of consensus among PPC network members, we opted to function as a network that would continue to explore disagreement and not take positions. We acknowledged that we were not an independent thinktank with autonomy, but a network based within a University setting, accountable to the internal policies and procedures of our institution.

So we embraced the term ‘talking shop’, although it is often used pejoratively, using it in our literature. We clarified that our role should be to open up key areas of contention and disagreement but not to take positions on specific actions. In so doing we made a commitment to working with disagreement and to the idea that talk has value in and of itself. This lost us some of the academics who wanted the PPC to take a definitive position that Bradford was segregated, for example, and to lobby for change on that basis. But it opened up the space for some other academics, originally doubtful, to engage. It didn’t seem to impact at all on practitioners and activists who engaged consistently and enthusiastically, hungry for spaces in which to reflect and think.

It is important to re-emphasise that the PPC began its life in a very tumultuous local and national context: the worst rioting on the mainland for twenty years in Bradford in

July 2001 which had a significant and lasting impact on many people and institutions; the birth of the national cohesion agenda and policy framework; the September 11 attacks in the US, and foreign policy shifts; and the 7 July 2005 London bombings and subsequent security response.

Within this context the PPC created spaces to explore some very hot topics including the impact of foreign policy, cohesion and multiculturalism, segregation (or not) in Bradford District, the rise of neo-fascism, the role of the pub in the inner city and organisations like Hizb-ut-Tahrir. We also hosted many public discussions exploring religion and secularism, such as religious belief and freedom of speech. We did not focus solely on issues around ethnicity, religion and difference but also opened up spaces to explore issues such as regeneration, class, local democracy, participation and governance amongst many other subjects. And in addition to the public and network conversation spaces, we created and hosted three hubs or meeting spaces which focused on research, training and safe spaces.

1.2 Resourcing Talk

The PPC's large programme of work has always been resourced with limited funds. From 2001-2003 the PPC functioned as a Network without any paid worker but secured one small grant from Barrow Cadbury to host a day conference exploring the development of a centre for diversity and learning, one of the key recommendations in Ouseley. It was only because committed academics volunteered their time for free that the PPC was started and developed. Between 2003-5 Professor Pearce secured funding from Yorkshire Forward via the Churches Regional Commission to employ a PPC Programme Officer. In 2005 the University of Bradford incorporated this job into the 'HEIF' (Higher Education Innovation Fund) Centre for Community Engagement. However, this new structure meant there was less time for me, now one of six Community Associates, to spend solely on the PPC. The role included a University-wide remit to work thematically on 'cohesion'.

Later, reduced funding for the Centre for Community Engagement led to me securing one of only 3 Community Associate roles, still within the theme of cohesion, before the University agreed to support the role. In 2011 there is still only one worker who supports the PPC alongside a School level Community Associate role (see Appendix). From 2010 to 2011 the Quaker Peace Studies Trust (QPST) provided the PPC with its only working budget. Throughout this time many academics have volunteered their time to support the PPC.

1.3 Changing Talk

In 2007 we produced our first systematization and after reflecting on the learning, decided to change some things about how we worked. We would still host some large public conversations but would work more in partnership with other academics and external organisations in a supporting role. We also agreed that we would deepen our understanding of talking processes and develop connections with people

and organisations working to do the same. Why this change? Three key reasons stand out.

- **Hearing ‘the other’**

One of the agreed aims in the 2007 systemisation was to deepen thinking about how to ‘challenge ourselves to hear the ‘other’. A key reflection from our first five years was that we needed more listening and less talking. Despite using safe space groundrules at the start of every discussion which included ‘listening’, it was clear that not everyone found this easy. Our safe space groundrules were influenced and developed through conversations with both local practitioners and organisations like the Belfast based ‘Community Dialogue’. Many of the discussions that we hosted were on issues where there was clear disagreement, particularly in relation to the key challenges facing Bradford.

It became clear that many people, including academics, had personal stories and lived experiences behind arguments that were articulated in discussions and decisions about what research was needed. One academic who repeatedly argued that communities were polarised in Bradford framed his understanding of social divisions in a social psychology perspective looking to ‘in group, out group theory’. But in smaller discussion spaces he described very personal struggles with changes experienced in his own locality. His stories included being intimidated by groups of young men in the inner city where he lived, and of feeling inhibited from sunbathing in his garden for fear of causing offence to devout neighbours. Practitioners and activists also shared very personal stories of why they had decided to embark on innovative new areas of work or activism from small scale regeneration initiatives to setting up community arts festivals and linking work with young people.

For some participants, the lived experiences were difficult to hear or were disputed, in the same way that more theoretical claims might be brushed aside. The personal stories that people shared were sometimes dismissed as irrelevant. Practitioners sometimes commented that they felt they were being interrogated rather than listened to. It became clear that if we wanted to explore disagreement and real ‘hot potatoes’ then we needed processes that were both fit for purpose and skilled facilitation rather than a traditional ‘chairing’ role. We needed to facilitate the sharing of stories and create spaces where people could explore deeply held values. Encouraging people to understand why someone may think and feel differently seemed crucial to meet our aim of ‘hearing the other’.

Key Learning for PPC

PPC members repeatedly requested spaces to explore difficult and controversial issues. At the same time it was becoming clear that if we wanted to continue to explore some of the most sensitive and difficult issues, we needed a different kind of talk. We needed to evolve from being a 'Talking Shop' where people tried to win or lose arguments and move towards more thoughtful public conversation and dialogue. We realised that how people talk and listen was just as important as what people talk about.

- **Civic Network and July 7 2005**

Everything changed after the London bombings in 2005. Mistrust grew in Bradford and 'who could talk about what' became more charged. How Bradford responded at first seemed hopeful. We were able to convert our Annual Meeting on July 7 2005 (the date was also the anniversary of the Bradford riots) into a reflection space about the day's events. Council Officers and senior Police addressed the PPC network and others to share information and reassure. Over a year before the terrorist attacks a Civic Network had been established by Jenny Pearce, Martin Baines, the District's Inspector of Race and Community Relations at the time and Dr Philip Lewis, the Bishop's Interfaith Adviser. The Civic Network brought together organisations in the District to encourage reflection and agree any action Bradford should take if there was a terrorist attack on UK soil. The aim was to agree how Bradford should hold together and ensure no community was vilified in the event of an atrocity. The Civic Network members participated in this PPC space and shared the statements of Faith Leaders. People trusted the PPC and the University to provide a space of reflection and togetherness. All that talk had led to some degree of trust and we were able to make a practical contribution at a time of stress.

The Civic Network carried on meeting post July 7. There were discussions about extremism in the form of BNP, Hizb-Ut-Tahrir and Al Qaeda. Biraderi or clan politics in Bradford began to be discussed in the light of its potentially limiting role to participation and change in the District. The Civic Network meetings were chaired by the Bishop of Bradford and held at Bishopcroft, the Bishop's house in Heaton and many appreciated the opportunity to discuss difficult issues and build cross-sector connections. But in the charged post 7 July environment, the Civic Network was seen by a minority as stigmatising the Pakistani Muslim community. 'Who could talk about what' began to be questioned by some and we began to reflect on the challenge this presented the PPC.

Our response at this difficult time was to connect more with Muslim-led organisations who themselves wanted to raise difficult issues. The PPC began to work with the Bradford branch of the Islamic Society of Britain and we supported them to bring

speakers like Tariq Ramadan, philosopher and Islamic scholar, and John Esposito, Professor of Religion and International Affairs & Islamic Studies at Georgetown University and founding Director of the 'Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding', to Bradford. At this time the cohesion agenda began to place greater emphasis on integration and shared values before also becoming conflated with the Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) policy response to the London bombings. We connected with local Muslim organisations to co-host the conversations that they felt were needed.

In a climate when many Muslims expressed concern that they were being judged and in some cases held responsible for the actions of a few, it felt particularly important to be aware of local sensitivities. This of course is a thin tightrope to walk and we found it was perfectly possible to be accused of stigmatising Muslims and promoting Islamist organisations in the same week. Trying to maintain balance annoys those at both ends of the spectrum – those that thought there should be no public discussion about anything related to Islam or Muslims by a non-Muslim organisation and those that thought there most definitely should. It should not, however, be surprising that hosting conversations about controversial issues raises controversy in itself.

Key learning for the PPC

Who decides what conversations are needed and the purpose and process of the conversation matters. It is possible to hold conversations that some think are important but can make others feel put under the spotlight. Who sends the invite makes all the difference. People are willing to embrace difficult issues and talk through challenging questions but not when under pressure. We realised that there was little point in a mostly White middle class led organisation facilitating conversations about issues relating to Islam if Muslims were missing from the conversation. In the post 9/11 and 7/7 context, mistrust increased. We reflected and adapted our approach to respond with sensitivity in this difficult period.

- **Changing local landscape**

A range of other organisations began to emerge in Bradford, similarly interested in building connections and hosting conversations. These included the Civic Network as mentioned above, but also the Diversity Exchange (a key recommendation from Ouseley committed to building a shared future through linking opportunities and influencing policy), Bradford District Faith Forum (eventually working in partnership with the University's School for Lifelong Learning on a 'Faith and the City' lecture series), Bradford Centre for Dialogue and Diversity (BCDD) and Bradford Cathedral among them. An organisation called Common Purpose had also been working for a number of years, connecting people at a strategic level. Importantly, in 2004, the

Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), with a budget of 5 million pounds to spend in 10 years, expanded its remit from York to Bradford and began to carry out a programme of work which included public lectures¹⁰.

It was notable that many organisations adopted the language of ‘safe spaces’ that the PPC had spearheaded. We had clearly influenced the culture of conversation in our District. We wanted to ensure that we did not compete with or duplicate the work of other organisations, not least those like ‘Faith in the City’ based within our own institution. We also saw an opportunity to move away from some of the larger public conversations, although not completely, and experiment with different conversation spaces particularly for sensitive issues.

Key learning for PPC

It is important to be responsive, flexible and to have the honesty to acknowledge the need for different skills and new understandings.

1.4 The PPC in 2007

Before carrying out the systemisation we worked in a range of different ways throughout 2007, including continuing to host regular PPC Network meetings on a range of subjects from the BNP to neighbourhood mediation. We began to facilitate a knowledge exchange ‘Thinkspace’ for practitioners and academics interested in dialogue, deliberation and participation. We used the term ‘knowledge exchange’ because of our commitment to valuing different kinds of knowledge, both theoretical and experiential, rather than the more orthodox notion of Research and Knowledge Transfer or (RKT). RKT implies knowledge flows outwards from academia, often at a price, rather than knowledge as something which can be shared. In the Thinkspace, academics from Peace Studies and the School of Health, exchange knowledge and ideas with a diverse range of practitioners. These include a palliative care manager (also a mediator), a community organiser, educationalists and a diverse range of facilitators experienced in both dialogue and deliberation.

Work on public conversations continued, including supporting local organisations to host provocative and challenging events such as the Bradford Centre for Dialogue and Diversity’s public meeting with Bishop Michael Ali Nazir (March 2007) and a range of events with the Islamic Society of Britain, including a day long discussion on Islam and parenting (June 2007) and an evening discussion on converging global crises with Paul Rogers and Tariq Ramadan (Nov 2007). The PPC supported the University’s Centre for Community Engagement with events such as ‘How Happy is Bradford?’ (June 2007). We held some of our own public conversations on subjects such as the ‘Legacy of the Transatlantic Slave Trade’ with Professor Uduak Archibong (July 2007) to mark the bi-centenary year and also an evening discussion event with writer and commentator, Ziauddin Sardar (Nov 2007).

¹⁰ <http://www.jrf.org.uk/work/workarea/bradford-programme>

Following long standing work on anti-racist training with young people, we brought together three organisations to harness expertise from activism, community development and the Arts. Bradford Youth Development Partnership, the Midlands based 'Rewind' and 'Thinkbucket' from Northern Ireland were funded from the University's Community Engagement pot to develop and deliver training for practitioners working with young people, from youth and community workers to the police. This was an opportunity to bring together organisations with a challenging activist focus (Rewind) together with expertise in creative conflict transformation and exploration (Thinkbucket) alongside practitioners with local knowledge and understanding.

We maintained connections with local organisations whilst reaching out to national ones. So we supported the Youth Service's Global Education Working Group and participated in events for young people, such as an evening looking at trade justice and global conflict in September 2007. We also entered into partnership with the Institute of Conflict Research based in Northern Ireland for the first leg of a Bradford to Belfast exchange at the end of 2007.

After we carried out the systematisation in 2007, the Community Associate undertook facilitation training (Dec 2007/Jan 2008) and from 2007 to 2011 we began to change our emphasis to meet the aims we set for ourselves in the systemisation.

2 THE PPC 2007-2012: THINKING DIALOGUE

2.1 What do we mean by dialogue?

Dialogue, as we are choosing to use the word, is a way of exploring the roots of the many crises that face humanity today. It enables inquiry into, and understanding of, the sorts of processes that fragment and interfere with real communication between individuals, nations and even different parts of the same organization. In our modern culture men and women are able to interact with one another in many ways: they can sing, dance or play together with little difficulty but their ability to talk together about subjects that deeply matter to them seems invariably to lead to dispute, division and often to violence. In our view this condition points to a deep and pervasive defect in the process of human thought.¹¹

This is not the place for an in-depth analysis of conceptual terms but our thinking about dialogue is close to the definition above from the late scientist and dialogue thinker David Bohm. Dialogue can provide an opportunity for people to explore some key questions such as:

¹¹ Bohm, D, Factor, D, Garrett, P. Dialogue A Proposal. http://www.david-bohm.net/dialogue/dialogue_proposal.html

Who we are in relation to others? How do we represent ourselves in public spaces? How do we negotiate rights, needs and values in a diverse society?

Stuart Hall has argued that the capacity to relate to difference is a key question of the 21st Century¹². Dialogue is one way of developing capacity to 'relate to difference' and challenge assumptions we might make about the nature of difference. Our experience of facilitating dialogue would lead us to agree with Anne Phillips who, whilst recognising the existence of both individuals and groups, argues that differences do not neatly map onto communities and that furthermore,

Solutions to multicultural dilemmas are best arrived at through discussion and dialogue, where people from different cultural backgrounds explain to one another why they favour particular laws or practices and develop the skills of negotiation and compromise that enables us to live together¹³.

We see dialogue as one way of helping us make meaning, share meaning and deepen understandings. Dialogue allows us to explore who we are, what we think and why. As stated in one of our most commonly used PPC 'groundrules', it is a search for understanding not agreement. Our experience indicates that dialogue can transform understandings, connections and disagreements but that any outcomes must be open ended and not assumed.

By developing practice in dialogue we are alert to the fact that it may not always be needed or appropriate, as articulated by Heierbacher, writing on the American National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation's website,

Many questions still need to be answered, though. Are there certain circumstances in which dialogue is less necessary, or even inappropriate? If people have an equal understanding of an issue, and already have good, trusting relationships, is dialogue unnecessary? If the issue is not personally important to those involved, should they go right into deliberation? If a decision needs to be made immediately, can dialogue be passed up? How often does dialogue lead to deliberation? How effective is dialogue that leads to action without deliberation? These are all questions that need to be explored further.¹⁴

Sometimes a space for people to understand and explore meaning through dialogue is enough. At other times people need to make an attempt to solve a problem, to reach agreement or clarify the level of consensus – the term often used to encapsulate this is 'deliberation'. It is with this awareness that we have also developed our work on deliberation, defined by Nancy Roberts as,

¹² Hall, S, Culture. (1993) Community, Nation. Cultural Studies 7: 349-63

¹³ Phillips, A. (2009) Multiculturalism Without Culture. Princeton University Press.

¹⁴ Heierbacher, S, What is the relationship between dialogue and deliberation?
<http://www.thataway.org/exchange/resources.php?action=view&rid=1503>

a public consideration about how problems are to be defined and understood, what the range of possible solutions might be, and who should have the responsibility for solving them (1997: 124-132)¹⁵.

For us, dialogue is a tool that is sometimes appropriate and sometimes not. If there is a need to build trust, to understand why someone may think differently, to challenge assumptions and to really listen then it may be useful. Dialogue can precede deliberative processes and in so doing can lead to more useful disagreement, where people can understand why someone thinks and feels differently. We don't always have the luxury of slowing down and taking time to hear each other. Sometimes we may feel the need to take action without building consensus or understanding, this is easy when there is agreement between likeminded people. But in contexts of diversity and inequality and where there is disagreement, we think it is important to give greater thought to the types of conversations we need and who we are having them with. Our learning through thinking and practice is that changing how we talk and listen opens up the possibility of transforming our understanding and relationships with each other,

Once a society loses this capacity [to dialogue], all that is left is a cacophony of voices battling it out to see who wins and who loses. There is no capacity to go deeper, to find a deeper meaning that transcends individual views and self-interest. It seems reasonable to ask whether many of our deeper problems in governing ourselves today, the so-called "gridlock" and loss of mutual respect and caring might not stem from this lost capacity to talk with one another, to think together as part of a larger community¹⁶.

2.2 Civil Society supporting dialogue and deliberation

In 2010 the Carnegie UK Trust funded an independent Commission of Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society in the UK and Ireland. They published a full report following the Inquiry entitled 'Making Good Society'. The main research analyst supporting the Commission had come across the work of the PPC online and asked us to contribute our thinking about dialogue and deliberation to the Commission. This led to an invitation from Carnegie to contribute to thinking and policy at a national level and our report entitled, 'Civil society supporting dialogue and deliberation'¹⁷ was submitted to the Commission in 2009. This allowed us some time to develop our own learning from the literature on dialogue and deliberation and reflect on the value and limitations of talking processes. As the report stated,

¹⁵ Roberts, N. (1997) Public Deliberation: An Alternative Approach to Crafting Policy and Setting Direction. Public Administration Review, vol. 57, no. 2 (124-132).

¹⁶ Senge, P. "A New View of Institutional Leadership" in Reflections on Leadership". From Stanfield, B. The Art of Focused Conversation. ICA Associates Inc. Canada. <http://ica-associates.ca/>

¹⁷ Kelly, U, Cumming, L. (2009). Civil Society Supporting Dialogue and Deliberation, Carnegie UK Trust, <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/getattachment/7e4dc6ee-d593-454c-9ffb-51a90f2367e1/Civil-Society--Supporting-dialogue-and-deliberatio.aspx>

In increasingly diverse societies, agreement on how to meet challenges of all kinds cannot be assumed. Dialogue and deliberation are not a panacea for all ills. Nor are they an easy 'feel good' option. They can, however, make valuable contributions to thinking through and responding to some of the most pressing challenges facing society. In this context dialogue and deliberation can:

- offer an alternative to purely strategic politics and/or the decision to keep divisive issues off the political agenda;
- enhance the capacity of individuals and groups to engage with these difficult and potentially divisive issues;
- offer the possibility that a careful, collective engagement with the challenges we face might make a valuable contribution to rethinking assumptions, questioning ways of life and formulating responses in ways that avoid authoritarian impositions". (Kelly, 2009:4)

This piece of work also required us to facilitate a workshop with some leading practitioners in the field: St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, Changemakers, Oxfam UK, New Economics Foundation (NEF), Forum for the Discussion of Israel and Palestine (FODIP), Blackburn Cathedral and others.

The workshop included an exploration of the following questions:

Are conversations an end in themselves, to meet wider goals or somewhere in between?

What are the underlying values (of the facilitator that underpin the approach used)?

What processes, tools, models, ideas, theories are used and what works for what issues?

Are inequalities and power confronted?

How are disagreements handled?

What is being discussed and what is too hot to handle?

What might strengthen civil society in creating spaces for conversations?

The reflections from this workshop were incorporated into the final report. The report looked both to theory and practice and helped us gain both conceptual understanding from the literature and wisdom of the practitioners and also practical insights of how facilitators are applying their thinking and knowledge.

2.3 PPC Thinkspace

Deepening our understanding of talking processes included bringing together academics and practitioners.

In 2006 we established the PPC Thinkspace. A group of practitioners and academics agreed to meet four times a year to share thinking, ideas and dilemmas from theory and practice in relation to dialogue, deliberation and participation. The themes we discuss are agreed collectively and we review whether there is still the desire to meet every year.

Learning is shared within the Thinkspace membership and we also invited people to contribute ideas and stay connected with us. The issues we have explored include: power, the English Defence League and the dilemmas for peacebuilding, mediation processes and disagreement. We also used the Thinkspace to disseminate and discuss learning from the Carnegie Commission report.

The former Director of Democracy at the New Economics Foundation (NEF¹⁸) Perry Walker, tested out a consensus voting¹⁹ exercise with Thinkspace participants, using the subject of assisted dying. We have also heard from Simon Keyes, Director of St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation²⁰ sharing his rich thoughts on 'disagreement success'²¹ which includes ideas of maintaining relationship and building understanding whilst disagreeing. Steve Smith of the Icarus Collective²² took us through an innovative facilitation process exploring personal choices in relation to climate change/resource depletion and peak oil. We heard of the civic mediation work practiced by the Burnley based Centre for Good Relations²³ and the challenges of developing both training and dialogue work that tackles disaffection and voting for the Far Right from Sheffield based practitioners. The challenges and choices made by the PPC and other practitioners were also shared with the Thinkspace following the interventions made after the English Defence League's visit to Bradford in 2010. Members shared details about the practical interventions made and shared personal stories about working in a very heated and tense local context where responses to potential violence themselves became a subject of dispute. One key learning shared was the importance of making connections between different activists and stakeholders to think through potential responses and build a level of trust before things get difficult. This learning was put into action in Sheffield, where a Thinkspace member brought together key leaders to agree a plan of action should such a difficult situation arise there.

¹⁸ www.neweconomics.org/

¹⁹ <http://www.neweconomics.org/projects/crowd-wise>

²⁰ www.stethelburgas.org/

²¹ <http://stethelburgas.org/reconciliation-resources/disagreement-successfailure>

²² www.icarus.uk.net/

²³ centreforgoodrelations.com/

Both practitioners and academics have found the Thinkspace useful. Practitioners have valued the opportunity to take time to reflect and to share both ideas and dilemmas, as one practitioner commented,

It's given me some very useful links to other relevant work that I can now explore in relation to my own. It's helped also in a more general way to hone ideas and thinking²⁴.

Even practitioners who lack the time to attend very often ask to be kept on the list because it reduces the sense of struggling with difficult issues alone. The Thinkspace has also been approached by practitioners who are not members but would like support in thinking through a problem. One example of this was a question put to the Thinkspace about what a peacebuilding response might be with respect to working with a group of young people joining the English Defence League (EDL), in an area of Bradford District. Thinkspace members reflected on all the complex issues this issue might raise. Who judges who? How to explore the tensions between being both an activist and challenging difficult views. And whether it might be possible to create space to listen, understand and explore root causes rather than simply dealing with the symptoms of why young people might be attracted to the EDL.

Sometimes sharing ideas has led to practical partnership working. In 2011 a Thinkspace member, who was working on a consortium bid to develop training for staff in a national organisation in engagement, facilitation and conflict, was connected through the Thinkspace to other members who were able to enhance the bid and build a more diverse consortium.

Another process used has been the 'Conversation Café'²⁵ which is a dialogue process that ensures everyone has a chance to speak by using a 'talking object' whereby people speak when holding an object whilst others listen. Using a quite formalised talking process can take people out of their familiar comfort zone and often shift the focus from talking to listening. A Peace Studies academic, who engages with a wide range of students at undergraduate and postgraduate level has been able to apply some of the processes with students.

I've found it especially interesting to try out different kinds of 'facilitated conversations' and to experience how they feel in practice. I've used some of these in my teaching²⁶.

The first Thinkspace of 2011 enjoyed hearing from Tom Wakeford, an experienced participatory practitioner, who shared learning from his experience in designing and facilitating Citizens Juries in England and India. The Citizens Jury process brings together non-experts to consider public issues and deliver a verdict, modelling the

²⁴ 2009 Evaluation of PPC Thinkspace.

²⁵ www.conversationcafe.org/

²⁶ 2009 Feedback

criminal jury system²⁷. We shared thinking about group decision making processes and agreed to have a longer workshop to experience processes from Citizens Juries and Participatory Budgeting (where citizens directly make decisions about budgets²⁸) with ICPS researcher Heather Blakey. It is notable that experienced facilitators are keen to learn from other fields of practice and thinking about decision making.

In 2011 the Thinkspace agreed to look at the why and how of 'building relationships', sharing ideas from theory and practice. Members shared their thoughts on what sort of connections they have helped build and why and what sort of relationships of trust are needed in the current UK context which has experienced rioting and continuing austerity. Thinkspace members felt it would be useful to think about how the economic context might impact on facilitating conversations. We considered some of the challenges and tensions in deciding whether, and if so how, to respond as a 'peacebuilder/facilitator' to current issues such as the public spending cuts, possibilities of civic unrest and organisations like the EDL.

If for example, civic unrest erupts, what are some of the tensions that people involved in facilitation and/or peacebuilding may need to consider? Issues may include: relationship to the State, whether or not to work with organisations and individuals who are openly prejudiced towards others (such as the EDL), balancing local wisdom with a professional peacebuilding model, funding sources and how to avoid competition with each other in what appears to be an emerging field of UK peacebuilding. It is important to note how many organisations (some of whom are Thinkspace members) are focusing on UK peacebuilding – St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, Community Resolve (Bristol), Foundation for Peace (Warrington), Centre for Good Relations (Burnley based), Mediation Northern Ireland, International Alert (London), LEAP, Northern Friends Peace Board, Talk-Action - to name only a few that we are aware of.

²⁷ <http://www.peopleandparticipation.net/display/Methods/Citizens+Jury>

²⁸ <http://www.peopleandparticipation.net/display/Methods/Participatory+Budgeting>

Key Learning for PPC

- Practitioners appreciate time to reflect on practice.
- Academics and practitioners both find it useful to experience and reflect on different ‘talking processes’. The Thinkspace provides an opportunity for people to experience different styles and process methods to explore the issues discussed. So there is learning in terms of both content and process.
- Bringing together theory and practice, ideas and experience is hugely enriching. Many practitioners draw deeply from theory and ideas but want space to think.
- Practitioners working in difficult contexts and on tricky issues, where there aren’t simple answers, value the support and ideas they get from each other in the Thinkspace.
- The Thinkspace has provided an opportunity for meaningful and equal knowledge exchange between academics and practitioners. Ideas from learning and theory have been shared and used by practitioners. Academics have used some of the processes learnt in teaching – practical methods experienced in the Thinkspace have been used to enhance classroom learning. Student researchers have participated and used the Thinkspace to complement their research and taught courses. Practitioners have made useful connections with each other that has led in some cases to partnerships and working together on bids. Thinkspace members gave useful feedback to the new MA module in ‘Dialogue and Deliberation’ developed by the ICPS. All types of knowledge have been valued and it is often the practitioners who want to discuss theory and the academics who want to experience different processes and methods.

3 PractisingTalk (Case Studies)

The PPC already had a strong track record in hosting very lively conversations and had tackled many difficult issues. But following on from our first systemisation, we wanted to experiment with, and learn about, different processes. The case studies below provide accounts of our experiments in facilitating dialogue from 2007-11.

3.1 Bradford – Belfast Exchange

The PPC was contacted by the Institute for Conflict Research and the NIACRO (Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders), based in Belfast towards the end of 2007. We were asked if there might be interest in inviting a group of Muslims from Bradford to participate in a seminar taking place in Belfast. The seminar included academics, policy people, council officers, activists and former

paramilitaries and its aim was to explore whether there was learning from Northern Ireland with regard to the British State's response to terrorism in the post July 7 environment. We met with a range of local people who expressed interest in attending and the visit to Belfast took place in November 2007. The seminar heard from practitioners, activists and academics, but it was the stories shared by former paramilitaries that Bradford participants found particularly moving and challenging. Bradford participants contributed during the seminar and shared their concerns about the Government's response to July 7 and how it had impacted on them and their communities.

The PPC was then invited to host a return visit on 27 March 2008 which was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). Visitors from Belfast included a Council Officer, a former serving RUC Officer and Presbyterian Minister, republican activists, an academic and former paramilitaries. This provided us with the perfect opportunity to think process, not least given the sensitivities of the post July 7 context. The first step was to meet and involve the Bradford participants who had been to Belfast. We agreed that we wanted a less formal seminar with more opportunity for discussion. We agreed we needed to invite those that would support and others who were actively against the Government's domestic security response to July 7 and continuing military action in Iraq and Afghanistan. As such we recognised the potential for heated disagreement was high and agreed that time to relax socially should be built into the daylong event. The list of who to invite was agreed and included Council Officers, Police, community activists, youth workers and interfaith workers.

Much thought went into clarifying the purpose and process. We agreed on the very simple aim: "To explore whether there is learning from Northern Ireland that has relevance to current State and non-State responses to violence such as July 7 bombings and possibilities of further violence". The title reflected both foreign and domestic security policies, including the PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism) agenda which connected the State and civil society organisations. Much thought was given to the wording. Participants who had been to Belfast felt that there needed to be something specific about July 7 rather than more general wording about 'Islamic Extremism' or 'Islamist Terrorism'.

As the visit was funded by JRF we were able to afford the University's flagship Norcroft Centre. We had a flexible space that could be set up with small groups of participants at round tables. We decided on two key themes: human rights and preventing violence. Both of these themes were really important to Muslim colleagues we were working with. Addressing concerns about human rights had been highlighted in the Belfast seminar with many participants from Northern Ireland voicing concerns about human rights abuses. Preventing violence was agreed as a term that could encompass all forms of violence. It was really important for Muslim colleagues that all violence, including that of the State should be on the table. We agreed that we should start with 'human rights' to give people an opportunity to

express fears and concerns before moving participants onto thinking about violence. We felt that people might not be able to hear issues about violence if they hadn't first had concerns about human rights acknowledged. It is interesting to reflect on how much effort and thought went into the wording and format. We also made the decision to prioritise the concerns of Muslim participants, some of whom were feeling stigmatised in the post July 7 context.

We opted for a structured process but decided not to micro facilitate, so participants would be free to have the conversations that mattered to them on their tables without facilitators and we would just provide an overall framework. The process would provide a container for conversations rather than relying on facilitators at each table.

Following a Working Together Agreement or set of 'groundrules' that were presented and agreed, the day started with a summary of the discussion in Belfast followed by inputs from Belfast and Bradford/Northern England participants on human rights. After these inputs which we knew would be heard and felt differently by participants, we put in a five minute silent reflection period, for people to gather their own thoughts and feelings. Using silence is a risk, it takes people out of familiar comfort zones and typical conference 'norms' of 'speaker' and 'questions'. Silence forces a change of pace and the opportunity to acknowledge feelings without asking people to share them. It was interesting to note that everyone participated in the silence apart from one participant, who had travelled up from London and worked in the domestic security field. It is important not to misinterpret what he was feeling but he certainly shuffled and audibly grunted through the silence!

Focused Conversation²⁹ is a method that creates space for four different levels of exchange 1) the objective – what can be observed, the facts; 2) the reflective – feelings, gut reaction; 3) the interpretative – underlying meanings and new insights; and 4) the decisional – what needs to happen. This method is rooted in the Socratic idea of asking questions to reach new meanings,

Somewhere between the learned conversations of the gentry and the interchange between folk in the street is the guided conversation focused on a topic, sometimes referred to as the "artform conversation" or the surface-to depth conversation. For the genesis of this, one has to go back to Socrates and his use of conversation as a method for seeking deeper understanding...a way of seeking the rock-bottom truth in what was being discussed. 2500 years ago, Socrates taught Western civilization the art of asking questions as a tool for discovering reality. For Socrates, "the unexamined life was not worth living." To find meaning in life, one had to dig constantly, and to keep naming what one was finding.³⁰

²⁹ The Focused Conversation Method was developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) as part of its Technology of Participation (ToP™) <http://ica-associates.ca/>

³⁰ <http://ica-associates.ca/>

The value of this method is that we were able to provide each table with a set of questions that would meet the needs of those who want to stay with the 'facts', those who want to 'express feelings', those who want to 'dig deeper' and those who want 'action'. Many, of course, want a combination or all of these questions. It also meant that participants had autonomy to decide what they wanted to focus on and have the conversation that mattered to them.

Participants were invited to have small table discussions after first introducing themselves using a Focused Conversations influenced questions:

- 1) What are the key issues you have heard raised about human rights?
- 2) How do you feel they relate to your experience?
- 3) Are there any underlying questions in relation to human rights?
- 4) Do you have any thoughts on what needs to happen and who should do it?

A huge amount of thinking and detail went into the seating plan for sixty or so participants. Participants were designated where to sit and grouped on tables where they might have common areas of interest e.g. those working on policy, youth issues, interfaith dialogue etc. One table was established which privately was referred to as the 'table of tension' where people likely to disagree the most were placed. Participants on this table included two parties who were likely to be in strongest disagreement, one working within the counter terrorism strategy and the other critical of it. This was risky but we made the choice to embrace the need for disagreement. We also spoke with the two parties beforehand so they knew they would be sitting together.

With the advice of local people involved in the planning, we had a two hour working lunch off campus so people walked or were driven in a mini-bus to a nearby Asian restaurant. This again was only possible because we had JRF funding but it meant that participants were able to eat together in a very relaxed setting and it was noticeable how many in depth conversations flourished.

Back on campus, the afternoon session started in reverse to the morning session. Participants were invited to have small table discussions before the input and given the following questions to use as a framework:

- 1) What are the key issues relating to preventing violence?
- 2) How does it feel to reflect on preventing violence?
- 3) Are there any underlying questions?
- 4) What needs to happen to prevent violence and whose responsibility is it?

Each table generated one question for the panel to consider, to ensure the inputs reflected the issues in the room. The second panel of Belfast and Bradford/Northern England participants gave their inputs and the day ended with a summary of the conversations.

A wealth of issues were shared. There was obvious disagreement in the room at many points. A participant from ACPO groaned when hearing some of the inputs that were critical of the State's counter terrorism response and shouted a loud 'hear, hear' when the former RUC Officer spoke. Participants heard very moving personal stories from some of the Belfast guests, particularly the stories of experiencing and/or perpetrating violence.

The 'table of tension' participants had a particularly bumpy ride. At one point during the morning, one party was heard declaring loudly to the other "I just can't sit here with you". Somehow they both stuck it out and afterwards were the most positive about the whole event. The person working within the counter terrorism agenda, commented to us that it had been hard but was the 'most real' conversation about terrorism that he had participated in, more so than some of the national spaces and events he had attended. The human rights activist spoke of her value in being able to express opposition to the State's response to someone with a degree of power and influence.

Key learning for PPC

- Clarifying purpose and process planning is crucial. Thought needs to be given to aims and any outputs and/or outcomes. Once purpose is established substantial time is needed to work on the process. Seemingly trivial details such as who sits where and where to eat may be vital for some conversations.
- It is possible to have a strong framework that still gives people the autonomy to have the conversations that matter to them and to contain the space without controlling it. It is crucial to consider when it is particularly important not to offer heavy handed or directive facilitation. Contrary perhaps to instinct, we felt that given the possibility for such deep disagreement, less directive facilitation would be the best option. But the process was contained within a strong framework where detail had been given substantial thought.

3.2 Religious Belief and Sexual Orientation

One issue kept being raised by PPC Network members. People felt that certain disagreements needed particular exploration and wanted the PPC to tackle religious belief and sexual orientation because it was an important issue and no-one else dared do it. This provided the perfect example to think more deeply about purpose and process, to slow down and go beyond inviting speakers and hosting a public debate.

After much thought and planning, the PPC hosted three seminars exploring religious belief and sexual orientation throughout 2008. The Community Associate (also the facilitator) began by consulting with people with religious, humanist and lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) & transgender perspectives. Given the PPC had long established connections with the Anglican Church and Muslim organisations, we guessed there might be suspicions about our motives. We organised planning meetings with a local LGB organisation and asked what was needed for LGB people to participate and crucially whether the idea was useful and wanted. If the LGB organisation had expressed concerns about opening up the discussion, we would not have done so. LGB academics based at the University of Bradford were also involved in the planning. It became apparent that a neutral aim and event title, such as 'religious views on sexual orientation' would not be focused enough for the LGB voices consulted to participate. The seminar series title and, therefore, its aim was agreed as 'How to challenge homophobic discrimination with a religious justification?'

People we consulted in the initial planning phase seemed pleased that such a controversial issue would be discussed. Many LGB people we spoke with felt that in the Bradford context, religious sensitivities had trumped equal rights in terms of sexual orientation. Invites were circulated through the LGB organisation and personal contacts, so although the seminars were not public each was attended by 20 to 30 people, mostly public and voluntary sector practitioners but often people expressing personal interest in the issue. Participants included religious and non-religious LGB and religious and non-religious heterosexuals. Small details were considered such as providing food and displaying direction posters that did not detail the title. Each seminar lasted for three hours.

The first seminar looked at legislative issues, so the starting point was clarifying equalities legislation and the complexity of what happens in practice. LGB academics invited an equalities speaker from UCU (University College Union). The process was a mixture of input with space for questions and discussion. It was structured but facilitation was kept low key. With very limited publicity, mostly using the Equity Centre and PPC networks, twenty people participated. Most people who attended were interested in equality issues.

In the second seminar, around twenty participants heard 2 very different Buddhist perspectives and a speaker from the British Humanist Association. As we had asked people to share personal perspectives of their beliefs, we opted for more of a dialogue process that had a greater degree of facilitation. The process included structured go-rounds (people having space to speak whilst sitting in a circle). We had learnt that if we are asking people to share deeply personal thoughts, it is vital to ensure that fellow participants are encouraged to take responsibility to really work at listening and understanding why someone may think and feel as they do. One of the participants, from a Gay Buddhist viewpoint, shared thoughts about the complexity of identity and how having a strong sense of himself as a Gay man was perhaps at

odds with his learning from Buddhism which places more emphasis on 'connectivity' than individual identity. There was disagreement in the room when people expressed different values about adoption. One person expressed concerns afterwards that her views about adoption had been misunderstood. The majority of people found the conversation valuable.

In the third seminar it was agreed that we should look at Christian and Muslim perspectives. Substantial time was spent planning the process to be used. We decided that this seminar would have the highest chance of conflict and the possibility of people feeling hurt. We decided on a structured process that would be tightly facilitated.

A University based Church of England Priest and Chaplain offered input. Conversations before the seminar revolved round his desire to reflect the diversity of opinion within the Anglican tradition towards homosexuality, from hostility to welcome. It was much harder to find anyone willing to give an Islamic perspective. We spoke with several Muslims who wanted to attend but did not feel qualified to speak on the subject or felt it was just 'too tricky'. Fortunately an Imam from the Salafi tradition who is also an equalities campaigner agreed to speak, voicing some relief that he was not being asked to speak about extremism!

The process started with input. Seminar participants heard carefully presented and thoughtful views from the Priest and Imam. The Priest spoke of how the existence of homosexuality is a threat to some Christians' entire belief system and to them personally, to the extent that if homosexuality has to be accepted, many beliefs would need to change. The question posed was "Do we challenge gently or with a bulldozer?" The Priest felt strongly that text can and should be challenged through reason. The Imam shared his commitment to challenging discrimination against homosexuality and staying true to his understanding of Islam. Describing how, if fellow Muslims question his support for equality, he responds with a quote from the Qur'an, which paraphrased in translation, states 'And do not let your hatred or opposition to another deny them justice'. He clarified that homosexuality is forbidden within Islam along with premarital or extra marital relations and that "anyone with homosexual feelings must remain celibate and this is their personal jihad". He also shared his sense of some distinct Islamic understandings of sexuality and pointed out that for him, Islam has a very secular understanding of private and public and repeatedly emphasized that no-one has the right to police or force their views on anyone else.

A dialogue tool called a Samoan Circle was used to follow up the presentation. Similar to other more familiar tools such as the 'fishbowl'³¹, a Samoan Circle allows for participants to join those who have given input, either to participate in the discussion or to ask a question,

³¹ Two concentric circles, inner circle discusses, outer circle listens.

One or two representatives for each of the views present remain in inner circle of Samoan Circle. Surrounded by a number of 'open chairs', they sit in a semi-circle for the entire discussion. The representatives discuss the issues with each other as the larger group listens. Anyone from the larger group who wishes to join the conversation may do so by coming forward at any time and taking one of the open chairs.³²

Physically five chairs were placed in a semi-circle in front of the rest of the participants. One of the LGB partners was invited to sit alongside the Imam and Priest, this person was Lesbian and an atheist. Two empty chairs on either side of the 3 'speakers' were for participants to use if they had a question or wanted to join in the discussion. People spoke honestly, with one woman stating, "I feel sadness that my love for my female partner and sexual playing out of that love cannot be blessed by Christian Church nor lived out in a Muslim community".

This seminar, again publicised only by word of mouth and through networks, attracted 30 participants. It was also the most diverse with a number of Muslim participants attending, who identified themselves as both LGB and heterosexual. A youth worker (non LGB) commented that they were really pleased that the process had been safe enough to ensure her colleague, who was lesbian and had never set foot in a University, felt able to participate when she had been extremely nervous about coming. The majority of evaluation forms asked for more and deeper dialogue. One LGB participant commented that more dialogue was not what was desired, rather she had gained an understanding of "what needed to be fought against". Several practitioners spoke about their own conflict between equal opportunity policies and personal beliefs and some wanted further exploration of this. Participants shared deeply personal values and one young man who described himself as gay and Muslim stayed behind after the seminar to speak of how hard it was to be Gay and live within what he described as a 'very traditional Muslim community' in inner city Bradford.

Interestingly it was the academics who felt there had been insufficient opportunity to air disagreement. Two academics (one LGB, one not) commented afterwards that they were disappointed with the lack of disagreement and one in particular (who attended via word of mouth and thought he was coming to a traditional seminar) felt the process had been too tightly controlled. The PPC had long faced the tension of 'safety to' and safety from' and how different people experience processes differently.

³² <http://www.peopleandparticipation.net/display/Methods/Samoan+Circle>

Key learning for PPC

- ‘Neutrality’ may exclude those that are or perceive themselves to be marginalised. The LGB people involved in the planning did not deem a neutral aim to be sufficient to secure their trust or involvement. A neutral title and aim would have left LGB voices out of the conversation. Of course, it is possible that some religious people did not attend on this basis but having hosted many discussions exploring religious belief we wanted to ensure LGB voices in particular trusted us enough to participate. We ensured the ‘agenda’ was explicit so that people chose to attend (or not) on that basis.
- We accepted that there would be disagreement and one of the ‘groundrules’ used was ‘we seek understanding not necessarily agreement’.
- Processes which seek to explore disagreement may cause some people to feel cheated out of just ‘having it out’ whilst others need facilitated processes to feel safe enough to stay in the room or speak. This is a delicate balancing act that requires judgement each time depending on context and content.
- People can respond very differently to the same process, one size does not fit all. Facilitators need to continually reflect and learn but also understand that different reactions will always be part of group work. Not everyone will feel comfortable with processes that give space for personal stories; some will prefer to have a ‘good argument’. Facilitators need to understand that people will respond differently and not everyone wants to participate in dialogue processes.
- Having a nice space (decent room) for dialogue is important but that is not the reality for many facilitators. Looking after people can mitigate space that is less than ideal (as we had to) e.g. welcoming people as they come in, providing food etc. Seemingly small details like welcoming people are incredibly important, especially when people are new to a venue or feeling nervous about attending.
- Time matters - in terms of initial consultation, clarifying aims and planning which process to use. There also needs to be enough time in the space for people to feel safe and connected enough to share their thoughts, questions and struggles.
- It is possible to talk about ‘controversial stuff’ but it needs substantial consideration about purpose and proper planning.

3.3 Campus Dialogues

The Community Associate had facilitating conversations for diverse groups in West Yorkshire with co-facilitators Tariq Bashir and Huw Illingworth, both of whom had

worked on the Intercultural Leadership and Communication School (ICLS³³) whilst working for a voluntary sector Leeds-based organization, Active Faith Communities. We had developed the ICLS from a programme with quite a narrow definition of identity (people were initially brought together as Muslims and Christians) and conventional notions of leadership towards a dialogue space for people to explore the complexity of identity and different understandings of social change. At the same time as developing this rich experience of facilitating intercultural dialogue, students and University staff, including academics, were raising questions about the opportunities for interaction between students at our own institution. Two small pieces of research³⁴ indicated that some students at the University of Bradford felt there to be a lack of opportunity for students from different backgrounds to come together. Religious distinctions were considered particularly significant.

The University of Bradford is proud to be a place that 'celebrates the diversity' of its student body. We felt that our learning from facilitating intergroup dialogue could be shared to ensure that this diversity could be used to enhance the learning and social experience of students. Of course there are many other ways that students can interact – in 2011 students now have the purpose-built Student Central, often filled with International students celebrating their heritage and there is the fantastic Arts on Campus, alongside all the usual student activities.

But given our conversations with students and staff, the research undertaken and our experience in facilitating intergroup dialogue we decided to facilitate a residential dialogue with the support of co-facilitators Huw Illingworth and Tariq Bashir working at that time with Active Faith Communities (AFC). AFC paid for the venue and Bashir & Illingworth co-designed and facilitated the weekend programme. Our hope was and still is that the University of Bradford could become a UK leader in intergroup dialogue. Universities in North America, such as the University of Michigan and the University of California, have been facilitating student intergroup dialogue for many years with the aim of fostering greater intercultural competence and communication skills for the students who participate, which could permeate to the wider University community. It would ensure the University of Bradford offered the opportunity for deeper understanding beyond interaction.

The intercultural residential pilot was held in the Lake District in 2009. Nine students attended a residential from Friday evening to Sunday teatime. Students were from Peace Studies, International Development and the School of Management and included those at Undergraduate and Postgraduate (Masters and PhD) levels and were from very diverse ethnicities including, White European (British and German), Pakistani (nationals), Black British, Tajik, Taiwanese – both male and female.

³³ www.intercivilization.net/

³⁴ Pearson, M. ((2005) Making Knowledge Work, the Promise of Dialogue. Dissertation for Master in Conflict Resolution. And in depth questionnaires were sent to all Deans asking them to distribute to their students and the Student Union in May 08. We received 38 responses with every School and the Student Union being represented.

The process began on Friday evening and ended on Sunday afternoon. The funding secured by Active Faith Communities ensured that the residential took place in the beautiful setting of Rydal Hall, near Ambleside. We used a dialogue process developed over several years, which we adapt for each group we work with. We always start with an exercise about identity that allows participants to define themselves. Depending on the context we then look at relationship to place and use a creative and often playful visual mapping process to explore different relationships and feelings about a place. Participants map their locality - where they live, work, shop and play before moving onto more underlying questions like where people do and do not feel safe. Identity is brought back into the discussion and we explore how aspects of identity can change according to context and situation. We use a range of different exercises and dialogue processes to explore values and create a space for participants to ask questions they would not normally feel able to ask. Our programmes also contain exercises to ensure participants develop understanding and skills in listening, conflict awareness and group work, and in this case, facilitating conversations about the complexity of identity, shared and different values and experiences of living in Bradford and the campus.

Students shared personal stories, games and music from their different cultural backgrounds and had very honest conversations about a range of difficult issues such as gender and clothing, how Islam is perceived, living and working in places with violence and some issues about living in Bradford. We also did some skills-based work, particularly on the importance and practice of listening.

The comments from the evaluation were overwhelmingly positive, including:

Not only exchanged and discussed different ideas but also learned ways to communicate more constructively and effectively. Not something we learn in classroom discussions.

Great diversity and interests of people. Although we have that at the university we are not exposed so much to sharing personal/cultural/religious values and norms as we were here.

Broadened my horizons. Made me more open to different values and beliefs.

More than I have learned in my (course). I think more learning and awareness in two days than the last six months of classroom learning.

All the students felt that they had gained much from the pilot dialogue residential and felt the opportunity to explore values, commonalities and difference was immensely valuable.

Key Learning for PPC

- Students greatly valued having in depth conversations about the complexity of identity, values and experience. The cohort we worked with did not feel classroom based discussions or campus activities provided the same quality of experience in relation to exploring diversity.
- The adaptations we made in our process methods worked for non-British students.
- Our recommendation to the University of Bradford was that we could become the leading UK University for developing campus dialogues. There are a range of models that could be considered and we could draw on learning from elsewhere. In the US the Sustained Dialogue Campus Network* is a project of The International Institute for Sustained Dialogue (IISD) which has branches in a range of North American Universities. Another example is IDEA (Dialogue, Education and Action) Center based at the University of Washington with strong links to South Africa.

(*SDCN see below ³⁵]

3.4 Identity, Citizenship and Social Action

An opportunity arose in 2009 to design and deliver a training/dialogue package for an international British Council programme. 'Active Citizens' was to offer people in Bradford the opportunity to develop skills in dialogue and citizenship and undertake both a social action project and a trip abroad. The PPC was able to help develop the training/dialogue programme and co-facilitate again with Tariq Bashir and Huw Illingworth. In turn we worked in partnership with Bradford Council and a couple of voluntary sector organisations, Bradford Resource Centre and C-Net.

Active Citizens was at the time, a global programme aiming to create a network of citizens, locally engaged and globally connected. It was described as a learning and action programme with a core global framework that is tailored to each local context. The key aim of the Active Citizen Programme was given as: "to build trust, understanding and skills locally and globally through dialogue and social participation". The other places in the UK in this first wave of Active Citizens were: Derry, Glasgow, Cardiff, Bury and Bradford and internationally, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh.

We facilitated a workshop consultation to ask local organisations what they thought of the concept before agreeing to go ahead and a local advisory group headed by

³⁵ The Sustained Dialogue Campus Network is an autonomous student-initiated, student-led, student-managed network within the IISD framework that helps high school and college students develop SD programs on their campuses to deal with issues that divide their campus communities—such as race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation.
<http://www.sd-campus-network.org>

Bradford Council was established. The Council oversaw the open recruitment process and 30 people were successful. The 30 people were the most diverse group we had ever facilitated in dialogue spaces, in terms of age range (from 18 to over 60) and disabled/non-disabled (including 3 visually impaired participants, one person with chronic pain and another with mental health issues). Participants were also from a variety of ethnic, religious, socio-economic and professional backgrounds. What all participants had in common is that they volunteered considerable amounts of their time in grassroots community projects, from an inner city football team to disability campaigning. No-one was recruited just because of their paid work.

The facilitation team spent considerable time planning the delivery. The British Council provided some training and guidance on talking process and citizenship and we married these to our own experience. The British Council required all participants to undertake 4 modules: 1) Understanding Ourselves, identity and culture; 2) Intercultural dialogue; 3) Local/Global Citizenship; 4) Project Planning and Delivery (of the social action project). The scale of commitment was significant, participants were expected to commit to a training programme, international visit and social action project.

The Facilitation Team developed a plan agreed with the Advisory Group that seemed to be realistic and deliverable in the tight timescales given (recruitment and delivery of training within 3 months from November to January). It was agreed to have two stages of 'training' – a four day residential for people who were new to dialogue processes and a two day programme at the University which would try and recruit from a pool of participants (mostly under 40) who had already taken part in the Intercultural Communication and Leadership School. It proved time consuming and complicated to adapt such a large, ambitious programme and make it both relevant to the local context and realistic to deliver within 3 months. Some of the concepts within the British Council programme such as citizenship needed a lot of work to translate into meaningful practical exercises.

The complex range of concepts given to us by the British Council, were refined to simply: 'Who am I? Who are we? How can we bring about change?' These were explored using a range of processes. For both stages of training (which took place in January 2010) we developed a programme of training that included both dialogue and deliberative processes. Participants experienced different talking processes for different issues. We gave real thought to the aims and outcomes of each part of the programme, particularly how to convey complex concepts in a way that would be accessible to a diverse range of participants.

One exercise created space for participants to consider how the July 7 London bombings had impacted on their identity. For many participants their 'Muslimness' was thrust into the spotlight, even if they did not feel particularly religious. One participant shared how he walked into his local pub, frequented by Trade Unionist

and Labour Party members. Instead of the usual conversation about football, he found himself confronted with questions about extremism in response to an issue in the news. He felt he was being asked questions on the basis of being a Muslim and described the burden of having this one aspect of his identity pushed to the fore. From then on, he felt the need to censor his views about ongoing military action in Iraq. If he criticised foreign policy, rather than being seen as a 'leftie Guardian reader', he would be positioned as a 'disloyal Muslim'. He described feeling that for the first time his loyalty to the UK, his place of birth, was in question. Another participant spoke of being told at work not to speak about the London Bombings on July 7 by a 'White non-Muslim manager' because it 'might offend Muslim colleagues'. Conversations were deemed too risky in this climate and assumptions were being made about what might cause offence on behalf of others.

The citizenship component aimed to encourage participants to reflect on the different concepts of citizenship and how to bring about change. We used dialogue processes to explore identity and deliberative processes to look at social change. We had support from Dr Graeme Chesters from the International Centre for Participation Studies (ICPS³⁶). Alongside sharing some conceptual ideas about citizenship with participants, we also developed a deliberative exercise using the subject of 'the hole' in the middle of Bradford. The 'hole' was at the time on land that had been cleared for a new shopping centre. In 2009 the Australian developers Westfield announced that they were putting plans for the centre on hold. In 2010 it became a temporary urban garden. Participants undertook a deliberative process where they were asked to generate ideas for 'the hole'. In small groups they came up with ideas and then had to think of the 'cons' of their ideas and the 'pros' of the other group's ideas. A Samoan Circle process was used to pitch and discuss ideas before a vote was taken.

The anticipated outcomes of both stages of training were that participants would have an increased awareness of identity and culture including: the relationship between each other, valuing and understanding what we have in common and what we do not. Another outcome was that participants would value the importance of listening and dialogue processes including, the value of dialogue in exploring disagreement. Participants were in the main very positive about the content and delivery of both training programmes. They responded differently to different processes but all valued the connections they had made with each other, as one of the participants on the four day training commented,

it seems that the group has really come together and worked well together and there is a lot of respect and understanding for each other. I really like the diversity of the group as I am learning a lot from everyone which is great.

³⁶ www.bradford.ac.uk/.../icps/

Another participant reflected that one particular dialogue process on the two day training allowed, “people to put away their diplomacy and share some of their prejudices”. The process managed to create a space where people felt understood, able to appreciate diversity but move beyond politeness and share assumptions. This is a tricky balancing act and conversely one participant felt there was too much caution on the two day training, “people are too reserved about openly sharing views. I think people in the group are still cautious so will avoid conflict until they are more comfortable”. On the four day residential during a dialogue session, some participants voiced that they valued the friendships so much that they did not want to explore some of the more difficult areas of disagreement. Others felt this was crucial and whether or not to get into difficult conversations became the subject of the dialogue. Participants expressed very different views about how much disagreement they were comfortable with and this had to be negotiated. Afterwards in the debrief, the facilitator team spent time on reflecting whether it was right to spend time on the negotiation of ‘difficult issues versus friendship’ or whether we should have pushed ahead with the process as planned.

Both the facilitators and participants felt there was real value in having such a mix of ages, “as one of the younger members of the group it was very beneficial for me to have discussion with people in the group with lots of active experience and knowledge”. In the end both stages of training were mixed in terms of ages. Participants were able to gain insights and understanding across generations. It was noticeable that during the informal spaces such as mealtimes there was no separation of different age groups.

The facilitators had factored in the physical access requirements of the group but it was only when actually delivering the training that many issues became apparent. There were two participants with no or very limited sight, one had been visually impaired for decades and the other for less than a year. On paper both had similar requirements but the reality was very different and we needed to make major adaptations to the programme and how we communicated. There were also requirements that were in conflict with each other – people who found it hard to sit for long periods and those who found it hard to move about. Some participants wanted visual tools but that excluded others. It was a steep learning curve but incredibly enriching to work with such diversity and reflect on how to balance very different needs.

Participants did go on to develop a range of social action projects and benefited from the international experience, with half the group going to South Africa and half to Kenya. Participants also hosted guests from South Africa and Nigeria in Bradford, developing the itinerary and helping out with the practicalities of the visit.

Key Learning for PPC

- Participants valued the opportunity to have conversations across generations and commented on how often community work separates different age groups. People from the ages of 18 to over 60 shared experiences and made lasting* connections.
- Dialogue and group work processes can be adapted for different physical requirements but there needs to be constant awareness on the part of the facilitators and willingness to change things completely when they are not working.
- It can be more time consuming to adapt a pre-existing framework of training into a deliverable programme than to start from scratch.
- Once again, it was very clear people respond differently to different processes and variety is important.
- It is worth reflecting on how to work with very different attitudes, expressed by participants, towards exploring disagreement. What is more important – exploring difficult issues or friendship and connections? What happens when people express conflicting needs and desires in a dialogue space?

*See below³⁷

3.5 Peacebuilding response to the English Defence League

The Bradford riots in 2001 had been triggered by the announcement that the NF were planning a march. In 2010 the English Defence League announced plans to march in Bradford. Initially the date was May but moved to the bank holiday weekend of August 28th. Throughout 2010 the EDL, a far right social movement, had grown dramatically in support and announced that their appearance in Bradford would be 'The Big One'. The news met with a range of responses.

Hope Not Hate/Searchlight campaigned successfully to ban a march, but could not ban a static assembly. The Preventing Violent Extremism operational partnership structure kicked in and a comprehensive strategy was initiated at this strategic level which included using the embedded neighbourhood and community engagement policing approach, planning a series of diversionary activities for young people with the Youth Service and initially sending out messages which called for people to expect business as usual but not to get involved with either the EDL or any counter protest.

³⁷ In 2012 one of the Active Citizens, Khalil Hussain was nominated to carry the Olympic torch in Manningham. A diverse group of around 10 participants from Active Citizens came to cheer their friend on.

Many local people did want to demonstrate their opposition but had different ideas about the best way to do this. Some activists were comfortable working in partnership with the national organisation Unite Against Fascism (UAF) who called for a national counter demonstration. Others wanted only a locally led response and were concerned that the UAF would create an angry space rather than a celebratory one. There were also a range of community peacebuilding responses that emerged, such as a new network of women, 'Bradford Women for Peace'. The possibility of violence was high with talk initially being of the EDL coming in their thousands. A concerted and varied response from many organisations and individuals helped ensure that Bradford did not see a repeat of the 2001 riots. The EDL was not able to provoke a violent response, which many felt was their real intention.

The PPC had a choice of whether to act or not and if so how. Our first decision was to turn to people with expertise and we brought a civic mediation organisation to Bradford to meet with Council Officers, Police and activists. It was agreed with the Council, Police and activists that this organisation would facilitate a workshop at the University to explore the possibility of third party intervention. The workshop took place a month or so before the proposed EDL visit and with tensions running high, participants did not warm to the ideas suggested. The organisation used the term 'third party' to describe one possible peacebuilding intervention often related to mediation. Put simply a 'third party' role is about someone who is not directly involved in the disagreement intervening in some way, such as offering or being invited to mediate. The civic mediation organisation felt there was a need for a third party intervention between the EDL, the UAF and the Police which would hold all to account in terms of behaviour on the day. The mechanism to hold parties to account would be a team of independent monitors.

The majority of workshop participants felt that with less than a month to go, there just was not enough time to plan for third party possibilities such as the use of independent monitors and both a local mediation organisation and some council officers felt it would be unsafe to try and attempt this. Some of the community activists felt that the third party option prioritised the national organisations and ignored their requests for a local response that differed to the ones already on the table. A few of the youth and community workers found the language of 'third party intervention' off-putting.

We kept the suggestions of the civic mediation organisation in mind and went back to the drawing board to think about whether or not we could offer something simple and realistic with less than a month to go. We designed, facilitated and hosted a number of 'keeping it calm' workshops with Bradford Council and sought advice from the non-violent training organisation 'Turning the Tides'³⁸. The Associate met with co-dialogue facilitators and decided to connect with participants from various dialogue spaces (including the Intercultural Leadership and Communication School

³⁸ www.turning-the-tide.org

and the British Council's Active Citizens Programme) to offer to be a point of contact on the day.

We wanted to connect particularly with lads of Pakistani heritage in their thirties living in the inner city who had really felt the impact of the 2001 riots on their communities. We already had a network of contacts with this group. We knew they were likely to be out on the streets and had some level of influence over younger men who might want to oppose the EDL. The lads we were in touch with were not naturally predisposed to peacebuilding and would have run a mile if there was any hint of 'anything hippy'. Some of them were clear that if they felt their community was under attack from the EDL, they would join the younger men to 'defend our community'. They were clear that this was part of what gave them legitimacy with the younger lads. However, they also identified two goals – firstly that the younger lads did not kick off with the Police and secondly that 'out of towners with their own agendas', did not use neighbourhoods like Manningham as a platform for disorder.

We had no particular connections with local people who might have supported the EDL and indeed the level of local support was unknown beforehand. On the day, the overwhelming majority of EDL supporters arrived on buses from outside the District, so we could not have taken on 'third party' role unless we had the capacity to do this at a national level.

We spoke to the lads we knew and asked if they wanted to be part of a 'Stop it Kicking off Network', they all agreed and told us what would be helpful. We were able to take the learning from the mediation organisation and adapt their approach for our local context and needs. On the day, the Community Associate and Tariq Bashir were based at Bradford Cathedral. We stayed in phone contact with people on the streets and at various points in the day acted as a communication conduit between them and the Police/Council operational command structure. We successfully secured a negotiation towards the end of the day between Police and 'the lads'. By being in touch with people on the street and the command structure, we were able to counter rumours like 'the Interchange was burning down'. We were able to maintain the trust both of the people with street influence and the authorities. At one point we got a call from someone with a group of 100 or so lads, who did not believe that the EDL were still in town and thought they were being lied to by Police. We were able to clarify that the EDL most certainly were still in the city centre as at that point we could see them trying to fight with Police as they were being shepherded onto their buses. This meant we could reassure the guy with the lads that the authorities were being truthful and he could do the important work cascading that information to lads he was with.

Afterwards we met with some of the lads we had maintained contact with and asked them whether or not it had been useful. One commented that being part of something beyond the lads he was with on the streets, had kept him grounded and it had been useful to have someone to call and let off steam with. Of course many

individuals and organisations contributed towards keeping Bradford peaceful that day and our response was a small one. However the importance of relationships of trust was highlighted – it isn't just what information is shared, but rather who shares it and whether they are trusted. The role of informal 'street' leaders with genuine influence was also hugely influential and needs to be valued more. It led us to think about embedding some of these connections in a sustainable way.

From June to August 2010, we also participated in some discussions that activists held with the Police and Council. In June, a few activists had been very disturbed by a group of EDL supporters joining behind a '3 Yorks Battalion' parade in the centre of Bradford. We helped ensure that there was a conversation between Police and activists. We were asked to continue having a presence in further discussions. Some local activists wanted an alternative space to the UAF counter demonstration. We encouraged the activists we were in touch with, to think through the pros and cons of various options and to stay in communication with each other and the Police where appropriate, as we felt lack of trust and communication had been part of the problem in 2001.

We did not take a position on the plan for an alternative space, but we did feel that local activists and not just those linked with national organisations had the right to have conversations with those in power. This was welcomed by most of those we engaged with but one activist in particular felt that this meant we were not acting with neutrality. This activist aimed to build unity between those that wanted to work with the national UAF and those that did not. To be present in discussions about a third space was seen as not working towards unity. Our position was not neutral in that we felt unity between activists was a matter of choice and not something that could have been forced. We were also aware of the long histories and different values between the activist groupings.

We were also not neutral in the traditional 'third party' sense, which would have required neutrality between the EDL, the UAF and the Police. Our connections were with those that were against the EDL, not with those who were in support. A key question we are continuing to reflect upon is whether neutrality was, in this context, attainable or even desirable.

Key Learning for PPC

- When there is the possibility of violence it is crucial to work with those who exercise street influence and not just 'traditional' forms of leadership.
- There are many different roles that are needed in a conflict situation. A Third Party approach may not always be practical or desirable. Other roles may include: negotiators, insider-partials (those involved within the conflict), nonviolent activists, advocates etc. The whole notion of partial/impartial needs rethinking in relation to the UK context.
- Any position taken, including doing nothing, is a position, and true neutrality seems impossible to imagine. Positions that seem impartial may prioritise certain actors above others e.g. in this context a Third Party approach would have focused on the EDL and UAF more than local actors committed to both contesting the EDL and preventing violence.
- Peacebuilding processes need the involvement of people who have understanding of the local context and even more crucially are trusted by key actors. This level of trust can take years to build. 'Outsider' intervention may also be relevant and valuable for certain situations but peacebuilding experts need flexibility and the humility to know when they are not needed.
- Connections and trust built during dialogue processes can hold strong and be utilised at times of stress. Connections with activists may also be important.
- Have confidence about doing something small-scale.

3.6 Facilitating the Common Good

In 2009/10 the Canon of Bradford Cathedral Dr Frances Ward, aspired to create a Common Good Network which would build friendship between key actors in Bradford District. Others within the Anglican Church wanted something more strategic - from a 'Civic Network Part 2' (see previous account of the Civic Network), to a network that would hold institutions to account about the value base from which they were operating. When Frances Ward left Bradford in 2010, these ideas were left with JRF (as funders). Having learnt from the Civic Network that organisations who raise controversial issues can be subject to criticism, JRF wanted a network to be the public face of a public seminar series which would explore controversial issues.

The PPC offered to help think through process and facilitation. The Common Good Advisory Group consisted then of JRF, two Anglicans and one Muslim woman. At the suggestion of the Associate they shared their different senses of what the Common Good could do in a facilitated discussion with a range of local participants (20 Sept 2010). Participants included community activists, human rights activists,

Council Officers, faith workers and one Police Officer. However this meeting was stalled by the impending news of the EDL's demonstration on 28th August.

The Advisory Group met again later and decided that the best way to proceed would be to pull together a group of 40 (originally they had hoped for 60) key actors in a residential weekend (7-9 Jan 2011). Given the number of participants, with agreement of JRF, the Community Associate brought in the two colleagues from previous dialogue work, Huw Illingworth and Tariq Bashir to facilitate this move. The Advisory Group wanted to invite a range of people including a combination of whom they described as 'young and fresh' and 'old and wise'. They decided against inviting the Police because they felt this could inhibit free conversation. The facilitation team met with the Advisory Group and reflected that they were hearing a set of related but quite different hopes for the potential purpose of the Common Good. The different ideas of the Advisory Group members were never truly reconciled before the end of the Common Good weekend and the facilitators had to work with the quite broad aims given to the participants:

- Enable trust to grow between participants, all of whom are involved with aspects of community development and cohesion work across the Bradford district;
- Advise JRF on shaping its Connecting through Change programme which focuses on connecting different voices and strengthening civil culture to help Bradford become a more equal and dynamic city;
- Further develop a renewed civic network to support community cohesion in Bradford.

The facilitator team spent three days on process planning for a resumed three day meeting. Given the numbers we did not think there would have been time for the group to generate their own Working Together Agreement (WTA) and we made the judgement that one was needed because of an incident at a previous meeting. After the welcome, aims and 'icebreaker' exercise we agreed to start by proposing the following WTA:

We will aim to start/finish on time and will all take responsibility for knowing when the next session starts.

(Beyond the residential) Ideas are for sharing, personal info isn't.

We respect each other.

Seek understanding rather than agreement.

Check what someone means, don't assume meaning.

We REALLY listen to each other e.g. one person speaks at a time, try not to interrupt and work hard to listen to understand.

Notice if everyone has had the opportunity to speak especially if you talk a lot.

Electronics will not cause disruptions.

It is ok to be confused and it is ok to change your mind.

You don't have to represent anyone other than yourself.

At the meeting we asked for participants to raise their hand in support to ensure there was group agreement. After the weekend however, the WTA activity was criticised by the Advisory Group who had found it uncomfortable. This raised the important question for us as facilitators about balancing what a group may need (tensions had been high at a previous meeting) and what feels comfortable. It is an issue we have continued to reflect on. Even with large numbers it may be worth taking the time for a group to negotiate their own WTA even if this means less time for conversation.

In the evening, participants were given one minute to respond to the question: "What do I do that contributes to the common good?" Given one of the key aims was to build trust; we started Saturday with dialogue processes and asked people to share something about who they are in pairs. We then went on to a listening exercise. Participants were asked to share in pairs, "where your values have come from and what values matter most to you?"

In small groups, participants made an attempt to define the 'Common Good'. They used this definition in their groups to carry out a 'forcefield analysis'³⁹ and note down the things that work towards the Common Good and the things that work against.

The Advisory Group had made it clear that they wanted 'big energetic conversations' rather than quieter dialogue processes. As the morning had been quite tightly facilitated, we felt participants would need a process that would ensure they participated in the conversations that mattered to them without direct facilitation. We opted for a long 'open space'⁴⁰ influenced process which involved people generating issues and moving into small group conversation spaces of their choosing.

Participants were invited to respond to the question:

Right now, what do you feel is a burning issue that is having an impact on the common good in Bradford District and needs more public discussion?

The process had more of a muddled start than intended, but most participants did organise themselves into conversation spaces. One participant reacted negatively to the process, insisting that there was too much pressure to participate. Many participants joined one particular conversation space along with the then Leader of the Council who, having arrived at lunchtime, added an interesting dynamic to the process. The groups differed greatly in size and energy levels. Issues raised

³⁹ http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_06.htm

⁴⁰ <http://www.openspaceworld.org/>

included the economic context and whether it is possible to talk about aspects of culture without being seen as racist.

Late in the afternoon, when participants were flagging a little, we used a 'conflict spectrum' process. In the break we converted the issues participants raised into statements and invited people to position themselves along a line from 'agree to disagree'. The conversations and disagreement were lively but we noticed that some participated more than others.

After an informal evening of games and activities organised by one of the participants who works in the Arts, we had half the day on Sunday to explore the possibilities for the Common Good Network. The Advisory Group members wanted to raise the social issues that they felt needed to be discussed via a second conflict spectrum exercise. The issues were: biraderi impact on local politics, sexual exploitation of young women, consanguinity and 'the glass ceiling' in relation to racial discrimination. Again the conversation was lively, disagreement expressed, but some participated more than others.

We then asked participants to sit with the Advisory Group member who had proposed the issue of most interest to them, think through and note down the pros and cons of opening the issue up for public discussion. We ensured there was also space for people to discuss a few of the issues from the previous day. And we created a table for participants who did not feel that public conversations should be the key priority for the Common Good Network. A minority of participants were not keen on talk at all and wanted much more focus on action.

The change to the programme left little time to generate group consensus about the purpose and function of the Common Good. So we opted for a simple exercise, asking everyone to note down what they thought the Common Good should do and what it should not. Participants then used sticky dots to opt for one key priority each and a consensus emerged round three or four issues. Participants were buoyant at the end of the residential and the majority expressed appreciation for the facilitation. Some still felt confused about the purpose of the Common Good and how decisions would be made going forward.

Key Learning for PPC

- It is important to hear and reflect on criticism of methods such as the Working Together Agreement. Feelings of discomfort need to be reflected on but not all activities are necessarily comfortable for participants.
- As anticipated 'big energetic' processes do not necessarily expose sensitive issues.
- Dialogue processes, building trust and working in a participatory way are tricky with large groups and need more thought.
- Time for planning is crucial and needs to be valued as a crucial part of a process.
- As facilitators we needed clearer boundaries of what we would and would not compromise on.

4 Teaching Talk: learning from theory and practice into teaching

The PPC was able to support Dr Ute Kelly of the ICPS develop a new MA module in dialogue and deliberation. We used our learning from practice to contribute towards writing a module that ensures students develop skills in matching process to purpose alongside the theoretical literature on dialogue and deliberation. The PPC also helped contribute to an innovative delivery approach which included online discussion and day long teaching sessions that gave students an experience of different processes and the opportunity to facilitate themselves. We also used our connections and had support from the Kinharvie Institute of Facilitation who helped deliver one component of the teaching days. Students were also given real life case studies to work with from PPC practice and had the opportunity to reflect on some key dilemmas and choices that facilitators have to face.

The content of the course is organised into eleven themes:

“Theme 1: Considering experiences of disagreement

Theme 2: Overview of dialogue – purposes and approaches

Theme 3: Overview of deliberation – purposes and approaches

Theme 4: Who should participate? The politics of invitation/representation

Theme 5: ‘Cool’ or ‘heated’? Reason and emotion

Theme 6: The strengths and limitations of dialogue/deliberation in contexts of inequality/asymmetric conflict

Theme 7: Making conversation easier? Groundrules, facilitators, and process design

Theme 8: Dialogue/deliberation and activist politics – tensions and possibilities

Theme 9: What difference does it make? Potential and actual outcomes of dialogue/deliberation – and how to capture them

Theme 10: Matching process to context

Theme 11: Face-to-face or online – how was it for you?

The learning outcomes of the Module are as follows:

- Analyse and critically reflect on theoretical and practical approaches to dialogue and deliberation, locating them in a wider field of theory and practice.
- Design dialogue and/or deliberation processes appropriate to specific contexts, and justify your choice of approach
- Design evaluations/ways of capturing and reflecting on participants' experiences of dialogue/deliberation processes
- Critically reflect on their own role(s) in dialogue/deliberation processes, as participants and/or facilitators
- Communicate in a way that takes account of a range of perspectives, both orally and in writing
- Reflect on their experiences of communication in everyday life and in created spaces for dialogue/deliberation".⁴¹

We were able to use real life examples of dilemmas from practice for students to discuss online, for example, we asked students to consider the following:

Which of the following issues are likely to have strong emotions impacting on facilitating conversation? What would be the pros and cons in exploring the emotions in each of these examples, what factors might you need to consider as a facilitator? What are the risks in exploring potential emotions and what are the risks in not?

- 1) Group discussion with diverse group of British participants on a two day residential about the July 7 bombings (bombing of London Underground and a bus in 2005) – exploring how participants felt when they heard, who they spoke to and whether it impacted on their identity/how they were perceived by others.
- 2) Workplace meeting about change decided by management including the nature of the organisation.
- 3) Conflict Spectrum discussion amongst dialogue participants at a 1 day workshop, whether religious belief has inhibited free speech.

⁴¹ MA Module in Dialogue and Deliberation, written by Dr Ute Kelly, ICPS, Peace Studies, University of Bradford.

- 4) Deliberative forum (day long) amongst staff and students of a University discussing possible responses to climate change and resource depletion.
- 5) Public meeting (evening) about threat of a Far Right organisation planning to hold a demonstration in a diverse British city.
- 6) Neighbourhood forum (evening) about an application for a gypsy traveller site in the locality”.

The MA Module is no longer running but we hope to continue to build this area of work and to incorporate relevant content and learning into other courses. Our learning can contribute thematically to peacebuilding theory and practice but also more generically in terms of facilitation skills and intergroup dialogue. We feel there is considerable potential for our learning from theory and practice to contribute towards teaching.

5 CONCLUSION – Practitioner reflection

In recent years academics have been called upon to demonstrate ‘impact’ beyond the world of research. This had led to fears about quality, autonomy and marketisation. Our experience has given us some insights into meaningful and ethical impact. It is possible to share research and ideas by inviting people into spaces where their knowledge and wisdom are equally validated. In our spaces, academics and practitioners share stories and ideas together. We have found it is possible to influence through sustained relationships – by attending meetings, listening to dilemmas, offering ideas when asked – we have retained autonomy and shared research. By working hard to listen to dilemmas in practice and activism we have found it easy to involve so-called hard to reach groups in research projects and research dissemination. A good example of this was when over 15 young people from a football project in Manningham participated in AHRC research about power within communities in 2012, attended the research feedback workshop at the University and participated in shaping a future Research Council bid. Most of the young people were not in education or employment and had certainly never stepped foot in a University before.

In the first phase of the PPC we created energetic spaces for people to grapple with key national and local policy debates against a very particular background of riots, cohesion policies, 9/11 and subsequent foreign policy responses. There was much to value in these spaces, and some people still miss them, but we learnt that a different kind of conversation was needed if we wanted people to listen to understand. Having influenced external organisations and other parts of the University to value the idea of public conversation and safe spaces we also did not want to compete.

We have learnt about being sensitive to context. Thinking through the role a University can and should play depending on what is happening in the world and

how that may be affecting communities on the doorstep. We have experimented and adapted our approach whilst preserving autonomy.

The London bombings in July 2005 ushered in a period of mistrust. We responded to this new climate by working in partnership with Muslim-led organisations to host conversations. In those spaces we saw a much greater diversity of people talking honestly about areas of disagreement. Post 7/7 it mattered much more who sent the invite to talk and perceptions about what the agenda might be.

Through our knowledge exchange work we know practitioners, activists and academics have much to learn from each other. Practitioners value time to think and have shared ideas from their own thinking and practice. Academics have shared research, although increasingly they struggle more than practitioners to have the time to contribute. Many of the issues that people want to discuss are complex and require space to muse - issues such as power, the English Defence League, the August 2011 riots, dialogue as a way of challenging hate and how the national backdrop of austerity is impacting on the ethics and practicalities of peacebuilding in the UK.

The PPC and partners have developed practice in facilitating dialogue that allows people to explore who they are, who they are in relation to others, what really matters to them and what happens when they disagree. Our learning so far is that dialogue has the potential to create new understandings of self and others. Dialogue offers a transformative space where people can consider why someone else may think and feel very differently. An interest in dialogue does not mean it is the only answer to complex, unequal and uncertain times. We have written about and reflected on both the value and limitation of talk⁴². Valuing dialogue should not preclude action, if action is felt to be needed and the action can build on contacts built up through dialogue.

The understanding that people can gain through dialogue offers new possibilities and connections. Connections we have found, that can hold strong at times of tension. When people are in dialogue with each other, they develop confidence in relating to people who have different world views, they may also clarify the nature of their disagreement and of course any shared values. We live in a competitive and fast moving world, where people get stuck into cycles of 'winners and losers'. Think of the voracity of debates on Twitter and Facebook. Actively fostering spaces that slow down a little and allow for empathy and understanding seems an important counter balance. Dialogue and thoughtful public conversation, where feelings are expressed not repressed or disparaged, has become almost counter cultural. Dialogue processes provide a radical departure from how most meetings are conducted and decisions made. When people say they want more action and less talk, what kind of action do we get if we have not asked our colleagues and neighbours for their opinion or what matters to them? What kind of decisions do we get if those around

⁴²http://www.brad.ac.uk/ssis/media/SSIS/Documents/Civil_society_supporting_dialogue_and_Deliberation.pdf

us do not feel they have been heard or understood? If we want to act with any kind of solidarity, we need first to understand what matters to others and why.

Some of our learning is simple but all too often overlooked – thinking about purpose and process are crucial. Slowing down to agree aims and then spending time on process planning are vital. This does not mean that spaces will always be facilitated or tightly controlled. It has been important for us to think more about how people will react in a variety of ways to dialogue and consider how challenging deep listening is for many of us.

Through facilitating dialogue we have discovered that many people lack the opportunity to share stories and experiences. Listening together can lead to assumptions being challenged and unheard voices heard. Enabling people to really listen to each other is not easy but is absolutely vital if people want to explore different views and work through disagreement. The alternative is that we only talk with likeminded people. It can be hugely liberating for people to be released from the pressure to agree, but invited instead to 'listen to understand'. If the invitation is for people to understand why someone thinks as they do, it is perfectly possible for people to explore controversial issues. That does not mean it is easy nor that it will lead to better relations. It is important not to assume outcomes as instrumentality may defeat the important premise of dialogue being open ended.

In addition to all our work on public conversations something new has emerged in the last two years (since 2010). We have applied learning from knowledge exchange spaces and connections to contribute towards local participatory peacebuilding. Using our connections we have reached out to people with informal street influence at particular times when the risk of violence on the streets has been high. By listening, not telling, we have supported people to develop their own community-led resilience responses and helped different organisations move out of their comfort zone and value this approach. This is something with great potential to build on. People who have been involved in community-led civic resilience (in August 2010 and August 2012) have expressed an interest in developing skills in both peacebuilding skills such as mediation/negotiation and also nonviolent resistance.

One of things we learnt from making practical peacebuilding interventions is the need for a whole range of roles in a situation of potential violence. It may also be necessary to move between roles as a changing context unfolds. This is contrary to some of the peacebuilding models that prioritise an uncompromising impartiality above everything else. It seems crucial to see conflict analysis leading to specific interventions as an iterative process. Perhaps the possibilities of interventions and responses should be on a spectrum from conflict prevention, management, transformation, participation and activism. Perhaps roles (mediator, facilitator, negotiator, advocate, activist) that relate to different types of interventions need to

have a degree of fluidity and not become fixed or wedded to a particular formula or approach early on.

A key question for reflection is whether peacebuilding approaches that are rooted in very specific contexts of conflict, where there are often clear asymmetries of power and the existence of conflict is not disputed, translate to a UK context. In the UK, power inequalities are real but often complex and the very existence of conflict or tension is in itself often the subject of dispute. There is also a more specific question about processes rooted in specific conflicts and the extent to which the learning can be applied to different contexts. Is impartiality between paramilitary organisations qualitatively different to impartiality in relation to neo-fascist or overtly racist organisations?

Are there processes so encompassing, that with minimal tweaking, one size really does fit all? Or should what matters be what a particular context needs? Might it be possible to integrate processes for conflict transformation and participatory social change? If so what would need to change in the way we think about analysis, roles and interventions? Can we strike a balance between learning from elsewhere, both from theory and practice, with developing and systematising more creative and flexible approaches? An integrated approach enriches our understanding of who the peacebuilders might be – community activists, social workers, teachers, council officers, police officers, trade unionists, artists etc. along with professional mediators.

As such our key thematic areas we aim to develop thinking and practice through knowledge exchange and action research include:

Bringing together dialogue, conflict transformation, participation and nonviolent resistance.

Responding to violence, hate and dominating power.

We will also continue to share ideas with local partners to ensure thinking about participatory peacebuilding impacts on Bradford District. Partnership work with a range of organisations including the Peace Museum; Schools Linking Network; FABRIC; Bradford Cathedral; Culture Fusion/YMCA and Soka Gakkai International will lead to a season of peace in 2013 entitled 'Routes to Peace'.

Above all we will develop and sustain connections with peacebuilding organisations working locally, regionally and nationally to ensure the largest centre for the study of peace and conflict in the world, learns from and contributes towards peacebuilding in Bradford and the UK.

6 Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future By Professor Jenny Pearce

Our District is a fascinating place with great energy amongst its diverse communities. It has been deeply impacted by deindustrialisation, provocations by the Far Right

and the reverberations from international and national events which have thrust Muslims into the spotlight and made people feel under constant scrutiny. Like many other Northern cities it also faces serious challenges of poverty, social deprivation and unemployment which impact severely on a District with unique demographics in the UK around its growing population of young people. These problems have been exacerbated by the recession of 2008 and beyond and public sector cuts. In 2012 these were only beginning to be felt, but loom on the horizon for many households. This systematisation of our experience between 2007 and 2012 takes this challenging context as a starting point for planning our next five years.

The Programme for a Peaceful City (PPC) was established on principles of knowledge exchange, sharing ideas and building connections to co-develop responses to such challenges with others in the District. We see our role as bringing skills from the University to work alongside other skills in the District, in our communities, civil society organisations, statutory bodies and amongst our local authority officers and political representatives. From our experiences in the Social Sciences and Peace Studies in particular, we work to strengthen resilience to external triggers, to foster and facilitate communities' own strategies to address these as well as their own internal divisions and conflicts. Our aim is to contribute towards supporting Bradford citizens find responses to disagreements, to deal with violence and hate wherever it originates, to build mutual trust in order to make the search for solutions easier and to manage difficult conversations when they arise. Much of this systematisation has focused on the latter, and we have learnt a great deal about talking and listening for change.

We are only one response amongst many in the District, which has the fortune of a rich history of self organising and a plurality of civic organisations committed to engaging with public policy alongside many activists creating social change.

We are particularly interested as we look to the future about whether and how themes from our research in Peace Studies and the International Centre for Participation Studies (ICPS), resonate with the contemporary context. Such themes as participatory peace-building, conflict transformation, deliberative and participatory democracy, grass roots driven change and non-violent strategies to address injustices.

2013 is the fortieth anniversary of Peace Studies and we will be using this opportunity to open fresh debate on conflict, violence and non-violent social change from the local to the global, and how this could inform our third phase of work in the District and beyond.

This systematisation recounts the confidence boosting collective effort across the District to respond peacefully to the English Defence League when it organised a protest in 2010 and in which the PPC played a small part. However, in a subsequent evaluation of this response for Bradford Council, which showered genuine praise on

everyone involved, I also urged people to build on this effort, to embed it in institutional memory and to develop the top down, bottom up communications flow which had played such an important role in its success. This included many young men who had rioted in 2001, but showed great maturity in helping to avoid a second riot. Participation and involvement need to be seen as a vital component of a democratic, problem solving culture, and the disagreements which emerge as part of the creativity of that culture.

These are some of the considerations we have in mind in building the next phase of our work. In keeping with our principles, we prefer to build with as many people as possible and throughout 2013 we will be opening up this debate through twitter, blogs, seminars and workshops. We hope you will join us!

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